

# SafeGrowth: Moving Forward in Neighbourhood Development

GREGORY SAVILLE

*Sustainable strategies for crime prevention rarely, if ever, find their way into the formal design and planning of urban places. This article illustrates how an alternative planning process – SafeGrowth – employs a more holistic style of neighbourhood development than occurs in traditional prevention theory. SafeGrowth is a shift towards a new style of prevention theory, one in which safe places emerge less from outside experts implementing strategies to or for neighbourhoods, and more from neighbours creatively planning with prevention experts, police and security. This article also provides a case study illustrating a practical example where SafeGrowth was applied in the planning of a troubled suburban neighbourhood in Toronto, Canada from 2000 to 2009. Crime reduction and increases in community involvement continue today suggesting this is an effective and sustainable method for developing, and redeveloping, urban places in the years to come.*

Sustainable strategies for crime prevention rarely, if ever, find their way into the formal design and planning process of urban places. There are two reasons for this. First, urban planning is already occupied with an array of concerns and adding another set of piecemeal strategies to an already busy job is a daunting prospect. Second, in either implicit or explicit fashion, crime prevention is conceptualized using an allopathic theory from medicine. Prevention theory does not present itself as a coherent model for planning neighbourhoods. Allopathic prevention theory envisions safety as a product of prevention strategies *applied* to crime problems, not as a product *arising from* planning processes within neighbourhoods themselves.

This article illustrates how a new planning and prevention process – SafeGrowth – employs a more holistic style of implementation than offered in allopathic prevention theory. The planning steps and local governance within SafeGrowth, illustrated

in the case study below, suggest that integrative prevention is a more productive way to move forward in urban design and planning. Consequently SafeGrowth is a shift towards a new style of prevention theory, one in which safe places emerge from neighbours planning for themselves in collaboration with prevention experts, police and security.

SafeGrowth is an extension of the Smart Growth movement in urban planning. Most of the customary Smart Growth design principles apply such as sustaining ecological capacity, human scale design, and transit oriented development. SafeGrowth also focuses on building a local capacity to create and sustain safe communities at a small neighbourhood scale.

The SafeGrowth model is defined here as an integrative planning process for creating safe neighbourhoods, improving local trust and cohesion among residents, and reducing crime and fear. It employs five planning steps along with local non-profit associations to

help neighbours learn how to create and self-regulate their own safety in collaboration with service providers and prevention experts. It requires the formulation of a SafeGrowth plan with strategies to sustain and enhance development. From this perspective safety is seen as the product of a well-developed neighbourhood. Thus, one goal of SafeGrowth is not for experts to apply prevention strategies to problems, but rather for neighbours themselves to work with experts to learn how to create safe, vital and sustainable places.

The case study presented below shows a practical example where SafeGrowth was applied to the planning of a troubled suburban neighbourhood from 2000 to 2009 in Toronto, Canada. Crime reduction and increases in community involvement continue today suggesting this is a sustainable method for developing, or redeveloping, urban places in the years to come.

### **The Velocity of Change**

There are many studies showing how careful urban design can cut crime (Cozens *et al.*, 2005). The more important question is how to sustain crime prevention in the long term. This article poses the idea that the critical factor for sustaining prevention efforts is the process of implementation and planning. The case study below illustrates how we might better facilitate and sustain safer neighbourhoods in the future.

It is fairly clear that over the past year our economic and social systems have entered a period of rapid upheaval. As with all economic downturns, the velocity with which the financial collapse unfolds conveys significant implications for community safety. In North America, urbanist Richard Florida believes excessive rates of home ownership distort economic demand by promoting larger house purchases and pushing sprawl yet further from the central city (Florida, 2005, 2009). He believes we will see the rise of urban mega-regions with higher population

densities, lower rates of home ownership, and a more mobile population of renters – a stark reversal of current living patterns. This new geography has many implications for crime and safety.

For decades criminologists studying the ecology of crime have described home ownership and neighbourhood tenure as a measure of territorial belonging – what Newman calls defensible space (Newman, 1973). In the CPTED model (crime prevention through environmental design) territoriality is key for creating safer communities. What will this new geography mean for the territoriality, defensible space and vitality of urban neighbourhoods? More to the point, what have we learned about urban design to help build safe neighbourhoods in these turbulent times?

CPTED programmes can produce significant crime reductions (Cozens *et al.*, 2005). But urban design and CPTED must now be considered in context with recent surges in violent crime and rapid changes in economic conditions. Government statistics show increases in American violent crime rates for the first time in twelve years (Department of Justice, 2007). One study claims ‘violent crime increases represent the front end of a tipping point of an epidemic of violence not seen in years’ (Police Executive Research Forum, 2006). National crime surveys report that the violent crime surge began even earlier (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007).

Yet, in spite of attempts across North America to integrate CPTED and crime prevention into the planning and administration of cities, the vast majority of contemporary programmes remain fragmentary and secondary to neighbourhood life. SafeGrowth emerges as a blueprint for establishing safety development plans within neighbourhoods, including the research and planning steps to create those plans.

### **Design Matters**

The theoretical framework of the SafeGrowth model emerges from the intersection of four

different fields: the ecology of crime in geography (Harries, 1971), the Smart Growth movement in urban planning (Urban Land Institute, 1998), situational crime prevention in criminology (Clarke, 1992; Clarke and Homel, 1997), and sustainable development in environmental studies (Schulze and Mooney, 1993; Williams *et al.*, 2001).

The initial work to test the SafeGrowth model began in 2000 with field projects at the Center for Advanced Public Safety Research at the University of New Haven (Saville and Clear, 2000; Genre, 2004). Today it is practised in various planning and development agencies ranging from Saskatoon, Canada to national programmes of the Local Initiative Support Corporation in New York (Saville and Mangat, 2009). It is currently led by AlterNation, a North American consultancy specializing in community safety.

SafeGrowth emerges at a time when new planning and design standards are needed to fit the rapid demographic and social change in urban areas. It was created because, when it comes to safety in a time of rapid change, it is insufficient to attach piecemeal prevention programmes such as CPTED checklists to the planning and development of cities. Instead, contemporary planning requires a coherent process for implementing safety and integrating social development within urban development.

### **The San Romanoway Story**

The San Romanoway apartment complex is located in a north Toronto suburb called the Jane-Finch corridor. Jane-Finch was initially constructed in the 1960s to house residents during rapid suburbanization. Some describe Jane-Finch as a 'Canadian example of the social housing failures in the United States notably the West End of Boston and Pruitt Igoe in St. Louis' (Rigakos *et al.*, 2004). It is of historical note that the Pruitt Igoe housing failure, and its subsequent demolition by explosives in the late 1960s, is cited by Newman as a driving force for the creation of

the crime prevention through environmental design concept (Newman, 1973).

The first actual plan to develop the Jane-Finch area was assembled in 1962 under the guidance of the federal government. It was officially approved as the York Official Plan in 1969 with a goal to integrate higher densities of public and social housing into the waves of single-family housing sprouting in newly developing suburbs (Rigakos *et al.*, 2004). In the 1960s some Canadian planners were already concerned about problems with low-density suburban sprawl that is today so widely critiqued, as demonstrated in Richard Florida's writing.

The original idea of the York Official Plan was to include high-rise, low-income apartments in the newly emerging suburbs thereby making public transit more affordable and breaking the monotony of single-family suburban housing. Unfortunately the urban form characterized by a lack of semi-private space hierarchy, wide swaths of open and vacant space, and deserted night time parking lots did not lend itself to sustainable or safe communities, especially in Jane-Finch. Rapid demographic changes from an immigration influx throughout the 1970s and 1980s overwhelmed meagre social services in the Jane-Finch area. Children in single-parent apartments had few social or recreational spaces. Anti-social behaviour and drug dealers took over vacant public areas which heightened fears.

Numerous attempts by local politicians over the years to slow development were thwarted by intense demand for low-income housing in Toronto and internecine political squabbling. Successive municipal, provincial and federal governments either ignored the growing troubles in Jane-Finch or delivered piecemeal prevention programmes with little local input and less support. By the end of the 1980s Jane-Finch was an under-serviced and under-resourced, poor, high crime community.

Today Jane-Finch contains over sixty high rise buildings with over 50,000 inhabitants

representing 30 per cent of the total population of police division 31, the division encompassing Jane-Finch. In 2005 police division 31 reported the third highest violent crime rate out of all sixteen police divisions in the city.<sup>1</sup>

Located directly within the Jane-Finch corridor, San Romanoway comprises three modernist-style apartment towers with 892 units housing more than 4,000 residents. From 1987 to 2000 crime in San Romanoway was 122 per cent above the national average (Edwards and Wraith, 2007). Jane-Finch area was, and still is, troubled by crime, gangs and drugs.

### Towards a New Prevention Theory

Over the years a question was repeatedly asked by successive governments; What

should be done to improve conditions in Jane-Finch? Most responses up to 2000 followed a programme by programme process, with implementation delivered by those outside the community. A precept of the SafeGrowth model is that the *process* of implementation and development is critical for success in places such as San Romanoway.

In North America many different professions contribute to crime prevention. These include police, social workers, probation and parole officers, community activists, and in more recent years urban designers and prevention specialists. Each employs their own programmes and technologies based on a well known crime prevention typology.

That crime prevention typology uses the allopathic version of medicine where the 'illness' of crime is thought to reside in the symptoms. We prevent crime by treating

Figure 1. Palisades, the largest of the San Romanoway apartments with over 400 units and 1,000 residents. (Photo: Paul Nguyen, Jane-Finch.com)



Figure 2. San Romanoway apartment buildings, intersection of Jane-Finch, Toronto. (Photo: Paul Nguyen, Jane-Finch.com)



real or potential crime symptoms and this occurs in three ways: primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention. Primary prevention deals with the conditions thought to cause crime by involving the community, schools and families. Secondary prevention deals with at-risk offenders or potential victims by removing the elements that facilitate crime through programmes such as target hardening, CPTED, Designing Out Crime, and product design. Tertiary prevention includes after-the-fact interventions on those who commit crime such as treatment programmes to ensure convicted offenders do not re-offend.

The problem with allopathic medicine is that it assumes health is a product of good medicine not a condition of life (McKnight, 1995, p. 64). Similarly, allopathic crime prevention looks to crime symptoms and then intervenes with those places, victims, or offenders. With the exception of primary prevention, safety is viewed as a product of prevention programmes that is implemented by experts and not a condition of healthy communities. Especially in secondary prevention, allopathic theories seek not to describe crime motives, but rather to remove crime opportunities. Crime locations are mapped and described as abstract 'nodes' or 'edges' (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1999) in a way which seems to sterilize crime from the people who cause and suffer from it.

Allopathic theories help practitioners see why opportune locations and easy access to unprotected crime targets are problematic. They lead to situational prevention tactics that can produce positive short term results. But allopathic theories are silent on successful educational and community-building programmes reported in scientific research (Sherman *et al.*, 2002). They also sidestep the web of motives that inspire decisions to commit crime in the first place – family dysfunction, poverty, substance abuse, mental illness, social alienation, and others.

For practitioners this means crime mapping and situational tactics do not intentionally

aim to do the very things that places like Jane-Finch so desperately need – to create the social capital that results in a sustainable and safe neighbourhood (McKnight, 1995; Saville and Clear, 2000; Crutchfield *et al.*, 2007). That is not their intention. CPTED lighting might be applied to risky locations and security patrols might be added to parking lots. But these efforts do not necessarily eliminate residents' fears of night time crime. If residents are disinclined to participate in social activities, they stay indoors. Situational prevention and urban design tactics alone are unlikely to instigate sustainable and safe neighbourhoods.

Allopathic medicine is transforming into a more holistic model for health called integrative medicine (Kligler and Lee, 2004; Rakel, 2003). In similar fashion the SafeGrowth model builds on the empirical traditions and attention to location found in allopathic crime prevention. But it integrates this with community development and urban planning to create a five-step change process. It adopts the goal of sustainable development by working to expand local assets in a neighbourhood. This means that ideally the neighbourhood need not rely as much on outside intervention. Thus, the goal of a SafeGrowth plan is to help those who reside in neighbourhoods learn how to create and self-regulate their own safety in collaboration with service providers such as planners and police.

The SafeGrowth model includes five steps for neighbourhood safety:

- ♦ community engagement,
- ♦ the neighbourhood profile,
- ♦ local priorities,
- ♦ the SafeGrowth Plan, and
- ♦ results and revisions.

The following is a description of a case study demonstrating how each step of the SafeGrowth model was applied in Toronto's San Romanoway apartments. This case study

used each of the five steps of the SafeGrowth planning process although it was not initially conceived this way. The steps evolved as the project unfolded and the differences between theory and practice are explained in each section.

### **Community Engagement – Establishing a Community Voice**

In areas such as Jane-Finch where social cohesion is weak and public spaces are empty, establishing legitimate community engagement is among the most difficult steps in any project. Social detachment is often the problem in the first place, especially when disorder problems or gangs are present as they are in San Romanoway. Success does not simply rest on conducting crime prevention workshops. Community development is required which includes finding local leaders and creating associations of residents who can learn new prevention and development skills.

In SafeGrowth the community associations are called Neighbourhood Safety Teams (NST). The NST comprise community members recruited to learn the skills and take actions to manage their own neighbourhood safety. At San Romanoway this was done by the San Romanoway Revitalization Association (SRA). They coordinated training, leadership programmes, social and recreational programmes, and various other life skills training.

The San Romanoway project was initiated in early 2000 when property owners tasked Ross McLeod, the head of the security company on site, with creating a more effective response to crime and disorder. A research team was assembled to conduct preliminary research and CPTED reviews.<sup>2</sup>

Preliminary research led to a crime profile of the site with recommendations to move forward. During research the team also located a community organizer familiar with the area who was hired to start the process of engaging the community. The

profile also recommended a detailed Quality of Neighbourhood Life Survey in order to establish base-line data about perceptions and fears and monitor results (McLeod and Saville, 2000).

The goal at San Romanoway was to establish an advisory organization to connect with political decision-makers and funding agencies as well as advocate for NSTs. Today the SafeGrowth model satisfies this goal through an organization called the Municipal Development Panel (MDP), but in the early years at San Romanoway this was done by an on-site manager of the neighbourhood association, Stephnie Payne.

#### *The Neighbourhood Profile*

Initial community engagement was also a crucial first step along with the field research to create a neighbourhood profile. At San Romanoway that was accomplished in a variety of ways, some of which included (a) the CPTED/security review and (b) the QNL Survey.

#### *(a) CPTED/Security Review*

The CPTED and security review was conducted in early 2000. Interviews with residents were followed by an examination of police and security crime reports. Interviews indicated that fears and intimidation were common at the property and few residents reported incidents to police. Incident data were, therefore, unhelpful for understanding the full extent of problems. Improving residents' trust and reducing fear became an early goal of the project. It led to recommendations for a series of victimization surveys to collect data on perceptions and the experiences of residents. This later became the Quality of Neighbourhood Life Surveys.

The security and CPTED review was divided into three categories:

1. *1st Generation CPTED/Basic*. Basic strategies included access controls, natural sur-

veillance and lighting, and maintenance (Crowe, 2000).

2. *1st Generation CPTED/Advanced*. Advanced strategies included movement predictors and way-finding, crime generators, and conflicting user groups (Atlas, 2008).

3. *2nd Generation CPTED*. These included social factors such as neighbourhood cohesion, community culture, and connectivity to outside agencies (Saville and Cleveland, 2008). They also included a review of security procedures, such as tenant screening and assessing the demographics and capacity of the buildings.

1. *Findings of 1st Generation CPTED/basic review:*

- ◆ Front foyers were in disrepair and contained numerous entrapment areas. Especially problematic was the location of postal boxes which were around blind corners and hidden from view.
- ◆ Buildings were designed in a modernist style with few semi-public or semi-private spaces for community activities. Landscaping was bleak and grass berms obstructed natural surveillance.
- ◆ Interior and exterior lighting was sub-standard. There were major dark spots along walkways and the underground parking lot was poorly lit and unsupervised. It contained many abandoned vehicles.
- ◆ There were few access controls onto the San Romanoway property, and doorway controls such as key locking and CCTV were in disrepair. Interviews revealed that entry keys were widely distributed to non-residents and unoccupied suites were being used for disruptive parties.

2. *Findings of the 1st Generation CPTED/advanced review:*

- ◆ Walkways and other movement predictors did not follow the way-finding paths of

residents. Worn lawn paths indicated desire lines that did not coincide with sidewalks on the property. These paths were unlit and blocked from view by landscaping berms and untrimmed trees.

- ◆ Large numbers of teens, including some gang members, gathered at night time on the driveways and parking lots of San Romanoway. They intimidated residents and claimed the turf even though the security review discovered few actually resided at San Romanoway.
- ◆ Activity generators on the property were limited to unused tennis courts.

3. *Findings of the 2nd Generation CPTED review:*

- ◆ There was an obvious lack of cohesion among residents and an unwillingness to participate in community events. The community room was unused and in disrepair.
- ◆ There were few social programmes for residents and fewer semi-public gathering places for residents to socialize.
- ◆ There were few cultural activities for residents. The QNL Survey showed a wide diversity of ethnic groups but fear of crime was so high many were unwilling to leave their apartments to participate in shared activities.
- ◆ The excessive number of gang members on site was far beyond the capacity of managers to control disorder and crime activities – especially non-resident gang members. That tipped informal control of the property over to the illicit gang members. They loitered in public areas and created fear in the residents.

(b) *QNL Surveys (QLNS)*

The QNLS provided an ideal opportunity to initiate community engagement. Surveys were created and administered at three different

times, 2002, 2004 and 2006, by a criminologist from Carleton University (Rigakos, 2007). Gathering survey data was completed with participation of the SRA and residents administered them throughout the buildings.

To put the QNLS in context, the data collected in the survey provided a baseline of resident perceptions. It was not possible to compare to surrounding areas since, unlike other countries such as the United States, Canada does not conduct annual victimization or crime perception surveys.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, during the initiation of the San Romanoway project the perceptions and fears of the residents in the larger Jane-Finch community were unknown. However, as table 1 shows, it was important to note that almost half of all respondents in San Romanoway felt unsafe walking at night and even fewer felt safe walking to bus stops or parking lots, suggesting their night time movement was restricted by their own fears. This gave an initial picture of residents who were disengaged from community life.

The QNLS also provided an excellent way to involve residents in the early research and planning stages of the project. Table 1 indicates 40 per cent of the respondents hardly ever had contact with their neighbours. Therefore, bringing residents on board to conduct some of the QNLS interviews helped initiate the process of breaking down some barriers between neighbours.

Respondents were also surveyed about their experiences with crime. Results for all three surveys are reported below. The surveys, along with focus groups, helped clarify more precisely what residents wanted. For example, the preliminary profile in 2000 called for construction of a basketball court and dismantling the tennis courts. However, many of the youth at San Romanoway are African-Canadian teen women who expressed interest in the global sporting success of tennis superstars Serena and Venus Williams. The survey data indicated they preferred tennis to basketball and wanted the tennis courts improved, not removed.

At this point it is worth noting these data helped the NST tailor specific 2nd Generation CPTED strategies. For example, in July 2008 a private transportation organization, 407 International Inc, provided funds to upgrade and refurbish the tennis courts. Later that year Tennis Canada, part of the national Olympic tennis association, sponsored successful, two-month youth tennis camps at the refurbished San Romanoway tennis courts (Tennis Canada, 2008). Today the tennis courts are in active use.

#### *Local Priorities*

Once the preliminary profile was submitted to property owners in late 2000, the on-site manager familiar with the neighbourhood

Table 1. Quality of Neighbourhood Life Survey 2002 – San Romanoway.

<i>Survey Question</i>	<i>2002</i>
Felt unsafe walking at night	47%
Felt safe waiting for public transit	35%
Felt safe walking in parking lots	33%
Hardly ever had contact with neighbours	40%
Spoke to neighbours a few times each month	10%
Spoke to neighbours a few times each year	9%

*n* = 302 *p* < 0.001

*Source:* Rigakos (2005).



was hired as a community leader. Stephnie Payne was a key to success at the property and was quickly able to establish positive rapport with residents.<sup>4</sup>

Rapport with residents is critical in order to formulate local priorities to enhance neighbourhood development. If prevention planning is to occur in an integrated way with the goal of a well-developed neighbourhood (and not the result of specific crime prevention programmes) then resident rapport and involvement must occur from the earliest stages. This was the case in San Romanoway where neighbourhood development was the main priority. Programmes were tailored to fit that goal and this included the physical modifications and social programmes that followed.

Community meetings were ongoing through the whole process. At one point residents were asked about their priorities for physical modifications. They chose upgraded sports facilities, on-site medical services and lobby refurbishing. Combined with improved lighting, sidewalk repair, and property clean-ups, these were among the first changes made by property owners. The physical modifications signalled to residents that someone was listening which was critical for building gradual community support.

#### *The SafeGrowth Plan*

Emerging from all the diagnoses at San Romanoway was a prioritized list of specific problems in that neighbourhood, suggestions for solving them, who might respond to them, and specific measurable goals in a one or two year timeframe. The SafeGrowth plan, coordinated by both experts and the NST, combining a wide variety of physical, social and enforcement strategies, and drawing on both self-directed local resources and professional service providers, is the mark of the SafeGrowth process.

In San Romanoway the project planning began in 2000. Following initial research in 2000, physical refurbishing got started in

2001. Soon after Stephnie Payne secured government grants to launch social programmes (Payne, 2005). The San Romanoway Revitalization Association (SRA) formed in 2002 and functions as the NST. It included residents from all three buildings, property owners, a representative from Intelligarde security, the police and Payne as executive director. The SRA has a charitable, non-profit status and received government and philanthropic grants through fundraising.

For the past six years SRA has governed many of the safety and neighbourhood development programmes at San Romanoway. The difference from other traditional allopathic prevention schemes is found in the SRA mission statement: 'to create a sense of belonging by assisting families, individuals and groups to support each other in building a safer and healthier environment'. This echoes the SafeGrowth principle that safety arises from a healthy and sustainable neighbourhood, not from the application of individual prevention strategies. Programmes are tailored by residents who are themselves upskilled to help develop the neighbourhood. That is how safety was made sustainable over the nine year period.

Some of the strategies implemented at San Romanoway include the following.

#### *1st Generation CPTED/basic:*

- ♦ *Territoriality.* Front foyers were refurbished and entrapment areas removed around the post boxes. However, as table 3 illustrates, some theft rates increased during the survey periods and therefore much work remains yet to be done.
- ♦ *Territoriality.* It was impractical to demolish the buildings due to the design, but it was possible to enhance semi-private spaces by building community gardens and clearing some landscaping for better natural surveillance.
- ♦ *Natural surveillance.* Lighting was modestly improved in both exterior and

interior areas. In areas such as dark parking lots, where theft had been a major problem, table 3 illustrates a dramatic 67.1 per cent decline in theft from autos.

- ♦ *Access controls.* Doorway controls such as key locking were improved and residents were asked to use better key control over who enters and leaves their apartments. Staff had little knowledge of illegal tenants, some of whom were gang members.

#### *1st Generation CPTED/advanced*

- ♦ *Movement predictors.* Some landscaping improvements were made on site which improved the walkways. However not all of the original recommendations were implemented by the property owners and government funders were unwilling to support physical CPTED modifications.

- ♦ *Conflicting user groups.* There are still problems with loitering teens, including gang members, on the driveways and parking lots of San Romanoway. However, as the QNL Survey data indicate, due to the extensive number of 2nd Generation CPTED strategies residents are less fearful. Residents are also more active on the property, with programmes such as the tennis camps and community gardens. This allows them to claim more territorial control over external areas through their increasing outdoor presence.

- ♦ *Activity support – tennis courts, community gardens.* Active social gathering places are now available at San Romanoway. These include enhanced tennis courts and in 2003 a new basketball court. They also include newly constructed community gardens and a computer training centre. These activity supports and improvements to the movement predictors made the personal violent crimes that were more common in public areas more difficult for offenders. This is reflected in dramatic declines in violent crime illustrated in table 2.

#### *2nd Generation CPTED*

*Cohesion – social programmes.* Table 4 presents the QNL Surveys data illustrating the increasing levels of cohesion among residents. This results from an extensive array of social and recreational programmes. Some of those include youth against violence programmes, after-school programmes, youth tutoring, outreach camps, and recreational opportunities. The types of social programmes do not distinguish the SRA approach. What distinguishes it is how they are tailored specifically onto social priorities for the purpose of building a sustainable neighbourhood.

*Connectivity – children's playground.* Connectivity with surrounding businesses was important. In 2003 nearby businesses worked together with over 300 San Romanoway residents to construct a children's playground. In addition, the SRA continues to be successful soliciting grants from different levels of government and businesses to fund programmes.

*Connectivity – SRA rooms.* In 2004 the property owners donated three ground floor units for the purpose of creating a social space and meeting rooms for the SRA. The local trade unions for the carpenters, drywallers, and painters offered to supervise and hire ten local youth to conduct the demolition and reconstruction of the social space.

*Computer training room.* In 2006 a local plumbing and heating company donated computers for a computer learning centre at San Romanoway. This enhanced the on-site educational programmes offered to residents.

*Community culture.* Tennis Canada's summer programme, outdoor summer camps, and various other cultural activities are also part of SRA programming. In 2009, as this article was being written, the Cineplex Corporation



Figure 3. Opening of Cineplex movie theatre on San Romanoway. (Photo: Stephnie Payne, San Romanoway Revitalization Association)

opened a movie theatre in San Romanoway (see figure 3) to provide another recreational activity for the neighbourhood.

#### *Results and Revisions*

Steps to engage activities and develop a profile are necessary to launch a SafeGrowth Plan. Local leaders, an NST and an MDP are necessary governing strategies. However the San Romanoway experience suggests that progress emerged from the final steps in the model – assessing results and incrementally achieving priorities within the plan. Every year or, in the case of the San Romanoway QNL Surveys, every two years the SafeGrowth Plan requires a review of progress and a strategy update.

At San Romanoway the initial profile research took three months. The follow-up QNLS Survey was conducted on three

occasions, once every two years. This was ideal for examining plan results and making revisions. The results suggest San Romanoway has experienced significant progress.

As described earlier, the 2005 police division 31 crime reports indicate the larger Jane-Finch corridor continues to suffer high crime rates. In comparison table 2 suggests that, up until 2006, San Romanoway violent crime rates have had significant declines across a number of categories.

Reinforcing the declines in violent crime reports, table 4 reveals that the victimization experience of residents also shows dramatic improvement. Residents report 49.9 per cent fewer violent crimes than six years ago. Robberies and assaults are down almost 30 per cent and there are 60 per cent fewer sexual assaults reported.

The survey results on property crime displayed in table 3 show an overall 13 per

Table 2. Violent crime rate (incidents per 1,000).

<i>Crime Type</i>	2002	2004	2006	% change 2002–2006
Assault	54.0	65.0	38.0	–29.6%
Robbery	60.0	43.3	43.6	–28.4%
Sexual assault	82.1	46.6	32.4	–60.5%*
<i>Total</i>	201.5	155.3	100.9	–49.9%*

*n* = 228 \* *p* < 0.05

Source: Rigakos (2007).

cent decline of four common property crimes. Curiously, a second year dip in household theft results in a marginal 3 per cent increase over the six years. Personal theft climbed almost 42 per cent. It is unclear why these two categories increased when most others did not. Part of the reason may be that the 1st Generation CPTED strategies target only exterior theft in public areas, such as parking lots, and not theft between residents. It may also suggest that the social strategies of 2nd Generation CPTED works more effectively on violent crime than property crime. There is clearly still much work to be done at San Romanoway. However, breaking and entering and motor vehicle/parts thefts did decline with a 67 per cent reduction of the latter.

Another area of improvement was in

relation to the cohesion, social involvement, and perceptions of residents, factors of equal importance to changes in crime rates. For this reason data from the 2002 QNL Survey offer an important base line for comparison. Data from table 1 indicate that between 33 per cent and 47 per cent of respondents felt unsafe in various locations around the property and hardly ever had contact with neighbours. Only 10 per cent spoke to neighbours a few times each month and 9 per cent each year.

Four years later improvements are notable. Those who felt unsafe walking at night dropped from 47 per cent to 20 per cent of respondents. Those who felt safe waiting for transit increased from 38 per cent to 67 per cent which was almost identical for feelings of safety in parking lots.

Table 3. Property crime rate (incidents per 1,000).

<i>Crime Type</i>	2002	2004	2006	2002–2006 % change
Break and enter	12.5	4.9	10.5	–16.0%
Motor vehicle/parts theft	7.0	7.7	2.3	–67.1%*
Theft household property	18.8	10.8	19.4	+ 3.2%
Personal theft	14.6	34.1	34.0	+41.9%
<i>Total</i>	40.4	26.7	35.0	–13.4%

*n* = 228 \* *p* < 0.05

Source: Rigakos (2007).

Table 4. Quality of Neighborhood Life Survey 2006 – San Romanoway.

<i>Survey Question</i>	2002	2006
Felt unsafe walking at night	47%	20%
Felt safe waiting for public transit	38%	67%
Felt safe walking in parking lots	33%	67%
Hardly ever had contact with neighbours	40%	28%
Spoke to neighbours a few times each month	10%	17%
Spoke to neighbours a few times each year	9%	32%

$n = 341$   $p < 0.001$

Source: Rigakos (2005).

Even more encouraging was the improvement in monthly neighbour contact. The number of people who had conversations at least monthly almost doubled; it trebled regarding the number who had conversations with neighbours annually. It appears the social cohesion strategies were having some effect, but that impact was not yet universal. Weekly and daily contacts did not improve much and some marginally declined. As with household and personal theft, this is another area for improvement.

Neighbourhood governance works best when the NST monitors the annual progress of the SafeGrowth plan. Whatever does not work one year is brought into the next plan. In this way the neighbourhood begins to take charge of its own future, thereby enhancing the sustainability of safety initiatives. The San Romanoway Revitalization Association is now working on programmes for the next few years including anti-gang programmes, opening up a youth recording studio on site, and enhancing their website (<http://www.srra.ca/>).

### Lessons Learned

Unlike prevention programmes implemented piecemeal in previous years, the SafeGrowth planning process described here suggests

neighbourhood development and safety programming can be sustained over a long period. Project initiatives began in 2000 and continue nine years later. The survey data indicate for a six year period the San Romanoway project continued to reduce fears and crime in most, but not all, categories. Interestingly, while San Romanoway victimization data in table 2 indicate that residents experienced 49.9 per cent fewer violent crimes from 2002 to 2006, Toronto police data for the whole city report that the number of violent crimes declined only 6.8 per cent between 2002 and 2005.

It is difficult to extrapolate from San Romanoway to the much larger area throughout the city, however this does suggest that while violent crime in Toronto was in slight decline it was declining at a significantly faster rate in San Romanoway. This is especially salient when violent crime rates are now reversing direction in cities across North America.

It is also difficult to evaluate a neighbourhood while initiatives are still underway; however, the reality of community life and social affairs in neighbourhoods like this is that initiatives of one sort or another are always underway. Seldom, if ever, do such real life environments provide ideal experimental controls and methodological precision

for textbook measurement. That being said, almost ten years since the inception of the project results thus far suggest the San Romanoway Revitalization Association continues to sustain community building activities and safety continues to improve. Figure 3 shows the recent opening of a Cineplex Theatre in one of the San Romanoway buildings, an event unthinkable a decade ago.

San Romanoway also demonstrates how a NST neighbourhood association, along with expert assistance, was able to integrate multiple approaches to prevention and development ranging from basic 1st Generation CPTED (improved lighting, landscaping improvements, and refurbished foyers) to 2nd Generation CPTED (anti-violence and youth tutoring programmes, computer training, and recreational activities).

One goal of SafeGrowth is for neighbours themselves to work with experts and learn how to create safe, vital and sustainable places rather than having experts themselves applying strategies to problems. When such an integrated process becomes part of neighbourhood life, future design and planning of issues beyond crime and safety might also follow this collaborative style. Nothing illustrates this better than the redesign of the floor level apartments for social meeting space built by local youths and supervised by volunteers from a local carpenter trade union. This not only encouraged an increased sense of territoriality among residents since it was now truly *their* space, but it also helped teach youth new skills and responsibility for their shared social space.

### Implications for the Future

The urban designer must consider many factors in architectural and urban form. Crime and safety is only one and most academic schools of planning or architecture say little, if anything, about crime (in North America at least). Atlas (2008, p. vii) contends that 'most architects are unfamiliar with CPTED

and security design because they were never taught CPTED in their college educations ... having police trained in CPTED is not enough to have the built environment changed'.

This does not bode well when the urban landscape faces such economic and social turbulence. Obsolete to a large extent are descriptions of traditional suburbs as places where 'suburbanites can distance themselves from offenders – preferably by placing other buffer communities between them so that their positional advantage is not crowded out' (Hope, 1999). Enough debate exists to suggest the suburbs have been both the source of urban ills (Burchell *et al.*, 2002; Putnam, 2000) and also, as described here, a place where we might solve them.

This means urban design does have an important role to play. For example, when urban designers tackle crime they turn to CPTED guidelines, Design Out Crime committees, or situational prevention tactics. But as this article discusses, these programme responses are only a small step toward community building. SafeGrowth modifies the allopathic prevention typology and, rather than focusing on programmes, uses a coherent planning process to help initiate a sustainable neighbourhood governance process.

Expansion of the SafeGrowth model is already underway in Saskatoon, Canada where SafeGrowth has been modified into a Local Area Planning process in a dozen neighbourhoods throughout the city. Each neighbourhood has created its own Local Area Plan similar to the NST SafeGrowth plan. A permanently appointed senior planner is in charge of safety planning and she liaises with city staff, police and neighbourhood groups to provide the MDP role. She coordinates SafeGrowth training for both NST groups across the city and for over a hundred city staff, police, and other service providers who work with local NSTs (Miller, 2008).

Rather than creating a programme with standardized CPTED design checklists, as in other North American cities, Saskatoon's

integrative Local Area Planning is in effect an embryonic SafeGrowth process. The programme, now in its fourth year, is the largest municipal SafeGrowth programme of its kind and demonstrates how SafeGrowth pertains to urban planning and design.

The velocity of our economic upheaval suggests to writers like Richard Florida a very different urban geography as the dust clears from the current financial collapse. Will this new geography produce changes in sprawl, the rise of urban mega-regions, lower rates of home ownership, and mobile populations of renters? Even fragmentary realization of these scenarios demands that urban designers, community developers, and crime prevention practitioners pay close attention to neighbourhood safety.

Florida and others may be correct when they imply that radically different geographies may emerge after the crash. Either way, SafeGrowth and the experience at San Romanoway offer an effective blueprint for integrating social development with a collaborative form of safe urban design in the future.

## NOTES

1. The last year for which Toronto Police divisional statistics are published online at time of writing was 2005. Available at <http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/publications/files/reports/2005statsreport.pdf>. Accessed 30 March 2009.

2. The initial research team was assembled by Ross McLeod, owner of Intelligarde, the security company on site. It comprised McLeod, Gregory Saville, Gerry Cleveland (a youth violence prevention expert and former high school principal in Jane-Finch) and Chuck Genre (a crime analyst from the Center for Advanced Public Safety Research at the University of New Haven). In November 2000 McLeod and Saville wrote the research summary for the property owners titled *The Greenwin Renaissance Project: A Phase One Proposal for Greenwin Property Management*. This document initiated the work that followed. It provided an early blueprint for some of the later strategies such as community gardens,

commissioning the Quality of Neighbourhood Life survey, and forming a neighbourhood association.

3. Canada has instituted a General Social Survey for this reason, however it is only conducted every five years and those years did not coincide with the QNLS. In addition, data from that survey are aggregated across the whole country and did not provide useful insight into the immediate Jane-Finch area.

4. Once the initial research was complete, the subsequent development occurred under the leadership of a community organizer, Stephnie Payne. She was familiar with the area and now serves as executive director of the neighbourhood association that became known as the San Romanoway Revitalization Association.

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