

Cabbagetown Safety Walks

Date: Tuesday June 25, 2013

Location: Gordon Sinclair Lane

Participants:

- **51 Division Police Services:** Sgt Nancy McLean, Susan Crawford, Wayne Alexander
- **Local residents:** 9 local residents
- **Cabbagetown Resident Association:** Lynn Dionne

General comments and observations about lane ways

- outdoor spaces that are untidy and overgrown, with garbage/ debris and graffiti convey that residents and the City do not care about the space; this attracts unwanted behaviour such as littering, public urination/ defecation, loitering and other activities (broken window syndrome)
- parking areas, spaces between garages and small spaces are easy to access and provide hiding places
- individuals looking for opportunities to enter properties and/ or commit crimes want easy access and an easy 'get away' – they will try gates to see if unlocked and will often move on if gates are locked, fences are high
- graffiti begets more graffiti and, if not removed, contributes to the feeling that no one cares about this space (which brings more unwanted activity)

Summary of Observations

- overall immediate impression is that the lane way is very narrow, overgrown with plants and trees and unkempt
- the lane way is not regularly used by many residents who live on the adjacent streets; consequently, they may not be aware of the state of the lane way and how their properties may contribute to safety issues
- light standards are obscured by overgrown trees
- graffiti is visible on garage doors; has been there for several months (or more)
- many garages and car ports extend the full width of the property; there are a few parking areas that provide easy access and hiding spaces
- lighting between city light standards is lacking; most properties can benefit from motion lights
- very few residents had house numbers on fences, gates or garages (difficult for police to respond and confidently find an address in an urgent situation)

What can residents and home owners do to help keep this area safe?

- regularly trim bushes, trees and plants, pull weeds and pick up garbage and unused materials; this will drastically change the look and feel of the lane way, reduce/ remove dark areas and hiding spots, and improve lighting
- ensure that lights are not obscured by plant material; prune and trim plant material or call the city to have plant material cleared around City installed lights
- homeowners may consider a garage or car port that extends the full width of the property and,

where possible, meets adjacent garages and structures; fences should be maximum height allowed by the City

- remove debris that people can climb or leverage to access property
- install sturdy and reliable locks on gates and garage doors; ensure locks are engaged at all times
- paint over or remove graffiti asap and preferably within a day or two of tagging

What resources are available to assist residents and the community?

Toronto Police Services – Community Response Unit

If you see and/or want to report suspicious activity, call the Toronto Police Services Community Response Unit (CRU) at 416-808-2222. **Please call often and share as much detail as you can.** CRU will respond and will return to problematic areas; more visible police leads to less traffic in lane ways and other areas.

As per the officers who participated in the safety walks “When you call the police, you are not burdening us – trust your instincts and call police if you see anything that concerns you.”

City of Toronto

Access the City of Toronto 311 services to request that that are obscuring light standards be trimmed, report burned bulbs, or report other issues . Again, call often and give as much information as possible. In order to expedite service, residents may wish to 'add' details that create a sense of urgency.

Graffiti Management Program

A Graffiti Management Program is available through Toronto Police Services and the City of Toronto to home and business owners. For more information about preventing, reporting and removing graffiti, please visit these websites.

<https://www.torontopolice.on.ca/community/graffiti/>

<http://www.toronto.ca/graffiti/plan.htm>

Anyone can report graffiti to the City of Toronto by calling 311 or on line at <http://www.toronto.ca/graffiti/> . Once a report is generated, the City will investigate the complaint within 24 hrs.

Toronto residents can contact the Graffiti Information Line at 416-733-8686.

City staff work closely with property owners, community groups and local Business Improvement Associations to coordinate community efforts that effectively deal with graffiti vandalism

A note about thefts of personal property.

TPS shared that theft of personal items – either by an individual or groups as 'swarmings' - occur at any time of the day and night. By far, the most common items targeted and stolen are cell phones, high end ball caps and clothing. Police services recommend that all residents be aware of the risks and their surroundings. If concerned, use cellular phones in well populated areas such as retail stores or restaurants.