

## *A PRIMER IN SAFEGROWTH®*

### *Fifteen steps toward the 21<sup>st</sup> Century neighborhood*

#### *1. What is SafeGrowth® ?*

SafeGrowth is a philosophy built on the belief that healthy and functioning small neighborhoods provide the most sane, healthy, and safest way to build cities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is based on the premise that crime is best tackled within small neighborhoods by harnessing the creative energy of functioning neighborhood groups, by employing the latest crime prevention methods, and by adopting an annual SafeGrowth Plan to control, and mitigate, crime and fear.

The concept of small-is-beautiful is well known in economics and urban development, sometimes called urban ecology. It is also known in the urban planning movement as Smart Growth, the idea that people can sustain living within their own walkable neighborhood. In this way SafeGrowth is a philosophy of urban ecology where even the largest cities function best by building, sustaining, and supporting an ecosystem of well-established and intricately networked neighborhoods.

#### *2. Action Research for Real Action*

Integral to the SafeGrowth philosophy are the strategies called action research and action learning. These are social science methods that integrate researchers, problem-solvers and community members together in a search for answers to difficult problems. In SafeGrowth this is known as the To-For-With-By concept.

SafeGrowth is an integrated planning method for planning safe neighborhoods based on To-For-With-By. It proceeds by delivering strategies in partnership *With* and independently *By* residents, not *To* or *For* them.

#### *3. Where did SafeGrowth® come from?*

Gregory Saville created SafeGrowth in 2007 after decades working as a crime prevention practitioner, a police officer, urban planner, and an academic researcher. SafeGrowth is borne out of a deep frustration from years of top-down bureaucratic logjams that solved nothing and academic abstractions that led nowhere.

Crime prevention should, by definition, prevent crime and create safer places. Yet, few of the practices, laws, enforcement, and theories came close to achieving that. SafeGrowth was a way out of that chaos toward a more coherent and effective way to create safe neighborhoods in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.



#### *4. How does it work?*

The four main activities of SafeGrowth are

1. Direct engagement with those in the neighborhood,
2. Outreach to relevant stakeholders,
3. Helping with technical assistance such as CPTED, and
4. Creating competent non-profits partnered with other service providers to co-plan and co-create safe places.

#### *5. What's wrong with traditional prevention and enforcement?*

Nothing is wrong with those approaches. But too often they don't work. When it comes to neighborhood crime, how do we take action? Usually we worship the Holy Triumvirate of Safety - policing, prevention programs, and government policy.

The Holy Triumvirate of Safety come in many forms: design out crime, secure-by-design, Intelligence-led policing, restorative justice, 3-strikes laws, broken windows theory, mandatory sentencing, quality-of-life policing, neighborhood watch, crime-free multi-housing, hotspot policing and crime prevention through environmental design.

These are not wrong. When surgically applied and well-crafted they make a difference. But they are very seldom applied surgically and rarely are they crafted that well. Usually they are applied to crime problems by outsiders the same way a drunk uses a lamp-post - for support, not illumination. In other words, they are used as though one-size-fits-all. When it comes to crime and safety that is simply not true.

In addition, in every case except CPTED, the Holy Triumvirate of Safety shows up after crime peaks or after some crisis when the roots of criminal behavior are already well established in the neighborhood. In other words, in order for hotspot policing to cool a crime hotspot, or for restorative justice to restore order and heal a community after a crime, there must already be a crime. They are all reactive strategies. SafeGrowth does not require crime to function; it builds the ingredients of a safe neighborhood during, or before, the occurrence of crime. Thus SafeGrowth is a future-oriented and visionary way to build socially cohesive city neighborhoods more resistant to crime opportunities.

#### *6. Local action*

Since SafeGrowth takes the position that most crime is best tackled within the neighborhood by coherent groups and local change agents, it falls on cities, organizers, and others in positions of influence to help find, organize, and support those groups/change agents where they are not already organized. When cities fail

to provide support for SafeGrowth initiatives, such as helping to organize groups and train change agents in SafeGrowth skills, it is much more difficult to initiate and sustain SafeGrowth implementation.

Change agents might be community leaders, social planners, youth and social workers, or community police officers. Those change agents will need training in modern prevention and planning strategies and access to experts with those skills.

Coherent neighborhood groups may already exist, or will be created, to enable SafeGrowth planning. They must be democratic and representative of the neighborhood and they will need administrative support.

### *7. SafeGrowth® Plans*

Each neighborhood creates its own SafeGrowth Plan on an annual, or semi-annual basis. The Plan will have measurable objectives, visions, and strategies. Strategies may be enacted locally or in conjunction with others.

SafeGrowth Teams and Facilitators will pay special attention to the 2nd Generation CPTED concepts of cohesion, connectivity and capacity to ensure neighborhood visions encourage inclusive environments, plenty of semi-public space, and urban places that are walkable, friendly, and safe.

### *8. SafeGrowth® Teams*

The small action group that is organized in each neighborhood is called a SafeGrowth Team. It assembles the plan, solicits a development vision from the neighborhood, and then works on problems within the neighborhood to help realize that vision. Within the plan the team identifies a set of specific problems that will be addressed each year. When one set is resolved, they move on to the next in following years. The team members comprise residents and representatives from Community Livability Academies who rotate onto the team at regular intervals. Team members also comprise professionals such as planners, urban design experts, community organizers and community police officers.

### *9. Plan updates*

Because neighborhoods are like ecosystems that constantly change, plans should be updated yearly. New problems will arise and visions will evolve. SafeGrowth Plans need to match this natural metabolism by rotating new members onto teams. Those members will come from the Community Livability Academy, described below.

Strategies that appear within SafeGrowth Plans may include all the traditional approaches such as crime prevention through environmental design, social



prevention, hotspot policing, restorative justice methods, education programs, and youth programs. However in this case plans are created through the positive vision for development that neighborhood identifies for their future, the Team diagnosis of local problems obstructing that vision, and specific outcomes the Team wants to achieve. That analysis is based on the Risk Assessment Matrix.

### *10. Risk Assessment Matrix*

The SafeGrowth Risk Assessment Matrix provides a consistent and coherent model of neighborhood diagnosis, crime and problem analysis, and quality of life assessment on which to base a SafeGrowth Plan. That Matrix is an evidenced-based method for teams to collect information, determine the best strategy, and evaluate the success of strategies. Each year SafeGrowth Plans are updated and team members again use the Matrix to collect data on new projects.

### *11. Team Process*

During SafeGrowth training participants learn a step-by-step process for team work. These steps provide a structure for work activities. Additionally, teams will use group process and emotional intelligence competencies in all their work. These are critical for effective functioning since they must collaborate with community members and professionals with diverse needs. They include life skills training in conflict resolution, self-awareness, situational awareness, listening skills, among others.

### *12. Career path*

Facilitators should ensure there are opportunities for learning and for professional training. This includes the opportunity to obtain certificates for new competencies such as leadership skills, analytical and problem-solving skills such as CPTED, and human relations skills such as conflict management and restorative justice. Training opportunities provide both a professional development path in other careers and incentive for learning new skills. Training can occur in many venues, one of which may be regular Community Livability Academy workshops (described below).

### *13. SafeGrowth<sup>®</sup> Facilitator*

Each municipality should provide administrative and, where needed, financial support to Teams. Each municipality should employ a person(s) who coordinates those activities. That person is the SafeGrowth Facilitator(s). In some places that will encompass an assigned manager or planner (or a management committee) who will help form the Teams, provide for regular training and ensure they run smoothly. Those trainings are provided through the Community Livability Academy.

## *14. Community Livability Academy*

Another method used to promote SafeGrowth teams and SafeGrowth Planning in each neighborhood is the Community Livability Academy. The SafeGrowth Facilitator(s) are tasked with establishing an evening a week workshop sessions. The public is invited to attend these free sessions. An entire course of sessions can run up to a few months in duration.

Workshop sessions include topics such as the criminal justice system, urban planning and development, how city government functions, personal development skills such as organizing community events, conducting meetings, and solving conflicts. Workshop evenings should be interactive and might include outdoor safety audits, community asset mapping, and attending cultural festivals. Crucially, participants learn about the SafeGrowth Planning method and how they can participate.

Guest speakers may also volunteer from different departments across the city such as criminal justice officials, urban land use experts, police officers, recreation and professional architects, and others engaged in urban governance and management. Academies last up to two months after which graduates receive a Community Livability Academy certificate of attendance. At the conclusion graduates are solicited to participate in neighborhood SafeGrowth Teams thereby providing a steady pool of candidates to rotate into Teams.

## *15. Urban development review*

Eventually, as Team members skill levels increase (particularly in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation CPTED), SafeGrowth Plans will include opportunities for the Team to provide feedback on new development proposals in each neighborhood. This will ensure new developments meet the visions established in each SafeGrowth Plan. Prior to the implementation of an urban development review process in each neighborhood, municipalities should implement a temporary internal design review process to assess new urban development proposals using both 1st Generation and 2nd Generation CPTED.

Design reviews should be more than a simple checklist and they should incorporate a complete urban design review, ideally assisted by CPTED trained residents and police officers. However, once SafeGrowth Plans and Teams are in place, SafeGrowth Team members, planners and urban designers should review development designs within the neighborhood where development is planned.



*Learn more about SafeGrowth®*

Gregory Saville (2009) SafeGrowth: Moving Forward in Neighborhood Development. *Built Environment*. Volume 31 (3), pp. 386-403.

Mona Mangat, Mona and Gregory Saville (2009) *SafeGrowth: Creating Safety and Sustainability Through Community Building and Urban Design*. Community Safety Paper Series. New York: MetLife Foundation and LISC/CSI. Available at [http://www.lisc.org/csi/images/strategies\\_&\\_solutions/asset\\_upload\\_file3\\_16229.pdf](http://www.lisc.org/csi/images/strategies_&_solutions/asset_upload_file3_16229.pdf)

Elisabeth Miller (2008) A new type of CPTED: SafeGrowth in Saskatoon. *CPTED Perspective*. Volume 7(3), pp. 3-4. Available at <http://www.safegrowth.org/safegrowth-saskatoon.html>

Gregory Saville and Gerard Cleveland (2013) Second Generation CPTED: The Rise and Fall of Opportunity Theory. In R. Atlas (Editor) *21<sup>st</sup> Century Security and CPTED, Second Edition*. New York: CRC Press, pp. 91-104.

*The SafeGrowth website:*  
[www.safegrowth.org](http://www.safegrowth.org)

*The SafeGrowth blog:*  
[www.safe-growth.blogspot.com](http://www.safe-growth.blogspot.com)