FROM DOWNTOWN TO TOWN CENTRE:
SELLING THE URBAN IDEAL IN BURNABY, BC

by

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ABSTRACT

This project seeks to determine if an urban ideal is being harnessed to sell high-density residential developments in Burnaby, BC. Through a review of contemporary academic literature on the ideas of urban resurgence and normative theories on urban development the project draws together several elements that together make up the urban ideal. The researcher examined advertisements, websites, brochures and articles. Using a methodology of discourse analysis the text and images contained in these documents was compared to the ideals identified in the literature review to determine which elements of the urban ideal were utilized to draw buyers to these high-density residential developments. The analysis shows that the discourse does indeed advance the notion that these projects and neighbourhoods embody elements of the urban ideal, but there is also a subtext of the suburban setting that allows one to infer that they are representing both the urban and suburban ideals.

Keywords: urban ideal; discourse; Burnaby; real-estate; marketing, suburbs

Subject Terms: urban studies, discourse analysis, suburbs
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INTRODUCTION

The Twentieth Century, particularly the last half of the twentieth century, saw a massive shift away from traditional forms of urbanism, with dense walkable centres focused on public modes of transportation, towards a new auto dependent low-density suburbanism (Kunstler, 1993, Dear and Flusty, 1998 Dear, 2000). Nowhere was this more apparent than in North American cities. In response to this shift in lifestyle and urban form, and to the emerging ideals that precipitated this shift, there arose in academia a discourse and theoretical framework of the “suburban ideal,” (Lucas, 2002, Bruegmann, 2005, Fishman, 1987). In the late 20th Century and now into the 21st Century we are witness to a resurgence of the old central cities and a revaluation of the concepts of North American urbanism by journalists, planners and academics. (Kunstler, 1993, Dear, 2000, Churchman, 1999, Gratz, 2004, Kenworthy, 2006, Calthorpe, 1993, Calthorpe and Fulton, 2001, Boone and Modarres, 2006, Zukin, 1982, Leinberger, 2007, Stossel, 2000, Boddy, 2005, Ward, 2006). It can be argued that this new take on city living may have given rise to a new “urban ideal” that exists alongside the “suburban ideal”. Is high-density development in Burnaby representative of this new urban ideal? This project examines the discourse of urbanity being constructed by real estate marketers and journalists to support the development of high-rise / high-density residential projects in the City of Burnaby.
As citizens are drawn in by the amenities offered by urban living there is new hope that the trend of unending sprawl may be challenged as redevelopment occurs in traditional city centres. This phenomenon has been prevalent in many major centres in United States and in Canada's largest cities. Indeed the statement “Downtown is Back” seemed to be a common observation North America. In the United States a sample of 24 cities saw 18 downtowns with increases in their populations during the 1990’s (Sohmer and Lang, 2001). In Canada many major cities are also seeing an increase in downtown residents. In particular, Vancouver, Toronto and Calgary have seen significant increases in their downtown populations, (Collins and Blomley, 2004).

This resurgence of central cities has inspired some suburban municipalities to plan for “town centres” to accommodate some of their growth in a more urban way. This project focuses on one such municipality, the City of Burnaby, a mid-range suburb of Vancouver, BC. A methodology of discourse analysis is employed to examine the marketing material produced for high-density housing developments, defined here as residential towers having twelve or more storeys, along with the coverage these projects have received in the local print media outlets. The project considers to what extent a discourse of the urban ideal being created to sell this type of high-density dwelling. Furthermore, it attempts to determine which specific aspects of the new urban ideal are the most prevalent tools employed in marketing campaigns. By identifying which aspects of urbanism are most often included in the promotional material for these condominiums, we can infer which aspects are most important to developers and
potential buyers, “given that ads are thought to reflect behaviour and values
(Callow and Lerman, 1999, p 13). From a practical perspective, this research
tries to contribute to sustainability and smart-growth initiatives. Of critical
importance in this quest for sustainability is the form of development adopted in
our suburbs. As author Joel Kotkin states in a 2004 interview with Metropolis
Magazine:

“The next great frontier is going to be the urbanization of suburbia. We will see the development of more urban villages . . . The way we’re going to contain sprawl will be by creating these village-like environments in suburbia, both in the older suburbs and further out” (Kotkin qtd in Pedersen 2004).

A critical tool for achieving this village-like urban form is encouraging
density. As Gratz notes:

“Density is the most crucial, misunderstood and ignored ingredient of a successful community. If real estate’s mantra is "location, location, location," urbanism’s should be "density, density, density." Someone once said: "it doesn’t matter how dense you make it, it is how you make it dense." (Gratz, 2004 p 30)

A greater understanding of how density is being sold to consumers will help planners and policy makers focus their efforts on providing or enhancing those amenities shown to be important facilitators of demand for high-density living. By doing so, they might enable their cities to emulate Burnaby’s success in attracting high-rise developers into the suburban realm, thereby absorbing population growth and reducing the need for auto-dependant sprawl and its’ associated ecological implications.

From an academic perspective, this paper attempts to contribute in two
important ways. First, it attempts to the advance a theoretical framework
surrounding the urban ideal, which currently lacks the cohesion and clarity found in the discourse of the suburban ideal. Second, this research presents another opportunity to apply the discourse analysis methodology in Urban Studies. Currently there is a growing body of work that has employed discourse analysis to understand different cities efforts to market themselves (i.e. McCann 2004; 2002, Aquiar et al, 2005), but a rather limited use of the methodology to understand the marketing of a specific form of urbanism (Talen, 1999), as is to be examined here.

**Background**

Leading the way in the North American urban resurgence is the City of Vancouver, whose Central Area Plan promoted the idea of “living first” downtown (Beasley, 2000). This strategy, along with a post-industrial restructuring, transnational migration, and a few exemplary urban mega projects, has contributed to an urban resurgence that has seen the number of people living in the downtown core almost double from 47,000 in 1991 to 85,000, in 2005, representing fastest-growing downtown population of any North American city (Hutton, 2005, Kuiper, 2006).

Vancouver’s success in bringing people downtown has led to this type of dense living being replicated in the suburbs. In conjunction with supportive regional policies such as the Greater Vancouver Regional District’s Liveable Region Strategic Plan (1996), new town centres are being developed around the region that are achieving residential densities comparable to, and surpassing, those found in many typical city centres. According to Metro Vancouver, since
the Livable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP) was adopted in 1996, it has been working with partner municipalities to create a compact, livable metropolitan region, a healthy natural environment, complete communities, and increased transportation choice, (GVRD, 2007). Burnaby has been noted as an area where this work has been met considerable success, though there are likely many factors, beyond the LRSP, that have contributed to this success. One such factor appears to be that the real estate marketing agencies have harnessed people’s desire to attain the ideals of urban living in order to sell high-density developments in traditionally low density areas of the suburb. While marketing theorists posit that marketing reflects public desires and does not actually generate them (Vakratsas and Ambler 1999, Callow and Lerman, 1999) this marketing appears to harness specific desires and portrays high-rise living as the was to satisfy those desires.

The relationship between Vancouver and its suburbs conforms closely with the classic concepts of inner-city and suburban areas. The inner city is normally seen as a portion of the City of Vancouver (roughly, the West End, Downtown, and the central portion of the City north of 16th Avenue). The rest of the City of Vancouver is generally included in the category of ‘inner suburbs’ and was mainly built between the closing years of the 19th century and 1939 (with a great deal of subsequent infill and redevelopment). The Cities of Richmond, North Vancouver, Burnaby, and New Westminster constitute a zone of mid-range suburbs, and the other municipalities of Greater Vancouver are classified as outer suburbs. (Burnley and Heibert, 2002)
The main tool for directing regional growth strategies in this context is the Greater Vancouver Regional District’s Liveable Region Strategic Plan, 1996 (LRSP). In addition to the ongoing development of the Metropolitan Core, the LRSP is focused on eight interconnected Regional Town Centres across the metropolitan area. A number of smaller, local serving Municipal Town Centres complement these major centres (see Figure 1). While each Regional Town Centre has a unique character, all provide a concentration of jobs and housing, road and transit connections to the rest of the region, and a variety of shopping, services and community facilities (GVRD, 2007).

![Figure 1: Town Centres in Metro Vancouver (GVRD, 2007)](image)

Within Burnaby, most of the commercial and residential growth opportunities are organized around Burnaby’s four quadrants, each having its own Town Centre. These four town centres - Brentwood, Edmonds, Lougheed
and Metrotown - form an organizing framework for the Burnaby Official Community Plan. All four of these town centres are now serviced and interconnected by rapid transit and provide a full range of commercial and housing opportunities. Of these four town centres, three (Brentwood, Edmonds and Lougheed) are smaller, local serving Municipal Town Centres and one (Metrotown) is a larger Regional Town Centre intended to serve the region more broadly (Burnaby, 2007). These four town centres are expected to accommodate about half of the new residential units and about half of the new commercial floor space within Burnaby. Between 2006 and 2021 Burnaby anticipates an additional 32,350 residential units, or a 38 percent increase. While no specific targets are given for commercial space, which measured 17.34 million square feet in 1996, it is expected to keep pace with residential development, (Burnaby, 1998).

These four town centres strongly conform to the characterizations of suburban mixed-use centres described by Scheer and Petkov in their 1998 article *Edge City Morphology: A comparison of commercial centres* in that they contain a diversity of activities, with a strong office employment and retail complement, they are being developed at a density that is much higher than the suburban norm, they are derived largely from public sector interventions in the form of planning regulations and the siting of transportation infrastructures, and they had suburban land-use features on their site prior to their development.

What sets the three municipal town centres apart from other smaller local serving municipal town centres in the region is access to SkyTrain, Metro
Vancouver's elevated rapid transit system. Most regional town centres are currently connected to either SkyTrain or Seabus (with three exceptions, Richmond, Langley and Coquitlam), and most municipal town centres across the region are connected only with the road network and mixed-traffic, bus based transit. This additional connectivity has allowed Burnaby to densify more rapidly and more broadly than would otherwise be the case. In fact, Brentwood Town Centre alone had more towers being marketed through the study period than

Figure 2: Burnaby's Four Quadrants. (Burnaby, 2007)
nearby Coquitlam Town Centre (8 towers in 5 projects versus 6 towers in 3 projects) even though the latter is a regional town centre.

**Research Framework and Methodology**

**A) Conceptual Framework**

This research rests upon a post-modernist framework of social constructivism. The social constructivist acknowledges that reality is shaped and negotiated through social and cultural processes. With regard the social construction of the urban realm, Lefebvre (1991) has noted a distinction between three conceptual spheres should be part of an analysis of the production of space: spatial practices, representational spaces and the representations of space. For the purposes of this research, I will be focusing on the on the latter of these three concepts, that is, how developers and marketers represent the suburban space as urban.

Much of the work that has built on the foundations of Lefebvre's concepts has tended to move from the analysis of spatial practices governed by such things as the structuring of interests within capitalism, to the images and symbols embodied in built spaces. (Stroper and Manville, 2006) What is missing generally is an analysis of what Lefebvre describes as “conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanist, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent—all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived” (Lefebvre 1991 p. 38). This paper is concerned with the manner in which the discourse being created guides
the transition from symbol (conceived) to sale (perceived) to built form (lived) with the developers (e.g. bankers, architects, engineers) and marketers playing the roles of "technocratic subdividers and social engineers".

To the post-modernist social science researcher, "All events and phenomena are considered texts," (Truex, 1996). This stance allows one to examine a broader discourse that includes many more communicative mechanisms than simply the written word. By employing this broad understanding of the nature of discourse this paper endeavours to identify when and how, "political actors construct a relatively consistent discourse, or discursive frame, on the future of a city," which is important because "these discourses strategically and instrumentally highlight certain aspects of the place and its political economic and social context" (McCann, 2003 p162). In this case we hope to demonstrate that real estate marketers in Burnaby's town centres are effectively constructing a consistent discourse about Burnaby as an 'urban place.'

In addition, a post-modern framework allows for a flexible understanding of the world and carries with it "an acknowledgement (and even celebration) of diversity, pluralism, complexity and ambiguity in urban form and land use patterns," (Hutton, 2005). The introduction of high-density living into what was previously a lower-density area of a traditional suburb adds complexity and diversity to the urban fabric in a way that is consistent with Hutton's understanding of post-modernism. This framework allows a conceptual understanding whereby Burnaby is both urban and suburban and can be "sold"
as such. That is, it can be understood as both an urban and a suburban place and neither understanding negates the veracity of the other. Indeed, as we will soon demonstrate some projects market themselves as offering the best of both urban and suburban environments.

**B) Advertising, Discourse and Urban Development:**

During the course of this research no fewer than 20 studies were uncovered that employed discourse analysis as a way to understand the processes of development and the creation of discourses as a means to advance a certain vision of urban development. A good example of this is McCann’s 2004 work on the ‘Best Places’ rankings and their impact on the urban development of places like Columbus, Ohio and Lexington Kentucky. In addition, studies have been done to examine the discourses generated by cities to encourage economic development. A British Columbia example of this type of work is Aguiar et al's 2005 study of Kelowna, BC’s marketing campaign to attract high-tech sector employment. While both of these use discourse analysis to look at the relationship between discourses and urban development, neither of them relate discourse to a specific urban morphology *per se*.

One study that looked specifically at the representation of a certain type of development in marketing discourse and related it to the perpetuation of a specific urban form was Susan Lucas’s "From Levittown to Luther Village" (2002). In that case the ‘suburban ideal’ was used to sell retirement villages in the Kitchener-Waterloo area of Ontario. Although this study offers many parallels
to the Burnaby/urban ideal/high-density case, the Lucas study employed content analysis methodology rather than the discourse analysis being proposed here.

Marketing choose to describe a particular world through their advertisements, and have the effect of creating a particular image of this world. (Johnstone, 2008) Studying the advertisements that are produced by real estate marketers and developers is useful for a few of reasons. First, it tells us what attribute of their developments they feel have the most value and by extension, tells us about the patterns of consumption that have become prevalent in a certain segment of the population. Also, as Callow and Lerman posit, the understanding of advertising allows us to recognize our values and aspirations as a society, “Researchers have been interested in studying ads not only for what they say about consumerism in a given society but also for what they tell us about ourselves. Identification of different kinds of appeals and their use, for example, tells us about our own needs and goals and the kinds of products we use to satisfy them,” (1999 p. 13). In this way this project attempts, by understanding the kinds of “appeals” marketers put forward, to understand the underlying values and goals that make higher density living a housing option of choice for suburban buyers.

C) Research Design

Is high-density development in Burnaby being represented in advertising, promotional material and local real estate reporting as an embodiment the urban ideal? The hypothesis presented here is that the prevailing discourse put forth by real-estate marketers and journalists represents high-density development in
Burnaby as embodying elements of the urban ideal. In order to address this research question I will be employing a methodology of discourse analysis. The discourse analysis methodology is an appropriate tool for understanding how this particular discourse is being used to transform an existing social reality because, as Fairclough and Wodak note, “discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially shaped... It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it,” (1997, p. 258). In other words it is interesting to explore how Burnaby’s established identity is being recast, in part by real estate developers and their marketing teams.

The data being analyzed is the marketing and promotional material produced by developers and their agents, as well as local real estate journalism. Specifically, both articles and advertisements from the real estate sections of Vancouver’s principal daily, The Vancouver Sun, as well as industry specific periodicals such as West Coast Homes, Real Estate Weekly and the New Home Buyers Guide. The project websites are used as a valuable source of data in keeping with the post-modern conceptual framework, which allows websites, images and even music to be read as discourse. Copies of the projects marketing brochures were also analyzed whenever possible.

The sampling strategy employed in this study is a combination sampling method. At the core of this sampling strategy is a critical case sample. Critical case sampling is useful as it may permit generalization and application of information to other cases. The critical case for my sample is the City of Burnaby.
Burnaby is an inner suburb that is adjacent to the central city. As suburban-style growth increasingly dominates North American metropolitan regions, concern is mounting about its sprawling and car-dependent nature. Prominent among proposed remedies is the creation of transit-oriented and pedestrian-oriented mixed-use centres with densities far in excess of the suburban norm, (Filion, 2002). As noted previously, within Burnaby, most of the commercial and residential growth opportunities are organized around the town centres of each of the four quadrants. In order for the City of Burnaby to achieve this level of intensification, it will be necessary to experience a sustained market for high-rise living. Understanding how this type of change is marketed will be valuable to other metropolitan regions struggling to improve their own land use patterns as it may offer insight into an untapped demand for urban lifestyles traditionally non-urban areas.

The other type of sampling strategy employed will be a criterion sample. In this case the criterion will be applied to the specific projects that are examined as part of the study. The selection criterion will be as follows:

1. Geographic: Projects must be located within one to the four town centres in the City of Burnaby.
2. Typological: Projects must include high-density residential units, defined as developments containing residential units in a tower of at least 12 stories.
3. Temporal: Projects must have been actively marketed, either before or during construction, between June 1 and November 31, 2007. In the event that projects are part of a multiphase development, data from previous phases has been included, where available.
This sampling method returned a total of 12 projects in three of the town centres, Brentwood, Edmonds, and Lougheed. Metrotown had no projects being marketed through the study period, this may be attributable to the fact that Metrotown is a larger and older centre whose development began with the construction of the SkyTrain Expo line in the mid-1980's resulting in fewer opportunities to assemble the land necessary to develop the type of projects considered here. The other three town centres have only recently been connected to the rapid transit system with the construction of the SkyTrain Millennium line in 2001. The ample areas around these town centres devoted to low intensity uses has likely made land assemblages easier to obtain, particularly in Brentwood and Edmonds.

Table 1: Project Sample Summary (City of Burnaby, 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Town centre</th>
<th>Height in floors</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Mixed use?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legacy</td>
<td>Brentwood</td>
<td>30 (2 towers)</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oma</td>
<td>Brentwood</td>
<td>31 (2 towers)</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oma 2</td>
<td>Brentwood</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watercolours</td>
<td>Brentwood</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>150+/-</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzgerald at Brentwood Gate</td>
<td>Brentwood</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motif @ Citi</td>
<td>Brentwood</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axis</td>
<td>Edmonds</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esprit</td>
<td>Edmonds</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esprit 2</td>
<td>Edmonds</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belvedere</td>
<td>Edmonds</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park 360</td>
<td>Edmonds</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silhouette</td>
<td>Lougheed</td>
<td>29 (2 towers)</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The unit of analysis for this project is the "discourse unit", which is defined as a topically coherent stretch of discourse. A discourse unit can be as simple as a word or picture or as complex as a conversation or series of conversations (Biber, 2005). For the purposes of this paper, the common discourse units are specific words, phrases or images that reference directly or by inference the urban ideal.

D) Validity

The nature of post-modern, social constructivist research means it is unavoidable that an author's own values and assumptions will shape the research, from the way one selects, analyzes and interprets data. Because every individual brings a different series of experiences, assumptions and biases everyone has a particular lens with which they view the world. As a result there is no single meaning of a text, and an infinite number of potentially valid readings is possible," (Rosenau, 1992, Truex, 1996). The potential for these biases to invalidate research can be mitigated by being as transparent as possible about these values and assumptions, though it is impossible to become aware of all factors that may influence an individual's interpretation. Ultimately, the reader must judge the analysis based on their own understandings and take from the research what they chose.

Consequently, there is no assertion made that an absolute truth is being unveiled by this research; rather, it represents a sincere attempt to present a strong interpretation that is internally valid. As Truex states, "Internal validity and strength of interpretation become the warrants to the validity of the 'reading' of a
text" (Truex, 1996). Another concern that can be raised about this type of research is the eventuality of rival explanations or interpretations of the case. Rather than invalidating the research, it is considered an integral part of the discourse analysis methodology that readings may be challenged in a dialectical process (Truex, 1996, Howarth, 2000). Indeed the author invites alternative interpretations of the case so that a more complete understanding may be obtained.
THE URBAN IDEAL

As noted previously it seems that a new urban ideal has arisen in response to the prominence of suburbanism in the last half of the 20th Century. As Arnstberg notes, “The urban ideal has… become even more dominant and is preached with more force and credibility than ever before.” (2007, p1) Despite this bold statement, there currently exists no cohesive theory or framework to draw from with regard to the urban ideal. This section provides a synopsis of the various writings that have been produced regarding the emergence (or rather re-emergence) of the North American central city, and urban environments generally, as desirable places to live. In the current urban literature, five main academic discourses seem to draw from, and contribute to, a contemporary urban ideal. These include the city as a place of, and for, consumption; the rise of the ‘creative class’ and the new economy; ‘loft living’; ‘sustainability’; and ‘Vancouverism’.

Consumption

Cities may have long been associated with consumption; indeed, historically they have served as the centres of commerce and trade from the first agrarian societies right through the age of modernism and now into the post-modern era. However, it is in the post-modern city that the act of consumption contributes as much to the changing urban form as it does to lifestyles and social practices within it. Indeed, contemporary processes of post-modern restructuring
are being redefined “through the deliberate employment of consumption as a mechanism of change,” (Miles and Paddison, 1998). That is, how and where people consume goods not only has impacts on the spatial structure and social relationships within the city, but consumption is being used as a tool to shape how the city as a whole is organized and developed. This occurs in two main ways, first is the role the act of consumption plays in the culture of urbanites, and second is the way the city itself is available for consumption.

The first role of consumption, which has become one of the defining factors of urban culture, was advanced by Sharon Zukin in her 2004 book *Point of Purchase*. As she notes, “With the shift of the economy towards consumption and our weaker attachment to traditional art forms, religions, and politics, shopping has come to define who we, as individuals, are and what we, as a society, want to become,” (p. 8). Indeed this sentiment that our culture is based largely on consumption is also noted by McCracken:

…in Western developed societies culture is profoundly connected to and dependant upon consumption. Without consumer goods, modern, developed societies would lose key instruments for the reproduction, representation, and manipulation of their culture... The meaning of consumer goods and the meaning creation accomplished by consumer processes are important parts of the scaffolding of our present realities. Without consumer goods, certain acts of self-definition and collective definition in this culture would be impossible (McCracken, 1990, p. xi).

Zukin takes this idea of consumption defining our culture and ties it explicitly to the nature of the urban realm. She posits that it is the act of shopping, and not necessarily the goods purchased (if any goods are purchased at all), that urbanites value. She suggests that one function of flashy city
shopping is the acquisition of ‘cultural capital’. Proximity to high-end retailers and ‘cool’ stores is a way to gain information about how to look and perform in certain socio-economic roles. Urban shopping is both enjoyable and also instructive; cities are where information about consumption patterns is distilled and distributed, and where individuals use this acquired information to signal to other people that they belong to a certain strata, or possess certain kinds of social attributes (Zukin, 2004, Storper and Manville, 2006). The opportunity to access these types shopping experiences is necessary for a place to be truly urban.

Such urban places are typically associated with the inner areas of ‘metropolitan’ centres in which residents use taste as a basis for social acknowledgment and “the enjoyment of status by way of contrast to residents in neighbourhoods in ‘suburban’, ‘provincial’, and ‘small-town’ settings” (Webber, 2007 p182). The status enjoyed by city dwellers is such that it can be seen as driver of an urban renaissance as there is evidence to suggest that, when adjusted for increased costs of living, relative real wages have been falling in dense urban areas. These “falling relative real wages are... seen as evidence for an increased desire of people to live in urban areas” (Glaeser and Gottlieb 2006 p 1275). In other words, due to higher costs associated with urban life the average individual is willing to make do with less, simply to live in an urban environment. In addition, according to Miles and Paddison (1998), this increased desire to live in urban areas has contributed to the development and commodification of urban spaces themselves because consumption is no longer determined by the producer. On the contrary, the producer, and by implication
the city, are increasingly subject to the demands and tastes of the consumer.

Indeed, what they see are the:

multiple intersections between consumption and the (re)territorialisation of urban space, the sites through which consumption takes place, the impress of new waves of capital investment and the meanings... such shifts have for the individual. (Miles and Paddison, p 822)

Put another way, the patterns of consumption and the desire for ‘cultural capital’ have influenced the distribution of real capital and the location of urban development; at the same time they are shifting the understandings of those spaces for the individual consumers. In the analysis section of this paper we will see how demand for urban consumption spaces has precipitated the attempts by real-estate marketers to create urban places out of the Burnaby town centres.

Creative Class

Perhaps one of the most influential works (at least in terms of mass dissemination) about urban development in recent memory is Richard Florida’s 2002 book the Rise of the Creative Class. In it he has notably suggested that a significant positive correlation exists between the incidence of a group he defines as the “creative class” in different cities and local economic growth. Through this book and a follow up books and writings such as 2005’s Cities and the Creative Class, an academic discourse around his theories has been both adopted by, and criticized by, many urban researchers and theorists. The creative class is generally defined as a wide swath of professional, managerial, technical, and cultural workers. The purported implication of a strong creative class on
demographics is an increase in a residential population of young professionals with more education and fewer children. This creates a social profile geared toward recreation and consumption concerns (Clark et al, 2002). The ‘creative class’ label is “intended to convey the sense that its members are the fountainehead of innovative energy and cultural dynamism in modern urban society,” (Scott, 2006 p4).

Indeed whatever label is applied to this section of society, if this discourse is correct, cities in which it is present would tend to display a certain kind of developmental structure, as is seen in the types employment, cultural life, and physical composition of said cities. As Scott Notes:

Thus, employment in these places tends to be dominated by high-end segments of the new economy; cultural amenities (in the guise of museums, art galleries, concert halls, multifaceted entertainment districts, and so on) are almost always present in some abundance; and the visible form of the city is generally dominated by up-scale streetscapes, expensive shopping facilities, and well-appointed residential enclaves, the latter frequently coinciding with gentrified inner city neighbourhoods. (2006, p4)

Furthermore, combinations of these attributes within urban areas are professed to represent sources of interregional competitive advantage and form a critical element of the contemporary creative city. The creative city is argued to also be focused on consumption, though more in terms of consuming culture than attaining “cultural capital.” According to creative class theorists, members of this class value the city over other forms of settlement space, specifically because of its ability to become “a cultural centre offering diverse, sophisticated and cosmopolitan entertainment lacking elsewhere (Clarke et al, 2002 p500).
While similar in many ways to the yuppie culture of the 1980's (Short, 1989) the main distinction is that the creative class is seen to generate economic growth and innovation through creative endeavours while yuppies were seen to work within the established business community and were perceived to be focused on the generation of personal wealth.

In addition to an increased focus on cultural amenities, Florida argues that the creative class contributes to advancement of diversity and tolerance as urban ideal. The idea of the city as a melting pot is not new whether it is one of traders, or immigrants, or of technologies and cultures. It is this diversity that creates new fusions such as, for example, those in fashion, art, or cooking (Webber, 2007). Florida argues that the interaction between people with distinct knowledge ideas and skill sets can often lead to technical or cultural innovations or to the development of new modes of living (Florida, 2002; 2005). Further, it is argued that the intermingling of cultures allows for the emergence of subcultures and provides access to communities of like-minded individuals who are not available in lower order centres (Savage et al, 2005). Indeed, this theory indicates that it is through embracing the dynamism that results from these disparate groups and ideas being able to achieve some kind of critical mass that cities are able to attract the creative class and the competitive advantages that that entails.

In addition to attracting the creative class, there are number of other ways that diversity has been shown to improve cities. Ottaviano and Peri (2005a; 2005b) have shown that ethnic diversity increases human capital of the native-born, as a result of mutual learning in such a way as to increase the wages of
native-born people in diverse cities. Storper and Manville, (2006) contend that one of the values of diversity is its ability to increase the array of available consumer goods and that this improved shopping allows a city to differentiate itself.

In order to be more creative and by extension competitive, Florida posits that ideally, cities should focus on mechanisms for drawing as many creative individuals as possible into their jurisdictions. This might be achieved through a high-quality urban environment rich in cultural amenities and conducive to diversity in local social life (Scott, 2006). Later we will see that the advertising discourse being examined indeed advances the available amenities as being sufficient to provide the rich, diverse social and cultural life described above.

**Loft Living**

Sharon Zukin’s 1982 book “Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change” explores the cultural, political and market forces that led to the redevelopment of the Soho District of Lower Manhattan. This redevelopment saw an urban transformation from small scale industrial uses intermixed with artists and artisans living in “genteel poverty” in converted inexpensive industrial space, into high price “bourgeois chic” apartments for Manhattan’s professional-managerial class. Zukin casts a critical eye on what she termed the de-industrialization of the city, and identifies the role local artists in advancing a bohemian aesthetic that enabled the ‘patrician elite’ to reimage and commodify the former industrial district. In addition to advancing this desirable aesthetic the artists cleared the way for redevelopment by fighting with “…city agencies and
zoning laws for state recognition and support of their alternative "lifestyle". Only when this happened could the aesthetic, and then economic "revalorization" of abandoned factory and warehouse districts take place," (Goldner, 1989 p. 1).

She also looked at the role the state played in facilitating this process. Zukin sees this transformation of the city as the outcome of a class struggle mediated by the actions of the state (DiMaggio, 1984). That is this transformation was the result of the struggle of the artists to legitimize their live/work bohemian lifestyle through zoning and tax law amendments, a struggle which was ultimately co-opted by the real estate industry who promptly repackaged the 'raw' spaces of SoHo for consumption by the elite, thereby pricing pioneering artists out of the area. This trend of pioneering artist being the vanguard of urban regeneration, only to be forced to move on, was recognized as a broader trend across the United States and elsewhere in the western world. This trend gave rise to the term "Soho Syndrome", which was coined in a 1986 Newsweek article on the subject. (McGuigan et al, 1986). While gentrification and class struggle can hardly be thought of as an urban ideal, the idea of a 'loft lifestyle' that has 'revalorized' urban living does speaks strongly to this ideal.

At the centre of this is the original SoHo 'loft lifestyle', Zukin saw a desire in the consumers of these places to identify with the artistic residents, and to appreciate the relationship between art and industry that was embodied in these buildings. The lifestyle was also about living in a central location that had a feeling of authenticity, an individuality that created a sense of "place" rather than a sense of "space." Another aspect of the loft living aesthetic Zukin identified
was an increased concern for the earth's ecology, an recognition of the conservationist elements of adaptive reuse and an appreciation of the “small” over the “big.” As she noted: “The market for living lofts that has developed after 1970 also sells the social and cultural values of the 1960’s to the middle class consumers of the seventies and eighties” (p 60). Perhaps more importantly, lofts imbued a certain amount of cultural status to their residents, identifying them has part of the urban avant-guard, people more daring and in-the-know than those of comparable socio-economic status that chose to live in the suburbs. Indeed, residents use their address to help define their own social identity while at the same time perpetuating SoHo’s urban identity as an artistic or bohemian residential district.

The role lofts played in the restructuring of Lower Manhattan has spread overtime to other cities around the globe both through the advancement of the loft aesthetic through popular décor and design magazines and through efforts by real estate developers to package inner city developments in an identifiably loft-like manner. Two recent studies on the role loft living plays in the urban realm are Julie Podmore’s 1998 exploration of Montréal, Quebec and Wendy Shaw’s 2006 examination of Sydney, Australia.

Podmore’s work highlights how the loft aesthetic has moved to Montréal and other North American centres. She notes that while the neighbourhoods and morphology of Montréal’s loft districts have gained some local specificity and authenticity, what is less particular and specific is the construction of the Loft aesthetic and “lifestyle”. She notes that whether the product is standardized
condominium lofts or rough artists live/work studios, “loft spaces depend on their resemblance to SoHo lofts for their legitimacy as ‘avante-garde’ domestic places and sites of identity construction,” (p. 284). That is by identifying the projects with Lower Manhattan, through both architecture and advertising; consumers are willing to buy into the idea of the hip urban lifestyle, who then in turn, reinforce the idea that the area is a “cool” place to live.

Shaw’s study looked at some to the same issues that Podmore explored, namely the cultural processes by which both the city and the residents build identity through the process of urban transition. This reliance on the Soho aesthetic to imbue Sydney’s former garment district with “authenticity” has led to the creation of “a metropolitan fantasy of a cosmopolitan, and globally generic, urbanity,” (p.185). She notes that Sydney's version of Soho “is a package of Manhattan referents and place-based cultural encodings” that have formed as part of a wider process of cosmopolitanism both produced and consumed in newly defined “urbane” city. Shaw takes her study further into the values and desires of those that chose to live in the urban centre rather than the suburbs. While a desire to be fashionable, artistic or “chic” plays a role, Shaw suggests that there are deeper needs or desires that are being met in these districts than merely attaining social status. Similar to the theories of urban development advanced by Richard Florida, Shaw sees that proximity and access to social events, cultural institutions, nightlife, diverse lifestyles and to “like-minded” people responded to the desires of many people that were not being met in suburban districts or in smaller order centres.
Sustainability

Another area of the urban ideal that has become prominent is the idea of sustainability. Of particular interest is the relationship between density and sustainability (Churchman 1999, Gratz, 2004, Downs, 2005, Kenworthy, 2006). Also important are issues of walkability (Cerin et al, 2006, Duany et al, 2000) and transit availability and orientation (Downs, 2005, Calthorpe, 1993, Calthorpe and Fulton, 2001). Encompassing all of the issues above is possible by focusing on two main, distinct but interrelated, models of urban sustainable development “Smart Growth” and “New Urbanism”. This section addresses both in the context of establishing an urban ideal.

The first conceptual model for sustainable urbanism that will be relied upon to inform our understanding of the urban ideal is the “Smart growth” model. Downs identifies the key elements of smart growth as the following:

1. Limiting outward extension of new development in order to make settlements more compact and preserve open spaces. This can be done via urban growth boundaries or utility districts;
2. Raising residential densities in both new-growth areas and existing neighbourhoods;
3. Providing for more mixed land uses and pedestrian friendly layouts to minimize the use of cars on short trips;
4. Loading the public costs of new development onto its consumers via impact fees rather than having those costs paid by the community in general;
5. Emphasizing public transit to reduce the use of private vehicles.
6. Revitalizing older existing neighbourhoods;

(Downs, 2005 p368).
To take it one step further, Boone and Modarres (2006) propose that the smartest growth, in terms of efficiency of services and environmental benefits, should encourage the rejuvenation of existing neighbourhoods, thereby taking advantage of existing infrastructure, preserving greenfields, and “reaping the energy benefits of renovating existing homes and neighbourhoods rather than building new ones,” (Boone and Modarres, 2006 p181). Burnaby’s town centres adhere to many of these ideas put forth by both Downs and Boone and Modarres.

The second concept to be examined is that of New Urbanism. Originally inspired by the work of Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk and now espoused by the Council for New Urbanism (CNU), New Urbanism shares many of the goals and directions of Smart Growth, including human scales and pedestrian focus. However, as a doctrine, New Urbanism is far more focused on the physical design of neighbourhoods and on the social well being of the communities. As Brain notes, “An urban ideal is evident in the idealized neighbourhood unit at the heart of much New Urbanist practice,” (2006 p21). One key prescription of New Urbanism is to build the city around the person rather than the car. This has the effect of re-humanizing the city as, “Designing and constructing cities to accommodate the automobile has quite literally dehumanized the city,” (Boone and Modarres, 2006 p185).

One of the chief criticisms of New Urbanism is that it is too design focused, which has resulted in a superficial aesthetic. While it is true that the vast majority of New Urbanist developments possess a neo-traditional style, in true
New Urbanist projects the design rational goes far beyond simply evoking a bygone era. As Brain notes:

In New Urbanist practice, the neighbourhood unit is not just a nostalgic image, but a paradigmatic representation of the core value of urbanism as a particular normative condition: the extent to which each house, each project built in a community, contributes to the completion of a street, neighbourhood or town; to the achievement of emergent possibilities; to a history that gives the place depth and meaning; and to the richness, variety, amenity, functionality, and pleasure of a shared world (Brain, 2006 p21).

Though New Urbanism is about design, it is also about attempting to design neighbourhoods in which people and cities can flourish rather than merely being about a specific architectural milieu.

While not specifically associated with New Urbanism, architect and philosopher Paolo Soleri captured many of the sentiments of New Urbanism in his concept of the “urban effect”. The urban effect is the notion that by reducing the extensiveness of the urban form and building complex compact cities we improve the quality of life and satisfaction of citizens. “It pulls together and then by pulling together generates a kind of overlapping so that you might have, for example, closely woven layers of activity. It is an urge toward a condition that is more intense, and richer, and less segregated,” (Soleri, 2006, p35).

Taken together these two concepts, Smart Growth and New Urbanism, suggest that an ideal city will be more concentrated and will have a reduced impact on the environment and result in a lower consumption of fossil fuels. This type of development is made possible by the construction rapid transit systems, such as SkyTrain, as Kenworthy notes, “Significant changes in land use around
these systems are also occurring, providing the means to reconstruct the automobile city into a series of transit cities based around town centers and local centers designed for walking, cycling, and transit access,” (2007, p. 67). According to New Urbanist theory, this ideal city would also offer a life to its residents that is more meaningful and fulfilling. Furthermore, this theory argues that to achieve this ideal, cities must become vibrant, progressive, energetic and inviting places (Boone and Modarres, 2006).

**Vancouverism**

In recent years, Vancouver has risen to prominence through its own interpretation of what constitutes the urban ideal and what the best mechanisms for achieving an ideal urban environment are. This has resulted in an emerging academic discourse on “Vancouverism” or “The Vancouver Model.” Perhaps the most recognizable feature of Vancouverism is “the block typology of small-plate high-rise towers on townhouse podia [that] predominates on Vancouver’s downtown peninsula,” (Boddy, 2004 p. 7), though there are other factors that contribute to the success of this model as well.

In many places in North America, multi-family, high-rise housing has been discredited socially, except as residences for the very wealthy. Even the wealthy only appear to be thriving “…in selective dense urban enclaves such as can be found in New York, San Francisco and other cities still considered worth visiting,” (Cook, 2006, p. 12). It is not surprising that many North Americans fear increased density, associating it with increased traffic, parking problems and noise or with the poor-quality public housing developments of the 1960’s and 70’s, but
Vancouver has proved that, with good planning, high-density can result in quality living spaces and attractive public space (Kuiper, 2005).

Vancouver achieves this quality and density by bucking the prevailing trend of North American urbanism. It accomplishes this by achieving a rapid urban development model while simultaneously building equity, amenity, and liveability. As Boddy notes, downtown Vancouver:

...may now be writing a new rulebook of city-making for the 21st century. The Vancouver that is now generating such interest amongst planners and architects was shaped by a complex interaction of geography, politics, principles, ideas, and contingency, yet out of its particular history may come some fresh notions that might apply elsewhere. "Vancouverism" has now become a term in the literature of city planning, a cousin to that older descriptor of the hyper-dense city – “Manhattanism” (Boddy, 2005).

One of keys to Vancouver’s success is the natural geography of its location. Downtown Vancouver is on a peninsula surrounded by ocean and mountains. This has contributed to a “view imperative” which is consistently demonstrated in the impact of the “significant perceived value to having a view of mountains and or water” on real estate prices (Berelowitz, 2005, p. 25). This, in turn, has had a significant impact on the city’s built form. Slim towers are more expensive to build than bulky towers. However, purchasers who are attracted to the view will pay for the extra cost in construction (Bogdanomcz, 2006). Slim towers are one of the keystones of downtown Vancouver’s perceived livability. Noted for their shimmering glass, they have small footprints relative to the typical residential tower in North America. This small floor plate allows for greater
separation between towers, permits sunlight to reach the streets, and prevents wind-tunnels and other microclimate effects (Punter, 2003).

With small floor plates being one tenet of the Vancouver Model, another are the podia at the tower bases. Sitting a residential tower on a one, two or three story podium creates a street wall with either retail or townhouses offering front doors and eyes on the street. This helps to animate the streetscape and improve the pedestrian realm, while at the same time improving public safety (Berelowitz in Beers, 2006). This point-and-podium morphology is demonstrated in Figure 3 (below).

Figure 3: The “building blocks” of Vancouver-style urban morphology. (Bogdanomcz, 2006, p. 24) © 2006 Canadian Architect Used by permission.
Beyond the physical structure of the residential buildings themselves, Vancouver is noted for its success in leveraging development to improve the overall urban realm. This leveraging has to do with the role that developers have in providing the social, cultural, and recreation infrastructure in new and renewed neighbourhoods. For over two decades, Vancouver has used a form of social bonus zoning, in which extra density in housing developments is granted in return for such public amenities as cultural facilities, parks, schools, and social housing. The development industry appears to support this system because not only are they afforded the ability to increase the density of their projects, but because they find that investments in a better public realm increase the value of their developments as well (Boddy, 2005). More recently, the City of Burnaby has also used an approach to amenity zoning, in which properties are rezoned to a Comprehensive Development (CD) District. The CD zone prescribes an outright allowable density and an additional maximum amount of density that can be obtained by providing an amenity contribution. The eligible amenities include open space, public facilities such as a library or community centre, or public art (Coriolis, 2007).

**Urban Ideal: A Working Definition**

The urban ideal is not wholly contained in any of the above discourses but rather each discourse points the way to one or more element of what might be considered an urban ideal. Just as the suburban ideal was composed of a number of elements that contributed to the societal embrace of suburban development, the urban ideal may actually be composed of several distinct ideals.
that together form what is perceived by many to offer a new direction and an new
type of development that is to be embraced as we move forward in the next half
century.

One fundamental element of both the suburban and urban ideal is that of
consumption and home ownership. In its urban form this element goes far
beyond that of its suburban counterpart. The suburban consumption ideal was
based on the ownership of the home and the material possessions that it
contained. The ideal urban consumption is also based on the idea of the
commodification of space and the accouterments of home ownership, but it
extends beyond the private aspect of consumption and looks at consumption in
the public realm. Opportunities to shop in prestigious, aesthetically pleasing
locations, to keep abreast of the latest fashions, and gain social status are also
part of the urban ideal.

In contrast to the parallels seen regarding consumption, an element that is
missing from the suburban ideal yet is a primary element of the urban ideal is
sustainability. The suburban ideal was based in part on the idea of access to
nature, with yards and lawns symbolizing that natural element (Lucas, 2002). The
irony of this ideal is that traditional forms of suburban development actually have
a devastating impact on the natural world. The urban ideal advanced by both
New Urbanists and smart growth advocates recognizes the value of a quality
urban environment that is intensive rather that extensive, so that nature may be
preserve elsewhere and the overall impact on the environment is mitigated. That
is not to say that greenery is not appreciated in the urban realm, New Urbanism
is particularly concerned with the aesthetic benefits of regionally appropriate landscape design, but it is not strictly necessary to achieve a desirable environment in which to live. This separation of greenery and sustainability is demonstrated explicitly in the theoretical relationship between loft living and ecology where a raw industrial aesthetic is valued in part because of its contribution to sustainability principles. Sustainability is also about walkability, access to alternative forms of transport, and perhaps most importantly, about the idea of complete communities in which people have access to employment, cultural, recreational and residential opportunities.

Furthermore, these intensive, complete communities contribute to the diversity and vitality that is also an element of the urban ideal. In effect, dense and diverse communities provide the drawing together and layers on interaction espoused by Soleri. This dense activity in turn fosters the type of cosmopolitanism, dynamism, and creativity both Florida and Zukin identified as being important to city dwellers.

Access to, and availability of, social, cultural and recreational amenities are other elements necessary in an ideal urban environment. These elements are repeated through many of the academic discourses we have seen including the theories of New Urbanism, the creative class, loft living, and consumption, all of which note that accessibility of amenities is a crucial element that makes a city desirable. In the upcoming analysis section we will examine which among, and to what extent, these different elements are leveraged by real estate marketers to sell condominiums in Burnaby.
In contrast to the elements of the urban ideal outlined here, the discourse surrounding Vancouverism does not explicitly identify an independent principle of urbanism but instead offers a practical, morphological template that seeks to provide, and arguably succeeds in providing, the urban ideal as described above. Given the proximity of the two municipalities, (they are adjacent) and the hierarchical nature of their relationship (metropolitan core versus mid-range suburb) it is to be expected that the type of development occurring in Burnaby embodies many of the characteristics for which Vancouver is noted. We will see that this is particularly evident in the built form of the projects examined in this study, as well as the predominant place “The View” has taken in the advertising discourse.
ANALYSIS

Private and Public Consumption

The ideas outlined in the previous section regarding consumption are prevalent in the materials examined in both of the ways discussed; specifically in the act of home ownership and access to exclusive public consumer spaces. The discourse on home ownership focuses on consuming the condominiums themselves, and all the associated status and wealth that is to be generated by investing in the various projects. The discourse on shopping hones in on the accessibility and quality of shops and services in the surrounding area.

The idea of home ownership is one of the more consistent discourses presented across all of the material examined. Indeed, this may not be surprising given that the ads are designed with the expressed purpose of inducing people to purchase homes in the various developments examined. One of the consistent themes in this discourse that seems to relate to the suburban location of these urban type projects is that of value for money. For example, the advertising for the “Axis” project in Edmonds is very explicit in equating their building with a high quality lifestyle at an affordable price. The cover brochure distributed at the Axis display centre proclaims, “BURNABY’S BEST CONCRETE VALUE, A LIFESTYLE YOU’LL LOVE, A STYLE THAT SUITS YOU,”(Rennie, n.d.b). The implication being made is that the project offers both “LIFESTYLE” and “STYLE” at bargain price. This idea of value and affordability is reinforced
through their print and web advertising with statement such as “Worth the Drive” and “Save $300/sq.ft. at Axis Vs. Downtown,” (Rennie, n.d.a). In an article about the project in the industry paper *Real Estate Weekly*, the heading reads, “Situated in the centre of everything, AXIS is a destination of its own with what astute buyers are seeking today: location, contemporary design, true value and a concrete real estate investment,” (2007 p. 1) As the *Real Estate Weekly* is distributed free to consumers and is supported entirely form advisements from realtors and developers it is likely that their assessment of potential Axis residents as astute condominium buyers is in agreement with the discourse that the developers of Axis are trying to create, for both their own project and for homeownership in general.

Another project that also stresses the relative value of living in Edmonds is the Esprit development, to which the project marketers have attached the tag line “Dwell Within Reach.” (Bosa, 2006; 2007) In this case the tag line has two implications. First, is the implication that it is within in the means, or financial “reach” of prospective buyers. The second is that it offers good proximity and access to the rest of the city. This tagline is reinforced with statements such as “Premium Space, Sensibly Priced from $377,900” and “All of this, and a price that is within reach,” (Bosa, 2007, June 16)(See Figure 4).

Other projects also make reference, either directly or by inference, to the relative affordability or the overall value ownership in their respective developments offers. At Motif in Brentwood they note that “You will be pleasantly surprised by the affordable price tag,” (Appia, 2007a; 2007b). Meanwhile
Legacy's advertising encourages one to “Live for today, Build for tomorrow,” (Embassy, n.d.a; n.d.b) apparently in reference to the ability to build equity through homeownership while still having enough left over to enjoy life in the present. In one article in *The Province* the author makes explicit reference to the affordability of the Watercolours project and likens Brentwood to the trendy Yaletown district in downtown Vancouver:

> Burnaby’s Brentwood Park neighbourhood offers Yaletown-like living at a much more affordable price, and the area is growing quickly in amenities and conveniences, just like its big sister in Vancouver did. (Read, 2007, p. E.6)

Again, the message that Burnaby offers environments equal to those found in the city centre, but they are achieved at a more accessible price point.

Another aspect of homeownership that is extolled by the marketing material produced for these types of condominiums is the status afforded the owners through the “sophisticated” and “luxurious” finishes and appointments of the suites. In Lougheed the Silhouette project is “sleek and sophisticated” (Ledingham McAllister, n.d.a; n.d.b) while the Esprit2 offers a choice of “two sophisticated yet flexible palettes,” (Bosa, 2007) (of interior design), OMA offers “Luxury West Coast homes with an Manhattan flavour”(Rennie, n.d.d), Legacy has “luxurious amenities,” (Embassy, n.d.b) the Fitzgerald at Brentwood Gate has kitchens that are simultaneously “opulent” and “chef-inspired” (Ledingham McAllister, n.d.d) and Motif has a “decidedly urban and sophisticated flair,” (Appia, 2007b).
All of this sophisticated luxury is offered to buyers in order to reinforce the idea that ownership of an apartment condominium is something that is to be aspired to, rather than something for which one settles, and it reassures buyers that living in a dense neighbourhood does not deprive them of the status they would enjoy if they were to purchase a traditional single family dwelling. Indeed, most buyers would recognize that houses in their price range likely would not offer anywhere near the level of fit and finish they could achieve in a new high-rise.
The other aspect of consumption highlighted in this advertising discourse is the public side of consumption. In this case the term public is used loosely to define spaces outside the home to which most people are offered access, rather than the more rigorously defined idea of public spaces with the connotation of public ownership and universal access. This is the realm that Zukin noted for its ability to provide urban dwellers cultural capital from the act of shopping in settings not available to suburban or small town residents. As the predominant form of shopping in Burnaby is still centred on the auto-oriented shopping centre, big box store and strip mall, it is interesting to note that proximity to shopping is highlighted by all of the projects examined here. Indeed, the choices for consumption are often described in such a way as to as to imply an urban level of choice and sophistication. For example in an article in the Vancouver Sun, one OMA resident refers to nearby Dawson Street as “a village-like setting” and “like Yaletown, very funky” again referencing the converted loft district in downtown Vancouver, (It’s all in, 2007, p. K17). She ironically goes on to describe the shops available in the neighbourhood such as Home Depot and Starbucks, two retailers commonly found in most North American suburban regions. Another good example of the quality of the shopping being embellished was put forward with respect to the Silhouette project:

Life at Silhouette means there’s plenty to keep you busy, entertained and fit. The brand new Northgate Village anchored by Save-On-Foods, BC Signature Liquor Store, Rogers Video, and a coffee bistro is literally right outside your front door. Lougheed Mall is just a short stroll down the street or check out the shopping extravaganzas of nearby Metrotown, Guilford and Brentwood Town Centre only minutes away by car or SkyTrain, (Boyce, 2007 p. 25).
Again, access to provincial or national level chain stores is being offered as a unique urban amenity, as is the ability to “stroll down the street” to a typical enclosed suburban shopping mall or to access the “shopping extravaganzas” that are the other nearby enclosed shopping centres.

The images presented in a number of the ads also reinforce the notion of shopping as an amenity of in these developments. One that is particularly consumption focused is the Esprit campaign, with its primary image being that of a young women gazing into space while a swirl of stylized images appears to grow out of her head (see Figure 4). The image prompted one blogger to describe the model as “dwelling below a stormy cloud of consumer goods,” (Condo Hype, 2007). Interestingly, the images that reference shopping predominantly feature attractive and fashionably dressed women, (see Figure 5). This begs the question of how real estate advertising contributes to the broader discourse of gender roles in advertising and whether these are indicative of the fact (real or perceived) that women play a larger role in choosing domiciles than men. While these questions are interesting and worthy of further exploration, they lay beyond the scope of what can be contemplated here.

**Selling Sustainability**

The next element of the urban ideal to be examined is the idea of sustainability. As we have seen, dense, compact and complete communities are considered to be more sustainable than sprawling, auto dependant communities. The developments examined here all act to improve the density of their
So many places to go. To shop. To see and be seen. An exciting, fashionable neighbourhood waiting to welcome you.

Figure 5: Images of female consumers. (Clockwise from top left: Legacy (Embassy, n.d.a), Watercolours (Polygon, n.d.), Silhouette (Ledingham McAllister, n.d.a), Esprit, (Bosa, 2006), Axis (Rennie, n.d.b)).
respective town centres and bring more residents into close proximity with existing retail, recreational and employment opportunities. In addition, fully half of the projects include some new commercial or institutional floor space within the developments themselves. All of the projects are located within walking distance to a SkyTrain station and all offer options for those that choose to live without a personal vehicle. This lack of auto-dependence is summed up for Silhouette as follows:

Lougheed Town Centre is the vibrant pulse of Burnaby and a desired place to be. With great shops, fine restaurants and every conceivable amenity close by, Silhouette residents can often choose to leave their cars at home. The area is also a transportation hub and commuters have major bus routes and the Millennium SkyTrain station just steps from their door. (Ledingham McAllister, n.d.b)

Indeed, walkability and access to SkyTrain are major components of the marketing of most of the projects and is mentioned in the promotional material for all of the projects. OMA, for example, uses the tag line “one minute from Vancouver, one minute from Brentwood, one minute from Millennium Line,” (Rennie, n.d.d; n.d.e), and Watercolours is “…merely footsteps to shopping, schools, and services, and is minutes from downtown Vancouver on the convenient Millennium SkyTrain,” (Polygon, n.d). From Axis one can “Stroll to shops and amenities,” (Rennie, n.d.a), while at Fitzgerald at Brentwood Gate one will reside in a “pedestrian-friendly neighbourhood,” (Ledingham McAllister, n.d.c; n.d.d). From Motif residents “need only walk out the door to find all the services and activities they want,” (Appia, 2007b). One exception is the Belvedere which has a distinctly high-end, enclave focus to its campaign, stressing the projects
location in a park and its (tenuous) relationship to the Belvedere Palace in Vienna, Austria. Though even the website for this atypical project showed the SkyTrain line and station on its location map, (Millennium n.d.).

Interestingly, the Belvedere aside, all but one of the project marketers chose to highlight this walkable proximity to shops, services and SkyTrain as a convenient amenity, rather than utilizing the green nature of these transportation options to attract consumers. The Legacy marketers were the exception; having produced some advertisements that stressed the environmental benefits of living in a town centre (see Figure 6). The advertisement explicitly tells consumers to “Go Green!” by purchasing in the development and further stresses that a green lifestyle is easier to achieve in this type of location. The ad purports that Legacy “…prov[es] that making less of an impact can also mean getting the most out of life,” (Embassy, 2007). A statement that is in keeping with New Urbanist idea that denser development leads to a greater sense of community and a richer life than in a sprawling, fragmented suburb.

While Burnaby’s high-density residential developments are clearly more sustainable than traditional suburban developments, it is interesting to note that a number of projects also tap into the suburban ideal with regard to accessing the natural world. However, the element of “access to nature” is modified from the suburban ideal, in that the back yard is not looked to as a surrogate for the natural world, but rather the communal semi-private garden or an adjacent public park is highlighted as providing residents with this connection to Mother Nature. The Brentwood Gate project draws attention to its connection with nature by
evoking Canada’s famous impressionist painters the Group of Seven. The Group of Seven were renowned for their paintings of Canadian landscapes and their imagery of trees and foliage is used extensively throughout Brentwood Gate’s branding. This association and contributed to the project tag line “The New Landscape for Living,” (Ledingham McAllister, n.d.c; n.d.d). The Fitzgerald tower is named after Lionel Limoine Fitzgerald, a Group of Seven member. In addition to focusing on the urban qualities of the project, its marketing also gives prominence to the “tranquil oasis” and the “mature trees and lush hillside” that provides a “backdrop of greenery for the 27-story high rise,” (Ledingham McAllister, n.d.c). Clearly, the message is that the project offers the best of both worlds, that is, the convenience of an urban environment, and the greenery of a suburb.

Other projects that emphasize both the urban and the natural elements of their developments in a noteworthy way are Silhouette, Watercolours and Park 360. Park 360 is located in Edmonds next to Bryne Creek Ravine Park. As part of their development process they were required to preserve a portion of their site to protect existing environmental features. As a result the tower is surrounded by park, a fact which gave rise to the name “Park 360” (Stewart, 2005). The project website notes it can be seen “Rising from an oasis of greenery, Park 360 is a smartly designed concrete and glass tower [that] is close to shops, services, High Gate Village and the Edmonds SkyTrain station which means everything you need is just minutes away,” (MAC, 2007). Again the urban convenience is shown
in conjunction with the natural. Watercolours is in a location decidedly less verdant than Park 360, being adjacent to the Lougheed Highway in an area that is in transition from light industrial to residential uses. This project still tries to
draw attention to those natural elements that do exist on site. For example, an article in the *New Home Buyers Guide* describes the project as “Tucked in a protected enclave off the Lougheed Highway, complete with a buffer of trees to the northern perimeter of the site,” with an “impressive water feature, lush landscaping, and a decorative paved drive” (Rayson, 2007). Notably, in opposition to Zukin’s ideas of loft living and industrial chic it seems that even in former industrial areas in the suburbs greenery and connection to nature are important. Silhouette’s residents will have “direct access to nature in Silhouette’s exclusive 30,000 square foot roof top garden” which will be a “calm oasis in the centre of the urban scene,” (Ledingham McAllister, n.d.a). Again, this seems to indicate that marketers acknowledge the suburban context of their projects at least in as much that they choose to highlight the relationship to greenery rather than strictly focusing on the “urban” qualities of high-density living. It should be noted that unlike in the traditional suburban development context the greenery and landscaping in these projects may actually contribute to the overall sustainability of the region as mature trees and “soft” landscaping are known to slow down stormwater runoff and reduce heat island effects of development. The traditional suburban landscaping has the same benefits though the new higher density version is not contained on a single family lot and is therefore not predicated on unsustainable sprawl.

**Vitality and Diversity**

The energy and vitality of urban environments is one of the more consistent elements found in the urban theory we have examined here. The idea
that one of the greatest benefits to urban living is the interaction, connection and vibrancy that can be found in these environments is also prevalent in the marketing discourse examined. Silhouette’s developers claim in their brochure that the Lougheed Town Centre is the “vibrant pulse of Burnaby” and the “centre of the urban scene,” (Ledingham McAllister, n.d.b). This type urbanity is espoused by developers and marketers in all three of the town centres. To those marketing Motif Brentwood is “no longer a sleepy suburban community,” but rather a “emerging urban area,’ (Appia, 2007a;) while OMA’s marketing team sees it as having a “Manhattan Flair,” (Rennie, n.d.c; n.d.e). In Edmonds the Highgate Village shopping centre is billed as a “unique urban village” (Bosa, 2007, Rennie, n.d.a) by both the Esprit and Axis marketers imbuing it with a level of cache perhaps beyond that which it deserves. Regardless, the emphasis is placed on the urban nature of the neighbourhood, marking it as a happening place. Again, The Belvedere is the outlier with no mention of the urbanity or vibrancy of the surrounding neighbourhood, electing only to highlight the pastoral qualities of its formal garden.

The idea of diversity is less clearly presented in the text and images produced around these developments. The only direct mention of diverse life styles was included in the Fitzgerald brochure, “Reflecting more than a single lifestyle, Brentwood Gate captures the complexity of modern living…” implying that the place that they are creating could be an appropriate domicile for a wide variety of people (Ledingham McAllister, n.d.c). Less direct references to diversity could be seen in the images contained in the brochures, websites and
advertisements produced, though not to the extent one might imagine in a multi-cultural city such as Burnaby (Burnaby's population is made up of more than 50% immigrants (BC Stats, 2007)). The most common images were of what appeared to be young Caucasian women, followed closely by young Caucasian couples or families. Less frequently images of East Asian women, middle age Caucasian couples and, in one ad for Esprit, a middle age East Asian couple. In none of the material were there any images elderly people, people who appeared to be of South Asian, Middle-Eastern or First Nations descent, nor were anyone shown to be in a same sex relationship. This limited representation of diversity in the advertising discourse indicates that despite the academic work on the benefits of diversity it is not an ideal that has been accessed to help sell density in Burnaby. Furthermore, the limited images of diversity that were presented seemed to be a result of an application by distinctiveness theory in advertising on the part of the marketers, rather than attempts to sell diversity as a benefit to prospective buyers.

Distinctiveness theory dictates that “in the process of creating targeted advertisements for multicultural marketplaces marketers look for meaningful characteristics by which to divide a single heterogeneous marketplace into separate homogenous consumer segments that may be courted [more] effectively,” (Grier & Brumbaugh, 2004 p.217). A clear application of this differential targeted marketing is found in the marketing for Esprit2. The main campaign appears to be based on the young Caucasian women with the “cloud” of consumer goods, (see Figure 4, p. 41) while a separate smaller campaign
featured an active older East Asian couple (see Figure 7). This advertisement effectively targets two consumer segments that were not reached by the main campaign. First it accesses the audience of East Asian buyers, and second it
accesses the empty nester market segment. As the ads ran separately, that is, no publication ran both of the ads simultaneously; it seems that this was indeed designed to access different markets segments rather than advance the diversity of potential buyers as a benefit.

**Accessible Amenities**

The one element of the urban ideal that is stressed for every project reviewed is the convenient access to amenities provided in each location. In fact, the only features of the projects that are emphasized with more prominence or regularity are the fittings and fixtures of the kitchens and bathrooms. This emphasis on amenity has already been alluded to in previous sections as it relates closely with the sustainability, walkability and vibrancy of the neighbourhoods in which the towers are located. A typical description of the “lifestyle” offered in one of Burnaby's town centres can be found in the Legacy brochure, which reads as follows:

Free time has never been so full as it is at legacy. Enjoy fine dining and a fine view from atop Burnaby Mountain. Higher learning is at your fingertips with close-by SFU and BCIT campuses. Everyday shopping and entertainment are only five minutes away at Brentwood Mall and Madison Centre. Relax with friends at one of the many great restaurants in the area before catching a concert at nearby Deer Lake Park. So enjoy the time you’ll save and make the most of your day, (Embassy, n.d.b).

In this text we see the marketers making clear connections between the proximity of amenities and the happiness and quality-of life that is offered in the development. The ability to shop and be entertained, to learn and to experience culture a short distance from home means that more time is available for
residents to participate in these pleasurable activities. Furthermore, the proximity to the more mundane shops and services, or “everyday shopping” also contributes to the surplus in leisure time. Another typical passage is found in the brochure for Esprit2:

Easy Access Everywhere. Spend more time doing the things you love to do and less time getting there. A quick SkyTrain trip downtown, shopping in nearby Metrotown, a stroll in any of a number of Burnaby’s urban parks. Be spontaneous – perfectly situated to get you anywhere you want to be… (Bosa, 2007).

Again the idea that proximity to amenities means that there is more time to enjoy said amenities is clearly spelled out. Without fail, all of the marketing material reviewed included some mention of the convenience or accessibility of desired amenities. Even a New Home Buyers Guide article on The Belvedere, often an atypical example, notes that residents might choose to, “head over to the Choices Market that’s part of the community and only a short walk from the SkyTrain station, grab an icy frappuccino to go, and spend a few quiet moments in contemplation watching the fountains play,” (Boyce, 2005). A statement that seems to indicate that close proximity to basic amenities is a benefit to all classes of buyers.

**Elements of Vancouverism**

There are two elements of Vancouverism prevalent in the discourse being created regarding high rise developments in Burnaby. First, is the morphological template of the towers themselves along with published images of these towers.
Second, is the “view imperative,” whereby views are leveraged to make high rise living more attractive for residents than it might otherwise be.

Regarding the design of the buildings, there are two ways in which the architecture acts to create urbanism in the town centre. There is the physical way in which the tall towers, street walls and incorporated retail or institutional uses contributes to the vitality, complexity and overall urbanism of the neighbourhoods. There is also the way in which the architecture, and reproductions of the architecture in the media, act as a language. Not only does the morphology of these buildings strive to create Vancouver type urbanism “on the ground,” but images of the buildings speak to potential buyers of the urbanity, or type of urbanity, being pursued in Burnaby. When these advertisements are encountered by people, the images of the buildings appear similar to images they have encountered of developments located in the downtown core. As a result the urban nature of the town centre is granted another layer of authenticity. When we compare images of many of the projects in Burnaby (see Figure 8) with the template for Vancouverism created by Bogdanomcz (see Figure 3, p. 33) we see that this point and podium style is replicated very clearly, making it likely that even a lay person would easily identify and understand the parallel elements.

The other aspect of Vancouverism represented here is the “view imperative”. The availability of pleasing outlooks from most high-rises in Burnaby is enhanced by their relatively sparse distribution. Unlike in downtown Vancouver where many suites have views impeded by adjacent towers, in Burnaby all of the
Figure 8: Examples of point and podium morphology. (Clockwise from top left: Park 360 (MAC, 2007), Esprit 1 and 2, (Bosa, 2007), Silhouette (Ledginham McAllister, n.d.a), OMA)
towers offer at least partial views from most suites. Not surprisingly, the quality of
the views achieved from these developments figures prominently into their
marketing materials. Potential residents are invited to "Savor mountain views"
from Esprit (Bosa, 2007) while the Fitzgerald offers "captivating views of
downtown Vancouver, the North Shore mountains and Mt. Baker," (Ledingham
McAllister, n.d.c). More abstractly, residents of OMA will experience "Lingering
tones of mountain evergreen. The urban night lights of Vancouver," (Rennie,
n.d.c), whereas Park 360 offers "views that defy description," (MAC, 2007).
Rather than trying to describe the views some of the projects opt to show them
instead (see Figure 9). While OMA2 and Legacy provide static images of views
from their respective sites Motif takes it one step further by offering the public the
opportunity to see interactive images that provide 360 degree panoramas from
ten different elevations above the construction site. Indeed, no matter how they
are portrayed, it is clear that views are considered to be key tools with which
marketers can sell high-density developments in Burnaby.

Urban Ideal Utilized

Through examining the texts and images presented by marketers of high-
density developments in Burnaby we have seen that they do indeed advance a
discourse about Burnaby as an urban place, and that they leverage elements of
the urban ideal to do so. The value of home ownership, opportunities to shop,
and the accessibility of amenities are all used with relative consistency to sell
these projects. Walkability and access to SkyTrain are also used frequently,
though only one project used the sustainable nature of the project as an explicit
selling point. The vibrancy and centrality of Burnaby was also espoused with
regularity, though despite Burnaby’s multi-cultural population, diversity was
overlooked as a potential benefit to residents. As we have just seen, the
architectural vocabulary of Vancouver is used to increase the understanding of
these developments as urban, and views are heavily marketed as well. On the
whole marketers have presented a remarkably consistent discourse that
leverages these ideal urban characteristics to sell the types of dense high rise
condominiums that we can now see in all of Burnaby’s town centres. That said,
there still exist persistent, if subtle, references to the suburban nature of the
developments, particularly with regard to pricing, access to nature and the types
of retail opportunities available.
CONCLUSIONS

The expansion of high-density developments into the suburban realm offers an alternative to the unending sprawl that suburban development has embodied in North America over the last half century. To a certain degree these developments also represent the adoption of a limited kind of urbanism, perhaps best described as “Burnabism,” and a selective representation of the urban ideal. Not all elements of the urban ideal identified for current academic literature were leveraged to sell high-density developments in Burnaby, nor were the marketers of all the projects making use of all of the elements that were present in the discourse. That said, taken globally, the advertising discourse that was created overwhelmingly defined Burnaby’s town centres as urban places that embodied elements of the urban ideal. The urban-ness of these centres was advanced most clearly through the ideas of status and consumption, access to amenity and overall convenience. The ideas represented in the “Vancouverism” brand of urbanity were also clearly adopted by advertisers as effective tools.

However, within this discourse of urbanity, there was still an undercurrent of suburbanism, particularly with regard to the cost of housing, natural elements presented and the quality and exclusivity of the shopping choices. There is also substantial variation from project to project with regard to which elements were put forward and which were held back as merely footnotes, or discarded altogether. Given the competition in the market place and the need to
differentiate the projects this variation may be a result specific choices that are made to advance a particular “brand” for the tower in question. More prosaically, some of this variation may be a result of the location and features of the buildings themselves. Indeed, the overall discourse gives the impression that these developments represent the best of both the urban and the suburban realms, with the emphasis firmly on the urban qualities.

Given the number of projects currently being marketed and the scale of those projects, it is clear that in Burnaby demand exists for this type of housing. Certainly the success of downtown Vancouver as a residential area has contributed to that success, both through offering a model of how high-density urbanism can be done well, and through the high price of housing driving buyers to look farther afield. Indeed the greatest success of Burnaby’s town centres is the fact that they have been successful at capturing the buyers that have being squeezed out of Vancouver due to high prices, before they look even further afield to areas without the access to mass transit enjoyed there. This success is seen in the prices being commanded for high-rise living in Burnaby relative to more traditional ground oriented townhouses in suburbs located farther from the metropolitan core. As a point of comparison, one bedroom units in Esprit 2 are priced starting from $389,900 while at the Glenmore, a townhouse development in the Morgan Heights area of distant Surrey, a 3 bedroom unit with an attached double garage can be had for $384,500. Undoubtedly, this discrepancy can be attributed to greater demand for real estate in Burnaby.
As this discourse portrays these developments as representing the urban ideal in the suburbs, it is consistent with the ideas behind the “urban villages” that are to be the vanguard in the “urbanization of suburbia” as espoused by Kotkin. In fact, this discourse appears to be one facet of a model of urban village creation that Burnaby’s town centres represent. This “Burnaby Model” of urban village development consists of high-rise towers rising adjacent to, or within, traditionally suburban commercial nodes, which are furnished with access to a quality regional transit system and are marketed to the masses as ideal urban environments. The success of this model may mean that, over time, the town centres may actually achieve the type of quality urbanism being sold in the marketing discourse.

The prospect of a Burnaby Model of development raises several questions that would require further exploration to understand the mechanisms that have allowed the model to emerge and ultimately to determine the model’s chances for creating communities that will be successful in the long term. In order to understand how the Burnaby Model arose it will be important to understand not only the marketing dimension, but also the political, planning, and policy “back story,” that is, what were the decisions, investments, and strategies that created the necessary transportation links, regional and local land use plans and infrastructure that generated the “space” in which this type of urban place-making could occur. With regard to the long term success of these town centres as communities, rather than commodities, further investigation is warranted into the actual lived experiences of the town centre residents. Post occupancy surveys or
interviews should be undertaken to determine if the life created by these residents lives up to the lifestyle they were sold through the advertising and marketing discourse. It would be also be interesting to learn how residents perceive their communities in relation to their surroundings. Are they seen as distinct nodes? Do they consider them to be part of a cohesive whole that is Burnaby? Or do residents see them as a part of a broader regional urbanism? These questions and others will allow this model to be advanced beyond what one could argue based on analysis of the marketing discourse alone.

However, if these Burnaby town centres are indeed offering us a new model for suburban development, it is clear that the advertising discourse put forth contributes to this success. One cannot argue that the marketing itself creates demand for high-rise condominiums, but by highlighting how this form of housing accommodates the needs and desires of people, marketing is able to focus people’s desires in such a way as to make high-rise living an aspiration for many. That is to say, the demand for high-rise living is not created by marketers, but rather there exists a demand for high quality spaces, and for high quality lifestyles, that is already present in the population. This demand is then harnessed to create a market for these projects. Understanding how this type of development is sold in Burnaby may provide developers in other regions with the inspiration to pursue similar developments and offer more people the opportunity to choose density over dispersion.
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