

Walkability in Toronto's Apartment Neighbourhoods

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON WALKABILITY WORKSHOP FOR THE CHALKFARM- BLACK CREEK COMMUNITY

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INTRODUCTION

This document reports on a “Walkability Workshop” held at the Chalkfarm Community Centre in the Black Creek neighbourhood of Toronto in March, 2009. The workshop is part of a larger study called *Walkability in Toronto’s Apartment Neighbourhoods* that will incorporate information gathered from approximately 10 Toronto neighbourhoods. The goal of the study is to explore the ways residents living in high-rise areas get around their neighbourhoods and, especially, to highlight the importance of walking for residents in carrying out their daily lives. It is intended to identify what works for pedestrians, barriers to walking, and possible improvements to the local walking environment.

In **Part One**, this report gives some background on the overall project. In **Part Two**, we describe how the walkability workshop was conducted and how the information will be used. In **Part Three**, we summarize some of the information gathered at the Chalkfarm workshop. The report is intended to give preliminary feedback to participants and others interested in the walking environment of the area. It is largely a straight forward reporting of the information we gathered and does not offer analysis or substantial interpretations of what we heard. This analysis will occur at a later time, as we gather more information and work with the data. As analysis proceeds, supplement reports will be produced that explore and interpret the rich information gathered in this and the other workshops in the study.

PART ONE: STUDY BACKGROUND

The study *Walkability in Toronto’s Apartment Neighbourhoods* is being conducted by Professor Paul Hess of the Department of Geography at the University of Toronto, in association with Jane Farrow, Executive Director of the Centre for City Ecology, Toronto. Our contact information can be found at the top of this document. We welcome any questions about this report or the overall study.

The authors recognize the Social and Humanities Research Council of Canada for helping to fund the research. We also are very grateful to the local community organizations that have helped us organize our workshops. At Chalkfarm, this was Doorsteps Neighbourhood Services that arranged use of the Chalkfarm Community Centre, organized volunteers and provided enormous overall support. And finally, we are especially grateful to the local residents who participated in the workshop and showed such commitment to and deep knowledge about their neighbourhood.

The overall goal of the research project is to help better understand the ways people get around Toronto’s high-rise apartment neighbourhoods, especially by walking. Building on arguments Toronto activist Jane Jacobs espoused more than 40 years ago, the importance of creating good places for people to walk is increasingly being recognized by transportation experts and public officials. Planners and architects have pushed the idea of “New Urbanism,” arguing that new neighbourhoods should

be built more like the Annex or Cabbagetown neighbourhoods of downtown Toronto, with connected streets and houses that directly front sidewalks. Public health researchers and officials even suggest that the ways we are designing our cities has contributed to the recent rise in physical inactivity and obesity because people no longer walk as part of their regular, daily activities.

These discussions, however, are usually focused on downtown areas or new developments in the outer suburbs. This study is intended to highlight the travel routines of the many people living in Toronto's inner suburbs. As individuals interested in making better walking environments, we believe that Toronto's high-rise neighbourhoods are important places to focus attention.

The high-rise neighbourhoods in the inner suburbs were planned and developed in the 1960's and 1970's. At that time, it was assumed that most of the people living in the new apartments did not have children, would move to houses as soon as they could, and would be able to drive to the places they needed to go. The single-family subdivisions in these areas were, at least, designed so that children could walk to school, but the apartments on the big arterial streets were not places designed for walking.



Today, however, a different population is living in the high-rise neighbourhoods; often people with limited incomes, people with children and complicated travel needs, and people who do not own a car or only have access to a car part of the time. In other words, neighbourhoods that were designed for cars now house people that must rely on walking and transit to carry out their lives. This study is intended to better understand how these residents get around their neighbourhoods, especially by walking. Our goal is to share this information with the people who live in these areas so they can better advocate for improvements.

This is a good time for residents to make clear what they want and need to be improved in their neighbourhoods because of policies and programs being developed by the City of Toronto. The City is working with local community organizations and developing policies and programs for 13 Priority Areas that include many of the high-rise apartment areas. It is developing a "Walking Strategy" that includes these areas, to "make Toronto a great walking city." It is currently developing a "Tower Renewal" program that also promises to bring improvements to apartment areas. Finally, the City has an ambitious transit plan, "Transit City" that could bring light-rail and other transportation improvements to some of these neighbourhoods. All these initiatives offer some potential for changing apartment neighbourhoods into better places to live.

The authors do not represent the city and we do not know what will become of these various initiatives, but we strongly believe that better information about how residents use their neighbourhoods is crucially important to making positive change. For these efforts to be successful and make Toronto a better place for its residents, we believe that the residents themselves must have a strong voice and play a central role in decision-making. We are doing this work to provide both residents and the City with information to help foster this objective.



PART TWO: WHAT HAPPENS IN THE WORKSHOPS AND HOW THE INFORMATION WILL BE USED

The workshops take place with the assistance of local neighbourhood or community organizations. The organizations recruit local residents to participate, provide a location to meet, and provide other support such as volunteer assistance for setting up and cleaning up. We strive to include a wide range of types of residents in terms of age and background and we make sure that childcare and some translation support is available if needed. All information gathered in the workshop is treated as confidential and identifying information of any participant is not collected.

WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES TO GATHER INFORMATION

After an introduction to the project, three activities take place in the workshop to explore how residents travel:

(1) Survey

Each participant fills out a survey consisting of roughly 40 questions. The survey contains background information on the participant such as age, household income, whether or not there are children in the household, how long the resident has lived in the area, how many cars and drivers are in their household if any, etc. This information is useful in understanding the transportation resources and needs of residents and in exploring different travel patterns by different types of people. The survey also asks more directly about the activities people travel to on a regular basis and how they get to them. For example, people are asked where they do their food shopping, how many times a week they shop for food, and if they usually go shopping by walking, transit, driving, taxi, etc. Finally, the survey asks a series of questions about how people find the walking environment in the area, whether they

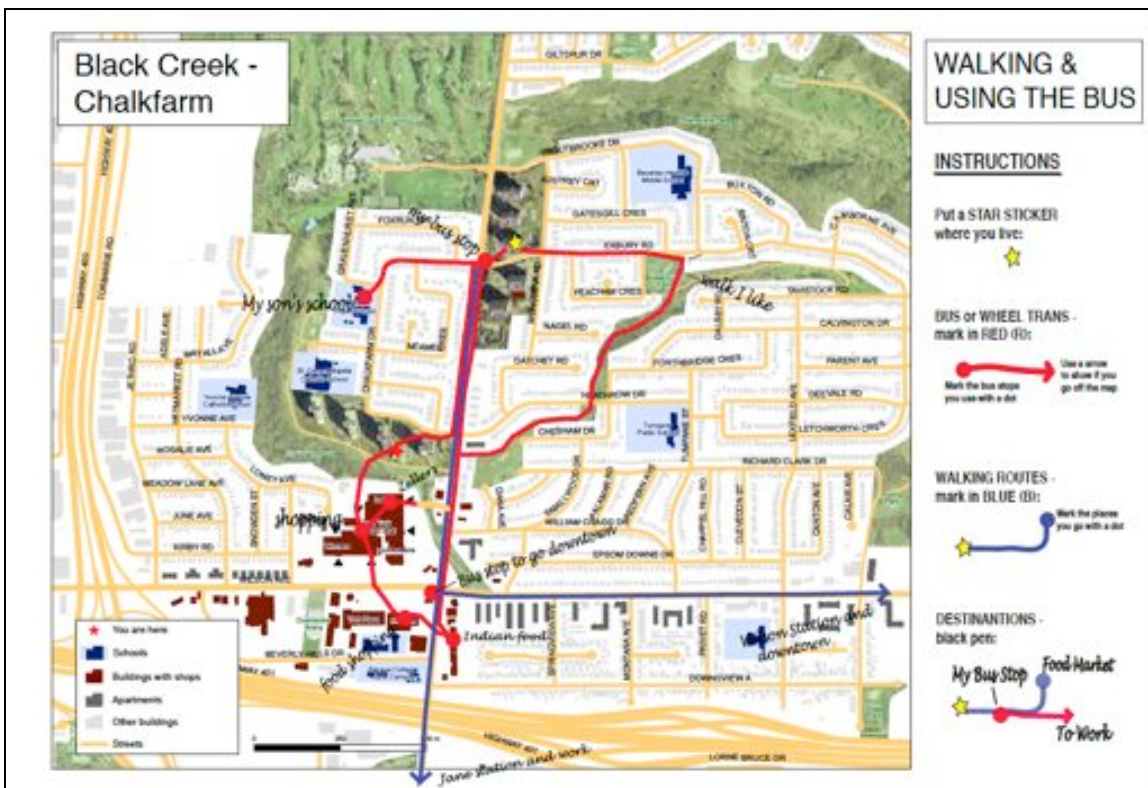
feel safe walking, whether traffic is a problem, etc.

A summary of much of this information is presented below. It will be further explored and presented with tables and graphs in subsequent reports.

(2) Individual maps

Participants are asked to create maps that show how and where they travel. Each participant is given a set of maps on which to draw. Using coloured pens to represent different modes of travel (walking, bus, auto, bicycling), participants are instructed to trace all the trips they regularly take during a typical week when the weather is warm. Participants are asked to show their actual routes and to label their destinations. When they travel outside of the area on the map, they are asked to note their eventual destination. This information is being entered into a Geographical Information System (GIS) that can be used to analyze the distances people travel by various modes for different activities, the types of streets they tend to use and the directness of their walking routes. This map information can also be connected to surveys for further statistical analysis.

This type of analysis is very intensive. It will be included in the final report but is not ready for this preliminary document.



Hypothetical Example of Individual Map for Walking and Bus Trips (can it include legend of red-bus, blue-walk?)

(1) Preliminary report

This current document is a preliminary report. It is intended to give feed back from the Chalkfarm workshop. Similar reports will be produced for each neighbourhood that participates. The reports describe the project, describe who participated in the workshop and give a first cut at what the researchers heard from participants. The report will be made available to the Chalkfarm Community Centre and Doorsteps Neighbourhood Services. Copies for download can also be found at the author's websites. See the contact information at the top of this document for the addresses. We will give updates to this report as we continue to analyze the data. We also welcome additions or corrections by residents.

(2) Final report

A final report will be made that includes the information gathered from all of the neighbourhood's studies. This report will include a full analysis of all the data and make general conclusions about what we learned. We will discuss the walking and transportation issues in the neighbourhoods as a whole, as well as compare them to each other. Like the preliminary report, we will make this report available to the local organizations that worked with us and post it on our websites. We will also provide copies to the relevant people and committees at the City of Toronto including the Mayor, City Councillors, Public Realm Office, Tower Renewal Office, and Pedestrian Committee.

(3) Academic papers and presentations

We also hope to add to the growing literature on walking and we will publish academic papers in planning journals and present at conferences based on the study. The goal is to help other planners and academics better understand pedestrian issues in these types of environments.

PART THREE: THE CHALKFARM WALKABILITY WORKSHOP

The workshop was held on a Friday afternoon in March 2009 with a diverse group of enthusiastic participants. The following summarizes some of the information we gathered from the 30 participants who completed the individual maps, survey, and small group exercise, for which there were three groups.

First, we present information gathered from the survey to describe who participated and their general travel patterns. This information is given in percentages to help better compare the range of responses but it should be remembered that the total numbers are small. For example, 10 percent of respondents constitutes only 3 people.

The following sections presents the more qualitative information on what people said about their walking environment.

WHO PARTICIPATED?

Participants in the workshop were a diverse group of people, but should not be seen as representative of the neighbourhood as a whole. This section describes socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, according to the survey responses.

Sex and age

About two-thirds (73%) were female and one-third (27%) male. The age range spanned from under 18 to the most populous age range, 40-65 (44%). Fewer people in their late teens and early twenties, 18-24, attended (19%).

Housing and household types

More than two-thirds of the participants (82%) live in apartments and an even higher percentage (86%) rent their homes. While most participants may live in similar types of housing, the composition of the households they come from are varied. Almost half (41%) of the participants came from households of couples with children, a little fewer (31%) were single parents, and less were single participants with no kids (18%). No participants came from households of couples without children, and the remainder (10%) came from unrelated adults living in a household together.

Income and education

Participants were mostly from low-income households, with 41% of the respondents reporting household incomes of under \$24,000 a year and another 20% reporting incomes of \$25,000-\$39,000 a year. Only a couple people (8%) reported income above these levels, with the remainder leaving this question blank or reporting they did not know.

While income levels were low, levels of education were high, with 40% reporting attending college or university. A slightly lower percentage (36%) reported finishing high school.

Time in Canada and language at home

The overwhelming majority (89%) of respondents were born outside Canada. The length of time respondents have lived in Canada was highly varied, approximately one-third reported living in Canada for more than 10 years, 20% reported living in Canada 5-10 years, and 10% living 1-5 years in Canada. There was a significant number of participants (30%) having arrived in Canada within the past year. Additionally, 11% of the participants reported having lived in Canada their entire life.

The languages spoken at home reflect the high number and diversity of the non-native Canadian participants. In total, 88% report speaking a language other than English at home, with almost half of these respondents speaking Spanish. Other languages spoken at home were reported as Somali, Bengali, Creole, Tagalog, Yuruba, Korean and Twi.

Length of time in neighbourhood and reasons for residence

A significant number of participants (30%) have lived in the area for less than 6 months. The remainder of the participants were fairly equally divided (16-20%) in having lived in the area from less than a year, to a few years, to 10 years or more.

When asked to pick from a list of reasons they choose to live in the neighbourhood, the highest response (34%) was “to be close to work or school.” Being “close to family and friends” was the next highest response (23%), followed equally by amenities (15%) and affordability (13%) as reasons why respondents chose to live in the neighbourhood.

Employment

The employment situations of the participants were varied, with half of the participants unemployed. Amongst the remaining participants, 30% are students, 13% work full-time and one participant works multiple part-time jobs.

Driver’s licence and auto ownership

Almost a full half of respondents (47%) report that their household does not own a car or other motor vehicle but the majority of participants (62%) report having a driver’s licence. The remaining 38% of the respondents do not have a driver's licence, though the majority would like to obtain or plan to obtain their licence.

TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR

The socio-demographic characteristics of the participants suggest a population that is highly dependent on walking and transit for meeting the needs of their households. This section describes general travel patterns of the participants in terms of how often they do common activities like shopping, where some of these activities occur – whether locally or outside the area – and the mode of travel – walking, bus, driving, biking or other modes. It confirms the importance of walking and transit for the participants.

Going to work and school

Of the participants who work outside the home or go to school, more than half (61%) do so within the neighbourhood, emphasizing that local travel is very important for most. Most participants get to work or school by bus (50%), followed by walking (36%). Only 13% get to work by car, either as a driver or a passenger.

Frequency and mode of other activities

The following activities requiring travel were most commonly done at least once or twice a week by at least half of the participants: food shopping, general shopping and errands, taking kids to school, and taking kids to other activities. Going to a park

or playground every week was reported by three-quarters of respondents. Walking or running for pleasure is also very common, with 62% of participants reporting they do at least once a week, including 37% of participants that report they do so at least 3 times a week.

Using the bus and walking most commonly dominate as the usual mode of travel for necessary household activities. For food shopping, 41% of participants report they usually walk, followed by 28% who take the bus and only 26% who drive. For general shopping (other than for food), a third usually walk and 27% percent rely on the bus. Using the car, either as the vehicle driver or passenger, also accounted for 30% of how respondents did their general shopping and errands. For taking children to school, 55% report they walk, 14% take the bus, and 21% report driving. For taking children to other activities, walking is again the dominant mode of transportation (46%), with taking the bus and driving having equal responses of 21%.

Where people shop

Because shopping is such an important activity for households and requires regular trip making, several questions in the survey further asked for information about shopping.

More than two-thirds of participants (82%) report they do most of their shopping near their home. This number is most likely affected by the significant number of participants currently unemployed, which limits the number of responses of shopping near work or in-between work and home. People regularly shop at the Sheridan Mall and Yorkdale Mall. To a lesser extent, the Jane/Finch Mall and Lawrence Square were also mentioned as shopping locations. Grocery stores are located in the Sheridan Mall (a Food Basics) and in the shopping plaza on the southside of Wilson (a No Frills). Some residents noted they prefer the No Frills which requires a difficult street crossing.

In terms of choosing their shopping location, price was listed most frequently as a factor in determining where to shop by respondents (22%). Transportation available (19%) and length of time to get there (16%) were also significant factors. Also rated as important, but somewhat less so, were the factors of ability to combine with other errands and availability of culturally specific goods, both 14%.

HOW PARTICIPANTS SEE THEIR TRAVEL ENVIRONMENT

This section draws information from both the survey and the small group exercise. It contains participant's evaluations of their pedestrian environment. More general comments about the neighbourhood and its public spaces follow.

General evaluation of pedestrian environment

The survey had a series of questions that asked people to rate the neighbourhood travel environment. For most of these, participants were presented with a statement and were asked to mark a response on a five-point scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree.' The broadest statement given was "My neighbourhood is a good place for walking." The responses to the statement were mixed- 30% agreed, 30% disagreed and 20% were neutral in stating their neighbourhood is a good place for walking. The majority disagreed that their neighbourhood was safe from traffic (42%) and strongly disagreed that they feel comfortable letting their children walk to places on their own (46%). Responses to safety in crossing, use of shortcuts, and jaywalking were less conclusive.

Among the responses to major barriers participants felt in daily travel within their neighbourhood, the two most frequent barriers cited were poor sidewalks (23%) and feeling not safe (20%). Specific factors of the pedestrian environment are discussed in greater detail below.

General sidewalk conditions

Participants identified the sidewalks on Jane Street as the ones they use most for carrying out their daily activities including grocery shopping, general shopping, and going to the bus stop. The narrowness of the sidewalks on Jane street was raised by several participants as a problem. One participant noted that since the sidewalks are so narrow, it is easy to bump into people walking in the opposite direction. Participants also reported that vehicles travelling at high speeds on Jane Street often inadvertently splash dirty water on pedestrians on the sidewalks. This is particularly a problem where Jane comes down the hill from Sheppard Avenue at the low point where it crosses Black Creek, and in places where there are potholes that fill up with water and melted snow. Participants noted that even people waiting in the bus shelters sometimes get splashed.

The sidewalks into the mall area on the bridge from Jane Street by the Tim Hortons was described as being very poor, narrow, and without curb ramps for wheelchairs, carriages, scooters, or shopping carts. Missing sidewalks were identified behind the fire station and in front of the Tim Hortons where there is often mud. Letchworth and Deevale streets, when walking east from Beverly Middle School, were also areas identified as places where sidewalks were desired. Participants reported having to walk in the road due to the lack of sidewalks on these streets. Additionally near the middle school, there is a big hole in the sidewalk on Exbury, just west of Jane.



Snow clearance

The condition of sidewalks and paths due to poor snow clearance was mentioned in all groups as an important issue. Participants reported that sidewalks are not cleared well enough and uncleared snow is a major barrier to walking in the neighbourhood during the wintertime. Participants reported that in some places the piles of snow are so high that it is difficult for them to get on the sidewalk and impossible to cross or climb over the snow banks. The city has identified the piling of snow at intersections as a pedestrian issue in some areas of the city, but it is not clear whether this neighbourhood is receiving attention in this regard.

Specific areas highlighted by the participants as needing better snow clearance were the southern branch of Chalkfarm Street (running east/west) along Heathrow Street going to Tumpane Public School, and Jane Street, where clearing the street leaves piles of snow on top of already narrow sidewalks. The pedestrian bridge and paths to the Chalkfarm apartments, and the auto/pedestrian bridge into the mall from Jane by the Tim Hortons were also mentioned as not having good snow clearance. These are both very active pedestrian routes.

Connectivity

An initial inspection of the individual mapping exercise shows that, apart from the pedestrian bridge connecting the Chalkfarm apartments to the Sheridan Mall, people heavily rely on the large arterial streets, especially Jane, to walk to the places they need to go in the neighbourhood. In the survey, participants did not identify the pedestrian network as poorly connected but, in the small group exercise, issues related to connectivity were cited several times by participants.

The length of signal lights and placement of crosswalks were two specific issues that were highlighted. Participants felt the length of some signal lights are not long enough to give them enough time to cross safely. The crosswalk between Dallner Road and Wilson was mentioned as a place with a short crossing signal, and where people often have to run across the street safely. Participants mentioned that the elderly, people with strollers/carts and the disabled find it extra difficult to cross streets.

Related to connectivity, some participants felt that there are not enough crosswalks. Some participants stated that they did not feel comfortable crossing Jane or Wilson Street, except at a light, because of the fast, heavy traffic. However, traffic signals are widely spaced, often requiring a long walk out of the way to go to a safe crossing. Crossing Wilson Avenue between the Sheridan Mall and the shopping plaza on the south side where some residents prefer to do their grocery shopping is clearly a



problem. There is an almost constant stream of pedestrians that risk crossing against four lanes of often heavy, fast traffic without a signal.

Bridge between Sheridan Mall and Chalkfarm Apartments

The bridge behind 180 Chalkfarm provides a direct route between the Sheridan Mall and apartments located on the north side of Black Creek. The bridge, which is heavily used, was the subject of much passionate discussion during the small group sessions.

Participants stated access to the bridge was difficult because of a steep slope between the apartment towers and the foot of bridge. This is particularly difficult in winter, with slippery conditions. One participant mentioned she had fallen on the slope on numerous occasions. Snow is an additional winter barrier with plowed snow from the parking lot piled near the foot of the bridge.

Additionally, there is a notable difference in height of the bridge surface and the walking surface on either side, to which the bridge does not connect smoothly. This creates a steep ramp at the foot of the bridge that is difficult for people with baby carriages or shopping carts and people with mobility impairments that are constantly using the bridge.



Once across the bridge, there is no clear pathway to the mall entrance, and pedestrians must walk through an area of the parking mall parking lot. Participants noted that cars, often at quite high speeds, cut around the back of the mall through this area as a way to avoid the Jane/Wilson intersection. With blind corners, no signs requiring a stop, and no indication this is an active pedestrian area, some participants reported they often do not feel safe from traffic. Some participants even reported they will around but going walk out to Jane Street to re-enter the mall to avoid using the bridge, even if it is much farther to walk.

Personal security also came up as a concern for people travelling across the bridge and through the parking lot to the mall, and many people mentioned the desire for better lighting through this area. Some participants mentioned “youth hanging out” and “big cars” that are parked near the foot bridge in the mall area where people even set up tables and play cards. Residents weren't sure if whether or not these were people from outside the community. In this context, there was also some discussion of the lack of alternative places for people to gather out of doors.

The Ravines

Many participants felt that Black Creek near 180 Chalkfarm held potential to be used better by the community. Some participants thought the ravine would be nice but that it's too dirty with garbage on the path next to the ravine, as well as people dumping garbage into the river. Others worried about children falling into the river and cited the lack of fencing near the ravine as being dangerous. If the ravine was safer, some participants mentioned they would go to the ravine more than they do.

Garbage

The piles of garbage in various locations of the neighbourhood were repeatedly raised as an issue. In addition to the ravine, some of the other places mentioned had garbage were around No Frills area in the Jane/Finch mall parking lot, the parking lot near the bridge, the community garden in the winter time, and the back of the 180 Chalkfarm building where residents complained about the smells associated with garbage.

Bicycles

While the vast majority of participants do not report using a bicycle, when asked about access for people in bicycles, many participants mentioned that there are bike riders in the area. With the large streets not feeling safe for riding, bikes on the narrow sidewalks was seen as a hazard for pedestrians. Although some participants mentioned riding a bike for pleasure, some families reported not allowing their children to ride because of the danger from traffic.

Security and lighting

Feeling safe when one is out walking is clearly an important concern for creating good pedestrian environments. From the survey and discussion in the small group exercise, personal security is a significant issue for many of the participants. Forty percent of participants marked that not feeling safe is "a major barrier to their daily travel in the neighbourhood," and, in another question asking, "If you feel unsafe walking in certain parts of your neighbourhood, what are some of the reasons why?," only 10% percent of participants marked "Not applicable, I pretty much feel safe."

Several factors were listed for participants to identify what makes them feel unsafe and some of these were not related to personal security such as traffic (marked by 23%). Still, 53% of participants marked 'Poor lighting,' 47% of participants marked "Scary people," 30% marked "Too few people around," 23% marked "Places with trees, bushes or buildings where I can't see who is there," and 20% marked "Places with fences and narrow spaces where I feel nervous." Likewise, when asked about things people do to feel safe, 53% of the participants said they avoid going out at night. Participants also walk with others, keep to the main streets, keep to the lighting, avoid certain streets, and carry a cellphone (all 30%) as other strategies to feel safe travelling in their neighbourhood. The bridge and surrounding area has already

been discussed as an area of general concern, but participants identified other areas that feel isolated and unsafe.

Public spaces

Other than the streets and the mall (which was mentioned as a place people go to walk for exercise), the green spaces around the building, the ravine and the parks constitute the neighbourhood's main public spaces. Some participants thought the neighbourhood around Chalkfarm is a beautiful place to walk, because it's near a ravine and green spaces. The green spaces between the buildings was also identified as a nice place for recreation, one that children frequently use.

However, when asked where people like to go and relax, some participants suggested there were no good places and one participant even said she takes the bus to go to nicer parks away from the area. Personal security was brought up as an issue, but so was the lack of good facilities. The benches in the park area along Black Creek, for example, were all removed some years back and have never been replaced. The pool in the park was highlighted as a place people enjoy but that there are no places to sit in the shade in the park. There is also no evident investment in this park, with no flowers or landscaping as is commonly found in other similar city parks.

Likewise, the extensive Downsview Dells comes right to Jane Street, but there is no formal pathway into the main part of the park, which can only be accessed by road from the single-family neighbourhoods to the east of Jane Street. Many residents did not seem to be aware that there was a major park that immediately adjoins their community.

Many play areas for children were also identified as needing fences and other improvements. For example, residents mentioned that the playground at 180 Chalkfarm needs a fence to keep children separate from the parking lot. A similar concern was raised for the water play area to the west of the Chalkfarm building, that children enjoy, but that has no fencing between the play area and the ravine. The playground at St. Gerard school was deemed 'okay' because there is no parking lot near the playground.

Finally, participants identified a clear lack of places to go for teenagers. In part, this was connected to talk about problems of 'youth' hanging around the bridge, but no good alternatives were identified. The community centre, for example, was identified as being small. It is also clearly in very poor repair. When the workshop was held there, much of the main room was blocked off because of the leaking roof. People specifically mentioned basketball courts and a gym as places that were lacking for teens.

SUMMARY OF THEMES

The information presented above does not fully describe all the comments we heard, all the information collected in the survey, or include a systematic compilation of the notes made on the maps. This work will continue.

However, even the preliminary reporting of information from the workshop brings up some clear themes. First, the participants represent a population that has limited car use, a barrier to mobility in the car-oriented inner suburbs, such as the Black Creek Community. Dependent on walking and transit to carry out their daily lives, most participants shop by foot and bus within the neighbourhood. Many also walk or take the bus locally for work and school.

Overall, people felt that the community was well located and close to many services that people need. Yet, the walking environment posed an issue for many people. Sidewalk and walking conditions along Jane, a major route used by the participants to access the Sheridan Mall, were seen as a problem. In winter, snow removal, ice, and snow banks that people must climb to cross streets or to use the bus was clearly identified as a problem. With Toronto's long winters, this is clearly a major issue for people who have any difficulty walking but must do so to fulfil basic needs. Outside of winter, the sidewalks along Jane were identified as too narrow and crowded.

The bridge behind 180 Chalkfarm is the main route people use to access the Sheridan Mall as it is the most direct. Access to the bridge is difficult due to the steep slope to get to the foot of the bridge, and once at the bridge, the bridge does not connect smoothly to the walking surface. This creates problems for large numbers of people who cross the bridge with shopping carts and strollers, as well for people with mobility impairments. After crossing the bridge, people feel unsafe walking through the parking lot to access the mall due to the lack of a pedestrian pathway and fast moving cars cutting through the parking lot to avoid the Jane/Wilson intersection.

Some people clearly did not feel safe moving about the neighbourhood, partly due to walking conditions but also because of security concerns. Some concerns were related to physical design or insufficient maintenance, while 'scary people' lead others to avoid certain places or avoid going out when it is dark. Better lighting in some area, such as the pedestrian bridge in the north parking lot of the mall was supported by many.

Finally, participants see the natural potential of their neighbourhood, with the adjoining Black Creek Ravine and surrounding parks and green spaces. Currently, the lack of investment and safety precautions deter people from using the spaces. Better lighting, fencing, seating, areas with shade and garbage removal were identified as concrete steps that could be taken to make the public spaces of the neighbourhood more inviting.