

CPTED AUDIT OF WESTON ROAD AND LAWRENCE AVENUE WEST

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Southwest corner of Weston Rd and Lawrence Ave W.

DISCLAIMER

CPTED – Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design – is a method of manipulating an environment in order to lessen the risk of opportunistic crime and disorderly conduct. Unfortunately, there is no method that will totally eliminate problems, but attention to detail and an effort to improve the surroundings often have a positive outcome with respect to users of the space.

INTRODUCTION

The corner of Weston and Lawrence has been the centre of Weston's business area since the inception of Weston as a town in 1892. The area has undergone many transitions and unfortunately, is now seeing a rise in disorderly conduct and crime in general. It's believed this increase is a result of several factors including economic, social, and housing issues related to the community. Previous recent attempts have been made to reduce disorderly conduct and crime in the area with little success.

Some of the issues identified by local residents and business owners are: disorderly conduct, public urination and defecation, assaults, shoplifting, drug dealing, and lack of behavioural restraints in people in crisis. This affects the population at large which is comprised of a very multicultural populace in a wide variety of economic situations. Due to fear instilled by these disorderly behaviours, people advise that they feel uneasy using this public space and the businesses suffer, not only from a decrease in customers, but also from the challenge of dealing with this small group of persons who engage in these behaviours on a daily basis.

The goal of this CPTED audit is to evaluate the area and make suggestions that may decrease this unwanted behavior so that the area becomes safer for everyone. In this case, we evaluated the area in and around the intersection of Weston Road and Lawrence Avenue West. There were many factors to

consider. Some areas were identified as more problematic than others and will require further attention.

There are several high-rise buildings in the immediate area: two of which are owned by Toronto Community Housing (1901 Weston Rd and 5 Bellevue). Two others (1765 and 1775 Weston Rd) are privately owned. All four buildings face several challenges of their own. Some of these challenges contribute to the issues being reported within the intersection and it would be advantageous to work with our community partners in this regard in order to secure a plausible solution. This CPTED audit team has not specifically included these buildings in this audit.

Several community service agencies serve the population in this area, addressing a multitude of social and economic issues including addiction, poverty, housing and persons who struggle with mental health. Part of the audit will discuss how working with these community partners could assist to decrease some of the identified issues at this intersection. These are Weston King Neighbourhood Centre, Weston Mount Dennis Community Hub run by Progress Place, and Reconnect that is based in 1901 Weston Rd. Streets to Homes also operates from 1901 Weston Road to house the homeless.

1901 Weston Rd was initially a seniors' residence but has recently become a Streets to Homes location. Information has been received from residents that the incompatibility of these two uses has resulted in the seniors leaving the building as the disorderly conduct within the building makes them feel unsafe. They also advise they no longer see on-site security in the building.

The architecture of the buildings contributes to the problem as there are many alcoves, especially in 1901 Weston and the Westlaw building. These serve as shelters and unofficial public toilets to those who loiter in the area, making it extremely unpleasant for the businesses and those who need to access the premises.

On the southeast corner of the intersection, several new construction projects are being planned by developer CastlePoint Numa. Although not reflected in this audit, these new projects are expected to create housing and community spaces in the area within the next 5 years or so.

Also located on the southeast corner of the intersection is a GO - Union Pearson Express (UP) station. Many commuters utilize this facility daily.

NORTH CORNERS

There have been previous attempts to beautify this corner and have it serve as a focus for the business area. Raised bed planters and seating have been installed and it is the home to Weston's historic town clock. Unfortunately, this spot has become the major hang-out spot for those engaging in disorderly conduct. This is particularly an issue for TTC riders waiting at the bus stop at this corner who do not feel safe, as well as the locals who are forced to pass through as they go about their business.



Neglected planters.

Few plants survive in the raised planters. The beds accumulate garbage that includes discarded beer and alcohol bottles. The edges of the planters serve as seating areas that augment the three benches installed by the Weston Village BIA. The elevated curb around the Royal Bank building also serves as an unofficial sofa which is being utilized on a daily basis.

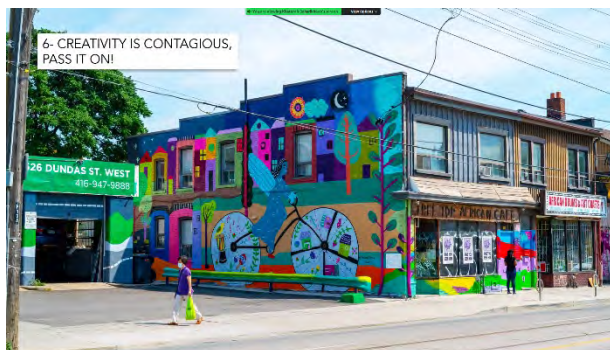
To discourage prolonged seating on the planters, 3 – 5” boulders could be placed unevenly on the surface of the planter walls and sealed in with concrete. Alternately, wrought iron mini-fencing can be embedded in the edges of the planters. Yet a third option is to install inverted “T” bars along the planter walls with wedge anchors and adhesive. This treatment can also be applied to the curb around the RBC building. At least two of the three benches could be moved to alternate locations along the strip to lessen the chance of congregating.



Robust speakers encased in expanded metal mesh cages could be installed on the RBC building high enough to prevent vandalism with all cabling encased in metal conduits. Music could be played at appropriate times to encourage people to move on. Alternately the Mosquito Anti-Loitering device that emits specific frequencies could be used but care must be taken that neither of these options penetrate to adjacent residential areas.

PLACE MAKING AT THE NORTH CORNERS

Recently, a mural was installed at a formerly problematic area to the south of Kensington Market. The mural itself is just a mural. The critical piece is *HOW* the mural was created. The project’s initiator polled most of the users of the area in a multitude of ways with respect to what should be present in the mural. She used social media, surveys, pop-ups, and live encounters on the street. Once all the suggestions were collected, they were turned over to a professional artist who then created two options. Again, people were polled regarding what they liked/disliked about the options. Again, the artist redesigned the mural to incorporate what was wanted and the mural went live with the help of many in the community. Since its creation, the surrounding businesses have become identified with respect to the mural – *‘the garage next to the mural’*, etc. Many have made attempts to improve their properties and the resulting beautification efforts have made the area a mini-tourist destination and business has increased for the merchants.



Thought might be given to applying this community building exercise to the RBC building wall on this corner as an uber marketing tool to draw residents to the BIA area. Again, the emphasis is not just to create a mural, but to have the many entities of the community feed into what should be represented.

Public art does not have to be permanent as in the form of a mural. The lighted arch that was on display to highlight Winterfest is an excellent example of a feature that draws people to the area. The more eyes and feet on the street we create, the greater the safety of the area.

PIGEONS

Other denizens of this corner include an infestation of hundreds of pigeons who are regularly fed by some people despite signs prohibiting this activity. The area is covered with bird droppings - a health hazard that should be addressed quickly as droppings can contain over 60 different parasites, bacteria, and fungi. These birds are not afraid of people and take their time getting out of the way should someone pass through their midst. Perhaps this is why the loiterers prefer sitting on the planters at the periphery rather than on the benches in the middle of the 'square'.

Multiple techniques will likely be necessary to get rid of the pigeon problem. Since their hearing range does not include ultrasonic wavelengths, noise devices in this range will not work. The most effective start will be to eliminate the area as a source of food. Those feeding the birds should be educated about the health hazards of having such a concentration of birds and should be ticketed if necessary. The broken garbage cans on that corner should be replaced and the area – including the planters - should be cleared of trash on a regular basis.

There are companies that provide falcons and hawks to initially chase away the pigeons. After that, lifelike decoys of falcons, hawks and/or owls can be mounted around the RBC building. However, these will need to be changed regularly as the pigeons habituate to static images. Another option is to install bird slides or bird wire on the ledges immediately above the brickwork of the RBC building that will prevent them getting a grip on the ledge. However, this will not prevent them from roosting on the hydro wires.



To serve and protect!

Where allowable, birth control measures can also be used to control the population. One mating pair can produce more than twelve offspring a year. Five mating pairs of pigeons can produce up to 400 offspring in their lifetime of two years, so a bit of prevention is something to consider. Please consult Toronto Animal Control for by-law regulations in regards to this method.

Pigeons are repelled by the scent of certain plants such as peppermint, garlic, onions and spices such as hot chilli peppers, vinegar, and cumin. They are also deterred by moving shiny reflective surfaces. This suggests a couple of things. One, including peppermint in the plant beds and two inserting 'mobile art structures' made from aluminum plates and old CDs into the beds as well. These structures could be created by children from the various agency programs such as Frontlines, Weston Library, etc.

ALCOVES AND PUBLIC URINATION

The Westlaw building contains the majority of businesses on the southwest corner of this area. Unfortunately, it was designed with alcoves for the entrances to the retail units. This feature is continued in the adjacent buildings. In some cases, such as 1942 Weston Rd, there is an alcove within the alcove, making it a perfect place for the homeless or impaired persons to occupy. This secondary internal alcove could be walled off, even with just a piece of plywood that could be used for advertising purposes. This would not interfere with the sight lines from within the shop. On the northwest corner, the problem continues with most of the shop entrances set back from the building walls.



Angled storefronts at 1901 Weston Rd

In a variation of this theme, the retail section of 1901 Weston Rd is designed with a series of zig-zags such that the storefronts around the building are visible to anyone on the corner looking eastward. While this is a good CPTED strategy for making those entrances visible, the downside is that hidden corners are created.

All of these areas – alcoves and hidden corners – are beset with people using them as toilets. One solution to this problem is to treat the lower walls of these areas with super-hydrophobic paint or coatings.

Motion sensor lighting can be located in vestibules where urination is a problem. The sudden bright light with or without the use of an overhead mounted convex stainless-steel mirror may deter such activity at night.

The main entrance to the Westlaw building consists of an interior alcove that gives access to a shop, the elevator to doctors' offices, and to the locked door to the residential units. This makes controlled access problematic. While the street door



Alcoves used as public toilets. Note the debris in the corners and the deterioration of the walls.



The Westlaw's main entrance

could remain unlocked during business hours, it should have key or fob access afterwards to eliminate loitering in the vestibule.

LIGHTING

The majority of the lighting in this area is provided by decorative lamps and standard street lamps. However, the covers of the decorative lamps are extremely dirty and hence the illumination provided is seriously compromised. These should be cleaned and the lighting

should be replaced with LED fixtures to increase illumination while decreasing hydro costs.

The lighting on the southwest corner is minimal, provided by fixtures housing high pressure sodium lamps (HPS), some of which are burned out. The businesses and the city should decide what the intended goal is to be for this corner. At night, the lighting is equivalent to that of a secondary road. When contrasted with the rest of the area, the corner is dark. At times, there has been attempts to use this corner to liven up the street life at night using, for example, buskers. However, the relative darkness made the performer extremely uneasy.

Consideration might be given to using dual lighting. LED illumination early in the evening, giving way to low pressure sodium (LPS) lighting in place of the HPS lamps is one way to discourage congregating in an area. Alternately, LED lighting such as is found at the GO-UP Express station could be installed, making the area highly visible.



Note the dirty light fixture.

EXTERIOR DOORS

The recommended space between an entry door and the frame is less than 3 mm. This is to prevent access to the deadbolt in a break-and-entry attempt. While most of the doors in this area do have deadbolts, the space between the door and the frame exceeds 3 mm, leaving the bolt exposed. In addition, this extra space can accommodate a crow bar that could be used to pry open the door. The use of an astragal, a plate that covers the gap for the full length of the door, is recommended. Otherwise, a strike cover plate should be installed such that it covers 6" above and 6" below the lock. As a benefit, closing the gap would reduce energy costs.

Doors themselves should be of solid construction rather than hollow frame.



Note the large gap between the door and its frame (arrow). An astragal or, at minimum, a strike cover plate should cover the lock area.

CAMERAS

It is not possible to make useful recommendations without seeing the images captured by cameras in order to detect dead spots, image quality problems, placement issues, etc. This was not done on this audit and given the territory covered, would require a separate audit to do a proper assessment. One recommendation for this future audit would be to develop a list of businesses and residential units that have operating cameras. The list should clearly link each camera to its coverage area in order to easily access footage when required. The list would include the contact person from whom to obtain video (including after hours). The audit should ensure that camera lenses are clean, adjusted correctly and operating properly. This will assist police obtain images of suspects and crime occurrences more quickly.

GARBAGE AND GRAFFITI

Some graffiti was noted on walls on the main strip along Weston Rd. However, there was significantly more in the alley adjacent to the BIA office. Garbage had also been dumped there adding to the perception that this area is uncared for. Part of the issue is the outdoor storage of material in the alley that belongs to the BIA. While it is covered with a tarp, it does not give the appearance that it is supposed to be there, hence others feel entitled to leave their rubbish and/or mark the walls with graffiti. An alternate site should be found to store the items and the alley should be cleaned up. This is particularly important as we were advised of personal safety concerns from businesses along John St.

WINDOWS

Several windows in the area are covered with advertising and/or product. This prevents persons inside the store monitoring activities going on outside and vice versa. Keeping windows clear usually increases safety as assistance is more easily rendered when required. Window displays in all cases should be attractive in order to entice customers.

Check out stations are best located near the exit doors and sightlines between the cash and the door should not be obscured by displays. Cash register drawers should be left in the open position in view of the window to signal that there is no cash on hand, decreasing the chance of a break in.

If the threat of broken windows is a concern, protective coverings are available that will prevent intrusion even if the window is broken. In the event of a broken window, the covering also keeps the glass in tact, making clean up quicker and safer. These products come in a variety of weights, the heaviest being bomb proof. The product must be installed properly if it is to function as designed. The film must extend into the window frame and not just cover the exposed glass.



BUILDING NUMBERING

The street numbers of the individual shops should be clearly marked with large numbers of contrasting colour to where they are mounted. Numbers should also be marked on any rear doors of the premises. This allows quick identification of a building in case of emergency. All rear doors should be kept locked at all times unless they can be monitored directly from within the shop. In addition, such doors should be equipped with a peep hole/optical viewer so that a cursory threat assessment can be conducted before the door is opened. This would be in addition to any camera that was mounted in this area.

MISCELLANEOUS

1. Merchants should make sure that their outgoing phone calls display the store's name and address in case someone has to call 911 and cannot talk. This way, the location can be traced faster. In an emergency, every second counts.
2. Some store windows are completely covered. If the door to such a business is locked during business hours, and there is no doorbell or intercom, this might contribute to a difficult situation if there was an emergency inside the unit.
3. On the south wall of 1938 Weston Rd, the wiring should be encased, the graffiti removed, and the 'cash drop' be removed as it is no longer appropriate.
4. Church's Chicken is located in the old BMO building at the corner of Weston Rd and John St. The main entrance does not lead directly into the restaurant but rather to an alcove where the old bank's ATM is located. Staff of Church's Chicken has identified this as a problem area due to loitering, safety concerns for people using the ATM, and for access control to the restaurant giving rise to possible liability issues. The ATM could be re-located for access to the outside. The adjacent window can be reconfigured to accommodate this. The secondary door leading into the restaurant should be removed once this modification has taken place.



This entrance served as access to RBC's ATM as well as the restaurant which is open until 5 AM. The ATM can be moved to the existing window area giving access from the street (Left mage from Google Maps).

5. The restaurant is open until 5 AM which is a concern as there are no other businesses open at that time that may be able to render assistance if needed. They are considering switching to 'take out' only after normal business hours for the area. The side window on John St could be reconfigured to accommodate distributing the orders as it is close to the kitchen and would be the least expensive way to deal with take-outs without the need for the customer to enter the premises. With respect to their garbage disposal, stronger leak-proof bags and containers should be used as the sidewalk where they put their garbage for pick up has heavy grease stains that could create a slip and fall situation.
6. On the alley wall of 4 John St, there is an opening that was formerly either a window or a display box. Currently it is a neither here-nor-there structure that could be either restored to its original use or closed off completely.
7. The space between 1901 and 1911 Weston Rd is currently blocked off by a mini-fence. A solid barrier should replace this as the spot gathers garbage and debris that is difficult to remove.
8. The main entrance to 1901 Weston Rd presents a serious challenge. Not only is it an access point to the residential floors, but there are also businesses within the corridor as well as access to York West Active Living. This makes controlling access an issue. Users of this space report a



Entrance to 1901 Weston Rd giving access to the mall, the residential floors and the seniors' centre. The building is home to seniors, Reconnect clients, and Streets to Homes clients.

major loitering problem that often involves drug use and disorderly conduct. It could be beneficial if a committee were formed of TCHC, the various agencies that serve building tenants, York West Services for Seniors, as well as building tenants themselves who could collectively devise strategies to make the building safer for all users.

CONCLUSIONS

Weston is a vibrant community with a history going back to 1795. As with most communities, the area goes through cycles of boom and bust. Currently, there is momentum to bring back its former luster. People should take advantage of this energy and build a community where everyone has a place.

- Lighting issues need to be addressed;
- Building maintenance issues should be attended to;
- The future of the southwest corner should be decided and re-designed accordingly;
- Planters and other street structures should be modified to prevent loitering;
- The vegetation in the planters should be rejuvenated to make the area more attractive;
- Pigeon control should be initiated;
- Business hours should be coordinated to provide a safe workplace;
- Service agencies and TCHC could collaborate to address collective issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

- That the corner of Weston and Lawrence be upgraded with LED lighting, pigeon control, and next summer, a community-led mural on the wall of the RBC building (*see Place Making*). If loitering remains a problem, then anti-seating strategies be put in place.
- That planters be rejuvenated appropriately.
- That all light fixtures be properly cleaned and re-lamped with LED bulbs.
- That super-hydrophobic paint be applied to areas where public urination is an issue.
- That motion sensor lights be installed in all alcoves where loitering and/or public urination is an issue.
- That alcoves be removed in places where it is possible to do so by minor modification.
- That strike cover plates or preferably, astragals, be installed on all doors with more than 3 mm between the door and the frame.
- That all exterior doors be either solid steel or in the case of glass doors, be covered by properly installed break-resistant film.
- That all front and back doors be numbered with respect to street address and that back doors be kept locked at all times.
- That garbage and graffiti be removed and that maintenance to this effect be ongoing.
- That windows be unobstructed by signage and/or merchandise.
- That in the case of businesses that choose to keep their windows covered, an intercom or doorbell be installed.

- That the ATM at Church's Chicken be relocated for exterior access from John St and the secondary door on the Weston Road entrance to the restaurant be removed.
- That after closing hours of other Weston Rd businesses, Church's Chicken serve only takeout orders through the window adjacent to the exit door on John St.
- That dead spaces be blocked off with fencing.
- That a separate audit be done to assess the effectiveness of the cameras in the area and to compile a catalog of available cameras along with contact information for quick access.
- That all agencies in this area mandated to care for those with addictions and/or mental health issues collaborate to maximize care for those who need their assistance.
- That the Toronto Police Service increase patrols in this area.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Audit report prepared by 12 Division's CPTED Audit Team. November 2022.

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