



COMMUNITY SAFETY WALK REPORT
2035 Kennedy Road Shelter

November 8, 2022

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COMMUNITY SAFETY WALK REPORT

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 community engagement activity for this site is a Community Safety Walk to identify safety issues and to further explore locations of concern identified by local area stakeholders.

COMMUNITY SAFETY WALK PLANNING GROUP

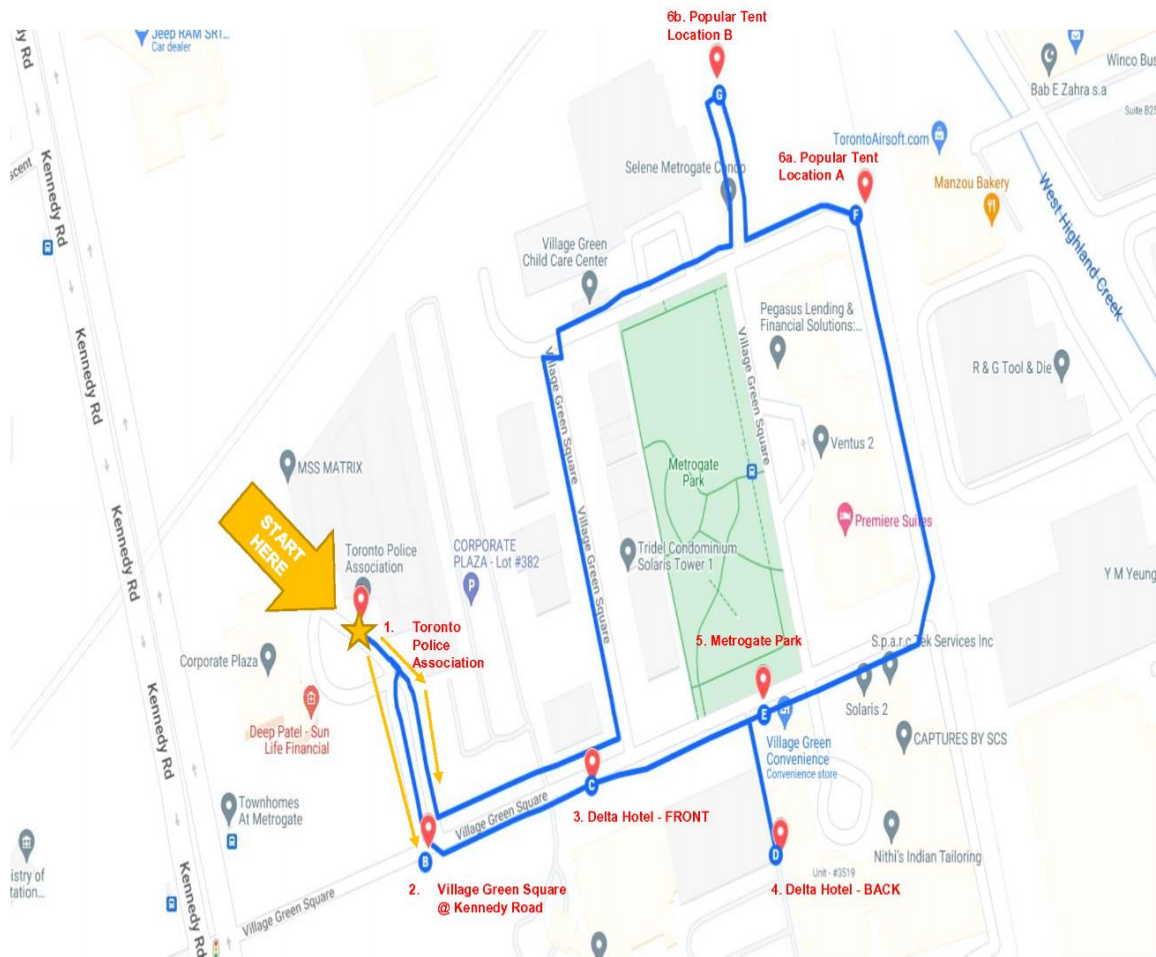
In early August 2022, a Planning Group was created to assist in organizing the Community Safety Walk (CSW) where key stakeholders, residents in the area, and representatives from the 2035 Kennedy Road shelter could come together to participate in a Community Safety Walk. The purpose of the walk was to 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 CSW route was comprised of information obtained during the Stakeholder Meetings held earlier in the summer, as well as input from Toronto Police Services. The route developed is as shown below:



THE COMMUNITY SAFETY WALKS

It was determined by the Planning Group that the Community Safety Walk would be conducted on September 13th at 3pm.

An additional CSW was held in response to issues raised during the Stakeholder Meetings, pertaining to the area surrounding the Agincourt Mall. This area is outside the boundaries of the shelter and the Community Crisis Response Team, and due to distance, was not viable to be included as part of the original CSW route for this site. As such, a secondary walk was added to observe the issues raised pertaining to this area. The details of that walk are provided in a separate CSW report.

Prior to the walk, a “Hold the Date” e-mail was sent to all CSW participants, as well as a friendly follow-up e-mail, encouraging those who had not confirmed their attendance to please do so. The week 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; as well as providing the route map, and an outline of various safety related issues to look for during the walk. (See Appendix A.)

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.

The original route map that was circulated to walk participants prior to the walk was altered at the beginning of the walk, at the request of walk participants. It was agreed to amend the route map by walking to a wooded area situated behind the large office building at 2075 Kennedy Road to observe an encampment at that location.

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER REPRESENTATION

In order to ensure that the CSW 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, City of Toronto, and staff from the shelter.

Of the original 18 CSW participants who confirmed their participation in the walk, 4 participants sent their Regrets just prior to the walk; and as a result, there were 14 walk participants who participated in the walk. Walk participants were comprised of representatives from the following organizations:

- MP Jean Yip’s office
- MPP Aris Babikian’s office
- Metrogate resident’s representative
- Toronto Police Services

- Agincourt Village Community Association
- City of Toronto, Shelter Support and Housing Administration
- Community Crisis Team representatives
- 2035 Kennedy Road shelter representatives

FINDINGS

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

Walk participants voiced a significant level of concern regarding the recent changes made to the Toronto Police Services that will result in their community not having the same level of access to Neighbourhood Police services that have existed prior to this recent change.

It was also acknowledged that many of the incidents and issues that were occurring more frequently in the past two years have improved significantly. The hard work and dedication of Sergeant Richard Shaw of Toronto Police Services, and the Homes First team were acknowledged by the group. The need to maintain the neighbourhood policing presence was strongly emphasized in both the Metrogate and surrounding community areas.

Generalized concerns and frustrations were also voiced about the lack of response when community members call 311 or 211 services, which has led to a growing sense of frustration due to the lack of supports available to the community in responding to issues regarding safety concerns.

AREAS OF CONCERN	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS
<p>Encampment located behind 2075 Kennedy Road</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An encampment consisting of one large tent structure covering 6 smaller tents was observed. It is believed that 4 individuals are living here. • Garbage strewn about in the vicinity of the tent structure. • This encampment is located on City property. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Crisis Response Team to connect with individuals at this location with a view to having them move from this location. • City staff to contact the encampment office and Streets to Home. • Residents are encouraged to call contact 311.

<p>Rear area of Metrogate townhouses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lighting in this area is poor, particularly in the walkway between the buildings and at the rear of the buildings. • There is a stairway that is also very dark • People congregate in these areas creating a concern for public safety. • There have been some thefts reported. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow up required with the condominium manager (Solaris). This location is on private property. • A Safety Walk/Safety Audits were done when the shelter first opened: Recommendations at that time included fencing, lighting and cameras. • It is recommended that follow-up be done pertaining to those safety audits.
<p>Ravine area behind Selene condominiums</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern was expressed about the presence of tents and/or rough sleepers in this area, as it is very difficult to access should first responders need to provide assistance to anyone in this area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City staff to contact the encampment office and Streets to Home. • Recommend contacting 311.
<p>Metrogate Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelter residents gather in the park at times (there were no residents present in the park during the time of the walk). • Lighting is poor in the park. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the Parks Department with regard to improving the lighting in the park. This park became a City of Toronto park as of August 2022.
<p>Village Green Convenience Store, and Optical Store located across from Metrogate Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were break, enter and theft incidents reported at these businesses, however, these incidents were some time ago. • The Convenience store has reported an increase in revenue as a result of the shelter residents patronizing this business. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police have suggested improvements to respond to theft, but these recommendations have not been acted upon yet.
<p>Daycare Centre located near Village Green Convenience Store</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns were raised regarding shelter residents who have apparently approached children from the day care. This was noted as happening some time ago. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homes First staff will follow up and reach out to the Daycare Centre. • TPS have reached out to Daycare Centre and indicated there have been no recent reports/incidents of this nature. Daycare Centre has not filed any reports or called police re: any incidents or issues.

<p>Need for community awareness/public education about resources available</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was recommended that a Public Education be provided to increase the knowledge of community members to assist them in gaining an understanding of the current concerns in the area; as well as the improvements that have been witnessed over the past two years, and to share some of the Success Stories from the shelter. • MPP Babikian offered to send out information in Community Bulletins to assist in increasing awareness levels in the community, and to share the “Who to Call” Information sheet developed by Homes First. • Who to Call Sheet needs to be circulated more broadly.
<p>Issues with City Service response times</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are few incident reports filed with Toronto Police Services in this area. • There are complaints about 211 not responding or being effective in accessing the Community Crisis Response Team. • 311 is not working as a resource; and not effective in connecting people to resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More resources are needed until 211 and 311 can respond in an effective manner – ie support is needed from more sources than just from the shelter.
<p>Follow up to all safety issues raised</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff from the Community Crisis Response Program have offered to host a follow-up meeting to assist with next steps re addressing community safety concerns. • A staff representative from the Community Crisis Response Program is to be invited to the next Community Liaison Committee Meeting to assist in the review of this report, and collaborate on next steps.

APPENDIX A – EMAIL TO CSW PARTICIPANTS

Community Safety Walk – Kennedy Road Shelter

Hello everyone – Thank you for agreeing to participate in the upcoming Community Safety Walk to take place on September 13th at 3pm.

In addition to the original Community Safety Walk discussed in the Stakeholder Meetings, an additional “mini” walk has been added to cover specific safety issues related to the Agincourt Mall area. Stakeholder Meeting participants whose interest in the Agincourt Mall area will be transferred from the original Community Safety Walk group to a separate group to cover this area. It was not viable to expand the walk route to include these areas given the distances involved. That walk will also be held on September 13th, and a separate e-mail will go out to those walk participants providing all relevant walk details.

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 walk is for those persons who have participated in the Community Stakeholder Meetings and who have volunteered to participate in this walk. 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 13th at 3pm

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 1 hour.

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

Meeting Place: In front of the Toronto Police Association Office at 2075 Kennedy Road

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!