



SafeGrowth®

SAFEGROWTH®

WHAT IS SOCIAL COHESION?

Gregory Saville (2013)

SafeGrowth differs from other crime prevention approaches such as CPTED because it is an integrative planning process with annual safety plans for creating safe neighbourhoods, improving local trust, and building community capacity. It is based on the premise that crime is best tackled within neighbourhoods by activating local organizations, engaging change agents and partnering with professionals. Because safety is seen as the product of a well-developed neighborhood it follows that social cohesion is a linchpin for successful neighborhood development.

There is no universally agreed-upon definition of social cohesion although there is abundant research about how people come together in common purpose. Social cohesion doesn't just happen. There must be local resources and local people with knowledge, skills, and abilities who know how to encourage a sense of social cohesion. Every neighborhood has people with obvious, or latent, knowledge, skills and abilities. But in some places they may be disenfranchised and inactive.

It is possible to have places where there are many cultural events, festivals for example, and yet still have poor social cohesion. It is also possible to have one group with strong sense of belonging but excluding other groups or minorities in that neighborhood. That is not social cohesion. It is social exclusion! When such places erupt into conflict outsiders ask why. Social cohesion is the glue that binds different people and perspectives together and it takes time and effort to cultivate.

SafeGrowth draws on the definition of social cohesion from 2nd Generation CPTED that focuses on small geographic neighborhoods as a starting place. Effective neighborhood populations vary, but rarely exceed 5,000 with smaller core groups within those neighborhoods ranging up to 150 people.

SafeGrowth also envisions social cohesion on a continuum with some neighborhoods at a weak level and others at a strong level. While there is no simple formula to social cohesion there are at least four elements that, taken together, build a strong sense of place and belonging. No doubt social science and urban planning research will emerge that further refines the boundaries of each element. However for the purpose of SafeGrowth it is sufficient to acknowledge the reality of social cohesion and to appreciate the power it has to improve quality of life. The four elements do not need to be present in equal amounts. It may even be possible for one element to be absent and still end up with a cohesive neighborhood. However that is much less likely than if all four elements are present to some extent. The four elements are:

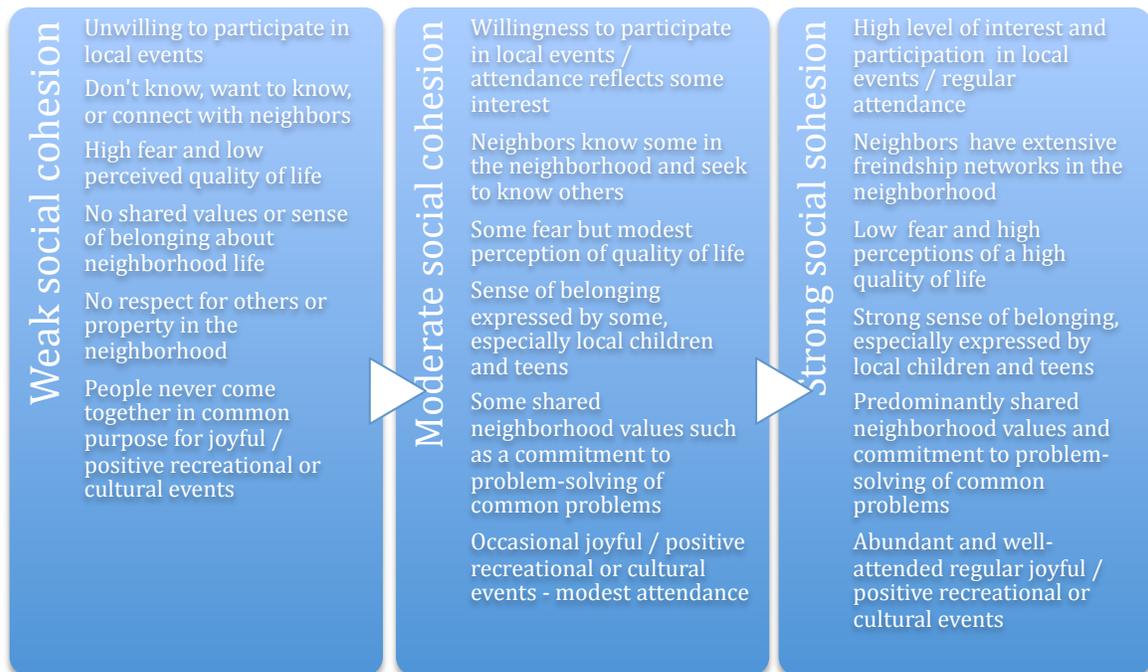
1. A sense of commitment to a place,
2. A desire to live, work or play together in harmony,
3. A set of shared values and sense of belonging,
4. A commitment to solving some shared challenge.

1. The sense of commitment to a place can be demonstrated in multiple ways, for example attending social events or participating in local organizations to make improvements to the neighborhood. However demonstrated commitment can also result from making other types of contributions, for example the elderly may be unable to attend local events to assist the neighborhood but instead provide other forms of support.

2. A desire to live, work or play together in harmony is a fundamental requirement for social cohesion. Doing things together is a common activity however in the cohesive neighborhood there is a specific desire to seek them out. Additionally there is a desire to ensure harmony rules over conflict. Conflict may arise, as in all groups, but there is a desire and actions to seek out resolution to that conflict.

3. Shared values and a sense of belonging is another fundamental requirement for social cohesion. However the shared values may or may not relate to values in the larger society, for example religious or political values. Instead in a socially cohesion neighborhood values can simply relate to the shared belief in collaborative problem-solving or respect for diversity. The shared values also need to help provide a sense of belonging for all those in the neighborhood, for example those with diverging opinions or minority status should not feel excluded from neighborhood life.

4. A commitment to solving some shared challenge. Unlike cultural events where people come together for entertainment and play, social cohesion has an added dimension of partnering to address some local challenge. The challenge can be immediate or remote. It can be a single issue or many issues. There are instances when it is possible to create a sense of social cohesion with no challenge, however very few places have no challenges whatsoever. Further, when people come together in common purpose they are more likely to bridge differences of opinion and commit personal time and resource. This element hinges on the truism that a neighborhood unified is stronger than a neighborhood divided.



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15 POINT PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Gregory Saville (2014)

- **1. FORMAL POLICY.** A written policy disseminated and publicized to the entire organization that clearly articulates the goal of the SafeGrowth policy. It will contain wording describing SafeGrowth as an integrated planning method for helping residents organize local teams, in partnership with police and other city organizations, for the purpose of creating safe and engaging neighborhoods.
- **2. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT.** The CEO, Mayor, or senior leader of the organization will publicize to the entire organization a statement of commitment for SafeGrowth implementation.
- **3. EXECUTIVE IMPLEMENTATION CHAMPION.** Appointment of a senior executive to ensure political, resource and operations support for SafeGrowth. The senior executive is responsible for instituting a succession plan for SafeGrowth leadership within the organization when leadership changes in order to sustain efforts in the long-term. This senior executive will stay fully engaged in SafeGrowth implementation for at least two years. During this period the senior executive will mentor others and create a succession plan so that there is a smooth transition in leadership in subsequent years.
- **4. SENIOR STAFF TRAINING.** Deliver an orientation training session for senior staff describing the purpose of the SafeGrowth policy, benefits the municipality, and what is expected of each executive to help implementation.
- **5. POLICY AND PRACTICES.** The City will embed SafeGrowth into organizational practices. This includes formal 1st and 2nd Generation CPTED design guidelines for future developments, a municipal ordinance requiring both 1st and 2nd Generation CPTED, formal process for design review of all new developments so that SafeGrowth and CPTED are in place, and the funding and training support of the Neighborhood SafeGrowth Panels.
- **6. SAFEGROWTH WORKING GROUP.** Establish a municipal SafeGrowth Working Group to coordinate plans for SafeGrowth implementation within the organization. The duties of the Working Group include:
 - a. Administer the implementation and review implementation progress of the Neighborhood SafeGrowth Panels, ensure resources and training for Neighborhood SafeGrowth Panels, and report to the CEO, Mayor, or Senior Executive responsible for implementation. It is advisable to incorporate the Panels as formal non-profits to ensure democratic governance and financial transparency;
 - b. Establish one Panel in a pilot neighborhood with the intent on expanding other Panels to other neighborhoods in need. The eventual goal is to have SafeGrowth Panels established in all major neighborhoods throughout the city;
 - c. Annually assess the status of SafeGrowth implementation, including implementation blockages, and make recommendations to the CEO, Mayor, or Senior Executive to overcome them. The committee should provide an annual review of progress to the CEO, Mayor or Senior Executive.

- d. A proposed organizational structure for the Panels is provided in diagrams on the following pages. The SafeGrowth Panel has up to 8 core members trained in SafeGrowth practices. The members should include a small number of professionals permanently appointed to the team, such as a local police officer and urban planner. The others on the Panel should rotate onto and off the team every year or two in order to ensure diverse membership and new ideas. The SafeGrowth Working Group will monitor Panel member selection using a fair and democratic process.

■ **7. PARTNERSHIPS.** The SafeGrowth program requires full partnerships between police, the city and neighborhood teams. Partnerships, by definition, mean that all partners share relevant information and provide resources, where needed, to ensure SafeGrowth Panels are successful in reducing crime and disorder.

■ **8. INFORMATION SHARING.** Because SafeGrowth Panels are specifically focused on crime and disorder, crime information is key to their success. Accordingly, police should establish a procedure to make monthly neighborhood crime statistics at a street level, including crime maps, available to the local teams for safety planning purposes. Obviously crime reports with confidential and personal information is not necessary for the larger scale crime pattern analysis employed by the teams. As well, if police officers regularly participate in the team project work they themselves can monitor the quality and confidentiality of the crime report data.

■ **9. REGULAR SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION MEETINGS.** All partners must meet regularly, including city departments, local teams, and police, to ensure teams are working on their SafeGrowth plan implementation and evaluating the results of their efforts. Evaluation should be based on the measurable results specified in each SafeGrowth Plan created by each local team.

■ **10. NEIGHBORHOOD SAFEGROWTH PLANS.** Each local Panel should work with residents and police to create an annual 5-stage SafeGrowth plan for their neighborhood. The Plan should include chapters on

- ❖ Community Vision, Neighborhood Profile and Problems, Strategies for Resolving Problems with Metrics to Measure Success, Implementation Strategies with Timelines and Responsibilities, Evaluation of Results and Next Steps;
- ❖ Base line expectations for improving the current crime and safety situation;
- ❖ Expectations should be measured by specific activities such as crime statistics, safety audits, surveys and CPTED audits;
- ❖ If the Panel chooses a quality of life problem, such as abandoned homes, then specific metrics must be used in the plans such as the number of abandoned homes that were eliminated, the changes in neighborhood perception based on survey results, or changes in the proportion of local crime related to abandoned homes.

■ **11. NEIGHBORHOOD SAFEGROWTH PANELS – MEMBERSHIP AND TRAINING.** The ideal configuration for SafeGrowth is to adopt SafeGrowth Panels (Leadership Team, Working Group, or whatever local term fits) for each geographic neighborhood in the city. Neighborhood sizes vary by city, however effective neighborhoods tend to be no larger than 5,000 members (some cities define larger areas as neighborhoods, however this becomes unwieldy in SafeGrowth since the locus of control for delivering programs becomes too broad). This means a city with a population of 250,000 might have 50 Neighborhood Panels, however since few cities are neatly organized into such precise neighborhoods it is more likely 25-35 panels will suffice. Further, in the early stages of SafeGrowth it may make more sense to implement Panels in a small number of neighborhoods with high or modest crime problems, perhaps 5 or 10. Once established they can then partner together into a linked association for sharing best practices and spreading the program to other neighborhoods.

■ **12. CITIZENSHIP ACADEMY.** The SafeGrowth Working Group will establish an annual volunteer Citizenship Academy, which is a series of evening classes one evening a week. Training sessions will include how to cultivate qualities of leadership, strategies for managing conflict, setting up and managing volunteer organizations, the role of city government, social programs, economic reinvestment programs, the role of real estate and property ownership, the operation of the criminal justice system, crime prevention programs, and other relevant topics pertaining to responsible citizenship. The training sessions will be free of charge and will run for a few hours during one evening for 8 weeks. The SafeGrowth Working Group will solicit local subject matter experts such as police officers, journalists, realtors, attorneys, clergy, social workers, business owners, academics, and others who can provide information on neighborhood livability, social programs, recreation and cultural programs, issues of the environment in the neighborhood, and crime and safety. Central to this training is exposure to the SafeGrowth method and tactics such as CPTED and Safety Audits. Graduates of the Citizenship Academy will be invited to participate in Neighborhood Panels. The Citizenship Academy is one (but not the only) training ground for membership onto the Neighborhood SafeGrowth Panels. Each panel should include a member from the neighborhood who has been trained in the Citizenship Academy and is familiar with SafeGrowth planning.

■ **13. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO.** One possible incentive for Panel work is career development. While on the Panel, some members (such as the Citizenship Academy graduates) may be interested in pursuing future career opportunities elsewhere. Since working on the Panel will entail project work, training opportunities, and exposure to other learning opportunities, they should be encouraged to develop their own professional portfolio for later employment possibilities after they finish their service in the Neighborhood SafeGrowth Panels. They will add each course, seminar, project and mentorship experience to their portfolio as they gain experience on the Panel. Thus their portfolios will comprise their professional resume and record of training gained while on the Panels. They can then use this to apply for other career opportunities.

■ **14. TRAINING FOR TEAM MEMBERS.** The SafeGrowth Working Group will ensure there are regular training opportunities provided to the Panel members so that each member can add those training events into their portfolios. They can be invited to employee training courses at city hall, at organizations such as colleges and universities, and at training conducted for the Panel. Training topics will include, but not be limited to, seminars, workshops, and conferences on how to run meetings, resolving interpersonal conflict, management and supervision, CPTED and SafeGrowth, assessing neighborhood concerns with safety audits and asset maps, and creating annual SafeGrowth Neighborhood Plans. On completion of their term in the SafeGrowth Panel, the CEO, Mayor or executive leader will provide a letter of reference for inclusion into their portfolios.

■ **15. NETWORK OF NEIGHBORHOOD PANELS.** After implementation of the SafeGrowth Panels the SafeGrowth Working Group will establish a city-wide network connecting the various neighborhood panels together. The network will include an online website and other social networking technology in order to celebrate success stories and share information. The networks can run an annual social event where members can meet, share experience and get to know each other. The annual events may include celebrations of successes, award ceremonies for successful projects, prizes and acknowledgement of individuals who excel in the SafeGrowth program, and demonstrations and displays to the public on current work. The SafeGrowth network and SafeGrowth Panels may eventually become a framework for a broader municipal neighborhood association looking at a wider variety of issues beyond safety and crime.

***SAFEGROWTH[®] PANELS FOR EACH
CITY NEIGHBOURHOOD
STRUCTURE AND MEMBERSHIP***

