



Safety Audit for Beverly to Alexander Streets

**Cowichan Women Against Violence Society
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**The Safety Audit for
Beverly to Alexander
was conducted
as part of the**

Cowichan Valley Safer Futures / Safety Audit Project

**Sponsored by:
Cowichan Women Against Violence Society**

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Cowichan Women Against Violence

SUMMARY

The Cowichan Valley Safety Audit Project is a regional initiative supported by the C.V.R.D., provincial and federal governments, whose purpose is to address women's and children's personal and public safety at the local level through design and management of community environments.

Approaches to build safer communities recognize the relationship between violence, fear and the built environment. While design of places such as streets, buildings and parks do not cause crime and violence, they are an important consideration in prevention of crime and violence. Safety audits are a tool to examine places and identify ways to improve them to increase safety for women, children and everyone.

The safety audit for Beverly to Alexander Street area in the District of North Cowichan involved community consultation through interviews and group discussions to obtain information on perceptions of safety, identify concerns, places where safety is a concern and aspects of places that present obstacles to safety for women and children.

This audit also sought to identify positive aspects about community, to obtain information about community strengths and places people consider to be safe, to be able to draw upon those strengths and provide positive examples for other areas to follow.

Input about safety issues and concerns received from interviews, discussions, audit walks and other consultation indicates appreciation of the local area in terms of its physical layout, mostly level topography, proximity to services, and as such is supporting of a pedestrian lifestyle. In addition to physical and locational aspects, the area was noted for neighbourhood and community strengths, and recreational opportunities offered by schools.

Obstacles to safety identified for the area included inadequate and uneven lighting in places, inadequate pedestrian walkways and crossings, lack of outdoor public telephones, vacant lots and other places where people 'hang out'. Accessibility was an important consideration in this audit and there are a number of factors that present obstacles to safety for people who rely on walking and people who are mobility impaired. In particular (but not exclusively), high volumes of vehicle and pedestrian traffic, historical development and design of roads and crossings, combine to pose safety hazards and have resulted in accessibility problems.

The affects of obstacles to safety and perceptions of risk of violence in the area for many women are avoidance of certain places, routes, situations that are perceived as unsafe, taking special precautions to ensure safety such as going out primarily in the day or going out with a group.

While taking precautions for safety is an essential part of individual, family and community safety, it is important to acknowledge that these are limitations, particularly

as they pertain to women's and children's participation in their communities, and can have a negative impact on individual and community well-being. It is also important to acknowledge that choices with respect to precautions may not be available to some people who need to use particular areas and routes as part of their daily lives.

Two formal safety audit walks were done which examined public and semi-public places in the study area for safety factors including lighting, isolation, maintenance, sightlines, potential hiding and entrapment spots. Recommendations for improvements to safety in this report stem from observations and reflect solutions put forward by the volunteer participants.

General items of concern included streetlighting, lighting for parking areas, improvements to design and maintenance of streets and pedestrian walkways, maintenance of vacant lots, trimming vegetation, improved safety of crossing areas, and increasing the number of public telephones.

Recommendations outline actions for the District of North Cowichan pertaining to Public Works and Planning, the Ministry of Transportation and Highways pertaining to the Trans Canada Highway intersection, and the CVRD Women's Safety Advisory Committee pertaining to education and information to the public.

In order for environmental design and management measures to be effective as a tool in preventing crime and violence, they need to be part of a long term, comprehensive approach which seeks to address the root causes of crime and violence. Similar to safety audits conducted for Cobble Hill and Mill Bay-Malahat, this report contains recommendations to the District of North Cowichan to support and encourage community safety and violence prevention through various avenues, including support of violence prevention services, community education and awareness, recreational opportunities, and policing.

Safety audits should not be viewed as a one time event, but rather as an ongoing process which is incorporated into regular considerations about community development. It is hoped that this project has provided an initial step toward a long term process.

1. INTRODUCTION

Safety Audits

Safety audits are used in various settings and have evolved as an important tool in community approaches for violence prevention. The purpose of a Safety Audit is to address personal and public safety of women and children through examining community environments from those perspectives and recommending solutions to reduce opportunities for crime/violence and enhance sense of safety.

Why focus on women and children?

Safety audits focus on personal safety of women and children. This focus is not meant to ignore or minimize the high rate of violence experienced by men. Rather, it is meant to highlight the unique situations of women, their higher risks of certain kinds of crime and violence, and the resulting limitations on their use and participation in their communities.

Violence and the resulting fear of violence has unique and significant implications for women's and children's lives, both as individuals, and in the way they use their communities. Many people, particularly women and children, have concerns about their safety in public and semi-public places - at home alone, walking alone in our neighbourhoods after dark, going out at night to meetings, waiting for and using public transportation, at our places of work, and school.

Statistics show that over half (57%) of all Canadian women restrict their activities and their participation in community life out of concern for their safety, including work, education, recreation, and many seemingly routine activities.¹

The Physical Environment

There is a growing body of research that indicates a strong relationship between building and community design and opportunities for crime. Characteristics of environments which are often identified in conjunction with safety concerns include inadequate lighting, isolation, places which offer potential entrapment sites, design elements such as lack of signage or emergency services, inadequate security, obstruction of sightlines and poor maintenance.

For example, research on public places where sexual assaults have occurred has found that a number of features are often present - ability of an offender to predict time and path of a potential victim, the presence of an ambush site, an attack site which is often enclosed on three sides, poor visibility and an escape route for the offender.

¹ Statistics Canada, Violence Against Women Survey Highlights, 1993

Conversely, factors that enhance both safety and sense of safety are those that:

- reduce isolation and provide for awareness and clarity of the surrounding environment, provide for clear visibility, access to emergency services, and
- foster a sense of ownership and hierarchy of space.

Certainly, design of public places and buildings do not *cause* crime and violence, and design does not operate independently of other social factors. Safety audits can also identify other ways communities can improve safety, for example, through education and awareness and cooperative actions of residents, community groups and police.

2. 0. SAFETY AUDIT FOR BEVERLY TO ALEXANDER

This Safety Audit has focused on an area located in the District of North Cowichan, generally between Beverly Street to Alexander Street and Chesterfield to York Road (Figure 1). This project has been conducted as part of a regional initiative to address safety of women and children. It is managed by Cowichan Women Against Violence Society, and carried out with direction of a 20 member committee appointed by the C.V.R.D. which includes representatives from North Cowichan and other municipalities, electoral areas, and community organizations of the Cowichan Valley Regional District.

2.1. BACKGROUND

The Beverly to Alexander Street area was designated for a Safety Audit by the C.V.R.D. Women's Safety Advisory Committee in September, 1997. Considerations for choice of this area included its location and urban character, and awareness of obstacles to safety experienced by people who live, work and use this area.

Additional Considerations:

The study area is a subject of the District of North Cowichan's 1995 Urban Policy Refinement Study and forms part of an area designated as "Area 2" of that study. North Cowichan Council is in the process of designating the area as a Development Permit Area, and has requested its Advisory Planning Committee to recommend development design guidelines for multiple family developments.

Safety audits can provide important information about physical design considerations for an area. During 1997, Cowichan Women Against Violence has been developing planning guidelines for safety in small and rural communities. While the guidelines will contain information on aspects of design for safety that can be incorporated into a given development proposal, it is important to remember that considerations need to be site specific.

Conducting a Safety Audit will give the advantage of looking very closely at a particular area, obtaining information about local safety concerns and local solutions which will contribute to planning decisions.

2.2. PROCEDURES

General procedures for this project are based on established models developed by METRAC (Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children) and the Women's Action Centre in Ottawa - Carlton. The latter model was researched and developed specifically to include considerations of rural women, people who live with disabilities and visible minority groups.

Safety audits are based on an understanding of violence issues and obstacles to safety posed by the physical and social environment. Research (both nationally and locally) has explored links between violence and fear of violence, and how that may affect the way people participate in their communities.²

Following upon the broader knowledge and understanding of issues, procedures involve consultation with the community to determine types of safety concerns and local areas /aspects where safety is a concern. Methods of consultation used in Safety Audits can include conducting a comprehensive survey, however, many safety audits are approached by obtaining input from local focus groups and broader reference groups.

From the input received, areas within the community are prioritized for site specific audits. Audits assess community places for factors which include awareness of the environment, places which present opportunities for crime and factors that contribute to or detract from accessibility and mobility. From the input received and observations made, recommendations for improvements to enhance safety are put forward to provide site specific solutions and proactive guidelines to include principles for safety into planning processes.

2.2.1 Community Consultation

As mentioned previously, focus group discussions held early in 1997 contributed information on safety issues and concerns of women with disabilities, seniors, young women and youth, aboriginal women and immigrant women living in the Cowichan Valley. Discussions brought up places in communities where safety is or would be a concern.³ The Beverly to Alexander Street area was one of many mentioned as containing places and aspects of places which present obstacles to safety for women and children.

² A comprehensive review is offered by Holly Johnson, M.A., in Dangerous Domains, Nelson Canada, (Scarborough, Ontario), 1996.

³ It is important to remember that people may not use a particular place or type of place because they perceive it to be unsafe.

Outreach and consultation to obtain information on safety issues and concerns was approached primarily through direct contact of individuals, businesses and community groups. Copies of a survey were left with two community organizations and one response was submitted.

Project staff distributed a notice with information about the Safety Audit to numerous businesses, apartment buildings, condominiums, and schools in the area. In addition, we contacted schools, community organizations and individuals directly to invite input and participation of interested individuals, members and staff.

Information and Planning Session

An initial information and planning meeting was held on November 19, 1997. The purposes of this meeting were to provide information about the project to participants, and to invite discussion about safety issues and concerns for the local area.

Nineteen people associated with the area indicated an interest to participate; however, three said that their home and work obligations would not permit them to attend the scheduled meetings; two of the three requested ongoing contact to keep them informed and allow for their input. Thirteen participants attended the November 19, 1997 session.

Comments received from the initial information meeting, previous discussion groups and direct contact with members of the community during distribution of flyers are summarized in Section 3.

2.2.2. The Audits

Procedures for audits involved walking through the areas with a checklist of questions (Appendix B) to examine 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?" Factors which are commonly examined are isolation, access to emergency services, lighting, signage, movement predictors, hiding places, entrapment sites and maintenance.

Accessibility factors are also important in examining a place for safety. In short, if a place presents obstacles to access, transportation or movement, it can have significant implications for that person's personal safety. Questions include: "Does this place or route present obstacles and related safety issues for someone who lives with a disability, to someone who is mobility impaired, does not have access to a vehicle or who uses a wheelchair or scooter?"

While the intent of a safety audit is to critically assess places for safety concerns, participants were also asked to note things that contribute to sense of safety to help determine what positive safety features exist and how they might be preserved as the area develops.

Two walkabouts were conducted for the area - one on the evening of November 26th and one during the afternoon on November 27th. The November 26th evening walk covered the entire area and assessed general safety factors including lighting, isolation, sightlines, maintenance, hiding and entrapment spots. The November 27th day walk focused more on accessibility factors and concentrated on York Road.

Participants on the walks included residents and people who work in the area. One of the walks was attended by Planners and Councilors from the District of North Cowichan and a Councilor from the City of Duncan.

Follow up

A follow-up meeting was held with participants on December 3rd, 1997 to review the observations, discuss proposed solutions and identify priorities for actions.

Follow-up contacts were made with participants in March of 1998 to assess progress.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1. Identification of Positive Aspects and Obstacles to Safety

Information about the studied area obtained during focus group discussions, casual interviews with some business owners, apartment managers, and residents, and the November 19th Planning Session indicates the following:

Positive Aspects of the Area

The Beverly to Alexander Street area is located within walking distance to services in and near Downtown Duncan and therefore is generally conducive to a pedestrian lifestyle. The area contains many multi-family, mixed ownership and rental dwellings but is mixed also with single family dwellings. It was noted as an area that provides affordable housing and rental accommodation. Its level topography is also important for people who live with disabilities and it was noted that the area is home to many people who use scooters or wheelchairs.

In addition to physical and locational aspects, the area has some notable strengths as a neighbourhood and community which lend to comfort in and appreciation of the area for many people.

The area offers a variety of recreational opportunities. Again, location and topography provide a variety of walking routes. Schools in the area provide recreational facilities (playgrounds, fields) and also serve somewhat as 'central' community facilities. The planned Chesterfield track is expected to be an additional positive feature of the area.

Emergency services for the area were considered to be quite good in terms of police response, and also the presence of the Ambulance Station. While there have been some negative experiences and ongoing concerns about levels and types of use of places by youth in the area, it was felt that overall, presence of youth in the area mostly positive.

General Safety Issues Identified

Obstacles to safety and accessibility that were identified included:

- In general, places, routes and buildings that are dark and/or poorly lit, contain obstacles to visibility, are isolated, present problems for getting to help in an emergency.
- Lack of an adequate number of public telephones.
- Maintenance, and/or appearance of places that detracts from safety and/or contributes little to sense of community (e.g., vacant lots that are overgrown and/or contain garbage).
- Unwelcome or inappropriate use of places (for example, cars speeding along neighbourhood streets, groups of people hanging out, drug use)
- Knowledge of violence (for example, knowing about domestic violence in neighbourhood)
- Perceived potential for crime/violence (based on own and reports of others experiences)
- Growth and change, development and increased urbanization over the last decade.
- For some people, lack of safe, accessible means of transportation (pedestrian *and* vehicle).
- In general, societal attitudes and behaviours that permit violence to occur.

Affects of Safety Concerns

When asked if and how safety concerns affected their use and participation in their community, the main aspects noted were:

- Avoiding certain places, situations (for example, not going out at all or alone at night, avoiding a certain route).
- Taking special precautions to ensure safety of self and children (for example, planning a route with safety in mind, going out with a group).
- Home security (for example, extra locks, telephone monitoring systems, heightened awareness of neighbourhood).
- Some women note that although they may feel unsafe, they may not have a choice to avoid a place or have resources for alternative means of transportation. Some women noted that despite their concerns they must take a route or use a place; projection of a positive self image was one method mentioned for meeting an unsure situation.

Local places cited for obstacles to safety

Discussions identified the following places and aspects of places in the study area for safety concerns.

Busy traffic areas:

York Road, Trans Canada Highway and York Road intersection;
Cars racing on Lewis St. especially at night.
Potentially around the Chesterfield area.

Inadequate pedestrian routes/walkways:

Lack of sidewalks in places,
Commercial building containing LJ's Video, Lordon's, etc.
Trans Canada Highway presents obstacles to pedestrians crossing;

Maintenance:

In places, road surfaces are uneven, potholes create hazards, large puddles,
cars splash pedestrians.

Building design:

LJ's to Ken's, exterior doors open out onto walkway.
New office building on York Road - doesn't appear to be accessible.
General inaccessibility of buildings in general (e.g., washrooms, corners, heavy
doors which are obstacles for people in wheelchairs, scooters).

Darkness, Inadequate Lighting:

Lewis Street
York Road (near Ambulance Stn)
Chesterfield Street
Alexander Street

Visual obstructions:

Bushes that overhang onto sidewalk

Inadequate supply of public telephones

Maintenance:

Vacant lots in the area (Lewis) that are overgrown, contain garbage.

People

people hanging out, leave garbage, sometimes harass people, drug and
alcohol use around Wendy's, McDonald's
Arcade on York Street

3.2. THE AUDIT WALKS

The following is a detailed summary of observations made by participants on the safety audit walks conducted the evening of November 26th and afternoon of November 27th.

Observations are listed by geographical area. Recommendations for actions will be addressed in Section 4 and will be organized by item (e.g., lighting, maintenance, etc.).

1. ALEXANDER STREET

In general Alexander Street was felt to be adequately lit, but there are places where street lighting, building and parking lot lighting do not provide adequate illumination of sidewalks and/or common routes, particularly between buildings and in parking lots.

Some apartment entrance ways contain bushes/trees that have grown over or into pedestrian pathways and/or offer potential hiding places and movement predictors. (While landscaping and trees are generally very positive features both aesthetically, for urban green space and for privacy, it is important to try to maintain a balance for safety reasons.)

An alleyway behind the commercial building on the corner of the Trans Canada Highway (5803) presents a hiding and entrapment spot, and is also a movement predictor; i.e., a place where someone would have the ability to predict the path of someone else. Lights and outlets were observed but none were on. On the evening of the walk, people were observed using this alleyway as a shortcut.

Suggestions:

- *Request building owner(s) at 5803 to keep rear building lights on at night. If there is a problem with vandalism, suggest protective covers.*
- *Encourage owners/management of apartment buildings at 2511, 2520, 2546, 2568, 2575 to enhance lighting, where possible, for building entrances, isolated areas of parking lots, and to maintain hedges and other landscaping for good sightlines and minimal obstruction.*
- *Request /encourage owners/managers of apartments to trim and maintain vegetation in landscaping to allow for maximum visibility for people using and walking by entrances.*
- *Future development for multi-family and apartment dwellings should include provisions for public safety and security in design, including but not limited to lighting and landscaping design.*

2. DINGWALL STREET

In general, Dingwall Street was felt to be adequately lit, particularly in areas around condominiums; however the portion of Dingwall closer to Chesterfield (between Howard and Chesterfield) and at the corner, was felt to be very dark. One street light was out at the time of the audit.

The bus stop at approximately 2576 Dingwall is fairly well lit; however, it is backed by bushes on the residential property that may present hiding and entrapment opportunities.

As with Alexander Street, some apartments on Dingwall Street have entrances and parking lots that are not well lit and/or vegetation that obscures visibility and provides opportunities for hiding and entrapment.

Suggestions:

- *Request co-operation of owners to trim back the tree/bushes behind the bus stop near 2576.*
- *Encourage owners/managers of 2556 Dingwall to enhance visibility around entrances and to trim vegetation to provide for good visibility.*
- *Plan for additional street lighting between Howard and Beverly.*

3. LEWIS STREET

Lewis Street is very dark at night, particularly between the corner of York Road to approximately 2533, after which lights from single family dwellings and condominiums provide better illumination of the area. On the evening of the audit a light at 2524 B was out.

Lewis Street has three vacant lots and these were noted for safety issues with respect to lighting, sightlines, maintenance and inappropriate uses. The vacant lot at 2579 contains fill approximately five feet high over a portion of the lot surface which provides hiding opportunities. This lot is partially fenced behind 5873 York Road which also detracts from clear sightlines. This lot was noted as a place where groups congregate; it contains pathways and is littered with garbage. At night it is quite dark. (Trees on other the vacant lots were felt to be a positive natural feature however.)

There are no formal pedestrian walkways on the north side of Lewis. The dirt shoulder between York Road and approximately 2424 provides for vehicle parking. This area is quite dark, and, in combination with visual barriers and hiding spots presented by parked vehicles, feels very unsafe. Cottonwood trees along this stretch were noted as very positive, but were felt to create additional barriers to visibility. Trimming of these trees up to eye level was suggested.

Sidewalks on the south side exist by the Ambulance Station, and in front of apartments and condominiums, but are absent in front of vacant lots (2579, Pl. 1346, 2562-6), resulting in an uneven access route for pedestrians. The sidewalk ends abruptly at

these locations, and in front of 2524 A again, where a tree also overhangs the street and poses a barrier to visibility.

Lewis street has been noted for speeding issues particularly on weekend evenings and for youth congregating in large numbers during the day.

Suggestions:

- *Additional lighting in or adjacent the rear parking lot of the Beverly Arms would help to increase levels of lighting on Lewis Street and provide better visibility at night.*
- *Prioritize this street for sidewalks. (It was suggested that sidewalks for this street would not only create a safer environment for pedestrians, but would also serve to encourage youth not to stand in the street).*
- *Prioritize this area for additional streetlighting (participants felt the ideal would be on both sides and on every pole).*
- *Repair burned out light at 2524B.*
- *Trim tree at 2524 A.*
- *Vacant lots: Remove garbage and obstacles to visibility presented by fill and bushes.*
- *Require owners of vacant lots to provide adequate landscaping and maintenance to ensure safety.*

4. HOWARD AVENUE

Howard Avenue was felt to be slightly dark at night, but it was noted that lighting from residences was very helpful.

This street was noted as a high traffic area for children traveling to and from Alexander School. Much of Howard has paved shoulders which provide space for pedestrians to walk, but there are portions where the street is bordered by ditches and places where cars parked on boulevards require pedestrians to walk on the roadway.

- *A school zone sign was suggested for this street. It will be necessary to consult with schools and parents regarding suggestions for exact placement.*
- *It was suggested that streetlighting be planned for this area, but that encouraging neighbours to leave outside lights on at night would be quite helpful. A possible avenue would be to distribute a notice encouraging residents to leave porch lights on at night.*

* It is noted that this is likely not a viable option; however, it should be indicative of the need for better and more even lighting in the area.

Beverly/Howard Intersection

This was noted to be a very busy intersection for both vehicles and pedestrians. Visibility at the crosswalk is obscured by a tree/bush on private property located at 2504 Beverly (it also presents a hiding spot and blocks access.)

- *It was suggested that the owner of 2504 be consulted and requested to trim their tree to increase visibility.*

5. BEVERLY STREET

Alexander School parking lot was noted as being quite dark.

- *Additional lighting on the school building and if possible, lighting in the parking lot to increase visibility to allow for a person to see clearly into the back of their parked vehicle at night. It was noted that this would fall under the jurisdiction of School District 79.*

6. CHESTERFIELD STREET

Lighting along Chesterfield Street was felt to be very inadequate. It was described as dark and creepy. It was noted that lights will be installed at the Chesterfield Track which will improve lighting within the facility and contribute to overall levels of lighting.

Chesterfield Street was noted as a high traffic street for vehicles and children. There is a lack of adequate space for pedestrians to walk along this street (particularly along the east side). There are no sidewalks between Alexander to Beverly other than in front of 5848.

Suggestions:

- *Prioritize Chesterfield Street for street lighting.*
- *Prioritize this street for sidewalks (it was suggested that at least one side of this street have a sidewalk, and that if only on one side it should be the east side).*
- *A School Zone sign(s) is needed.*

YORK ROAD

York Road was noted as an important access route for many people who walk or ride to James Street and Downtown Duncan. It is a high traffic area for vehicles as well as for pedestrians, including seniors, youth and people with disabilities, but presents many obstacles in terms of safety and accessibility for pedestrians.

York Road: Alexander Street to Dingwall Street

A commercial sign on the corner of Alexander / TCH has a maintenance box attached on the street side at shoulder level to someone riding on a scooter. This was noted as a hazard.

- *Request the owner of the commercial sign at Alexander and TCH to move the box up at least two feet or around to the other side of the pole.*

Telephone poles situated in the middle of the sidewalk in front of 5803 to 5811 block access for someone on a scooter or in a wheelchair. When we measured, we estimated that a wheelchair would be too wide to travel around the pole at all.

Suggestions:

- *Extend the sidewalk approximately two feet around the poles.*
- *Future plans for this and similar areas should consider adequate width of sidewalks for people who use wheelchairs and scooters, and should avoid placement of structures that would create obstacles.*

Visibility in the parking lot at the border of 5803 and 5811 lot is poor at night; combined with a steep grade / 'bank', presents a hazard for both pedestrians and vehicles.

- *Reflective paint on the paved surface would draw attention to the drop off and would create a visual 'border' between the two lots.*

Lighting in this area was noted as quite good; however, the parking lot at the side of the building bordering the Variety lot (5811) was thought to be inadequately lit.

Suggestion:

- *Encourage/request the owner/management of 5821 to install a light on the building exterior (near the rear of the building next to the apartment parking lot) to illuminate the parking area nearest to the fence.*

The area between 5821 York Road (Ken's Grocery) and Dingwall Street was noted as containing a number of obstacles to safety and accessibility due to a combination of factors in layout and design of the parking area, walkways, crosswalks and highway intersection.

- 1) The sidewalk between 5803 to 5821 TCH ends abruptly at 5821 and results in a drop off. After this point there is no formal pedestrian pathway connecting the sidewalk to the 'walkway' in front of the commercial building. Pedestrians must travel over undesignated pavement area to reach the walkway. Further obstacles to accessibility are presented by vehicles parked in front of 5821 (which present physical as well as visual obstacles) and potholes which result in collection of water in places.
- 2) The commercial building which fronts York Road (between approximately 5803 to 5835) has straight in parking. The existing pedestrian route through the area is a

paved walkway approximately 4 feet in width between the parking spaces and building. The walkway is separated from vehicles by cement curbs.

- The width of walkway was felt to be inadequate, especially for wheelchairs and scooters. Bumpers of parked cars often extend over curbs reducing the amount of space for pedestrians, combined with building doors that open out onto the street present hazards and obstacles for people walking/riding through this area.
- Access to the walkway in front of the building from the crosswalk over York Road is limited by cars which sometimes park in the 'no parking' zone (in front of 5821). The 'no parking' zone leading to crosswalk is faded, as is the crosswalk itself.
- Visibility for both pedestrians and drivers is poor due to configuration of parking, cars which must turn right off York into spaces. Parking spaces are close together. Cars parked closely together contribute to obstacles for people in wheelchairs, on scooters.
- The grade from the building walkway slopes down to the crosswalk, combined with uneven pavement and a pothole at the 'bottom' presents a hazard.
- The natural pedestrian route from the Trans Canada Highway intersection, is to go across York and stay on the street behind parked cars rather than to go onto the walkway near the building. Thus people remain with car traffic.
- Participants observed that at least 2/3 of cars going through this area do not stop at the stop sign. The Stop sign is faded and its location is not very visible to vehicular traffic.

Trans Canada Highway Intersection (York over to James)

This is an important access route over the highway for many people who live in the area and who walk/ride to and from the Community Centre, Lunch on Clements, and downtown Duncan. This intersection has a high volume of vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Obstacles include:

1. The island between York Road and the highway is sloping and the paved surface is uneven.
2. The crossing signal is set for 5-6 seconds for someone to cross the highway. We assumed this is intended to signal not to commence crossing. However, our group made it less than halfway across before the signal changed and made it across just as the light turned red. This was felt to be an insufficient length of time to cross, particularly for anyone with mobility difficulties.
3. No left hand turn signal at this intersection means that cars 'pile up' in the middle of the intersection to make it before the light turns. We observed several cars turning

on the red. In combination with a short crossing signal, this presents hazards for pedestrians.

4. There are 2 pedestrian crosswalks over the highway; one from York over to James and one across James from the high school to the Esso Station. This is said to result in many youth crossing the highway on the north side to McDonald's and also presents problems for people with disabilities. Someone traveling from the Community Centre who needs to get to the west side of York has to cross at the Esso Station over to the high school side, then over the highway, go through the parking area, to the Dingwall intersection and then over once again.

Suggestions:

- *Prioritize this area for improvements to design of intersections, parking areas, crossing areas and pedestrian walkways.*
 - a) *Provide a continuous walkway for pedestrians from the sidewalk to the walkway.*
 - b) *Add another stop sign to left hand side of this intersection and ensure it is placed to ensure visibility. Install a new sign to replace the old, faded one.*
 - c) *Consider options for parking at 5821 to 5835:*
 - No on street parking at all.*
 - Angled parking only.*
 - Straight in or angled parking between 5821 to 5825.*
 - Reduce total spaces by widening each parking spot.*
 - A combination of the above.*
 - d) *Provide immediate improvements through:*
 - *Repairing potholes and improving paved surfaces to increase accessibility.*
 - *Attending to drainage problems.*
 - *Repaint the no parking area and crosswalk in front of 5821. Install a no parking sign for this spot.*

SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE THE TCH INTERSECTION:

- *Adjust timing of lights to allow for maximum crossing time.*
- *Prioritize this intersection for at least one left turn signal..*
- *Install additional crosswalks on the north and east side of this intersection.*

YORK ROAD - Dingwall to Lewis

Dingwall / York Road Intersection

The crosswalk over York Road is generally good; however high traffic volumes means cars often line up from the light over the crosswalk. Someone crossing from Wendy's loses visibility at the half way mark.

Suggestions:

- *Signage (e.g., Hazardous crossing) was suggested to draw attention and caution to potential hazards.*
- *A public telephone was suggested for the area around 2579 Dingwall.*

The 'east' side of York was felt to be well lit except for an alleyway by the Thunderbird Motel (parking lot of 2569 Dingwall) and a spot adjacent to a residence where a hedge borders the sidewalk. Participants noted that in combination with darkness, this hedge presented a hiding spot. It was also noted however, that the hedge is very likely a positive feature for the residence. It was trimmed just recently and participants felt this was very positive.

A drain spout on the corner of the Barnacles Restaurant building drains onto the sidewalk and freezes in winter.

The building and parking lot design at 5855 York has resulted in a concealed entrance. Vegetation near the entrance presents hiding and entrapment spots.

Suggestions:

- *Request/encourage owners/managers of 5855 York Road to install motion sensor lighting on the corner of the building.*
- *Attention to future design should avoid creation of hidden/recessed entrances and landscaping barriers to allow for adequate visibility.*
- *Continue and enhance trimming and maintenance of streetside landscaping/hedges.*
- *Divert the drain spout at 5849 York Road around the side of the building.*

On the west side of York Road, the wall of the building housing the salon and Thrift Store facing York is solid, but contains an alcove which presents both a hiding and entrapment spot; participants noted this spot to feel very unsafe. Some participants said they would avoid walking on this side of York Road at night.

The new office building at 5878 York Road was noted for its design described as 'fortress-like'. The main entrance is removed from the street up a flight of stairs and no visible means of access for wheelchairs or scooters is apparent. The parking garage has steel bar doors which, although are not very attractive, allow people to see and hear inside. A recessed 'entrance' under the stairs presents both a hiding and entrapment spot.

Some participants felt the design involving solid walls along this area removes the stores and their occupants from the street (and therefore the neighbourhood) and invites graffiti.

The space between the apartments at 5864-5874 and the office building is dark

McDonald's entrance is dark and somewhat narrow. Visibility is very limited, even in the day. Two ramps for cars and pedestrian crossing give a roller coaster effect; a pole between the two ramps is an obstacle for wheelchairs.

Suggestions:

- *Install additional lighting in or near the alcove under the stairs at 5874 York.*
- *Future development could consider the importance of relationship of commercial buildings to the street and neighbourhood. As mentioned above, development design should avoid creation of recessed entrances and alcoves which present safety concerns.*
- *Request/encourage building owners of 5845 York to install a locked door to the alcove. Require future development design to avoid creation of recessed entrances and alcoves wherever possible.*
- *Install lighting on the two buildings at 5874 and 5878 to illuminate the area between the buildings.*
- *Combine the two car and wheelchair ramps at the McDonald's entrance.*
- *Install additional lighting and prune bushes near the entrance to McDonald's to increase visibility.*

Lewis/York Road Intersection

The "old" crosswalk over York is not quite eliminated (paint remains) and is confusing. It was noted that cars do not respect this crossing very well.

Suggestions:

- *Move pedestrian crossing sign from 'old' location.*
- *Complete removal of paint or paint over the old crosswalk.*

Beverly Street / York Road Intersection

The public telephone at the Supersave Gas Station was noted as very positive but needs to be better indicated.

This was noted to be a very busy intersection, especially at peak times during the day (morning, noon and after school to dinner), both for vehicle and pedestrians.

- *Prioritize this intersection for a pedestrian crossing light.*
- *Request B.C. Tel to install a larger sign and/or illuminate the existing sign for the telephone at Supersave.*

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section summarizes recommendations stemming from observations and suggestions made by participants during the audit walks, and provides further policy and procedural recommendations to foster inclusion of public safety considerations in decision-making processes.

Recommendations are organized into categories of lighting, streetlighting, maintenance and repairs, larger public works items, and finally, policies and procedures.

4.1 LIGHTING

4.1.1. COMMERCIAL, MULTI-FAMILY AND SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES:

In various places, obstacles to safety and accessibility were presented by a combination of factors with respect to public and semi-public space. It should be stressed that such aspects reflect the duality of private and public space in terms of how the two combine to support public safety, and that the obstacles identified are not attributed to any negative intent or intentional neglect of the public good. In fact, in many instances, commercial buildings and residences were noted for positive contributions to overall levels of lighting in public places.

Raising awareness of property owners/management by way of letter from North Cowichan, the Safety Audit Project or the Women's Safety Advisory Committee as to public safety benefits of lighting around buildings and in parking lots, and requesting their attention and cooperation wherever possible, with respect to making noted improvements, .

Wherever possible, the District of North Cowichan should provide assistance to property owners to make noted improvements (for example, provision of materials at cost or in-kind labour such as for trimming of vegetation).

- 1. Provide information to owners/management of buildings at 2511, 2546, 2568, 2575 Alexander Street regarding public safety with respect to lighting and design of building entrances and parking lots, hedges and other landscaping that detract from visibility and create potential hiding spots.*
- 2. Encourage owners/managers of multi-family residences to maintain vegetation in landscaping to allow for maximum visibility for people using and walking by entrances.*
- 3. Encourage owners/managers of 2575, 2568 and 2520 Alexander Street to install additional lighting to illuminate dark and/or more isolated areas of their parking lots.*

4. *Encourage owners/manager of 2562, 2544 Beverly Street increase levels of lighting in their rear parking lot adjacent to Lewis Street.*
5. *Request building owners/managers at 5803 York Road to keep rear building lights on at night. If there is a problem with vandalism, suggest protective covers.*
6. *Request / encourage owners/management of 5821 York Road to install a light on the building exterior (near the rear of the building next to the apartment parking lot) to illuminate the parking area nearest to the fence.*
7. *Encourage owners/managers of 5855 York Road to install motion sensor lighting on the corner of the building to illuminate the entrance area.*
8. *Request / encourage owners/managers of 5874 and 5878 York Road to install lighting on the sides of the two buildings to illuminate the area between the buildings.*
9. *Request/encourage owners/managers of 5874 York Road to install additional lighting in or near the alcove under the stairs at 5874 York to better illuminate the area..*
10. *Encourage School District 79 to install additional lighting on the Alexander School building and if possible, lighting in the parking lot to increase visibility to allow for a person to see clearly into the back of their parked vehicle at night.*

4.1.2. STREET LIGHTING

1. *Additional street lighting was recommended for: Chesterfield Street; Dingwall Street between Howard and Chesterfield; Lewis Street (participants felt the ideal would be on both sides and on every pole* would improve the area)*
2. *It was suggested that streetlighting be planned for Howard Avenue, but that encouraging neighbours to leave outside lights on at night would be quite helpful. A possible avenue would be to distribute a notice encouraging residents to leave porch lights on at night.*

* It is noted that this is unlikely to be a viable option; however, it should be indicative of the need for better and more even lighting in the area.

4.2 MAINTENANCE, REPAIRS, IMPROVEMENTS

4.2.1 COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES:

The following improvements to safety are assumed to fall under the responsibility of owners and management of commercial and residential properties.

As mentioned previously owners/management should be consulted and their cooperation be encouraged with respect to the following:

1. *Beverly Street - trim tree at 2504 to increase visibility for the nearby intersection.*
2. *York Road - divert the drain spout on the building at 5849 which currently flows onto the sidewalk around the side of the building.*
3. *A Lewis Street - trim tree at 2524B / 2514 to provide visibility and reduce barrier for pedestrians.*
4. *Repair burned out light at 2524B.*
5. *Trim back the tree/bushes behind the bus stop at 2576 Dingwall.*
6. *Request the attention of owners/managers of 2556 Dingwall to the importance of visibility around entrances and to trim vegetation to provide for adequate visibility*
7. *Vacant lots on Lewis Street - Remove garbage and obstacles to visibility presented by fill and bushes.*
8. *Request/encourage building owners of 5845 York to install a locked door to the alcove.*
9. *Request the owner of the commercial sign at Alexander and TCH to move the box up at least two feet or around to the other side of the pole.*
10. *McDonald's - Install additional lighting and prune bushes in and near the York Road entrance to McDonald's to increase visibility.*

4.2.2 PUBLIC WORKS

The following is a list of items which are under the jurisdiction of the District of North Cowichan and are assumed to be the responsibility of Public Works.

Some of these items (indicated with asterisks *) appear to be work which might be incorporated into routine maintenance and repairs. Others may require planning and prioritizing re: budgets and schedules, and are recommended as priorities. Some will also require further exploration with respect to feasibility.

A draft summary of these items have been referred to North Cowichan Public Works and a response from that committee regarding timing and feasibility of implementation will be prepared.

1. * *Reflective paint on the paved surface in the parking lot between 5803 and 5811 York Road to mark the border between the parking lots and to draw attention to the drop off.*
2. *Install an additional stop sign on the left hand side of the York Road intersection (adjacent 5821) and ensure it is placed to ensure visibility. Install a new sign to replace the old, faded one.*
3. * *Lewis/York Road Intersection : Move the pedestrian crossing sign from 'old' location and complete removal of paint or paint over the old crosswalk.*

York Road (between 5811 and 5835):

4. * *Repair potholes and improve paved surfaces to increase accessibility.*
5. *Attend to drainage problems posed by uneven surfaces.*
6. * *Repaint the no parking area and crosswalk in front of 5821.*
7. * *Install a no parking sign for this spot.*
8. * *Continue and where possible increase attention to trimming and maintenance of streetside landscaping/hedges.*
9. *Combine the car and wheelchair ramps at the McDonald's entrance.*
10. *Install signage (e.g., Hazardous crossing) for the intersection of Dingwall and York to draw attention to limited visibility and caution to potential hazards.*
11. *School zone signs are recommended for Howard and Chesterfield Streets. It will be necessary to consult with schools and parents regarding suggestions for exact placement.*
12. *Prioritize Lewis street for sidewalks. (It was suggested that sidewalks for this street would not only create a safer environment for pedestrians, but would also serve to encourage youth not to stand in the street).*
13. *Prioritize Chesterfield street for sidewalks (it was suggested that at least one side of this street have a sidewalk, and that if only on one side it should be the east side).*
14. *Install a pedestrian crossing light for Beverly Street / York Road Intersection.*
15. *Request cooperation from the Ministry of Transportation and Highways to widen the sidewalk between Alexander and York Road approximately two feet around the telephone poles to provide adequate width for wheelchair access.*

16. *Prioritize the area between 5811 and 5835 York Road for improvements to design of intersections, parking areas, crossing areas and pedestrian walkways. Where appropriate, request implementation from the Ministry of Transportation and Highways.*

- *Provide a continuous walkway for pedestrians from the end of the sidewalk near 5821 York, to the walkway in front of the commercial building.*
- *Consider options for parking in the area between 5821 to 5835 York Road to increase visibility and reduce barriers to access:
No on street parking at all. Angled parking only.
Straight in or angled parking between 5821 to 5825.
Reduce total spaces by widening each parking spot.
A combination of the above.*

Trans Canada Highway Intersection/York Road:

*Adjust timing of lights to allow for maximum crossing time.
Prioritize this intersection for at least one left turn signal.
Install additional crosswalks on the north and east side of this intersection.*

4.3. PUBLIC TELEPHONES

1. *Consult with owners/managers of businesses in and around 2579 Dingwall regarding installation of an outdoor public telephone. If appropriate, contact B.C. Telephone and request installation.*
2. *Request B.C. Tel to install a larger sign and/or illuminate the existing sign for the telephone at Supersave.*

4.4. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Safety audits encourage and provide a forum in which to discuss safety issues and concerns that affect women and children in particular - concerns which may not be a regular part of traditional processes. Safety audit processes try to focus on needs and concerns of individuals and groups who are the most vulnerable to violence, and work to promote accessibility of the process.

For example, child care and transportation expenses for participants are often provided; meeting space is chosen for accessibility in terms of location and facility design; outreach is usually conducted to invite participation of a variety of individuals and groups.

Safety audits should not be approached as a one time event but rather as an ongoing process. However, formal safety audits do not need to be conducted for each and every area of a municipality. 'Informal' Safety audits can be carried out by small groups of neighbourhood residents or community groups, and individual residents are experts at assessing their area.

Planning and development processes of the District of North Cowichan can also incorporate proactive policies and guidelines for safety. For example, several observations from the safety audit noted aspects around design and management of the physical environment that could be considered in the planning and development stage, including:

- *lighting*
- *landscaping design and maintenance*
- *hidden/recessed entrances*
- *adequate width of sidewalks for people who use wheelchairs and scooters*
- *placement of structures that would create obstacles.*
- *design that promotes sense of community*

The District of North Cowichan is developing design guidelines for multiple family dwellings and designating this and other areas as development permit areas. This will be an opportunity to incorporate safety into decisions about future development for the Beverly to Alexander Street area.

Design and management of buildings and public spaces that promotes safety and security can and should be an integral component of development processes and policies. Guidelines for safety in design and management are being developed by Cowichan Women Against Violence Society and will provide a detailed reference for planning and development of urban and rural areas.

Planning Policies and Design Guidelines - Recommendations:

1. *Policies to support personal and public safety are recommended for the Official Community Plan and in specific designations such as Development Permit Areas. These should include:*

- A) A requirement of Council that public safety and security be a consideration in approvals for development of buildings, parks, schools and other private and public open spaces (Appendix C provides examples of policies adopted in other areas).
- B) Acknowledgment that public safety and security should consider all persons, and in particular, women and children, and persons with special needs.

2. *Consideration of safety and security should be supported by specific guidelines which should outline provisions for location, siting and design of buildings, streets, parks and other private and public open spaces.*

The objectives of development design should be to promote personal and public safety through providing for the following:

- A) Location, siting and design of buildings (interior and exterior), street, parks and other open spaces should promote personal safety and accessibility through design that provides for adequate visibility, unobstructed sightlines and opportunities for casual surveillance within and around buildings, onto and from adjacent streets and parking lots, parks and open spaces.
- B) The design and character of buildings should respect that of the surrounding neighbourhood and be in keeping with the local neighbourhood.
- C) Encourage management policies and practices which promote safety of residents, staff and patrons.
- D) Process requirements for public consultation should include women and special needs groups.

3. *Policies should support improvements to existing streets, buildings, parks and other publicly accessible areas that are identified for safety concerns.⁴*

Reports and requests for repairs, maintenance and other related improvements for safety should be priority and should be supported by a clearly defined and *accessible* process which includes coordination of audit recommendations.

Foster accessibility through production of written information (for example, a brochure) for publication and broad distribution which outlines how people can report their safety concerns via telephone or written request to the District of

⁴ An example City of Ottawa's process for coordinating responses is presented in Appendix D.

North Cowichan, and the process by which requests and reports will be handled. Consultation with community groups can assist with design and subsequent distribution of information.

4. To foster inclusion of public safety in planning processes, public input into planning matters such as OCP Reviews, development of Design Guidelines, Development Permit Areas and development applications should include consultation with women (including immigrant women and aboriginal women), seniors, youth, and people with disabilities.

Accessibility can be fostered through reducing barriers to participation posed by formality of processes, and physical barriers posed by location and personal safety factors, through the following

- A) Conduct outreach to community groups to request input and participation in planning processes.
- B) Whenever possible, hold public meetings in neighbourhood locations and ensure the facilities are safe and accessible.
- C) Advertise processes in *plain language*. Work with community organizations to provide information in other languages, in audio and large print form.

4.5 COMMUNITY SAFETY AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Discussions about safety concerns highlighted a number of factors in addition to those posed by physical environment.

Community crime prevention, violence in the home, workplace safety, opportunities for children and youth, transportation and traffic, education and awareness are also important factors identified in relation to women's and children's safety.

Local governments can take a leadership role and make a commitment to reduce violence through contributing time and resources and participating at every possible level. The report of the 1996 Women's Safety Audit Pilot Project⁵ made several recommendations to the Regional District in this regard which are also relevant to the Municipality of North Cowichan. It should be acknowledged that in general and through its participation in this process, the Municipality has demonstrated commitment and has contributed of time and resources, both at the Council and Staff levels.

The following recommendations reflect priorities for community safety and violence prevention.

1. Continue and where possible, enhance support for community violence prevention services and programs serving the needs of women and children.
2. Support and participate in initiatives for public education and awareness of violence issues and responses, including broad community education and specific programs (such as self defense workshops for women or local programs for community safety).
 - i) Support and promote a community safety program aimed at awareness of the business community of safety issues for women and particularly of people with disabilities to encourage emergency safety assistance and accessibility.
 - ii) This safety audit provided an opportunity to examine the community in detail from the perspective of women who live with disabilities and demonstrated the need to understand safety in terms of physical accessibility. It also presented the importance of understanding and awareness with respect to decisions made for and about individuals with disabilities.

For example, a current item of discussion regarding people who use scooters is whether to mandate the use of a reflective flag. Some responses to this idea have been that while it may appear to be a valid safety response, it can quickly become an issue of discrimination and personal choice. If for example, the solution is in response to lack of visibility of someone on a scooter, due to height, the question arises: "Should not everyone below a certain height wear a flag?"

⁵ C.R.A.S. (1996) Women's Safety Audit Pilot Project for Cowichan Lake.

If the question is a matter of safety habits of those on scooters, perhaps it is a defensive issue and should be addressed by education of those who ride scooters.

3. Continue and wherever possible, enhance support for the provision of local community services and recreational opportunities for children and youth.

Several comments were received regarding the need for children and youth to have access to more opportunities for community and recreational involvement, both in general sense and in terms of youth at higher risk of committing or experiencing violence.

As previously mentioned, schools located in the area currently provide community facilities for recreational opportunities. Schools have potentially significant roles as centers of the community and neighbourhood through their close association with and understanding of the needs and concerns of students and parents, and of the community at large. For children and youth who do not have opportunities to engage in formal recreational programs, local, community-sponsored activities are extremely important.

Concerns of residents around large numbers of youth walking and standing on streets, reports that youth sometimes behave and use places inappropriately are met with two views: 1) that the majority of youth are positive members of the community, that youth hanging out in places does not constitute a crime; and 2) that although a minority of youth actually commit offenses or behave inappropriately, their presence in numbers can be intimidating to some people.

Responses and suggestions to these issues have included:

1. Increase availability of recreational and other activities (low to no cost) for youth in the local area.
2. Increase supervision in the area during school times to reduce traffic/pedestrian issues.
3. Continue and wherever possible, enhance cooperative efforts and programs aimed at violence prevention in schools.
4. Support and encourage schools in their community functions and as facilitators of social services and recreational opportunities for children and youth.

Security/Policing/Law Enforcement

4. Support and wherever possible, enhance the ability of police to respond to the needs of the community, in crime prevention initiatives, victim assistance, public safety programs, particularly with respect to youth activities, domestic assaults, and monitoring and enforcement of traffic safety.

Speeding vehicles and lack of respect for pedestrian crossings were identified as a particular issue for this area. Crossing lights were suggested as physical design measures. However, these may not be immediately feasible in terms of

cost and questions around effectiveness. The alternative is to increase monitoring and surveillance through policing which also presents a resource issue for an already busy detachment.

However, due to the volume of pedestrian and vehicle traffic, and the experience of this area, Beverly to Alexander should receive attention and priority to solving this issue. A potential avenue may exist in the volunteer Speed Watch program that is in progress for Duncan/North Cowichan. It should be brought to the attention of program coordinators to prioritize the Beverly to Alexander area for regular monitoring.

Workplace Safety

5. Support and participate in cooperative efforts of planning departments, labour organizations and private businesses to promote safety awareness and implementation of violence-prevention programs aimed at both staff and patrons in and around places of work.
6. Develop and maintain municipal policies and procedures which ensure equity and equality in operations and systems, including prevention of sexual harassment.

4.6 IMPLEMENTATION

This project has identified areas of concern and presented recommendations for actions for the District of North Cowichan. Implementation of solutions to improve safety is essential step after a Safety Audit has been conducted.

While recommendations in this report focus on actions of local government, they also present the need for planning of long term solutions, and will require cooperation and coordination between the Municipality, other levels of government, community residents and organizations. Additional challenges to implementation include budgets, the need for coordination and follow-up, volunteer efforts, and for some recommendations, the need to further explore feasibility.

Implementation of solutions requires prioritizing actions which begin with small, achievable steps that fit within current budgets and organizational frameworks. The recommendations have been organized to outline specific actions needed for both immediate and long term solutions, and assumed areas of responsibility for each action. As previously mentioned, a preliminary list of items has been submitted to the District of North Cowichan, and efforts to address implementation have already begun. The following recommendations suggest potential steps and actions to further progress.

Suggested steps and actions for implementation:

North Cowichan:

1. Review and comment on the draft report by Public Works, Technical Planning and Advisory Planning Committees and departmental staff with respect to general content and recommendations.
2. Committees / departmental staff develop outlines of their respective actions and corresponding timetable.
3. Implementation of actions and provision of regular progress updates. (appropriate time frame to be determined).

Project Coordinator: (Pending determination of 1998 project status)

1. Meet with committees and departmental staff to review the report.
2. If appropriate, arrange to provide additional information session for staff, elected officials.
3. Arrange meeting and take back comments, plan of actions and progress items resident group. Where necessary, explore alternative strategies and refer suggestions back to North Cowichan.
4. Assist to coordinate implementation of items referred to W.S.A.C.
5. Forward updates and progress items to audit participants.

5.0 . DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The safety audit for Beverly to Alexander Streets has involved community consultation and site specific audits which have examined the physical and social environment primarily from the perspective of women and children.

Limitations in this study were identified with respect to the short time frame in which it was conducted, and the absence of an in-depth neighbourhood survey. However, information about safety aspects and concerns pertaining to this area is supported by consultation with focus groups and qualitative information resulting from discussions with area residents and staff.

While recommendations in this report focus largely on improvements to the physical environment, it is recognized that environmental design does not operate independently of social contexts. Familiarity, social contacts and supports, communication with neighbours, participation in local activities build involvement in the community and a sense of ownership and control. These factors are equally as important as supportive as design and management.

In order for environmental design measures to be effective as a tool in preventing crime and violence and increasing sense of safety, they need to be part of a long term, comprehensive approach which seeks to address the root causes of crime and violence. Recommendations in this report have, therefore, also included support of violence prevention services, information and crime prevention initiatives.

The challenges to developing and implementing community design and other strategies for safer communities arise out of the complexity of the issues and the actual or perceived complexity of the solutions. Conflicts can and will invariably arise in the search for strategies and solutions to improve safety.

Over the short term, it may be important to look for innovative solutions and strike a balance between what is desirable and what is achievable. Over the long term, a community's objectives for personal and public safety can be prioritized through incorporating safety into processes and policies that guide development.

Safety Audits should not be viewed as a one time event, but rather as an ongoing process which is incorporated into regular considerations about community development. It is hoped that this project has provided an initial step toward a long term process.

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APPENDIX A: SELECTED STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- Using definitions from the Criminal Code of Canada, one out of every two women in Canada past the age of 16 has been physically or sexually assaulted by a man at least once.
- Most assaults on women are perpetrated by someone known to them. One in three BC women is assaulted by her husband or partner. However,
- An estimated 2.5 million Canadian women have experienced physical or sexual assault by a stranger. Many assaults take place in the victim's home and homes of people known to them; however, about 68% of stranger assaults occur in public places, almost one third in streets or parking lots.
- *Only about 6% of sexual assaults are ever reported to police. Of these only about 16% make it to court.*

Nationally, of women in the following situations:

- 55% are worried about walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark,
- 76% are worried about waiting for or using public transportation after dark,
- 83% are worried about walking alone to their car in a parking garage,
- 40% are worried about being home alone at night.

- Women are eight times more likely to forego an evening activity due to concerns for their safety.
- About one half of women do not use public transit or parking garages due to concerns for their safety.
- Women are twice as likely as men to carry something to defend themselves
- About two thirds of women who are fearful of walking alone after dark say they would do so if they felt safer. (*Statistics Canada, Violence Against Women Survey, 1993*)

COWICHAN VALLEY: *Between 1994 - 1997, Somenos Transition House accommodated about 6,000 bed-stays for women and children. On average, the WAVAW crisis line receives about 800 to 1,000 calls per year.*

- *In B.C., an estimated 16,000 elderly persons suffer abuse and neglect. People who get hurt are: mostly over 75, usually female, dependent for care. People who hurt them are often relatives, live in the same household, are dependent on the victim.*
- It is estimated that as many as 70% of women with intellectual disabilities experience abuse and 80% of aboriginal women experience assault or abuse.

APPENDIX B: SAFETY FACTORS and CHECKLIST QUESTIONS

The Safety audit checklist used in the safety audits was adapted from the METRAC Model. Our checklist and discussions included the following questions:

General Impressions/Overall Design

*What words best describe this area? How does this place feel at night, in the day?
Is it easy to find your way around the area?
Is the area (building) accessible? Is it served by transit?
Would you know where to go for help? How accessible is help?
Can you see clearly what is up ahead?*

Isolation

*How far away is the nearest person to call for help?
Do you know who to call for help?
Are there many people around the area?
Do the surrounding land uses encourage people to be there?*

Lighting

*Is the lighting bright enough, even and in good repair?
Are walkways, directional signs or maps sufficiently illuminated?
Can you see someone at night 20 metres away? Can you see into the back of your parked car?
Is lighting obstructed by trees or bushes? Would you be able to identify someone from a distance?*

Sightlines, Movement Predictors/Entrapment Sites

*Are you able to see clearly what is up ahead?
Are there small, confined areas where you (or others) could be hidden from view?
How easy would it be to get away if you were threatened?
Could someone predict your movements? Is there an alternative route for escape?*

Maintenance

*Does the area feel cared for or abandoned?
Is there (offensive) graffiti or vandalism present?*

Signage

*Are there signs or other information that tell you about the area?
Can they be seen and read easily? By someone with a disability?*

APPENDIX C: MUNICIPAL POLICY EXAMPLES

City of Toronto Goals and Policies - Planning for a Safer City

“It is a goal of council to promote a City where all people can freely use public spaces, day or night, without fear of violence, and where people, including women and children and persons with special needs, are safe from violence. Accordingly, Council shall adopt development guidelines respecting issues of safety and security and shall apply those guidelines in its review of development proposals.”

“Council shall promote safety and security in public places, including street, parks and open spaces, schools, public transit and public parts of buildings. To encourage public safety and security for all personas, but with particular attention to women, children and persons with special needs, Council will:

- a) ensure that public safety and security are important considerations in City approvals of buildings, streetscaping, parks and other public and private open spaces;
- b) encourage the design and siting of new buildings to provide visual overlook and easy physical access to adjacent streets, parks and open spaces, and to allow clear views to parks and open spaces from the street;
- c) improve existing streets, buildings parks and other publicly accessible areas, where existing conditions do not promote public safety and security,; and
- d) require appropriate lighting, visibility and opportunities for informal surveillance for parking lots and garages.⁶

City of North Vancouver Policy for Zero Tolerance of Violence

“The District of North Vancouver recognizes that violence is an insidious problem with devastating costs that affects all residents and that violence against any person is unacceptable. Moreover, the District recognizes that the groups most at risk of being abused is women and that among women, the most vulnerable groups are visible minorities, aboriginal women and women with disabilities.”

(District of North Vancouver, August, 1996)

⁶ (Excerpted from Werkerle, G., Wiseman C., Safe Cities, pp. 26,27)