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Mapping & Alternative Cartography

Osgoode Hall and Gardens are located beside City Hall in Toronto City which showcases the rich history of the private sector growing into the public realm. The site is located at Queen Street West and University Avenue, placing it on one of the busiest intersections in the city. The building is a former law school and currently houses offices and the Great Library of the Law Society. The choice of selection for this site is its connection to the urban core and infusion of modern and vintage elements which include; the iron gate fence, the clock tower, a performance center, the US consulate, and human and vehicular traffic. Surrounded by these elements, Osgoode Hall and Gardens provides a clear opportunity to investigate how accessibility and safety has evolved over the last 200 years.

When we went to observe the location, the first thing we noticed is the iron fence that surrounds the gardens and the prominent buildings around the area such as Toronto's City Hall, the Ontario Court House, the Four Seasons Centre, and Nathan Phillips Square. Within the site, there is a pathway that leads from the gardens towards City Hall, which people use to cut through the area. This made us think about the different kinds of people that use the garden and how it would be accessible to them with respect to safety and accessibility. This was essentially evident when we noticed that during the day, the space is mostly used as a walking path for people to get to other parts of the area, which means that it has a lot of foot traffic and different people entering and exiting at different points. We also noticed that the Gardens of Osgoode Hall are the only green spaces in the area surrounded by multiple subway stations and major arterial roads, which is why we believe that it is a popular destination for people to sit and enjoy it within the urban core. Since the Gardens have so many different uses, such as a walking path, a place for dog owners, a photographic location, and even sometimes a place of protest, we believe that it is important for people to have easy access to them and feel safe using them. In our map, we chose to look at the ways Osgoode Hall promotes accessibility for its users and the measures of safety employed.

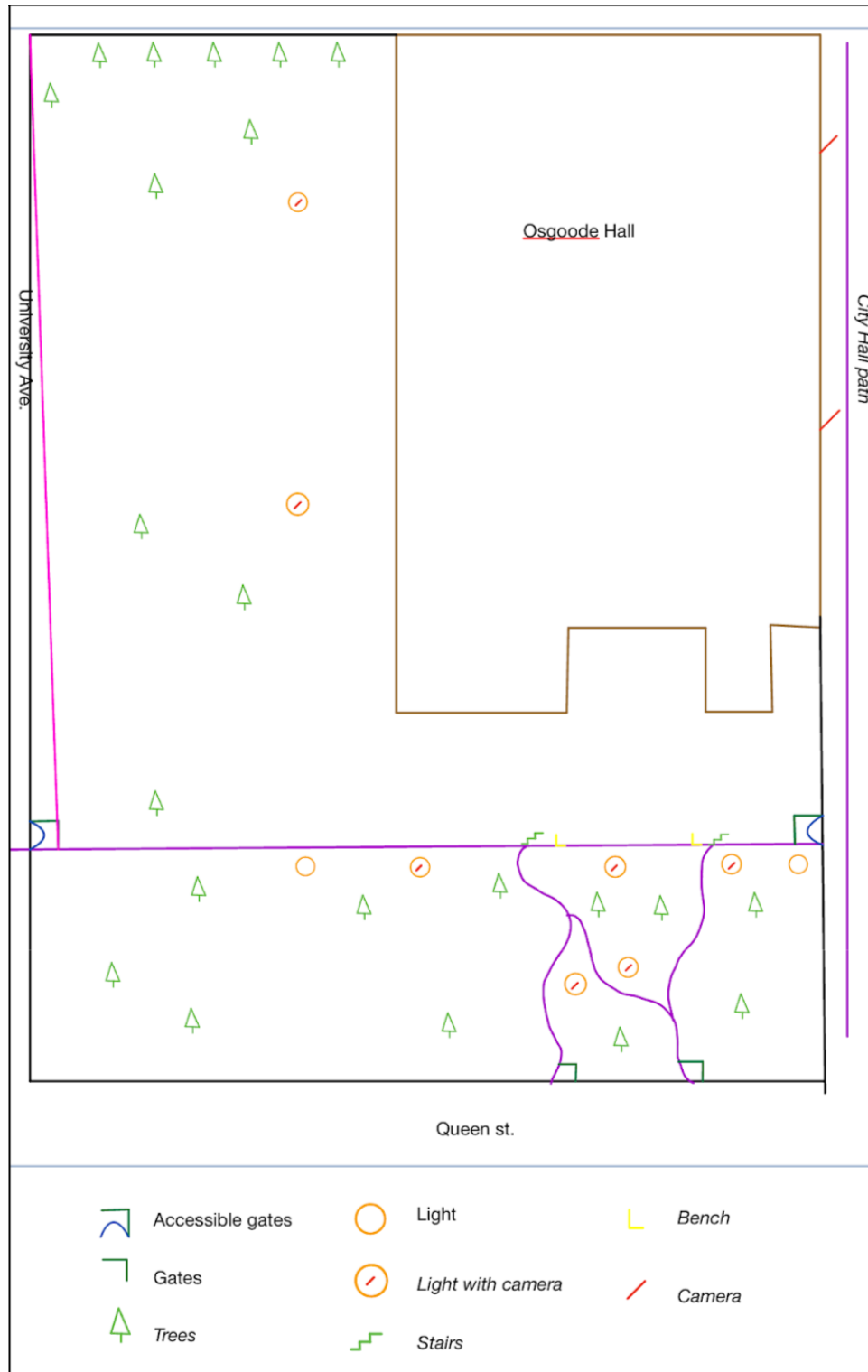
As the site is approached from the northwest, the long iron fence begins to act as a boundary line between the gardens, the sidewalk and then the road. The northeast side of the site has the City Hall and a small walkway that separates the two, making it publicly accessible. When regarding public safety and approachability, the construction on university Avenue and areas of city hall acts as the biggest barrier in the park currently. When entering the park from University Avenue, there are approximately 3 security cameras, two on the side of the building and one on a lamppost. At the front of

the building, which faces Queen Street West, the park has around 6 cameras on lampposts, marking that area as the most used and monitored. Additionally, there are cameras at the corner and back of the buildings that monitor the walkways approaching City Hall. The iron fence around the park does not necessarily act as a safety measure, but the gate design acts as an accessibility issue. The complex gate makes it difficult for anyone to enter with accessibility issues, however, only the front entrance of the building has two ramps that span out on either side towards the wider gate exits, located on the left and right of the building, but none at the back walkway. The width of the walkway that continues from the ramps without a break in between is wide enough for only one accessible device, such as a wheelchair, and is the only smooth path available. The building itself is setback from the roads and does not sit directly on the streets. The parks were more publicly used, especially by dog owners, now that the weather is getting warmer. Since it is winter, the bare trees do not provide any visual barrier, and so the construction all around the site is visible from within the park.

As we approached to map, the garden boundaries were very apparent. Tall, gated fences surround the three edges of the rectangular garden with the Law Society of Ontario building closing off the last edge. In mapping our garden, we found that the “main” entrance to the park was rather ambiguous. The gate entrances were scattered in the west and south boundaries of the fences. Additionally, the small width of the entrances proves difficult for bikes and other vehicles to enter. The intentional design of the gates shows the garden’s attempt at minimizing visitor traffic to ensure a quiet and peaceful atmosphere. Adjacent to a major road (University Avenue), the west end inhibits accessibility to drivers and walkers alike, due to the long sidewalks and tall metal fences. To effectively access the scenery of the gardens and the Osgoode Hall building, visitors must enter towards the east end through City Hall, and the south entrances on Queen Street. With limited benches in the garden, visitors did not peruse the scenery. In the map drawn, we decided to locate the security cameras and walkways specifically to locate how the circulation of the site occurs, as seen with the purple lines, and which areas users seem more comfortable to use. The use of singular lines and bright colours is to show the usage in a more direct manner. Since the whole park is publicly accessible, the front of the building was the most used.

Our observations of the site and of the map further suggests that while Osgoode Gardens is a historical landmark, it lacks a level of accessibility for visitors compared to other urban greenspace in downtown Toronto and slightly minimal interactions with its users. The design of the boundaries signals a more private environment. Furthermore, the addition of its metal fences and abundance of security cameras may intimidate and hinder positive experiences of visitors, making the building seem unapproachable. While initially a beautiful and tranquil looking park, Osgoode hall’s boundaries suggest that its safety and accessibility may be intended for a

disproportionate population, and its affordances may be offered to only a specific group of individuals. These observations may vary as the weather changes and more public begins to use the park.



Security and Accessibility map



City of Toronto

Osgoode Hall Map

Bibliography

Map of Toronto. *Osgoode Hall Map*. Retrieved February 6, 2023, from <https://map-of-toronto.com/monuments-maps/osgoode-hall-map>.