

2010 WBDC Safety Plan Summary

Project Description

The Safety Plan is a rough snap shot of this community's current reality with suggestions made for what individuals and agencies could do to improve things. Particular focus is put on the mandate of WBDC and its capacity as a community building organization to make things safer in this neighbourhood. The Safety Plan is WBDC's initial contribution to local dialogue around addressing safety concerns and could ultimately serve as a touchstone for WBDC's own efforts to work with and on behalf of community members.

Main conclusions of Research

- Crime rates in West Broadway, though higher than city averages, are slowly falling and relative safety of community members is improving.
- Some community members face greater risks in their lives than others and need improved supports, particularly youth and low-income renters
- There is a great deal of anxiety and fear in the community, much of it based on perception rather than reality, and that this anxiety is a stumbling block for efforts to build a safer West Broadway.

Broad Strategies for Making West Broadway Safer:

- **More programs for neighbourhood children and youth** – Supporting local efforts to expand afterschool programming, anti-gang initiatives, sports and recreation options for youth, employment and training opportunities, outreach programming, and the introduction of a 24 hour drop-in centre for youth, etc.
- **More emphasis on community policing** – Continue building relations with WPS, lobbying for the return of walking police patrols, pushing for an expansion of the School Resource Officer program, advocating for official relationships between the WPS and community centres, etc.
- **More supports for neighbourhood families** – Support efforts to augment local initiatives that help stabilize and nurture families and individuals in need. Examples include healing circles, parenting programs, programs for street involved women and single mothers, addictions programming, etc.
- **More supports for tenants** – Continue to bolster supports for local residents who are currently housed in unstable or inappropriate accommodations. Continue offering support for agencies and businesses working to address core housing needs in West Broadway, and decreasing neighbourhood mobility rates by advocating for stronger government response to rising rents and rental displacement.
- **Improving mobility and safety for pedestrians/cyclists** – Support efforts to: improve lighting, add speed bumps on side streets/lanes, create distinct cycling lanes on major streets, improve traffic law enforcement for intersections and crosswalks, introduce traffic calming measure for pedestrian oriented streets, etc.
- **Work to alleviate fear in the community** – Continue educating with community members on both the root causes of crime and real, as opposed to perceived dangers, while working to create opportunities for residents to interact and get to know one another.

- **Work to ensure that existing crime prevention mechanisms are widely used and accessible** - Work to bolster the awareness, use and capacity of existing resources.
- **Work to encourage stable housing and poverty reduction in West Broadway and for the broader community**—Lobby for improvements to income and housing supports for those most vulnerable to victimization/involvement in criminal activity.

Direct Strategies for Making West Broadway Safer:

- **Block meetings and block parties**
- **More supports for tenants/residents**
- **Safety Audits**
- **Neighbourhood Watch/Block Parents**
- **Graffiti removal program**
- **Improved garbage removal**
- **Newcomer welcoming wagon**
- **Safety walks and ‘Take Back the Night’ marches**

For WBDC in particular, the first year of this process has strengthened our understanding of local priorities and shed light on both the strengths and weaknesses of existing safety efforts. It has reinforced our commitment to safety as an agency priority and introduced fresh ideas for how to move forward.

Based on the findings and recommendations of the Safety Plan, WBDC will introduce 2 projects which will begin implementing as many local safety strategies as possible over the next 2 years:

1) **The WBDC Safety Through Community Engagement Project** will educate with community members on both the root causes of crime and real, as opposed to perceived dangers, while working to create opportunities for residents to interact and get to know one another. Staff will also work to ensure that existing crime prevention mechanisms are widely used and accessible. A safety Coordinator will be available as a resource to residents, businesses, and agencies in West Broadway and will facilitate access to the above mentioned initiatives

2) **The WBDC Rental Safety Program** will support tenants in maintaining longer tenancies, building relationships with landlords and neighbours, and improving the physical safety of their units and buildings. Longer term tenancies dovetail into more community involvement/accountability and lessen the feeling of fear associated with high turnover rates and not knowing neighbours. Longer term tenancies also provide landlords with greater income security and require less short term maintenance investments.

- WBDC programming can assist in improving tenant safety by facilitating physical changes within a building (small improvements such as swing bar locks and peepholes or working with tenants to lobby for larger repairs that require a landlord’s investment), improving access and understanding of rights and responsibilities, or opening up lines of communication between tenants and property management representatives. WBDC can offer in-suite safety audits, advocacy, letter writing, hosting public education events on rental issues and rights/responsibilities, and organizing tenants groups to work collectively on shared goals.