



**COMMUNITY SAFETY WALK REPORT  
AGINCOURT MALL WALK**

November 8, 2022



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## **COMMUNITY SAFETY WALK REPORT AGINCOURT MALL WALK**

### **BACKGROUND**

In December 2018, The City of Toronto released a Request for Proposals (RFP) inviting hotel/motel operators to submit proposals for the purposes of providing short-term accommodation to homeless individuals. The purpose of the RFP was to create an established roster of cost-effective hotels and/or motels that could be used as emergency shelter service on an as-required basis. This program model has proven to be successful in responding quickly to fluctuations in demand for shelter space due to seasonal and/or specific system pressures.

The owner of the hotel at 2035 Kennedy Road was selected through the RFP process to provide short-term accommodation as required. Through this process 2035 Kennedy Road became available for SSHA's use until the RFP end date in August 2024.

Since March 2020, the 2035 Kennedy Road Temporary Shelter Program has been operational as part of the City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to the pandemic, the resulting state of emergency, (including the emergency powers granted to enact needed programming to save lives) and the guidance from Ministry of Health to create physical distancing in the shelter system, the normal Community Engagement process of notifying and working with the community before a shelter opens was not possible. However, the City and its operator partners remain committed to ongoing engagement with communities to mitigate issues that arise and to ensure programs are successful in the community while they are open

A Community Engagement process was facilitated by the City of Toronto to inform and engage local community members around the operation of the 2035 Kennedy Road shelter and to provide an opportunity for the community to become involved in ensuring the success of the shelter in the community. One of the community engagement activities for this site include a Community Safety Walk to identify safety issues and further explore locations of concern identified by local area stakeholders.

### **COMMUNITY SAFETY WALK PLANNING GROUP**

In early August 2022, a Planning Group was created to assist in organizing the Community Safety Walk (CSW) where key stakeholders, residents in the area, and representatives from the 2035 Kennedy Road shelter could come together to participate in a Community Safety Walk. The purpose of the walk was to identify issues of community safety, related to residents of the Kennedy Road shelter, in the area surrounding the shelter and to contemplate how best to address those issues.

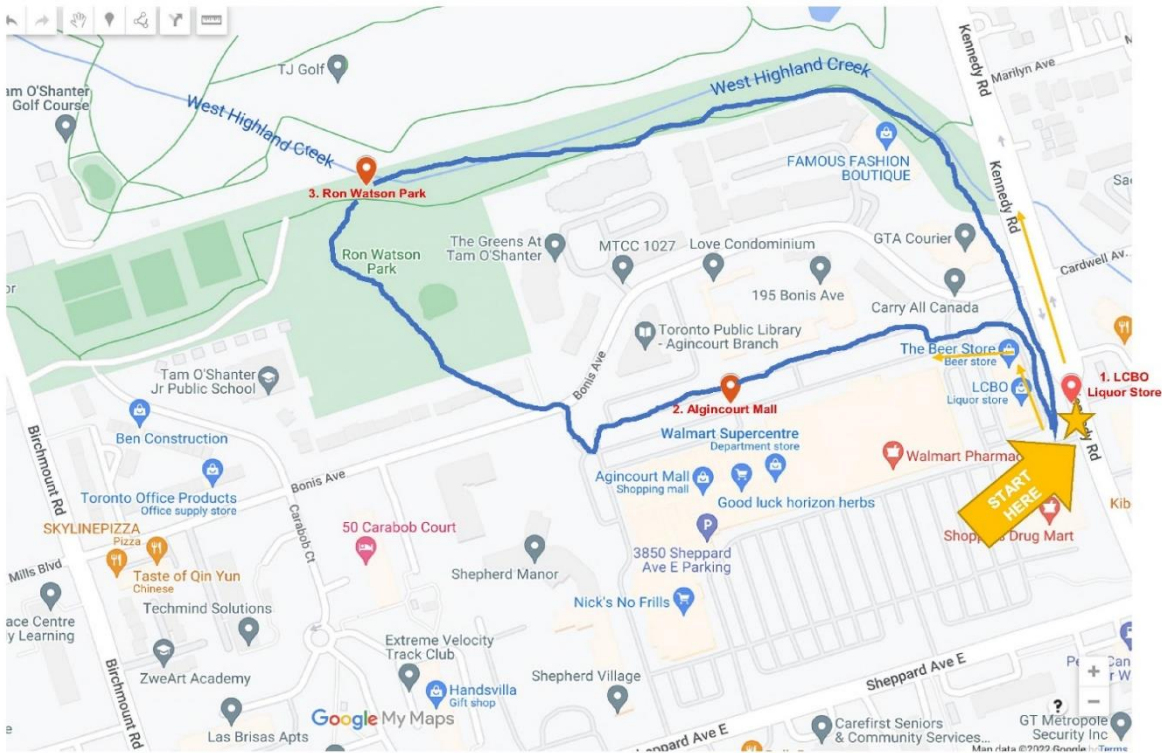
The Planning Group was comprised of 4 members, which consisted of one representative from the Shelter, one representative from the Community Crisis Response Program, Social

Development, Finance and Administration Division, City of Toronto, and one representative from the Toronto Police Services. The Planning Group Meetings were facilitated by a Community Engagement Facilitator from Barnes Management Group.

The Community Safety Walk Planning Group held 3 planning meetings prior to the Community Safety Walk. The group met to review approaches and best practises in conducting a Community Safety Walk, to oversee the development of the route for the walk, to confirm community stakeholder participation in the walk, and to determine how to best conduct the walk given current COVID-19 considerations.

The development of the Community Safety Walk route was informed by information obtained during the Community Stakeholder Meetings as well as input from Toronto Police Services. It was determined by the Community Safety Walk Planning Group that the Agincourt Mall and surrounding areas were not within the service boundaries for the shelter and Community Crisis Response Teams. These locations were also not viable locations to include in the main Community Safety Walk for the Kennedy Road shelter due to distance and these catchment area boundaries.

As a result of requests from the Agincourt Village Community Association, an additional Community Safety Walk was included, and was comprised of locations forwarded by that association, as well as information coming from the Stakeholder Meetings, and Toronto Police Services. It was also agreed that the concerns pertaining to this area would be added to the agenda of the Community Liaison Committee for further review and collaboration.



The route followed during the Community Safety walk is below:

**THE COMMUNITY SAFETY WALKS**

It was determined by the Planning Group that the two Community Safety Walks would be conducted in the late afternoon on the same day, and the Agincourt Mall walk would follow the main Community Safety Walk held in the Metrogate area. As a result of COVID-19 considerations, safety considerations for walk participants, and the need for note takers to be able to capture all issues and recommendations identified, the 11 walk participants were divided into two groups of five and six people respectively.

Prior to the walk, a detailed e-mail was circulated to all walk participants outlining all relevant details of the walk and highlighting COVID-19 safety precautions. The route map, and an outline of various safety related issues to look for during the walk were also forwarded to all walk participants. (See Appendix B - e-mail outlining walk particulars.)

Each group had a group leader and a group note taker who recorded all safety issues and concerns observed during the course of the walk. The notes taken during the course of the walk were compiled into this report, and all walk participants were provided with a draft copy of the report for review to ensure its accuracy and completeness.

**COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER REPRESENTATION**

An exception to the traditional composition of Community Safety Walk participants was made for this walk. As a result, an additional group of 5 CSW participants were included in this walk,

bringing the total number of walk participants to 11. This exception and inclusion was made in response to requests from the Agincourt Village Community Association.

The additional CSW participants, with the exception of one individual, had not participated in the Stakeholder Meetings held earlier in the summer. In order to provide context and background to the Community Engagement process, its parameters and its activities, a brief overview of the Community Engagement process was provided at the beginning of the walk, and the five activities to be conducted during the Community Engagement process were shared with these participants.

In order to ensure that the Community Safety Walk was conducted by a diverse range of community stakeholders, there were representatives from resident groups in the community, Condominium owners, community organizations and service providers, Residents Associations, Business Community, City of Toronto and, and staff from the shelter. Unfortunately, the representative from Toronto Police Services was called away on an emergency, just prior to the commencement of this walk.

Walk participants for this secondary walk were largely comprised of individuals requested by the Agincourt Village Community Association.

**FINDINGS**

Walk Participants were asked to point out issues of concern as we progressed through the Community Safety Walk route. The following chart is an outline of the issues identified at various locations along the walk route. Walk participants were also asked to identify suggestions for remediation of the concerns, where possible.

It is important to note that some of the areas of concern listed below are on private property.

Several additional areas of concern were noted by walk participants. These areas and locations are not within the parameters of the agreed upon Community Safety Route, however, at the request of these residents, those concerns are outlined in a separate document (Appendix A).

Following completion of the Community Safety Walk, and in response to additional concerns raised by the Agincourt Village Community Association, City staff have provided additional information and resources. This information is included following the section below.

AREAS OF CONCERN	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS
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**Agincourt Mall**

- Individuals were observed loitering in front of the LCBO, Shoppers Drug Mart and the Walmart stores. Some individuals appeared to be intoxicated or may have mental health and/or addiction challenges.
- At other times, individuals in need of support and assistance have been observed in the mall area.
- Many residents experienced being verbally harassed by some of these individuals.
- Many residents voiced concern for their safety when attempting to shop at some of the stores in this mall.
- Complaints have been made to the security guard but there has not been a response to these complaints at the time of the walk.

- In instances where it can be determined that individuals are shelter residents, (ie security camera footage), Shelter staff will intervene with those individuals.
- Residents suggested a better police response is required, as is the return of the neighbourhood policing structure previously in place.
- Improved co-ordination and collaboration of various community organizations and service providers are required in order to explore better ways of enabling more expeditious communications and a more immediate response to individuals who are in need of assistance.
- Improved engagement and participation of businesses, shop owners and BIA.
- Exploration of community resources that may be of assistance, ie The Art of Neighbouring sessions (can be done online).
- De-escalation training is being offered by the City of Toronto for street-fronting retailers. The sessions are free and open to businesses city-wide.
- Additional de-escalation training may be offered through Ontario Tourism Education Corporation (see Service Excellence: De-escalation Training – OTEC website).
- 311 Responses need to be improved, especially when requested by Mall security personnel and/or residents
- Increased Outreach teams from ACSA are needed to respond to individuals in need.
- These items need to be discussed further at the Community Liaison Committee.



<p><b>Area behind Walmart (north side) of parking lot</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of people congregating on the median strip between the parking lot and the street (broken table &amp; garbage accumulating).</li> <li>• Large RV parked in parking lot with people living in it.</li> <li>• A lot of petty theft.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved response by 311 needed for streets outreach.</li> <li>• Contact Toronto Police Non-Emergency for crimes where non person is in immediate danger: 416-808-2222</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ron Watson Park</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a lack of adequate lighting in the park.</li> <li>• Park Bench has recently been vandalized and then set on fire.</li> <li>• At times there are encampments in some areas of the park, however, no encampments were observed on the day of the walk.</li> <li>• Empty beer cans noted in the park.</li> <li>• A townhouse resident backing on the park informed walk participants that they now lock their back gates due to loitering and theft.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks department to improve lighting levels in the park.</li> <li>• Parks Department to replace the bench that was destroyed. Of note is the fact that the bench had a dedication plaque, which must be restored and replaced.</li> <li>• Police Bike Patrols need to happen periodically.</li> <li>• Community members have requested 42 Division Neighbourhood Community officers be returned to the community.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Walkway along north side of Ron Watson Park (West Highland Park Ravine)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a major walkway where many residents and community members walk to access the GO Station.</li> <li>• Garbage and debris were scattered along many areas of the walkway</li> <li>• Several pathways from the walkway into the ravine were noted, and encampments are at times present.</li> <li>• Walkway is poorly maintained in winter; often icy conditions prevail.</li> <li>• There is no lighting along this pathway, it is very dark and not safe in the evening.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks Department to be contacted regarding the cleanup of garbage and refuse littering the sides of the walkway.</li> <li>• Parks Department to be contacted regarding the installation of garbage/recyclable bins.</li> <li>• Residents suggested lighting needs to be installed along the walkway.</li> <li>• Year-round maintenance by Scarborough Transportation Services is needed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Kennedy Road and Marilyn Avenue</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to high traffic volumes and the lack of a pedestrian crossing, this is a dangerous crossing area for community members on route to the GO Station or crossing to take TTC from the pathway.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community members to contact 311 to recommend installation of a crosswalk connecting the walkway/bridge at the end of the walkway to the east side of Kennedy Road.</li> </ul>

<p><b>2365 Kennedy Road (Condo building)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has been an increase in break-ins reported, particularly in the underground parking area.</li> <li>• People have reportedly been found sleeping in the vestibule area of the building.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact Toronto Police Non-Emergency for crimes where no person is in immediate danger: 416-808-2222</li> <li>• Outreach support through 311 needs to be increased regarding encampments and street homelessness.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Follow up to community safety issues raised</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff from the Community Crisis Response Program has offered to host a follow-up meeting to assist with next steps re addressing community safety concerns.</li> <li>• Staff from the Community Crisis Response Program to be invited to the Community Liaison Committee Meeting to assist in the review of this report, and collaborate on next steps.</li> </ul>

Additional information provided by City staff:

When connecting with someone who is genuinely seeking shelter, you can also refer them or support them to call Central Intake at 416-338-4766 or 1-877-338-3398. Central Intake has eyes on the entire shelter system and can let people seeking shelter know if there are spaces available and where. Sometimes people who you interpret as being in need of shelter may not actually require or desire shelter (they may already have their own apartment or they may already be a resident of a shelter for example). Public spaces are open for all to use and everyone is subject to the same laws and deserving of the same support of our emergency services when needed.

In addition to the information provided above, the City also has this information online – about **Toronto Community Crisis Service** where depending on the nature of the call being made to 911 the call may be diverted to dispatch teams that focus on health prevention and wellbeing and is an alternative to police enforcement. Your community is within the catchment area for the Northeast pilot. Details are on the City's website here: <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/public-safety-alerts/community-safety-programs/toronto-community-crisis-service/> the partner for this work is TAIBU Community Health Centre <https://www.taibuhealth.ca/en/>

## APPENDIX A – ADDITIONAL AREAS OF CONCERN

The following notations are direct excerpts provided by Community Safety Walk participants who requested that their experiences, as noted in these excerpts, be included in this report. The following feedback is anecdotal; and pertains to areas that were outside the scope of the

Community Safety Walk route; and therefore, were not observed during our Community Safety Walk on September 13<sup>th</sup>. All duplicate notations/examples have been amalgamated.

AREAS OF CONCERN	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kennedy Commons area – customers are being harassed when trying to enter shops in this area.</li> <li>Encampment beside the Tim Horton’s at Kennedy Commons which was set on fire – 311 was alerted several times regarding this encampment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to involve First Gulf Management and Kennedy Commons BIA in finding solutions.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ramp from 401 - Aggressive panhandling.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By-laws need to be changed.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kennedy/Sheppard intersection - Woman was seen getting dressed in the bus shelter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need resources of who to call in such situations.</li> <li>City/Homes First to share Who to call sheet</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Man was seen in the area with no pants or shoes and appeared to be intoxicated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need resources of who to call in such situations.</li> <li>City/Homes First to share Who to call sheet</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lockie and Midland area - Drug paraphernalia and an abandoned bicycle seen laying on ground.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2586 Midland “Homeless” people hang out in front of houses, trespassing on private property and trying to break into houses.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A young woman at Agincourt Jr. public school was seen rolling around on the ground near the school dumpster and in distress – 211 was called and advised that they did not provide this kind of support and the caller was transferred to non-emergency services.</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A senior woman ringing doorbell of home at 1am speaking incoherently and saying she was lost.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intoxicated men were on private properties jumping fences to try to find their bicycle which was full of drug paraphernalia eg. Used needles, naloxone kit, bands, etc. When questioned, they said they were looking for landscaping work and continued to jump fences to find their bicycle. 911 was called and said it was a non emergency situation – officers did respond and did not locate the individuals but disposed of the drug paraphernalia.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drug paraphernalia is being found close to the Agincourt Junior Public school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important that the school be aware of this safety issue. Children must be educated as to what a needle looks like and to not touch it and report it to their teacher. The school currently has no cameras, and the community has made requests for it due to the increase in crime in the area.</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX B - EMAIL TO CSW PARTICIPANTS

### Community Safety Walk – Kennedy Road Shelter Agincourt Mall “mini walk”

Hello everyone – Thank you for your interest in participating in the upcoming Community Safety Walk to take place on September 13<sup>th</sup> at 5pm.

In addition to the original Community Safety Walk discussed in the Stakeholder Meetings, an additional walk has been added to cover specific safety issues related to the Agincourt Mall area. Stakeholder Meeting participants whose interest is in the Agincourt Mall area will form a separate Community Safety Walk group to cover this area, as it was not viable to expand the original walk route to include these areas given the distances involved. This walk will be held on September 13<sup>th</sup>, at 5pm.

We have divided the walk into two groups to comply with current COVID-19 considerations and precautions and also to ensure that the groups are manageable in size to enable us to safely navigate through the community, have focused discussions, as well as capture and document all relevant safety related information.

This Community Safety walk is for those persons who have participated in the Community Stakeholder Meetings, and who have volunteered to participate in this walk. The Agincourt Mall walk will have additional walk participants as requested by the Agincourt Village Community Association. It is not an open walk, so please do not extend this invitation to others, or bring along a guest, or your child.

I am including information below that will be helpful for you as a walk participant, as well as including the route map which we will follow during our walk. This map was compiled using feedback from Community Stakeholder Meeting participants and from Toronto Police Services. The walk participants have been identified from those who have volunteered to participate during the community stakeholder meetings held earlier in the summer; as well as shelter representatives and appropriate City of Toronto department representatives.

The primary focus of the Community Safety Walk is to identify safety issues as they relate to the shelter at 2035 Kennedy Road. Other safety issues noted during the walk that do not pertain to the shelter will be referred to the appropriate bodies.

**Walk Date:** Tuesday September 13<sup>th</sup> at 5pm

Walk participants will be divided into two groups. Each group will have a walk leader, and a note taker. Please arrive approximately 10 minutes early to ensure time to organize the groups and provide a brief overview prior to commencing the walk. The walk is anticipated to take approximately 45 minutes to one hour.

Additional walks may be planned by the Community Liaison Committee to encompass different seasons of the year, etc.

**Meeting Place:** In the parking lot in front of the LCBO at Agincourt Mall.

**Walk Route:** Attached is a route map outlining the area to be covered

**Conduct during Walk:** In order to have a productive and positive experience for all walk participants, and those that we may encounter along the way, walk participants are requested to be respectful of others, and to refrain from any abusive or discriminatory comments or behaviour. Any participant who exhibits such behaviours will be asked to leave the walk immediately.

The aim of the walk is to identify and document all safety issues and concerns along the walk, so walk participants are requested to make every effort to remain a part of the walk group and not splinter into smaller groups or discussions. It is important that the note takers are able to capture all issues identified, and any recommended remediation measures.

**COVID Precautions:** In order to ensure the safety of all walk participants, it is recommended that you wear a mask at all times during the walk. Should you forget your mask, one will be available for you. The size of the walk has had to be limited, so please do not bring along a guest, or your child. If you are experiencing any symptoms related to COVID-19, or have been in contact with anyone who has recently tested positive for COVID-19, we ask that you not attend the walk.

#### **Topics to Consider During Walk:**

1. General Safety & Security – Do you feel safe? Are there places/activities you avoid because you feel unsafe?
2. Isolation – Are there a lot of people in the area during the daytime/nighttime? Are there areas where someone could block your path or confront you where no one could see it happen?
3. Visibility – Can you see clearly ahead and all around you? Are there objects that block views?
4. Lighting – Are there broken lights or areas that need more lights?
5. Signs and Maps – Are there enough easy to see and understand signs? Are there emergency exits and signs to show where to go in an emergency?
6. TTC – Do people generally feel safe using public transit in the area?
7. Maintenance – Is the area clean and well-maintained?
8. Accessibility – Are there any problem areas for people with disabilities?

**Note Taking:** During the course of the walk, each group will have a designated note taker, however we also encourage you to take notes as we go along, and to share those notes with us at the completion of the walk. You will also be able to e-mail your notes to ensure that we capture all information, comments, suggestions, etc.

**Final Report:** A draft report will be prepared and circulated to all walk participants. We welcome your review, edits and contributions to ensure that the report is accurate and captures all observations, concerns, suggestions, etc. There will be a short turnaround time for reviewing this report (2-3 days); in order to meet final report submission dates. Your input will then be incorporated into the final report.

We look forward to seeing you on the walk. Wear comfortable shoes!