

Community Safety Committee Research: Executive Summary

Community Safety Committee of Hamilton originated in the GALA Neighbourhood, recognizing and responding to the needs of the community. Julie Michal and Joanne Gibbons from the GALA Hub, reached out to neighbouring hubs and community members to identify the need for the following project and collaborated with a McMaster University Student Researcher, Yishi Sun, with supervision by Ms. Margaret Secord. From September 2015 to April 2016, a literature review was conducted with the following research question:

What is the spectrum of community participation and engagement initiatives that contribute to an increase in neighbourhood safety in an urban residential setting?

The findings from this literature review explore both the theory behind concepts of community participation and engagement initiatives as well as examples of their implementation along with their respective successes and areas of improvement.

Social Cohesion: The extent to which neighbours share values, can rely on one another for support, and act upon common goals. It can be a significant predictor of actual involvement in crime prevention efforts by local communities. Building social cohesion will vary by community but can include: programming in public areas, focus groups, community festivals.¹

Neighbourhood Watch: Community initiative where residents operate as “eyes and ears” and visible surveillance for the neighbourhood, report suspicious behaviour and increase flow of information to the police or neighbourhood coordinator, creating signs of occupancy, and working together to solve problems and enhancing community cohesion.²

Lighting: Improved street lighting has been shown to reduce crime in both day and night time settings. Also has a role in increasing community pride through visible community investment and is more effective in reducing crime in stable homogenous populations.³

Crime prevention through environmental design: Improving community safety through initiatives focused on various aspects of a neighbourhood’s built environment.

- Surveillance: Design that can facilitate opportunities for natural surveillance for residents
- Territoriality: Differentiating private and public space and reinforcing sense of ownership
- Activity Support: Encourage residents’ use of public spaces within the neighbourhood
- Access Control: Reducing opportunities for crime through denying access and heightened perception of risk and detection by residents
- Image and Maintenance: Creating positive image and reducing decay in neighbourhoods
- Target Hardening: Increasing the efforts that offenders must expend for a crime.⁴

Situation Table: Regular held meetings with members from services, organizations, and police in a community to address risk situations in a timely manner. Provides a space for different community partners to collaborate and address acute situations where individuals are at risk.⁵

Sustaining Volunteer Engagement: Many of the community participation and engagement initiatives will require volunteers and sustaining their engagement will be important for ensuring sustainable initiatives. A focus on enriching volunteers’ experience will increase retention such as instilling a sense of pride and respect, recognizing their efforts, providing opportunities for personal

and professional development, matching volunteers to tasks, and having volunteers assist in recruiting other volunteers.⁶

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