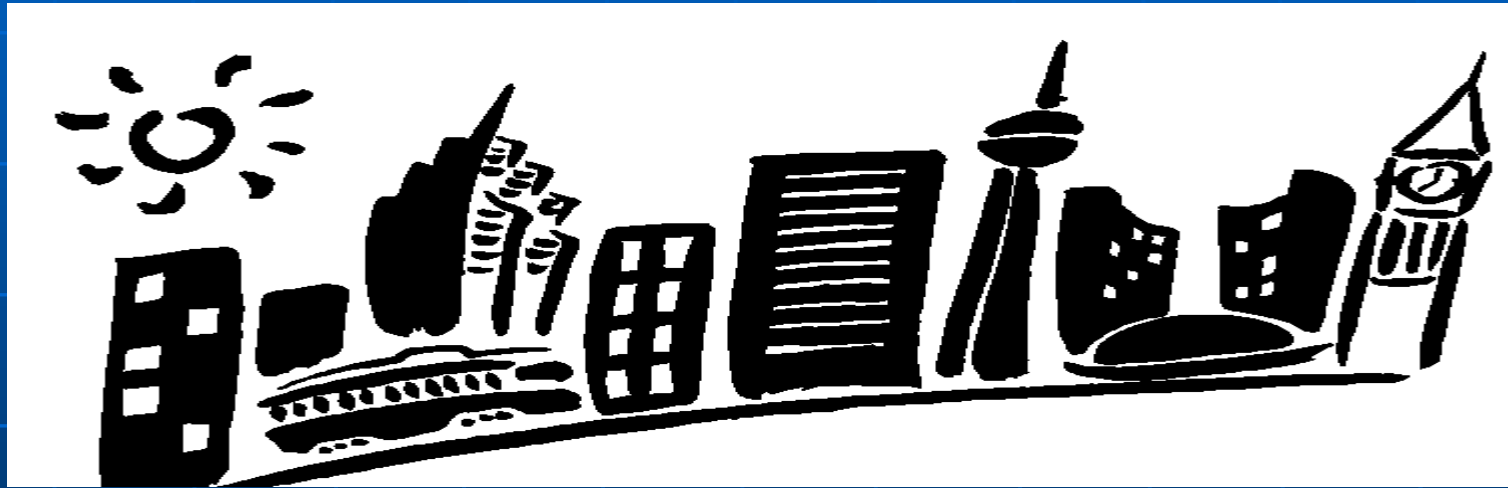# Designing Safer Cities? Ideas, questions, and good practice

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Who Am I?

- Co-ordinator of Toronto Safe City Committee for 10 years (1989-1999): Toronto originated community safety audits and comprehensive design guidelines

- The less known side of Toronto's safety initiatives: public education and community service provision

- More recently, board of Women and Cities International: 2 international conferences on women and safety plus international awards competition this year- inspirational!

- Also working with Latrobe Uni on local project

Toronto

- City (1989) 650,000 people (equivalent to Melbourne and 'inner suburb' municipalities)

- City (1999) 2.5 million people (add most 'middle suburb' municipalities) in a metropolitan region of 5 million (bigger than Melbourne)

- Similar in terms of multiculturalism, 'liveability', crime stats

Toronto's understanding of safety

- Freedom from violence and fear of violence, with a focus on 'vulnerable groups'

- "The intentional use of physical force or power, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (WHO 2002)

Community Safety includes

- Open, democratic, pedestrian friendly public spaces (some link to traffic safety eg., kids' walk to school)

- Supportive and inclusive community spaces

- Safety in home seen not only as safety from strangers but also safety from acquaintances and intimates

What Questions Am I Asking These Days?

- What are the links between health promotion and violence prevention?
- How can violence issues in public space and violence issues in private space be better integrated in policy concerns?
- What is the positive vision of 'safe communities' that drives this movement forward?
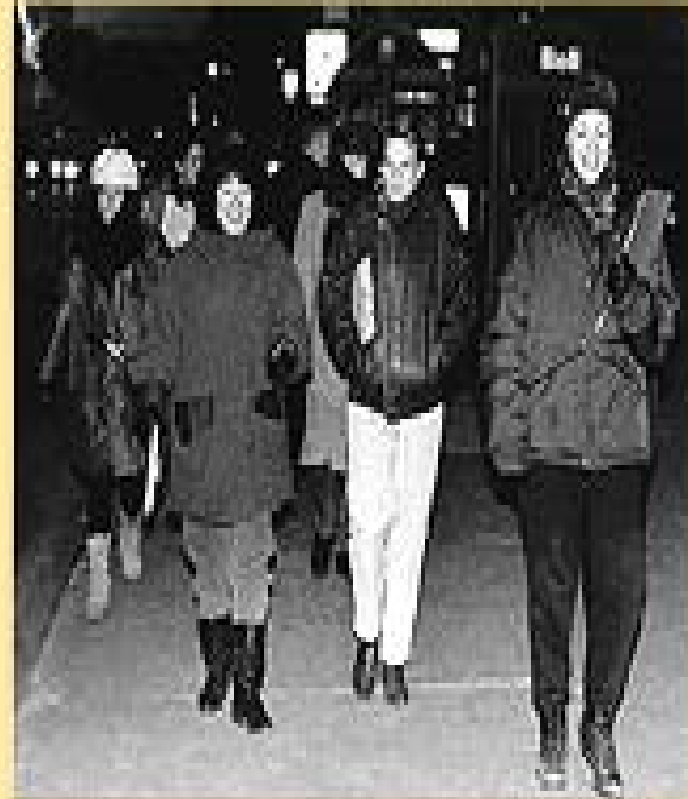
What can Local governments do to promote safer communities?

1. Safety Audits: what works and what doesn't
2. Safety Guidelines: what works and what doesn't
3. Public education and public space
4. 'Safe space' in relation to violence in private space
5. Comprehensive initiatives

1. Background on Safety Audits

- 1984: report creating arms-length advocacy group, METRAC

- 1989: Making Transit Safer Project

- 1989: Women's Safety Audit kit (out of Making Transit Safer Project)

Photo credit: www.femmesetvilles.org

Diffusion of Safety Audits

- By 1995, Canadian study able to identify 250 women's safety audits in Canada, and programs taking place in UK, Australia, New Zealand

- By late 1990s, European Forum on Urban Safety had distributed safety audit guides in 4 languages and the UN Safer Cities Programme was promoting them in African cities

Photo credit: www.bankstowncity.nsw.au

What *can* work: safety audits (1)

- Two studies (Canadian and VCCAV)
  - Good first step for organizations
  - Validate participants' experiences, especially women participants who have been excluded from decision-making
  - Increase recognition of safety and security as important issues amongst diverse stakeholders

What *can* work: safety audits (2)

- Create momentum for change
- Sometimes lead to concrete, timely, well-publicized improvements
- Sometimes bring a diverse set of people together
- Sometimes develop both short-term and long-term solutions that cover all aspects of fear and violence

Safety Audits: the bad and ugly (1)

- Not based in a broadly supported problem-solving process;

- 'Neutralizing' safety audits by removing references to gender, income, differing abilities, and ethnicity/LOTE and making no efforts to attract these group to audits;

- Increasing fear and frustration, if nothing is seen to be done after an audit

Safety Audits: the bad and ugly (2)

- Most importantly, creating unreal expectations in community that safety will magically 'happen' because a safety audit has occurred, instead of recognizing that it is one step in a long complex process

- Eg., in Vancouver, Indo-Canadian and Chinese-Canadian groups participated in organizing committee, including translations, but completed audits never sent to Vancouver planning department!

Good Practice: Women's Design Service, UK

- With local councils and development companies in London, Bristol, and Manchester, organized women in low-income communities to carry out and follow up on safety audits

Photo credit: www.safh.org.uk

Good practice: KZN Network, Durban South Africa

- As in several other African cities (eg., Dar Es Salaam), safety audits focus on how low-income women can address essential infrastructure issues identified in safety audits (abandoned buildings, lack of sewerage and electricity)

Photo source: KZN Network

2. Safety Guidelines in Toronto

- Based on design guidelines developed in late 1980s in several London-area municipalities
- workshops that brought together planners, developers, architects, and community activists 1989 and 1990
- 1991: planning for a safer city guidelines, policy in OP (MSS), followed by further workshops
- 1995: *Safer Cities: Guidelines for Planning, Design and Management*

Safety Guidelines elsewhere

- Many cities in UK, NZ, Aus, Canada, mainland Europe: sometimes national (UK) or State (Victoria)

- Focus on new development proposals (including re-development), and sometimes neighbourhood renewal (eg., fixing existing buildings)... through statutory planning (DAR)

- Copies available for developers, architects

Safety Guidelines: What works

- Consulting with developers, urban designers and architects before and *after* they are published: consensual!

- Guidelines that are tied into other health-promoting policies, programs, and guidelines eg., alternatives to the car, diverse public spaces, land use mix for day and night activity

- Guidelines that are seen as one aspect only of what planners can do to prevent violence!

Safety Guidelines: the bad & the ugly

- Guidelines that are not backed/understood by everyone from senior management to planning assistants in an organization

- Guidelines that are seen by the development community as 'just another hoop to jump through'

- Guidelines that are disconnected or in conflict with other city programs and policies

Good Practice: Building a Safe City Together Petrozavodsk, Russia

- Started with women's shelter, expanded to network of women planners, architects, and grassroots advocates organizing at the neighbourhood level, including guidelines
- Neighbourhood committees redesigned apartment houses to improve community safety
- Also disaggregated crime data (by gender) and public education

Photo Source: **www.owl.ru**

Good Practice: Montreal, Canada

- Poster campaign to get people to identify unsafe places that could be improved, in all local shops in a 'problem neighbourhood'

Photo source: L'echo des femmes de la Petite Patrie

Bigger Picture: Toronto

- How could what planners do (who work with public space, and to a lesser extent community space), have an impact on violence in homes?

- Answer: develop community grants program with public health and recreation services: ensure that it was reaching vulnerable communities (geographic and socio-cultural)
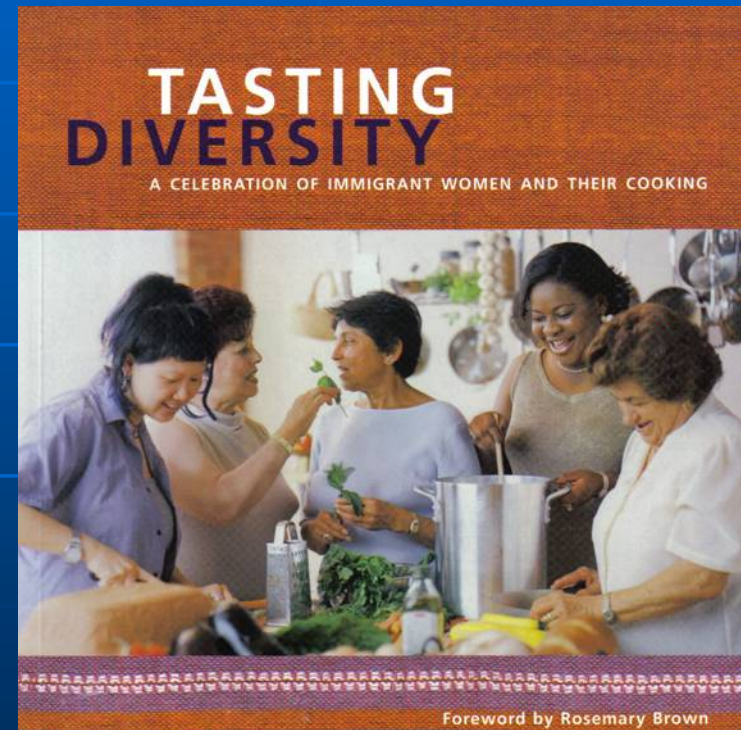
3. Public Education and Public Space

- In Toronto, free self-defence courses in 30 community centres across city

- Poster and pamphlet campaign in 10 languages on resources

- But also, encouragement of ethnospecific initiatives that worked with particular linguistic, religious, or country-of-origin groups

Good Practice: Working women's Community Centre, Toronto

- Volunteer-led outreach campaign on violence in 6 languages to ethnic grocery stores, Laundromats, hair salons, social clubs, schools, doctors offices and places of worship

Photo source: Working Women's Community Centre

TASTING DIVERSITY
A CELEBRATION OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN AND THEIR COOKING

Foreword by Rosemary Brown

Good Practice: Getting Information on the 'airwaves

- Darebin Domestic Violence Network has a new multilingual website with information on local services: gettingsafe.org.au

- In Nunavut in Arctic Canada, young Inuit girls were trained to make a video on their lives, as a way to prevent generational abuse

Photo source: Inuit Broadcasting Corp.

4. Safe Space in Relation to Domestic Violence

- Where can people (women, children, older people) who are abused in the home find safe space?

- The answers are sometimes surprising! Aside from emergency shelters and longer term affordable housing options, often people find spaces for mutual support in unusual community and public space

Good Practice: Safer Spaces

- Afgan Women's Group in Dandenong: talk about issues of common concern in changing room after weekly swim!

- Project Respect in BC Canada: outreach to schools, provide youth programs with positive images on healthy relationships

Photo source: yesmeansyes.com

Safer Spaces

- 2 BC rural projects: 1 tries to find private homes as shelter space in rural communities where formal shelters unavailable: focus on older women with strong community ties

- Another works the full gamut, from safety audits to coordinated service response to domestic violence

Photo sources: bcysth.ca, saferfutures.org

Comprehensive Initiatives on Safety from Violence would include:

1. A broad set of data to demonstrate breadth of local issues (police, hospitals, community services) and provide indicators

2. 'Bridging discourses' with a broad range of community partners to talk about common issues in both public and private violence

3. A set of community level interventions that encompassed built environment and social development approaches

2 Current Research Projects

- With Latrobe University Public Health: looking for municipalities willing to engage in this process!
- With a number of state government and community partners: focusing specifically on safer space for new arrival women
- Interested? whitzman@unimelb.edu.au

A final question: positive vision

- "Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being, without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic, or social condition" (Constitution of WHO 1946)
- What is the positive vision of safety from violence and fear of violence?