



**CHD Partners'  
Community Safety  
Audit Methodology**

**Fairfield City Council  
Package**

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## What is a Community Safety Audit?

A community safety audit is a process of reviewing (generally) public spaces / urban areas and making recommendations about how they can be improved to prevent crime and promote community safety.

Community safety audits are undertaken by small teams. The small teams should consist of local residents / business people, council staff, police and people representing diverse groups within the local community (including different age, gender, ethnicity and mobility groups). Involvement of community members is central to the process, because local community members will have a deep familiarity with an area. This knowledge of how places and spaces are used, locations that feel safe, locations that seem to promote criminal activity, and areas that require repair or remediation will often be known to locals. The knowledge of local people combined with expert knowledge of crime prevention, planning and urban design, increases the likelihood of good outcomes from a team approach.

Audit teams should have diverse representation because it will ensure that different user perspectives are properly integrated into the community safety audit process. This is critical, given the different perspectives people have of public spaces.

Example of how public spaces and crime are viewed differently by different groups is illustrated by the following:

- 44% of females reported choosing not to walk alone in their local area after dark because they felt unsafe, compared with 7% of males.<sup>1</sup>
- “Research in Australia and overseas shows overwhelming evidence that women are fearful of particular situations including:
  - Any mode of transport other than the car
  - Going out at night
  - Walking to the nearest shops
  - Use of public transport, in particular train travel at night
  - Use of a public telephone
  - Walking to a friend’s house
  - Walking through a neighbourhood park or walk home from the cinema, restaurant, bar or pub
  - The situation at either end of a public transport journey
  - The use of city centre car parks particularly at night and if multi-storeyed

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Criminology (2008) **Australian Crime Facts 2007**, Canberra.

- Driving alone at night
- Open spaces (parks and the countryside) and pathways (alleyways and underpasses)".<sup>2</sup>
- When asked about their perceptions of crime in the Australian Social Attitudes survey, 51% of those respondents aged 65 years and older said that it had increased a lot, compared with 25% of the 18-34 year old respondents. This echoed similar findings, which suggests that older respondents tend to hold the most inaccurate perceptions of criminal activity in Australia.<sup>3</sup>
- "But it was not just houses, backyards and shops where migrants were making significant impacts on the wider culture. Migrants, particularly from southern European countries were used to 'going for a walk at night'. During the 1960s most shops were closed at night, but after dark many streets around Fairfield would see groups of migrants strolling and talking or meeting in local parks. Smart Street in the Fairfield shopping district was a favourite spot for such activities".<sup>4</sup>

This information points to some critical issues: females generally are more fearful (and less likely to use) public space (especially at night); older people are generally more fearful than young people (despite the inverse risk of becoming a victim of crime) and different ethnic groups use public spaces differently. These findings should form the back drop to any community safety audit and should ensure that audit teams reflect the diversity and demographic profile of the area.

A further salient issue emerging from these passages and statistics is the temporal patterns of use of public space. Seasonal variables will promote or hinder activity in public spaces. Similarly, times throughout the day will generally see greater activity and movement than during the evenings. Understanding these temporal patterns of use will be best achieved by ensuring community safety audits are conducted at different times. Day and night audits will provide insights into patterns of use that will have implications for lighting, space management and fear of crime.

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<sup>2</sup> Bell, W. (1998) 'Women and Community Safety', Paper presented at the Safer Communities: Strategic Directions in Urban Planning conference, Melbourne 10-11 September 1998, page 3.

<sup>3</sup> Indermaur, D. and Roberts, L. (2005) 'Perceptions of Crime and Justice', in Wilson et al (eds) **Australian Social Attitudes: The First Report**, UNSW Press, Sydney, page 147.

<sup>4</sup> Gapps, S. (2008) **Fairfield: evolution of a migrant city**, Fairfield City Museum and Gallery, Smithfield, page 40.

## How is a Community Safety Audit Conducted?

There are numerous ways that a community safety audit can be undertaken. Some approaches suggest a very detailed process stretching over many weeks or even months. The table below is from the **Guidance on Local Safety Audits – A Compendium on International Practice** report published by the European Union in 2007. This timetable shows that an audit might take up to 12 months following their proposed schedule of activities, which can include analyzing socio-demographic data, reviewing crime statistics, liaising with key stakeholders, establishing an audit steering group, surveying users of an area, conduct site audits, preparing reports and taking relevant action.

Example Of An Audit Timetable

|                |   | Month |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
|----------------|---|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|
|                |   | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Planning       | Set up Audit steering group   | ■     | ■ |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
|                | Appoint audit team and agree on a work programme                    |       | ■ | ■ |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Implementation | Initial appraisal of problems, risk factors and responses (Stage 1) |       |   |   | ■ | ■ | ■ |   |   |   |    |    |    |
|                | Researching topics requiring further investigation (Stage 2)        |       |   |   |   |   | ■ | ■ | ■ |   |    |    |    |
|                | Identifying priorities for action and opportunities (Stage 3)       |       |   |   |   |   |   |   | ■ | ■ | ■  |    |    |
|                | Consulting stakeholders and communicating findings (Stage 4)        |       |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | ■  | ■  | ■  |

While this comprehensive framework for conducting a safety audit is applauded, it is not very practical to adopt such a lengthy process. Rather, a more responsive and less labour intensive approach has been adopted by CHD Partners. This more responsive approach recognizes the need for quicker turn around of such a process, the desirability of having limited administration and acknowledges that community safety audits will frequently focus on a narrow range of variables.

### The CHD Partners' Community Safety Audit Methodology

Reflecting the need for a less labour intensive approach and acknowledging the level of expertise of people generally engaged in community safety audits, the following approach has been developed.

The next three pages outline the methodology. A more detailed description of what is required to complete an audit is then provided.

## CHD Partners' Community Safety Audit Methodology

**Audit Team Members:**

**Audit Dates:**

**Audit Times:**

**Location:** List the locations audited (attach map where appropriate).

**Functions:** List the functions, the activity generators and the movement predictors of the sites reviewed.

**Audit Observations:**

**Day Time Observations:**

**Night Time Observations:**

| <b>Recommended Treatments:</b>   |  |                 |                       |
|--|--|-----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Issue</b>   | <b>Recommended Treatments (including photos where appropriate)</b> | <b>Priority</b> | <b>Responsibility</b> |
| <b>Natural surveillance (including lighting and sightlines and entrapment spots)</b> |  |                 |                       |
| <b>Space management - maintenance</b>  |  |                 |                       |
| <b>Space management - activity coordination</b>                                      |  |                 |                       |
| <b>Territorial reinforcement</b>   |  |                 |                       |
| <b>Access control</b>  |  |                 |                       |
| <b>Wayfinding and emergency contacts</b>   |  |                 |                       |
| <b>User conflict</b>   |  |                 |                       |
| <b>Social cohesion and community culture</b>   |  |                 |                       |
| <b>Connectivity</b>  |  |                 |                       |

**Priority: 1 = High; 2 = Medium; 3 = Low; N/A = not applicable.**

### Photo Running Sheet

| <b>Photo Number</b> | <b>Location</b>                            | <b>Description (including required treatment)</b>  |
|---------------------|--|--|
| <b>1</b>            | Corner Smith and Happy Streets, Knoxville. | Foliage overgrown at roundabout; blocks natural surveillance and sightlines. Reduce foliage. |
|                     |  |  |
|                     |  |  |
|                     |  |  |
|                     |  |  |
|                     |  |  |
|                     |  |  |
|                     |  |  |



## The Audit Process

The audit process follows a series of steps, which are listed below:

### **Step 1: Selecting the Site**

Fairfield City Council will generally identify sites requiring a community safety audit. Crime data, crime maps, reports from the public or police, or observations by council employees will suggest that an area needs to be audited. The Council will then decide to conduct a community safety audit of that area. Generally, the area selected will be clearly outlined and geographically contained - the wider the area, the more complex the audit.

### **Step 2: Selecting an Audit Team**

Fairfield City Council will then invite people to join the audit team (or teams, depending upon the size of the area being audited). Audit team members will be expected to have completed basic training in community safety audits and to have read this document. Team members will be invited to an initial briefing, which will then be followed by the first site audit.

### **Step 3: Initial Briefing and First Audit**

Audit members should be instructed to wear suitable attire and to follow the directions provided in any Occupational, Health and Safety (OH&S) training. Having suitable transport home at the end of the audit, wearing sturdy footwear, having appropriate protection from the sun and elements, not having personal items of significant value and staying with the audit team are all examples of how to ensure that audit members maintain their own safety throughout the audit process.

The initial briefing will generally be conducted by a member of council who will be the Audit Leader. They will explain the purpose of the audit and define the parameters of the area to be reviewed. They will allocate audit members into teams (where appropriate) and issue each team with a clip board, black pen, torch (for evening audits), a map of the area to be audited, contact details and any further instructions. One member of each team might be provided with a camera to take photos of both problematic areas and positive comparable examples. The photos will be included in the report from each team.

A second audit date will be set ensuring that both day and night coverage is provided during the audit processes. A timeframe for the audit will be set (often between 1 and 2 hours) and a time set for re-convening. The audit team(s) will then disperse and conduct their audit.

#### **Step 4: The Audit**

Teams of between 4 and 6 people will conduct the audits. The teams will have an identified scribe who records notes and recommendations. A separate person might be tasked with taking photos and recording the details in the Photo Running Sheet. Audit team members should consider the following:

- Functions – what are the functions of the areas being audited? Understanding the purpose of the specific locations will provide an important insight into gauging whether the areas are working well. For example, if an area is a public space, are people using the space? What appears to be prevent people's use of the space? Is the space being used legitimately? Moreover, the function of an area will also infer which crime types are more likely to occur in the area. Furthermore, understanding activity generators and movement predictors through the area will also promote a better understanding of the location and the potential associated crimes.
- General observations – general observations should be recorded. This can include the movement of people through a location; any obvious trends in use; what facilities are located in the area; how the area feels to the audit team members; and the general image of the area.
- Natural surveillance – would-be offenders will be deterred if they can be easily seen. Natural surveillance can be promoted by use of sidewalk activities (i.e. al fresco dining); clear shop windows / fronts; well maintained foliage that does not obscure sightlines; clear, straight streets with minimal clutter; wide paths; and well-lit pathways. Highlight any areas where there is little natural surveillance and areas that would-be offenders could easily hide.
- Maintenance – areas that are poorly maintained invite potential criminal activity. Rubbish that has been dumped; damaged surfaces and facilities; the presence of graffiti; lights not working; signs damaged or removed and other similar issues should be noted.
- Activity coordination – areas that are vibrant, with lots of activity and movement will often be perceived to be safer than empty spaces. Knowing when and where activities should be coordinated is complex. However, observing what activities encourage movement and activity in an area can highlight periods when and places where activities could be promoted. Shop closing times, venue trading hours, transport routes and timetables, retail mix, mixed land use, bike and walking paths

and busking are just some of the issues that might be considered and observed in relation to activity coordination.

- Territorial reinforcement – clear demarcation between public and private space tends to show capable guardianship. Privately owned land will often be well maintained and cared for, showing capable guardianship. Areas that are not clearly public or private and with no obvious sign of being cared for will often be associated with criminal activity (including illegal dumping, malicious damage to property). Any areas that are ambiguous in terms of ownership and maintenance should be noted.
- Access control – in some locations, the movement of people into and through areas will be restricted to prevent crime. In public areas, this is most often associated with closing off laneways or pedestrian corridors after business hours; protecting the docks and the back of shops through fences / gates / security; and the provision of internal lighting and appropriate security for shop fronts facing streets.
- Wayfinding and emergency contacts – purposeful movement through a space and familiarity of an area can help reduce the potential of becoming a victim of crime. Signage showing where key landmarks are located and the availability of telephones to contact emergency services aid perceptions of safety.
- User conflict – in public spaces, there are often a host of businesses and land uses. At times, the co-location of facilities or premise types can result in user conflict. For example, having an aged care facility located next to rowdy pub might result in user conflict. Consideration should be given to whether user conflict might arise from the proximity of particular premises next to or close to each other.
- Social cohesion and community culture – design features alone will not prevent crime. The cohesion of the people that commonly use a space or area can have numerous positive benefits. Observing social cohesion can be difficult. Local cultural icons; murals; flags; community activities; community facilities and clubs are just some of the potential indicators of social cohesion and a vibrant local community culture.
- Connectivity – places that work well have good connectivity. Places that are easily accessible by public transport; places that allow easy navigation and movement; mixed land uses; availability of community facilities; and social programs and

activities are just some of the considerations for connectivity.

It should be remembered that there are no single solutions to crime. Rather, the above parameters help guide observations and discussions. Through these observations and discussions, sharing of experiences, analysis of different user perceptions, a deeper understanding of the area will result. It is through this deeper understanding of an area that sensible and practical suggestions / recommendations can be made to prevent crime.

### **Step 5: The Audit Report**

After completing a minimum of two audits (day and night), each audit team will submit a completed report. The report will include the completed observation sheets and the photo running sheet. Together, these two simple documents will provide the audit leader with suitable information to develop a list of actions.

### **Step 6: Post-Audit Action**

The audit leader will integrate the findings from the different audit teams and compile one report. This report will be submitted to the Fairfield Mayor's Crime Prevention Reference Group, who will endorse the audit report and highlight those issues requiring attention. The Community Projector Officer – Community Safety and Crime Prevention will then be responsible for coordinating internal and external stakeholders to undertake the relevant actions, which might be possible within existing budgets or require specific budget enhancement bids. Completion of tasks (including budget enhancement bids) will be reported back to the Mayor's Crime Prevention Reference Group to ensure that the findings / recommendations emanating from the audit reports are enacted and monitored.

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You should now be ready to conduct a community safety audit. While there will be some issues that are especially complex, your observations, knowledge of the area and your gut feel about a location mean that you have much to contribute.

When trying to develop treatments or recommend ways of preventing crime, remember to 'Think Thief' (or in this case 'Think Offender'). This simple tag (developed by Professor Paul Ekblom) can help you to think of what an offender wants and needs to successfully commit a crime and how they can be successfully prevented.