

**Community Spaces as Critical Infrastructure:
How the South Vancouver Neighborhood House
Contributed to Community Resilience
during the Pandemic**

by

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Abstract

When the COVID-19 pandemic and physical distancing measures arrived, most indoor facilities closed. The South Vancouver Neighbourhood House (SVNH) launched temporary emergency food distribution activities using its main building in response to food insecurity and the closure of local food bank locations. This thesis project is an exploratory case study of how SVNH functioned as social infrastructure as it adapted its services and supported community capabilities and resilience outcomes during the first months of the pandemic, a time of crisis. SVNH, as an institution, a network of staff, volunteers and members, and a physical space and set of spatial assets, along with their linkages with other organizations, spaces and services function as an adaptive network of social and critical infrastructure. Through its activities, services, use of spatial assets, and collaboration with other organizations and spaces, SVNH facilitates community building, social service provision and collective capabilities on a regular basis and during a crisis. Based on this case study and a review of literature on community resilience, collective capabilities, and social infrastructure, I make a case for a capabilities approach to understanding and operationalizing community resilience.

Keywords: community resilience; community capabilities; social infrastructure; social-purpose space; critical infrastructure; emergency response; pandemic; Vancouver

Dedication

Dedicated to my parents.

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This research took place on the ancestral and unceded territories of the Squamish, Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, Katzie, Kwantlen, Stó:lō, and Stz'uminus First Nation peoples. I am grateful to live, learn, work and play here.

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List of Acronyms

ANHBC	Association of Neighbourhood Houses of British Columbia
CA	Capabilities Approach
CC	Community Centre
CER	Community-Engaged Research
CI	Critical Infrastructure
CoV	City of Vancouver
EOC	Emergency Operations Centre
EPA	Emergency Program Act
GVFB	Greater Vancouver Food Bank
NH	Neighbourhood House
PIRS	Pacific Immigrant Resources Society
SHC	Seniors Hub Council
SI	Social Infrastructure
SPRE	Social Purpose Real Estate
SSSC	Safe Seniors, Strong Communities
SV	South Vancouver
SVFP	South Vancouver Family Place
SVNH	South Vancouver Neighbourhood House
UWLM	United Way of the Lower Mainland

Glossary

Capabilities (In the Capabilities Approach)	Freedoms, opportunities or possibilities available to people to undertake the actions they want so that they can be who they want to be and live the kind of life they value. These are options that people can actually act on and effect in reality.
Community	A social process involving various forms of social encounters, interactions and relations among people with relationships (personal, professional, neighbourly) or even among strangers in public settings.
Community resilience	A system-level concept that may refer to a characteristic of a community, a process, a strategy or an outcome related to the ability of a community (as a system of natural and built environment, organizations and individuals) to avoid or reduce the impacts of a disruption, crisis or disaster, reduce recovery time, and adapt to reduce future vulnerability and risk. In this study, community resilience is conceptualized as multiple collective <i>functionings</i> (collective <i>capabilities</i> that are 'achieved' or put into action) related to emergency response, recovery and adaptation to avoid or reduce future risk and vulnerabilities.
Community building	Efforts to facilitate social connections, relationships and actions, and to contribute to the social process of <i>community</i> .
Community Centre (CC)	Large civic centres that offer social, educational and recreational activities for all ages and include large recreational facilities (gymnasiums, sports fields, pools, etc.). In this study, CCs may be owned by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation and jointly operated with Community Centre Associations, or resident boards.
Conversion factors (In the Capabilities Approach)	The personal, social, economic, political, and environmental characteristics, conditions or capacities that facilitate the transformation of resources into capabilities.
Crisis or emergency	Marked by a sudden disruption and uncertainty affecting many aspects of daily life, and an urgency to take action for immediate needs (emergency response). During a crisis or emergency, there is also an enhanced fear for the future, or a sense that if things are handled poorly, the emergency or crisis could become a disaster.

Critical infrastructure (CI)	A category of infrastructure used predominantly in the field of disaster management and defined by national governments referring broadly to systems, structures, facilities and networks that are deemed essential to the functioning and wellbeing of society and/or the functioning of the state.
Disaster	A complex occasion where the following conditions or processes interact: a hazard, accident or disruption combines with a human population, society, the natural and built environment and requires response action; people, property, livelihoods, communities are exposed; these interactions threaten or result in loss of life, harm, damage, destruction and reversals or setbacks to communities' progress towards quality of life and livelihoods; and recovery efforts and changes in societal relations and power and resource distributions are required or demanded.
Family Place (FP)	Organizations that offer support, resources, and programs for families with young children. They are part of the Family Resource Programs of BC.
Functionings (In the Capabilities Approach)	Ways of being and doing that are realized or achieved, or capabilities that people put into action.
Infrastructure	A broad concept traditionally referring to large-scale human-built physical or digital resources in the form of a network or interconnected system. It may include systems that provide services and enable social processes and collective life.
Neighbourhood House (NH)	Organizations that focus on place-based community building, and are open to anyone living in the area. They offer many services, programs and activities that serve and engage a range of target groups in the local population and respond to local needs and interests.
Resources, Commodities (In the Capabilities Approach)	The assets, goods, rights and entitlements available to people in a given context.
Social infrastructure (SI)	Includes organizations, programs, services, physical spaces and facilities that serve social purposes and enable social interaction.
Social purpose organization	An organization dedicated to a social mission, not profit. This typically includes nonprofits, charities, co-operatives, social enterprises. This term is often used interchangeably with social mission organization or human service organization.

Social purpose space

A space or facility dedicated to hosting interactions, activities and services of a social nature or part of a social mission, or owned and operated by a social purpose organization. It may also be referred to as social infrastructure or social-serving space.

Chapter 1.

Introduction

In March 2020, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the distancing measures adopted to limit the spread of the virus, local authorities and social purpose organizations closed most of their indoor facilities, and some facilities were used for emergency response activities. The South Vancouver Neighbourhood House (SVNH) used its main building to operate temporary emergency programs through the summer, particularly for food distribution, while adapting its regular core services to online, remote, and limited on site engagement.

Through this research project, I aimed to find answers to the question: How did spatial arrangements (indoor facilities, equipment, outdoor space) affect the ability of SVNH to adapt its services and contribute to community capabilities and resilience outcomes during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a time of crisis? I also examine the sub-question: How did SVNH spatial arrangements, as social purpose space, serve as infrastructure?

This is an exploratory single-case study that collects and analyzes qualitative data using spatial analysis, document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Through this research, I explore the connection between ‘social purpose’ and physical infrastructure and their importance for community capabilities and resilience outcomes during a crisis. I also use this study to analyse and theorize collective capabilities and action as a core element of community resilience, and to contribute to a case for a capabilities approach to understanding and operationalizing community resilience. This research is situated at the intersection of the fields of urban studies and disaster studies – fields that are currently separated.

1.1. My interest in this topic

My interest in the role of social infrastructure or social purpose spaces in community resilience began through my work with the City of Thessaloniki, on its resilience strategy (the first such strategy in Greece). The city was part of the 100

Resilient Cities network¹ as was Vancouver. My role involved a lot of work bringing together community groups and local stakeholders, and also helping to connect the municipality and local stakeholders in Thessaloniki with international partnerships.

At the time, I was not aware of the concept and literature on social infrastructure. Through my work, I became interested in the language and concepts I encountered when seeking funding for resilient cities work, and in particular a growing appearance of financing for ‘resilient’ or ‘green’ infrastructure, while finding resources for properties and facilities for social or community purposes remained a challenge. For nonprofits, social enterprises and community groups, the search for appropriate spaces to conduct meetings, house new services, or establish community hubs or collaboration spaces was an ongoing struggle. There was always a shortage, even though Thessaloniki was a city with many apparent commercial vacancies after a decade long national economic depression and low real estate values and rent prices. Spaces were available but it was difficult for organizations, community groups and even local authorities to obtain funds and financing to buy, lease, or renovate property for social and community purposes across the city.

Recently I came across the concept of social infrastructure, which offered a framework to understand the problem I was observing related to spaces for community and social purpose activities. I explored this topic further in the Urban Studies 675 course on Urban Economic Development and learned that in cities with financialized (expensive) real estate markets such as Vancouver, San Francisco, Washington, DC, and others, nonprofits, artists and other social purpose and cultural organizations are losing their spaces due to affordability and development pressures² (REIBC & SPRE Collaborative, 2013; Central City Foundation, 2013; Smith, 2019; District of Columbia Bar, 2016; Northern California Grantmakers & The San Francisco Foundation, 2016). I also learned about the growing focus on social purpose real estate (SPRE) in Vancouver. SPRE refers to “property and facilities owned and operated by mission-based organizations and investors for the purpose of community benefit, and to achieve blended value returns [social or environmental goals and community impact in addition to financial returns]” (SPRE Collaborative, n.d.). Cities like Thessaloniki that are trying to

¹ While the 100 Resilient Cities initiative has ended, the participating cities and Chief Resilience Officers established and are now part of the Resilient Cities Network (R-Cities).

² In US cities, this is often referred to as “nonprofit displacement”.

attract private investment and development as a solution to weak economies may have something to learn from cities with hot real estate markets in terms of protecting spaces for social purposes, community connectedness and resilience before it is too late. This is how I came to focus on the connection between social infrastructure – in particular facilities owned or operated by social purpose organizations – and community resilience.

The City of Vancouver (CoV) has shown an interest in the topics of social connection, community resilience and social infrastructure through recent strategies. In 2014, it approved *A Healthy City for All: Healthy City Strategy 2014-2025*, with goals and targets related to social and community services, residents' sense of belonging, social connections, and healthy neighbourhood environments. In 2019, it approved a resilience strategy, *Resilient Vancouver*, with the priority areas of: Thriving and Prepared Neighbourhoods; Proactive and Collaborative City; Safe and Adaptive Buildings and Infrastructure. Most recently, in December 2021, City Council approved the first part of a social infrastructure strategy, *Spaces to Thrive Phase I: Vancouver Social Infrastructure Strategy Policy Framework*. It began developing this strategy in 2017 to support facilities owned or supported by the City but not included in other City plans and funding programs focusing on parks and recreation facilities, arts and culture spaces, libraries, community centres, and housing.

The CoV interest and planning efforts in these areas creates an interesting context for this research project, in terms of the analysis I was able to conduct and the practical implications of this study. I explored these concepts through the literature, the experience of SVNH as a social purpose organization and physical space, and the city perspective. Because the City and its institutional and community partners are implementing and advancing these strategies, this case study and theoretical analysis offer relevant insights for policy and planning as they work toward their goals, and as other cities in the region or beyond seek to develop similar strategies.

As I was exploring this research topic, I began searching for a past emergency in Vancouver (e.g. a wildfire smoke air quality or extreme weather emergency) and a social purpose organization that used its facilities for emergency response actions to serve as a case study. This is when the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, and I learned that despite most social spaces closing due to pandemic health safety regulations, some organizations used their facilities for emergency-specific purposes. An observation by

sociologist Eric Klinenberg (2018) in his book about social infrastructure struck me at this time:

The components of social infrastructure rarely crash as completely or as visibly as a fallen bridge or downed electrical line, and their breakdowns don't result in immediate systemic failures (p. 21).

The physical distancing measures during the first months of the pandemic created a rare, almost complete and visible shutdown of social infrastructure, to use Klinenberg's words. This provides an interesting practical and theoretical context for a case study about the use of a social purpose space during an emergency, and an opportunity to contribute to post-pandemic recovery and long-range planning that recognizes and supports the role of social infrastructure for community resilience.

1.2. Shaping the research question

I shaped my research question and project using a community-engaged research (CER) approach through a Graduate Research Fellowship with SFU's Community-Engaged Research Initiative (CERi). CER is research that is based on the principles of participation, cooperation, reciprocity, shared knowledge, and social transformation. This research approach resonates with me because I value community engagement and collaboration in my work, and I want my research to contribute to action and better policies for community benefit. Through the CERi fellowship, I had the opportunity to learn about CER and bring community-engaged principles into my process of developing my research question for this masters thesis project.

1.2.1. SFU CERi Fellowship and local stakeholder input

During my CERi summer 2020 fellowship, I shaped my research question using insights from conversations with local stakeholders, including members of the SVNH leadership team. I had exploratory conversations with individuals from different stakeholders supporting SPRE, managing social purpose spaces, or conducting relevant research, including: SVNH, the SPRE Collaborative³, Vancity Community Foundation,

³ A group of funders, investors and government bodies in BC formed the SPRE Collaborative in 2009 "to mitigate the effects of the real estate market on non-profit and social enterprise organizations and focuses its efforts on capacity building, research, policy and partnership development" (Social Purpose Real Estate Collaborative, 2020).

City of Vancouver, City of Surrey, Exchange Inner City (EIC), Vantage Point, Dunbar Earthquake Emergency Preparedness (DEEP), and the University of British Columbia (UBC) Institute for Resources Environment & Sustainability. These conversations took place during the first months of the pandemic. I asked about the utility of social purpose spaces during emergency response and recovery, including but not limited to the pandemic. I asked ‘What kind of research would be beneficial?’ and ‘What questions still need exploration?’ Responses included:

- How do we better support communities and social purpose organizations in their emergency response and resilience efforts?
- How do we quantify the value of social purpose and community space?
- What resources and policies are needed for leveraging social infrastructure and social purpose spaces for emergency response functions?
- How do we get the fields of practice of disaster and emergency management (including planning, risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery) to consider and involve social purpose and community organizations in their work?
- What financial, land use or other policies and regulations can protect and grow community land (land or real estate owned by non-profit organizations or cooperatives for housing and facilities for community members)?
- How do we ensure equity in resilience and access to social infrastructure?

These questions suggest that there is a need to evaluate our understanding of the utility of physical spaces for community and social purposes in the context of crises or disasters. This includes their utility in reducing vulnerability and risk, responding to needs during a crisis, and contributing to recovery efforts. I considered these questions as I framed my research question and case study design. As an in-depth, qualitative analysis of the experience of one organization and its social purpose space, and theoretical analysis of the concepts of community resilience and infrastructure, this exploratory study reveals insights that respond to some of these questions and suggests areas for further research.

Before this, I knew very little about neighbourhood houses. It is through the CERi fellowship that I connected with SVNH staff and learned that they used their main building for emergency food programs. I am grateful that SVNH directors shared their

experience and perspectives through these exploratory conversations and then agreed to have SVNH serve as a case study for this project.

1.3. Neighbourhood Houses in Vancouver

South Vancouver Neighbourhood House serves as a valuable case study because its main building was a critical neighbourhood space during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic and, more importantly, because it is a particular type of social purpose organization and space: a neighbourhood house (NH). There are 15 neighbourhood houses in Metro Vancouver, but they are also found in a variety of formulations in communities around the world, so it is worth noting that in Vancouver they are “largely grassroots-oriented, secular, and professionally initiated and operated” (Yan & Lauer, 2021, p. 62). The first NH in Vancouver opened in 1938, and two more opened during the Second World War, but the number grew during the 1960s and 1970s. This growth of NHs was interlinked with the community development movement and a decentralization of control over social planning and service provision from the province to the local level and resident participation (Yan & Lauer, 2021).⁴

Neighbourhood houses focus on building community and are place-based. They offer multiple services, programs and activities in response to local needs, so each NH is different, but they each serve a wide range of target groups and are open to everyone living in the area (Yan & Lauer, 2021; Sandercock, 2009). Based on consultations with staff of NHs across Metro Vancouver, Yan and Lauer (2021) found that NHs provided 21 different types of activities, including childcare, family services, activities for seniors, youth programming, settlement assistance, employment counselling, workshops, food programs, and more. With this focus on place-based community building and a range of services, a neighbourhood house is an ideal case study for this research as it offers the possibility of revealing a more holistic set of insights about community capabilities and the role of spatial arrangements.

⁴Sean Lauer, Miu Chung Yan and Eleanor Stebner outline the history of neighbourhood houses in Metro Vancouver in detail in Chapter 1 of *Neighbourhood Houses: Building Community in Vancouver* (Yan & Lauer, 2021).

1.4. The pandemic as a crisis and context for this research question

Pandemics are perceived to be rare compared to natural hazards or human-caused accidents that trigger emergency situations or disasters. In the City of Vancouver's *Resilient Vancouver* strategy, the risk of a pandemic is not even mentioned. The strategy describes climate and geo-physical shocks (earthquakes, floods, forest fires and smoke, extreme weather) and technological and health shocks (oil spills, opioid crisis, infrastructure failure/disruption, hazardous materials, residential fires) as likely or possible for this region (City of Vancouver, 2019). Most authorities, organizations and individuals were not expecting, anticipating, or planning for a pandemic. I, too, was not anticipating or thinking about a pandemic when I began researching community resilience, emergency planning and social infrastructure to develop my research question and this project.

While there are aspects of a pandemic that are unique compared to other types of emergencies, the findings of this study suggest that there are lessons about the role of social purpose organizations and their physical spaces that are widely applicable. People turn to community hubs during emergencies because they know them as places that provide information and resources, and because they are often large facilities with outdoor spaces where shelter or supplies may be available and people will be gathering to support each other. The pandemic may be unique as an emergency context because it necessitates physical distancing, and so many social purpose spaces were closed, but we cannot assume that social purpose spaces will be available in all emergencies. For example, in August 2021, Vancouver experienced a heat wave and many community centres (CCs) and libraries were not used as cooling centres because they were not built (construction materials, design to manage air flows, etc.) or equipped (ground source cooling systems, air conditioning) for cooling through a heat wave. In 2018 and 2020, during wildfire smoke events and air quality advisories, few CCs and libraries served as clean air shelters⁵. In other disasters, if power or water is cut off, or structural damage from flooding, earthquake, or hazardous materials occurs, buildings can be unavailable

⁵ Rashmin Ramzan Ali Sorathiya completed an interesting MA thesis on the current and potential ability of community centres in Vancouver to function as community clean air shelters during wildfire smoke events (Sorathiya, 2020).

or permanently displaced, including social purpose spaces that could offer refuge or host emergency response activities.

1.5. Chapters overview

The next chapter presents three bodies of literature that form the conceptual framework for my examination of SVNH and its spatial assets as social and critical infrastructure that contributed to collective capabilities and community resilience during a crisis. In the third chapter, I describe my research design and methodology, and my analysis approach. The fourth chapter presents the case study. First, it presents relevant background information about South Vancouver, its population, existing social purpose spaces in the area, and food insecurity. Next, it presents information about SVNH, its spatial arrangements, and its activities and use of space before and during the first months of the pandemic. In the fifth chapter, I analyse some key themes that reveal how spatial arrangements impacted the ability of SVNH to adapt services and take on an emergency role focused on emergency food distribution, social connection, and advocacy for more equitable distribution of regular and emergency resources across the small scale neighbourhoods of Vancouver. I further analyse my findings through my adapted capabilities approach framework and propose how community resilience can be understood through a collective capabilities approach, based on the findings and analysis of this case study and conceptual framework. In the concluding chapters, I discuss policy and planning implications and areas for further research.

Chapter 2.

Conceptual Framework

My conceptual framework includes concepts that are overlapping though also distinct, with literature that deals with them separately. To answer my research question and understand how physical spatial arrangements are a crucial part of the role of the NH in community resilience, I used the following bodies of literature: capabilities in the context of community resilience (adapted from the capabilities approach for human development); social purpose spaces as social territories and social infrastructure (SI); and SI in contrast to expanding conceptualizations of infrastructure or 'critical infrastructure' (CI) in disaster studies.

The first body of literature focuses on the evolution and complexity of the concept of community resilience, critiques of the way community resilience is sometimes defined and used in planning, policy and theory to avoid issues of equity and power, and definitions that focus on the abilities, capacities and resources of local communities. This will help me frame my research question within the broader topic of community resilience related to a crisis. This section also presents a clear conceptualization and framework for understanding the concept of capabilities, based on the Capabilities Approach (CA) from the human development literature. The CA focuses on the capabilities of individuals, and capabilities are generally not defined or specified in the context of community resilience, but I explore the potential value of understanding community resilience through collective capabilities, or the capabilities of residents and organizations in a neighbourhood to take collective action during a time of crisis. I consider how such an adapted CA framework helps address the critiques of community resilience. This body of literature provides a framework to evaluate how spatial arrangements allow the SVNH to contribute to collective capabilities in a resilience context.

The body of literature on physical spaces and neighbourhood houses (NHs) in particular as social territories committed to place-based community building will allow me to conceptualize SVNH and its spatial arrangements as a particular type of social infrastructure. It will also allow me to theorize my research question and my effort to

understand physical space or 'spatial arrangements' as an independent or causal variable that affects the ability of a social purpose organization to adapt its services and affect collective capabilities and community resilience outcomes.

The third body of literature will highlight a gap in research and policy, and guide a consideration of areas for further research, policy development, planning and public resources investment. The focus on SI is relatively recent in the literature, and it is important to consider it in contrast to traditional and expanding conceptions of infrastructure and categorizations of CI used in disaster management, resilience planning and investment. I will consider the different conceptualizations of infrastructure and explore how SVNH operates as a part of a network of social purpose organizations and spaces that serve as social and critical infrastructure using the capabilities approach.

I present an adaptation of the CA framework for this research that brings together the concepts in this conceptual framework. I hope this research will reveal insights into how social purpose organizations and spaces affect local collective capabilities for resilience, and how cities and other levels of government should support and invest in this critical social infrastructure for its regular and emergency functions. At a conceptual level, I explore how an adapted CA framework offers a way to understand inclusive and equitable community resilience, and reveals more insights about the role of social infrastructure.

2.1. Capabilities in community resilience

There appears to be a growing interest in community or neighbourhood resilience, with the words *community* and *neighbourhood* often used interchangeably (Nguyen & Akerkar, 2020). Community resilience as a concept emerged more recently as the concept of resilience evolved through different disciplines. This section presents a brief overview of the evolution of the concept of resilience and how this influenced the understandings and definitions of community resilience. Next, it presents the key elements of community resilience and conceptualizations that focus on collective capacities and collective action, as these are relevant for this study. Finally, it presents the elements and framework of the capabilities approach, highlighting how capabilities are not clearly distinguished from capacities or abilities in the community resilience

literature, but they offer a conceptual lens to clarify and advance understandings of community resilience.

Resilience has been a key concept in engineering, psychology, ecology, disaster studies, environmental planning, climate change adaptation, and complex adaptive systems, so there are different definitions at various scales and in different disciplinary contexts (Martin-Breen & Anderies, 2011; Davoudi, 2012; Siders & Gerber-Chavez, 2021). Researchers in engineering and the physical sciences first used the term and defined it as the ability of a system to “bounce back” like a spring after a disturbance and return to pre-disruption conditions and remain stable.

In ecology, where systems are understood as dynamic and constantly changing, researchers from environmental sciences and resource economics expanded the concept of resilience to include the ability of a system to adapt or bounce forward (Davoudi, 2012, discussing Holling, 1973, 1986 and 1996; Mulligan et al., 2016). Resilience became a key concept in disaster studies and urban planning research and national or federal policies and programs in the US, UK and Australia (Mulligan et al., 2016). In their review of community resilience literature, Koliou et al. (2018) found that community resilience research and federal government programs in the US were motivated by large impact events related to hurricanes, terrorist attacks and earthquakes in the US and globally in the 1990s and 2000s. Resilience in disaster studies and urban planning included a focus on local level planning, emergency preparedness, understanding and communicating risk, recovery, learning from past disasters, and adaptation efforts (Mulligan et al., 2016; Koliou et al., 2018). Research on the crucial role of local-level social capital, social networks and cooperation or collective action of community members and local organizations in disaster response, recovery and resilience has increased in recent decades (Ersing & Kost, 2012; Aldrich, 2012; Meyer, 2018; Kendra et al., 2018).

Community resilience emerged from urban resilience research, systems theory, and the socio-ecological and political ecological approaches to disaster studies (Martin-Breen & Anderies, 2011; Magis, 2010; Kendra et al, 2018, citing Dow 1999; Mulligan et al., 2016). It is a systems-level concept with a “specific and exclusive focus on community systems in the context of change” (Magis, 2010, p. 408), including sudden, ongoing or possible change. It is generally discussed in relation to disruptions, including

either or both shocks (sudden events) and stresses (ongoing conditions or repeated challenges). Definitions of community resilience in studies related to natural hazards generally include three dimensions related to the disruption or hazard event (Koliou et al., 2018). This “tripartite view of resilience” (Koliou et al., 2018, p. 4) includes reducing risk and vulnerability and avoiding or reducing the impacts of a shock; reducing recovery time; and adapting to reduce future vulnerability and risk.

As a systems-level concept, community resilience is complex and used in different ways. For example, it has been conceptualized and defined as a characteristic of a community, a process, a strategy and an outcome (Norris et al., 2007; Pfefferbaum et al., 2017). Several literature reviews of research and/or projects focusing on community resilience found that resilience may involve from four to nine types of elements (some reviews also call them components, dimensions or domains) when applied to communities (Nguyen & Akerkar, 2020; Pfefferbaum et al., 2017; Magis, 2010; Kendra et al., 2018). While these reviews group and list these differently, there is significant overlap, so I summarize the key elements in Table 1.

Table 1. Categories of community resilience elements

Types of Community resilience elements (also referred to as Domains or Dimensions) according to literature reviews
Collective action and civic or political engagement.
Social capital and social connectedness.
Human capital and individuals leading or influencing efforts.
Community resources within and outside the community.
Natural resources.
Physical and infrastructural resources.
Economic capital or resources (financial, livelihood, housing).
Information and communication;
Institutional capital specific to emergencies, hazards and disaster risk.
Capacities and resources for strategic deliberation and planning.
Ability to adapt to changes within and outside the community and develop new future trajectories.
Equity in distribution of resources, opportunity and involvement in community planning and leadership.
Political capital (distribution of resources, access to leadership and decision making, capable governance).

An important critique of community resilience is related to this distinction between an understanding of resilience as bouncing back, remaining stable or recovering pre-disruption conditions and resilience as adaptation and structural societal transformation to reduce risks, stop creating risks, and continually improve social and human systems. In the context of social or human systems, bouncing back or recovering from a disruption and returning to pre-disruption conditions may equate to a return to social inequity, marginalization and other unjust systemic conditions, or the ‘resilience of social inequity’ (Siders & Gerber-Chavez, 2021, pp. 374-375). Resilience applied to society or social systems, including *community resilience*, involves power, politics, equity and justice (Davoudi, 2012).

Depending on how community resilience is defined, operationalized, or employed in government policy and planning discourse, it can be used to tolerate structural inequities, disproportionate risks and vulnerabilities on some groups, and systemic problems. It can also be used to shift responsibility for risk mitigation (preventing or minimizing negative impacts), emergency response and dealing with disaster impacts away from governments, state institutions and private sector entities and onto individuals, local groups and organizations, and local authorities, without also shifting the associated rights, resources and power over decisions (Diprose, 2014; Davoudi, 2012; Mulligan et al., 2016; Kaika, 2017; Mahdiani & Ungar, 2021; Titz & Kruger, 2018). Mulligan et al. (2016) argue that simplistic and ambiguous understandings of both *community* and *resilience* have implications for planning, and are used to obtain greater public appeal with less scrutiny. Davoudi (2012, p. 305) points to the prominent or subtle emphasis on “self-reliance” in US and UK resilience literature and discourse as contributing to this responsibility shift. Focusing on the psychological resilience of individuals, Mahdiani and Ungar (2021) argue that resilience is sometimes used in ways that encourage tolerance of disparities and avoid calls for change or responsibility of those in power. Through her own research, literature review, and critical analysis, Heugten (2014) found that resilience discourse applied to social purpose organizations (which she refers to as human service organizations) and workers in the context of disasters and emergency response can be used by governments and insurance companies to download or transfer their responsibilities to these charitable and social purpose organizations, individuals and networks.

Both *community* and *resilience* as words and concepts are often used in vague, undefined and implicitly positive ways, including in national and urban planning discourses and disaster management, and this allows policy-makers, planners and development professionals to ignore questions of power, equity and access to resources (Mulligan et al., 2016; Titz & Kruger, 2018; Blokland, 2017). The word *community* is used almost always ambiguously and with a positive connotation to imply shared identities and a sense of belonging among people in a geographic locality or within social networks (Blokland, 2017; Duclos-Orsello, 2018; Mulligan et al., 2016) because “it conjures up utopian and idealistic views of how society functions” (Mulligan et al., 2016, p. 2). Relatedly, Titz and Kruger (2018, pp. 1-2) found that *community-based* is used globally in work related to development, disasters and climate change adaptation to imply that local level work is ‘people-centred’, ‘participatory’ and will ‘do good’. In the context of life in an urban setting with diverse and changing populations, community involves social ties and relations but it also includes boundary work or exclusion and questions about who does and does not belong. Boundaries or divisions may be based on racism, xenophobia, religious divisions, discrimination, socio-economic marginalization, exploitation and even oppression (Blokland, 2017; Mulligan et al., 2016; Titz & Kruger, 2018). Blokland suggested that power may be the “most ignored aspect of community”, in terms of both decision making and power within the processes of inclusion and exclusion through everyday relations and shared beliefs or symbolism (Blokland, 2017, p. 13, 52, 164).

In times of crisis or disaster, the ‘mostly ignored’ aspect of power within community inclusion/exclusion processes becomes a similarly ignored aspect of community resilience. Recent work on community resilience to disasters, including the current pandemic, critiques the ambiguous and assumption-based use of *community* and emphasizes the need for an intentional equity and justice approach that recognizes power dynamics. Siders and Gerber-Chavez (2021) distinguish between the overall collective of ‘community’ and the individuals and different groups within a broader community, pointing out that, “resilience of the collective may overlook or even be achieved at the expense of the resilience of populations within the community” (p. 373). They argue that experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic brought new emphasis to the existing question of “‘resilience for whom’-what portions of the community” and the crucial role of social support systems such as public transit (buses), food security (food

banks), and other services often provided by social purpose organizations and spaces (daycare, hotlines) and for whom they are available (pp. 382-383).

Definitions of community resilience increasingly refer to collective adaptation (changing and adjusting in reaction to actual events or to reduce the negative impacts of expected or potential disruptions, hazards and crises) and reducing future risk and vulnerability. However, community resilience is often conceptualized as an 'ability' and 'capacities' of local communities to respond, recover, adapt and grow. Illustrative examples of such definitions include:

Community resilience can thus be considered to be *the ability of a community* to adapt to different kinds of interconnected social, environmental and economic change and in ways that promote further change towards healthy community functioning (Magis 2010; Wilson 2013; Fazey et al. 2018a) (Fazey et al., 2021, p. 2. Emphasis added).

Community resilience describes the collective *ability* of a neighborhood or geographically defined area to deal with stressors and efficiently resume the rhythms of daily life through cooperation following shocks (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015, p. 255, referencing Aldrich, 2012. Emphasis added).

Community resilience aims at representing *the abilities of a local community* as a complex system, including actions and interactions of local agencies, natural and built environments, critical infrastructures, and citizens, to reduce, withstand, and even turn back from impacts of hazards, as well as *the competence* to adapt and thrive themselves to be less vulnerable to future disasters and emergencies (Nguyen & Akerkar, 2020, p. 2, based on their literature review of 77 articles, projects, and tools that modelled, measured, or visualised community resilience and were published since 2000. Emphasis added).

Definitions that center the abilities, capacities, and even resources of a local community keep the focus shifted away from structural inequities, resource disparities, and the responsibilities of institutions that hold power, and thus do not adequately address the critiques of community resilience. Definitions of community resilience do not include capabilities or functionings as conceptualized by the capabilities approach discussed in the next section. Ben Wisner (2016), a key scholar on social vulnerability and community-based disaster risk reduction (CBDRR), referred to the capabilities approach and the distinction between capabilities and capacities or assets as a valuable tool for disaster researchers and activists working to empower local communities while maintaining a focus on power dynamics, structural forces, maldevelopment, and the need for societal transformation. This brought my attention to the CA.

2.1.1. The Capabilities Approach framework

I use the Capabilities Approach (CA) framework to better understand the elements of collective action and the physical spaces or spatial assets required to organize and perform collective action during the early response phase of a crisis. This study will make a case for using the CA to advance an understanding of community resilience. This approach contributes to the conceptualizations of community resilience that focus on social capital, community resources, capacities and action while incorporating consideration of systemic equity and power.

The CA framework will guide my exploration of how SVNH contributes to community resilience during a crisis by contributing to collective capabilities. Amartya Sen pioneered the CA through his work on human development and wellbeing, and Martha Nussbaum (2003) further developed it as she elaborated a partial theory of social justice. As a framework for evaluating ‘what people are actually able to do and be’ (Sen, 1999) and what opportunities, freedoms or obstacles exist for achieving the kind of life they value, the CA considers individual choice and agency as well as structural or external factors and conditions.

The CA framework distinguishes and defines key concepts that are useful for thinking through community capabilities and the role of spatial assets or arrangements. Robeyns (2003) analysed and further elaborated on the concepts and framework of the capabilities approach (she refers to it as the Capability Approach), and I adapt and use this framework in my analysis. *Capabilities* are people’s “effective opportunities to undertake the actions and activities that they want to engage in, and be whom they want to be” (Robeyns 2003, p. 6). Capabilities can be thought of as freedoms, opportunities or possibilities, but specifically ‘real’ or ‘effective’ freedoms as opposed to ‘formal freedoms’, meaning that people can actually act on them and make them a reality (Robeyns, 2003 and 2018). This is a different and more complex concept than ‘capacities’, which often refer to abilities and skills. *Functionings* are ways of being and doing that are realized or achieved, or capabilities that people put into action (Robeyns, 2003 and 2018; Clark et al., 2018). Being well nourished, being literate, being part of a community (e.g. having social connections, interactions and affiliations), and being economically active are examples of functionings. *Resources*, *Commodities* are the assets, goods, and even rights and entitlements that are available to people in a given

context. *Conversion factors* include the personal, social, economic, political, and environmental characteristics, conditions or capacities that facilitate the transformation of resources into capabilities, or the freedoms, options and choices available to people to undertake the actions they want and be who they want to be. For example: personal characteristics may include people’s skills and physical abilities; social characteristics may include policies, social norms, power dynamics; and environmental characteristics may include climate, infrastructure, resource distribution, institutions and other elements in the natural or built physical environment (Robeyns, 2003; Clark et al., 2018).

Figure 1 is a visual representation of how these concepts are connected.

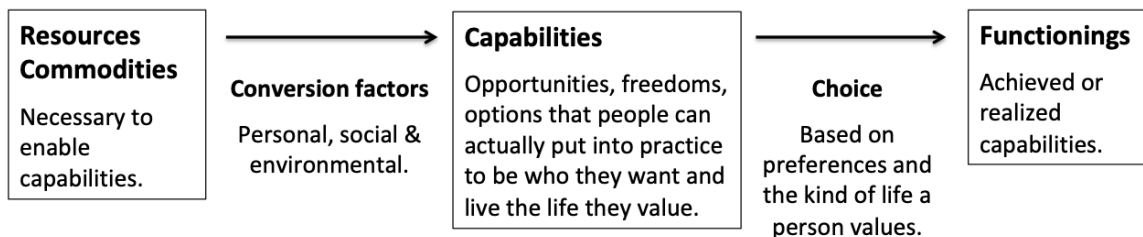


Figure 1. Capability Approach Framework and Concepts

Adapted from Robeyns 2003 analysis of CA Framework based on the work of Sen and Nussbaum.

2.1.2. Resilience and the Capabilities Approach

The CA framework addresses the critiques of community resilience. It places capabilities within a context that requires consideration of personal, social and environmental characteristics (including structural and systemic forces) as *conversion factors* that enable or hinder the transformation of resources and capacities into freedoms, choices and options available to people (capabilities). Jerolleman (2019) utilizes a capabilities justice framework in developing the concept of Just Recovery as a justice-based framing of disaster resilience and recovery that explicitly considers ‘resilience for whom’. She argues that this framing “empowers individual agency in support of collective action, allowing for the exercise of resilience in support of recovery” (p. 10). The four principles of a Just Recovery that she offers as a starting point for further research and discussion emphasize individual agency and choice; collective adaptive capacity for defining resilience and reducing future risk; the principle that only equality and equal treatment is defensible; inequity in the disproportionate distribution of risk; and equity in access to resources and full participation in decision-making

processes. This demonstrates how the capabilities approach can be used to reveal, emphasize or integrate equity and justice considerations within resilience.

2.2. The Neighbourhood House as social territory and a type of SI

This study considers the social and community building purpose of SVNH and its spatial assets on a regular basis and during a crisis. The literature on community as a social process and physical space or spatial arrangements as social territories will allow me to conceptualize how SVNH and its spatial assets function as a social territory for public familiarity, community building, and collective capabilities. This will also help theorize how SVNH as a social purpose organization and space may be conceptualized as a type of social infrastructure.

2.2.1. Community as a social process

As mentioned in section 2.1, many discussions of community resilience neglect to clarify their understanding of community (Mulligan et al., 2016). Talja Blokland (2017) presents a thoughtful and well researched conceptualization of community as a social process, and I use this understanding in my analysis. Her framework of 'community as a social process' helps reveal, challenge and move beyond assumptions underlying vague definitions or uses of community. Blokland posits that we should think about 'community' through the lens of various forms of social relations (encounters, engagements, interactions and bonds) and public practices or doings rather than defining community as certain 'types of relationships', such as family, friends or even neighbours (pp. 11-12).

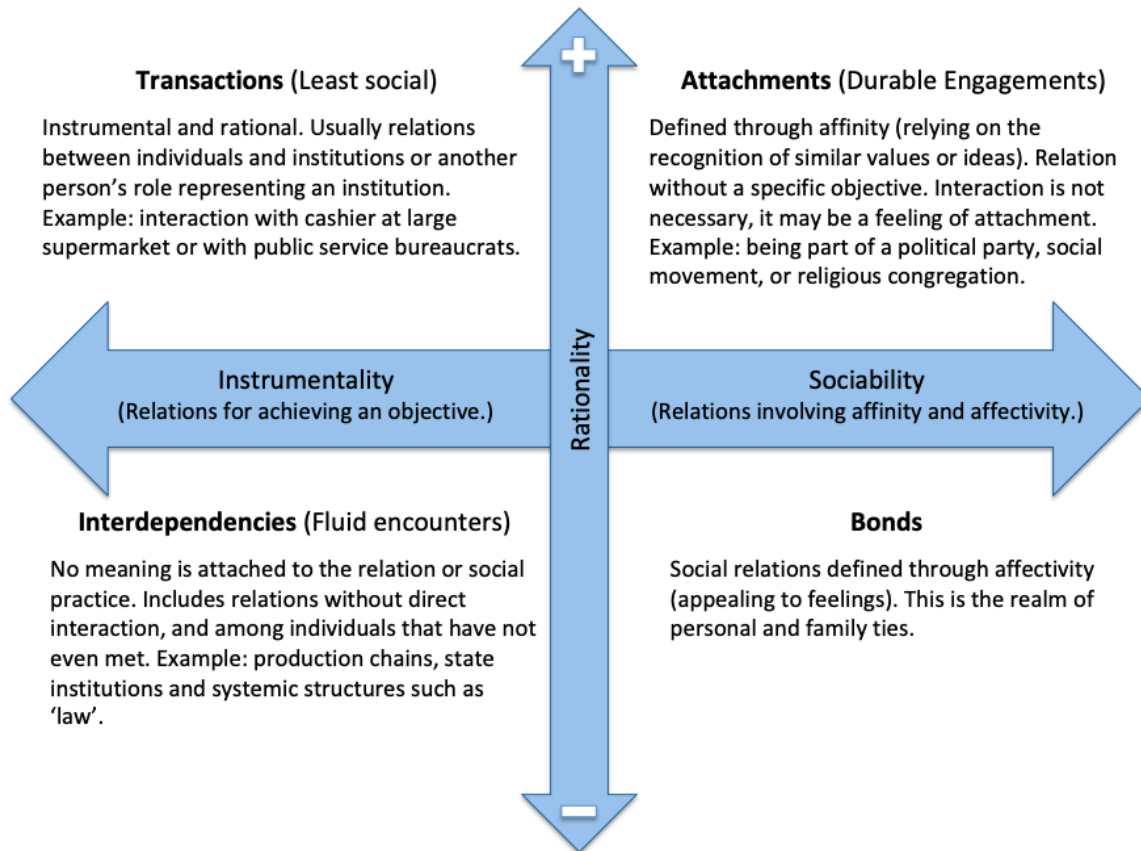


Figure 2. Typology of social ties or social relations

Blokland's (2017) typology of social ties along continua of rationality and of instrumentality to sociability (p. 73) adapted to include additional description from her narrative (pp. 70-80).

These types of social ties, relations and interactions include strong and weak ties as well as *absent ties* (transactions, interdependencies and attachments with people we do not know personally), and they are all part of the social process of community (Figure 2). All these types of social relations also occur within “relational settings of belonging” (p. 133), or networks of human affiliations that may or may not be linked to physical spaces and create differing possibilities for personal and social identity and belonging (Figure 3). These relational settings of urban environments can be understood as occurring along two continua:

- 1) the privacy continuum, from anonymous settings where we have maximum control over how much personal information we share with others so that we can maintain “the quality or state of being unknown or unacknowledged” (p. 89) to intimate settings such as with family and partnerships where personal information is shared with or known by others, and

2) the access continuum of public to private, from public settings that may include public locations like parks and socially produced common spaces like cafes or virtual engagement platforms to private settings like the home.

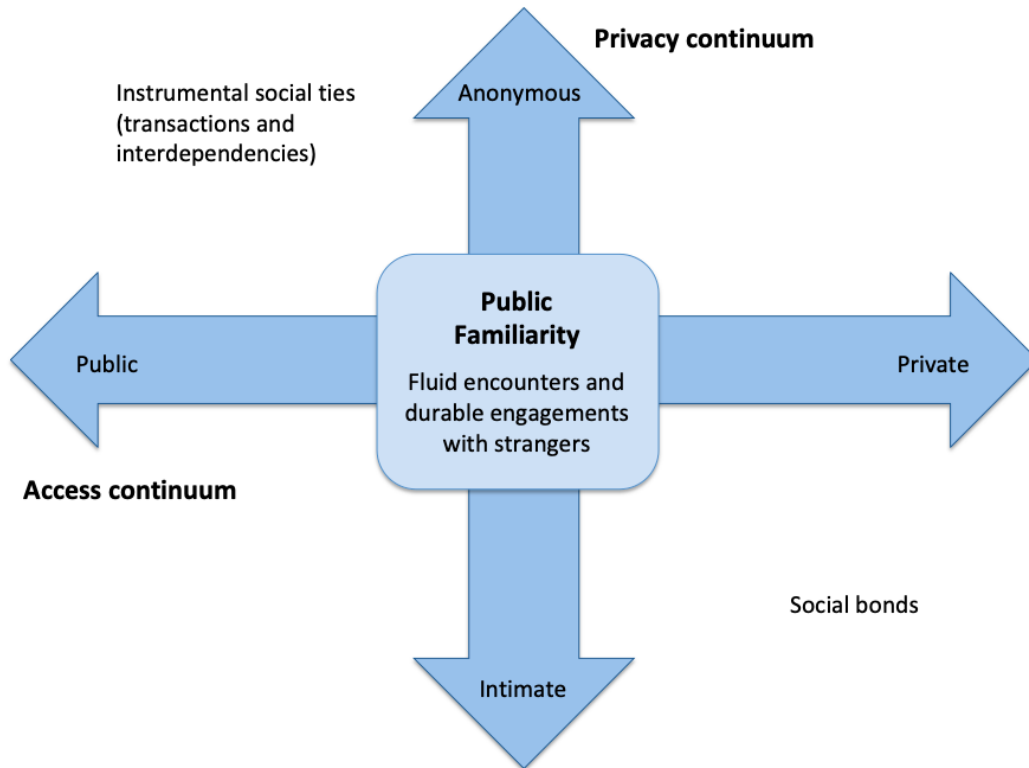


Figure 3. Relational settings of belonging: Public familiarity on the continua of privacy and access

Adapted from Blokland (2017, p. 89). Blokland specifies that the relational settings of belonging do not correspond exactly to the typology of social ties, but they are linked.

The lynchpin where these continua intersect is what Blokland calls public familiarity, a “social fabric of the city” (p. 126) where repeated fluid encounters and durable engagements not based on personal ties create a setting where individuals recognize and expect to see each other without knowing each other personally, symbols are produced and understood, and boundary work may also take place to create inclusion or exclusion. Public familiarity is a social space constructed in the physical space through interactions and is a setting specific to cities, where there are more public or shared spaces, more people and subsequently more encounters and interactions with strangers, or opportunities to observe interactions between others. Blokland argues that this concept of public familiarity “is central for understanding how both spaces and relational settings matter to community” (p. 86). The repeated fluid encounters and durable engagements between strangers that occur in the space and relational setting of

public familiarity provide opportunities for people to gain local knowledge of what is going on (good and bad) that can only be learned through experience, and it can help people feel included or excluded in the urban neighbourhood, independently of personal networks (Blokland & Nast, 2014).

I apply Blokland's framework to analyse how SVNH and its spatial assets facilitate social interactions and relations that are part of the social process of community, and how this enables collective capabilities during a crisis. For this study, community is not fixed. It is not based strictly on geography or necessarily on shared interests, common identity, belonging or even strong ties. It is a dynamic social process in which physical spaces and institutions like NHs help create public familiarity, as Blokland argues, by facilitating durable and ongoing engagements with others and shared experiences that help lead to stronger relationships and contribute to community building (i.e. facilitating the social process of community). These engagements and shared experiences allow people to create shared narrative and sense of belonging. I will theorize the role of SVNH in facilitating community understood as a dynamic social process on a regular basis and in the context of the crisis, when social processes are interrupted and have to change.

2.2.2. Physical spaces and social territories

Lyn Lofland's (1998) framework for how physical spaces and the built environment function as social territories, or social-psychological environments not necessarily rooted in physical places, complements Blokland's concept of public familiarity settings and the role of physical spaces as social spaces. Lofland identifies three realms of city life: private – characterized primarily by household, friend, kin networks; parochial – characterized primarily by neighborhood, workplace and acquaintance networks; public – characterized by the world of strangers. As social territories, physical spaces may legally be part of one realm but function to host another realm, or a combination; for example, private property may serve to host the public realm if it is opened for guided tours or other services for the public, or a public park may have 'bubbles' of the private or parochial realm where parts of it are reserved for private functions. Social purpose spaces function as social territories, as varying combinations of public and parochial realm.

Lofland describes and contributes to the paradigmatic shift in the literature toward geographical determinism (i.e. the physical form of communities has consequences) and research based on the idea of physical space and the built environment as potential causal variables. She argues that space structures human interaction in city life by affecting: 1) how interaction occurs, 2) who interacts with whom, and 3) the content of the interaction.⁶

Social purpose spaces allow social interactions and relations to manifest: people can connect, share knowledge, access social protection and take group action. The understanding of community as social process based on various forms of social encounters, interactions and relations that occur in physical spaces that function as social territories is helpful for thinking about collective capabilities because these entail shared resources, social relations, and action among individuals and groups. It is also useful for analysing the role of SVNH and its space in relation to community capabilities.

2.2.3. Neighbourhood Houses as social territories

Sandercock and Attili (2009) explored the case of the Collingwood NH (CNH) in Vancouver. Their case study explores in depth how CNH as a physical place and a relationship builder helps create a sense of belonging among neighbourhood residents and newcomers across ethnic and cultural differences. They outline how the intentional community building purpose of a NH and especially the CNH approach to intercultural community building offers a model for *community* and *citizenship* as social processes and helps establish “political community rather than ethno-cultural identity as the basis for a sense of belonging in multicultural societies” (p. 196). The case study of CNH led Sandercock to re-theorize multiculturalism as *interculturalism*, defined as a daily social and political process of dealing with difference in culturally diverse 21st century cities⁷ (p. 219).

⁶ Christopher M. Kennedy (2011) presents an even bolder analysis of built infrastructure as an independent, causal variable when he argues that “physical infrastructure substantially underlies the wealth and economic growth of cities” (p. 4).

⁷ In her earlier work, Sandercock (2009) described the most culturally diverse cities of the world struggling with the challenge of difference as the “mongrel cities of the 21st century” (pp. 35-36, citing Sandercock 2003).

Building on the work of Donald (1999), who described community and common culture (among strangers, neighbours or groups) as a process that requires broad social participation in negotiating shared meanings and values, and the work of Amin (2002), who argued that people learn to live with differences in the “micro-publics of banal transgressions” or the local places where our everyday interactions and encounters take place, Sandercock concludes that “this is community redefined neither as identity nor as place, but as a productive process of social interaction” (p. 225). The CNH is a unique and important “micro-public” where this interculturalism and community as social process can happen. In this way, the CNH and other NHs ‘nurture the essential political virtues of a cosmopolitan urbanism (or an intercultural society)’ and are “microcosms of all that Canada aspires to be” (p. 227).

Yan and Lauer (2021) find that the wide range of services provided by NHs is important for their community-building outcomes. They surveyed people who use the 15 neighbourhood houses in Metro Vancouver in 2014. The survey was available in six languages, and the 675 respondents included people who use NH services and participate and volunteer in programs. These users of NHs reported more friendships and relationships in the neighbourhood and higher levels of social capacity development when they participated in a variety of programs and activities. In his research and analysis of this survey data, Lauer finds that NHs function as social infrastructure because they serve as “a vehicle for opportunities – opportunities for relationships to form and opportunities to learn skills for working collectively” (Lauer, in Yan & Lauer, 2021, p. 154). Building on Klinenberg’s (2018, p. 5) definition of social infrastructure as “the physical places and organizations that shape the way people interact” (similar to social territories) and Mario Small’s (2009) study of how organizations playing a brokerage role contribute to community development, Lauer develops a conceptual approach that emphasizes the combination of physical spaces *and* organizations attracting, guiding and structuring interactions purposefully to contribute to community-building. He finds that NHs as a unique form of social infrastructure contribute to “two important aspects of community-building: the development of relationships [among community members] and the development of social capacity” (p. 134), defined as the “ability to work with others to achieve shared goals” (p131).

2.3. Social infrastructure in relation to traditional and critical infrastructure

To assess how SVNH affected collective capabilities as a type of social infrastructure, it is necessary to understand how infrastructure is studied or theorized and how it is understood by policy-makers. It is also helpful to understand how governments, emergency management agencies and the field of disaster studies understand and categorize critical infrastructure in order to contextualize the role of a social purpose space through an emergency or crisis and consider how policy and investment might better acknowledge and support the role of social purpose spaces. This will help frame an understanding of social purpose spaces and built facilities as infrastructure at the neighborhood level in the resilience context.

2.3.1. Social purpose spaces as social infrastructure

Social infrastructure is a relatively recent and broad concept, so it is useful and timely to conduct in-depth case studies of specific types of SI at the local level where people connect and interact directly. This case study contributes to the research on SI by exploring one type: a physical space owned and/or operated by a non-profit for social purposes.

The concept and terminology of 'social infrastructure' has been in use in Australia for some time, referring to infrastructure *and* services that "accommodate social services" (Wear, 2016, p. 285, citing New Zealand Social Infrastructure Fund, 2009). It has also been defined as social services that serve people across the lifespan, or address lifelong needs, and include physical spaces, buildings and facilities as an element (Davern et al., 2017). Sociologist Eric Klinenberg drew attention to the concept of SI among academic and professional audiences with his 2018 book *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*. He argues that physical conditions and places are important for building social connectedness and social capital. Latham and Layton (2019) build on Klinenberg's definition, describing SI as "the networks of spaces, facilities, institutions, and groups that create affordances for social connection" (p. 3). They emphasize infrastructure studies, publicness and public space, sociality and encounter, and the

politics of city planning and service provision as key strands of social scientific inquiry related to social infrastructure and encourage further study of this concept.

In Vancouver, research and dialogue on social connectedness contributed to the focus on community social infrastructure and attention to the growing real estate pressures on social purpose organizations and artists. In a 2011 public consultation and subsequent research, the Vancouver Foundation found that isolation and disconnection was the issue that people in the region said concerned them most (Vancouver Foundation, 2012, p. 3). In 2014, the Mayor's Engaged City Task Force held discussions with community on this issue, and a recurring theme was that organizations were "struggling to find, access and retain affordable (private) spaces in which to bring people together" (Engaged City Task Force, 2014, p. 22). In a later survey for the 2017 *Connect & Engage* report, the Vancouver Foundation found that participation in almost every community-related activity had dropped since 2012 (Vancouver Foundation, 2017, p. 6). The SPRE Collaborative and the City of Vancouver's Healthy City strategy factsheets (City of Vancouver, 2014c) refer to these findings as drivers of their ongoing work to understand and support social infrastructure.

2.3.2. Infrastructure

Infrastructure is a broad and evolving concept. According to Pike et al. (2019), "the term was first used in relation to railway engineering in France in the late nineteenth century" (p. 32), and early definitions or understandings focused on military assets, physical built structures, and technical systems. The term and concept were used later to also consider economic systems (digital communication, banking, and the energy or built systems that enable the movement of commodities) and social or "soft" services, such as education, medical, legal, law enforcement, and research (Pike et al., 2019, p. 32). The modern conception of infrastructure remains predominantly centered on large-scale, human-built physical or digital resources that take some form of a system (highways, railroads, sewers and water systems, communications systems, etc.) as well as large buildings such as hospitals and schools that are available for public use (Frischmann, 2012; Davern et al., 2017).

Infrastructure may be defined by characteristics of the networked structures, assets or services it aims to describe, or by its function enabling other functions or

outcomes in society. Common characteristics or qualities of traditional infrastructure are that it is open access (though there may be some regulation) and therefore viewed as a public or collective good; it is government provided, subsidized or regulated; and it produces positive and negative externalities or spillovers (Frischmann, 2012; Pike et al., 2019).

With this origin and prevailing focus tied to built physical systems, infrastructure is commonly associated with engineering in its applied form and conceptualized by the field of economics, including public welfare or public good economics and regulatory economics (Pike et al., 2019; Frischmann, 2012). According to the website of an international collective of scholars exploring the concept of infrastructure from various disciplines (Critical Infrastructure Studies, CIS, 2022), a broad field of “infrastructure studies” has developed over the past few decades. Scholars in this emergent field conceptualize different kinds of structures, systems and services as infrastructure, and apply various critical approaches from the humanities and social sciences to the study of different kinds of infrastructure, such as feminist, racial equity, inclusion and accessibility and postcolonial approaches, as well as literary or artistic explorations (CIS, 2022).

Academics and practitioners working with a traditional conceptualization of infrastructure are increasingly acknowledging the role of built and technical infrastructure systems in supporting human and community wellbeing and development. Yet social infrastructure is still considered secondary to these forms of infrastructure, or as Whitzman (2001) described, it is treated as “the poor cousin of physical infrastructure” (p. 60). Even more recent literature focusing on infrastructure in general, especially national infrastructure, often does not include the network of facilities and spaces owned by local government (civic infrastructure) and nonprofit or social purpose organizations that are used to offer services for the public, aside from that related to the health and education system and some large buildings such as libraries. For example, Frischmann (2012) focused on infrastructure as a shared resource and emphasized the underappreciated role of (traditional) infrastructure in supporting social goods (p. 71) but did not focus on SI. A 2019 World Bank Group report on resilient infrastructure described infrastructure as “a lifeline to better health, better education, and a better livelihood”, though it, too, did not examine SI (Hallegatte et al., 2019, pp. xiii and 1). Turner (2020) discussed SI in his book on national or state infrastructure systems, but conceptualized it as a sub-set of state infrastructure.

2.3.3. Critical infrastructure in disaster studies

The common view of social infrastructure as secondary to built and technical infrastructure has practical consequences when we consider ‘critical infrastructure’. As the concept of community resilience includes disruptions and shocks as core elements, it is relevant to consider the categorization and understanding of ‘critical infrastructure’. The field and practice of disaster management focuses on a category of infrastructure deemed Critical Infrastructure (CI). The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) defines CI as “the physical structures, facilities, networks and other assets which provide services that are essential to the social and economic functioning of a community or society” (UNDRR, n.d.). This is a notably broad definition, likely intended to leave room for national governments and other entities to shape the definition and categories to their own priorities. Official definitions of CI vary across countries, and refer to an essential function for economic and social well-being and/or the functioning or security the state (OECD, 2019). CI categories, including those of the Canadian government, reflect the traditional conceptualization of infrastructure focusing on built, technical and, increasingly, finance systems.⁸ Social infrastructure is not included as a distinct category in CI (aside from hospitals and schools) and is not a focus of government-led (federal or national) emergency management strategies and investments (Clark et al. 2018; Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). In their research on the prioritization of CI by U.S. federal agencies, Clark et al. (2018) find that “there remains no articulated set of values that justify this particular list of infrastructure systems or how decision-makers might prioritize investments towards one critical sector over another during a crisis” (p. 339). Based on this, the question of whether SI should be considered CI remains open in the literature.

The Government of Canada does not include SI as a CI category. However, in its “Investing in Canada Plan” launched in 2016 and committing over \$180 billion “for infrastructure that benefits Canadians”, SI is a key funding stream that includes “investments in Indigenous communities, early learning and childcare, affordable housing, home care, and cultural and recreational infrastructure” (Government of

⁸ Canada’s National Strategy for Critical Infrastructure, and subsequently the Province of British Columbia’s Emergency Program Act (EPA) recognizes 10 sectors as CI: Energy & Utilities; Communications; Transportation; Water; Health; Safety; Government; Food; Finance; Manufacturing (Public Safety Canada, 2009, Emergency Management BC, 2019, p. 33).

Canada, 2022). The inclusion of SI in a national investment plan demonstrates a growing focus on the value of SI for society on a regular basis, but the exclusion of SI as a CI category without a clear argument or justification about its intentional exclusion indicates that its role through emergencies and disasters is either not understood or not acknowledged.

In disaster studies, social purpose organizations along with other organizations, businesses and government departments are considered *extending organizations* according to a typology of organized disaster responses developed by Kreps and Bosworth (2007, p. 299) because they exist before an emergency event but they take on new or different (non-regular) tasks as emergency response. Despite being recognized in this typology, there remains little research on the work of social purpose organizations in times of crisis (Koliou et al., 2018; Latham & Layton, 2019). Atkinson (2014) notes that case studies of the role of community- and faith-based groups are not extensive in the literature, beyond some catastrophic events like Hurricane Katrina in 2005. There are some studies of social capital in post-disaster environments that include an explicit analysis of the role of a physical space or facility in the dynamics of social ties, like Aldrich's study of the *Ibasho* project in Japan that engaged local elders as managers of a facility for the local community (Aldrich & Kyota, 2017; Kiyota et al., 2015). Klinenberg (2003) found strong evidence of the connection between social networks, physical spaces, and socio-economic conditions when he conducted research into how the Chicago heat wave of 1995 affected neighborhoods, and why two demographically similar neighborhoods exhibited different levels of resilience. In his subsequent research on SI through studies of disasters in the US such as Hurricane Sandy in 2012, he found that libraries, religious organizations, and even surf clubs used their social connections and facilities as sites for both community building and community resilience before, during and after disasters (Klinenberg, 2018).

2.3.4. Infrastructure in urban sociology

Conceptualizations of infrastructure from the field of urban sociology are relevant for this study because they expand and fundamentally change the concept of infrastructure and elaborate on how the built environment acts as a causal variable that affects social interactions and the social processes of community. The urban sociology literature offers in depth critical analysis on how political and economic power dynamics

determine the design and (un)availability of traditional built infrastructure systems and how the built environment can contribute to spatial inequities in quality of life and further reinforce systemic power structures. This literature also demonstrates how informal and constantly changing networks of people, spaces, materials and activities can function as infrastructure.

Fran Tonkiss takes an integrated and critical approach to the design of cities and the concept of infrastructure. In her work on the neglected social and political aspects of urban form and the design of cities, Tonkiss (2013) highlights the “ordinary infrastructures” (p. 24) that are “not engineered by experts but embodied by everyday social actors” (p. 140). This may include networks of people, equipment and practices for “collecting, storing, transporting and distributing fuel, food, resources, goods, information, and people” (p. 24), in the formal and informal economy or utility operations. She demonstrates how political, economic and social forces influence the design and availability of traditional built infrastructure and in turn, built infrastructure or its absence impacts social relations and common life.

Focusing on inner-city Johannesburg, AbdouMaliq Simone (2004) further extends the concept of infrastructure beyond built physical structures *and* socio-technical systems to connect “directly to people’s activities in the city” (p. 407). His notion of “people as infrastructure” explores the way residents in areas that are deprived of traditional infrastructure, policies, economies and regular provisioning of services of urban life collaborate in flexible and provisional ways (for example, for informal economic transactions, markets, credit systems) to enable better livelihoods (pp. 407-408, 411). In a recent essay, Simone (2021) elaborated that his “people as infrastructure” notion uses infrastructure as a broadening concept to conceptualize urban collective life beyond categories and closer to an understanding of how people, bodies, interactions, encounters, activities, affiliations, technical processes, materials and built environment are interconnected in complex ways.

Ash Amin (2014) builds on the work of Tonkiss (2013) and others through a case study of land occupations and un-serviced slum settlements in a city in Brazil with an analysis of how the absence or presence of urban infrastructure provisioning basic needs (water, food, sanitation, housing, etc) has agency and impacts the lives of

individuals and communities. The absence or failure of built infrastructures also necessitates collective endeavors to create alternative shared infrastructures.

2.3.5. A Capabilities Approach to infrastructure

Clark et al. (2018) directly apply the capabilities approach to CI to make the case for redefining it as “the systems that are vital for protecting or providing essential human capabilities” (p. 351), because infrastructure provides services that enable and support people to realize their capabilities and do things, especially at a collective level. They adapt the capabilities approach elaborated by Sen and Nussbaum, and use the list of ten capabilities that Nussbaum outlined as “minimum entitlements” (p. 345) for their importance to people’s lives. Using the analytical framework of the capabilities approach outlined by Robeyns (2003), they conceptualize infrastructure as a *conversion factor* – something that allows people to transform their *resources* (set of rights, entitlements, commodities) into *capabilities* (the real freedoms, opportunities or possibilities that enable the pursuit of wellbeing) and *functionings* (realized capabilities, or ways of being and doing that a person puts into practice) (Clark et al., 2018). (Figure 1, p. 17)

The idea of infrastructure as a *conversion factor* is similar to Lofland’s (1998) conceptualization of physical spaces as social territories and Simone’s (2004) idea of infrastructure as a platform for action and coordination. As discussed earlier, Lauer (2021) presents a similar conceptualization of the function of a NH, as an organization *and* physical space, referring to it as a “vehicle” for opportunities and interactions that contribute to social connections, relationships and skills that are part of the collective social process that is community (p. 154). This study builds on the conceptualization of SI as a conversion factor for collective capabilities during a crisis.

2.4. The conceptual framework as an adapted CA framework

This conceptual framework comes together within the capabilities approach (CA) framework. The analysis will use the concepts of social territory and public familiarity to understand how SVNH as a place-based community-building organization with its physical spatial assets facilitates certain kinds of interactions and social ties. In this way, SVNH and its spatial assets contribute to the social process or practice of *community*.

The analysis will then conceptualize SVNH and its spatial assets as social and critical infrastructure that functions as a conversion factor to contribute to collective capabilities and community resilience outcomes. This analysis will show how community resilience at the local neighbourhood level can be understood as multiple collective capabilities and collective functionings through the CA framework. The elements and relational framework of the capabilities approach also provides space to consider how structural inequities (including resource distribution) and power affect community resilience, addressing some important critiques of the way community resilience is sometimes defined and used in planning, policy and theory.

This adaptation of the CA framework for this research entails the following specifications of the components of Figure 1 (p. 17):

Resources, Commodities: Community resources and assets that should be inclusive and accessible for everyone. This includes many of the elements of community resilience identified in Table 1 (p. 12).

Conversion factors include social, economic, political, and natural and built environmental characteristics, conditions or capacities of the population and context in the geographic neighbourhood and the city, though some of these may be connected to provincial and national systems and conditions. The following concepts describe conversion factors for collective capabilities and resilience:

- Public familiarity (fluid encounters and durable engagements) and strong social ties.
- Social territories or relational settings (physical spaces and organizations providing services and activities) used to generate public familiarity and social connection.
- Local social purpose organizations and their connections with external institutions and resources. The network of social infrastructure and its ability to adapt and coordinate services quickly.
- Availability and quality of traditional critical infrastructure.
- Distribution and accessibility of City resources and infrastructure.

Collective capabilities in the context of community resilience include:

- Capabilities of groups (seniors, youth, newcomers, etc.).

- Capabilities of the inclusive collective (everyone in the neighbourhood).
- Capabilities to reduce disaster risk, to prepare for and respond to emergencies, and to recover through collective action.

Through collective choices, these collective capabilities can be realized as **collective functionings** that represent community resilience:

- Capabilities that individuals and groups throughout the neighbourhood put into action together as a collective, on a regular basis and in anticipation of, during and after a crisis.
- Community resilience through a crisis.
- Collective adaptation understood as actions to evolve in response to or anticipation of hazards or change and to reduce the vulnerability and risk to hazards.

The next chapter presents the research methodology and describes the four phases of the analysis approach for this case study. This will explain how the concepts from these bodies of literature and the adapted CA framework will be used to analyse the experience of SVNH and its spatial arrangements and to answer the research question.

Chapter 3.

Methodology and Research Design

This is a deductive qualitative research project, testing the theory that social purpose organizations with physical spaces, facilities and equipment contribute to collective capabilities and community resilience outcomes during a crisis. It is an exploratory single-case study that collects and analyzes qualitative data through the use of spatial analysis, document analysis and semi-structured interviews.

3.1. Exploratory case study of a Neighbourhood House

SVNH serves as a valuable case study because its physical space (main building) was open and dedicated to community building and emergency response activities during the COVID-19 pandemic and it is a long-standing social purpose organization with a vision of a neighbourhood with many of the attributes of capability. Studying SVNH therefore offers the possibility of revealing insights about community capabilities and the role of spatial arrangements during a crisis.

This is not presented as a case that is representative of all or most other cases of social purpose organizations with physical spatial assets. However, as there are NHs throughout Metro Vancouver and in other cities and countries, other scholars could build on this research, and this case could be compared with case studies of other NHs or other types of social purpose organizations to derive more generalizable findings.

3.2. Study timeframe

The crisis and timeframe for this case study is the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic, from the period just before the public health ‘social [physical] distancing’ regulations through the first few months of these pandemic containment measures. While the pandemic is ongoing in 2022 with changing phases and creates a situation where we are in response and recovery mode at the same time, the first few months after the announcement of distancing measures was a distinct period of emergency response decision making, uncertainty, transition, and urgent temporary programs and

services. This timeframe, from March to September 2020, is the focus of this study. SVNH ended its temporary emergency food distribution program in August and re-started its regular childcare services and began offering limited programming at the main building in September, so this was a notable transition point out of the crisis response phase.

A note on terminology: Throughout this document, I refer to this period as a time of emergency or crisis because these early months of the pandemic were marked with sudden disruption and uncertainty affecting many aspects of daily life, and an urgency to take action to meet people's immediate needs (emergency response). This early period of great uncertainty also created a fear for the future, or a sense that if things are handled poorly, the emergency or crisis could become a disaster. While there are many definitions and conceptualizations of disaster (Perry, 2018), a disaster is usually distinguished from a crisis or emergency by the extreme negative impacts of the former: loss of life, damage, destruction, reversals to communities' progress towards quality of life and livelihoods, and the necessity of recovery efforts and changes in societal relations and power and resource distribution. The pandemic is a disaster globally, but its first months were most associated with uncertainty and emergency response rather than these extreme negative impacts, so I will not refer to it as a disaster.

3.3. Impact of COVID-19 regulations

During this study, public health regulations were in place to limit the number of people in indoor spaces and limit travel across health authority regions. To minimize risk to study participants and respect health and safety guidelines, in-person or on-site activities were kept to a minimum. It was not possible to observe the use of the space extensively or conduct on-site activities. The only on-site activities were two tours of the SVNH building, at times when few other people were present, in order to follow safety guidelines and to avoid interfering with the organization's ability to serve community members.

I received approval for ethical conduct of research with human participants in December 2020 and approval of my COVID-19 safety plan and protocol for in-person research in January 2021 via course-based ethics approval for URB 696 and 697. I completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving

Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE) on September 29, 2020. I employed informed consent forms and scripts to obtain verbal consent from each participant before the interview, after sending each participant a digital copy of the consent form ahead of time.

3.4. Methods

The research methods consisted of: 1) spatial analysis through a review of floor plans and site visits, 2) content or document analysis, and 3) semi-structured interviews. This was the approximate sequencing, though the methods overlapped and were conducted from January to July 2021. Interviews were held six to nine months after the study timeframe of March to September 2020, so they were based on participants recalling events, use of space and decisions. This creates a challenge for identifying details, particularly regarding the uses and limitations of spatial arrangements, and ensuring accuracy of information that is recalled. However, triangulating data obtained via multiple methods allowed me to ensure more accuracy or correctness regarding the events and decisions that took place and to generate more useful concepts from my analysis of the data (Babbie & Roberts, 2018). For example, I had access to SVNH grant proposal documents and public statements or announcements from the study timeframe so I could compare with interview details for correctness. Using multiple methods to triangulate research findings also helped ensure more validity, meaning the events, actions or statements that I focus on in my collected data reflect the concepts I am exploring as accurately as possible (Babbie & Roberts, 2018).

3.5. Spatial analysis - floor plan review and site visit

SVNH directors provided a digital copy of the floor plans of the main building at 6470 Victoria Drive. I analyzed the floor plans and observed the indoor and limited outdoor spaces of the building before conducting the interviews. The first site tour, led by the SVNH Operations Director, took place February 16, 2021, on an afternoon when only a few individuals were in the building, in order to observe COVID-19 safety measures. During the site tour, I took photos that I analyzed later. This helped me prepare questions for the subsequent semi-structured interviews, and prepared me to better understand the spatial references that participants mentioned. This was important

because most interviews took place remotely through video call platforms, so participants could not point to physical spaces during interviews. After some initial interviews with SVNH staff, I followed up with a partial on-site tour of the building with the SVNH Office Manager on April 13, 2021 and took some additional photos.

SVNH operates other sites for some of its regular programming, but this research focuses on its main building because that is the facility that SVNH used during the early months of the pandemic. The other facilities remained closed.

3.6. Content analysis

Content analysis included public reports, announcements, presentations and social media posts of SVNH, as well as some internal documents provided by the SVNH Executive Director. This content revealed information about SVNH programs, activities, use of space, and decisions. I also examined relevant City of Vancouver strategies, plans and reports. The CoV social infrastructure strategy was approved by City Council and made public in December 2021, so it was not available during my data collection and initial analysis. I reviewed it and incorporated it into my analysis in the later stages of preparing this document.

Table 2. Content analysis documents reviewed

Documents and public presentations
SVNH 2020-2023 strategic plan and draft work plan.
SVNH Annual Reports COVID-19 Safety Plans.
2021 report <i>Exploring the Creation of a Local and Equitable Food Hub in South Vancouver</i> , prepared for SVNH.
SVNH public announcements on its website and public Facebook page.
Recent SVNH grant proposals.
SVNH executive director's presentation and discussion during the Simon Fraser University event <i>Closer to Home: The Case for Complete Neighbourhoods</i> on February 17, 2021. This public event was held online due to COVID-19 restrictions and safety measures. It was free to register and the recordings were posted online.
SVNH Food Security Manager interview for the Vancouver Food Runners e-newsletter August 2021, posted on SVNH public Facebook page.
CoV Healthy City strategy.
CoV Resilient Vancouver strategy.
CoV Age-Friendly Action Plan 2013-2015.
CoV <i>Free and Low Cost Food Programs in Vancouver map</i> , March 17, 2021
CoV Emergency Operating Center (EOC) COVID-19 planning guide, June 2020.

CoV website page describing the Social Infrastructure Strategy in development.
CoV Spaces to Thrive Phase I: Vancouver Social Infrastructure Strategy Policy Framework – Report to Standing Committee on City Finance and Services. Approved by City Council and made public December 2021.

3.7. Semi-structured interviews

For this qualitative and exploratory study, I used a purposive approach to select interview participants. I began by interviewing SVNH directors, identifying CoV staff working in areas related to my research question, and used the snowball method of asking interview participants to suggest other potential participants (Babbie & Roberts, 2018). This research employs case study logic as described by Mario Small (2009, citing Yin 2002) adopting and building on Yin: the information shared and the questions raised in each interview help the researcher determine the next potential participants, and further interview questions. Thus, the semi-structured interview questions were similar, but somewhat different as they were tailored to each participant and informed by the information gathered from completed interviews.

Of the ten (10) total semi-structured interviews, most were conducted remotely, on video call platforms due to COVID-19 safety regulations and considerations. The two interviews conducted on site were with the SVNH participants who also provided a tour of the building.

I conducted seven (7) interviews with SVNH staff and consultants, and individuals from partner organizations or groups who were directly involved in decision-making or key activities related to the use of the main building during the study timeframe. I refer to this group of interviews as South Vancouver interviews (SV interviews). These participants included:

Zahra Esmail	Executive Director	SVNH
Paul Riley	Director of Operations	SVNH
Roberta Kihn	Office Manager	SVNH
Mimi Rennie	Director of Community Programs	SVNH
Julio Bello	Executive Director	South Vancouver Family Place (SVFP)
Marion Hartley	Council Member	Seniors Hub Council (SHC)
Nicola Henderson	Former consultant and current volunteer	SVNH

I conducted three (3) interviews with individuals from CoV who work on teams or focus areas related to the conceptual elements in my research question, including resilient neighbourhoods, social infrastructure and City support for nonprofit and community organizations or groups. I refer to this group of interviews as city interviews because their experience and perspective sits at the citywide scale. The participants are:

Ada Chan Russell	Social Planner, Social Infrastructure Strategy and Community Serving Spaces	City of Vancouver
Eric Kowalski	Social Planner, Grants Team	City of Vancouver
Katia Tynan	Manager, Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction	City of Vancouver

I reached out to two CoV staff members who worked on food security during the study timeframe and who were suggested by other participants. They were not available for interviews due to their schedules, but they referred me to the EOC COVID-19 planning guide (listed above in Table 2). I also attempted to arrange an interview with Emergency Management BC to inquire about the Province’s understanding of social and critical infrastructure during emergencies, and relevant goals, indicators, policies, and support or decision-making mechanisms that affect actors at the local level, but ultimately this did not take place.

I knew I had conducted a sufficient number of interviews when there were no other staff members who were directly involved in the decision-making and activities within the study timeframe who I had yet to contact. This was confirmed by reviewing the key decisions and activities indicated in the document review, and when the snowball technique led back to individuals that already participated in interviews. I did not reach out to any SVNH board members, ANHBC leadership or City Councillors because it appeared that they were not involved directly in the decision-making or implementation of activities at the main building of SVNH or in the City of Vancouver’s engagement with community organizations like SVNH during the study timeframe.

Given the small number of interviews, I transcribed the digital audio of the site tours and semi-structured interviews directly into a Word document and coded hard copy printouts.

3.8. Approach to analysis

The mixed methods approach of spatial analysis, document analysis, and semi-structured interview analysis allowed me to compile a comprehensive picture of what happened in the SVNH building during the study timeframe. It also allowed me to develop an understanding of the SVNH decisions made at that time and how spatial arrangements, spatial limitations and related factors affected these decisions and the options available to SVNH. This was a necessary foundation for me to then conduct analysis to answer my research question and examine relevant concepts and literature according to the findings from the study data.

I chose to conduct SV interviews and city interviews and distinguish between them because I employed two conceptual coding frames in two phases of analysis. In the first phase, I coded SV interviews to analyse the events, decisions and perspectives of the SVNH experience. In the second phase, I analysed the role of SVNH and its spatial assets as infrastructure, and considered how they may be conceptualized as social and critical infrastructure and how they function as an adaptable network with other social purpose organizations and spatial assets. In the third phase, I applied my adapted CA Framework to analyse how SVNH contributed to community capabilities and resilience outcomes, and compare the local SVNH perspective and experience with the understandings of CoV participants and the role of the City.

3.8.1. First phase – analysing the SVNH experience

For the first phase of analysis, I collected and organized the information about SVNH activities and services before COVID-19 and during the pandemic emergency, and sorted the data about how SVNH changed the use of its physical spaces, and how consideration of its own spatial assets and others in the area factored into decisions about activities during the crisis.

Spatial Analysis

During the site tours, using the floor plan, pictures and information from the site tours, I wrote down the main uses or limitations of each room or relevant spatial aspect of the building (such as 'front entrance'), along with my initial impressions. As I conducted SV key informant interviews (SVNH staff, consultants and partners), I added

information and references to these descriptions. SVNH documents, including Annual Reports, also had some information about the use of particular rooms or spaces, but the interviews revealed the most information about how each room or spatial element of the building facilitated or limited intended uses before and during the pandemic.

Coding SV semi-structured interviews

To answer the first part of my research question – ‘what is the nature of SVNH as social infrastructure’ - I consider only the SV participant interviews, as these are individuals with direct experience in the decision-making and/or activities of SVNH during the study timeframe. This includes the transcripts of site tour descriptions. In these semi-structured interviews, I asked questions about how the space was used by staff, volunteers and community members before the pandemic and when public health measures were implemented. The full list of questions that formed the basis for the SV semi-structured interviews is in Appendix A. I also coded the remarks of the SVNH Executive Director’s public presentation at a February 2021 event, because it occurred during the timeframe of the study interview data collection and the topic was related to this study.

In a first round of coding, I coded space uses and limitations, programs and activities, partners and collaborations, and decisions that were referenced. Data was also coded temporally according to stage of crisis: pre-COVID-19, during COVID-19 as emergency response activities, during COVID-19 as maintaining regular services and activities, and post-COVID-19 anticipated needs and activities. In a second round of coding, I used a primarily open coding approach. I then went through all the coded excerpts to update the codes and sort codes into categories based on my own concepts included in the research question of this study (resilience, capabilities, etc) or concepts emerging from the interview data. (See Appendix B for full list of categories, subcategories and codes of the data from the seven SV interviews.)

Tables 3 and 4 show the categories, sub-categories and number of occurrences (coded excerpts) of the coding for the SV interview transcripts. The coding subcategories are grouped into eleven categories. Two categories, ‘Space Uses’ and ‘COVID program/service adaptation’, represent the coding of activities, events, spatial attributes or uses. The other nine categories (Theme-categories) serve as themes that tell a story beyond describing activities and uses that took place, and reflect

interpretations and conceptual framings. While the interview questions of this study focused on SVNH and its use of the main building, the coding and categorizing reveals that spatial arrangements in the wider geographic neighborhood and of other related social purpose spaces are interrelated and of comparable if not greater importance. This is indicated by the fact that ‘Social Infrastructure as a Network’ is the most prevalent theme-category and ‘network of SI and community’ and ‘other social purpose spaces’ are sub-categories in other theme-categories.

Table 3. Categories and subcategories from coding SV interviews - Coding activities, events, and spatial attributes or uses.

Coding activities, events and spatial attributes or uses		
Occurrences (# of coded excerpts)	Category (2 total)	Sub-Categories
66	Space uses	Outdoor spaces. Other social purpose spaces. Network of SI and community. Social purpose space needs. Children and childcare. Space limitation before COVID and during COVID. SVNH space uses before and during COVID. SVNH sites (in addition to main building).
29	COVID program/service adaptation	Economic (income tax). Families, children and youth. Food security. Organizational decision-making, planning, adaptation.

Table 4. Theme-categories and subcategories from coding SV interviews - Coding concepts, perspectives and interpretations.

Coding concepts, perspectives and interpretations		
Occurrences (# of coded excerpts)	Theme-Category (9 total)	Sub-Categories
53	Social Infrastructure as a network	Network of Social Infrastructure (SI) - Community Centres. Decision-making. Early years programming. Food security. Hub and Spoke. Partners and use of SVNH space.
52	Community capabilities	Capabilities - community needs, requests, capacities. Social connection or connectedness. Diversity. Seniors. Community/neighbourhood social, economic, environmental conditions (transit, economy, employment, housing). Power and decision-making. Advocacy, representation. Public authorities - City of Vancouver.
29	COVID emergency role	COVID emergency role: Information. Organizational capacity and resources. Creating expectations. COVID emergency role compared to earthquake and other emergencies.

Coding concepts, perspectives and interpretations		
Occurrences (# of coded excerpts)	Theme-Category (9 total)	Sub-Categories
22	Resource Distribution, Funding, Equity	Funders / donors (government, United Way, new Canada Healthy Communities Initiative). Funding. Resources. Equity.
18	Resilience	Support systems/mutual aid, social connections/isolation/relationships/friendships, support systems, inclusion/ welcoming, advocacy and political engagement, decision-making, power, bouncing back and recovering as community, link to non-emergency time, community members as leaders and changemakers, prevention, equity.
15	SVNH community building purpose	SVNH mission. Role of social purpose organization. Community building purpose of NHs. SVNH programs and staff. SVNH economic/employment services.
13	What is a Neighbourhood	Neighbourhood scale and spatial factors. Micro-Neighbourhoods. 'Natural neighbourhood'. Place-making.
10	Post-COVID	Post-COVID-19 (community needs and possible programs, services or activities).
9	Food	Food and community building. Food infrastructure - space and equipment needs.

From the interviews and documents, I collected and organized the information about SVNH activities and services before COVID-19 and during the emergency response phase of the pandemic (March – September 2020), and sorted the data about how SVNH used its physical space (indoor facilities and outdoor space) before the pandemic, how these uses changed with the onset of the pandemic, and how the spaces impacted SVNH’s ability to adapt its services and use of space.

3.8.2. Second phase – conceptualizing the role of SNVH as infrastructure

Drawing from the case study and the conceptual framework for this study, I conceptualize SVNH (as an institution, a network of staff, volunteers and members, and a physical space and spatial assets) as infrastructure, considering the different adaptations of this concept, including social and critical infrastructure.

3.8.3. Third phase – analysing how SVNH and its spatial arrangements contribute to community capabilities and resilience during crisis

Conceptual coding frame for community capabilities and resilience

In the third phase of analysis, I explored how the concepts of collective capabilities and community resilience are reflected in participants' comments by coding indicators or elements of these concepts. To begin, I coded SV and city interviews for aspects or key elements related to community capabilities and resilience. The city interviews were included in this study primarily for this phase, to compare the comments and perspectives of people involved with the neighbourhood house with those of people working on citywide efforts. There is value in seeing the similarities and differences to develop a fuller picture of how we might understand and operationalize community capabilities and resilience, what this case reveals about how they are related and the role of SVNH in contributing to these outcomes.

Indicators and elements of community capabilities and resilience appeared throughout the interview responses. In each semi-structured interview, I asked the participant to describe their understanding of the term 'community resilience', and invited their thoughts on whether this is a useful or appropriate concept. This question was saved for the end of the interview, to avoid influencing the rest of the discussion in unintended ways, considering that this concept is used and understood in different ways across disciplines and professions. This broad, open question at the end of the interview created a space for participants to share the key elements, qualities, benefits and challenges they see in this concept and its uses, based on their experiences. There was no interview question that directly referred to 'community capabilities', the second most commonly occurring theme. These are coded excerpts that mention the needs, engagements and initiatives of community members, as well as the contextual or environmental conditions in the neighbourhood and society. I applied a "provisional coding" approach, as described by Saldaña (2016, p. 168), using researcher-generated codes and categorization using the concept of capabilities from the conceptual framework. The 'community capabilities' coding theme captures all the elements that are part of the CA framework: resources, commodities and conditions, conversion factors, capabilities, and functionings, though interview excerpts were not coded directly in these terms. (The codes are in Table 4.)

Analysis using the Capabilities Approach framework

I apply the CA framework to analyze the role of SVNH and its spatial assets in contributing to collective capabilities and community resilience. I then briefly compare the role of SVNH and City of Vancouver according to the CA framework, and compare the elements of community capabilities and resilience from the interview data with related goals and targets in the CoV Healthy City, Resilient Vancouver, Age-Friendly Action Plan 2013-2015, and Spaces to Thrive SI strategies and the SVNH 2020-2023 strategic framework (Table 2).

3.8.4. Fourth phase – implications and further research suggestions

I then consider implications for policy, planning, emergency management and further research.

The next chapter presents information about SVNH, its spatial arrangements, its regular community building activities and use of space and its adapted or emergency-specific activities and use of space during the first months of the pandemic, as revealed by the data in this research project. The chapter begins with relevant contextual information about South Vancouver and its population, and existing social purpose spaces, food assets and food insecurity in the area compared to the city of Vancouver overall, as this is relevant for the case study.

Chapter 4.

The Case Study

This chapter provides some background information about South Vancouver and its population that is relevant for this study. It then presents information about SVNH, its spatial assets with a focus on the main building, and its activities and use of spatial assets before and during the first months of the pandemic.

4.1. The South Vancouver area and population

The area referred to as South Vancouver, in the southeast part of the city, is home to more than 100,000 people, about one sixth of the population of the City of Vancouver, which was 631,486 as of the 2016 census. Smaller neighborhoods within South Vancouver include Sunset, Victoria-Fraserview, Killarney, Champlain Heights, River District, Punjabi Market, South Hill, and Fraser Lands.⁹ The City of Vancouver does not have formal local districts or official neighbourhoods. It uses 22 “local planning areas” demarcated in the 1960s by the City’s first Social Planning Department (established in 1966) in collaboration with social planners of the organization that is now the United Way, during a period of decentralization of social service planning and provision to the local level. Today’s ‘neighbourhoods’ are based on these local areas, even though the population and context of the city has changed substantially since then (City of Vancouver 2020; Yan & Lauer, 2021). Sunset, Victoria-Fraserview, and Killarney are the three local planning areas that make up South Vancouver. In the draft Current State Data Book included in the CoV *Spaces to Thrive* SI strategy report, the three local planning areas of South Vancouver are grouped together as “South East”, one of six social non-profit organization “service areas” or “Network Areas for additional planning and analysis” (City of Vancouver, 2021b, pp. 12, 18). (Figure 4)

⁹ In some cases, the Marpole neighbourhood is considered to be part of South Vancouver, but this study does not include it because the Marpole Neighbourhood House, and not the South Vancouver Neighbourhood House, serves that area.



Figure 4. Network Areas in CoV Social Infrastructure Strategy

Source: City of Vancouver *Spaces to Thrive: Vancouver Social Infrastructure Strategy* presentation to City Council (City of Vancouver, 2021c, December 8, p. 35).

South Vancouver is one of the most diverse areas of the city. The population is 56% newcomers to Canada - the highest percentage in the city, 80% visible minorities and 68.6% has a non-English first language (Statistics Canada, 2016). The percentage of the population that is age 65 and over is close to the City of Vancouver average of 15% (15% in Sunset, 20% in Victoria-Fraserview, and 18% in Killarney) but these neighbourhoods had a higher rate of growth in total number of seniors since 1996 than the rate of growth in Vancouver overall (City of Vancouver, 2020).

Statistics of some social and health indicators suggest how quality of life is different among the three main neighbourhoods of South Vancouver and compared with the City of Vancouver overall. Median total family income in 2015 for all families with children under 18 was \$83,845 in Vancouver overall, \$73,080 in Killarney, \$68,410 in Sunset, and \$62,930 in Victoria-Fraserview (VEYP & HELP, 2019). The percentage of families with children under age six below the after-tax Low-Income Measure is 17.6% for Vancouver, but it is 23.3% in Victoria-Fraserview, 19.6% in Sunset, and 17.7% in Killarney (VEYP & HELP, 2019).

The South Vancouver & Marpole Neighbourhood Equity Report (Holden et al., 2022) found that civic expenditures are notably lower in South Vancouver than is the

case in the City of Vancouver as a whole. The City of Vancouver offers funding for non-profit social service groups and neighbourhood organizations in the form of grants. The report found that from 2016 to 2020, the value of recommended grants in South Vancouver and Marpole neighbourhoods was much lower (\$5.2 less per capita) compared to citywide. It also shows that the per capita amounts of contributions from property developers to fund community improvements in Killarney, Victoria-Fraserview and Sunset were disproportionately low compared to the citywide average.

4.1.1. Existing social purpose spaces

In Vancouver, the following key social purpose spaces exist: 24 community centres (CCs), 21 public libraries, 11 neighbourhood houses, five family places and one Aboriginal Friendship Centre. They offer programs, activities and services for residents and welcome newcomers. CCs offer social, educational and recreational activities for all ages and include large recreational facilities (gymnasiums, sports fields, pools, etc.). Family Places offer support, resources, and programs for families with young children¹⁰. Aboriginal Friendship Centres are located throughout Canada and help Indigenous people transition between life on reserve and life in urban areas, and the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society (VAFCS) provides a range of services to the urban aboriginal community. These community resources are featured in a City of Vancouver guide for newcomers (City of Vancouver, 2014b). Many community centres, libraries and parks across the city are designated as Disaster Support Hubs, focusing primarily on a disaster in the form of an anticipated earthquake (City of Vancouver, n.d.-a).

Across South Vancouver, there are three CCs, three libraries, one neighbourhood house (SVNH), one family place, and few other social service organizations. (Figure 6) Regarding 'amenities within walking or cycling distance', all three neighbourhoods have a notably lower percentage of the population that 'strongly or somewhat' agrees (57% in Victoria-Fraserview, 75.6% in Sunset, and 63.3% in Killarney), compared to the Vancouver average (81.4%) (*My Health My Community*, 2014). In terms of mobility within the neighbourhood, the percentage of people who walk or cycle as their primary mode of transportation to run errands is notably lower in all three of these neighbourhoods than the City average: 43% in Vancouver compared to

¹⁰ Family Places first appeared as Family Resource Programs in British Columbia in the 1970s, and are part of the [Family Resource Programs of BC](https://frpbc.ca) (<https://frpbc.ca>)

only 12.9% in Victoria-Fraserview, 11.5% in Sunset, and 9.8% in Killarney (*My Health My Community*, 2014).

South Vancouver is underserved in terms of social services, support providers and social purpose spaces. This is confirmed most recently in the CoV *Spaces to Thrive* SI strategy report. The report of this strategy approved by CoV City Council December 2021 acknowledges that South Vancouver “has one of the lowest number of Social NPOs [nonprofit organizations] in our sample size (n-405), accounting for 2% of the orgs [sic] in our sample” (City of Vancouver, 2021b, p. 18). It indicates seven organizations based in this area, including SVNH and SVFP, though the report does not name all seven organizations.

The South Vancouver & Marpole Neighbourhood Equity Report (Holden et al., 2022) provides comprehensive analysis of the inequities in neighbourhood amenities, social infrastructure (spaces and services) and resource allocation per capita in Killarney, Victoria-Fraserview, Sunset, and Marpole neighbourhoods compared to the City of Vancouver as a whole.

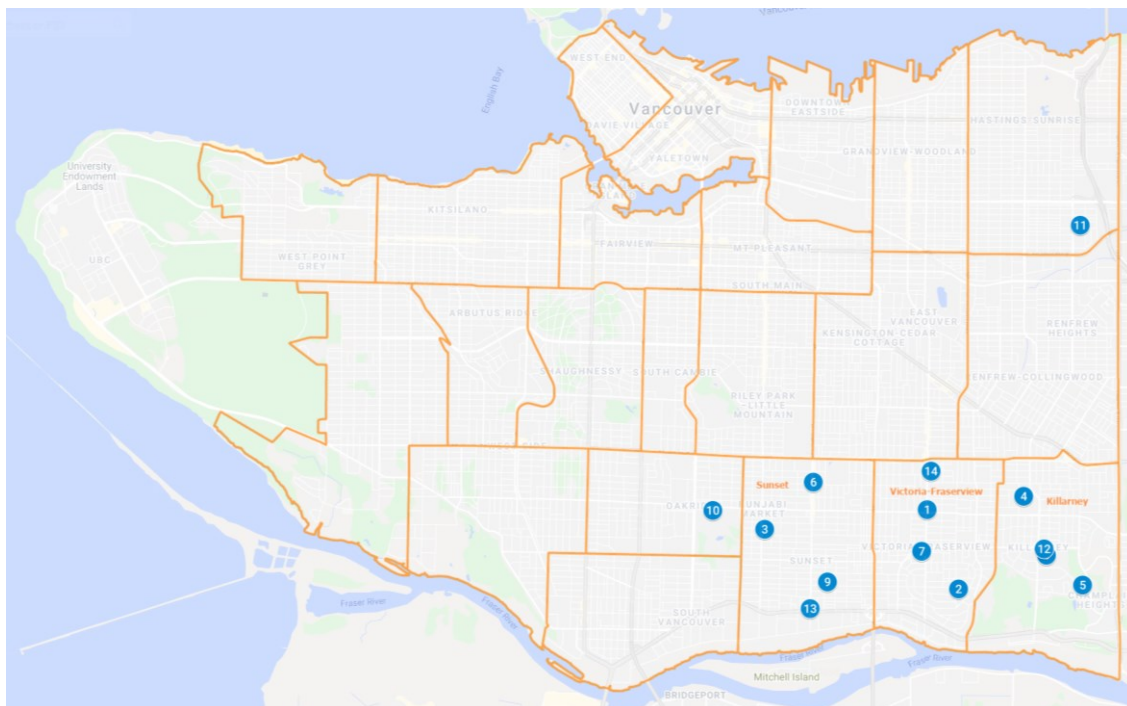


Figure 5. Map of SVNH and other social purpose spaces in South Vancouver within the City of Vancouver.

Map created by author using a base map of Google 2021 and the neighbourhood (local planning area) boundaries from the City of Vancouver’s VanMap platform (City of Vancouver, n.d.-b).

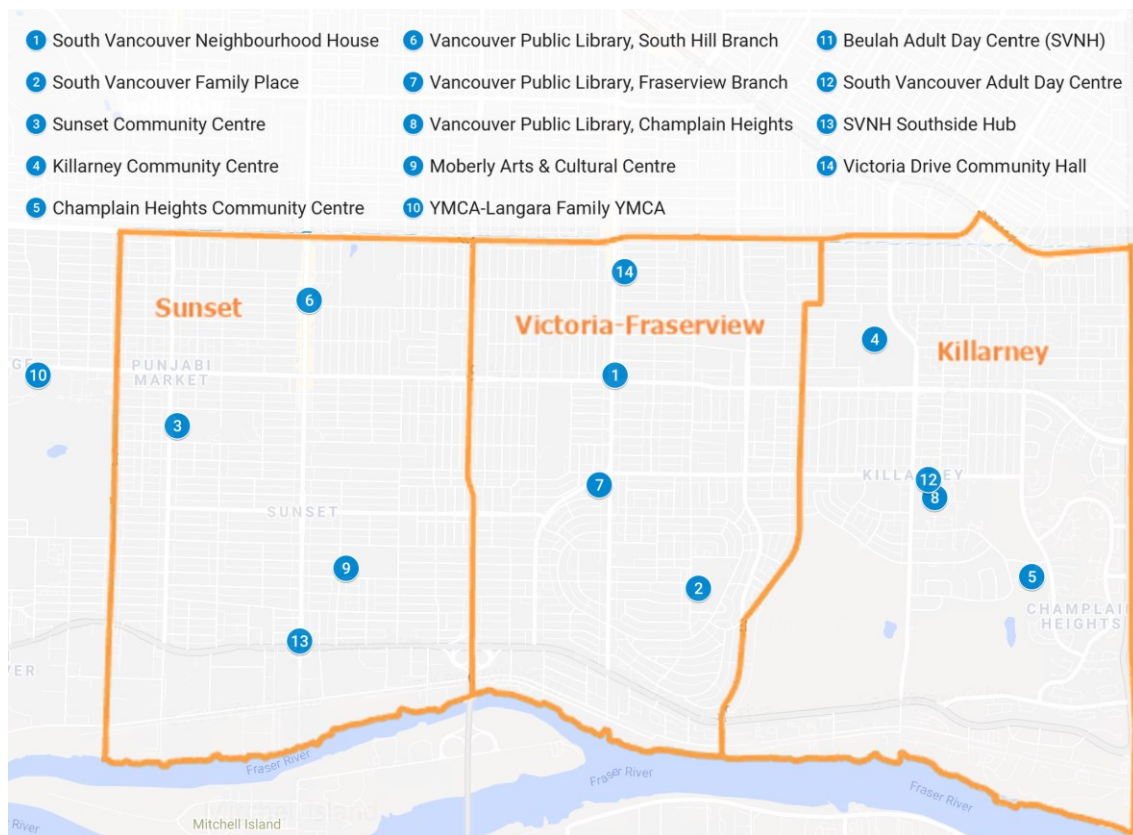


Figure 6. Map of SVNH sites and other social purpose spaces in South Vancouver.

This map includes SVNH sites and other spaces for social or community purposes mentioned in this case study and in the City of Vancouver’s *Spaces to Thrive* report. Location 11 is outside the South Vancouver area (see Figure 5). Map created by author using a base map of Google 2021 and the neighbourhood (local planning area) boundaries from the City of Vancouver’s VanMap platform (City of Vancouver, n.d.-b).

In January 2020, shortly before the pandemic, SVNH completed its 2020-2023 Strategic Plan, developed through an engagement process with community members, staff and partners. Strategic priorities include “Reframing South Vancouver” with a focus on “each South Van neighbourhood”, and “Connected Neighbourhoods” where “residents feel connected to their neighbours and their neighbourhood”.

We’re really pushing back at this idea of South Vancouver being one neighbourhood so our whole new strategic plan - the first priority is about reframing South Vancouver (Esmail, 2021).

In a public presentation, Zahra Esmail (2021), as the SVNH Executive Director, argued for the need for spatial considerations in resource distribution across the small-scale neighbourhoods in Vancouver. She highlighted how South Vancouver is underserved in terms of social services and support providers given the size of its

population and geographic area and the needs of a diverse population. Julio Bello, the Executive Director of SVFP, echoed the view that it is a large area for one family place to serve, and there are not enough social services in all the communities within this area: “It’s 100,000 members, and some communities lack some level of social support, like the Sunset area and the Fraser Lands area” (Bello, SVFP, interview, April 14, 2021).

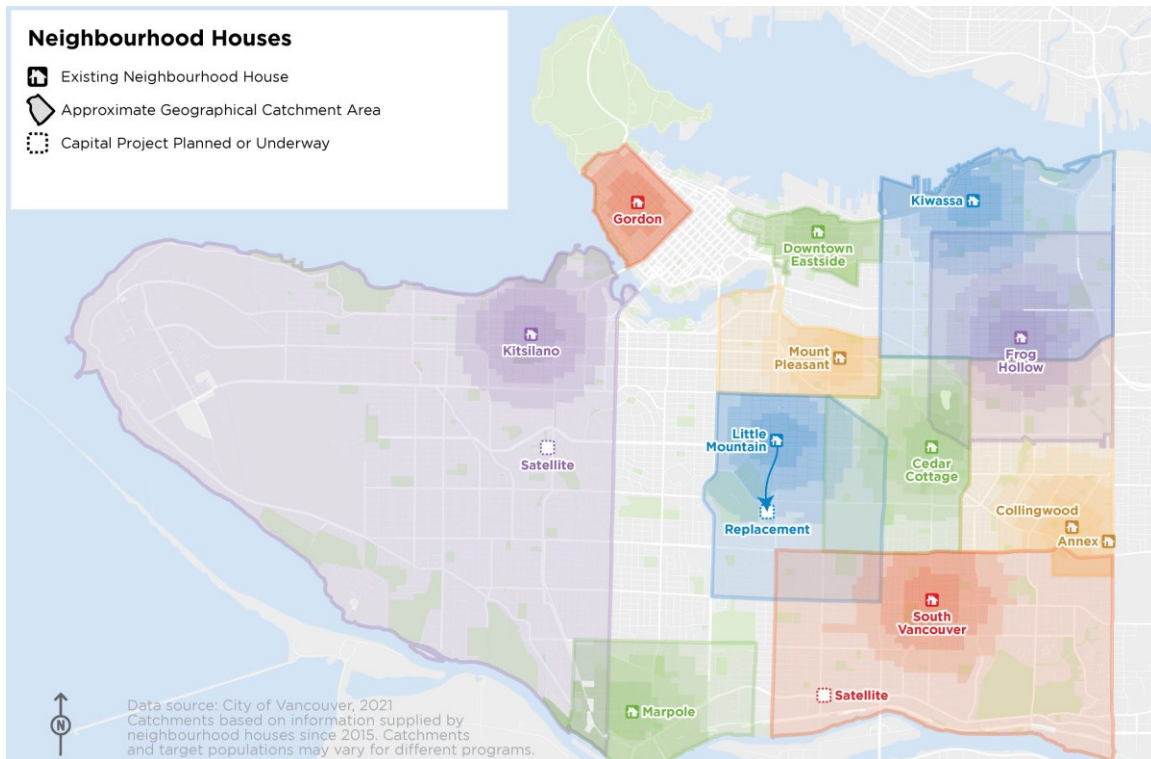


Figure 7. Neighbourhood Houses in Vancouver and the geographic areas they serve

Source: City of Vancouver *Spaces to Thrive Phase I: Vancouver Social Infrastructure Strategy Policy Framework – Report to Standing Committee on City Finance and Services*, November 23, 2021 (City of Vancouver, 2021b, p. 7, Appendix A).

4.1.2. Food insecurity and food assets

In Vancouver, 10 per cent of households experience food insecurity (Vancouver Today Reference Guide, 2020, p. 122) and more were affected during the pandemic as people lost income, and as free and low cost food providers closed (City of Vancouver, 2021). Food insecurity refers to the situation where people do not have adequate or reliable access to enough nutritious food due to physical, social or economic reasons. According to a recent study on mobility and access to nonprofit food hubs in Vancouver, there are fewer nonprofit food hubs in the City of Vancouver than there are other food

assets like supermarkets, so it can take people significant time to travel to a nonprofit food hub (Rajasooriar & Soma, 2022).

South Vancouver has fewer food assets in relation to its population than Vancouver overall, and there is a shortage of nonprofit food hubs providing free or low cost food. A recent SVNH report exploring the creation of an equitable food hub included a mapping of food assets, which may include community gardens, community kitchens, free/discount meals, food hampers, grocers, spaces for eating and sharing. It identified approximately 1,000 food assets in Vancouver but only 83 in South Vancouver: “Thus, while South Vancouver makes up 16% of the total population of Vancouver, it only has 8% of food assets” (Thurber, 2021, p. 22). A City of Vancouver map of free or low cost food programs available during the pandemic (updated March 2021) showed only three programs with locations in South Vancouver other than SVNH, out of over 70 across the city (City of Vancouver, 2021). A contributing factor to this shortage is the fact that the Greater Vancouver Food Bank (GVFB) consolidated its distribution operations to one location per city at the beginning of the pandemic (March 2020), closing six of its seven Vancouver food hub locations, including the Community Food Hub at SVNH. As a result, there were no food bank locations in South Vancouver at the start of the pandemic, when many services and places closed, people lost jobs or had wages reduced, health authorities told people to isolate at home, and many people were afraid to go out in crowded places or take public transportation.

A city participant in this study acknowledged that South Vancouver is underserved in terms of social services and resources, and that geographic service gaps were evident during the early emergency response phase of the pandemic with the shortage of organizations and facilities to provide free or low cost food.

...it's kind of considered a service desert – that whole South Vancouver area...and recognizing that they [SVNH] stepped up to do the food hub because really there's nobody else down there that would do that kind of thing, or be able to identify and find these really vulnerable seniors. (CoV participant interview, 2021)

4.2. South Vancouver Neighbourhood House

SVNH was established in 1975 when local residents who were active in social services planning formed a storefront information centre and joined the Neighbourhood

Services Association (NSA) alongside other neighbourhood houses (Yan & Lauer, 2021). The mission or purpose of SVNH includes community building, connection and place-making. The exact mission statement in its Strategic Framework for 2020-2023 and on its website reads: “Play a leadership role in building healthy and engaged neighbourhoods in South Vancouver by connecting people and strengthening their capacity to create change” (SVNH, n.d.).

With about 80 regular staff and 600 volunteers, SVNH regularly offers programs and services for seniors, families, children, preteens and youth, adults, newcomers, migrant workers and supports resident-led activities like workshops, presentations, social gatherings and more. According to its annual reports, it offers “hundreds of unique programs” (SVNH, 2019, p. 5) and over 7,000 individuals participate in programs and activities each year (SVNH, 2021, p. 3).

The main building

The main SVNH physical site is a three-storey storefront building on a commercial strip on Victoria Drive (Figures 8 and 9). This section provides descriptions and images of the rooms and physical spaces of the main building that are relevant to this study as they were used for activities and programs during the pandemic and as participants referred to them in interviews. These descriptions draw on observations during the site tours and on the excerpts from SV interviews and site tour comments that were coded under the ‘Space Uses’ category.



Figure 8. Aerial view of SVNH main building and surrounding block.
Source: Google maps. Imagery ©2022 Google, Imagery ©2022 Maxar Technologies, Map data ©2022 Google



Figure 9. View of the front of the SVNH main building.
Photo by author, February 2021.

Building Overall: The main building was built for SVNH in 2002, when the old two-storey building was torn down, yet it is not fully functional for the neighbourhood house's purposes. It is located in the middle of the block on a commercial strip of small businesses, right up against the buildings on either side of it (Figures 8 and 9). The front entrance is situated on the sidewalk, and it is the only entrance/exit to the building for the public. There is a garage in the back end of the building that goes right up to the alleyway. The NH has no outdoor space around this building.

All the programming of SVNH (community programs, youth programs, family programming, senior programs, childcare) use space at the main building throughout the day, so it is normally a busy place, and the space is never enough:

It was just *so full* (emphasized) I can't even describe it. Before COVID we were at capacity, we almost needed to cancel programs because we couldn't provide [enough space] (Rennie, SVNH, interview, March 1, 2021).

SVNH programs and activities for the community have been growing as it serves a large area and population and it appears there is also high demand for the space from community members and partner organizations. SVNH rents out or provides space in its facilities to other organizations and community groups. The YWCA WorkBC team and an

Indigenous Early Years (IEY) worker each rent out an office at the SVNH main building. The IEY worker is embedded with SVNH programs and participates in staff meetings and strategic planning processes. The Seniors Hub Council (SHC) organizes workshops and events at the SVNH main building. Some social workers book space to meet with families. The YWCA offers some family programming, like parenting classes, in the space, and SVNH provides staff to take care of the children during this programming. The YMCA offers computer classes in the space, and Pacific Immigrant Resources Society (PIRS) does some programming. Churches also rent the spaces in the main building on the weekends, though they are not embedded in SVNH programs. SVNH was also exploring a new partnership with the Vancouver Native Two Spirit society during the time of this writing.

Ground floor

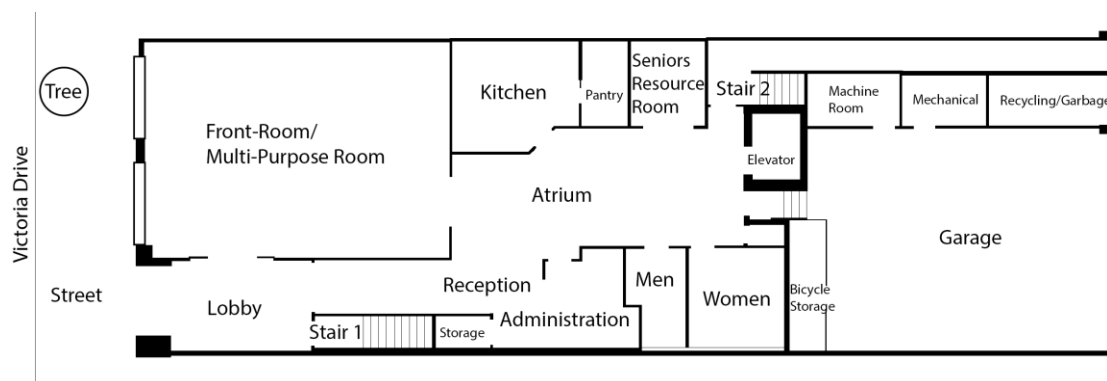


Figure 10. Floor plan of ground floor, SVNH main building.

Floor plan outline created by researcher from the architectural drawings provided by SVNH.

Front Entrance: SVNH staff referred to the main entrance and front of the building as having a “storefront” appearance (Figure 9). There is also no space to easily pause outside the building to chat with others, because one is then in the way of people passing by on the sidewalk.

Atrium: The Atrium is an open space in the middle of the ground floor that connects with the kitchen and large front room, and reaches all the way up to the glass ceiling. People entering the building for activities on any of the three floors pass through this Atrium area.



Figure 11. Atrium, SVNH main building.

Views of the front (right) and rear (left) of the Atrium. A large freezer is visible between the doors to the front multi-purpose room and the kitchen. Photos by author, February 2021.

Limitations: Normally, SVNH has a small couch and some chairs arranged like a ‘living room’ to make it a seating area, but, according to the SVNH Operations Director, “it’s really just a pass through area that’s high traffic and it gets really loud if there are people in the building.” In addition to the echo and the noise level, the SVNH Office Manager pointed out that while the glass ceiling lets in the sunlight, when it is raining outside, it gets ‘dark, drab and dreary’. Several participants expressed that the physical design of the space does not make it very welcoming, because it is not conducive for groups of people to ‘hang out’ and sit or interact comfortably. They described the Atrium as “not cozy”, “very echo-y”, “more like a clinical waiting room than a living room” and “not much of a gathering space”.

Multi-Purpose or Front Room: This room at the front end of the ground floor is the largest in the building. One door connects it to the reception area and one opens to the kitchen. It has a gymnasium-style floor and projector and audio-visual equipment for presentations. Normally, early morning care for the Out-of School Care Program takes place here, then seniors use the room from mid-morning to early afternoon, and youth

groups use it after school. The SVNH community board meets here, as do groups like the South Asian women’s group and Chinese women’s group. Community luncheons, presentations, workshops, Friday night bingo and other activities take place here. When the GVFB Community Food Hub [introduced later in 4.3.1] took place at SVNH, this room was used for the weekly food distribution on Tuesdays.



Figure 12. Presentation in the front room, SVNH main building. Photo from SVNH public Facebook page, posted June 5, 2020.



Figure 13. Community food program activities in front room. Food box preparations in front room, with vegetables donated by the gardeners at Sunset Community Garden. Photo from SVNH public Facebook page, posted August 12, 2020.

This is the largest room in the building, but it is still not big enough. While it officially accommodates up to 60 people, it may fit fewer people for certain activities. According to Marion from the SHC, a multicultural wellness and exercise program for

seniors run by one Council member attracted around 30 people, and that was “too many almost for the space to hold” (Hartley, interview, March 31, 2021). The SHC organizes workshops where up to 80 or 90 people sign up. This building cannot fit these large groups and the Council has to find other venues, such as the Sunset CC:

that’s one of the things I find a little bit frustrating, is that when you try to plan an activity that people would find meaningful and helpful, that is maybe a one-off [a one time event], and the space just won’t accommodate it (Hartley, interview, March 31, 2021).

During the pandemic, this room was used Monday through Friday for food programs.

Kitchen: This is one of the busiest and most in-demand rooms in the building. Many programs and groups use the kitchen to prepare daily snacks, occasional meals and food for special events: youth, seniors, community dinners, holiday dinners and more. There is a system for booking the use of the kitchen, but even after it is booked, it is “negotiated”. The demand for the kitchen also reflects the overall demand for spaces in the building:

Everybody fights for the space because three quarters of our programs offer snack, so you’ve got, every day – every hour or every two hours – you’ve got someone that wants cookies and coffee or whatever, plus running meal programs, plus you have [out of] school care in the morning and the afternoon doing snack. And it’s not a very big space (Kihn, SVNH, interview, April 13, 2021).

My first thought when I observed the kitchen was that it is much smaller than I would expect for a NH or any community space. There is one large refrigerator, one oven (the only oven in the building), a small island in the middle with narrow paths around it, giving it a crowded feeling. Participants confirmed this impression:

Oh the kitchen is just teeny. I think that they [SVNH staff] do their best [laughs] with the space that they have. [Before the pandemic] we were about to move our community dinner to St. Thomas Anglican Church because they spent a huge amount of money doing a renovation, making their meeting and kitchen space accessible. They have a wonderful kitchen and I was just thinking 'great, finally we can move into a kitchen where we don't run into each other', which is dangerous, right? (Hartley, interview, March 31, 2021).



Figure 14. Kitchen, SVNH main building.

Photo by author, February 2021.

During the pandemic, the kitchen was used to prepare frozen meals for delivery.

Seniors Resource Room: There is a small room with computers, phones and supplies for seniors to reserve and use. It is next to the kitchen and opens onto the Atrium. During the pandemic, it became a food storage space, as it is next to the kitchen.



Figure 15. Seniors Resource Room, SVNH main building.

The room was used for food storage during the pandemic. Photo by author, March 2021.

Parking Garage and Rear Building Exit: The rear exit is in the parking garage, so it is not available for the public. SVNH has two vans parked here, both of which are

used for food and other programming. During the pandemic, the garage was also used for storing food on shelves and in an industrial refrigerator, and preparing frozen meals and supplies on folding tables for loading onto delivery vans.



Figure 16. Temporary refrigerators in the parking garage, SVNH main building. Photo by author, March, 2021.

Second and Third floors

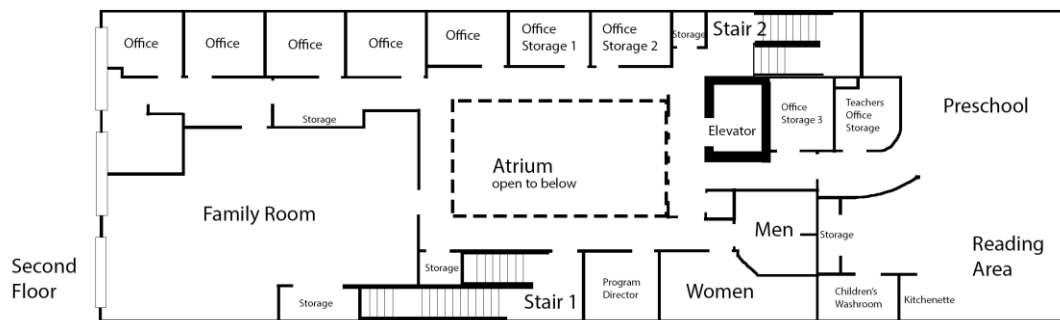


Figure 17. Floor plan of second floor, SVNH main building. Floor plan outline created by researcher from the architectural drawings provided by SVNH.

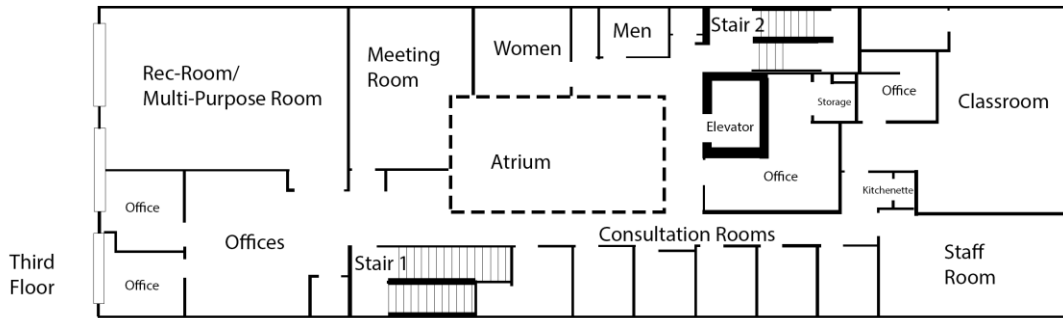


Figure 18. Floor plan of third floor, SVNH main building.

Floor plan outline created by researcher from the architectural drawings provided by SVNH.

The second and third floors were not used extensively during the study time period. The second floor includes a large room used for the licensed childcare programs (pre-school and out-of-school care in mornings and afternoons) that SVNH resumed in September 2020, at the end of the study time frame but during the ongoing pandemic crisis. The second floor also includes a Family Room used primarily for family programming as well as other activities or group meetings also take place here, such as the caregiver support group that formed as a result of a workshop organized by the SVNH Seniors Hub.

The third floor includes a recreation room with a gym floor used primarily for youth programs, but it was also used once a week for the Community Food Hub first-time registration. This floor also includes a classroom that is regularly used for group classes, including formal English language classes offered through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) funding. During the pandemic crisis, it became a storage space filled with furniture and items mainly from the ground floor that had been cleared out for food programs and food storage (figure 22 below). During my site visits, the classroom was filled with stackable chairs, office chairs, a television, small tables, bins, boxes, the small couch from the Atrium, and youth program items. One SVNH informant indicated that they intend to use the space for flexible programming once all the on site programs and services can be offered again safely.



Figure 19. Classroom used for storage, SVNH main building.
Photo by author, February, 2021.

Rooftop

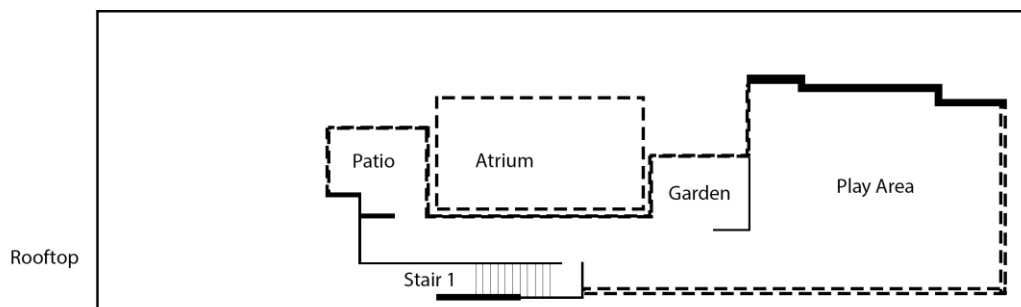


Figure 20. Floor plan of rooftop, SVNH main building.
Floor plan outline created by researcher from the architectural drawings provided by SVNH.

The rooftop has a play area with playground equipment, some garden boxes, and a small patio that was installed some years ago. This play area is crucial, because licensed childcare programs must have access to outdoor play space, and SVNH does not have any such outdoor space on the ground level. The SHC Council Member suggested that seniors may not use the roof as much, because, while there is an elevator in the building, it does not reach up all the way and some stairs must be climbed to access the rooftop, so seniors cannot engage in outdoor activities at this site.



Figure 21. Rooftop play area, SVNH main building.
Photo by author, February 2021.

Additional locations and partnerships

SVNH has additional locations, some of which permanently closed in 2021 and some that are new sites that opened in 2021 and 2022:

- Beulah Adult Day Centre (3355 East 5th Avenue).
- [Now closed] The South Hill Neighbourhood Centre (5888 Fraser Street) closed in June 2021 because the landlord wanted to sell the property.
- [Now closed] The South Vancouver Adult Day Centre (3076 East 49th Avenue) was located in portable structures situated on a church parking lot. It closed after a change in tax law led the church to decide it could no longer host tenants renting space.
- A new space at a Champlain Heights Mall location opened to participants June 2021 for the SVNH Adult Day Programs (including support for caregivers) that were previously held at the South Vancouver Adult Day Centre.
- The SVNH Southside Hub and Salmonberry Childcare Centre (8131 Fraser Street and Marine Drive) opened in 2022. This is a purpose-built 37-space childcare center with a 1500 square foot annex for community programming that will serve as a “satellite Neighbourhood House” for the Sunset community. SVNH is the operator of the space.

In addition to these spaces, SVNH facilitates programs at schools, libraries, community centres (Sunset, Killarney, Champlain Heights), places of worship, parks (for example Memorial South Park and Gordon Park) and other locations across South

Vancouver. The Moberly Arts and Cultural Centre became a partner of SVNH in recent years, hosting youth programming, family meals and other activities.

SVNH has a wide range of partnerships, collaborations and relationships with institutions, local businesses and groups in the neighbourhood and throughout the city. It is a member of the Association of Neighbourhood Houses of B.C. (ANHBC) that oversees eight NHs and an outdoor centre in Metro Vancouver. SVNH has a wide range of formal and informal partners (several are mentioned throughout this study) and local donors or sponsors. Its main funders include the Government of Canada, the Province of British Columbia, the United Way of Lower Mainland (UWLM), Vancouver Coastal Health, and the City of Vancouver. SVNH is a co-chair organization of the South Vancouver Early Years Table, a coalition of service organizations in South Vancouver invested in early childhood success (SVNH, South Vancouver Family Place (SVFP), Pacific Immigrant Resources Society (PIRS), Vancouver Public Library, Vancouver Coastal Health, Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre, Vancouver School Board). It also leads and hosts the South Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Network (SVFN), a collaboration of community members, agencies, service providers, and organizations aiming to enhance health and well-being by increasing food security and dignified access to healthy food.

The NH and its leadership and staff are also active in a range of collaborations of multiple organizations and groups. SVNH, SVFP and other community organizations held monthly meetings of senior staff and leadership and monthly meetings of program staff to discuss the challenges the community is facing and to exchange information and best practices. Through these regular meetings, organization leaders also decided whether to take action on a particular issue together, or increase awareness on an issue that they do not have the capacity to fully address.

An important aspect of the SVNH support and services for seniors is its relationship with the Seniors Hub Council (SHC). SHC is a group of seniors, all volunteers, who create and run activities for seniors, conduct assessments and scans to identify gaps in services for seniors in the area (for example, an accessibility assessment of sidewalks), and advocate for seniors needs. According to the SVNH Executive Director, the SHC informs how SVNH works with seniors and identifies solutions for seniors' needs, and even writes grants with SVNH staff to partner on

programs and services. The SHC plans many activities with the staff of SVNH, and it meets at the NH and organizes activities there or at other locations in the area.

4.3. How SVNH activities and use of spatial assets changed during the crisis

To understand how spatial arrangements impacted the ability of SVNH to adapt its services during the pandemic, I compared regular services, programs and activities in the two year period before the pandemic with those that were adapted or newly initiated during the first year of the pandemic (March 2020 – March 2021). I also identified where the use or consideration of spatial assets was a relevant factor. This section describes the main services, programs and activities that the NH offered before the pandemic, how staff adapted some of these services and operations when the pandemic began, and the emergency-specific services launched in response to the pandemic crisis.

4.3.1. Services and activities before the pandemic

This section provides a brief overview of the services, programs and activities that SVNH offered on a regular basis in the approximately two years before the pandemic (2018 – March 2020). I use the programming categories used in SVNH Annual Reports but each category overview includes information from the two most recent SVNH annual reports, the SVNH website, and the interviews and site tours of this study. SVNH staff and volunteers host or support hundreds of programs and activities, but for the purpose of this study, these summaries focus on the activities that were adapted or relate to newly-launched emergency response activities during the early pandemic period. There is an extended discussion of food programs because this relates to the emergency-specific food programs that will be discussed.

Adult Day Programs: SVNH offers the Beulah Gardens Adult Day Program (at the SVNH Beulah Adult Day Centre) and the South Vancouver Adult Day Program (located at a new SVNH space at a Champlain Heights Mall since 2021) through contracts with the Ministry of Health for participants referred by the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority. These programs offer support for frail elders, adults with physical or cognitive challenges and their caregivers, to help people continue to live at their home with

caregivers. The programs include activities, outings, medical supervision, meals on location and take-home meals.

Adult and Community Programs: SVNH organizes, hosts or supports a range of workshops, trainings, social gatherings, celebrations and other events as part of its diverse programming for adults or for everyone in the community. For adults, SVNH offers information and orientation sessions for newcomers to Canada, formal and informal English language classes and English conversation groups, basic computer training, pre-employment support, small business training, and more. It hosts an annual tax clinic at the main building where Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) volunteers help people complete their taxes. Community events include festivals, holiday events, community meals, educational or awareness events such as Anti-Bullying Days and Orange Shirt Days. SVNH has also organized a men's group focusing on healthy relationships and positive parenting and convened people who identify as homeless or are at risk of being homeless, along with businesses, educational and financial institutions, and political representatives for conversations on how to break stigma and provide education related to homelessness (2018-2019).

Childcare Programs: SVNH provided licensed childcare programs that undergo annual licensing inspections in collaboration with the Vancouver School Board and Vancouver Coastal Health. The NH also provides Out of School Care (OSC) at its main building and other locations, as well as preschool, BC Housing Kids Clubs, preschool summer camps, walkathons, and community get-togethers at various locations.

Family Programs: SVNH provides family drop-in programs offering play-based learning and opportunities for families to build social connections throughout the year at the main building and the Fraser street location. These were also offered during the weekly GVFB Community Food Hub held at the main building from 2018 until 2020. Other family programs included a Family Meal organized by SVNH at the Moberly Arts & Culture Centre for families in the Sunset neighbourhood, parenting courses offered across South Vancouver, and co-chairing the South Vancouver Early Years Table, as discussed above in 4.2. SVNH also provides Domestic Violence Support for women and children, including counselling, advocacy, safety planning, accompaniment, information and connection to resources.

Preteen and Youth Programs: This includes a range of programs and activities held at SVNH facilities and other locations throughout South Vancouver, including: Homework Club, United Way Future Leaders Program for employment skills mentorship (started January 2019); leadership workshops for volunteering; bike safety workshops; SHIFT program on gang and violence awareness; School's Out after school programs; "No cell phone" challenge for youth; and fundraising for programs led by youth. SVNH also provides activities for newcomer youth, including welcome circles, leadership workshops, food skills activities, and mental wellness programs.

Seniors Programs: SVNH offers many programs and activities for seniors through the South Vancouver Seniors Hub, a network and project driven by seniors and hosted and supported by SVNH at its facilities since 2010, and with a dedicated website¹¹. The NH collaborates with the Seniors Hub Council (SHC) and hosts SHC workshops and activities mainly in the main building Multi-Purpose Front Room and using the kitchen. SVNH also offers an Intercultural Seniors' Wellness program and a Friend and Family Caregiver Supports Program that started January 2020.

Settlement Services for Newcomers: Through a new federal contract in 2020, SVNH began offering settlement services for newcomers and hired a Young Adult Settlement Counsellor and Newcomer Mentorship Worker. SVNH also offers services and referrals for migrant workers, and offers Canadian citizenship preparation workshops.

Food Programs: SVNH was involved in community-based food security work for over 10 years, regularly offering programs like intercultural meals, community kitchens, cooking classes and a rooftop garden, and incorporating multiethnic food considerations. The GVFB operated a Community Food Hub for food distribution at the SVNH building from May 2018 until the start of the pandemic in March 2020, serving up to 500 families. The Hub took up nearly the entire ground floor for one day of the week. GVFB provided the food, staff, volunteer training, and the registration and tracking systems to arrange enough food and allow people to pick up food for a family or household. It would bring the food, unload it from the trucks, and set up and take down everything required for the distribution on Tuesdays from 10am-12pm. The Seniors Resource Room was used for

¹¹ The three community centres in South Vancouver are partners in the South Vancouver Seniors Hub, and the SHC "is responsible to set priorities, track progress and identify emerging needs". www.theseniorshub.org

first-time registration, but after the first year there were so many people registering each week that they moved registration to a room on the third floor (Figures 22 and 23). The Atrium was used to serve coffee and tea and for socializing.

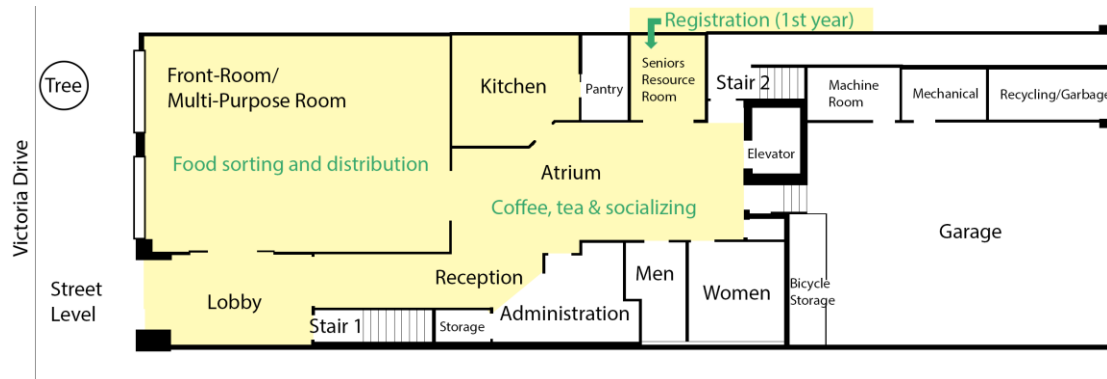


Figure 22. Community Food Hub space uses - Ground floor

Developed by researcher based on spatial analysis and interviews, using a floor plan outline created from the architectural drawings provided by SVNH.

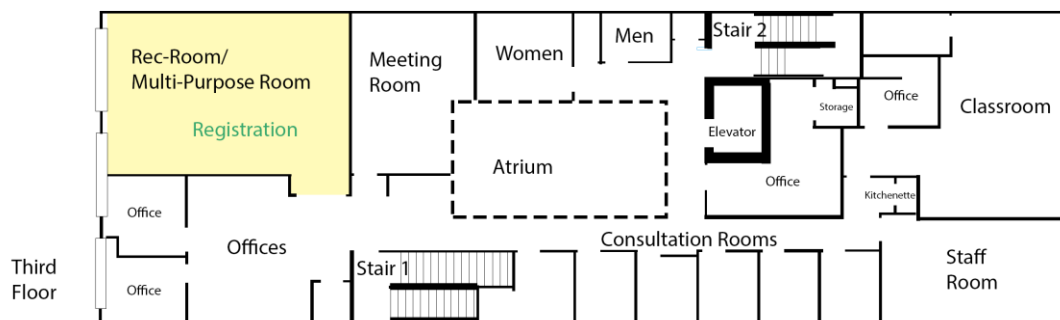


Figure 23. Community Food Hub space uses - Third floor

Developed by researcher based on spatial analysis and interviews, using a floor plan outline created from the architectural drawings provided by SVNH.

In this GVFB and SVNH collaboration, there was an intentional effort to connect food distribution and community connections. The GVFB 2018 Community Report explains:

These Food Bank locations are aligned with community partners that offer a variety of opportunities for collaboration like a public library table and nurses from Vancouver Coastal Health. These relationships deepen the impact of our work, sharing resources and programming with our members along with sharing a vision for food in dignified community spaces that works directly against an historic model of food banks.

These locations do much more than just provide food. They provide a place for members to connect and meet others in the community. Every day we see people sharing recipes, life experiences, and building new friendships (p. 9).

The GVFB distributed food from a church before moving this distribution to SVNH in 2018. According to Nicola Henderson, who worked with the GVFB on the Community Food Hub and with SVNH food programs during the pandemic, the move to SVNH was part of the deliberate strategic goal of GVFB (described in the report above) to make food accessible from locations where people would have opportunities for socializing and connecting with other programs and services. She indicated that distribution activities from other churches were also moved to NHs, but “that sentiment or goal is no longer part of the Food Bank strategy, but it was for a number of years” (interview, May 6, 2021).

Participants in this study did not indicate why the GVFB moved away from its community hub approach at the onset of the pandemic. An article that quoted the GVFB CEO reported that the food bank was centralizing its operations to “allow for physical distancing” (Karim, 2020). However, the community hub closures may have been more of a strategic choice of the GVFB than a necessity of the pandemic. A June 2020 COVID-19 planning guide developed by the City of Vancouver’s Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) planning team reports that at the onset of the pandemic, along with centralizing locations, the GVFB “introduced a registration process for members that food security advocates including the Vancouver Food Policy Council flagged as stigmatizing and contrary to principles of dignified food access and Access without Fear policies” (City of Vancouver, 2020, p. 47). The barriers created by this registration process along with the GVFB centralization at the start of the pandemic was also described in an editorial published in a provincial newspaper by a UBC land and food systems professor (Black, 2020). Before the GVFB adopted the Community Food Hubs strategy, advocates working in food security in Vancouver, including people from other NHs, critiqued the food bank’s traditional charity model because it does not address the systemic and political causes of food insecurity, poverty, growing inequality and hunger, and because food banks draw attention away from the responsibility of government to protect the right to food (included in the UN Declaration of Human Rights that Canada signed and ratified) (Kimmitt, 2012).

The SVNH experience of hosting the Community Food Hub illustrated the importance of social space and partner outreach. According to Nicola, people would arrive early, sometimes before the staff and volunteers.

You chat with people, [and ask] like why? Sometimes it was the fear of [all food or preferred food items] running out but most of the time it was because it was a social space...for a lot of people they chose to come early because they see the same faces every week (Henderson, interview, May 6, 2021).

The space and layout of the main SVNH building was not designed for this purpose, so there were limitations, but even the limitations highlight the need for more space for socializing and social connection. The food was set up in the large multi-purpose front room, for people to walk through and select what they wanted, but the space would get congested, so it was not ideal for “offering people the space and the time to really choose the foods they wanted or to move at their own pace.” Coffee and tea was offered in the Atrium or small Seniors Resource Room next to the kitchen, but there was no space for people to sit. The area still got congested as people socialized.

At other [Community Food Hub] locations where there was more space, we had a different system for people waiting so they didn't have to stand in line, they got a number, but there was ample space for people to spread out and mingle or go for a walk, so it was more pleasant. Or space where there was a full breakfast meal served so people could do their shopping and then go and have a meal. Or have musicians at some locations, or different community organizations coming to do outreach as well (Henderson, interview, May 6, 2021).

Many of the people coming to pick up food were not already connected to the NH, so SVNH staff introduced them to SVNH programs and other services, such as employment programs and seniors programming, and offered drop-in activities for families with children. The SHC also talked to seniors and invited them to the community dinners they held at the NH for seniors living in isolation. Once in a while someone from the library would come and do outreach as well, though space limitations affected how often they could come and how much engagement they could do alongside the food distribution.

4.3.2. The COVID-19 pandemic and safety regulations

The COVID-19 pandemic appeared globally at the start of 2020, and the Province of BC announced public health safety measures in March (Table 5). While the Province outlined required safety measures, the decision whether to close facilities or continue programming with the safety measures was left to each organization. The six civic community spaces in South Vancouver – three community centres (CCs) and three Vancouver Public Library branches - were closed. These closures included Killarney, Sunset, and Champlain Heights CCs and Fraserview library that are designated City of Vancouver Disaster Support Hubs (City of Vancouver, Disaster Support Hubs).

Table 5. COVID-19 pandemic early declarations timeline

Date	Pandemic declarations and regulations
January 30	World Health Organization declares the COVID-19 outbreak a public health emergency of international concern.
March 11	World Health Organization declares the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic.
March 12	BC health officials discourage all non-essential travel outside of B.C. and announce a two-week self-isolation period for anyone arriving internationally into the country.
March 16	B.C. Health officials ban all events with more than 50 people and order bars and nightclubs to close.
March 18	B.C. declares a provincial state of emergency due to the pandemic
March 19	City of Vancouver declares a local state of emergency
March 26	Province announces that all municipal states of emergency are suspended, and municipalities cannot enact additional local orders or special emergency powers.

4.3.3. Adapted services and operations

With the onset of the pandemic and the introduction of these closures and other changes, SVNH changed its entire method of operations. Initially, it closed its facilities to the public, directed all staff to work from home, and stopped program activities at schools and other sites, as many of those facilities were also closed. Telephone lines remained open so community members could reach staff for information and referrals, and staff and volunteers conducted outreach calls and wellness checks by telephone. SVNH leadership introduced the technology for staff to access phone extensions and work remotely shortly before the pandemic, as part of a general operations update, so in this regard, the NH was fortunate that it could transition to remote work, communication and engagement right away. Staff quickly organized some activities (family drop-ins, preteen and youth activities) outdoors in local parks. The SVNH team adapted many

program activities and services to virtual platforms (Zoom and Microsoft Teams), and used email, telephone and social media to keep people connected and engaged in activities. Within this study, I do not explore the role of virtual or cyber platforms as 'spaces', though this is an increasingly important and complementary question to the one I address here focusing on physical spaces.¹²

Limited on site support and programming: The main building remained closed to the public and no regular activities took place there until September 2020, when SVNH restarted its childcare programs (preschool and out of school care) as this was deemed an essential service in terms of pandemic restrictions on non-essential services only, and some community members relied on these services. This is when SVNH also began operating some youth and family programming activities in small groups on site at the main building. The building remained closed to the public and used only for limited programming or by appointment through the fall of 2020 and spring of 2021 so that staff could maintain a maximum number of 40 occupants in the building at a time, according to public health safety guidelines for physical distancing (SVNH, 2021).

Staff could schedule one-to-one meetings on site with community members for support that they deemed urgent or important, for example, if a person needed help finding resources related to their livelihood, or filling out government forms when they did not understand English well. Some people needed in-person help to apply for federal emergency financial support benefits or to find other financial or employment resources. Mimi Rennie, the SVNH Community Programs Director, noted that the NH received a donation of phones to distribute to seniors at the start of the pandemic, and meeting in-person at the main building was necessary for some seniors who needed help learning how to use the phone and registering for phone service. SVNH directors and staff maintained this in-person support option, recognizing the range of needs among community members, even while moving most services and communication to remote means.

¹² Anthonia Ogundele highlights the role of digital environments as places of social or human connection during the pandemic and frames this as "The Fourth Place", expanding on the concept and categorization of 'third place' as described by sociologist Ray Oldenburg, referring to spaces like cafes, pubs, and community centres as informal public gathering places serving a distinct role different from home (first place) and work or school (second place). (Ogundele, 2021)

Staying connected with people: One significant focus of SVNH during the emergency was finding and connecting with people isolated in their homes to offer needed support. This included individuals living at home alone, especially non-English speaking seniors, and newcomer families that did not have ties with other people or organizations in the neighbourhood. In the context of the pandemic, sheltering at home and the closure of social spaces and activities resulted in social isolation for some people. They lost opportunities for social connection, access to information about what was happening and what resources were available to them, and access to food and basic needs. SVNH staff sought ways to reach isolated people who were regular or occasional participants at the NH before the crisis as well as area residents who had no previous relationship to the NH but who could be in need. While this outreach to isolated individuals and families can also be considered an emergency function unique to the pandemic and physical distancing measures, I include it in this section with adapted services because connecting with people and offering them information, resources and various forms of support is a regular function of SVNH.

Providing information: Both SVNH and SVFP made changes to the way they provided information to their participants and the public at the onset of the pandemic. SVNH redesigned the South Vancouver Seniors Hub website, and began producing a monthly e-newsletter to promote virtual programs and share information regarding COVID-19 and the vaccine roll out. SVFP staff began managing the SVFP website directly in order to publish up-to-date information for families, recognizing that it is difficult for many people, especially non-English speakers, to find information. Julio emphasized communication and accessible information as one of the first things an organization needs to act on during an emergency:

That's the first thing that people want to know - what's happening. 'I don't speak the language, where can I get this information?' So, connecting with people through some sort of communication piece, whether it's your website, whether it's publishing, whether it's putting boards outside, whatever it takes to let people know....One of the things that we found with COVID is that there was so much information out there and a lot of it was confusing, and some of it contradictory. We were talking to the Ministry, we were having conversations with [Provincial Health Officer] Dr. Bonnie Henry. So we knew what was needed and we published that. (Bello, SVFP, interview, April 14, 2021)

Here again, providing information can also be considered an emergency function, but I include here as an adapted service because it is something that both the NH and the FP do on a regular basis, and people turn to these organizations for this service.

4.3.4. New emergency-specific services and activities

The most significant change in activities or services in the neighbourhood related to food security programming. Emergency food programs were a central focus of SVNH, in terms of the number of staff and volunteers and the required spatial assets. Implementing food programs required the use of the entire ground floor of the main building and additional large equipment (refrigerators and freezers). (Figure 25)

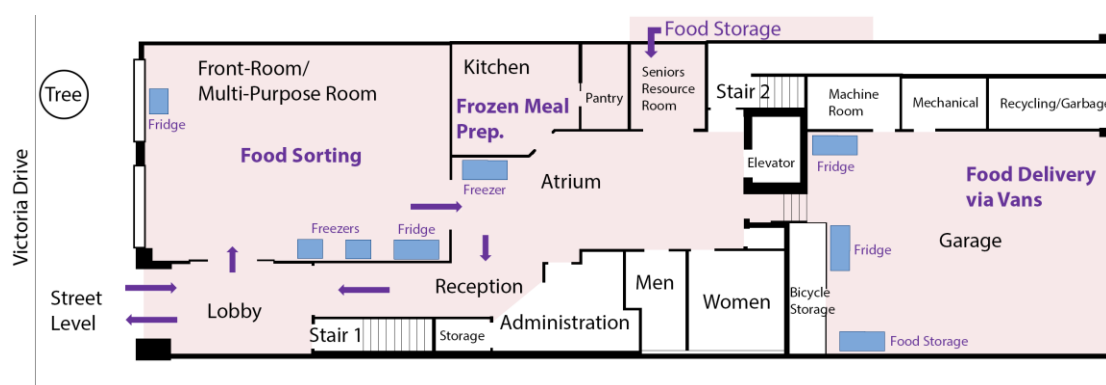


Figure 24. Emergency Food Distribution space uses (March-August 2020)
 Developed by researcher based on spatial analysis and interviews, using a floor plan outline created from the architectural drawings provided by SVNH.

The decision of SVNH leadership and staff to implement food security programs was based on previous food program offerings, anticipated and expressed community member needs, and the closure of other food distribution sites and services in the area. SVNH used its main building to deliver three new food programs, intended as temporary emergency response: Temporary Emergency Food Distribution Program; designated hub agency with the “Safe Seniors, Strong Communities” (SSSC) initiative of United Way of the Lower Mainland (UWLM); and “Hi, Neighbour” Emergency Response for Families Program. These activities and the network model for delivering food programs that SVNH developed through these programs are discussed in the following sections.

Temporary Emergency Food Distribution Program

The impact of the GVFB's decision to close locations and consolidate at the beginning of the pandemic crisis was an instigating event in the SVNH decision to organize and host a temporary emergency food distribution program at the main building during the first months of the pandemic (March to August 2020).

The minute that the pandemic hit, they [GVFB] pulled out. Even though we promised that that was one area that we would continue to be open for, because it's important to our neighborhood. But nope, nope, they pulled out (Rennie, SVNH, interview, March 1, 2021).

SVNH reached out to GVFB to obtain food to distribute. There was apparently initial reluctance or resistance from GVFB, because SVNH directors asked "decision-makers" to call and pressure the food bank to agree. United Way provided support for the SVNH food distribution. GVFB ultimately supplied food, but less than what was available before. The food would arrive at SVNH on Monday, and SVNH volunteers would package it into bags. Between 75 and 100 volunteers participated in this effort, including many newcomer youth, according to SVNH directors. The NH did not have a card scan or tracking system to give them information about household size, so everyone received the same bag of food. This effort required several large refrigerators and freezers, which were still at the NH as of April 2021, situated in the front room, Atrium and garage. SVNH received some of these items from the Food Bank, purchased two, and received two as donations.

Every Tuesday, people had to line up outside of the NH (due to pandemic safety measures) and wait their turn to pick up the bag of food at the entrance on a first come, first served basis. Since SVNH does not have outdoor space around the building, this meant that people lined up on the sidewalk (in front of other small businesses) and around the block. The disruption and unplanned change in service provision from GVFB to SVNH resulted in some people losing access to the food they relied on because: 1) there was no advance warning that GVFB would centralize or that SVNH would take on temporary food distribution; 2) SVNH did not have access to the contact list of the food hub visitors to inform them of the SVNH food distribution or to distribute food based on household size; and 3) less food was supplied so some food products or all the food would sometimes run out before everyone present could receive a bag.

The NH had to end this program in August due to lack of available space, because they restarted the childcare program in September. Before ending the program, SVNH directors tried to find another facility in South Vancouver where the food storage, sorting and distribution could take place. They believed another makeshift option must certainly exist, but they could not find an organization with a space willing and able to take on the emergency food distribution. There are few other social service organizations in South Vancouver to begin with, and other organizations closed their facilities or laid off staff due to budget cuts or safety concerns surrounding COVID-19 (Thurber, 2021). SVNH staff called other organizations and churches, and asked their contacts at United Way and City of Vancouver for help identifying a space. The City did not have a formal mechanism for helping community partners find facilities or spaces, though some City staff tried informally to help. Eventually the YMCA Langara, which was closed for redevelopment of its site, offered to rent SVNH outdoor space (squash courts) to place a refrigerated shipping container for food storage and sorting.

One participant said that when SVNH tried to get a City permit for this container that would serve as an emergency food distribution hub, the process took months and the permit was initially declined: “because it looked too industrial for that area. Yeah. Because it’s a shipping container.” SVNH asked a food policy City staff person to help mediate the matter with the permit department. The resolution found was for the SVNH to re-submit the application with, effectively, a beautification clause.¹³

SVNH also found it challenging to find organizations with space, capacity and willingness to serve as emergency food distribution ‘spokes’ to reach people throughout South Vancouver. Nicola, who worked with SVNH at this time, described the outreach effort:

Nicola: We were looking at the map [to see] where are there real gaps, and reaching out to churches [and organizations] like, ‘is this something you’d be interested in’, and even if it’s just the physical space and we could try to arrange volunteers and whatnot.

Researcher: So, even cold calls?

¹³ As a result, SVNH re-submitted the application indicating they would put bamboo or reed fence panel over the outside.

Nicola: Oh yeah, definitely. Like, looking at a map, seeing a church, and having a zoom [call] with them...in the search for spokes. There are so few organizations and so few spaces. Like really, churches are some of the only non-residential spaces, and you know, sometimes churches are not the most accessible for other reasons (Interview, May 6, 2021).

Food hampers for families

From March through September 2020, SVNH operated the “Hi, Neighbour” Emergency Response for Families Program, preparing and distributing food hampers for 120 families, along with SVFP and Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society (PICS). When this program ended, SVNH launched the Families Food Program and hired a Community Food Navigator to connect people with food supports and other services. With emergency funding from the Government of Canada through the Community Food Centres Canada, SVNH also supported families, BC Housing residents, migrant workers, seniors and international students with weekly grocery gift cards.

South Vancouver Family Place (SVFP) also got involved in food distribution because they saw a community need and few options available for people. Julio Bello, the SVFP Executive Director, described how the principal of the nearby elementary school called him to express concern for about 15 families struggling to get sufficient food. The principal initially purchased \$100 gift cards for each family (her own personal initiative), before calling him to ask if there was anything that SVFP could do for the families at the school in need of food support, and he, in turn:

reached out to our partners to see what they can do - if there's anything they can do, and South Vancouver Neighbourhood House was in the process of trying to create a food security program...And so they prepared those food hampers for us. We went and picked them up and we delivered them. That's how we started - very informal. I would go there and pick up some food, because we didn't have the staff capacity to do it. So we started building on that (Interview, April 14, 2021).

Despite limited capacity SVFP was able to do some food distribution because SVNH took a leading role. SVFP then applied for funding from UWLM and provided 120 children with hot lunches each week. It continues to serve as a food distribution partner, or ‘spoke’, as part of the SVNH Food Hub and Spoke Model for Equitable Food Access (described below).

Support services and social connection for isolated seniors

Isolation was a concern especially for seniors living alone during the pandemic. The concern was intensified in the initial months (nearly a year) of the pandemic, before vaccines were available, and even more so for racialized non-English speaking seniors, according to SVNH participants and based on the focus of SVNH efforts in this time period. SVNH became a designated community response hub with the “Safe Seniors, Strong Communities” (SSSC) initiative of the UWLM in April 2020. This involved wellness check-ins and social calls for seniors, and pick-up and delivery services for groceries, shopping, and prescriptions. Through this effort, SVNH reported providing 50,569 services (as of June 2021) to existing participants of SVNH programs and additional seniors (SVNH, 2021, p. 14).

Advocacy for food security resources and support for seniors

In August 2020, as the SVNH ended the temporary emergency food distribution program, the SHC launched a petition about the lack of food security resources and related challenges for seniors in South Vancouver:

Our petition was to make the City aware that there’s nothing in southeast Vancouver, there’s absolutely nothing for people, for food insecurity. For a lot of our seniors in particular – I’m not talking about the families which run into similar things, but for seniors there’s also the mobility issue...trying to get to a food bank is really [limiting]. First of all, finding out how to get there. We found a lot of seniors whose English is limited are very nervous about taking public transportation (Hartley, SHC, interview, March 31, 2021).

SVNH collaborated with the SHC to launch the petition to advocate for more spaces, but the petition also helped SVNH reconnect with seniors. Through its experience hosting the GVFB Community Food Hub before the pandemic, SVNH observed that food access was particularly important for seniors. When that closed, SVNH did not have contact information for the people who came to the food hub but were not connected with SVNH programs. The registration and card system was the GVFB’s, and according to Zahra, the SVNH Executive Director, while the relationship with GVFB has improved since the first months of the pandemic, “it wasn’t great at the time” and they felt they could not ask for the contact list (follow-up interview, July 29, 2021). By the end of the SVNH emergency food distribution program in August 2020, about 350 people were coming to the NH every week to pick up food – still significantly

less than the 500 people coming before the pandemic. Without the GVFB contact list, SVNH could not connect with everyone during the pandemic:

We didn't know who they were, we didn't know how to reconnect with them. We knew a lot of them were seniors, we knew a lot of them were immigrant seniors, and racialized seniors who had some language barriers (Esmail, follow-up interview, July 29, 2021).

SVNH hired a seniors outreach worker who looked at the addresses of those who signed the petition to identify people not already involved in SVNH programs and to see where people were located far from or with poor access to SVNH facilities and programs. The seniors outreach worker then considered ways to reach more seniors with food resources and other programming, particularly through the Food 'Hub and Spoke' program (discussed below).

A network model and community-based approach for food security

There are very few organizations that are offering concentrated services in South Vancouver and those who are, like SVNH, are stretched very thin across a huge region. COVID has made these gaps abundantly clear (Esmail, 2021).

Food distribution as a response to an urgent need during an emergency was not something that one organization could implement alone. The need throughout South Vancouver was extensive. Even with several organizations willing to join the effort, there was a need for information about how to implement this, because these organizations did not have direct experience with the logistics of this service. Julio Bello explained that the informal monthly meetings of senior staff and leadership of community organizations in South Vancouver were key to this coordination and real-time learning process.

In fall of 2020, SVNH worked with UWLM to become a Regional Community Food Hub and launch the SVNH Food Hub and Spoke for Equitable Food Access Program. SVNH developed this program model to continue food distribution during the ongoing pandemic while also moving toward a more sustainable, accessible and community-based approach to food security. A dedicated SVNH Food Team includes a Community Food Navigator and a new Food Security Manager and Coordinator. The portable container at the Langara YMCA serves as the central food operations hub: food is received and stored, grocery boxes are packed, and volunteers are trained. A network of community organizations partner with SVNH as 'spoke' agencies – they pick up food from the Langara hub to distribute in their neighborhoods so it is more accessible for

more people. Spoke partners include Pacific Immigrant Resources Society (PIRS) in collaboration with SVFP, City Reach (a charity providing food security, childcare and other initiatives in the Metro Vancouver area), the YWCA Pacific Spirit Terrace Residence (in Champlain-Heights), and Zoe Church. There is also an individual who does food distribution, and several churches are developing a relationship with SVNH as spoke agencies. The program supports approximately 340 households (almost 1200 unique individuals) with weekly grocery boxes that are customized to reflect recipients' household size and dietary or cultural preferences.

The Hub and Spoke approach is not limited to food security. SVNH is proposing this model for a potential community health center in South Vancouver, and for its overall structure as a Neighbourhood House. The approach is a response to the challenges of serving a large geographic area and diverse population as a place-based community building organization. Staff are shifting their operational strategy, collaborations and activities to serve the various small-scale neighbourhoods with a range of community building programs. Zahra explained that this approach is “about itinerant programming and opportunity for people to access support close to home”. The goal is to have locations that serve as satellite, or spoke neighbourhood houses, in each of the three main neighbourhoods of South Vancouver (Killarney, Sunset, Victoria-Fraserview) because proximity is required for most of its community-building activities and services for residents. The new SVNH Southside Hub facility¹⁴ with a space for the Salmonberry Childcare Centre and a 1500 square foot annex to host various programs and activities will be the first such spoke, or satellite NH, for the Sunset community.

[Southside Hub] is going to be great, but we are pitching pretty hard to get more spokes across the neighbourhoods and also continue partnering with the community centres and libraries so that we can be using all the social infrastructure that's there to support place-making in various ways, so that's the short and medium term plan (Esmail, SVNH, interview, February 18, 2021).

A timeline outlining the key decisions and events mentioned above is included in Appendix B.

¹⁴ SVNH will be the operator of a new facility at Fraser and Marine Drive, named the SVNH Southside Hub, planned to open in 2022. This facility includes a space for the Salmonberry Childcare Centre and an annex to function as a satellite NH for the Sunset community, hosting various programs and activities.

Chapter 5.

Findings and Analysis

Participants involved with SVNH made it clear that SVNH decisions about services during the onset and first months of COVID-19 were driven first and foremost by anticipated and demonstrated community needs and organizational capacity. This study began with a focus on the organization's physical spatial arrangements (existing or absent) and how these impacted staff decisions and the organization's ability to offer services. The case study reveals that spatial arrangements in the geographic area were also a significant factor in SVNH's decisions to provide some services even despite the limitations of its main building, particularly in the pandemic context where many social purpose facilities were closed.

The research question of this study is: *what is the nature of SVNH as social infrastructure that allowed it to contribute to community capabilities and resilience?* In this section, to answer this question, I provide analysis on some of the key findings from the theme categories of the interview coding that are conceptual and reflect participants' perspectives and interpretations. This helps reveal the deeper impact of spatial arrangements on the ability of SVNH to adapt its services and role during the pandemic emergency context. Next, I conceptualize SVNH and its spatial assets as infrastructure, considering the different adaptations of this concept. Then, using the CA framework, I analyze how SVNH contributed to collective capabilities and community resilience. Finally, I elaborate on how this case study and analysis contributes to a case for understanding community resilience through a collective capabilities approach.

5.1. Place-based community building and emergency response

This situation with COVID amplified what our purpose was, in a way, because we're very in touch with the people that we work with (Riley, SVNH, interview, February 16, 2021).

The emergency role of SVNH and its spatial arrangements was connected and in large part dependent on the regular (non-emergency) community building role of the NH.

In turn, its emergency role reinforced the importance of its community building mission. SVNH directors and staff anticipated the emergency needs of residents or learned about them quickly because they were connected to an extensive network of residents through their regular community building work for diverse segments of the population. At the same time, adapting and maintaining the regular community building services and activities was important because social connection was important to community members throughout the crisis. Julio Bello expressed a similar perspective on the experience of his team at SVFP.

5.1.1. A social territory for the social process of community

SVNH functions as a social territory of public familiarity and facilitates the social process of *community*. Using Blokland's conceptualization of community as a social process that is practiced through different types of social ties (transactions, fluid encounters, durable engagements, bonds) in a range of relational settings of belonging, SVNH can be understood as facilitating fluid encounters and durable engagements in its own facilities and in locations throughout South Vancouver. SVNH staff and volunteers initiate and facilitate these social ties through various activities, ongoing programs and services, and outreach inviting residents to join, participate and lead activities. The NH ensures opportunities for regular, ongoing engagements but also for diverse and evolving engagements. For example, there are programs for seniors, youth and newcomers as well as opportunities for these individuals to go become volunteers and program leaders. These social encounters and engagements create public familiarity, where strangers see and learn about each other and start interacting and getting to know each other (Blokland, 2017). They also contribute to social capital (Lauer, 2021) and a sense of belonging (Sandercock & Attili, 2009). The durable engagements facilitated by SVNH and other NHs sometimes even develop into social bonds, in this case friendships (Yan & Lauer, 2021).

For example, SV participants discussed how food and meals help create and strengthen social connections, neighbour relations and friendships. Marion shared how the community meals can help counter isolation: "We've chatted with people who have had, I would say, some serious mental health issues where they're feeling really isolated, and just to sit with them at a community dinner or the community kitchen have made them feel more welcome" (Hartley, SHC, interview, March 31, 2021). In the case

of a NH, it is not just the food that contributes to social connection but the kitchen that is available for people to prepare meals and snacks together. In their study of Collingwood NH, Sandercock and Cavers (2009) also found the kitchen to be “the one space in CNH that tends, more than others, to attract people, and to involve them immediately” (p. 144).

SVNH also builds social capital and multiplies its role in facilitating the social process of community by supporting residents who want to launch a social activity or program. SVNH staff and leadership view the volunteers and community members as the “experts” in what they want to see in their community. For SVNH directors, the role of the NH is to “build community capacity” by supporting community members to produce programming, engage in advocacy and lead change. The findings of a survey of participants of NH programs across Metro Vancouver in 2014 support this perspective on the dedication and impact of NHs in this regard: 27% of the 675 respondents indicated that they helped start a new program or event (Lauer, 2021, p. 136-7). Yan (2021) found that the NH “proactive approach in nurturing leadership among local residents fosters a strong sense of ownership among their service users” (p. 121). Staff support community member-led activities and programs by mobilizing resources or grants (including supporting groups like SHC to write grants), providing administrative support, and providing the physical spaces and equipment (such as audio-visual) for activities. SVNH staff are also available to get involved on issues that are beyond the expertise of community members and volunteers. For example, SHC volunteers participated in food delivery and phone calls to check in on people who were isolated at home. In cases where a person needed more substantial mental health or other support, the SHC volunteer would ask an SVNH staff member to step in. As Marion pointed out, “The staff member may not have the expertise as well, but they may well know who to refer the person to” (Hartley, interview, March 31, 2021).

One CoV participant commented on the reality that *community* actually involves multiple communities by recognizing that there are separate and overlapping groups and people can have multiple identities within the ‘big community’. If we understand community as a social process based on repeated, everyday interactions (Blokland, 2017; Sandercock & Attili, 2009), then building a sense of familiarity, belonging and social relationships across different groups and different identities requires intentional efforts and organizations facilitating social interactions, ongoing engagements, and

participation. And this requires physical spaces that serve as social spaces or social territories (Blokland, 2017; Lofland, 1998) and micro-publics (Sandercock & Attili, 2009, citing Amin, 2002). Some study participants mentioned occasions where participants at SVNH activities made statements that offended people from other ethnic or identity groups, or cultural differences created disagreements or tensions during an activity. In these cases, volunteers and staff mediated and built understanding. SVNH and other NHs are particularly unique and valuable for contributing to public familiarity and belonging among different groups, or as Sandercock and Attili (2009) describe it, helping “strangers become neighbours” (p. 185) because their intentional purpose is to build community and they are neighbourhood/place-based and open to everyone.

One CoV participant emphasized the intentionality and effort around building relationships on a regular basis as a factor that makes relationships function during an emergency:

When I look at areas [throughout the city] that did well during the pandemic, it's because they had worked intentionally on relationships well before. Not because they were preparing for an emergency, just because that's how they felt their community would work better (CoV interview, 2021).

Key spatial elements of social purpose spaces

Many of the spatial limitations of the main building that SVNH staff describe as affecting regular programs, activities, and social gatherings also appeared as limitations during the pandemic crisis, albeit in different ways and for different purposes. This is most notable with the kitchen and the largest activity/event room in the building, the multi-purpose front room. The kitchen was too small and in constant, overlapping demand before the pandemic, because the majority of programs included a snack or meal component, and the NH regularly hosts shared community meals. Study participants expressed a need for a large kitchen with space for multiple people to work and move around comfortably and safely, and for commercial sized equipment and storage for large quantities of food and supplies. They also identified a need for more space for socializing near the kitchen and smaller kitchen stations near other large rooms and activity areas. During the pandemic, the kitchen was used for emergency food programs, but in both regular and emergency response circumstances, there was a need for a larger kitchen and more/larger kitchen equipment. Similarly, participants expressed the need for a larger multi-purpose and flexible space (space that can be

reconfigured for various gatherings and uses) for the diverse and growing programs/activities of SVNH, partners and local residents. During the pandemic, this room was used for emergency food programs, including commercial refrigerators and freezers, supply storage, and the sorting and distribution activity of many staff and volunteers. These uses require a great deal of space, so the room's availability for other social and program purposes was limited.

While the specific uses of physical spatial assets is different in crisis and non-crisis times, the SVNH experience demonstrates the importance of understanding the value of physical spatial arrangements that serve as social territories regularly and that facilitate collective actions during crises.

5.1.2. Spatial equity and the small-scale neighbourhood

Understanding community as a continuous and dynamic social process highlights the importance of social purpose spaces and organizations that facilitate social interactions being located at a close proximity to people to be part of their everyday lives and routines. SVNH staff are working to engage people to understand how they identify or define their "natural neighbourhoods" in order to "help people get to know their neighbour on a more micro-level" (Esmail, interview, February 2021). The SVNH leadership and staff perspective on the link between micro-level or natural neighbourhoods can be better understood and is reinforced by the conceptualization of micro-publics where people learn to live with differences (Sandercock, 2009, citing Amin 2002, p. 207) and the NH as a micro-public where "daily negotiations of difference" and community as social process take place (Sandercock, 2009, p. 186).

The SVNH effort to Reframe South Vancouver aims to help decision makers understand the reality and impact of the disparity of social services *and* community building resources. Tonkiss (2013) describes how urban built infrastructure systems can "integrate cities as shared spaces of common life" (p. 173) and their absence or inadequacy can create place-based exclusion from that common life and shared benefits. From this perspective, the spatial disparity of resources available for social purpose organizations and facilities or physical spatial assets across neighbourhoods results in fewer services for individuals, families and households, but it also hinders the social processes of community, belonging, social connection and interculturalism. This

geographical disparity also leaves people in some neighbourhoods with fewer options for collective action (collective capabilities) during crises.

The SVNH hub and spoke approach can be understood as a response to the proximity challenge of one NH trying to provide services and facilitate community building for an area the size and extent of South Vancouver. SVNH is implementing this network strategy to serve the needs and interests of residents in the different micro-neighbourhoods throughout South Vancouver, by finding new additional facilities to use or manage, and finding partners to help bring emergency services like food distribution and its regular activities and programs closer to where people live. This approach also allows SVNH to create opportunities for people to initiate or engage in activities in their own neighbourhoods with the neighbours they may see and encounter in their everyday routines.

5.1.3. Anticipating and identifying community needs

Social purpose organizations like SVNH and SVFP and community groups like SHC can anticipate and identify community needs quickly during a crisis because of the work they do on a regular basis. They identify the needs and interests of residents through regular activities, outreach and communication, needs assessments, and by creating a space for community members to launch their own activities, from knitting circles to advocacy campaigns. SVNH offers a range of services and programs for people of all ages that are part of their everyday life (childcare, after-school activities, support for families and caregivers, settlement services, language classes, etc.), so staff have diverse knowledge of the needs, capacities and living circumstances of many segments of the local population. Participants from SVNH and SVFP also referred to the importance of providing services based on an understanding of the social, economic and environmental conditions that residents experience.

This diverse engagement and network of connections with residents also results in SVNH staff receiving community member requests for support during a crisis, so they have a view of emerging needs. At the onset of the pandemic, SVNH and SHC, along with other community organizations, mobilized volunteers to do phone check-in calls, providing an opportunity for isolated people to express if they needed something. People who knew the SVNH from its regular programs reached out to staff for other needs

during the crisis. Mimi Rennie, the SVNH Community Programs director, recalled that area residents requested help with income and accessing the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)¹⁵, finding employment or knowing their labour rights, finding housing, and accessing technology for school or job search purposes. Even when residents needed a kind of support that was beyond the NH mandate or service offerings, staff could refer people to the appropriate agencies, services or information. Study participants also mentioned social connection as an ongoing need, explaining that people increasingly wanted the in-person social activities and “human contact” to resume.

At the onset of the pandemic and distancing measures, SVNH staff were quickly aware of the range of people that could and would end up isolated (socially and physically), and received information about some isolated people through their networks. They found that people in a variety of situations can end up isolated in their homes during a crisis, including: seniors and people living alone and with mobility or health problems and vulnerabilities; people who do not have phone or Internet services and equipment or do not know how to use these to find resources and connect with people and organizations; people who do not speak the primary language in the area; people who may be connected with only one institution but this is closed (this was the case for some new immigrant families that were only connected with the children’s schools); and people who participate in some social activities and casually visit some places but are not ‘signed up’ with their contact information.

Closing its main building for the public and stopping on site activities revealed just how important physical space is for establishing and maintaining social connection and communication with some individuals or segments of the local population:

We noticed right away when our building closed, there’s a lot of people who would come into the Neighbourhood House but who don’t necessarily use email or who we didn’t have a phone number for, and we didn’t [pause] I don’t know what happened to some of those people. Some of them are reconnecting with us now, but when we moved everything online, a lot of those, particularly seniors, racialized non-English speaking seniors, a lot of them it was a question mark

¹⁵ The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) is “financial support to employed and self-employed Canadians who were directly affected by COVID-19”, provided by the federal government during much of the COVID-19 pandemic 2020-2021.

about how to connect with them (Esmail, SVNH, interview, February 18, 2021).

5.1.4. From community building food programs to transactional emergency food distribution

Emergency food distribution is the activity most easily identified as an emergency service and use of space. In fact, this is what first caught my attention and intrigued me about SVNH as a case study. At the onset of the pandemic, directors and staff anticipated that some residents would have an immediate need for food, based on their experience hosting the GVFB Community Food Hub at the SVNH main building and their knowledge of residents' circumstances, including food insecurity affecting people who relied on the weekly food bank, and mobility challenges and language barriers for many seniors. When the GVFB closed the food hub at SVNH and other local food bank locations, residents of South Vancouver would have to go to GVFB's central location at a warehouse in the neighboring city of Burnaby, and SVNH directors recognized that this would require many people to take two buses and travel nearly an hour each way to get there.

We experienced a little bit of a crisis, I'd say, at the NH when the Greater Vancouver Food Bank decided to centralize its distribution locations because we know that, particularly in the early days of COVID, seniors, people with compromised health, really didn't want to be going on transit. People were so scared. [Pause] We knew that it would be very difficult for us to tell them 'you need to go on the bus for 45-60 minutes to access food' (Esmail, SVNH, interview, February 18, 2021).

People from schools and other community partners in the area also reached out to SVNH about their anticipation of increased food needs as the pandemic resulted in job or income loss and health challenges, and free or low-cost food programs closed. As Mimi shared: "We had schools that were really concerned, what would happen when school's over because they didn't have any programming for food, for kids."

The NH offered or hosted food programs and events for years, but addressing people's immediate need for food during the pandemic crisis required food distribution that some SVNH participants referred to as 'transactional', meaning that people pick up a food package and leave, they do not socialize or participate in other activities (Esmail and Riley, interviews, February 2021). This transactional form of food distribution falls

outside the NH mandate of community-building, so for SVNH it was a distinctly emergency function.

For SVNH, the experience with the 'transactional' nature of emergency food distribution emphasized even more the need for ongoing efforts that integrate food security with social connection and community building. They described the emergency food distribution experience as 'undignified' because people had to line up outside, wait for hours, and they could not choose the food that was appropriate for them (based on dietary needs or cultural preferences).

5.1.5. A 'broker' for information and cooperation

SVNH and SVFP participants described how their organizations functioned as a source for information during the crisis, because of their regular presence and services in the neighbourhood and in residents' daily lives. They also functioned as connectors with other organizations approaching them for collaboration and residents asking for referrals to other services and resources.

In a study of childcare centers, Mario Small (2006) shows how neighbourhood institutions serve as 'brokers' for information and resources through their ties to other organizations, including government agencies, nonprofits and businesses. The 'broker' role involves creating new connections between individuals and other organizations or among organizations. SVNH plays a 'broker' role on a regular basis throughout its programs by collaborating with various organizations, government agencies, and professionals, and offering people and families referrals for housing, employment, immigration, health and other services or resources. SV Family Place plays a similar 'broker' role through its partnerships or informal relationships with organizations such as Boys and Girls Clubs, Pacific Immigrant Resources Society (PIRS, a nonprofit with services for newcomer women and children), Multi-lingual Orientation Services Association for Immigrant Communities (MOSAIC, a nonprofit focusing on settlement, integration, employment services and community building in the Vancouver metropolitan area and Lower Mainland), Vancouver Coastal Health, and dental offices and counselling or other specialists. It even hosts specialists at its facilities (nurses, dental specialist, physical development therapists, etc) so that families can come see them and receive more tailored referrals as needed.

During the pandemic, people relied even more on the SVNH 'broker' role as many lost their jobs, income and subsequently housing and access to food. SVNH staff provided information about financial, employment and housing resources and helped people fill out necessary applications. Much of this was done by phone or online, but in cases where people needed help filling out forms and spoke little English, staff arranged on-site meetings at the main building. These kinds of activities reflect the role of SVNH as a source of information and referrals to resources, and how the facilities support this role.

SVNH also played a 'broker' role for collaboration, as other community organizations reached out to the NH and its leadership and staff to collaborate, or NH staff contacted them to coordinate efforts. SVNH partnered with several community organizations and groups to offer the volunteer services of phone and virtual check-ins and grocery/prescriptions deliveries of the SSSC community response hub (SVNH 2021). The SVNH 'hub and spoke' network approach for food distribution (described in 4.3.4) also demonstrates this collaboration 'broker' role, as it is based on coordinating collaboration among organizations, individuals, and facilities. Yan (2021) argues that NHs in Metro Vancouver are more than brokers for other resources, services and information. He conceptualized them as a "form of organizational social capital" and in this way, a community asset:

NHs are a community asset that solves community problems by successfully nurturing resources. Most often these resources are from other community organizations and public institutions that are fragmented and that often operate in isolation (p. 121, in Yan & Lauer).

5.1.6. Social connection and community building as emergency recovery

At the time of this writing, the pandemic was ongoing, but safety regulations were changing as people got vaccinated and risk levels changed, so it was a situation of both emergency and early recovery efforts. There were already signs that the recovery role of SVNH will be interconnected with its regular community building role, just as its emergency role was found to be. When asked about their perspective on the kinds of activities or services they may need to offer as a NH in the recovery phase of the pandemic, participants from SVNH mentioned examples of services and activities that

residents and partner organizations were already requesting at the time of the interviews (March-April 2021), related to the regular NH services but with aspects specific to a crisis recovery context:

- loss and grief circles and healing circles,
- celebrating and helping people connect socially again,
- addressing loneliness, including its emotional, mental and physical health impacts, and especially for seniors,
- more employment and settlement services.

For example, Indigenous partners had already expressed the need for loss and grief circles and healing circles, and at the time of this writing, SVNH and these partners were already offering these events together online through Zoom. The SHC plans to offer more anti-racism efforts that began before the pandemic and meet a growing need, including working with youth to help the seniors in their life report racist incidents. SVNH also plans to continue its hub and spoke model for food security but in a way that is integrated with sociability and community building. It will scale down but continue the frozen meals program in some form for people who are homebound and need this affordable, nutritious meal service. All of this is in addition to bringing back its regular programs and activities and continuing its strategy to bring programs closer to people in their small-scale neighbourhoods throughout South Vancouver.

Understanding the role of SVNH and its spatial arrangements in crisis recovery periods is a question for additional research, but this section demonstrates that many of these anticipated needs and emerging requests related to recovery involve social connection, relationships, ongoing support, and collaboration among different organizations.

5.2. SVNH as infrastructure

SVNH and its spatial arrangements and their linkages with a network of other organizations, spaces and services function as social, critical and adaptive networked infrastructure. This case study shows how the availability of this kind of infrastructure at the small-scale geographical level of neighbourhoods is important on a regular basis and

during a crisis. This understanding helps reveal additional policy and investment implications.

5.2.1. A network of social infrastructure

As discussed in previous sections, SVNH (as an institution and network of staff, volunteers and members) *and* its spatial arrangements function as infrastructure for social services (childcare, educational activities, settlement services, etc.) but also for the social process of community. In this way, SVNH and its spatial arrangements are place-based neighbourhood social infrastructure.

SVNH and its spatial assets function as part of a network with other social purpose organizations and spaces to provide services, resources and referrals that meet the needs of residents. When I began this case study research, I focused on the SVNH main building as a causal variable because it was used for temporary emergency food programs. During my analysis, I found the coding theme with the most occurrences from the SV interviews was ‘Social Infrastructure as a Network’. Sandercock and Attili (2009) highlight this connectedness of “the whole gamut of institutions” in a neighbourhood and beyond the neighbourhood as a unique strength of NHs in Vancouver (p. 187). For SVNH leadership and staff, this network function was a key consideration in decisions during the pandemic crisis regarding the emergency response activities they would take on, and how they would use their main building. The closure of the GVFB community food hub at the SVNH building, the lack of food security assets in South Vancouver, and the local community centres not making their large spaces available for food distribution were key factors in the SVNH decision to provide temporary weekly food distribution, dedicating almost the entire ground floor of its main building for this purpose and bringing staff and volunteers on site.

On a normal basis, SVNH offers spaces in its main building for use or rent by other organizations, as discussed in section 4.2. At the same time, SVNH uses other spatial assets (schools, community centres, parks and other locations) through networked partnerships and collaboration to make activities and services more accessible to individuals and families through *proximity* to where they live or go to school. In these ways, social purpose organizations, civic institutions, related agencies

and community groups use each other's facilities and public spaces as they collaborate to offer services and facilitate activities and social connection.

There are formal partnerships and informal monthly meetings and relationships among social purpose organizations, schools, and other neighbourhood groups, and these are all mechanisms by which social purpose organizations and spatial assets function as a network (it can also be described as a *local ecosystem*). Some formal partnerships and informal relationships are also linked to City, provincial and federal programs and funding. When the pandemic arrived, the informal relationships and monthly meetings led to food security emergency response action that evolved into ongoing collaboration through the SVNH Food Hub and Spoke for Equitable Food Access program (described in section 4.3.4). The Hub and Spoke model formalizes and strengthens the function of social purpose organizations and spatial assets as a network of social infrastructure.

The network of social purpose spaces owned by nonprofit or social purpose organizations and by local government and public authorities (civic spaces) and located throughout a neighbourhood or a city fits within the broad common characteristics and qualities of traditional infrastructure discussed in Chapter 2, including: takes the form of a network or system; is open access and viewed as a public or collective good; is provided, subsidized or regulated by government (many social purpose organizations rely in large part on government grants, programs and policies to provide their services); produces spillovers; and supports social goods, development and quality of life (Frischmann, 2012; Pike et al., 2019).

A key difference between a network of social infrastructure and traditional infrastructure networks or systems (roads, energy grids, utilities networks, etc.) is that the network of social infrastructure is decentralized to a very local level and there is no network owner or operator. There are partnerships and collaborations, but ultimately there are many organizations, local authorities or informal groups that make decisions about their services and the use of their facilities and physical assets. As discussed in Chapter 2, the urban sociology conceptualization of infrastructure moves beyond the focus on structural and management characteristics of built systems and elaborates on the outcome of shared common life, and how interconnected spaces, materials, activities and even people can function as infrastructure that shapes that common life (Tonkiss,

2013; Simone, 2004; Amin, 2014). By this understanding, the decentralized, dynamic and adaptable network of social purpose organizations, spatial assets, and services function as infrastructure with a dedicated focus on social relations, common life and social goods.

The decentralized character of SI networks allows them to adapt and react quickly to changing circumstances and people's needs. The extent to which a local SI network can adapt and effectively act to mitigate or respond to the impacts of a crisis depend on the available resources, previous experiences, and the nature of existing relationships among organizations and actors. In this case study, the place-based community building role of SVNH allowed it to act quickly and take on an emergency role. At the same time, an emergency context also presents challenges for decision making and coordinated action within a decentralized and informal network of organizations. The pandemic brought uncertainty, danger and risk related to public health and liability concerns related to adherence to public health safety regulations that changed along with the changing circumstances (spread of the virus and developing knowledge about how it spreads and the effectiveness of prevention measures). The provincial public health authority issued safety and distancing regulations, but organizations or authorities managing civic and social purpose spaces made their own decisions about whether to close their facilities or how to use them. Participants indicated that the City and funders like the UWLM played a coordinating role, but there is no formal mechanism for deciding what neighbourhood facilities to use for different purposes during an emergency. SVNH leadership decided to use the main building for emergency food distribution because GVFB ended the Community Food Hub held at this building and closed other food bank locations in the area (discussed in 4.3.4), and Community Centres closed and did not provide their facilities for use, despite being designated Disaster Support Hubs. These closures resulted in a lack of food distribution services and large spaces to host such activities in South Vancouver, and SVNH participants described this as a factor motivating them to step into the gap.

5.2.2. SVNH as critical infrastructure

...the spaces and the programs and services that allow people to build that social connection and that engagement with each other during a time of crisis, that is where we need to focus a huge amount of

attention and that is absolutely critical (CoV participant interview, 2021).

SVNH and its spatial assets played an emergency role during the pandemic crisis and were considered critical by participants in this study. This section provides some additional analysis to consider whether and how SVNH and the network of SI should be regarded as critical infrastructure based on study data, the CA framework and definitions of CI used in the literature and federal and international policy.

Community organizations as critical partners for local authorities

Two city interview participants described community partners (referring to organizations, social enterprises, informal groups and individuals) as critical in delivering important services and reaching more people during emergencies, especially during large-scale emergencies. The CoV social infrastructure strategy also refers to “social non-profit partners” (p. 6) and social infrastructure as critical in fostering social connection and resilience on a regular basis and during crises. During large-scale emergencies, such as an earthquake or flood, the logistics and resources required to respond quickly to needs is too large for emergency response agencies or government alone, so they have to respond to high-priority incidents. Discussions of community resilience thus often begin with the observation that while ‘first responders’ are the specialized and trained professionals that respond to an emergency, the true ‘first response’ comes from friends, family, neighbours, and the people that run local organizations, businesses, places of worship, etc. (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; City of Vancouver, n.d.-a).

With the pandemic, the scale of food insecurity in Vancouver grew too large for the City government to tackle alone. City interview participants described food insecurity as “astronomical” and “momentous”, because the impact of COVID-19 safety measures resulted in people losing their jobs, pre-existing food distribution programs were less available, and the pre-existing need for food support was exacerbated significantly. They acknowledged the critical role of community organizations and partners, referring to nonprofits, social enterprises and even individuals doing urgent and lifesaving work:

Community partners were absolutely critical. Critical in advocating for what community members actually needed, but also critical for doing the work. Nothing we [city government] did would have been possible without community partnerships, absolutely nothing...not just the

organizational ones, there were individuals who were pulling together sandwiches and going to do street outreach... Lots of incredible partnerships arose out of this challenge (CoV participant interview, 2021).

SV interview participants did not use the word *critical* to describe the role of SVNH or their work during the first months of the pandemic, though they discussed the emergency-specific activities and services responding to residents' needs as described above.

Expectations for the emergency role of community organizations

The 'critical' role of community partners and the use of their spatial assets was not only recognized but expected. Participants in SV and city interviews noted the importance of staff of social purpose organizations feeling safe and having the support they need during a time of crisis and in normal operations. However, some SVNH participants expressed feeling pressure and an expectation from their CoV and UWLM partners and funders to continue the temporary emergency food distribution program through the pandemic:

...we reached out to different decision-makers and they pressured food bank [GVFB] to continue giving us food. But I think that, the City and United Way kind of thought we would just do that in perpetuity and we had to be very clear – and they kind of got upset when we said this can't be long term, and they're just like 'but you're the ones that said that this was a problem, and now you're saying you don't want to do anything about it' (SVNH participant interview, 2021).

This implies that partners expected SVNH to implement long-term emergency food distribution as the pandemic continued, which is surprising. Food distribution operations rely heavily on facilities, large equipment, and on-site labour of staff and volunteers. This is a significant burden for an organization and facility that are not set up and resourced to do this. For SVNH, this operation took up the entire ground floor of its three-storey main building. SVNH needed to bring back core programs and services in September 2020, particularly childcare service because staff "knew this was a need for families" (Esmail, SVNH, interview, February 18, 2021). Childcare was recognized as an 'essential service' by government and public health authorities during the pandemic. For this to happen, SVNH had to end the temporary food program in August. Some spatial aspects of the SVNH building factor into this trade-off requirement: there is only one entrance/exit for the public, so it is difficult to operate food distribution while having

children on the premises, even if childcare is located on a different floor. Childcare operators must have spaces, including entrance/exits, clear to ensure that children can move around the space safely.

SVNH study participants described feeling stressed and pressured by the CoV and UWLM expectation for longer-term food distribution. “We thought, should we have not said anything at all?” (SVNH participant interview, 2021) This indicates a problem. If social purpose and community organizations feel like they will create unreasonable expectations to continue temporary emergency programs longer term at the risk of delaying their core services which their community members expect and rely on, and without the necessary resources, they may hesitate or decline to take part in response activities in future emergencies. The safety, health and capacity of organization staff is a factor determining the extent to which an organization can implement emergency response services, and for how long. Only a few study participants discussed this issue directly, and still discussed it briefly compared to other matters. This is consistent and may be explained by one of Heugten’s (2014) findings in her study of human service workers in the aftermath of a devastating earthquake in New Zealand. Heugten found that workers participated in her study because they wanted to highlight the “negative consequences of neglecting human service workers” (p. 172) but also to emphasize that structural social, economic and power inequities lead to disproportionate impacts of disasters on already disadvantaged, marginalized or equity-denied populations.

Social infrastructure as critical infrastructure

SVNH along with other social purpose organizations and groups and their spatial assets function as networked social infrastructure, contribute to the social process and interactions that constitute *community*, and play a critical role in emergencies. They should be considered critical infrastructure and referenced more directly when government agencies list CI sectors and allocate investments. They fit the broad definitions of CI discussed in Chapter 2: they are “essential” to the “well-being of people” as the Canadian government definitions stipulate (Emergency Management BC, 2019, p. 33) and the “functioning of a community” as the UNDRR definition emphasizes (UNDRR, n.d.). The definition of CI proposed by Clark et al. (2018) as “the systems that are vital for protecting or providing essential human capabilities” (p. 351) is particularly relevant for evaluating and recognizing the critical role of social infrastructure networks. This case

study finds that SVNH and its spatial arrangements functioned as critical infrastructure based on their role contributing to collective capabilities during the crisis, including collective capabilities related to some of Nussbaum's (2003) central human capabilities. This will be discussed in the next section (5.3). This emergency role is linked to their regular function supporting community building.

5.3. The SVNH contribution to collective capabilities and resilience through the Capabilities Approach framework

The physical space is the vehicle that people are allowed to work in, to provide those services. Without the space, we can't provide services, so the physical space is an important part, and how you present that physical space is also important - how do you make it welcoming to various people, that's also a key factor (Bello, SVFP, interview, April 14, 2021).

In this section, I use the Capabilities Approach framework and some of Nussbaum's (2003) 10 'central human capabilities' to evaluate how SVNH and its spatial arrangements contribute to collective capabilities and functionings as a *conversion factor*. I then compare this analysis with the main elements included in the definitions of community resilience in the literature and discuss how this study makes a case for a capabilities approach to conceptualizing and understanding community resilience. Finally, I compare the role of SVNH and the local government through a CA lens.

5.3.1. SVNH as a conversion factor for collective capabilities

Using the concepts of the CA framework, SVNH, as an organization and social purpose space dedicated to community building, can be conceptualized as a *conversion factor* for community capabilities and functionings during the pandemic crisis. Through its services and activities in various locations and through interpersonal and interorganizational relationships, SVNH helps develop community resources, assets, skills and capacities. It also serves as a conversion factor to mobilize those resources, assets, skills and capacities to give residents and other local organizations options to act collectively. The physical spatial assets of SVNH are also a resource for the organization, local residents and partner organizations, but the combination of SVNH as an organization *and* space supported collective activities and outcomes that reached

beyond the direct use of the main building and even the limitations of the physical space, so I focus my analysis on SVNH as a conversion factor.

‘Capabilities’, defined as people’s actual available choices, options or freedoms to ‘do and be’ what they want and to have the kind of life they value, are somewhat conceptual. People speak about ‘basic needs’ and strengths, skills, assets, even capacities, but they do not generally refer to their ‘capabilities’ using this terminology. This holds true for the participant interviews in this study – there was no mention of ‘capabilities’. Therefore, for this analysis, I looked at the main themes that emerge from the interviews with participants directly involved with SVNH, and considered Nussbaum’s (2003) list of 10 ‘central human capabilities’ to identify the capabilities that SVNH and its spatial assets impacted.

The themes that emerged from coding the SV interviews in this study reveal that SVNH, through its activities and use of spatial assets, played an emergency role related to food distribution, identifying and connecting with isolated people, ‘brokering’ information, connections, referrals, and collaborations, and advocacy for food security, support for seniors and resources for social services and community building in South Vancouver. Three capabilities¹⁶ from Nussbaum’s list of ten central capabilities are most relevant for this case study:

- Bodily Health - “Being able to have good health” and “to be adequately nourished”.
- Affiliation - “Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction...”
- Control Over One’s Environment – “A. Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one’s life...”

Nussbaum refers to central capabilities of each human being – the list is conceptualized and articulated as capabilities of individuals. I adapt this concept to consider ‘community capabilities’ as capabilities of people interacting or taking action together as a collective. In the terms of the literature definitions (Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2003; Robeyns 2003 and 2018), a community capability refers to the actual choices,

¹⁶ I did not include the full definition of each of these capabilities, only the portion of Nussbaum’s definition that is relevant for this case study of the work of SVNH during the study timeframe.

options or freedoms available for a collective of people to act together and to be the kind of community they want to be. The concept of ‘community capabilities’ may also be used to refer to the choices, options or freedoms available to all the members of a ‘community’.

During the early crisis phase of the pandemic, SVNH, as a neighbourhood house with spatial assets, functioned as a *conversion factor* for the community capabilities that I describe as “Community Food Security”, related to Nussbaum’s Bodily Health capability, “Affiliation Through a Crisis”, related to Nussbaum’s Affiliation capability and using Blokland’s conceptualization of community as a social process, and “Control Over the Collective Neighbourhood Environment” related to Nussbaum’s Control Over One’s Environment capability. These are laid out in Figures 26, 27 and 28.

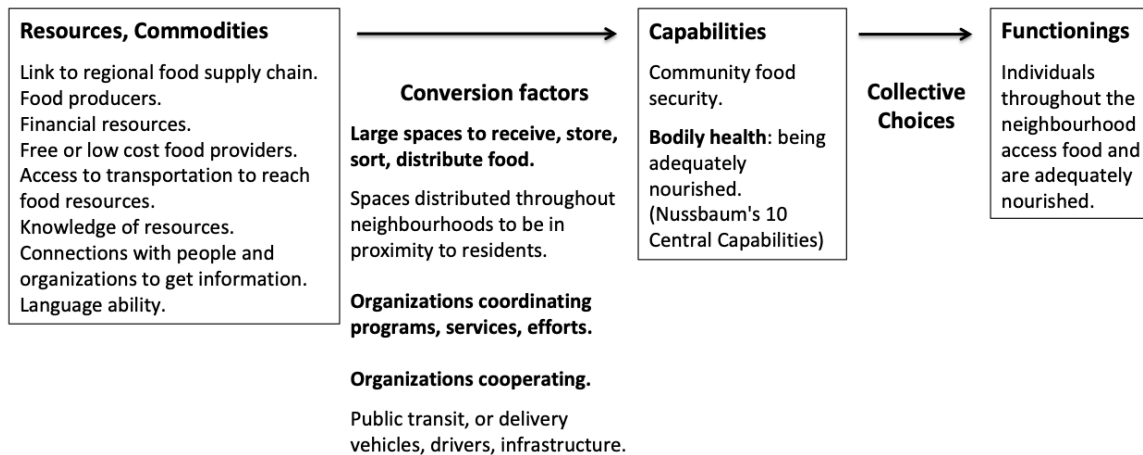


Figure 25. Community Food Security as a Collective Capability in a CA Framework.

Figure 26 illustrates some of the elements related to the community capability “Community Food Security” according to the CA framework. Based on the data in this study, SVNH used its own spatial assets, or used collaboration to leverage other spatial assets, to function as a *conversion factor* for this capability in the following ways:

- Used its main building and set up the Langara food operations hub refrigerated container as large spaces to receive, store, sort, and distribute food.
- Took action to respond to food needs of individuals who were particularly vulnerable while also considering the various small scale neighbourhood communities throughout the larger area of South Vancouver that it serves.

- Implemented its ‘hub and spoke’ model to recruit and coordinate partners and activate physical spaces in the small scale neighbourhoods throughout South Vancouver in order to distribute food in closer proximity to residents.
- Used its vehicles and the parking garage at its main building and mobilized staff and volunteer drivers to deliver frozen meals and other necessities to people isolated at home
- Chose to use its spatial assets for emergency food distribution in response to residents’ needs and because of the lack of other spaces and accessible emergency food providers in the geographic area.

SVNH (as an institution) and its active community members (staff, volunteers, engaged residents like the SHC members) also played a role in the collective *choices* that put collective capabilities into action to make them collective resilience functionings. This is most notable in the collective functioning of emergency food distribution: once SVNH leadership and staff decided to provide temporary emergency food distribution, it was possible for SHC, volunteers, other organizations and even funders like the UWLM to be part of this collective action.

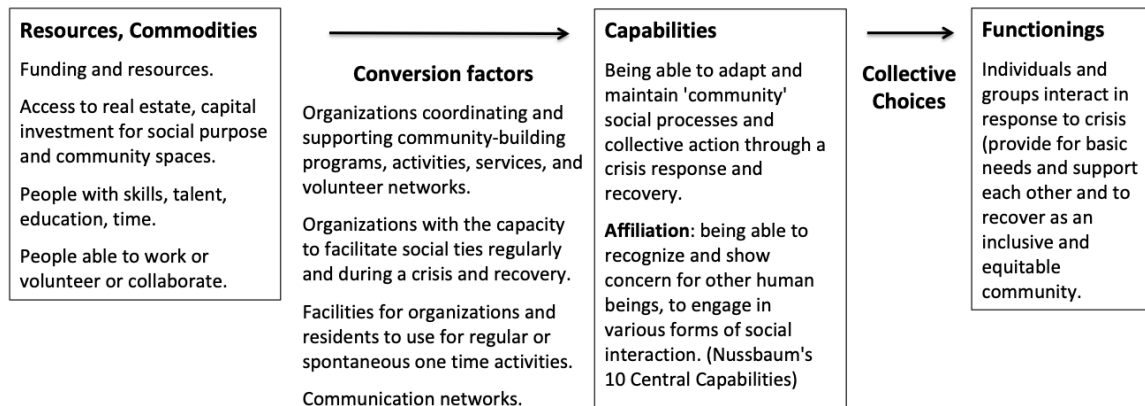


Figure 26. Affiliation Through a Crisis as a Collective Capability in a CA Framework.

Figure 27 illustrates the elements related to the collective capability “Affiliation Through a Crisis”, or *being able to adapt and maintain community social processes and collective action through a crisis response and recovery*, according to the CA framework. Based on the data in this study, SVNH functioned as a *conversion factor* for this capability in the following ways:

- Adapted communication and engagement methods, using telephone, email, social media and online video call platforms to check in on people, maintain social connections, and facilitate social activities.

- Organized social activities at public parks and outdoor spaces.
- Conducted outreach to seniors in response to needs related to social isolation and food security, including working with SHC to connect or re-connect with seniors that may need emergency food or other supports and social connection.
- Maintained and activated collaborations with other organizations, community member groups like SHC, funders and volunteer networks for food distribution, identifying isolated people, delivering groceries, prescriptions, activity/learning kits, and other necessary goods to people, using its own vehicles and mobilizing volunteers with vehicles.



Figure 27. Control Over the Collective Neighbourhood Environment as a Collective Capability in a CA Framework

Figure 28 illustrates some of the elements related to the community capability “Control Over the Collective Neighbourhood Environment” according to the CA framework. Based on the data in this study, SVNH functioned as a conversion factor for this capability in the following ways:

- Supported the SHC petition for more food assets and other resources in South Vancouver.
- Used its connections with the local government and relationships with City staff to highlight food insecurity in South Vancouver neighbourhoods (during the crisis and on a regular basis), the lack of free or no-cost food options located in the area and accessible to residents, and the need for emergency food distribution resources and facilities.
- Published a report mapping the food assets in South Vancouver in comparison to food assets in Vancouver and advocated for an equitable,

sustainable and community building food hub in South Vancouver (Thurber, 2021).

- Developed the Reframing South Vancouver initiative to advocate for more equitable distribution of resources across the city at the level of small-scale neighbourhoods (beginning before the pandemic and ongoing).
- SVNH directors highlighted barriers to the way South Vancouver residents can engage with the City, including language barriers (lack of interpretation during community engagement events and outreach) and less resources for local community planning processes, through presentations at public events (Esmail, 2021).

These do not involve a direct use of SVNH spatial assets as a conversion factor but they demonstrate how SVNH as an organization and network of directors and staff facilitate and support political advocacy and engagement related to spatial assets and other resources in South Vancouver.

In many ways, SVNH and its spatial assets were able to function as a *conversion factor* for collective capabilities related to ‘Community Food Security’, ‘Community Social Processes and Collective Action Through a Crisis’ and ‘Control Over the Collective Neighbourhood Environment’ during the early phase of the pandemic *because* the neighbourhood house functions as a *conversion factor* for Affiliation or ‘community as social process’ on a regular basis. Through its range of programs and activities at its main building, other sites, and partner locations, SVNH is directly involved in facilitating, structuring and even initiating ‘community as a social process’ regularly as part of people’s everyday lives and routines. This is also in line with the findings of Yan and Lauer (2021) that NHs in Metro Vancouver “are successful in building and supporting local community by providing services that meet local people’s needs, nurturing leadership among the residents, enhancing civic engagement and skills, particularly among newcomers and women, connecting local residents, and building an institutional bridge with greater service networks” (p. 235). This finding confirms the sentiment that SVNH participants expressed in this study, that the pandemic emergency ‘reinforced’ the importance of the NH community building mandate and mission.

Table 6 provides a summary illustration of how the nature of SVNH as social infrastructure is directly connected to its role as social and critical infrastructure during a crisis. The table summarizes how the regular community building work of SVNH is

connected to its emergency roles that contributed to collective capabilities during the crisis.

Table 6. SVNH as social and critical infrastructure for collective capabilities

Social infrastructure	Social infrastructure as critical infrastructure		
SVNH regular place - based, community building work	SVNH emergency role	SVNH and collective capabilities during crisis	Related central human capability (Nussbaum, 2003)
Hosting the GVFB Community Food Hub and other activities involving food, shared meals, socializing, and connections with more services.	Transactional food distribution: people pick up food and leave or receive food deliveries.	Community food security	Bodily health
Diverse programs and activities open to everyone and intentionally facilitating social connection and community building.	Social connection: identifying and connecting with isolated people, implementing social activities virtually, in parks, by phone and by delivering activity kits. Creating opportunities for people to volunteer and help others.	Affiliation through a crisis (social process of community)	Affiliation
Reframing South Vancouver Initiative advocating for more equitable resource distribution across the city's small-scale neighbourhoods.	Advocacy for more equitable distribution of regular and emergency resources across small neighbourhoods.	Control over the collective neighbourhood environment.	Control over one's environment

5.3.2. A collective capabilities approach to understanding community resilience

This case study shows that collective capabilities are key to community resilience at the local neighbourhood level, with community resilience conceptualized and understood as multiple collective functionings related to change and crisis. Therefore, I propose conceptualizing community resilience through the CA framework, and considering it as multiple collective *functionings* (capabilities that are 'achieved' or put into action), including, for example: emergency response as a community; recovery as a community; collective action for adaptation to reduce risk and vulnerability for future disasters.

A capabilities approach helps clarify and evolve the understanding of community resilience. In reviewing the literature on community resilience, I noted that this concept is defined and operationalized in different ways, depending on how the concept is used in research and in practice. Many definitions often refer to elements such as community resources, capacities, peoples' abilities or collective abilities, cooperation, and more complex processes such as adaptation. Table 7 shows the categories of elements that contribute to community resilience that I summarized from recent literature reviews and the CA Framework element or elements that they represent.

Table 7. Community resilience element categories through a CA lens

Community resilience element types (also referred to as Domains or Dimensions) according to literature reviews	CA Framework Element
Collective action and civic or political engagement.	Functionings (individual and collective)
Social capital and social connectedness.	Capabilities (individual and collective)
Human capital and individuals leading or influencing efforts.	Resources/Commodities Capabilities (individual)
Community resources within and outside the community.	Resources/Commodities
Natural resources.	Resources/Commodities
Physical and infrastructural resources.	Resources/Commodities Conversion Factors
Economic capital or resources (financial, livelihood, housing).	Resources/Commodities Conversion Factors Capabilities (individual)
Information and communication;	Resources/Commodities Conversion Factors
Institutional capital specific to emergencies, hazards and disaster risk.	Resources/Commodities
Capacities and resources for strategic deliberation and planning.	Resources/Commodities
Ability to adapt to changes within and outside the community and develop new future trajectories.	Capabilities (individual and collective)
Equity in distribution of resources, opportunity and involvement in community planning and leadership.	Conversion Factors
Political capital (distribution of resources, access to leadership and decision making, capable governance).	Conversion Factors

This table shows that the types of elements that contribute to community resilience refer more to *Resources/Commodities* and *conversion factors*, while many definitions of community resilience focus on people's capacities for collective action or their ability to mitigate, respond, recover, and adapt (as discussed in Chapter 2), which are more related to *collective capabilities*. The critiques of how community resilience is used in theory and in policy and planning discourse show how the structural, systemic or contextual elements can be downplayed or ignored, despite the fact that they are key components in many studies, projects and evaluation models (Nguyen & Akerkar, 2020; Pfefferbaum et al., 2017; Magis, 2010; Kendra et al., 2018). The CA Framework reveals how these elements relate to each other and leads to an understanding of what resources, conversion factors, capabilities and collective choices result in *achieved* community resilience. As a relational framework that distinguishes between action that is (un)available as an option (capabilities) and action that is realized (functionings), the CA framework requires an evaluation of systemic contextual factors, including equity and power considerations, many of which are determined by institutions and actors beyond the local community or neighbourhood.

Participants, especially SV participants, referred to social, economic, environmental factors in South Vancouver that are part of city or regional conditions, including housing, economy, public transportation, and urban design, as creating challenges for people and the social process of community, and these challenges were then exacerbated by the pandemic crisis. Participants associated these structural, systemic or contextual conditions directly with the needs of neighbourhood residents, the options (un)available to residents and organizations, the decisions they made regarding how to adapt the services of their organizations, and the disproportionate impact of the crisis on people already living with social or economic precarity. There were no interview questions about these social, economic, environmental conditions – all the questions focused on what happened when the pandemic began, but people referred to these contextual factors throughout their discussions. This points to the value of the CA framework as it incorporates consideration of these systemic conditions as conversion factors, and directs attention to the responsibility of institutions with power over these conditions, while recognizing the agency of individuals and communities.

Conceptualizing this case study through the CA framework also offers a view of how regular (non-emergency) collective capabilities and functionings can determine collective capabilities during a disruption or emergency. Collective capabilities and especially functionings such as food security (related to Nussbaum's Bodily Health capability) and 'community' social processes (related to Nussbaum's Affiliation capability) on a regular, ongoing basis serve as resources and conditions that contribute to collective capabilities during a crisis.

If functionings are achieved capabilities that communities choose to put into action, then the 'emergency response as a community' functioning depends on community capabilities for collective action during crisis. These may include:

- Working together (individuals, groups, organizations) for emergency response actions or services such as emergency food distribution and support for vulnerable individuals and groups.
- Communicating and connecting quickly to form networks/groups for emergency response action.
- Choosing what needs to address during crisis. (community determines priorities)
- Using available spatial assets (indoor facilities, outdoor open space, equipment) for emergency purposes.

Relevant conversion factors to enable these community capabilities may include:

- Availability of social purpose organizations and spaces (such as NHs, family places).
- Funders provide flexible funding and rapid support, including for collaborative efforts.
- Decision-making and approval mechanisms to deliver resources or to permit and encourage use of spatial assets for emergency purposes.
- Organizations or institutions that play a coordinating role.
- Social norm that spatial assets for social and community purposes should be available for emergency response purposes.

Relevant resources, commodities or conditions may include:

- Pre-emergency experience with activities engaging many organizations and residents throughout the community. (This can be considered a collective

functioning of ‘community’ social processes, related to Nussbaum’s Affiliation capability, on a regular basis.)

- Existing knowledge of community characteristics, assets and needs, and communication channels to quickly learn of changing community needs.
- Existing physical spaces or facilities (indoor or outdoor) for people and organizations to use for social and collective activities.
- Spatial equity in the distribution of resources across neighbourhoods.

If these resources, conversion factors and collective capabilities exist before a disruption or emergency occurs, they make it more feasible for groups of people or organizations to make collective choices and put collective capabilities into action during the disruption/emergency. Using this conceptualization of community resilience, SVNH contributed to community resilience functions because it served as a conversion factor for collective capabilities and functionings during the early emergency response phase of the pandemic, and it was beginning to do the same for community capabilities for recovery.

5.3.3. Comparing the role of SVNH and City of Vancouver through a CA framework

My research question and design do not focus on the role of the City of Vancouver related to community capabilities, but because this is an exploratory case study, it is worth considering how the role of SVNH compares with the role of the City through a capabilities approach.

The CoV (departments, policies, actions, resource provision) plays a role in providing or enabling access to *Resources*, *Commodities*, and it can function as a *conversion factor*, or allocate resources for conversion factors (social purpose organizations and spaces, public transit services and infrastructure, civic infrastructure, etc) that affect individual and collective capabilities. The interview data collected in this research project reveal a few specific aspects of the City’s role in relation to community partners and social infrastructure during the pandemic crisis:

- The CoV provides funding to community organizations, including core funding for neighbourhood houses. With the onset of the pandemic, it provided additional emergency grants and offered flexibility to grantees in terms of reporting requirements and adapting their activities to the changing

emergency context. This role is related to the *Resources, Commodities* part of the CA framework.

- In a large-scale emergency that impacts the entire city, local government cannot provide direct services to all areas. In the pandemic, food and personal protective equipment for example were needed throughout the city. The CoV regarded community partners as critical because it could provide funding, help acquire supplies in bulk, and provide other supports, but it relied on local partners “doing the work” across the city to deliver goods, offer services to people, and identify people who were vulnerable or impacted in the current circumstances. CoV had to prioritize where it would provide direct services based on its capacity and the areas of the city where it determined there was the most urgent need. Providing resources or strategic support is related to the provision of *Resources, Commodities* and a *conversion factor* role.
- The CoV did not have an official role in helping organizations find available physical spaces or facilities (whether owned by the City or other local organizations, entities or individuals) during emergencies. Its EOC produced a map (digital and paper format) of free and low-cost food throughout the city to help people find these food resources, but it did not play a formal, systematic role in matching spatial assets with organizations available and willing to manage services and local emergency response activities. CoV staff used ‘informal connections’ to help SVNH find a space for food storage and distribution, according to one CoV participant, but at the same time, the City’s building permit department delayed the establishment of the SVNH food operations hub in the early months of the pandemic by initially declining the permit. The new CoV SI strategy indicates that a centralized database and matching platform will be created to help match available spaces with nonprofits, but it does not directly address an emergency context. Identifying or providing spatial assets would be a *conversion factor* role.
- The CoV gathered information on basic needs by conducting email outreach to frontline community partners and residents during the pandemic. One SVNH participant described receiving email “questionnaire after questionnaire” from various CoV departments or staff inquiring about needs on the ‘frontline’. This role of understanding and providing basic needs or supporting partners to provide basic needs is related to provision of *Resources, Commodities*.

In comparison, SVNH and its spatial assets serve as a conversion factor for collective capabilities, but in a more direct, intentional and proactive way. As discussed earlier, SVNH was able to serve as a conversion factor for collective capabilities and functionings during the crisis in large part because of its regular, ongoing and intentional role as conversion factor for community building, or ‘community’ social processes. As an organization, SVNH plays a direct role in facilitating and even initiating social interactions and connections that help create inclusive and welcoming community. Its intentional focus on community building and place making at the small-scale neighbourhood level, as evidenced through its mission statement, strategic goals, activities and use of spatial

assets, shows direct attention to collective capabilities and collective functionings. SVNH is also a community asset as Yan (2021) conceptualized NHs because they ‘nurture resources’ from other organizations and government agencies, and they advocate for the community (people and the neighbourhood) and help people advocate for themselves as a community.

The City perspective on reaching people who are vulnerable or negatively impacted during an emergency illustrates the difference between the role of SVNH and the City. One CoV participant recognized the importance of organizations that are connected to people through their day-to-day work, so they are “the organizations that people know and trust” and that “know about people that are in the community that aren’t on the official radar”. This statement suggests that the municipality’s “official radar” was not aware of just how many people were vulnerable to the impacts of physical distancing measures and social purpose spaces closing throughout the city and how these policies and actions affected vulnerable people by cutting them off from social connection and access to services. For example, this participant acknowledged how the connections that SVNH staff had with residents through their work offering diverse services and food programs meant that they were able to identify “this population of highly vulnerable seniors” throughout South Vancouver, ostensibly for the first time.

SV participants did not refer to *trust*, but they talked about residents knowing about and having experience with neighborhood organizations and social spaces in order to turn to them for information and support during a crisis, and to get involved in volunteer efforts and emergency response programs. This reflects how these organizations serve as proactive conversion factors for collective capabilities, going beyond service delivery or identifying people with urgent needs. CoV participants acknowledged the role of NHs in connecting with vulnerable people, delivering services and advocating for their needs, but the impact of SVNH and other NHs is more significant. In a study of NHs in Metro Vancouver, Schmidtke (2021) found that NHs function as agents of political change because of their place-based approach to delivering services, building social capital and connection, facilitating civic engagement and advocating for neighbourhoods and residents, particularly with local government. NHs not only play a role, they “have a profound effect on shaping the community and advocating on its behalf” (pp. 88-89). This analysis was based on semi-structured interviews with NH executive directors and City representatives.

This analysis also found that SV participants offered more references and detailed discussions of pre-crisis conditions, structural obstacles in the political, social economic and built environments, and power and equity considerations. They mentioned the shortage of affordable housing and new development displacing ethnocultural communities, the lack of public transportation exacerbating isolation and making it difficult for people to access resources, increasing property taxes driving away small businesses that were part of the ‘neighbourhood culture’, and even the design of the neighbourhoods limiting the “natural places for people to connect”. Social and economic systems are significant determinants of the impact of a crisis or disaster in addition to the circumstances of the crisis event and the implementation or shortcomings of emergency response. However, local government, in this case CoV, plays a key role in determining the spatial equity of many *resources*, *commodities* and *conversion factors* across the city’s neighbourhoods and therefore the (in)equity of what collective capabilities are available to local populations through all stages of a crisis.

Zahra emphasized power and (in)equity as important elements of community resilience, because emergencies can either reinforce power and inequity (the ‘resilience of inequity’) or reveal opportunities for change. She acknowledged the importance of “the strength of the people” and the work of the neighbourhood house in supporting the strength of people and community, but described the tension between a strength-based approach and the need to address systemic failures within the context of ‘community resilience’:

I feel like sometimes when we focus on strength-based approaches, you circle around the issue of what is actually wrong and you never really identify it and it’s really hard to move it forward, and so I ask myself sometimes why, why do we want to do that? Is it so that we don’t have to be holding the people who are in power accountable? Because if we focus on strengths we’re painting a rosy picture, and then nobody has to change anything (Esmail, SVNH, interview, February 18, 2021).

And yet, the word *power* did not appear in the interviews of CoV participants. They indicated that the City provided funding and flexibility in the use of funding during the crisis and reached out to NHs and other organizations to assess community needs in the first months of the pandemic, and City staff informally helped SVNH operationalize a space for a food distribution hub. However, they did not describe any strategic discussions or shared decision making between the City and community partners about

emergency response activities or approaches, even though resilient neighbourhoods or communities are a priority in the Vancouver resilience strategy. Community or neighbourhood resilience also did not appear as a planning domain or consideration in the CoV EOC document (2020) that outlined the experience of the first three months of the pandemic to guide planning by City departments moving forward. Looking at NHs and the City of Vancouver, Schmidtke (2021) found that a collaborative relationship has evolved and strengthened over decades but a power imbalance remains as engagement takes place on the City's terms and does not engage NHs regularly. (p. 79).

5.4. Case study data and analysis summary

Based on the data and analysis of this case study research project, SVNH played a critical emergency role, and this was possible because of the regular (non-emergency) community building role of the NH. This community building role consists of the SVNH physical spaces, programs, services, staff, volunteers and partnerships functioning as social territories for the social interactions and relations in residents' daily lives that constitute 'community as social process'.

At the onset of the pandemic, SVNH brought together various community *Resources, Commodities*, including: its own staff, volunteers, funders, financial resources, donations (food, phones for seniors, etc.), relationships with residents, partnerships and collaborations with local organizations, its own facilities and other physical spaces and assets. As an organization and physical space, SVNH *converted* these resources into *collective capabilities* and *functionings*. SVNH contributed to community resilience by contributing to collective capabilities that are considered central human capabilities (Nussbaum, 2003) before and during a time of crisis.

Analysing this case study through an adapted CA framework shows how SVNH along with other social purpose organizations or groups and their spatial assets function as networked social infrastructure and play a critical role in emergencies not only because they deliver services and respond to urgent material needs, but because they contribute to the social process of community and enable collective capabilities and functionings.

In the concluding chapters, I discuss policy and planning implications for city and provincial authorities and the owners and operators of social purpose spaces based on the findings of this case study, and identify areas for further research that are relevant for the fields of urban and disaster studies.

Chapter 6.

Policy and Planning Implications

All emergencies and disasters are different in regards to their exact circumstances, severity, scale and impact on different communities. People's needs (even urgent needs) may be different and changing in each situation. This is all the more reason why it is important for people to have continuity for individual "central capabilities" (Nussbaum, 2003) and collective capabilities.

While at first glance, the COVID-19 pandemic can be said to have presented unprecedented challenges to emergency planning and community social infrastructure that would preclude comparing this crisis to others, my research shows that the differences in implications for different forms of emergency may be less than they initially appear. In this case study, participants did not emphasize their experiences and challenges as being connected to unique aspects of the pandemic, and even made some connections to other possible emergency situations. One SVNH participant responded to the question of whether SVNH *should* play a role during emergencies by expressing a reluctance to intentionally sign up for this, recognizing the limitations of their facilities, but acknowledged that the NH would have to adapt and play a role in future emergencies:

We just kind of pivoted and did what we had to do. I don't believe this place [main building] is set up to do that. It's just, (sighs) you really notice the flaws in something like this [experience with the pandemic crisis]. As a building it's just not constructed – I mean, if we were to have an earthquake right now...we would again pivot and do what we could, but I don't know that we would actively seek that out (Interview, 2021).

Julio expressed a similar recognition that SVFP will play a role in future emergencies because the people that rely on the family place services and are part of its social network will turn to the SVFP staff and the space during a crisis:

What happens if there's an earthquake? Do my staff know the [points of contact for emergency response services and relevant government authorities]? We just know to run out on the field, but as an organization, we need to be more than that. Because people are going

to come to us and ask, 'where are these organizations?' (Interview, April 14, 2021).

This case study and many of its insights and related policy implications are relevant for a variety of emergencies and situations of uncertainty.

6.1. The role of the City

In the past decade, the CoV developed a healthy city strategy, a resilience strategy and most recently a social infrastructure strategy that directly address the concepts explored in this study. These strategies do not clearly define their understanding and use of the concepts *community* and *community resilience*. This study presents frameworks to conceptualize these concepts in a way that makes it possible to analyse the role of SVNH spatial arrangements as social and critical infrastructure that enables collective capabilities. This reveals some policy and planning recommendations that contribute to the CoV approach.

Supporting the critical role of community partners through emergencies

The CoV provides *Resources, Commodities*, allocates resources for *conversion factors* (public transit services, social purpose organizations and social services, civic facilities, public spaces, etc.) and functions as a *conversion factor*. CoV participants of this study described the CoV role in relation to community partners and SI as including: engagement; grant making for programs and as a 'stabilizing force' through core operational funding; small capital grants for facilities upgrades; 'taking inventory' of available assets and needs; helping with supply chain issues (for example, acquiring food or personal protective equipment supplies in bulk for community partners); acquiring and providing large equipment; and advocating to senior levels of government on behalf of community partners and residents.

However, the City needs a comprehensive and overarching policy on supporting and empowering community partners, particularly social purpose organizations and spaces, through a crisis (emergency preparedness, response and recovery) and in efforts to reduce disaster risk and vulnerability throughout the city in an equitable manner. The CoV resilience strategy does not constitute an overarching policy with specific roles and decision-making procedures for all the relevant departments. This

case study revealed that the City did not formally help its community partner, SVNH, find and locate facilities to use for their temporary food programs during the pandemic emergency; this work was left to SVNH, and to the ability of SVNH staff to draw upon informal relationships with a third party at the City to secure the only available and agreeable site in the vicinity. The new CoV SI strategy indicates that a centralized database and matching platform to help match available spaces with nonprofits is a key action with allocated funding “proposed to begin in Q1 2022” (City of Vancouver, 2021, p. 1, Appendix D). The SI strategy was being developed since before the pandemic, so it can be assumed that there was knowledge that the City needed or intended to provide this role, and yet this matchmaking effort was not declared an official service or function by senior City decision-makers. Further, the City’s permit department initially declined the SVNH permit application for the refrigerated shipping container set up as an emergency food distribution hub at the YMCA Langara site, for reasons that were not justifiable priorities in an emergency context. Competing objectives, procedures or awareness among departments or individuals within an organization can obstruct efforts to provide services, even during a crisis period. This is something the CoV must address.

This case study demonstrates that social purpose organizations like NHs and family places play a role through emergencies, sometimes taking on activities and services beyond their organizational mandates. CoV participants in this study and City documents recognize the ‘critical role of community partners’ and the City offers supports, including emergency grants. However, if SVNH and other NHs and organizations – and their spaces – play an important role during emergencies, they need to be properly resourced to do this. This resourcing needs to be ongoing – during ‘normal’ (i.e. non-emergency) times, so that an organization is best prepared to adapt and respond to the situation in the community as needed in an emergency or crisis, and so that the organization can continually build relationships with and among people in the community when a crisis happens. But there should also be dedicated resourcing for community partners to engage in planning and training and make the facilities upgrades or retrofits necessary for them to take on emergency-related functions. The people working in organizations such as SVNH and SVFP may be dedicated to serving the needs of residents through a crisis, but their own safety, health and workload capacity is

also important in terms of their entitlements as individuals and as an effective conversion factor for collective capabilities.

One of the six CoV SI strategy policy directions recognizes the role of SI, including local networks of SI, through the stages of emergencies. This policy direction focuses on supporting organizations to maintain their operations and services through crises and ensuring that there are enough existing, new and upgraded facilities to reduce risk and serve emergency related functions (CoV, 2021b, pp. 34-35, Appendix B). This is promising, though it should be guided by an evaluation of the spatial distribution of SI across small-scale neighbourhoods.

Investing in place-based community building and disaster risk reduction

When we're doing disaster risk reduction and planning, the City [of Vancouver] has to be looking at where people are not speaking up and plan for everyone (Esmail, 2021).

To address vulnerability, disaster risk, community building and community resilience in an equitable manner across all neighborhoods, the City will need to work with community partners that are part of residents' everyday lives and routines, maintain regular channels of communication with them, can anticipate and respond to needs quickly in a crisis, and can facilitate collective actions.

Metro Vancouver is growing rapidly with immigration and changing with development, redevelopment and displacement trends. This has several implications related to the insights from this study:

- It will be challenging to fully understand and anticipate all the needs and vulnerabilities of the population in varying circumstances and during emergencies when the population is changing, residents of neighbourhoods are changing, and peoples' socio-economic circumstances are changing.
- This will create an increased need for community building organizations and spaces to facilitate the social process of community, to serve as settings of public familiarity, to help people negotiate differences, and to strengthen social connection and belonging.
- Collective capabilities and collective resilience at the level of each small scale neighbourhood and at the city level will require more community-building spaces and ongoing efforts.
- This requires equitable spatial distribution across small-scale neighbourhoods, because many social services and community building efforts require proximity and accessibility to be part of people's everyday lives and routines.

- Given that CoV is committed to increasing housing density and the city's population is projected to grow, community building SI at the geographical small-scale neighbourhood level will be increasingly important.

It is important that the City (along with other levels of government and other funders) invests in more place-based community building SI (organizations, services, physical spatial assets) recognizing these implications. When the population of a city and its neighbourhoods is changing rapidly and newcomers arrive on a regular basis, the areas “where people are not speaking up” as Zahra describes may change often. The role of place-based community-building organizations that engage with diverse and extensive networks of local residents *and* welcome newcomers is even more important in these circumstances.

The CoV should evaluate disaster risk and plan for communities with a spatial equity approach based on attention to small-scale neighbourhoods. The CoV SI strategy recognizes that “local-serving multi-service” and “stage of life” facilities such as NHs, and senior, youth and family centres should be available through ‘equitable geographic distribution across neighbourhoods’ (CoV, 2021b, pp. 12-14, Appendix B), but it intends to use the larger geographical Network Areas for planning and analysis. Recent research on vulnerability to the impacts of disasters across Vancouver supports using the small-scale neighbourhoods for analysis. A research team at the University of British Columbia (UBC) conducted an assessment of neighbourhood socio-economic vulnerability indicators for the City of Vancouver at the small-scale neighbourhood level (using the Census Dissemination Area) as part of a larger project on disaster risk reduction in BC (Chang et al, 2021). Their analysis at this scale reveals small-scale neighbourhood ‘hotspots’ of different kinds of elevated social vulnerability to disasters, including within South Vancouver, that are not revealed at the level of the City's 22 local planning areas or the six Network Areas of its SI strategy.

Addressing Spatial Equity at the Small Scale Neighbourhood Level

The CoV should update the SI and resilience strategies and implementation plans with a citywide analysis of the SI facilities and spaces used or not used during the pandemic, and what disparities are revealed among the small-scale neighbourhoods. They should also examine the geographic distribution, availability and accessibility of the type of SI that actively focuses on community building, such as NHs, as a distinct category. The pandemic emergency and this case study highlight the importance of the

spatial considerations of non-emergency resource distribution, funding and equity at the level of small-scale geographic neighbourhoods. The spatial distribution of organizations and physical spaces dedicated to community building strongly determines whether residents have access or remain underserved in terms of social services, urgent needs, the processes of social connection, public familiarity and belonging, and the collective capabilities that are available to them.

SVNH leadership and staff were focusing on this issue before the pandemic through their emphasis on “Reframing South Vancouver” in their latest strategic framework. It also factored into their decisions regarding what programs and activities to deliver when the pandemic arrived, and shaped their Hub and Spoke approach for food security and other programs. The CoV SI strategy addresses many of these issues, and includes an initial analysis of the citywide geographical distribution of SI, the *Current State Data Book*. However, it still assesses South Vancouver as one Network Area for planning purposes, so it may continue to miss gaps in the provision of services that require proximity or in the resources and capacities of local SI networks.

Planning for the use of civic and social purpose spaces in emergencies

This study showed that the closure of other social purpose or civic spaces in South Vancouver, particularly the GVFB locations and community centres, during the pandemic crisis factored into the decision of SVNH as it weighed available food security services in the community and what it could take on in its own facilities in response to people’s needs. The City designated many CCs, libraries and parks across the city as Disaster Support Hubs, “to serve as public areas where citizens can gather following an earthquake or other natural disaster to share information and resources” (City of Vancouver, n.d.-a). These are a key element in the city’s resilience strategy and resilient neighbourhoods program. CCs in particular have large indoor and outdoor spaces that would have been useful during the pandemic where small indoor spaces created the highest risk of viral transmission, yet only a few of the city’s 24 CCs were used during the pandemic for emergency response purposes, primarily locations in the downtown area. Given the importance of outdoor spaces and large indoor spaces in the pandemic context, it is reasonable to expect that these facilities would be used for emergency community needs. Their governance model may play a role in why they were closed: CCs are owned by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, and they are jointly

operated with Community Centre Associations, or residents boards. The decision on whether to close or keep open each CC was up to each residents board.

At the start of the pandemic, on March 19, 2020, the City of Vancouver declared a local state of emergency, which would give the local government special emergency powers, including the authority to “acquire or use any land or personal property considered necessary to prevent, respond to or alleviate the effects of the emergency” (City of Vancouver, 2020, March 19), but by March 26, the Province announced that all municipal states of emergency are suspended (Kotyk, 2020, March 26). Vancouver enacted its local state of emergency under the Vancouver Charter, so the Province could not suspend it, but it ordered the City to enact no further orders without approval from the Province. Would different engagement around the role of Disaster Support Hubs in various crises have led to more of these facilities being available during the pandemic? Should local government have emergency authorities to order the use of civic community facilities that are needed during an emergency? These questions call for further study and planning.

In the City’s EOC COVID-19 planning guide, the recognition that “community centres are hubs for safety protection, and public hygiene” and “the provision of a safe place to rest or care for oneself plays a critical role in making the human right to water and sanitation a reality” are listed as lessons learned. However, there is no reference to the Disaster Support Hubs designation, and the Park Board’s closure of community centres is listed in the discussion of finance and budget challenges as an “outcome of the City’s response actions” with no further evaluation of the impact of the CC closures on facility needs and uses in neighbourhoods (City of Vancouver, 2021, pp. 32, 68).

There is no formal mechanism for deciding what neighbourhood facilities to use for different purposes during an emergency. SI organizations, services and spaces operate as a decentralized network. A benefit of this is that SI can adapt and respond to changing circumstances and needs quickly (as far as the available resources and capacities of each organization or space allows). At the same time, if there is a lack of coordinated planning and commitment to cooperate on emergency response, this decentralized and informal decision making aspect of the SI network in a neighbourhood or in the city will result in service gaps and disproportionate impacts on some communities.

Affordability and Displacement Pressures

One CoV participant in this study pointed to the resilience or sustainability of physical spaces as a distinct and related element of community resilience. There is a growing focus on social purpose real estate (SPRE) in Vancouver because affordability and displacement pressures affect social purpose spaces throughout the metropolitan area (REIBC & SPRE Collaborative, 2021). The CoV is on the right track of focusing on social infrastructure and developing an SI strategy, but it needs to ensure a spatial and equity lens that considers small-scale neighborhoods.

Ada Chan Russell, the CoV social planner working on the City's SI strategy, highlighted the need for policies and actions to protect social purpose spaces/facilities from displacement. At the time of the interview, the CoV SI strategy was not yet finalized or made public, so she referred to a policy recently adopted in the City of Richmond, the Non-Profit Organization (NPO) Replacement and Accommodation Policy, as an example that informed the CoV strategy development. Under this policy, if NPOs are displaced through development, they receive support for a temporary location or replacement space and moving costs, and they have the first right of refusal to return as a tenant in the new development. If the NPO tenant declines to return to the new development, the space is still reserved for an NPO that the City of Richmond approves. "I think it is part of the narrative of resilience of space. If you're there [the NPO and its physical space], you have people that are relying on you" (Chan Russell, interview, May 20, 2021).

SVNH participants did not discuss displacement pressures extensively, perhaps because the main building is not under these pressures, but they mentioned the motivations of landlords (wanting to sell the property, or changing their position on hosting tenants as tax laws change) as contributing to the permanent closure of some of SVNH's other sites (South Hill Neighbourhood Centre, South Vancouver Adult Day Centre), and the need to find new locations for activities and services.

As development, redevelopment and population growth continues in Vancouver and the region, and considering how the small scale neighbourhood is important for the social process of community and collective capabilities and functionings, the CoV SI strategy and other strategic plans and planning processes need to consider the

availability and protection of social purpose spaces across all small scale geographical neighbourhoods, and not only in new developments.

6.2. The role of provincial emergency management legislation

The Province of BC's Emergency Program Act (EPA) provides the legislative framework for the management of disasters and emergencies in BC. This legislation needs to acknowledge and ensure support for the role of existing local level SI during emergencies. The modernization or updating process of this 1993 legislation is nearing completion at the time of writing. Proposed changes consider the role of volunteers, non-governmental organizations, and service providers, and civil liability protection for volunteers (Emergency Management BC, 2019). To support SI, the EPA should also include protection from undue liability for social purpose organizations that use their facilities for emergency response activities, even if those activities are outside their mandate but fill a service gap in their neighbourhood. This would reduce the uncertainty for some SI operators that may understandably fear undue liabilities if they use their facilities during emergencies that involve various safety risks. This kind of protection in provincial legislation may have resulted in more CCs and other organizations using their physical spaces during the pandemic, but this requires further research. An analysis on the geographical distribution of SI and the role of place-based social purpose organizations and spatial arrangements should inform this key emergency management legislation so that it may in turn better support SI as critical infrastructure.

6.3. Owners and operators of social purpose spaces

At the time of this writing, SVNH participants said they were doing an internal evaluation of the pandemic experience to identify lessons to act on moving forward. There is little research on how many social mission or community based organizations conduct risk and preparedness planning (Rapeli, 2017), or the kinds of plans and measures these organizations adopt and their motivations for them (Tyler et al., 2020). There are no surveys to gather data on this topic from the nonprofit or SI sector in BC, but this is a common challenge for organizations in the social sector because they often

struggle with short-term project cycle funding and difficulty securing core operational or long-term funding.

This case study shows that it would be helpful for each organization to have an internal operations continuity plan¹⁷ and a plan for emergency situations that consider how residents may turn to the organization or its facilities during emergencies. SVNH and SVFP did not have such plans, and had to develop adapt their operations and services and develop COVID-19 safety plans as best they could. Participants from both organizations commented on the need to reflect on lessons learned from their experience with the pandemic crisis and apply them in their planning for future emergencies. Social purpose organizations and spaces operate and contribute to collective capabilities as a network, so it is important that they plan together as a network for continuity of services and potential emergency functions in each neighbourhood, with attention to spatial assets and how they will be used in coordinated and complementary ways during emergencies.

¹⁷ A continuity plan outlines procedures, arrangements and clearly defined responsibilities to ensure that an organization's basic, necessary functions and operations continue through a disruption. This may include procedures for setting up operations in an alternative location if the main location is inaccessible, or arrangements for who makes decisions and issues approvals if the executive director is not available.

Chapter 7.

Further Research Suggestions

This exploratory case study and theoretical analysis of collective capabilities, community as a social process, community resilience and social infrastructure reveals areas for further study that are relevant for the fields of urban and disaster studies. Disasters occur more frequently and their impacts are more costly today than in the 1970s and 1980s (FAO, 2021), and cities are increasingly focusing on resilience and reducing disaster risk. Financialized real estate markets in global cities create affordability and displacement pressures on social purpose organization that rent or own facilities, prompting Vancouver and other cities to start developing strategies to support SI. As city, regional and provincial governments develop strategies, plans and allocate resources, they need data and better understandings of how different kinds of SI support community building and community resilience, and in particular the role of physical spatial arrangements (built facilities, outdoor spaces, equipment and other assets) and their spatial distribution across neighbourhoods.

The role of SVNH in disaster recovery: First, this case study focused on the early emergency phase of the pandemic, but at the time of data collection, SVNH staff were already implementing and considering recovery-related activities (discussed in 5.1.6). Extending this research to cover the pandemic recovery phase would provide a more complete understanding of how SVNH and its spatial arrangements contribute to collective capabilities and resilience throughout a crisis.

Community-engaged research (CER) using the capabilities approach: There is a need for additional research on the role of place-based community-building organizations in the context of crises and disasters. A CER approach engaging organization staff, volunteers and local residents to apply a CA framework to their work, experiences and perspectives would reveal more extensive and nuanced insights about the role and impact of social purpose organizations and spaces like NHs for collective as well as individual or household capabilities before, during and after a crisis. This would provide a better understanding of capabilities that were available throughout the pandemic as *options*, compared to capabilities that were realized and put into action

(*functionings*). SVNH, CoV staff, and other organizations could use the CA framework with a community-engaged research approach as they reflect on the experience and lessons of the pandemic and plan for the future in a way that empowers local residents in disaster risk reduction while continuing to push for more equity through systemic and institutional change.

Decision making in the network of SI in an emergency context: This case study raises questions about how Community Centres, the GVFB and other organizations made decisions about whether and how to use their facilities during the pandemic, and why the CoV's Disaster Support Hubs were not activated. Research focused on how social purpose organizations and civic institutions make decisions about the use of their spatial assets together or based on the decisions of other organizations is needed. This research would inform potential changes to local policies and programs and provincial legislation like the BC EPA regarding protections, incentives and resources to enable more organizations to use their facilities in emergencies.

Capabilities in community resilience: An in-depth review of the community resilience literature using a capabilities approach lens would advance the conceptualization of community resilience in away that addresses key critiques of how the concept is theorized and used. This study demonstrated that a capabilities approach helps clarify and evolve the understanding of community resilience because it distinguishes clearly between available options (*capabilities*), choices, and action that is realized (*functionings*) at a collective level. The relational framework of the CA directly incorporates systemic contextual factors, including equity and power considerations that enable or obstruct the collective *functionings* of community resilience (5.3.2). Applying a CA lens to community resilience would build on the work of Jerolleman (2019) who applies a capabilities justice framework to disaster resilience and recovery. This approach would address disproportionate spatial distribution of resources and conversion factors that enable individual and collective agency for reducing disaster risk and making choices about emergency response and recovery.

A capabilities approach to infrastructure: There is a need for research to evaluate the current categories of CI in Canada along with social infrastructure according to a CA framework, building on the work of Clark et al. (2018) who applied a capabilities approach to the prioritization of CI in the US. This would provide a more

complete and deliberate analysis of the types of infrastructure that are critical during emergencies and in reducing disaster risk and vulnerability based on their role in enabling central human capabilities. The evaluation and prioritization of a wider range of infrastructure types, including decentralized SI networks, is necessary if governments are committed to investing in the infrastructure that is 'essential' to the wellbeing of people and communities, and to disaster risk reduction, as their CI definitions proclaim.

SI for community building and community resilience: Research related to community resilience and social infrastructure should articulate how it defines and uses the concept of *community*. This research project makes the case for using Blokland's framework to recognize community as an ongoing process made up of different types of interactions and relations, rather than equating community with strong social ties or shared identity, assuming it is inclusive, or basing it on geography. This will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how the physical spaces and assets of SI function as social territories that shape or even initiate social interaction, relationships, public familiarity and a sense of belonging. Further research on the interconnectedness of social infrastructure, community building and collective capabilities in the context of emergencies and resilience will help communities and cities allocate resources that contribute to inclusion, belonging, reduced social vulnerability and resilience outcomes in a more equitable manner throughout a city's neighbourhoods.

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Appendix A.

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Tell me about the activities of SVNH that take place in the main building - in normal times, before the pandemic.

How do staff use the space?

How do volunteers use the space?

How do people from the community use the space?

Is the space welcoming?

What other sites does SVNH own or rent, and use for activities?

Does SVNH collaborate with any other organizations with facilities in the neighbourhood?

What happened when COVID arrived in Canada and as distancing and other pandemic health and safety measures were announced early in 2020? Were there activities that had to stop, or be delivered differently?

What were the temporary emergency response programs that took place? (Who were the partners? What activities took place at the SVNH main building? Which rooms or areas?)

How did staff continue their work and how did work arrangements change?

Do you anticipate changes in programs and services that will be needed/in demand after immediate health crisis and distancing?

What role do you think the Neighbourhood House (facilities, staff) should play during emergencies, based on the experience during the pandemic?

Did people from the community request services or resources from SVNH during the pandemic emergency? Were there requests for services or resources that were different from SVNH's regular activities/services?

Were there activities that were considered but not implemented due to space or furniture/equipment limitations or limitations on the use of the space, such as health safety measures?

Were there any interactions with public authorities (health, City of Vancouver) during the pandemic, or as the pandemic distancing measures were becoming a possibility? Were there any guidelines from public authorities for using facilities during this crisis?

Do you have recommendations or suggestions you would give to public authorities for future emergencies?

Through all this experience, what is your understanding of 'community resilience'? Is this a useful concept or framing to think about?

Appendix B.

Timeline of decisions and events related to the use of space at SVNH

This timeline gives an overview of the key decisions and events mentioned above. It covers the study timeframe (March to September in 2020) and some key events before and after this period that relate directly to the temporary emergency response activities of SVNH of this period.

2018

- Greater Vancouver Food Bank (GVFB) and SVNH partner to set up a Community Food Hub at the SVNH main building.

January 2020

- SVNH completes its 2020-2023 Strategic Plan, with a focus on recognizing and serving the smaller scale neighbourhoods within South Vancouver.

March 2020

- Province of B.C. begins announcing public health and safety measures and declares (March 18) a provincial state of emergency due to the pandemic.
- SVNH closes its facilities to the public and transitions to remote and virtual engagement.
- GVFB consolidates operations and closes food hub locations, including the Community Food Hub at SVNH, leaving South Vancouver with no food bank location.
- SVNH begins temporary emergency response food programs: operating a Temporary Emergency Food Distribution Program where people pick up food once a week, and preparing and distributing family food hampers through the “Hi, Neighbour” Emergency Response for Families Program.

April 2020

- SVNH becomes a designated hub agency with the “Safe Seniors, Strong Communities” (SSSC) initiative.

August 2020

- The SVNH Temporary Emergency Food Distribution Program ends (August 20).
- Seniors Hub Council (SHC) and SVNH launch petition for more food security resources in South Vancouver.

September 2020

- SVNH re-starts childcare and some other activities at the main building, with limited numbers of people and by appointment only, to observe health and safety guidelines.
- “Hi, Neighbour” Emergency Response for Families Program ends.
- News articles published about the SHC and SVNH petition on the need for more food security resources in South Vancouver with the closing of the SVNH temporary food distribution after the GVFB centralized its distribution services (Steady, 2020; Uguen-Csenge, 2020).
- SVNH Executive Director and two consultants develop food security plan for South Vancouver, to continue addressing gaps in food resources and access during the ongoing pandemic and transitioning into post-pandemic approaches.

November 2020

- Food programs transitioning from emergency food distribution to long-term strategies:
 - SVNH becomes a Regional Community Food Hub with UWLM
 - Soft launch of the SVNH Food Hub and Spoke Model for Equitable Food Access, with the temporary space at the Langara YMCA for the SVNH Langara Food Operations Hub, and seven pop-up emergency food distribution locations across South Vancouver, with the collaboration of local partners

Appendix C.

Categories, subcategories and codes – Interviews of participants involved with SVNH

Category	Sub-Categories	Codes
Community capabilities	Capabilities - community needs, requests, capacities. Social connection or connectedness. Diversity. Seniors. Community/neighbourhood social, economic, environmental conditions (transit, economy, employment, housing). Power and decision-making. Advocacy, representation. Public authorities - City of Vancouver.	Community capacity, needs and requests - Space needs - Social Connection - Seniors - role of Seniors Hub Council (SHC) - Community connections, self-determined activities, community feedback, emergency reinforcing/amplifying – Employment – Work – Housing – other social infrastructure (SI) and social service organizations - community response network - "Living OUT and Visibly Engaged (LOVE) LGBTQ2s Lower Mainland CRN" - Food insecurity and seniors – Advocacy / Advocating - Transit – Language - Multi-cultural - Place-based – Volunteers – staff - SHC phoning people, making masks - Diversity on SHC – Racist statements within seniors programs – Connect with people - Small business – Economy – Seniors and Community Centres - Access to decision-makers – identifying with neighbourhood, 'place-making', advocating for themselves (to decision-makers) – Potential partners – Community planning - People's voices - Representation - Engaging with City – Language - Political engagement – Community informed programming - Seniors (computer and phone, info, connectivity, resources, housing) - SNC connection with NH –(staff, use space, seniors in isolation, workshops) - Seniors engagement by City and organizations in seniors planning - City of Vancouver (overwhelming emails, questionnaires to gather information - 'not front line')
COVID emergency role	COVID - emergency role: Information. Organizational capacity and resources. Creating expectations. COVID emergency role compared to earthquake and other emergencies.	Emergency role – Social Connection - Seniors – Food distribution - Disparity – Resources – Volunteering – Staff – information and communication - SVNH role as info provider - Organizational capacity (already online before COVID, remote work, equipment, technology, funders, staff, stress on organization and staff) – Staff and leadership during COVID - Role of leadership to be supportive – SVNH initiative and expectations post-COVID – 'only agency' 'felt alone' – mandate – 'mission creep' – COVID compared to other emergencies - earthquake - planning – disaster risk reduction (DRR) - equitable city

Category	Sub-Categories	Codes
COVID program/service adaptation	COVID – Economic (income tax). Families, children and youth. Food security. Organizational decision-making, planning, adaptation.	Childcare, Children and Youth activities - Community need - Core programming – Mandate – Volunteers – Food insecurity – Food distribution - Seniors frozen meals delivery - emergency role (food distribution, stigma, food is a right, people put boundaries, organizational competition, 'only agency', 'need to work together' including businesses) - Family food hampers - Kitchen – Garage – volunteers - pandemic policy, continuity plan – Staff autonomy – Staff in-person / remote work – COVID arriving and decision-making - Safety
Food	Food and community building. Food infrastructure - space and equipment needs.	Food - Community building - Transactional service - GVFB community food hub - community kitchen - network of social infrastructure (SI) - Food 'infrastructure' (equipment, space)
Post-COVID	Post-COVID	Community needs - loss and grief - healing - celebrating - connecting - fear and safety - employment - settlement services - newcomers - seniors isolation and technology affordability/ barriers - food and space for sociability - bringing programs back in-person and in hybrid format - anti-racism
Resilience	Resilience	"help others along" - "vibrant community" - "reach their potential" - "inclusive of people" - welcome - the multiple identities of 'big community' – advocate / advocacy - best life, equity, pre-emergency, people's strength and spirit, thrive in difficult circumstances, community, connecting for strength - community leaders / changemakers - connecting through SI, services, common purpose, relationships among organizations, 'hang out' - connections, systems of support, communication, coordination, capacity - equating it with 'survival' or 'enduring' - food - friends across different groups, connection, isolation - multiple understandings and uses of the word/phrase/frame, system, power, accountability, change, colonization and white supremacy, decision-making, social sector, status quo - other SI - spaces – prevention - people connections and mutual aid - recover, link to non-emergency time, vulnerability, inequality/disparity of resources, emergency reinforcing/amplifying, recovering as community - support systems - sustain ourselves (capabilities) - bounce back

Category	Sub-Categories	Codes
Resource Distribution, Funding and Equity	Fundors / donors (government, United Way, new Canada Healthy Communities Initiative). Funding. Resources. Equity	ANHBC and other capital projects - Fundors – Staff – Public authorities, City of Vancouver (food) – Decision-making when COVID arriving - Equity and systemic inequity – resource distribution - Other SI and social service organizations - public spaces - Community Centres - Libraries - basic needs - access to information - seniors - social isolation - investment / resources - staff stress - funding - resources, independent – competition among organizations for funding – United Way partner (funding, coordinating network, seniors, COVID program adaptation) - strength-based approaches - status quo
Social Infrastructure as a network	Network of Social Infrastructure (SI) - Community Centres. Decision-making. Early years programming. Food security. Hub and Spoke. Partners and use of SVNH space.	Connections – Services – Network - Emergency role (offer service based on expertise or support another organization with the expertise by assigning your staff to support them) Fraser Lands – ANHBC – Childcare - Each organization learned and responded in its own way - Food – Information - Formal and informal relationships, referral - Programs pre-COVID - Schools and youth - Seniors - Micro-neighbourhoods – Diversity – Social connection - Community Centres – Libraries - Decision-making, public authorities - Community Meetings (leadership and staff) - Early Years Programming - COVID (food, family food hampers - SVNH initiative to get food for distribution) – food 'infrastructure' (equipment, space) – Food Hub and Spoke (YMCA Langara, SVFP spoke) - GVFB (Community Food Hub at SVNH, welcoming space, 'fill a gap', people accessing food, community building and connections around food, kitchens, gardens, churches, decision-makers, seniors, vulnerable, transit, COVID-community need) – Community health center hub and spoke - Partner - Collaboration – Indigenous Early Years (IEY) Worker
Space uses	Outdoor spaces. Other social-purpose spaces. Network of SI and community. Social purpose space needs. Children and childcare. Space limitation before COVID and during COVID. SVNH space uses before and during COVID. SVNH sites (in addition to main building).	Outdoor space and activities, community requests, Seniors – Safety - Search for space post-COVID – Social Infrastructure and the role of space - How you present the space – welcoming space ("beat up" but "comfortable") - SV Family Place facilities and space uses/limitations – Children - Building designed for a NH – Comparison with Marpole NH - before COVID ('full' capacity - space as community base - 'noise of that place') - 'imaginative work' - spontaneous activities - food and social connections - Kitchen before COVID ("chaotic", 'busy') – Seniors – COVID (activities, safety, flow of people, children) – community groups and church renting SVNH facilities - SVNH and PIRS activities at SVFP - WorkBC – YWCA - Other SVNH sites (ownership issue, landlord pressure, tax law changes)

Category	Sub-Categories	Codes
SVNH community building purpose	NH community building purpose. SVNH mission. Role of social-purpose organization. SVNH programs and staff. SVNH economic/employment services.	community building and connection, connectedness - Ability to adapt - being close with community - Community Centres more transactional - comparison to NHs - community capacity, neighbour connections / relationships - community informed programming, self-determined / participant-led activities, staff supporting participant-led activities, seniors, food and community, 'living room' - equity - need for programs to bring people out - technology - language - helping each other - role of NH - community space - social infrastructure - Strategic plan - Programs (community programs, community connections, funding, staff, Staff diversity, volunteers, place-making, seniors, food security, youth, settlement services, newcomers, immigrants, employment, children) - Pre-COVID - 'all in person', 'lush' 'full' weekdays - Employment - provincial funding
What is a Neighbourhood	Neighbourhood scale and spatial factors. Micro-Neighbourhoods. 'Natural neighbourhood'. Place-making.	community advocacy - reframing South Vancouver, strategic plan, micro-neighbourhoods / communities, 'natural neighbourhoods', place-making, transit, neighbour social connections - network of SI, lack of services, organizational capacity – resilience – hub and spoke, going out in community, disparity of resources, infrastructure per capita