Palimpsests and Placemaking: a critical inquiry of Strathcona as home

by

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Abstract

This dissertation draws connections between non-Indigenous settlement in BC and urban renewal by conducting an interdisciplinary critical place analysis of the neighbourhood of Strathcona from the late-1960s to the late-1970s to understand the legacy of settler-colonialism embedded into residential environments. Since the dominant land use in Vancouver is residential, housing becomes the prevailing visual marker of the city's colonial history. The residential structures visually reinforced a largely white, middle-class, British material culture in the styles of architecture, the emphasis on property ownership, and the cultural norms attached to living within the dwellings, which became associated with ideas of a modern and progressive city. This dissertation examines the ways the City of Vancouver employed the tools of colonialism—mapping, surveying, using experts, and developing a master plan—to shape their urban renewal plans for the neighbourhood of Strathcona. It also focuses on how the Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association (SPOTA), a multilingual, multicultural, and multi-generational group of residents, organized and countered the hegemonic urban narratives and performances of domesticity rooted in the legacy of colonialism. They did so by using the very tools of the City to establish a counternarrative of neighbourhood rehabilitation as fostering a sense of inclusion and place within the city for renters and low-income homeowners. By drawing attention to the dual meaning of home as both a shelter that has an economic value, and as a site of belonging, this research establishes how Strathcona's residents successfully argued that the destruction of housing is also a destruction of identity, community, and relationships. It also illustrates how SPOTA, as the representative body of the residents, worked with all three levels of government to guide spending of federal, provincial, and municipal funding on the structural and social rehabilitation of their neighbourhood. This consensus decision-making model was the first time in Canada that urban redevelopment occurred with the active participation of residents, who successfully advocated that their sense of home—invested both in their individual dwellings and in the neighbourhood as a whole—had value and was worthy of preservation.

Keywords: Vancouver; Strathcona; activism; 1970s; home; settler-colonialism

Dedication

For my grandma, Dorothy Chutter, who supported my love of learning more about the City of Vancouver.

For my children, Benjamin and Jacob. Thank you for believing that I could get this done.

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While pursuing a PhD is a solitary endeavour, I am blessed to be surrounded by people who believed in me that I could get it done.

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To my friends and family—I think this is my last degree, maybe, give me a year, then we will talk. In no particular order—Lois Chutter, Robin Battley, Gordon Chutter, Maddeline Enns, Starla Beselt, Sheliza Metha, Patrick Inglis, Christine Lyons, Kim O'Donnell, Michael Dyce, Jean Quan, Daphne Wright, John Martin, Kayo Devcic, Jennifer Davis, and Isabel McCusker. Thanks for feeding me over the years, sending well-timed texts, and encouraging me to keep going. Thanks to Hayne Wai, Shirley Chan, and Doreen Lang for telling me your stories of living in Strathcona. To my run pals, just because I have finished my version of an ultra marathon does not mean I will train with you now! Thanks to Sandra Louie, Rick McVicar, Anders Nurmi, Mike Richen, Luciana Baraldi Ellis, Kenneth Ma, Bryan Cogan, Colin Chan, Linda Chan, Bo Chew, Sam Su, Tracy Cao, Evan Moore, Joe Racinelli, and Rainy Kent for keeping me company for hundreds of kilometers as I wrote in my head. Liam O'Flaherty, thanks for providing me with opportunities to test out ideas with your classes, and for celebrating every little step with me. Steve Burr, thanks for scooping me up in this past year and talking me through all my fears that I might not finish, and that I might have broken my brain. Your support was invaluable.

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List of Acronyms

AHOP	Assisted Home Owners Program
CMHC	Central (now Canada) Mortage and Housing Corporation
CPR	Canadian Pacific Railway
CVA	City of Vancouver Archives
LAP	Local Area Planning
NIP	Neighbourhood Improvement Program
NPA	Non-Partisan Association
RRAP	Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program
SPOTA	Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association
SRC	Strathcona Rehabilitation Committee
SRP	Strathcona Rehabilitation Project
SWC	Strathcona Working Committee
TEAM	The Elector's Action Movement
TPC	Town Planning Commission
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

House under renovations in Strathcona, 1973
Source: CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, COV-S511---: CVA 780-345 Box: F14-E-01 File 15.

Chapter 1.

Introduction

> *"You claim to give fair market value for a home, but is it fair? How do you judge the 'Value to Owner' when the home is in an area I have grown up in?" —Shirley Chan*[1]

Enraged by a notice from the City of Vancouver that their block of Keefer Street was slated for demolition starting on January 1, 1969, Mary Lee Chan renewed her resolve to do something to preserve her community. Her neighbourhood activism had been growing over the past decade. After renting for four years in Strathcona, the Chans purchased their house at 658 Keefer Street in 1953, without knowing that the entire neighbourhood was slated for demolition.[2] In order to gain support for neighbourhood preservation, Mary Chan "started with the Chinese Benevolent Association to fight urban renewal in 1956 or '57."[3] Accompanied by her pre-teen daughter, Shirley Chan, who acted as a translator, Mary Chan began knocking on doors to get her neighbours to sign petitions. Her husband, Walter Chan, wrote articles in a local Chinese newspaper explaining how houses were purchased by the City at below market value and how this illustrated the injustices of urban renewal.[4] In the hopes of protecting their home from the bulldozer, the Chan family started renovating their Edwardian style house in order to show that their home was not derelict and was instead worthy of preservation. By purchasing a house that reflected a British architectural aesthetic, they were participating in the dominant cultural narrative that property ownership would confer on them feelings of safety and belonging, and by renovating their home, the Chans were attempting to

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[1] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, 3, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 583-E-07 File 5.

[2] Daphne Marlatt and Carol Itter, *Opening Doors* (Medeira Park, Harbour Publishing Co. Ltd., 2nd ed. 2011), 222.

[3] Marlatt and Itter, *Opening Doors*, 223.

[4] "Walter and Mary Lee Chan House," Places That Matter: Community History Resource, Vancouver Heritage Foundation, accessed June 3, 2023, https://placesthatmatter.ca/location/walter-and-mary-lee-chan-house/.

perform acceptable domesticity by showing their attachment to and maintenance of acceptable domestic material culture. Yet, the notice from the City, in the fall of 1968, announcing the beginnings of urban renewal on their block, indicated that neither of these things was protecting them from the imminent reality of losing their home. Continued demolition of the residential neighbourhood closest to Chinatown was particularly devastating for bachelors and seniors who had formed their sense of community there after years labouring in British Columbia's resource industries, as a history of racial exclusion had limited Asians to living in this neighbourhood. And for families who had recently immigrated upon the repealing of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1947, living near Chinatown provided a sense of familiarity to begin to build a new life.

Despite the Chinese Property Owners Association having been formed in 1958, and despite the Association retaining a lawyer to present a brief to City Hall protesting the demolition of their neighbourhood, Phase I of a federally funded urban renewal plan for the Strathcona area of Vancouver began with the demolition of six predominately residential blocks in order to construct the 393 public housing units of Raymur Place beginning in 1959.[5] It marked the beginning of significant structural change in the neighbourhood, as concrete low-rise apartments replaced single-family dwellings and commercial areas along the eastern edge of the neighbourhood between Campbell Avenue and Raymur Avenue. These units had very little green space, and while the residents in these new public housing units were mostly families, predominately single mothers, there were few places for their children to play other than in common hallways.[6] The federally funded low-income housing did not match the national narrative that the suburban single-family dwelling surrounded by a yard was deemed the ideal home in which to raise children.[7] Phase II of urban renewal in the neighbourhood came with the

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[5] The Strathcona Rehabilitation Project Documentation and Analysis December 1975, 8, CVA, City Clerk's Office report files, COV-S40, Box 120-G-01 File 92.

[6] Board of Administration to City Council Re MacLean Park Playground Extension, October 10, 1972 MacLean Park Tenants Association 1972-73, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-C-7 File 10.

[7] In both Canada and the United States, a single-family dwelling surrounded by a yard was advertised as the optimal place to raise children because it was considered safer, and the abundance of green space was considered healthier. See Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (Basic Books: 1988); Robin Schuldenfrei, *Atomic Dwelling: Anxiety, Domesticity, and Postwar Architecture* (Oxon, GB: Routledge, 2012); Veronica Strong-Boag, "Home dreams—women and the suburban experiment in Canada, 1945-60," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. LXXII no. 4 (Dec 1991): 471. –504; Veronica Strong-Boag, "Canada's Wage-Earning Wives and the Construction of the Middle Class, 1945-60," *Journal of*

construction of MacLean Park Public Housing in 1961, which demolished an additional five blocks, displacing 1000 people on the western boundary of the neighbourhood.[8]

Additionally, the City of Vancouver had negotiated with the Board of Parks and Public Recreation to expropriate the only public park within the neighbourhood to start construction of this public housing project, thus forgoing the need to wait for existing housing stock to be acquired and demolished. The park had a small wading pool and supervised summer programs for children; a new park was going to be built on a different block adjacent to Strathcona Elementary School, but it would require the acquisition and demolition of all the existing housing stock there, and there was no assurance that the new park would be adequate in meeting the needs of the community. As a result of towers being constructed on the former park space, the children in Strathcona had even fewer safe spaces to play, and once construction was completed there were inadequate play areas provided within both Raymur Place and MacLean Park Public Housing. By 1965, both the western and eastern edges of the neighbourhood were reshaped to reflect the City of Vancouver's idea of a modern and progressive urban environment. The range of housing options to accommodate families in an affordable manner was diminishing. Phase III, which prompted the notice about the imminent demolition of the Chan family home along with their entire block, would demolish the remaining industrial, commercial, and residential structures and recreate the area into a cohesive urban form with a new commercial destination on Hastings Street, changes to existing streets to accommodate more traffic to downtown, and more residential towers. Phase III would destroy the rest of the neighbourhood; in Mary Chan's eyes, however, it was a neighbourhood worth saving.

This dissertation explores a moment in Vancouver's municipal history when gendered, raced, and classed dimensions of domesticity, home ownership, and ideas of home came to the forefront of decisions regarding community displacement and land development. The City of Vancouver viewed the land in and around Strathcona as an economic commodity to be bought, developed, and sold in order to shape the area to conform to a modern and progressive vision of the city. This top-down view of the

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Canadian Studies Vol. 29 no. 3 (Fall 1994): 5-25; Graham Allan and Graham Crow, eds, *Home and Family: creating the domestic sphere* (Hamsphire: Palgrave, 1989).

[8] The Strathcona Rehabilitation Project Documentation and Analysis, 8, CVA, City Clerk's Office report files, COV-S40, Box 120-G-01 File 92.

neighbourhood eliminated the residents from the City of Vancouver's vision of the future. The residents, however, starting with the organizing efforts of Mary Chan, sought to preserve their sense of home in Strathcona from the bottom-up. The clash between the City of Vancouver and the residents in Strathcona over the proposed Phase III urban renewal plan reveals the settler-colonial norms attached to housing and domesticity; the City wanted to preserve these norms through the regulation and redevelopment of housing, while the residents desired to maintain their sense of home through the rehabilitation of the existing housing stock and improvements to the structural and social aspects of their neighbourhood. It is the performative tension between these different senses of house and home that forms the subject of this dissertation.

Growing Citizen Discontent

Mary Chan and her family organizing their community to take action against the City of Vancouver's plan to demolish the rest of their neighbourhood was preceded by other less successful attempts at neighbourhood organizing by the Chinese Property Owners, the Italian Property Owners, and the Chinese Benevolent Society. Recognizing there was a growing discontent in the neighbourhood due to the state of housing insecurity, the loss of housing during Phases I and II of urban renewal, and the lack of park space, the United Community Services set up the Strathcona Area Council on May 5, 1965 as an avenue for residents to express their concerns about neighbourhood redevelopment.[9] However, it was not representative of residents in the whole area, nor was it bilingual, and was mostly interested in "compensation and relocation assistance," rather than providing an opportunity for both the residents and the City of Vancouver to work together to develop a clear neighbourhood plan that recognized the residents' desire to remain in their homes.[10] The Strathcona Area Council offered a guise of open

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[9] The United Community Services (UCS), previously called Community Chest and Council, and later became the United Way, was responsible for providing social planning to the City of Vancouver. It divided the City of Vancouver into 22 neighbourhoods in order to assess and then ensure social services were equitably distributed, and to coordinate local services. The City of Vancouver adopted these neighbourhood designations in 1964. The chair of the United Community Services was Arthur Block, who also owned Block Bros Realty, a prominent real estate corporation in Vancouver. In 1966, the Social Planning Department was established and the UCS worked collaboratively with social planners. See Miu Chung Yan and Sean Lauer, *Neighbourhood Houses: Building Community in Vancouver* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2021).

[10] Questions and Answers or An Analysis of The Strathcona Rehabilitation Project's Planning Process, 5. CVA AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-7 File 4.

communication rather than genuine engagement, and sought to support and approve "urban renewal programs because the expectation [was] that they will yield a net social benefit."[11] Unlike the other neighbourhood groups headed by property owners or associations within Strathcona, the consultant heading the Strathcona Area Council, Elio Azzara, did not live in the area, and so did not understand the unique needs of the residents, nor the value of the neighbourhood to them; furthermore, he was also a property developer who could benefit from private developers getting access to city-owned land within Strathcona, and as a result the residents grew increasingly frustrated that Azzara did not represent their views to City Council.[12] The Strathcona Area Council organized a public meeting held at Strathcona Elementary School on November 14, 1967, and the City of Vancouver planning staff were available to answer the questions of concerned residents regarding the construction of the Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts, which would eliminate additional housing belonging to the predominately Black community on the western edge of the neighbourhood.[13]

The Strathcona Area Council did not meaningfully engage with the residents of the neighbourhood, nor did it advocate for their concerns that Chinatown would be destroyed with the expansion of the Carrall Street alignment. This was because the meeting was merely an information session, as the City of Vancouver had no intention of stopping the demolition in their neighbourhood in order to expand the freeway system through the city. Not only were the residents within Strathcona against the expansion of freeways through their neighbourhood, but many other residents in Vancouver opposed the destruction to the city that the expansion of transportation networks would bring.[14] When the City of Vancouver halted the development of the freeway system and scrapped plans for the redevelopment of the downtown core in December 1967, the residents of Strathcona felt that their neighbourhood would be protected from further demolition.

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[11] The Strathcona Rehabilitation Documentation and Analysis, 6; emphasis in original, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-8 File 5.

[12] Shirley Chan, "An Overview of the Strathcona Experience with Urban Renewal by a Participant," For ACTION RESEARCH Secretary of State Dept. Vancouver BC March 31, 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-C-03 File 2.

[13] Wayde Compton, *After Canaan: Essays on Race, Writing, and Region* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2010).

[14] Walter Hardwick, "A city to serve the people" *The Vancouver Sun* December 5, 1967.

However, when letters arrived from the City of Vancouver in the fall of 1968 informing residents that the 600-block of Keefer Street would be demolished, it became clear to many residents that their desire to remain in their neighbourhood had gone unheard. The residents recognized that the City of Vancouver viewed their aging housing as something that should be replaced, and not as a home where they raised their children, lived with extended families, and supplemented their income by running a range of home-based businesses. By the fall of 1968, the residents had faced over a decade of housing insecurity and witnessed the slow destruction of their neighbourhood as the City halted civic maintenance because they had planned to demolish it in the future; as a result, sidewalks, streetlights, and paving had not been maintained for over a decade. Furthermore, the City continued to buy up properties only to let them become derelict over time because once the entire block was acquired all the houses would be demolished. Mary Chan resumed her door knocking in the fall of 1968, accompanied by her daughter, Shirley, now a university student, or Mary's friend Sue Lum, who likewise acted as a translator; residents needed to be aware that they too would lose their home in the continued demolition of the neighbourhood as Phase III was set to begin in January 1969. Many of the people who were displaced during the construction of Phase I and Phase II were offered priority to move back into the new public housing units or to relocate to the newly constructed Skeena Terrace near Boundary Road and Lougheed Highway when it was completed in 1965; however, the majority of those who lost their residences were existing homeowners, who did not want to become renters in much smaller dwellings. For many of the displaced residents, the issue was not just relocating to a new house; it was finding "a house of the size that an extended family could live in. It was a house where [their] life patterns wouldn't be disrupted."[15] Many of the residents had already paid off their mortgage on their demolished Strathcona home and housing elsewhere in the city was more expensive.[16] Furthermore, the City of Vancouver was only offering market value for their houses, which had been artificially depressed due to the fact that the neighbourhood had been slated for redevelopment for over a decade. The City's desire to demolish the neighbourhood in order to create a new urban form was at odds with the residents' desire to preserve their sense of home. For them, their

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[15] Marlatt and Itter, 223.

[16] Richard Nann, "Relocation of Vancouver's Chinatown Residents under Urban Renewal," *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 3, no. 2 (November 1975): 125-130.

house was more than an economic commodity; it allowed them to create a life in the city that was meaningful to them.

The growing discontent in Strathcona was mirrored in other neighbourhoods across Canada as urban renewal in lower income areas of cities and rapid construction of public housing became the norm in the post-war period.[17] The public housing units were often poorly constructed and led to other social problems that the state was unprepared to manage. These new public housing units were in predominately poorer parts of the city, and mostly housed racialized minorities. The process destroyed neighbourhoods and broke community connections, but was seen as the most expedient way to solve urban decay or "blight" and increase the transportation infrastructure through cities as they transitioned to an automobile culture.[18] After a decade of national demolition and construction in urban areas, Paul Hellyer, Minister of Transport, initiated a Task Force on Housing in 1968 in order to collect stories and data from those directly affected by urban renewal.[19] Hellyer traveled across Canada with a team of people to meet directly with discontented residents. On November 8, 1968, Hellyer arrived in Vancouver to talk to the residents of Skeena Terrace. Many families and seniors, who lost their housing during the construction of Raymur Place and MacLean Park, were relocated there. Located on the eastern edge of Vancouver near Boundary and Lougheed Highway, the residents had lost their walkable connection to Chinatown and employment opportunities in downtown. Fred Soon, a homeowner who had lost his house in Phase II, and Shirley Chan, daughter of Mary Chan, went to the open meeting to share their stories and concerns about the Strathcona neighbourhood facing continued demolition.

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[17] Sean Purdy, "By the People, For the People: Tenant Organizing in Toronto's Regent Park Housing Project in the 1960s and 70s," *Journal of Urban History* Vol. 30 No. 4 (May 2004): 519-548; DOI: 10.1177/0096144204263804; Benjamin Looker, *A Nation of Neighbourhoods: Imagining Cities, Communities, and Democracy in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

[18] Tina Loo, *Moved by the State: forced relocation and the making of the good life in postwar Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019); David Ley, "The New Middle Class in Canadian Central Cities," in *City Lives and City Forms* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 15, https://doi.org/10.3138/j.ctt2ttmhz.6.

[19] Despite the fact that Canada was predominately urban by 1960, there was no Minister of Housing in the federal government. Hellyer initiated the Task Force on Housing because he recognized much of the housing being demolished in order to construct new highway developments belonged to poor and BIPOC communities.

For the rest of the following day, Hellyer attended public meetings held at the Vancouver Art Gallery to hear briefs from other concerned citizens and organizations about the state of housing affordability in Vancouver. Hellyer publicly stated that "the conventional wisdom is that public housing is the answer to the housing shortage … but the people whose lives are affected by it don't like it."[20] Bolstered by Paul Hellyer's recognition of their plight, the Chans hosted a meeting in their home on the evening of November 9th to discuss future plans. At this meeting, "everyone agreed that personal contact was important to arouse the interest of all the residents."[21] They agreed to expand their door knocking. The Strathcona Area Council, again, tried to quell the growing discontent by hosting a meeting on November 12, 1968, to figure out the best way to disperse information to residents in the community about the impeding demolition of Strathcona. There was no attempt to have the meeting translated to include non-native English speakers. By the fall of 1968, the residents in Strathcona had had enough of the negative characterization of their neighbourhood, and they recognized the failure of the Strathcona Area Council to advocate for their needs; this was combined with their property values being depressed because of zoning changes, and the fact that despite continuing to pay property taxes, civic maintenance hadn't been undertaken. As a result, neighbours opened their doors after work in the evenings to listen to Mary Chan encouraging them to come out to a several meetings held at the Chans' house in November 1968 to share concerns and strategize about how they would approach the City of Vancouver to halt their schemes for urban renewal.[22] With growing support from inside and outside of the neighbourhood, combined with disappointment over the lack of advocacy by the Strathcona Area Council, the Chans organized a public meeting on November 23, 1968, at Gibbs Boys Club. Sixty people came out to raise their concerns—four times the size of previous concerned citizens meetings at the Chan's home. Walter Chan chaired, and it was translated into Chinese by Pak Lee. At this

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[20] "Hellyer Claims Residents of Public Housing Unhappy," *The Vancouver Sun* November 9, 1968.

[21] "An Overview of the Strathcona Experience with Urban Renewal by a Participant," CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-C-03 File 2.

[22] The meeting was held on November 15, 1968, and included UBC Law students—Mike Harcourt, Peter Hart, Harvey Field, Leo McGrady—as well as Penelope Stewart, a UBC Social Work student, and Monique Hebert, a SFU student. The network of supporters was growing beyond the residents in the neighbourhood. For example, Margaret Mitchell, from the Alexandra Neighbourhood Services Association, also offered to help the residents take action against urban renewal.

meeting, they decided to launch a neighbourhood-wide door-to-door campaign to gather more support to voice their concerns to City Council. Meanwhile, having collected stories and concerns from across the nation, on November 26, 1968, Paul Hellyer announced a federal freeze on funding urban renewal projects, noting: "It's been cheaper to start from scratch and rebuild—this is now being questioned by the Task Force which favours rehabilitation. The federal government pays 50% of Urban Renewal costs and they are in a strong position to set the direction of Urban Renewal."[23] The City of Vancouver would be unable to undertake the planned Phase III without federal funding; this allowed residents some time to organize and figure out the best approach to getting their demands heard. At the same time, the City of Vancouver promptly issued an appeal of the Hellyer decision because Phase III of their urban renewal plan in Strathcona was slated to begin in January 1969, and they did not want to delay.[24]

Hearing about the growing community organizing, the Strathcona Area Council held another public meeting on December 4, 1968, at Strathcona Elementary School, in order to assure residents that the City was aware of their needs. Mayor Tom Campbell attended and pledged his support for the Chinese community as part of his re-election campaign promises; however, he did not promise to halt urban renewal.[25] Realizing that clear bilingual communication was the most effective strategy for neighbourhood mobilization, the committee formed at the Chans' house organized themselves with block captains and divided up the thirty-two blocks slated for demolition in early 1969. Block captains were in charge of going door-to-door to hand deliver a flyer inviting residents to attend another public meeting at Gibbs Boys Club on December 14, 1968, at 8:00 pm. Over 500 people attended, representing approximately 63% of the families living in the area.[26] And it was at this particular meeting, which capped an intensive two-month period of grassroots organizing that the Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association (SPOTA) was formed "… to ensure that the people who live in the area will

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[23] Hellyer announced the freeze on urban renewal funding ahead of the publication of the Task Force findings. Vancouver was one of the last cities he had visited, and his decision was based on the data collected over the fall. The Task Force report was published in January 1969. CVA, SPOTA fonds, SPOTA Early History April 1971 to July 1971 AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-4 File 9.

[24] "City protest for Hellyer," *The Province*, November 27, 1968.

[25] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5.

[26] SPOTA Early History April 1971 to July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-4 File 9 .

be fully informed and that their interests and their community will be protected."[27] A fourteen-member Executive committee was elected, with Harry Con, Walter Chan, and Sue Lum acting as co-chairs of the committee. Block captains were formally appointed to communicate directly with residents on a door-to-door basis. At this meeting, "Mrs Bessie Lee suggested that more non-Chinese people be recruited to join" to ensure that the committee represented the multi-cultural neighbourhood more accurately.[28] In these and other ways, SPOTA was established to reflect a multilingual, multicultural, and multigenerational collective of residents who were united as both homeowners and tenants to preserve their neighbourhood. The residents knew the value of their homes to them personally as well as the value of the connections to each other and the wider neighbourhood; however, it took the withholding of federal funds to the City of Vancouver to stop the urban renewal scheme because without the support of the federal government, the provincial government also withdrew their portion of funding, which meant the City of Vancouver could not afford to carry out Phase III of urban renewal based on their municipal budget. In protesting the City's urban renewal schemes in their neighbourhood, SPOTA exposed the colonial structures embedded in the ideas of domesticity and challenged the role of housing in the city. By drawing attention to the dual meaning of home as both a shelter that has economic value, and as a site of belonging, the residents illustrated how the destruction of housing is also a destruction of their identity, their community, and their relationships. The residents successfully advocated for the recognition of their personal histories and attachments to land as having greater value to housing as just an economic commodity.

SPOTA, as the representative body of the residents, guided both the structural and the social rehabilitation of their neighbourhood from the bottom-up. This consensus decision-making model, which interacted with the three levels of government, was the first time urban redevelopment occurred in Canada with the active participation of residents, who successfully advocated that their sense of home both in their individual dwellings and in the neighbourhood as a whole had value and was worthy of preservation.

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[27] "An Overview of the Strathcona Experience with Urban Renewal by a Participant," CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-C-03 File 2.

[28] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5.

For the purposes of this dissertation, and the need to narrow its scope, I will only be discussing urban renewal as it pertains to one neighbourhood in Vancouver, Strathcona. By advocating for something different, so that people could affordably remain in the city centre and were not pushed to the margins based on their ethnicity and income, SPOTA revealed that it was not only the domestic structure residents lived in that had value, but also their connections to each other, places of employment, quality of life, and visions for the future. Allowing residents to guide the use of urban renewal funds in this "experimental project" for neighbourhood rehabilitation reveals how their sense of home triumphed over the economic value of housing.[29] Furthermore, the Strathcona case study illustrates an example of how the federal, provincial, and municipal governments worked together with residents in order to ensure that their sense of home was not just preserved in their individual dwellings, through rehabilitation and the construction of new affordable housing, but also in the neighbourhood as a whole through the development of community spaces and parks.

While this model of resident inclusion in urban redevelopment schemes did not set precedence for future development in Vancouver, it is important historically for the ways in which SPOTA challenged the for-profit model of urban development by ensuring funding was available for rehabilitating the existing housing stock and new housing was affordable for low-income families.[30] It is also important for the ways SPOTA advocated for the social and structural improvements of their neighbourhood to happen in tandem with improvements to housing stock. SPOTA's neighbourhood activism revealed the importance of Strathcona as place for the people who lived there.

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[29] Board of Administration documents refer to the rehabilitation of Strathcona as an "experimental project" and repeatedly stress that involving citizens in urban rehabilitation will not be repeated elsewhere in the city. When TEAM was elected to the majority of City Council in 1972, they fired Gerald Sutton Brown as the chair of the Board of Administration, and planning processes began to involve citizens at the neighbourhood level.

[30] Unlike Phases I and II, which constructed public housing, Phase III was intended to expand private development in the neighbourhood with the construction of taller towers, similar to the development of the West End in the 1960s. There were also plans to construct a new destination shopping area off Hastings Street, which would demolish much of the housing and replace it with parking lots and commercial buildings. Funding from the federal and provincial governments was to upgrade the civic infrastructure for the anticipated higher density and to pay for the demolition of existing structures.

Interdisciplinary Analytical Framework

The discussion of activism in Strathcona could be framed as another example of citizen discontent in the long 1960s.[31] As Sean Purdy suggests, "housing struggles [are] rarely mentioned in general accounts of the upheavals of 1960s North America," despite the fact that poor public housing and urban renewal were key factors in citizen discontent.[32] Resident activism in Strathcona sits aslant most of the existing scholarship on the topic because it was a multicultural, multilingual, and multigenerational group of both homeowners and tenants who wanted to preserve their neighbourhood as home. Other scholarship on resident activism focuses on more homogenous groupings based on race and/or class, or housing tenancy;[33] SPOTA's organizing was significant because it crossed these lines. This dissertation examines the ways in which SPOTA organized and countered the hegemonic urban narratives and performances of domesticity rooted in the legacy of colonialism by working to rehabilitate their neighbourhood and to construct new housing to foster a sense of inclusion and place within the city for renters and low-income homeowners. Since Vancouver's urban development has been shaped by settler-colonialism, I draw connections between non-Indigenous settlement in BC and urban renewal by conducting a critical place inquiry of the neighbourhood of Strathcona from the late-1960s to the late-1970s. Indigenous scholar Eve Tuck and Marcia McKenzie, an interdisciplinary scholar, define critical place inquiry as "research that takes up critical questions and develops corresponding methodological approaches that are informed by the embeddedness of the social life in and with places."[34] SPOTA's activism calls attention to the lack of recognition by the City of Vancouver Planning department of the impact of urban renewal on the social lives embedded within

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[31] Bryan Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Lara Campbell, Dominque Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey (eds.), *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); Dimitry Anastakis, ed., *The Sixties: Passion, Politics, and Style* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008).

[32] Sean Purdy, "By the People, for the People: Tenant Organizing in Toronto's Regent Park Housing Project in the 1960s and 1970s," *Journal of Urban History*, Vol 30 No. 4 (May 2004): 520.

[33] Benjamin Looker, *A Nation of Neighbourhoods: Imagining Cities, Communities, and Democracy in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Amanda I. Seligman, *Chicago's Block Clubs: How Neighbors Shape the City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[34] Eve Tuck and Marcia McKenzie, *Place in Research: Theory, Methodology, and Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 2.

Strathcona. This is important, Edward Casey argues, because "*we live in places*. So it behooves us to understand what such place-bound and place-specific living consists in."[35] I argue that simultaneously under-explored is the destruction of the sense of place and home held by existing residents when a new residential, commercial, and industrial areas are constructed on the land. As this dissertation will show, this was first time in Canada that a group of residents were given an opportunity to rehabilitate their neighbourhood to preserve their sense of place in the area they were currently living in.

In order to explore the importance of place, Tuck and McKenzie support critical place inquiry as a theoretical framework because it draws from a variety of disciplines to construct a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of place. They advocate addressing "spatialized and place-based processes of colonization and settler colonization" through critical place inquiry because it "works against their further erasure or neutralization."[36] Critical place inquiry "entails, at a more localized level, understanding places as both influencing social practices as well as being performed and (re)shaped through practices and movements of individuals and collectives."[37] Analyzing the activism of SPOTA and the urban rehabilitation of Strathcona through this kind of interdisciplinary lens brings together the social relations, collective memories, and material culture of the neighbourhood, and juxtaposes it with the City of Vancouver's agenda of urban redevelopment in order to understand how the legacy of settler-colonialism and its structure is embedded in residential environments. While conventional approaches to understanding urban development would be framed through the lens of history, urban studies, or legal geography, I have decided to pair critical place inquiry with performance studies as my theoretical frameworks in order to show how Strathcona is an important place for the residents because "performance analysis incorporates critical theories of social interaction, of the relationship between space and subjectivity, of human behaviour as signifying practice of the material and embodied basis of identity formation."[38] These frameworks shed light on the relationality of residents to each other and to the built environment and illustrate how the tools used by

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[35] Edward Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), xiii; italics in original.

[36] Tuck and McKenzie, *Place in Research*, 19.

[37] Tuck and McKenzie, 19.

[38] Shannon Jackson, *Lines of Activity: Performance, Historiography, Hull-House Domesticity* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 8-9.

the state to justify the oppression of a group of people can simultaneously and counter-politically be used by the same oppressed people to tell their story of belonging and connection. Kim Solga argues “that performance is the most apt discourse for understanding our interactions with our cities, the one best able to represent the nuance, diversity, and lived experiences of our urban spaces.”[39] As she argues, performance captures both the formal and informal ways citizens negotiate their physical, material, and psychic interactions with the city.[40] The focus of performance studies research, in understanding home in the city, illustrates and critiques how people interact with, use, and respond to urban environments, which I suggest allows for a greater understanding of how colonialism is a structure that is performed daily. While settler-colonialism has largely guided the physical and material development of urban environments, it continues passively and invisibly as a structural framework that has been internalized in the bureaucratic approaches to urban development and the built form. Simultaneously, the residents were actively reshaping the urban environment in their own performances of domesticity and place-making in where and how they lived.

In order to understand how housing shapes the performance of both political and social spaces, I am drawing from architecture historian Gray Read, who suggests that, “to cast buildings as players in urban life suggests that their primary value is not in what they are but in what they do, as acts of imagination in and of the world.”[41] Specifically, I argue that houses should be examined for what they *do* in cities. While the obvious answer is that they provide a shelter for inhabitants, I suggest that they also play a larger role in defining acceptable domestic material culture, which shapes a people’s understanding of their place within the society by how and where they live. As a structure on the landscape, houses enact a dual performance depending on who is defining their “acts of imagination.” Within the colonial city, housing represents the imagined ideas of progress, civilization and order over the natural landscape based on where they are placed and how they are designed; in this, they are participating in the scripting of a space to become a reflection of the metropole guided by the political views

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[39] Kim Solga, with D.J. Hopkins and Shelley Orr, “Introduction: City/Text/Performance,” in *Performance and the City*, eds., D.J. Hopkins, Shelley Orr and Kim Solga (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 3.

[40] Solga, “Introduction,” 5.

[41] Gray Read, “Introduction: The Play’s The Thing,” in *Architecture as a Performing Art*, eds., Marcia Feurstein and Gray Read (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 5.

of those in power. Houses also foster an imagined future for the inhabitant by how they are used and lived in, which creates a sense of place or home; the inhabitant's performance of dwelling and domesticity captures more of the emotional, affective, and relational aspects of urban life. Both of these performances occur simultaneously within the same structure. Performance studies offers a way of looking at urban redevelopment in the post-war period that highlights the nuance and the complexity of the relationships between people, the structures in which they live, and the control of the state in trying to reshape the image of the city to reflect a narrow view of housing aesthetics. In this way, looking at domestic spaces becomes an important part of understanding how different forms of housing shaped expectations of what the city should not only look like in the post-war period, but also who should live where, and how they should make a home in the city.

I am using historical geographer Cole Harris' definition of colonialism to guide the formulation of my argument; he states that "colonialism—particularly in its settler form—is about the displacement of people from their land and its repossession by others."[42] The construction of housing by settlers was a way of securing ownership of land, and followed a colonial pattern of exclusion and dispossession, where Indigenous peoples' existing attachment to where they were living was denied because they did not have proof of ownership in the form of title to land. As Brenna Bhandar argues, "the appropriation and cultivation of land was integral to the progression from a state of nature to a civilized state of being."[43] It rested on a view that the land to be developed was a *tabula rasa*—an empty area. This top-down view of land erased existing uses and attachment to land with the aim of civilizing the area by imposing a colonial view of order and rationality through the construction of housing. Historian Paige Raibmon argues that "late nineteenth-century colonial society cast domestic spaces and domestic goods as material markers of civilization."[44] The single-family dwelling replaced the multi-family longhouses in British Columbia as missionaries and early settler-colonists sought to civilize the Indigenous population by forcing them to live in small houses separated from

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[42] *Cole Harris, Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), xxiv.

[43] Brenna Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 48.

[44] Paige Raibmon, "Living on Display: Colonial Visions of Aboriginal Domestic Spaces," *BC Studies* 140 (2003/4): 71.

their extended families. Historian Adele Perry argues that the construction of single-family dwellings was not only attempted to civilize Indigenous communities, but also cemented the importance of domestic spaces as the aspirational benchmark of civilization. She suggests that colonial-settlers had two roles in the growing society: first, to displace the Indigenous populations; and, second, to "assert a specific brand of white dominance."[45] Perry states that this "white dominance" would best be established with an influx of British settlers. Wealthy British settlers arrived with money to invest in businesses and a desire to cultivate the landscape to reflect their socioeconomic status. Other immigrants arrived hoping to become wealthy, and to take advantage of new opportunities available in a growing city. Housing was and continues to be perceived as natural and logical in settler society because shelter is an essential part of human survival; however, the types of housing constructed, the ownership model, and the planning structure are all based on a colonial paradigm.

In addition to securing ownership of land, colonialism attempted to destroy the sense of place Indigenous communities held and replaced their stories of belonging in relation to the land with a new set of stories that privileged home ownership and leisure as the appropriate uses of land in urban environments. Appropriate uses of land shaped the cultural norms, which Cole Harris argues should be "treated as a primary locus of colonial power."[46] The intertwining of culture with policies and procedures guiding appropriate land uses shapes settler-colonialism as a structure. Anthropologist Patrick Wolfe argues that "when invasion is recognized as a structure rather than an event, its history does not stop."[47] He asserts that "narrating that history involves charting the continuities, discontinuities, adjustments, and departures whereby a logic that initially informed frontier killing transmutes into different modalities, discourses and institutional formations as it undergirds the historical development and complexification of settler society."[48] Bhandar's work likewise establishes how dispossession of Indigenous land in

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[45] Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 132.

[46] Cole Harris, "How does colonialism dispossess?" Comments from the Edge of Empire," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 94, no.1 (February 2008): 166, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.2004.09401009.x.

[47] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native," *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8:4 (2006), 402.

[48] Wolfe, "Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native," 402.

British Columbia established a pattern of land domination, with little communication between the state and the residents it would affect. Drawing from Bhandar's argument about ideas of land use, and pairing them with Wolfe's argument that colonialism is structural, I argue that successive waves of housing development in Vancouver have consistently followed a pattern of exclusion and dispossession of marginalized peoples (either by race or class, or the intersection of the two) in order to maximize the profitability of the land, which in turn has normalized the ideas of who gets to live in the city.

As scholars on housing in Canada illustrate, the early forms of domestic construction, the style of architecture, and the placement of houses on lots reflected a British heritage, which in turn shaped the narratives of who belongs in the neighbourhood.[49] The material markers of civilization were thought to reflect "the inner state of the individual's soul and the family's moral state."[50] In addition to housing reflecting the moral state of the family, Perry further suggests that housing "was an animate social force that was generative of proper gender roles, work habits, and domestic ways."[51] Other scholars have shown how the exterior of the house by the early twentieth century came to represent the cultural background as well as the moral character of the inhabitants of the house.[52] The colonial view of household and family rests on the normalizing of the British nuclear family, and excludes, through by-laws and zoning regulations, living with extended family, or boarders. Furthermore, housing becomes defined as only residential, and other uses, such as using one's home to supplement household income, were strictly regulated.

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[49] Peter Ward, *A History of Domestic Space: Privacy and the Canadian Home* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999); Peter Ennals and Deryk J. Holdsworth, *Homeplace: The Making of the Canadian Dwelling over Three Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Marc Denhez, *The Canadian Home: From Cave to Electronic Cocoon* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994); Jill Wade, *Houses for All: the Struggle for Social Housing in Vancouver, 1919-1950* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994).

[50] Raibmon, "Living on Display," 71.

[51] Adele Perry, "From 'the hot-bed of vice' to the 'good and well-ordered Christian home': First Nations Housing and Reform in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia," *Ethnohistory* 50.4 (2003): 587.

[52] Marianna Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

I argue that, while it is important to understand how the federal, provincial and municipal governments negotiated an attempt at erasure of First Nations communities from the urban landscape, there needs to be a concomitant understanding of how ideas of domesticity and homemaking became the tool through which to ensure that the arriving immigrants also adhered to the colonial conventions of the state in how they constructed their houses, and how they lived in them. As Wolfe argues "assimilation programmes can reflect the ideological requirements of settler-colonial societies, which characteristically cite native advancement to establish their egalitarian credentials to potentially fractious groups of immigrants."[53] Housing, in other words, becomes the visual marker of colonial ideals.

Taken together, these settler-colonial ideals of domestic living were used as the baseline against which other forms of living were measured. Both Raibmon and Perry illustrate how the structure of the house itself embodied ideas of home and domesticity that could not clearly be economically commodified. In this way, the house came to represent the cultural values of the nineteenth-century settlers. Since houses are seen as stable entities on the landscape, so too are the cultural values attached to them; in other words, as housing becomes entrenched in urban layouts, so too do corollary cultural values become entrenched in the mindsets of the people. This becomes an effective colonial tool because it continually reinforces the colonial power through the visual display of domesticity as a way of reinventing the home left behind in Britain.

To understand how settler-colonialism operates as a structure, Aimee Carrillo Rowe and Eve Tuck suggest that the ways in which the "ongoing occupation and settler pursuits of land are often made natural, logical, or invisible in settler society" need to be examined.[54] My own project shows how the building of housing is both a material and symbolic structuring of colonial norms and ideas as long-standing features of the urban landscape, which are then reanimated to determine who belongs where in the city in the post-war period, thereby naturalizing these material and symbolic colonial housing norms through the demolition and construction of new dwellings. I argue that examining housing is central to understanding the structures of colonialism because shelter is

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[53] Wolfe, 403.

[54] Aimee Carrillo Rowe and Eve Tuck, "Settler Colonialism and Cultural Studies: Ongoing Settlement, Cultural Production, and Resistance," *Cultural Studies—Critical Methodologies* 17(1) (2017), 5.

deemed necessary for survival, so it is important that housing construction and who gets access to what is built does not fade from analysis of post-war urban renewal schemes. In the post-war period, the existing housing stock was deemed inadequate because it no longer reflected the symbolic ideas of progress, order, and civilization. The state-led mechanisms to remove the housing stock, and as a result the residents as well, drew on mechanisms and ideologies similar to the policies and procedures used to dispossess Indigenous communities of their land. This is not to suggest a moral equivalence between post-war urban renewal strategies in Vancouver and the colonial genocide of Coast Salish Indigenous peoples. Rather, I am arguing that the system put in place to abet the latter—through the clearing and occupation of the land, and the removal or relocation of its inhabitants—has continued to inform municipal approaches to property development in Vancouver, and that this has disproportionately affected racialized and economically marginalized communities in the city. It has also continued to benefit the property developers, land speculators, and other wealthy land investors. I am drawing connections between settler-colonialism and urban renewal in Vancouver in relation to SPOTA's activism in Strathcona to provide an example of how colonialism is structurally maintained within domestic architecture, ideals of domesticity, and neighbourhood development.

This pattern of displacement and repossession repeats itself as an established cultural norm in the construction of new housing. While recent scholarship has shown the impact of loss of home for Indigenous communities with the growth of cities,[55] I suggest that the colonial and cultural norms attached to housing become an iterative performance of whiteness that creates what historian Jordan Stanger-Ross terms "municipal colonialism," which he defines as "settler territorial claims that were predicated on the supposed requirements of urban vitality and development."[56] As Stanger-Ross illustrates, municipal officials had clear ideas of where Indigenous

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[55] Penelope Edmonds, "Unpacking Settler Colonialism's Urban Strategies: Indigenous Peoples in Victoria, British Columbia, and the Transition to a Settler-Colonial City" *Urban History Review* Vol 38, No 2. (Spring 2010): 4-20; Jean Barman, "Erasing Indigenous Indigeneity in Vancouver" *BC Studies* 155 (Autumn 2007): 3-30. Owen Toews, *Stolen City: Racial capitalism and the making of Winnipeg* (Winnipeg: Arp Books, 2020); Heather Dorries, Robert Henry, David Hugill, Tyler McCreary, and Julie Tomiak, eds., *Settler City Limits: Indigenous resurgence and colonial violence in the urban prairie west* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2019).

[56] Jordan Stanger-Ross, "Municipal Colonialism in Vancouver: City Planning and the Conflict over Indian Reserves, 1928-1950s," *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol 89 No. 4 (December 2008), 544.

communities should live within the City of Vancouver boundaries, and they used legal means, albeit unjustly, to cultivate the urban form according to the larger progress narratives that regulated residential, commercial, industrial and leisure areas.[57] Municipal colonialism plays a role in determining neighbourhood aesthetics because it initially decided who gets to live where in the city. Once that was clearly defined and established, the construction of housing ensured that land could not be squatted on, and neighbourhoods started to form across the city.

My work is building on Stanger-Ross's scholarship on the early colonial history of Vancouver. He claims that "cities remained peculiar colonial environments long after their founding."[58] In order to better understand how colonialism formed a structure that guided the settlement of Strathcona, I suggest that a Eurocentric view of space shaped a specific relationship to the land and put in policies which guided people to examine land use to ensure progress and profitability. For example, Stanger-Ross illustrates how officials drew on ideals of modern urban vitality in an attempt to shape Vancouver's development by continuing to control the Kitsilano and Musqueam reserves, which fell under federal jurisdiction but remained within the city limits. In turn, the process of trying to reclaim the Kitsilano waterfront to become park space exposed the complexity of government processes because the land fell under both federal and provincial jurisdictions, and officials had conflicting views of what urban development should look like. Stanger-Ross suggests that these processes of urban development were "powerful expressions of settler possession."[59] Building on Stanger-Ross's concept of municipal colonialism is important because the policies, land use guidelines, and zoning restrictions that were enacted to dispossess and remove Indigenous peoples from the urban environment as Vancouver grew in the early 20th century are still in place in the post-war period and were successively used to displace working class and racial minority communities.[60] I am drawing connections between settler-colonialism and urban

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[57] Stanger-Ross, "Municipal Colonialism in Vancouver,"542.

[58] Stanger-Ross, 546.

[59] ibid., 543.

[60] Jean Barman, in *Stanley Park's Secret*, discusses the ways in which Indigenous and working-class families were removed from Stanley Park and Coal Harbour in order to cultivate the idea of a pristine wilderness within the urban environment. The Parks Board also removed families and workers living along English Bay and what is now Sunset Beach in order to cultivate leisure spaces.

renewal in Vancouver to provide an example of how colonialism is structurally maintained within domestic architecture by examining, as Wolfe suggests, its "different modalities, discourses and institutional formations."[61]

Figure 1.1. Map of Redevelopment Area--revised March 1966
Source: CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, COV-S648-F0686-: MAP 1017 Box 270-10-03

"Second-Wave Municipal Colonialism," the Performativity of Home, and Vancouver's East End

The expansion of the suburbs relied on the expansion of an extensive freeway network, which in turn led to the demolition of older areas of the city. There is an extensive literature on the processes and impact of suburbanization,[62] as well as urban renewal in North America.[63] My argument does not seek to contest this scholarship;

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[61] Wolfe, "Settler-colonialism and the elimination of the native," 403.

[62] John Archer, *Architecture and Suburbia: From English Villa to American Dream House, 1690-2000* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Robert Fogelson, *Bourgeois Nightmares: Suburbia, 1870– 1930* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005); Richard Harris, *Creeping Conformity: How Canada Became Suburban, 1900-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Richard Harris and Peter Larkham, eds., *Changing Suburbs: Foundation, Form and Function* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 1999).

[63] Tina Loo, *Moved by the State: forced relocation and the making of the good life in postwar Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019); David N. Verbeek, *Slum Clearance & Urban Renewal: A Demographic and Spatial Analysis of Changes in Downtown Halifax* (School of Planning,

rather, I suggest that framing both of these events as a continuation of colonialism helps to shed new light on these urban processes, and that this further highlights the structural embeddedness of settler-colonialism in the policies and procedures developed to ensure efficient urban development. I argue that presenting suburbanization and urban renewal as two separate and different urban processes obscures how the state shaped the narrative of the nation to promote the ideals of home without explicitly stating how this narrative was expressly raced and classed; housing was perceived as a stable and noble good for society, but the policies enacted in post-war Vancouver benefited a largely white, middle-class society, and frequently excluded the needs of low-income and racially marginalized residents of the city. Calling the proposed urban development schemes urban renewal or suburbanization gives the impression that it is an entirely different and new set of forces involved in shaping the city.[64] Stanger-Ross concludes his study of municipal colonialism in Vancouver in the 1950s; however, I argue that his work lays the foundation for a deeper examination of how the urban forces he illustrates play out in the post-war period because if his theories of municipal colonialism is the set of structures that he claims, then an examination of their legacy needs to be tested in looking at the next phase of urban development in the City of Vancouver. I argue that there are two intertwined master narratives guiding Vancouver's urban development, which form the ideological requirements of settler-colonialism. They have focussed on creating a specific image of the city based on policies of dispossession and exclusion and ensuring that the built form reflects the beauty of the natural landscape, rather than fostering a narrative that emphasizes the domestic environment as one which shapes how people form a sense of home or place. Paying serious and meaningful attention to

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Dalhousie University 2012); Jane Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (NY: The Modern Library, 1961).

[64] I would argue that what is commonly called gentrification should be referred to as "third-wave settler colonialism" because it is a continuation of the same urban forces to shape the environment according to a set of structures that have normalized who has a right to remain in the city and who should be displaced. With gentrification, residents have deeply internalized settler-colonial ideals of how land should be lived on. For example, in seeking to reclaim houses and return them to their "original form," these residents further reinforce the value and prestige of 19th-century domestic norms and ideals on the domestic landscape. Suleiman Osman, in *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), and Neil Smith, in *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London: Routledge, 1996,) both discuss how property developers and real estate agents evoked the language of settlement, frontier, and civilization in order to justify the displacement of working-class families to gentrify neighbourhoods in New York City.

place in Vancouver especially would potentially be a route towards more creative solutions to affordable housing stock.

I argue that both urban renewal and suburbanization were a reaction against the seeming lack of progress in the urban form during the Great Depression and WW II.[65] In order to illustrate how colonialism is a structure embedded in the urban fabric, I suggest that rather than focusing on urban renewal and suburbanization as two separate processes in urban development in the post-war period, they should be viewed coextensively as a form of "second-wave municipal colonialism." I am defining "second-wave municipal colonialism" as the process by which the progress narrative of colonialism is reanimated and applied to the urban development of areas that were perceived as not conforming to the vision of a progressive and modern city in the post-war period.[66] The goal of second-wave municipal colonialism was, once again, to promote a national identity by shaping the domestic landscape to ensure that built structures, both residential and commercial, reflected the ideals of progress and good citizenship.[67] Within the urban environment, neighbourhoods across North America were demolished and rebuilt to ensure that structures reflected the new and progressive identities of post-war cities, and outside the city, the unproductive and undeveloped landscape was carved into lots and strip malls to house the progressive citizenry who supported the economic progress of the nation through home ownership, the increased consumption of material goods, and the expanded reliance on automobiles.[68] The term second-wave municipal colonialism ties together both the structural and cultural norms

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[65] Second-wave feminism offered a liberatory framework for women to challenge the gender norms attached to domesticity in the 1960s. I suggest that there was a more dominant state-driven shift towards home ownership and domesticity to counteract this.

[66] I am borrowing the concept of "wave" in connection to colonialism from two scholars. Tina Gradinetti discusses the arrival of immigrants and capital that displace Indigenous peoples in Hawai'i in terms of waves of displacement in "Urban aloha 'aina: Kaka'ako and a decolonized right to the city," *Settler Colonial Studies*, 9:2 (2019), 227-246, DOI: 10.1080/2201473X.2017.1409400. Lorenzo Veracini also discusses settler-colonialism as a political idea that moves around the world in successive waves and remains in the present in *The World Turned Inside Out: Settler Colonialism as a Political Idea* (London: Verso, 2021).

[67] Avi Friedman and David Krawitz, *Peeking through the Keyhole: The Evolution of North American Homes* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002).

[68] Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Richard Harris and Peter Larkham, eds., *Changing Suburbs: Foundation, Form and Function* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 1999).

attached to land and guiding its redevelopment, which in the process dismisses the value of place for the inhabitants.

Since the predominant land use in Vancouver is residential, housing becomes the dominant visual marker of the city's colonial history. Land is viewed from a top-down perspective by city officials and developers seeking to profit off the land and leads to the displacement of existing inhabitants and the repossession of their dwellings by others. In addition, residential structures transferred a largely white, middle-class, British identity in the style of architecture, the emphasis on property ownership, and the cultural norms attached to living within the dwellings, all of which visually reinforced a British material culture and became associated with ideas of a modern and progressive city. The domestic structure itself becomes a stable performance of colonial culture in which the economic commodity of the house becomes conflated with the emotional attachments of home because ownership has been culturally constructed to denote citizenship and belonging to the country. By looking at Vancouver's urban development through the lens of home, I hope to emphasize what critical geographers Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling have referred to as the "*spatial imaginary*" of home: "a set of intersecting and variable ideas and feelings, which are related to context, and which construct places, extend across spaces and scales, and connect places."[69] In other words, by looking at how people have created a sense of home in Vancouver, I hope to illustrate how people form a sense of attachment to their neighbourhood that both supports and counters the dominant colonial narratives established by the city.

Performativity, as a concept that links language and other forms of non-verbal expression to social action that can either effect change or uphold the status quo, is a useful framework for understanding home as applied to the neighbourhood of Strathcona. This approach allows me to pull out the nuance of the term home as a colonial structure and how people within the neighbourhood perform home in an intimate and personal way. I argue that what Strathcona residents facing neighbourhood redevelopment were being regulated on was their performance of domesticity. This performance was twofold. Its foundation was the legal performance of property ownership. The land needed to be regulated by the state in order for the performance of ownership to be considered legitimate. By this set of parameters, the renting of property

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[69] Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, *Home: an introduction* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 2.

was not considered an adequate performance of home and yard, and as a result many renters had fewer rights in preventing the changes in property and the ideas of domesticity. Performance also rests on the ways in which people maintain and decorate their home, and whether that performance matches the larger narrative of acceptable domesticity. Both of these aspects of the performance of domesticity needed to conform to an acceptable middle-class standard of residential performance. So, while many residents in Strathcona did own their home, due to financial precarity the ability to maintain its exterior, as well as interior, made it difficult for them to adhere to a performance of acceptable domesticity. Rather than examining societal or structural issues that may have hindered residents from maintaining their houses, their attachment to ideas of domesticity, which was closely aligned to citizenship, was called into question, and their poor adherence to the City's norms and standards was considered enough of a justification to demolish their homes and construct something new in their place.

However, I argue that there is also a third element of the performance of home within the city and that is the connection of people to each other. Performativity and performance studies encapsulates the movement of people through their neighbourhood and how they interact with each other as well as the built form of the neighbourhood. The interaction with the built form is important because residents' attachments to their houses and the wider neighbourhood becomes part of their personal narrative and history. This becomes a more intangible part of belonging to a city and is often dismissed as having little value or connection to how cities should function. Dominant civic narrative concentrate on the aesthetics of structures, but cities are inhabited by people, and so this cannot be dismissed—even when these people live in so-called "less desirable," "depressed," or "low-income" parts of the city.

Vancouver's explicit aim to gain a cosmopolitan city status in the post-war period, which is reflected in its featuring of Stanley Park, [70] the beaches along English Bay and

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[70] The first plan was developed by British planner Thomas Mawson in 1911. He suggested reshaping Stanley Park and the surrounding areas to look more like Parisian boulevards. The second plan was developed by American planner Harland Bartholomew in 1928, who drew on the Garden City movement and suggested increasing the park space in the city and shaping neighbourhoods to have a more middle-class aesthetic. Harland Bartholomew and Associates were again hired in 1947 to produce a series of plans to guide the city's post-war urban development. Again, the emphasis was on ensuring the built form match the beauty of the natural environment.

the housing facing outwards towards the water, has always required a counter narrative to help burnish its super-modernity.[71] Drawing from the work of feminist geographer Doreen Massey, this project affirms her claims that cosmopolitan cities' "dynamics [produce] poverty and exclusion."[72] Massey frames her discussion around the political and economic binary of maintaining successful financial city status in London, or solving the problems of poverty and exclusion. Housing has formed a central feature of the dynamics of poverty and exclusion because the wealthier neighbourhoods have been protected from urban development strategies, and low-income residents have faced continual housing insecurity due to lack of access to affordable shelter and/or destruction of affordable housing. Massey's work points to the complexity of solving the affordable housing crisis because of the fear of the wealthy that the financial status of their city will drop by doing so. I argue that settler-colonialism set up a similar dynamic within cities because the process of establishing an economically viable colony needed the counter-narrative of poverty, largely held by First Nations communities living on reserves. As the city grew, the counter neighbourhood in Vancouver has been the East End, which was initially settled by businessmen and their families, but who had soon moved into the wealthier West End neighbourhood by the 1880s to be near the numerous parks and leisure spaces. As industry grew, the East End neighbourhood was then occupied predominately by working-class single men and families from diverse ethnic heritages, who could find affordable housing and a sense of community. The neighbourhood has been conceptualized as primitive, and not modern in both the descriptions of the buildings and the people living within the neighbourhood.[73] However, areas of poverty could not be left for too long because they were seen as diminishing the financial investments of the wealthy over time.

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[71] Lance Berelowitz, *Dream City: Vancouver and the Global Imagination* (Vancouver: Douglas& McIntyre, 2005) offers a close analysis of Vancouver's particular urban performance.

[72] Doreen Massey, *for space* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2005), 157.

[73] Jill Wade, in *Houses for All: The Struggle for Social Housing in Vancouver, 1919-1950,* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994), discusses the poor quality of housing in the East End as well as the West End. Both neighbourhoods were significantly redeveloped in the 1950s. Nicholas Blomley, in *Unsettling the City: Urban Land and the Politics of Property* (New York: Routledge, 2004), discusses the continued characterization of the East End neighbourhood's poverty in its justification of redevelopment leading up to Expo '86 and the gentrification in the 1990s. The NFB film "To Build a Better City," which I discuss in Chapter 2, also visually illustrates the run-down nature of the East End to promote its redevelopment. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FY5I8h1IJjs

The post-war progress narrative in the City of Vancouver had a two-pronged approach. First, there was a desire to build up the downtown core to attract businesses to establish headquarters on the West Coast. Second, the City wished to improve housing stock to reflect a modern, progressive urban environment. The narrative was predicated on catering to a white, middle-class view of the urban environment. Settler-colonialism laid the foundation for how the domestic landscape could promote a national identity and determine the shape of the land. The neighbourhood of the East End had been redefined and reconfigured over time and by the post-war period it included the neighbourhoods of Chinatown, Gastown, Strathcona, and the Downtown Eastside. The fracturing of this larger area into separate neighbourhoods over time, I argue, was an attempt to cultivate it to reflect a modern city status, and to shape ideas of domesticity to reflect a middle-class, Anglo heritage.[74] City planners viewed the established neighbourhood of Strathcona in the 1950s as a *tabula rasa*—an "empty" area that could be cultivated into a new image. This required territory to be resurveyed, remapped, and reshaped to cultivate a new domestic environment by dividing the land into lots and deciding the highest and best use of those lands by enacting zoning regulations and by-laws to determine aesthetics, and by promoting private and public development. The existing houses, apartments, park, and community spaces would be demolished, and the residents removed, and block-by-block a new homogenous domestic environment would be constructed. But at the same time, City-led rezoning and redevelopment initiatives in the area ensured that a level of poverty and degradation in the built form was maintained in order that the mirrored counter-narrative of a cosmopolitan city was reflected back to planners, developers, and housing investors even more brightly. The citizens of Vancouver's East End neighbourhoods had to fight harder to get access to

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[74] Sherry McKay, in "'Urban Housekeeping' and Keeping the Modern House," *BC Studies*, 140 (Winter 2003/2004): 11-38, discusses how the construction of apartments in the West End and Strathcona differed in the materials used and the conceptualization of women's roles within the apartment and neighbourhood at large. Kay J. Anderson discusses the construction of Chinatown as a specific way to contain the Chinese population, but at the same time to maintain control over its redevelopment in order to market it as a tourist destination in *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996). Becki L. Ross, in *Burlesque West: Showgirls, Sex and Sin in Postwar Vancouver* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), illustrates how the supper clubs and nightclubs in the West End came under increasing regulation in the post-war period, whereas nudity increased in nightclubs located in the East End. I suggest that how these neighbourhoods were redeveloped and regulated relates to the early narratives of class and race embedded into the landscape.

leisure spaces in their neighbourhoods, and to prevent the demolition of their housing because their neighbourhoods did not reflect middle-class Anglo domestic ideals.

The construction of new housing, particularly concrete towers with smooth lines and homogeneous forms, becomes a way for cities to showcase their modern urban environment, and to gain control over areas that appeared uncivilized due to the age of structures or the socio-economic and/or racial backgrounds of the inhabitants.[75] By examining the parallels in the language and land use guidelines used to justify colonialism and the language and land use guidelines used to justify urban development, I illustrate how the structures of colonialism are embedded into the landscape and have become normalized in how they pertain to the construction of new housing and neighbourhood renewal strategies. These structures reify a white, middle-class view of domesticity that is used to marginalize residents who are not performing home according to the narrow views prescribed by the state.

The multicultural make-up of Strathcona, and the cross-cultural dynamics of SPOTA, challenge this approach to domesticity and the successful performance of home. To date, scholarship on Strathcona and the formation of SPOTA has been written through the lens of race,[76] gender,[77] and urban development and state politics,[78] focusing especially on the success of their neighbourhood activism in halting the freeway from running through the downtown core, which significantly changed the flow of traffic and the visual aesthetics of the city.[79] These scholars, while acknowledging the

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[75] Rhodri Windsor Liscombe, *The New Spirit: Modern Architecture in Vancouver, 1938-1963* (Cambridge, MASS: The MIT Press 1997).

[76] Richard Nann, "Relocation of Vancouver's Chinatown Residents under Urban Renewal" *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, Vol 3 Iss 2 (November 1975): 125-130; Hayne Wai. *Vancouver Chinatown 1960-1980: A Community Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1998)

[77] Jo-Anne Lee, "Gender, Ethnicity, and Hybrid Forms of Community-Based Urban Activism in Vancouver, 1957-1978: The Strathcona story revisited," *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 14:4 (2007): 381-407.

[78] John Punter, *The Vancouver Achievement: urban planning and design* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003); and Tina Loo, *Moved by the State: forced relocation and making a good life in postwar Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019). Both texts discuss the role of municipal government and residents in the shaping of Strathcona by preventing a freeway from going through the downtown core. John Atkin, *Strathcona: Vancouver's First Neighbourhood* (Vancouver: Whitecap Books Ltd, 1994) gives an overview of the neighbourhood's development.

[79] Mike Harcourt, Sean Rossiter, and Ken Cameron, *City Making in Paradise: Nine Decisions That Saved Vancouver* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2007).

significance of resident activism, still privilege the significance of the halting the freeway and its impact on the city as a whole. This continues to reflect a colonial progress narrative because it focusses on a top-down view of the city, which resulted in the freeway still being built elsewhere; the scholarship does not discuss the bottom-up ways in which SPOTA challenged the settler-colonial ideals of domesticity and place by acknowledging the structural and systemic aspects of unaffordability. The freeway protest and eventual halting of its construction was only a small piece of the decade long neighbourhood transformation in Strathcona. This project tells a fuller story of Strathcona's redevelopment and emphasizes the ways in which the residents worked across race, gender, and class lines to preserve a sense of home in the neighbourhood by rehabilitating existing housing stock, by constructing affordable housing for low-income families, and by improving the civic infrastructure.

While, in the 1960s, neither City of Vancouver officials nor the residents of Strathcona argued that cities should *not* grow and change over time or reflect different political ideologies, architectural styles, modes of production and social relations, they did differ in their understanding of how this should occur in the neighbourhood. Neighbourhood activism in Strathcona during the 1960-70s focused on the emotional and psychological state of the neighbourhood by highlighting the connections between residents, and their attachment to the existing built forms. Their advocacy counteracted the proposed block-by-block demolition of their neighbourhood over a twenty-year period by illustrating the differing ideas of how housing could and should perform in the City of Vancouver.

In this dissertation, I am attempting to tell more of the story of that neighbourhood transformation by centering the voices of the citizen-activists who helped form and provided much of the energy for the successes of SPOTA because much of the previous scholarship privileges city records of events. In doing so, I take my cue from Shirley Chan, who in the open meeting with Paul Hellyer asked: "you claim to give fair market value for a home, but is it fair? How to do you judge 'Value to Owner' when home is an area I have grown up in?"[80] Chan's questions raise different and unexplored aspects of the preservation of Strathcona as a home, as something different and distinct from

[80] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, 3, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5.

housing, and something that cannot always or easily be reduced to the sum of race, gender, and class. Chan, in framing home as an attachment to the neighbourhood, foregrounds as central the location of her personal history. The value of that personal history was not recognized by civic officials. I am expanding the existing scholarship to examine Strathcona as a place whose residents shaped and reshaped a narrative of belonging and inclusion in the ways they advocated for their performance of domesticity and home-making.

Positionality

I recognize that I am both an insider and an outsider to this research. I am an insider to Vancouver because my dad's grandfather arrived in the city in 1907 from England. He was a successful businessman, invested money well, and lived in a large mansion, first on Point Grey Road, and then in a bigger one on Southwest Marine Drive. I grew up listening to stories about the city from my great-grandparents, grandparents, great uncles and aunts, second cousins, and my dad. I feel at home in Vancouver. I grew up in a middle-class suburban neighbourhood in a house that my parents owned. While the houses I grew up in were never as palatial as my extended family's houses, I recognize that I have a great deal of privilege as a white settler, and that my privilege makes it difficult to see other narratives of different kinds of housing in the city. I did not travel east, past Cambie Street, until I was in my early twenties because the people and places I visited were all on the west side of Vancouver. I am in the process of unlearning the ideas of what makes an acceptable house by recognizing that these notions are cultural constructions based on middle-class British ideas.

I recognize that I am an outsider to this research because I did not grow up working-class. I do not belong to a racialized minority, and I have never lived in Strathcona. I recognize that this has the potential to skew my research and shape my arguments in ways that may not reflect the lived reality of the residents, and what they were trying to accomplish.

I acknowledge that examining the legacy of colonialism is the responsibility of all citizens in Canada. I have undertaken this research with the recognition that I am disrupting my own personal narratives about housing in the city as much as I am disrupting larger urban stories.

Methodology and Outline of Chapters

For this project, I approached the extensive collection of files within the SPOTA fond at the City of Vancouver Archives with the understanding that they are stored in a colonial structure. However, rather than needing to search for the absence of voices in the archives, as Cheryl Thompson suggests, or following Ann Laura Stoler in reading along the archival grain, I was able to access the materials saved, produced, and evaluated by SPOTA from its inception in 1968 to the completion of the last phase of housing construction in 1980.[81] The materials were donated by Penelope Stewart, who was involved in SPOTA's organizing from its inception, and by Bessie Lee, who eventually became SPOTA President. This archive of activist materials is significant because SPOTA recognized the need to not only keep a transparent record of their meeting minutes, project plans, correspondence, and social events, but also recognized that their materials should be donated to the City of Vancouver archives at the close of the rehabilitation project for future reference. In approaching my archival materials, I have also been very influenced by performance theory's approach to rethinking the archive as a timeless and stable repository of textual documents through a repertory model that sees the archive instead as a space of live and embodied encounter with those archival documents.[82] In such a model, what something is must always be understood in terms of what it *does to you*, and what *you do with it*. I began with the question of "what happens if stopping the freeway was not the whole story?" and read until I found a different story emerging from the files. A story that was frequently written by hand in unpolished and unedited ways.

Many of the files I examined had not been curated in any significant way before donation. To help guide my approach to the materials, I interviewed Hayne Wai, who helped in the data collection for SPOTA in the 1970s, and who conducted many of the interviews that I listened to. He helped me to understand the significance of the materials stored in the SPOTA fond. Many of the papers were not in chronological order and there

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[81] Cheryl Thompson, "Rethinking the Archive in the Public Sphere." *Canadian Journal of History* 54 (1) (2019): 32–38; https://doi.org/10.3138/cjh.ach.54.1-2.04.; Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain : Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[82] Diana Taylor, *The Archive & The Repertoire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (Oxon: Routledge, 2011).

were numerous duplicated documents. Tucked in the papers were grocery lists, phone messages, and doodles, which reinforced the idea that urban renewal was impacting families and a community and not merely changing structures. Some meeting notes were written on the backs of papers that were dated years in the future from the dates listed in the meeting. It was not clear if the notes were transcribed from another source or if they were a reflected documentation of the memory of the meeting. Some of the materials were written in Cantonese; however, there were often English versions in the same file. I could not tell how accurate the translations were or whether there were subtle nuances or differences in the language used. For this project, it did not seem necessary to have the material translated because the minutes indicated that translation was done to encourage inclusiveness. I compared the SPOTA records of events to the City of Vancouver Council Minutes, Board of Administration reports, Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation documents, as well as to newspaper reports in *The Vancouver Sun* and *The Province* written at the time. I paid particular attention to the language used to describe ideas of home and domesticity, as well as to how the SPOTA arguments were being presented in the popular press. At times they were characterized as being aggressive, and at other times they were presented as firm and forthright. Public opinion of the residents' behaviour changed as they became more successful in advocating for their sense of place within the city. The SPOTA Executive documented all of their meetings, and while some of the minutes were hand-written, most were typed; there is clear evidence that they wanted to maintain an open and transparent process of how decisions were being made throughout. Archives don't just record events; they also function, much like a performance script or score, as the basis for the production of another event. This latter event is the telling of the story of the archive as it has spoken to a particular researcher at a particular moment in time, which, again like a play or performance, will be distinct in each instance. It was important to me to use SPOTA's documents as a guide for my research rather than following previous scholarship of focusing on city records to tell the narrative.

An additional part of my methodology was to follow the same methods that SPOTA used to advocate for their neighbourhood. I walked the neighbourhood and took photos of the houses. I chatted with residents during my walks. I went on a two-hour guided walking tour of the neighbourhood to learn more about the houses from a former resident who had conducted extensive archival research on the individual dwellings. This

walking tour allowed me to go into a couple of homes. One woman had converted the Anglican Church into her residence. Another family shaped what had been a small corner candy shop into their living room. They showed me the features of original architecture and described how they had attempted to preserve it. I read blogs on Strathcona in order to collect an understanding of how people are telling stories about their neighbourhood; within these stories, there were often references to other events, and by following the threads I was able to get a better understanding of the neighbourhood as a palimpsest.

Palimpsest has a dual definition: it refers to a piece a parchment, which has been scraped clean in order for new writing to be placed on top, but with traces of the original script remaining. Cities conform to this definition of palimpsest because through the process of urban development previous inhabitants are erased from the landscape through colonization and new structures are put in their place. Furthermore, through the process of continued development, previous structures are demolished and new ones are constructed in their place; however, traces of the originals remain, particularly in the layout of streets, the zoning restrictions, and the by-laws guiding new construction, as well as the collective memories and social relations between urban dwellers as cities grow. The second definition of palimpsest refers to the architectural references in buildings to a previous time period. These architectural references remain a stable part of the symbolic and material culture of the city as markers of colonial ideals and acceptable domesticity. Lucy Lippard suggests that the idea of palimpsests "tends to be obscured by their primary identities as sites of immediacy, money, power and energy concentrated on the present and the future."[83] By examining the layers of stories we tell about a place from a federal, provincial, and municipal level, as well as from the very micro level—neighbourhood and home—we start to see how decolonizing the city needs to begin from an examination of what stories we are telling about who belongs, how we are telling them, and how this plays out in very real ways in how we live in the city. By proposing to demolish Strathcona block-by-block in the 1960s, the City of Vancouver was attempting to shape the performance of the neighbourhood according to their rational and scientific script of what a modern city should look like, with tall towers and a uniform neighbourhood aesthetic. Palimpsest becomes an appropriate metaphor for

[83] Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Sense of Place in a Multicentered Society* (NY: New Press, 1998), 196.

understanding Vancouver's urban history because it recognizes the layers that create a city, and while one layer may be scraped clean, the imprint of the previous layers remains.

The colonial performance of housing is comprised of many layers shaping the cultural norms of domesticity. In order to organize the layers, I am drawing from feminist scholar Rachel Bowlby, who suggests that "in one French usage, *domestiquer* means quite simply the subjugation of a tribe to a colonizing power."[84] While it is important to understand the structural aspects of colonialism regarding the construction of housing in Vancouver, it is equally important to understand how the structure of the house and the feelings of safety and belonging, or home, have become conflated as meaning the same thing, where living in a house would or should automatically generate said feelings. According to Bowlby, if home "is the place of origin … domestication, then, would be a return to or reinvention of the home that you left or lost,"[85] which in a multicultural city with a diverse population of immigrants would lead to a range of recreations of the home that was left or lost. She suggests that the etymology of domestication is important to understand to tease out the threads connected to home and domesticity. While the performance of domesticity in the West was, and I argue still is, a performance of colonial power, I suggest that this performance is more nuanced and rests on the intertwined interplay of the three distinct definitions of the term domestic: to domesticate, or tame; in relation to a country of origin; and, referring to household and family.[86]

Synthesizing the different strands of my critical place inquiry of Strathcona, I have divided the dissertation into three sections in order to illustrate how the three definitions of the domestic—to domesticate, or tame; in relation to a country of origin; and household and family—work together in order to reinforce the colonial landscape within the neighbourhood of Strathcona. Each section illustrates how colonial ideas and the collection of data on those ideas has been used to shape a justification of exclusion and dispossession. In turn, I illustrate how members of SPOTA co-opted similar tools of the colonial state in order to develop a narrative of inclusion and belonging. Each

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[84] Rachel Bowlby, "Domestication," in *Feminism Beside Itself*, eds., Diane Elam and Robyn Wiegman (New York: Routledge, 1995), 75.

[85] Bowlby, "Domestication," 75.

[86] "Domestic" Merriam-Webster dictionary, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/domestic [Accessed: Dec 29, 2022].

chapter illustrates that there are multiple ways to tell a story about a neighbourhood and it depends on who is telling the story and why. Each likewise highlights how the City of Vancouver drew on colonial norms for housing in order to continue to marginalize racialized low-income residents in Strathcona.

Section one, conceptually focused around the first definition of the domestic—to tame or civilize—is made up of Chapters Two and Three. Chapter Two examines how what I refer to as the tools of colonialism—mapping, surveying, using experts, and creating a vision of the future—are used to tame and re-tame the land to conform to a progress narrative has been carried out in the neighbourhood. First, colonialism sought to “tame” the land in order to domesticate it. The uncivilized wilderness needed to come under colonial control through enacting private property in order to make it productive and useful according to settlers; this was the process of civilizing the landscape. I illustrate how a top-down view of the area was an attempt to break people’s connections to place. The proposed redevelopment of the neighbourhood was based on colonial ideas of progress, which reflected British ideas of landscape and land use. The use of zoning and by-laws were an attempt to shape the neighbourhood into a more homogeneous form with the separation of residential and commercial areas. In the post-war period, Strathcona was defined as uncivilized, and using the same tools of colonialism, the neighbourhood needed to be demolished to create a new civilized urban environment. Chapter Three examines how the residents of Strathcona challenged the views of the City by advocating for the preservation of existing neighbourhood structures and that new structures should foster a sense of connection and belonging between people. The residents developed their own set of maps, surveys, experts, and plans to illustrate their connection to the neighbourhood and to each other. They show that their neighbourhood did not need to be tamed and was worthy of preservation.

Chapter Four makes up the second section of the dissertation, and in it I illustrate the difficulties in making the neighbourhood reflect the second definition of domestic—to make like the home country. I illustrate the contrasting views between the City of Vancouver and the residents as the Strathcona Rehabilitation Plan is developed over a two-year period from September 1969 to July 1971. The City of Vancouver’s policies and bureaucratic structures are based on a colonial paradigm; however, the largely immigrant population residing in Strathcona bring the cultural values of their own home countries and want to see these incorporated into the structural and social aspects of

their neighbourhood. This chapter illustrates the difficulty of creating a cohesive redevelopment plan involving all three levels of government and SPOTA.

The dissertation's final section, centred around notions of the domestic as they relate to household and family, is again comprised of two parallel chapters. Chapter Five explores the transgressive nature of rehabilitating housing because it does not fit into the progressive narrative based on demolition and construction of something new in its place. I show how SPOTA successfully advocated for some of the funding for urban renewal to be granted to the residents in the form of grants and loans based on income so that they could rehabilitate their homes according to the needs of their household and family. Particularly innovative was the fact that these grants and loans were awarded to tenants, landlords, and homeowners.

Chapter Six highlights the difficulty of breaking the colonial narratives surrounding the construction of new housing for families because it also excludes residents who are single or do not have children living with them. The new housing developments proposed and developed by SPOTA offered a view of housing that encouraged people to remain in the neighbourhood and provided different kinds of housing options (rental, cooperatives, owning on leased land, single-family ownership) to ensure that residents had housing options that would allow them to remain in the neighbourhood regardless of changes in their housing needs. However, there were many difficulties in providing low-income housing because of many of the bureaucratic structures that made it difficult to secure financing for development, and, ironically, many of the applicants wanted to maintain the colonial norms attached to home ownership.

The conclusion offers some suggestions for how SPOTA's neighbourhood advocacy can point to ways in which the development of new housing could happen in Vancouver by providing insights into how people could be a part of the planning process and how a consensus model could be employed in decision-making. In order to break the colonial paradigm surrounding home ownership and housing construction in Vancouver, this scholarship illustrates the importance of carrying out urban growth and change with the guidance of the citizens living within the city in order to ensure that their sense of attachment to place remains rather than imposing top-down development designs and decisions upon people, which perpetuates dispossession and exclusion from the neighbourhood.

Colonialism is the palimpsest. Despite the scraping away of the structures and cultural norms surrounding notions of proper domesticity in urban Vancouver, their traces remain and continue to shape development in the city. But so do the stories of attachment to place. This dissertation provides one small case study that illustrates this contradiction.

Chapter 2.

Building a Better City

"To build a better city requires only the industry and ingenuity of man."[87]

On November 1, 1967, a public lecture featured the film *To Build A Better City*, presented by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the City of Vancouver, about the beginnings of the redevelopment of the neighbourhood of Strathcona.[88] This film was part of a month-long series of screenings and public events held at the downtown library to educate concerned citizens about the importance of careful urban development.[89] The fourteen-minute long film opens with jubilant music and features images of the natural environment—the city's harbour, parks, beaches, and mountains—and its domestic environment, with new, tall apartment buildings, and orderly single-story suburban houses set back from the road with well-kept front lawns. Vancouver's urban progress is highlighted with examples of industry thriving, transportation humming along, and tall office towers dominating the landscape. As the camera pans down and the music stops, the viewer is shown contrasting images of old, multi-storey, unpainted houses, which are referred to as examples of "blight" and are characterized as "dying board by board."[90] The camera angle then switches to an aerial shot showing houses close together with no lawn space and with fences in disrepair; this is in direct contrast to the housing featured in the opening of the film.

To Build A Better City follows the format established by the National Film Board (NFB), in 1948, of filming the construction of the first public housing unit in Canada,

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[87] "To Build A Better City - 1964 City of Vancouver/CMHC Film." BC History. February 14, 2014. Video, 0:14:20, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FY5I8h1IJjs.

[88] Town Planning Commission--Composite Committee General 1968-69, CVA, COV fonds, AM 274 Box 555-C-1 File 4.

[89] The events were organized by the Composite Committee, a subsidiary of the Town Planning Commission. They hosted month-long lecture series and other events from 1965-1972 with the aim of educating Vancouver residents about the importance of careful urban planning. Town Planning Commission--Composite Committee General 1968-69, CVA, COV fonds, AM 274 Box 555-C-1 File 4.

[90] "To Build A Better City" 0:2:33 and 0:2:42.

Regent Park, which demolished the working-class neighbourhood of Cabbagetown, in Toronto. As Sean Purdy shows, there was a desire "to make a crystal-clear propaganda statement about the physical and social depravity of the Cabbagetown slums and the modern promise of public housing."[91] This required the juxtaposition of images of poor, aging housing stock with clean, modern public housing. Following a similar propaganda formula, it is clear to the viewer that Strathcona, characterized by its "dilapidation and decay," is in need of redevelopment because it does not match the triumphant celebration of Vancouver's urban progress at the opening of the film.[92] The aim of this approach, Purdy suggests, is to show how residents were "economically, socially and morally transformed due to the new public housing environment."[93] The transformation of the residents at Regent Park became justification for the continued construction of public housing across Canada. Following the established narrative of the importance of the state providing housing for low-income residents, the new public housing developments in Strathcona highlight the improved physical and social conditions for the families relocated, and the implied assumption is that the rest of the housing stock should be demolished to improve the lives of the residents and the city as a whole. The film was shown to the public as the City of Vancouver was preparing its last funding proposal to the Federal government for Phase III of the demolition of Strathcona and was likely used to boost public support for continued municipal spending on urban renewal. The transformation of housing and the domestic environment in Strathcona was considered essential to "build a better city."[94]

Drawing from Rachel Bowlby's three part definition of domestic, this chapter outlines how the first definition—"to domesticate or to tame"—shaped land use policy of early European settlement to North America, which has allowed municipal governments to continue to maintain colonial structures in how land was "tamed" as the city grew. The act of taming the landscape was carried out by asserting power over the natural world as well as the people who inhabited it in order to create a visual depiction of civilization in what was perceived as wilderness, or an uncivilized area. Additionally, those who

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[91] Sean Purdy, "Framing Regent Park: the National Film Board of Canada and the construction of 'outcast spaces' in the inner city, 1953 and 1994" *Media, Culture & Society* 27(4), 533.

[92] "To Build A Better City" 0:2:58.

[93] Purdy, "Framing Regent Park," 531.

[94] "To Build A Better City" 0:14:00.

participated in the acts of settlement were considered to be civilized; this formed the foundation of settler-colonialism. The colonial framework of land development constructed a narrow and specific view of domesticity by dispossessing Indigenous communities from their land, and by promoting the construction of the single-family dwelling. I am using this first definition of domestic to illustrate how the taming of the land, by removing trees, flattening surfaces, filling in waterways for easier travel, defining boundaries through surveying, and promoting housing construction, was a way of shaping an idea of domesticity in a new area to conform to a colonial progress narrative. A narrative that, when performed repeatedly over time, led to the notion that urban space should appear orderly and productive—an urban development narrative that had been successfully employed in North America for nearly two centuries by the time European settlement occurred in Vancouver. The process of taming the landscape in North America in turn transplanted British planning structures and architectural styles, which shaped the visual culture of cities to resemble the metropole. As scholars on housing in Canada illustrate, the early forms of domestic construction, the style of architecture, and the placement of houses on lots reflected British heritage, which in turn shaped the narratives of who belonged in the neighbourhood.[95] As cities grew, so did a middle-class, British architectural aesthetic, which in turn shaped the performance of domesticity in order to illustrate the civilized nature of the inhabitants. By the time Vancouver was formally settled by British colonists in the late 1880s, the method and form of settler-colonialism had been refined, the process of laying out street grids was efficient, and the forms of acceptable domestic architecture were well established, as were the cultural norms attached to housing. In Vancouver, the taming of the natural environment was set in juxtaposition with the wild spaces of the mountains, forests, and ocean, which emphasized cultivating the built form to reflect the beauty of the surrounding landscape.

I opened this chapter with a description of *To Build A Better City* to frame the first strand of the my critical place inquiry because it visually depicts the performance of top-

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[95] Peter Ward, *A History of Domestic Space: Privacy and the Canadian Home* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999); Peter Ennals and Deryk J. Holdsworth, *Homeplace: The Making of the Canadian Dwelling over Three Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Marc Denhez, *The Canadian Home: From Cave to Electronic Cocoon* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994); Jill Wade, *Houses for All: the Struggle for Social Housing in Vancouver, 1919-1950* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994).

down post-war urban planning in Vancouver. The city's settler-colonial history is established at the beginning of the film with shots of the statue of George Vancouver outside of City Hall, and with reference to him "sailing through the entrance of Vancouver harbour on the thirteenth day of June 1792."[96] The statue quickly transitions to shots of Vancouver's busy harbour, thereby illustrating its growth over the last 170 years since initial European discovery, which I suggest emphasizes how Vancouver's colonial history has been subsumed within narratives of the city's history and urban growth based on the expansion of industry, commercial enterprises, and residential areas. Overarching these narratives of growth and expansion is the framing of Vancouver's urban environment in relation to the natural environment, which is reinforced with the opening sequence highlighting Vancouver's harbour and "magnificent natural setting" and closing shots of the film featuring the Stanley Park seawall looking towards the newly developed Coal Harbour.[97]

The performance of taming the landscape

This chapter attempts to illustrate the colonial material performance of urban development, but also the corresponding symbolic ideas those decisions are based on. I am drawing from an Austinian sense of performance in which words, in the form of land use regulations, speak into being the cultural performance of settlement.[98] In British Columbia, the mechanisms of state appropriation of land did not have a formal treaty process; it was not about negotiation, fair use, or equity.[99] Despite the clear histories of dispossession of Indigenous communities from their lands in the process of urban development, Stanger-Ross asserts "city governments have not typically been considered key actors in colonial land politics."[100] As a result, I contend this has allowed

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[96] "To Build A Better City" 00:42.

[97] "To Build A Better City" 00:57.

[98] I am using Austin's idea of the performative to illustrate how words, such as settlement, imply the actual settling of the land, but also a set of relationships to that land which reflects the Anglo cultural values of domesticity. These cultural values of domesticity are intertwined with the ownership of the single-family dwelling. Homeownership is both a legal relationship with the state in the form of land title, and a cultural relationship that implies civilization, stability, security. J.L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

[99] Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002).

[100] Stanger-Ross, "Municipal Colonialism," 548.

municipal governments to continue to maintain colonial structures in how land was developed as the city grew. Robert Home argues, in *Of Planning and Planting: The making of British colonial cities*, that "urbanism was the most lasting of the British imperial legacies."[101] His work outlines the pairing of ideologies, with the performative processes, and structures that were developed and then transported around the world as Britain expanded its empire; these included the use of street grids, housing for working-classes, racial segregation, and the rise of surveyors and town planning experts. Lance Berelowitz outlines Vancouver's specific colonial urban planning process and argues the use of the street grid system in Vancouver is a reflection of "the unsentimental military mindset of the British colonial imperative."[102] The use of the street grid was a way of taming the uncivilized landscape by creating an orderly environment often as cheaply and quickly as possible, and the legal tools and policies used to do this became part of the civic bureaucracy, as Stanger-Ross points out. In Stanger-Ross' words, cities represent "symbols of conquest," "tools of dispossession" and "vital instruments of colonization."[103]

Previous scholars of Vancouver's early settlement history lay the foundation for understanding settler-Indigenous relations.[104] While there is increasing scholarship on Indigenous populations living within urban environments,[105] this project argues that

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[101] Robert Home, *Of Planning and Planting: The making of British colonial cities* (London: Spon, 1997), 2.

[102] Lance Berelowitz, *Dream City: Vancouver and the Global Imagination* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntrye, 2005), 47.

[103] Stanger-Ross, "Municipal Colonialism," 543.

[104] Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002) and *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1997); Jean Barman "Erasing Indigenous Indigeneity in Vancouver" *BC Studies* 155(Autumn 2007): 3-30 and *Stanley Park's Secret: The Forgotten Families of Whoi Whoi, Kanaka Ranch and Brockton Point* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Pub, 2005) and *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007); Renisa Mawani ,*Colonial Proximities: Crossracial Encounters and Juridical Truths in British Columbia, 1871-1921* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009).

[105] Patricia Roy, ed., *Vancouver: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: National Museums of Canada, 1980); Penelope Edmonds, *Urbanizing frontiers: Indigenous peoples and settlers in 19th century Pacific Rim cities* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010) and "Unpacking Settler Colonialism's Urban Strategies: Indigenous Peoples in Victoria, British Columbia, and the Transition to a Settler-Colonial City" *Urban History Review* Vol 38, No 2. (Spring 2010): 4-20; Jean Barman, "Erasing Indigenous Indigeneity in Vancouver" *BC Studies* 155 (Autumn 2007): 3-30 and *Stanley Park's Secret: The Forgotten Families of Whoi Whoi, Kanaka Ranch and Brockton Point* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Pub, 2005); Jordan Stanger-Ross, "Municipal Colonialism in Vancouver: City

colonialism within the urban environment is not just about the removal of the səl̓ilw̓ətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), but it also established a set of municipal structures and domestic norms of how land should be used to perform urban progress and productivity. Early settlement history of Vancouver establishes its importance in the Gold Rush, lumber industry, trade with the Pacific Rim, and as the terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which depended on the labour of Indigenous and racialized minorities.[106] As British Columbia expanded its economic interests, the city of Vancouver grew, and in the process continued to displace Indigenous communities who had called the area home since time immemorial and to segregate Indigenous, Blacks, and peoples of colour to poorer and less desirable parts of the city. In his examination of the early colonial history of Vancouver, including the process by which the Squamish were dispossessed of most of their reserve land in what is now Kitsilano and the maintenance of the Musqueam reserve near UBC, Stanger-Ross argues that these acts should be viewed as acts of "municipal colonialism."[107] The development of municipal colonialism is primarily concerned with ordering the landscape to ensure that people are living in appropriate housing and that the location of the housing reflects the city's urban identity. Jean Barman also illustrates how the removal of homes belonging to Indigenous and Portuguese families from Stanley Park allowed the City of Vancouver to develop an image of the park as untamed wilderness to set it in juxtaposition to the modern urban development of the growing city.[108] I am building on the scholarship of Stanger-Ross and Barman to show how the colonial land use guidelines used to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their land during the settlement of Vancouver remained part of the civic infrastructure and planning structures during the post-war period. As Libby Porter and Oren Yiftachel argue, focusing "on settler-Indigenous relations should function as a window onto a wider production of urban citizenship of other marginalized groups as separate and unequal, segregated and

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Planning and the Conflict over Indian Reserves, 1928-1950s" *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol 89 No. 4 (December 2008): 541-580.

[106] Eric Nicol, *Vancouver* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1970); Alan Morley, *Vancouver: From Milltown to Metropolis* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1961).

[107] Stanger-Ross, "Municipal Colonialism," 544.

[108] Jean Barman, *Stanley Park's Secret: The Forgotten Families of Whoi Whoi, Kanaka Ranch and Brockton Point* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Pub, 2005).

marginalized."[109] In particular, this chapter illustrates how the colonial view of urban space involved planning for potential uses of land which can be viewed as iterative performances of power. Understanding Vancouver's colonial history is essential to understanding how past municipal decisions have become embedded into the urban norms of planning decisions which continued to dispossess marginalized citizens of their land.

I trace how ideas of urban citizenship attached to the performance of housing and domesticity are used to reanimate a colonial framework of land development in the post-war period that both justified and enacted the dispossession of working-class and racially marginalized homeowners and tenants because their urban environment did not reflect a civilized urban environment and as a result needed to be re-tamed. Feminist critical race scholar Sherene Razack argues, "racial projects…come into being and are sustained through a wide number of practices, both material and symbolic."[110] The material practices of colonialism involve the establishment of a grid system, and the construction of separate commercial, industrial, and residential areas, which helped to shape the symbolic narratives that these changes to the landscape reflected progress and good citizenship. Adherence to the material and symbolic practices gave a perceived sense of stability and belonging, though for those who did not fit the white, middle-class, heteronormative ideals, the level of acceptance and belonging was highly dependent on their location within the urban geography. I am interested in looking at how the intersection of policy, which guided the material practices, and popular culture, which reinforced the symbolic practices, has allowed for narratives of urban planning, and housing, to emerge that perpetuated colonial ideas of acceptable domesticity. Through these processes of taming the landscape, the city's identity formed, as the urban environment defined the material and symbolic practices in relation to the natural geography.

In this chapter, I argue that in the post-war period the process of taming the landscape should be called second-wave municipal colonialism, rather than urban renewal, because of the continuity of the material practices of colonialism in the land use

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[109] Libby Porter and Oren Yiftachel "Urbanizing settler-colonial studies: introduction to the special issue, *Settler Colonial Studies*," 9:2 (2019), 180 DOI: 10.1080/2201473X.2017.1409394.

[110] Sherene Razack, ed., *Race, Space and the Law: unmapping a white settler society* (Toronto: Between the Lines: 2002), 7.

guidelines and in the tools used to dispossess racialized and working-class people of their land in order to symbolically create a civilized city. Following George Lipsitz's argument that there is a continuity between the policies guiding westward expansion, industrial era covenants and urban renewal, it becomes easier to see how these policies were "emanating from shared cultural ideals and moral geographies based on a romance of pure spaces."[111] In both the eyes of the colonial officials as well as urban developers the land appears empty, as a *tabula rasa*, from a top-down perspective, and as a result the idea of urban growth and change is based on a vision of the future that attempts to continue to tame the landscape to reflect the colonial progress narrative by dominating the land, by removing people who do not conform to the vision of the future, and by constructing new buildings to symbolically reflect the colonial authority and assure its dominance.

The City of Vancouver was enacting an iterative performance of its municipal power in the post-war period. Critical geographers have drawn from both Erving Goffman and Judith Butler in order to examine the performance of power in urban spaces.[112] I am suggesting that pairing these scholars' ideas of performance, as the management and belief of the part one is playing in everyday life, and performativity, as the stylized repetition of acts, in urban spaces with a decolonial lens allows us to see the repetition of colonial norms rooted in cities in their layouts, and their structural uses of power. The performance of this municipal power rests on what I identify as four colonial "tools"—mapping, surveying, using experts, and creating a vision for the future—which are employed in an iterative cycle to shape a city's urban identity. In what follows, I will show how the City of Vancouver used these tools to shape its urban identity, and then I will illustrate how they were re-employed in the post-war period to reshape the city into a new modern form, specifically in the neighbourhood of Strathcona. The film *To Build A Better City* visually depicts how the neighbourhood of Strathcona will be domesticated or tamed in order to become civilized using these colonial tools by reflecting the progress of the city as a whole not just through a computer-simulated vision of the future with a block-by-block transformation of the neighbourhood into new modern towers, but also by

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[111] George Lipsitz, "Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race: Theorizing the Hidden Architecture of Landscape," *Landscape Journal* 26: 1-07 (2007), 12.

[112] Rueben Rose-Redwood and Michael R. Glass, "Introduction Geographies of Performativity," in *Performativity, Politics, and the Production of Social Space*, eds. Michal R. Glass and Rueben Rose-Redwood (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2014).

depicting the hard work of the experts—the city planners, data collection through windshield surveys, and the development of new maps of the neighbourhood. Mapping became the tool that forms the foundation that the other colonial tools— surveying, consulting experts, and the drawing up of plans for future development—are built upon because it records what currently exists and becomes the visual representation of the potential future for the area. Maps also require a top-down view of land, which also obscures the unique physical features of the landscape and the lived reality of the inhabitants. This visual depiction of the transformation of Strathcona strengthens the importance of top-down planning to tame the uncivilized landscape of run down and derelict housing into a new domestic dwellings, thereby reinforcing the connection between civilization and housing in creating an orderly society. As with the early settlement of Vancouver, housing plays a central role its urban growth, and as the film illustrates, it needs to be redeveloped in order to reflect the city's modern identity and to mirror the beauty of the natural environment established in the opening sequences.

Early History

Municipal colonialism plays a role in determining neighbourhood aesthetics because it initially decided who gets to live where in the city. As Jordan Stanger-Ross illustrates, municipal officials had clear ideas of where Indigenous communities should live within the City of Vancouver boundaries, and they used legal means, albeit unjustly, to cultivate the urban form according to the larger progress narratives that regulated residential, commercial, industrial and leisure areas.[113] Once the territory started to be mapped out and was clearly defined as land was divided into lots and sold for industrial, commercial or residential development. As historian Adele Perry argues, the "significance of Western homes was partially derived from their ability to literally and concretely signify permanent settlement patterns" because as urban areas grew houses began to cluster together which further displaced Indigenous communities.[114] By

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[113] Penelope Edmonds discusses this is in the early settlement history of Victoria in *Urbanizing frontiers: Indigenous peoples and settlers in 19th century Pacific Rim cities* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010) and "Unpacking Settler Colonialism's Urban Strategies: Indigenous Peoples in Victoria, British Columbia, and the Transition to a Settler-Colonial City" *Urban History Review* Vol 38, No 2. (Spring 2010): 4-20. Owen Toews constructs a similar argument with the urban development of *Winnipeg in Stolen City: Racial Capitalism and the Making of Winnipeg* (Winnipeg: Arp Books, 2018).

[114] Adele Perry, "hot-bed of vice," 597.

removing the tall Douglas firs, and red cedars, roads appeared in the wilderness, followed by early European settlement to establish civilization through the creation of an orderly environment. The urban environment grew rapidly during the 1880s and 1890s and quickly came to represent a particular British definition of space and place in how the streets were laid out and named and the forms of domestic architecture reproduced.

While apartments, and some row houses were constructed in Vancouver prior to 1922, the predominant form of residential architecture became the single-family dwelling. However, the size of the lots varied across the city, which notably changed the visual aesthetics of the house on the lot. These lot size differences, I argue, shaped the material and symbolic performances of housing in Vancouver. Drawing from historian Robert McDonald, I assert that class differences became embedded into the landscape of Vancouver and were visually performed through the construction of housing. The west side of the city, originally the municipality of Point Grey, established upper- and middle-class neighbourhoods that tended to have a more homogenous housing aesthetic due to the municipality's early by-laws and higher property taxes. Families resided in larger houses with more British architectural references, and there was greater attention to the cultivation of English-style gardens on the larger lots. By contrast, the east side of the city, originally the municipality of South Vancouver, was a working-class residential area because the smaller lots and lower property taxes made it more affordable. As a result of fewer land use restrictions the east side of the city has an eclectic range of housing styles, sizes, and setbacks.[115] These early settlement patterns shaped views of acceptable domesticity within neighbourhoods; moreover, civic officials predominately resided on the west side of the city, which meant that the material and symbolic practices of urban growth of where they lived guided future development.

Vancouver had a persistent history of hiring outsiders to create a master plan of what the city's urban form should look like, trusting the expertise of people who do not live in the city, and not asking for civic engagement in designing new urban spaces. In 1911, the City of Vancouver hired British planner Thomas Mawson to develop an urban vision. His work emphasized Stanley Park as a feature site and recommended grand

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[115] Robert A. J. McDonald, *Making Vancouver: class, status and social boundaries, 1863-1913* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994). These two municipalities were incorporated into the City of Vancouver in 1929. The aesthetic differences between them still exist in the present.

boulevards similar to Paris.[116] Few of his ideas were implemented as Vancouver headed into a recession and then WWI. American Harland Bartholomew was hired in 1928 to develop a master plan to ensure the city's amalgamation with the municipalities of Point Grey and South Vancouver created a cohesive visual aesthetic.[117] However, plans for implementation of his ideas were thwarted with the Great Depression and WWII. While these two master plans were not implemented, they did instil the idea that the built environment should serve as a backdrop to the spectacular natural environment. I suggest that they are important for the ways in which the City of Vancouver could materially and symbolically construct a visual narrative of civilization in the wilderness.

However, the construction of housing in Strathcona occurred before the city became incorporated in 1886, which has meant that the neighbourhood has aesthetically remained somewhat outside of the settlement patterns found elsewhere in the city. Strathcona has had a long history as a landing pad for arriving immigrants who displaced the "former native campsite, called *Kumkumalay*, meaning 'Big Leaf Maple Trees,'" due to its proximity to the growing industrial and commercial areas of the city along the waterfront of the Burrard Inlet.[118] Initially, it was settled as a suburb separated from the industrial and commercial areas of Gastown by a swath of forest. The lots were laid out in a twenty-five foot by one-hundred-foot grid pattern in 1885.[119] The streetcar line was established in 1889 along Harris Street (now Georgia Street) and connected the growing suburbs with the downtown core around the railway station.[120] Predominately, upper middle-class British immigrants constructed narrow Victorian and Edwardian style houses often surrounded by picket fences. The public school was constructed in 1889 on its current location, at Pender Street and Jackson Avenue, and soon reached full capacity; the name changed from East End School to Lord Strathcona in 1900 to reflect the colonial heritage of the neighbourhood. As the forest slowly disappeared to

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[116] Sean Kheraj, *Inventing Stanley Park: An Environmental History* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013); Thomas Mawson, "Vancouver: City of Optimists," *The Town Planning Review*, Vol. 4 No. 1 (1913): 7-12.

[117] Harland Bartholomew, *A Plan for the City of Vancouver*, 1928, accessed August 13, 2023, https://archive.org/details/planforcityofvan00vanc/mode/2up.

[118] John Atkin, *Strathcona: Vancouver's First Neighbourhood* (Vancouver: Whitecap Books Ltd, 1994), 6.

[119] Larry Bell and Richard Moore, "The Strathcona Rehabilitation Project Documentation and Analysis," 2, CVA, SPOTA fonds AM 730 S4 Box 583-E-8 File 5.

[120] Stanley D. McLarty, *The Story of Strathcona School 1873-1961* (Vancouver 1961).

accommodate the growing urban population, the housing established on the periphery of the neighbourhood was working-class rooming houses for the predominately single men working in the resource industry or at the nearby mills or docks. By the late 1890s, many of the wealthier families relocated to the newly established West End because the larger lots and proximity to Stanley Park symbolically reflected ideas of wealth and status. Strathcona became home to middle-class and working-class families, who built smaller and less ornate houses nestled in between existing housing or lived in larger houses that had been subdivided to accommodate multiple families. The settlement history and architectural designs reflect a blend of class markers, and lack the visual distinctions found between the west and east sides of Vancouver. Early settlement and redevelopment sought to "tame the landscape" in order to create a civilization out of the bush; further redevelopment of the 1920s and 1930s sought to control the physical environment by flattening the streets to improve traffic flow and safety for the growing neighbourhood population.

While there was a clear attempt to prescribe a settler-colonial order and domestic and cultural norms on the landscape through the use of street grids, single-family dwellings, and public education, the neighbourhood of Strathcona has had a fluid history of class as well as racial settlement that forms an integral part of its neighbourhood identity. Chinese bachelors lived in rooming houses close to Chinatown. There was a large Jewish community within the neighbourhood, and they established a synagogue, but with changing settlement patterns and access to land, the majority of the community moved south to the area between 16th and 41st Avenues between Oak and Granville Street to establish new residential settlement. Despite the exodus of the majority of the Jewish population, the synagogue remained and was refashioned into Gibb's Boys Club and was eventually converted into condominiums to ensure that more housing was established within the neighbourhood.[121] The exodus of the large Jewish population was replaced by a growing Italian and Portuguese population, many of whom set up small backyard bakeries as a means of supplementing their income.[122] Black families resided on the western periphery of the neighbourhood between Main and Jackson Streets and

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[121] "Former Schara Tzadeck Synagogue," Vancouver Heritage Finder, Vancouver Heritage Foundation, accessed June 18, 2023, https://www.heritagesitefinder.ca/location/700-e-pender-st-vancouver-bc.

[122] Marlatt and Itter, *Opening Doors*, 71. Peter Battisoni's father established Venice bakery in his backyard in the 900 block of Princess Street.

Union and Prior.[123] There was also a large Japanese population in the neighbourhood, residing predominately north of Hastings Street, with it estimated that nearly half of the Strathcona school population was of Japanese descent by the 1930s.[124] With the internment of the Japanese, the neighbourhood demographic shifted again, and post-WWII few Japanese families moved back into the neighbourhood. Several teachers referred to the student body at Strathcona Elementary School as the "Little League of Nations" to reflect the cultural diversity, but also the sense of social cohesion within the community.[125] Throughout these shifts in neighbourhood population, there was an informal economy established to help new immigrants get access to housing and there were many community and cultural organizations, as well as churches, established within the neighbourhood to support new immigrants. As a result of the waves of immigration, as different cultural groups moved in and out, the neighbourhood was shaped as a palimpsest because buildings took on new purposes and a constellation of different connections across people, ages, racial and cultural backgrounds occurred over time with the changing demographics of the neighbourhood.

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[123] "What was Hogan's Alley?" Hogan's Alley Society, accessed August 13, 2023, https://www.hogansalleysociety.org/about-hogans-alley/.

[124] From excepts from *The Story of Strathcona School 1873-1961*, accessed August 13, 2023 https://blogs.vsb.bc.ca/heritage/2019/03/27/early-history-of-strathcona-elementary-school/.

[125] McLarty, *The Story of Strathcona School 1873-1961 n.p*.

Figure 2.1. View of Strathcona before urban renewal
Source: View looking east from Main Street and Pender Street, 1931, CVA, Major Matthews fonds, AM54-S4-: van Sc P160.

Taming of the Postwar Landscape

Drawing from the early settlement narratives in which colonial officials tamed the wild spaces by removing trees to establish an orderly, rational, progressive urban centre, urban renewal was an attempt to tame the wild spaces within the city by demolishing existing structures, removing people who lived there, and constructing new buildings which would symbolize order, rationality, and progress. The City of Vancouver turned its focus on areas of the city which were impeding urban growth and developed new rationales for dispossession, but they were based on existing colonial ideas of domesticity and of taming the land. Housing becomes a particularly important lens through which to examine Stanger-Ross' theories of municipal colonialism because housing construction was the dominant use of land in Vancouver.[126] By the 1950s, the taming of the landscape began to look at how housing in the City of Vancouver should conform to ideas of acceptable domesticity because most of the housing stock in the areas of early European settlement was nearing seventy years old. Older housing combined with a lack of homogeneous neighbourhood aesthetic started to be viewed as

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[126] Graeme Wynn and Timothy Oke, eds., *Vancouver and Its Region* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 71.

uncivilized and in need of taming. The mixed land use of Strathcona did not conform to the post-war urban progress narrative of creating orderly and efficient cities.

Urban development in the City of Vancouver during the post-war period mirrored urban changes across North America as it sought to redefine its image as a progressive and modern city in the wilderness.[127] In the post-war period, the City of Vancouver was very concerned about the public performance of its urban life. Housing was a top concern after the protests of veterans at the Hotel Vancouver over the construction of new housing.[128] The federal government constructed housing in three new neighbourhoods—Jericho, Fraserview and Renfrew Heights—in order to provide housing for veterans; the house plans were regulated and reflected national ideals of promoting the nuclear family.[129] The City of Vancouver also hired Harland Bartholomew for the second time to draft a master plan in order to guide the City's, as well as the Greater Vancouver region's urban growth.[130] The goal of these plans was to construct a modern city and build up the infrastructure of the city, as well as the surrounding urban areas, to ensure that it would be attractive to and could accommodate the anticipated arriving population. Bartholomew and Associates had established themselves as experts in urban planning as they were hired to produce master plans for cities across North America; however, they had only visited the City of Vancouver for short periods of time to collect the data needed to write their reports and were not residents of the area. This perpetuated the settler-colonial bird's eye view of the city, and the pattern of an expert, like previous colonial officials, deciding what was the best use of the land based on ideas of profit and productivity. Bartholomew and Associates laid the foundation for the City of Vancouver's urban performance in the post-war period to reflect the beauty of the natural environment, and to perpetuate the architectural designs found in the wealthier areas of the city. Bartholomew published a series of ten booklets between 1946 and

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[127] Wynn and Oke, *Vancouver and Its Region*, 235.

[128]Jill Wade, ""A Palace for the Public": Housing Reform and the 1946 Occupation of the Old Hotel Vancouver," *BC Studies*, (1986), 288.

[129]Jill Wade, *Houses for All: the Struggle for Social Housing in Vancouver, 1919-50* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994), 148-151.

[130] Harland Bartholomew was first hired in 1928 to development a master plan to guide the development of the City of Vancouver after it amalgamated with the municipalities of Point Grey and South Vancouver on January 1, 1929. Bartholomew's plan focused on the development of more park spaces throughout the city and encouraged the development of single-family houses. http://archive.org/details/vancplanincgen00vanc/mode/2up?view=theater

September 1947, ranging from topics such as transit planning to park and school development.[131] Bartholomew and Associates' advice perpetuated the top-down approach to urban planning as the expert was removed from the land in question and did not have any lived experience with or relationship with the residents interacting with the existing built form. The suite of booklets advocated for increasing the number of regulatory bodies within the City of Vancouver to guide the taming of the landscape in the post-war period. It was no longer about removing trees, putting in new roads, and establishing industries; this new phase of urban development needed more experts and regulatory bodies guiding the performance, which would have a new Civic Centre, to showcase arts and culture, a revitalized downtown core to entice new commercial enterprises, and a new airport to draw in travellers from around the world.

In the final booklet of the series, *The Appearance of the City*, Bartholomew and Associates outlined how the urban form should look. They argued that the "man-made city appears sordid and ugly because of this magnificent scenic background" of "mountain scenery, forested foothills and marine vistas."[132] This emphasis on the built environment performing in tandem with the scenery is a repetition of the earlier narrative of the city emerging from the wilderness that was first established during early colonial settlement from the 1860s to 1910s, during which time the goal was to eradicate Indigenous populations from the city's boundaries, and to establish industries, businesses, and residential spaces. Ensuring the built form showcased the natural environment was also part of Thomas Mawson Master Plan and Bartholomew and Associates first plan in 1928.

Improving the appearance of the city, according to Bartholomew, was the responsibility of both civic officials and citizens alike. The plan emphasized the need to create an orderly, clean, and well-maintained city, which would require increased zoning to ensure that residential, commercial, and industrial development occured in separate

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[131] The ten booklets: *Transit Planning, Metropolitan Airport Plan, The Major Street Plan, A Preliminary report upon parks and recreation, Administration of the Plan, Civic Centre, Economic Background and Population Growth, The Downtown Business District, Decentralization and Regional Planning, A preliminary report upon parks and recreation and schools, The Appearance of the City,* accessed June 18, 2023, https://archive.org/search?query=creator%3A%22Vancouver+Town+Planning+Commission+%3B+Harland+Bartholomew+and+Associates%22.

[132] Harland Bartholomew and Associates, The Appearance of the City, 10, accessed June 18, 2023, https://archive.org/details/appearanceofcity00vanc/page/10/mode/2up.

locations in order “to deter a haphazard and hodge-podge pattern.”[133] Much of the report focuses on the need to cultivate a more pleasing environment through increasing the number of trees and boulevards and the removal of power poles in residential areas to along back lanes or underground wiring. The photographs accompanying the document are of areas located on the west side of the city, which were initially developed by mimicking the stricter neighbourhood design guidelines of Shaughnessy and the University Endowment Lands. By highlighting wealthier areas of the city as examples of a tamed landscape and civilization, and of what the entire urban form should aspire to, the report subtly implants a class bias into the neighbourhood aesthetics and justifies the demolition of working-class houses because they did not conform to the wealthier areas of the city. Furthermore, the report focuses on the architectural design of private property as a way to enhance a city’s overall appearance and encourages the City of Vancouver to “exercise a limited amount of architectural control through its Building Inspector and City Council”—which passively advocated for private development to guide the built form.[134] By encouraging private development, the housing market remained profit driven and there were few obligations of the state to ensure that housing is equitable and meets the needs of the current population.

The growing acceptance of using experts to guide urban planning led to the creation of the Urban Planning Department at the University of British Columbia in 1950.[135] Bartholomew’s reports guiding the redevelopment of Vancouver also led to the creation of the Planning Department in the City of Vancouver in 1951. According to historian Will Langford, the planners hired were British-trained and predominately represented white, male, middle-class values.[136] Prior to the creation of the Planning Department, the City of Vancouver had been guided “from the late 1910s, [by] the Town Planning Commission (TPC), a non-professional (and business-elite-dominated) board,” that acted in an advisory capacity to City Council.[137] The Town Planning Commission

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[133] Harland Bartholomew and Associates, *The Appearance of the City*, 13, accessed June 18, 2023, https://archive.org/details/appearanceofcity00vanc/page/10/mode/2up.

[134] ibid., 20.

[135] Karen Murray, “Making Space in Vancouver’s East End,” *BC Studies*, (2011), 16.

[136] Will Langford, “Is Sutton Brown God?”: Planning Expertise and the Local State in Vancouver, 1952-73” *BC Studies*, no. 173 (Spring 2012), 26.

[137] Will Langford, “Gerald Sutton Brown and the Discourse of City Planning Expertise in Vancouver, 1953-1959,” *Urban History Review*, Vol 41 No 2 (Spring 2013), 31.

was made up of members of the public who were interested in the development of the city, but were not urban planners; they were businessmen, real estate developers, or wealthy elites, who had a vested interest in ensuring that their commercial, industrial, and residential investments continued to accrue value. Langford suggests that "throughout the 1940s, council and the TPC were often in conflict over a range of urban development issues."[138] Figuring out ways to resolve Vancouver's "longstanding housing crisis" was frequently a source of conflict.[139] The Town Planning Commission was guided by the Shaughnessy Heights Act, established on March 4, 1914 by the Province, which ensured that single-family dwellings were the only form of residential development in Shaughnessy. It was further amended in 1922 to ensure that lots within the neighbourhood could not be subdivided and only a single house could be established on the lot.[140] The members of the Town Planning Commission resided on the west side of the city, and as a result the performance of upper-class property ownership and design became the guiding force in new property developments. With the creation of the Planning Dep

Post-war Strathcona

The material and symbolic performances of both early settlement, property ownership, and housing aesthetics impacts how the neighbourhood of Strathcona was viewed by both members of the public and the newly formed Planning department because the lots in this neighbourhood were significantly smaller than lots found across the city, which had initially developed as suburbs of Vancouver. The 25'x100' lots in Strathcona gave the impression that the neighbourhood was cramped because there was little yard space between houses, which appeared crowded when compared visually

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[138] Langford, "Gerald Sutton Brown and the Discourse of City Planning Expertise in Vancouver, 1953-1959", 31.

[139] Will Langford, "Gerald Sutton Brown and the Discourse of City Planning Expertise in Vancouver, 1953-1959" *Urban History Review*, Vol 41 No 2 Spring 2013; Leonard Marsh in *Rebuilding A Neighbourhood: Report on a Demonstration Slum-Clearance and Urban Rehabilitation Project in a Key Central Area in Vancouver* (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia, 1950) also highlights the need for increased rental market.

[140] According to Richard Harris in *Creeping Conformity: How Canada Became Suburban, 1900-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), Vancouver was the first city in North America to establish zoning guidelines to regulate new development. This has had a significant impact on the development of Vancouver in embedding a narrow set of class-based guidelines into the land use guidelines for the development of housing.

to lots that were twice the size but with a comparable sized house on them. The crowded housing, combined with the fact that much of the housing stock had been built when the neighbourhood was first established in the 1880s signaled to the Planning Department that the neighbourhood should be demolished and a new, more cohesive neighbourhood aesthetic matching the beauty of the natural environment should be put in.

In 1949, the City of Vancouver seconded sociologist Leonard Marsh, a new expert who had recently been hired to UBC's School of Social Work, to undertake an analysis of the city's blighted neighbourhoods. Fears of blight infecting cities first emerged in North America post-WWI and were grounded in the idea that poor housing was akin to a disease which could spread throughout the city if not curbed and controlled by careful planning.[141] Similar to excising a cancerous tumour, to ensure the health of the patient, Marsh advocated for complete clearance of the blighted areas to ensure that the health of the city could be preserved.[142] While he argued that the neighbourhood of Strathcona was "not the worst example of housing conditions in the city," he suggested that, "because of its location, in relation to False Creek, to traffic routes and industrial areas, it's one of the critical areas for the whole future of town planning in Vancouver."[143] It should be the first priority for "slum clearance" because the neighbourhood's proximity to the train station meant that new arrivals to the city would form a negative opinion of Vancouver if they saw derelict housing and unkempt streets.[144] In order for Vancouver to establish itself as a modern city, the neighbourhood needed to be demolished and rebuilt with modern forms of housing, predominately high-rise apartment housing and public housing. Despite his advocacy for the removal of urban blight, Marsh presents a nuanced and complex understanding of housing problems within the city by pointing out

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[141] Colin Gordon, "Fighting Blight." In *Mapping Decline*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc., 2014); Taylor, Dorceta Taylor, "Racializing Blight." In *Toxic Communities*, 228–61. (New York: New York University Press, 2020). https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479805150.003.0014; Hilary Ballon and Kenneth T. Jackson ed., *Robert Moses and the Modern City: the Transformation of New York.* 1st ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2007).

[142] Leonard C. Marsh*, Rebuilding A Neighbourhood: Report on a Demonstration Slum-Clearance and Urban Rehabilitation Project in a Key Central Area in Vancouver* (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia, 1950), iii.

[143] Marsh, *Rebuilding A Neighbourhood*, iii.

[144] Marsh, iv.

the inadequacy of rental supply, the limited supply of new, affordable housing for low-income residents, and decentralization of the city due to urban sprawl.

Marsh advocated for the neighbourhood's redevelopment to take place in phases. Several blocks would be demolished at a single time. Those residents who were displaced could find subsidized rental accommodation elsewhere in the city but had priority to move back into the new buildings once they were completed; however, this appears to be a contradiction because the report also stresses the low availability of rental accommodations. He justified complete demolition of the neighbourhood because of the rising costs to the city based on the increased demand for social services if poor housing was allowed to continue. Marsh argues that "the biggest cost of the slum to society is apathetic, dreary living, which is a menace to every aspect of heathy citizenship."[145] By tying together housing with citizenship, Marsh perpetuates the colonial ideas that domesticity is a reflection of civilization, and like previous settlements it would require taming the landscape to conform to the progress narrative.

Colonial Tool 1: Mapping

In 1949, as part of Marsh's survey of Strathcona, three maps were created of the neighbourhood. The first map showed the neighbourhood as 1200 lots on the grid of streets. It lists the population as 7500, with a density of 55 persons per acre, and identifies one school and a park.[146]

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[145] Marsh, *Rebuilding a Neighbourhood*, 23.

[146] "Existing Subdivision" Marsh, *Rebuilding a Neighbourhood*, no page number for the map given.

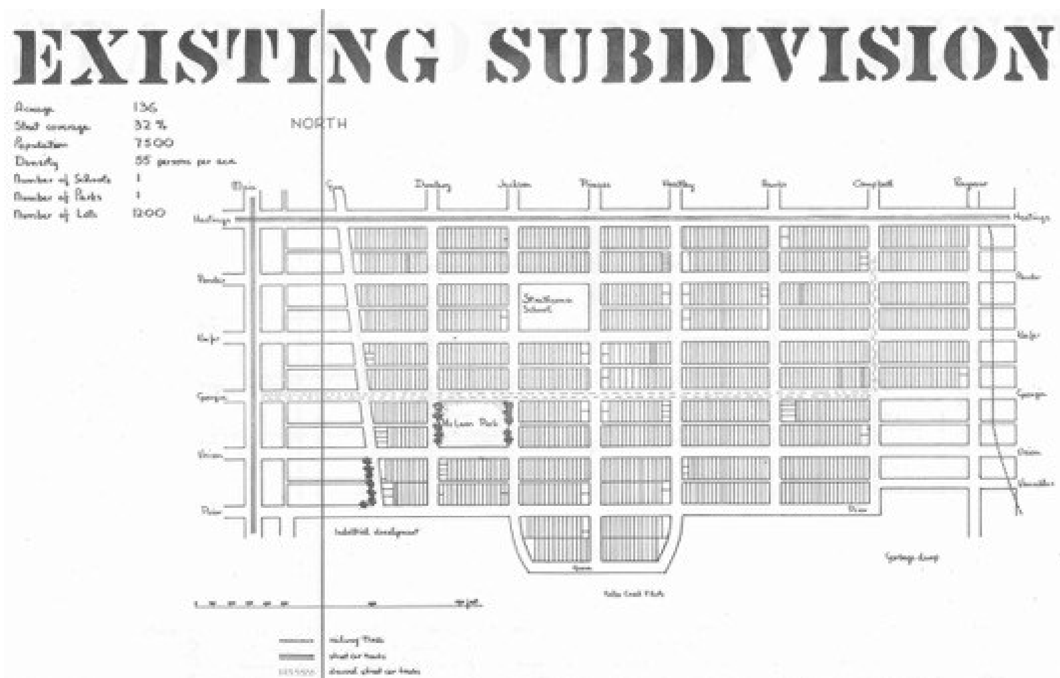

Figure 2.2. Map 1: Existing Subdivision
Source: Leonard C. Marsh, *Rebuilding A Neighbourhood: Report on a Demonstration Slum-Clearance and Urban Rehabilitation Project in a Key Central Area in Vancouver* (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia, 1950).

This map indicates a recognition that families are living within the area, as indicated not only in the population density, but also in the spaces where they would gather for education and play. However, the map does not identify the numerous places of worship, community gathering, or the Chinese language schools, nor does it identify the existing commercial and industrial areas embedded into the neighbourhood. This gives an incomplete view of the neighbourhood structures and what will be impacted as a result of redevelopment.

The second map removed the lots and illustrated development as a series of four stages covering wider areas of city blocks.

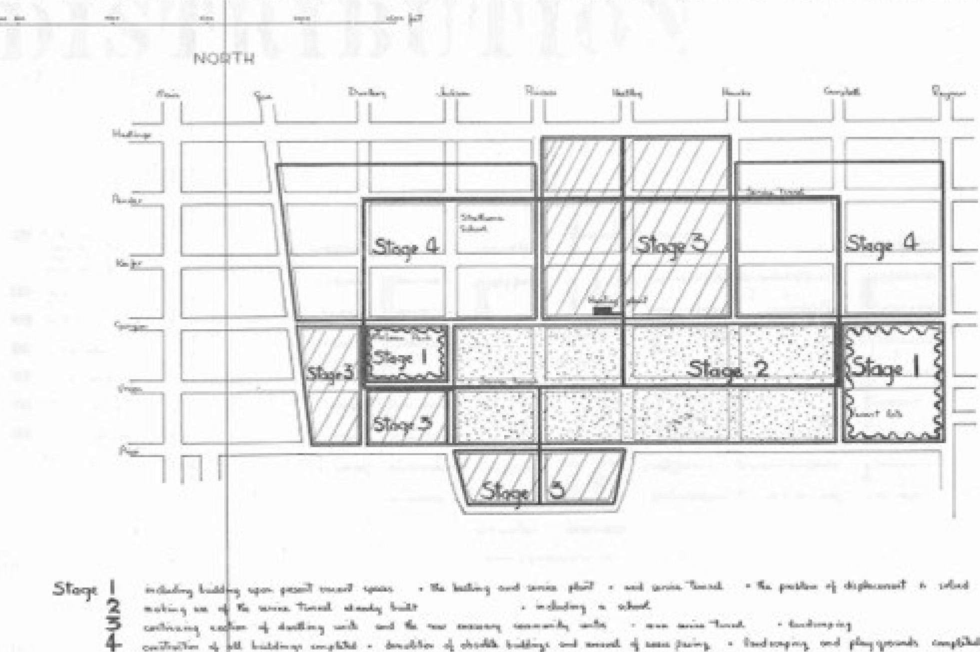

Figure 2.3. Map 2: Stages of Development
Source: Leonard C. Marsh, *Rebuilding A Neighbourhood: Report on a Demonstration Slum-Clearance and Urban Rehabilitation Project in a Key Central Area in Vancouver* (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia, 1950).

By zooming out and removing the lots, this map also removes the people living there, as MacLean Park is removed and forms part of the development of Stage 1, thereby indicating that it would no longer be of use for the people living there as a replacement park is not identified in the subsequent stage. While Strathcona school remains on the map, it gets swallowed into Stage 4, which is defined as having these goals: "construction of all buildings completed, demolition of obsolete buildings and removal of excess parking, and landscaping and playgrounds completed."[147] In this description it is not clear whether the school is considered an obsolete building and the park will replace the school and its surrounding grounds.

The third map included in Marsh's report illustrates a radical transformation of the neighbourhood, with the removal of existing streets and the construction of "Dwelling

[147] "Stages of Development" Marsh, *Rebuilding a Neighbourhood*, no page number for the map given.

units” built in zones of dormitories, single room, and one bedroom to five bedroom dwellings.[148]

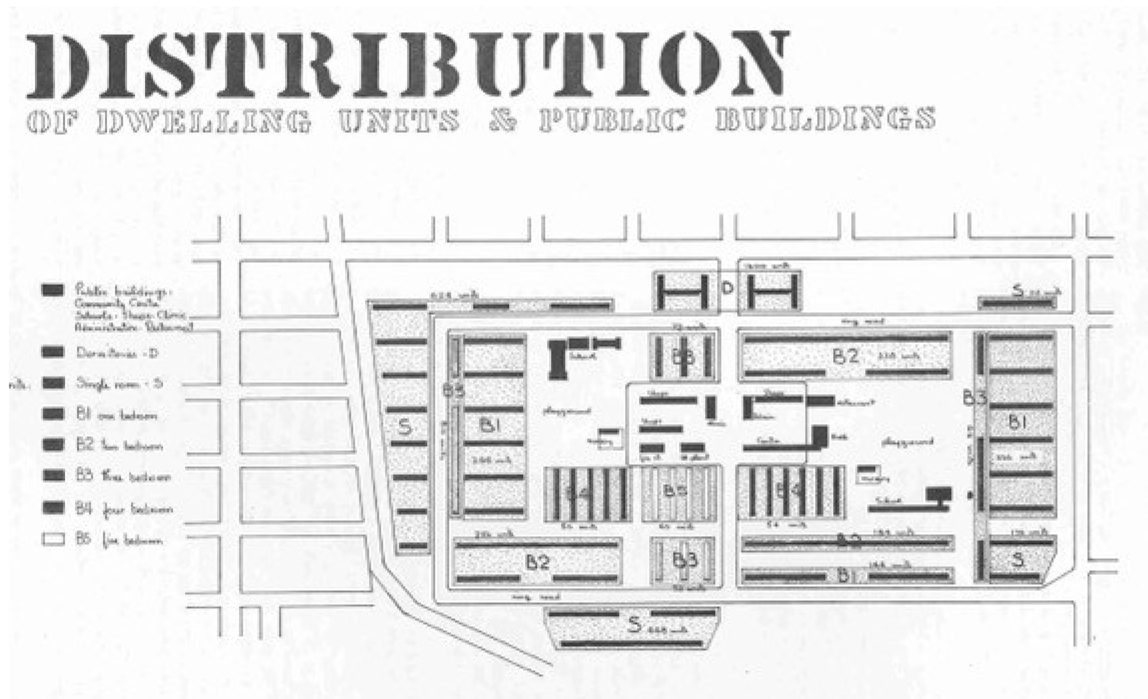

Figure 2.4. Map 3 Distribution of Dwelling Units & Public Buildings
Source: Leonard C. Marsh, *Rebuilding A Neighbourhood: Report on a Demonstration Slum-Clearance and Urban Rehabilitation Project in a Key Central Area in Vancouver* (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia, 1950).

This would require people to move as their family size changed rather than offering them housing that was flexible to change according to their needs, as the existing, predominately, single-family dwellings had allowed people to do. According to this map this form of regulation of new housing construction illustrates that housing is segregated according to the number of bedrooms rather mixing housing size within the same structure. It also assumes that their dwelling priorities rest in needing a place to sleep over a place to have a small business, entertain, or welcome friends or family to stay. The three maps illustrate a process of dehumanizing the area. By removing the specific sites and data about people living there from subsequent maps, in order to create it into an objective space to promote the redevelopment it to conform to municipal notions of acceptable housing rather than meeting the needs of the people living there. This began

[148] “Distribution of Dwelling Units and Public Buildings” Marsh, *Rebuilding a Neighbourhood*, no page number for the map given.

the process of physically shaping the neighbourhood into the city's image. It was an attempt to create orderliness over what was perceived as chaos over three phases of development.

While Vancouver began planning for demolition of Strathcona in 1950, the process was slow compared to other cities in Canada. Toronto, Halifax and Calgary all quickly demolished poor areas of the cities in order to construct low-income towers to house people.[149] These public housing projects followed the US examples, albeit, at a much slower rate.[150] However, as Everett Brown points out, Canadian urban planners did not learn from mistakes made or problems with how demolition was done or the consequences of it.[151] Urban renewal began in the downtown core of Vancouver in the late 1950s and 1960s in an attempt to attract investors and people in order to transform it into a global city.[152] Seven years after the Marsh Report, Gerald Sutton Brown ordered further study of the neighbourhood. Marsh was willing to acknowledge the poverty of the area and the need to provide appropriate rental housing; however, Sutton Brown's agenda focused on improving the urban efficiency by promoting transit corridors, and his reports do not reveal the need to provide a range of new housing options provided by the municipal, provincial, or federal governments, but instead advocated for private developers to construct new housing options.

Colonial Tool 2: Experts

Performance Studies scholar Jon McKenzie suggests that the organizational performance of corporations and governments rests on a performative framework of efficacy and efficiency in order to increase productivity and reduce waste.[153] As head of the Planning Department, Gerald Sutton Brown sought to further improve Vancouver's

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[149] Tina Loo, *Moved by the State: forced relocation and making a good life in postwar Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019); Sean Purdy, "By the People, for the People: Tenant Organizing in Toronto's Regent Park Housing Project in the 1960s and 1970s" *Journal of Urban History*, Vol 30 No. 4 (May 2004): 519-548. DOI: 10.1177/0096144263804

[150] Richard Harris, "More American than the United States: Housing in urban Canada in the twentieth century." *Journal of Urban History* Vol. 26 no. 4 (May 2000): 456-478.

[151] Everett Brown, CMHC Interview, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM734-S4 Box 583-E-03 File 10.

[152] Mike Harcourt, Ken Cameron with Sean Rossiter, *City making in paradise: nine decisions that saved Vancouver* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2007), 32.

[153] Jon McKenzie, *Perform or Else: from discipline to performance* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 55-59.

urban development by creating an additional regulatory body called the Board of Administration that operated outside of City Council. As Langford argues, “the creation of the [Board of Administration] in 1956 signalled the further entrenchment of expertise in local government and was another instance of the postwar expansion of bureaucracy.”[154] The Planning Department would submit proposals to the Board of Administration, who would then advise City Council. This performance of expertise strengthened the colonial structures set in place and perpetuated the notion that British-trained experts understood the complexities of urban development and should operate above the elected officials to guide urban growth. By creating a separate administrative body, with no decision-making accountability to the people whom it affects, the Board of Administration further dismissed citizens as having any clear role or place within city planning. Sutton Brown ushered in the structures of five-year plans that would supersede the elected three-year City Council terms to ensure the top-down planning structures would not be affected by changes in city council. His vision for the renewal of the blighted areas of Vancouver was to take place over a twenty-year period. Langford illustrates how Sutton Brown relied on experts from both the United States and Britain to inform the practice of urban redevelopment in Vancouver. This perpetuated the settler-colonial top-down decision-making process of experts determining what was the highest and best use of an area based on information from a map rather than lived experience in the location.

While much of east side of the city was identified as needing redevelopment, Sutton Brown broke the wider redevelopment area into smaller pieces to begin implementation. In order to assert control over the area, the neighbourhood needed to be clearly defined following a settler-colonial development pattern, where establishing clear boundaries of a territory would make it easier to determine who gets to live where and to decide what kinds of activities are acceptable within that area. This process started with the Planning Department subdividing and renaming large swathes of the city, often in contradistinction to how residents referred to these areas. The area east of the downtown core was referred to as the East End by residents within the area, as well as by those who lived elsewhere; its residential counterpart was the West End, located near Stanley Park. The neighbourhood of the West End had clearly defined boundaries because Burrard Street was a definitive eastern edge, and Stanley Park formed a clear

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[154] Will Langford, “Is Sutton Brown God?,” 26.

western edge. The water to the north and south of the neighbourhood clearly defined how the neighbourhood would grow according to the natural geography. However, unlike the West End, the East End did not have a predominately residential and leisure focus because the settlement of this area occurred several decades earlier, with residential areas developing close to commercial and industrial areas, and with changes in zoning in 1929 industrial development moved into the residential and commercial areas. The water to the north of the neighbourhood formed a clear boundary to the East End, but the southern tidal flats were slowly being infilled to meet the needs of the growing city. The western and eastern edges of the East End were not as specifically defined as they were in the West End. In order to regulate these overlapping land uses in the East End, and in the absence of clear physical geographical demarcations of boundaries, the City of Vancouver split the East End into four separate areas—Gastown, Chinatown, North Hastings, and Strathcona. Each of these areas would be redeveloped according to the City of Vancouver's post-war progress narrative in order to regulate the built form, while at the same time asserting a form of dominance over the residents, which was similar to colonial views as the existing inhabitants were not consulted or included in the decision-making. They were informed of how land would be used in the future.

By breaking down the neighbourhood into problems to be solved rather than recognizing that there were people who had lives there, it became easier to view the area as a space, as Henri Lefebvre defines it. Lefebvre argues that the term "space" is as an objective and mathematical concept based on a Cartesian view of the world.[155] This reduction of space to a set of objective principles, he argues, has dominated many urban development policies. Objectively, the East End needed to be reshaped to ensure that there was a clear focus for each area; creating a homogenous area was part of taming an area that had become uncivilized with overlapping land uses. So as a result, Gastown would be redeveloped as a predominately commercial area with light industrial. Chinatown would be redeveloped as a tourist destination by ensuring that the built form appeared more traditionally Chinese, but with a Western view of what was an acceptable display of Chinese culture. As geographer Kay J. Anderson argues, the development of Chinatown was an example of "the material consequences of the power relation that had

[155] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans., Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1991).

always underpinned European constructs of identity and place."[156] North Hastings was zoned primarily industrial with the goal of eliminating most of the housing entirely. Many of the residents in this neighbourhood had already been displaced during World War II with the internment of the Japanese, and their houses, businesses, and properties had been sold. Strathcona posed a more difficult area to define the boundaries of because of the mix of residential, commercial, and industrial uses within the span of several blocks. As a result, the perceived easiest thing to do would be to eliminate all the structures, and to begin again with a clear and cohesive form with clearly designated areas. All of these changes to the definition of the neighbourhoods was based on a top-down approach to urban development in order to define and regulate urban space to ensure that each area reflected the modernist view of urban development. Anderson argues that the reshaping of Chinatown allowed "white Europeans were at once defining themselves as a privileged in-group, all the time building and justifying a form of cultural hegemony over such 'racial Others'."[157] While Anderson's specifically focuses on the shaping of Chinatown to reflect a particular idea of Chinese identity, I suggest that it was also a way to shape particular ideas about class through the construction of public housing within the adjacent neighbourhood of Strathcona, where many Chinese residents lived, and it continues to follow a colonial view of land of a top-down approach of determining who gets to live where within the city by taming the previous urban development that had allowed for a mix of land uses.

Drawing from the work of performance studies scholar Heather Davis-Fisch, I suggest that defining the boundaries of the neighbourhood, and giving it the definitive name of Strathcona rather than the more general name for the wider area of the East End, was an attempt to reassert its colonial heritage in the remaking of the neighbourhood. Davis-Fisch suggests that "the place name can become a placeholder, holding open a space that can be filled with a narrow range of cultural narratives and from which outlying cultural memories are excluded."[158] By referencing Lord Strathcona, less formally known as Donald Smith, the man who drove the last spike uniting the

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[156] Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 178.

[157] Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown*, 178.

[158] Heather Davis-Fisch, "X̱eyx̱elómós and Lady Franklin Rock: Place Naming, Performance Historiography, and Settler Methodologies" in *Performance Studies in Canada* eds., Marlis Schweitzer and Laura Levin, (Mc-Gill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 76.

railway across Canada, which established Vancouver as the terminus of the railway and launched the rapid growth of the urban environment. By naming the neighbourhood Strathcona, the British colonial heritage and the progress narrative was both reanimated and strengthened in the post-war period. By erasing the working-class material culture from the landscape, and drawing from ideas of high modernism and progress, the neighbourhood could be remade in the image of the early wealthier white settlers, who had originally settled in the neighbourhood and had named the elementary school Lord Strathcona. The changing of place names allowed for a reanimation of British heritage in the city and became a form of whitewashing the neighbourhood, which had been predominately settled by non-whites. McKenzie argues that this form of discursive performance "reaffirm[s] existing structures."[159]

All of this was compounded by the fact that, in 1957, the City of Vancouver stopped civic maintenance in the Strathcona neighbourhood, which meant sidewalks were not repaired, streetlights were not maintained, and there were no upgrades to the civic infrastructure. Since the area would eventually be demolished, city officials felt there was no point in spending money on upkeep if urban renewal was inevitable. By the late 1950s, property values declined because the neighbourhood had been zoned light industrial, which made it difficult for many of the homeowners in the neighbourhood to sell and relocate elsewhere in the city because mortgage lenders were leery of granting new mortgages in what was considered a non-residential area. The lower property values also made it easier for the City to buy up the properties of homeowners who chose to relocate in order to demolish them once the whole block had been acquired. Homeowners were still paying property taxes, even though they were receiving little in terms of civic infrastructure; garbage was picked up, but many empty lots were overflowing with refuse, which attracted rats and other vermin, thereby reinforcing the need for demolition. Homeowners who wanted to stay in the neighbourhood and improve their houses had their building permits denied. By changing the zoning, declining permits, and stopping civic maintenance the City of Vancouver was performing a visual narrative of the neighbourhood in order to justify its demolition.

[159] Jon McKenzie, *Perform or Else*, 30.

Colonial Tool 3: Survey

Based on Marsh's report, the City of Vancouver did further research in order to apply for funding from the federal government to start urban renewal. On February 4, 1958, City Council instructed the Technical Planning Board, who submitted plans to the Planning Department, to prepare a second report to submit to the provincial and federal government "in regard to acquisition and clearance of substandard areas under the terms of Section 23 of the National Housing Act."[160] The Technical Planning Board conducted a second set of surveys in order to determine whether the neighbourhood was in need of demolition or rehabilitation. Members of the Technical Planning Board conducted windshield surveys in order to compile their data on the condition of the housing. This form of data collection removes the researcher from the site and is based on a narrow view of the condition of housing based as reflected in the aesthetics of the dwelling. The dwellings were assessed for the state of their foundation, walls, roof, gutters and downspouts, chimney, windows, and porch, railings and steps.[161] However, it was difficult for those administering the survey to get an accurate assessment as to the conditions of housing when they were physically removed from the house itself by sitting in a vehicle. As a result of this initial survey, it was deemed that the majority of the housing was in poor or very poor condition and should be demolished. As part of Vancouver Redevelopment Study 1957, every structure on its lot was included on a map and then classified according to a symbol coding scheme indicating the states of disrepair from very good to very poor.

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[160] "Opening Letter submitted to Mayor and Members of city Council from G. F. Fountain, Chairman of Technical Planning Board January 19, 1960" City of Vancouver Redevelopment: Acquisition and Clearance Section 23, National Housing Act Project 1 Prepared by The Technical Planning Board, November, 1959.

[161] "Appendix XIII Windshield Survey: Check List of Deficiency Items" City of Vancouver Redevelopment: Acquisition and Clearance Section 23, National Housing Act Project 1 Prepared by The Technical Planning Board, November, 1959, 96.

Figure 2.5. Map of Redevelopment Area
Source: City of Vancouver Archives COV-S648-F0686-: MAP 995 Box 270-10-03

As a result of this classification system, the city was attempting to justify the demolition of the neighbourhood. Sutton Brown's approach was to transform the neighbourhood over a twenty-year period by expropriating and demolishing the existing properties on a block-by-block basis. The neighbourhood would be redeveloped by applying for federal and provincial funding for new public housing and by selling blocks to private developers for market housing and commercial expansion. The report suggested that "clearance areas should be integrated into an overall plan of redevelopment so that urban renewal can proceed as an orderly and continuous operation within the framework of the City's 20-Year Development Plan."[162] This report formed the supporting documentation for application for urban renewal funds from both the provincial and federal governments.

Colonial Tool 4: Vision for the future

The plan for redevelopment was presented as more important than the people whose lives it would affect, as throughout the report there is little reference to the residents of Strathcona or the impact the twenty-year scheme would have on their lived reality. In short, the civic performance of planning follows a colonial pattern in which land

[162] ibid, 19.

is determined as open and available for redevelopment with little regard for people currently living there, nor the preceding history of state-sponsored violence that contributed to the community's evolving make-up. With the repealing of the Chinese Exclusion Act, more Chinese families began to move into the neighbourhood as Italian and Portuguese families relocated further east into the Grandview-Woodlands and Hastings-Sunrise neighbourhoods. The neighbourhood underwent another significant cultural shift with the destruction of housing and businesses belonging to the Black community along the western edge of the neighbourhood boundary with the construction of the Georgia viaduct and the beginnings of the MacLean Public Housing development. Not only did the beginnings of urban renewal destroy affordable housing, but it also destroyed an area of the city where culturally marginalized groups could live close to employment. This destruction further inscribed both the material and symbolic norms of settler-colonial land use in the post-war period.

On the face of the successive redevelopment maps of Strathcona produced by the City, the existing structures become swept clean and little evidence of them remain. Phase 1 displaced 1,600 people, "and twenty-eight acres of land were cleared" to construct the first public housing unit of MacLean Park Public Housing, constructed between 1961 and 1967.[163] In order to speed up the process of development, the City of Vancouver acquired MacLean Park from the Vancouver Park Board and constructed the first tower on what they termed vacant land, thereby indicating that the park had no value or use to the residents in the neighbourhood. This park was one of the first supervised parks offering summer programs for children and had playground equipment and a wading pool.[164] Phase II of Strathcona's redevelopment occurred with the development of Raymur Place Public Housing. "The second phase, which began in 1965, displaced 1,730 people from twenty-nine acres of cleared land."[165] Raymur Place lacked essential facilities, such as children's play spaces and further places to meet as a community. This left the neighbourhood without any park space for children to play in aside from the school yard. The urban renewal plans of Strathcona included changing

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[163] Harcourt, Cameron, and Rossiter, *City Making in Paradise*, 40.

[164] There are inconsistencies in the spelling of MacLean Park Public Housing and MacLean Park, which was demolished. In some files it is spelled McLean. MacLean Park used to be called Harris Park, but I haven't been able to track down when it changed and why it changed, other than the street name Harris Street disappeared. For consistency, I use MacLean Park throughout.

[165] Harcourt, et al. 40.

the streets to a more curved aesthetic under the guise that it would reduce traffic flow through the neighbourhood. In other words, the City wanted to impose a suburban aesthetic on to the existing streets by removing the grid and putting in curved streets. This pattern of street construction is only found in a few neighbourhoods in Vancouver: the older neighbourhoods of Shaughnessy, and the University Endowment Lands (UEL), and the newly federally constructed neighbourhoods of Jericho, Renfrew, and Fraserview for veterans. Strathcona's maps of the proposed urban renewal efficiently removed the existing structures and street patterns from the visual representations of the neighbourhood in favour of a new modernist vision of what this section of the city should look like.

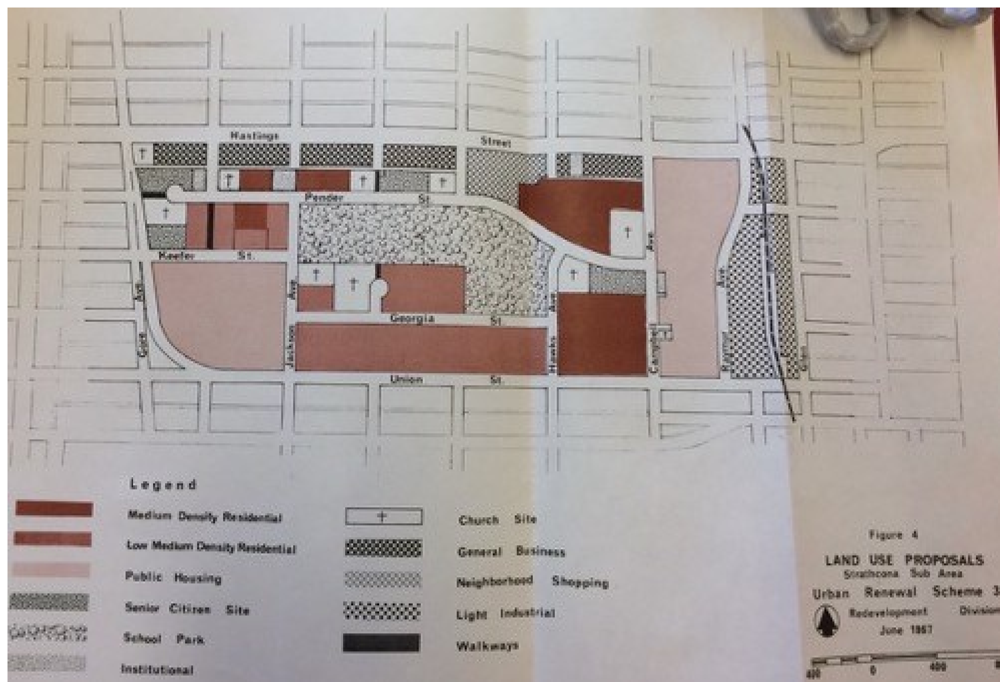

Figure 2.6. Land Use Proposals for Strathcona Sub-Area 1967
Source: CVA, COV S305 Box 100-G-5 File 3.

While reflecting on Vancouver's urban growth, Hartcourt and Cameron do not explicitly state that policies were colonial, they do observe that "the problem with urban renewal was as much in how it was administered—top down and in secret—as in the schemes themselves."[166] The decision-making process removed the people from view in order to expedite the demolition of Strathcona, thereby repeating the colonial performance of moving people out of places to develop a narrative of progress. The

[166] Harcourt et. al., 46.

material and symbolic practices of progress are also rooted in profit. As historian Tina Loo argues, the “main purpose [of urban renewal] was to maximize the economic value of city lands.”[167] Loo suggests that the City was motivated to undertake a comprehensive renewal scheme in order to “increase the tax revenue accruing from that part of the city by two or three times.”[168] The urban performance of taming the landscape in the postwar period sought to increase the municipal coffers by displacing residents who were hindering the profitability of the land, which further reinforced the notion that land was an economic commodity, and not a place to create a sense of home.

Growing Citizen Discontent and Civic Counter-Publicity

However, at the same time Gerald Sutton Brown increased bureaucratic control to push his ideas and agenda through, there was a shift within civic culture that called for greater accountability to citizens. As head of the Chinese Business Association Foon Sien Wong states “somehow, somewhere, planners have become so enraptured with the bricks-and-mortar of urban renewal that basic needs of people have been shuffled aside.”[169] As citizens started to push back against his authority, Sutton Brown wound the control tighter.

In 1965, a smaller Composite Committee of the Town Planning Commission established a series of free public lectures, held at the Vancouver Public Library to educate the city’s residents about the ideas and ideals of what the built form could look like and should look like. These yearly public lectures and exhibits called for a shaping of urban performance in line with previous grand visions established by Thomas Mawson and Harland Bartholomew and Associates. Very little of Bartholomew’s first master plan, to help smooth out the visual differences across the city after the amalgamation of the suburbs of Point Grey and South Vancouver with the City of Vancouver, had been implemented after 1929 due to the Depression and World War Two. This meant that the class differences between the east and west sides of the city still persisted. Educating the public on the importance of cohesive planning expanded with urban planner Warnett

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[167] Tina Loo, *Moved by the State: forced relocation and making a good life in postwar Canada,* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019), 163.

[168] Loo, *Moved by the State*, 163.

[169] SPOTA Early History 1968-69, CVA, SPOTA fonds AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-3 File 2.

Kennedy writing about city issues for the popular local *Western Homes and Living* magazine beginning in 1966.[170] His monthly column advocated for improving the built form and, in May 1966, he suggested that "to achieve a beautiful city it would be essential that [architects] donate a great deal of time to the promotion of better cityscape and total environment."[171] He helped to popularize the notion that change in the city needed to be completed in broad strokes rather than on a smaller scale, and that it should be guided by experts, such as architects and planners, and not individuals in an area. The built form was to complement the natural environment. However, by 1967, articles covering the proposed expansion of the freeway and the ensuing protests in both *The Vancouver Sun* and *The Province* newspapers indicated a growing discontent with the role of a planning department guiding urban growth.[172]

Perhaps recognizing that they needed to combat residents' growing discontent with their redevelopment schemes, in the fall of 1967, under the broad theme of the "The City Seen," the Composite Committee put together many public showings of films about cities featuring different ideas on urban development. On November 1, 1967, the public lecture featured the film with which I opened this chapter, *To Build A Better City*.[173] Previous years and films had focused on Lewis Mumford's ideas of the city and had broader visions of what the city should be like. This was the first film presented that displayed a specific Vancouver neighbourhood, in this case Strathcona, and its proposed transformation due to the construction of public housing. The film lists the three primary reasons why the demolition of the neighbourhood needs to occur. Firstly, the houses are old and as a result the film suggests that they are at the end of their life span. Secondly, the quality of the housing is considered poor, and finally, there are "confused and mixed land uses."[174] Finally, according to the film, the neighbourhood is

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[170] *Western Homes and Living* volXVII No. 1, 1966. Warnett Kennedy wrote a monthly column for the magazine until 1967 when the magazine became *Vancouver Life* and it focused more on fashion than urban development, housing, and home-making trends.

[171] *Western Homes and Living* May 1966, p6.

[172] "Chinese seethe over freeway," *The Vancouver Sun*, October 18, 1967; "2nd Opinion on Freeway defended," *The Vancouver Sun*, November 6, 1967; Walter Hardwick, "A City to Serve the People" *The Vancouver Sun*, Dec 05, 1967; "Second Public Meeting on the Freeway Issue," *The Province*, November 29, 1967; Tony Eberts, "Freeway: Concrete knife into the heart of Chinatown?," *The Province*, December 2, 1967.

[173] Town Planning Commission--Composite Committee General 1968-69, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds AM 274 Box 555-C-1 File 4.

[174] "To Build A Better City," 0:5:22

costing the city more for police services, water, fire and social protections to support the large group of low-income residents. The justification of the demolition is further reinforced with the citing of health problems, specifically a much higher rate of tuberculosis as a result of damp floors and walls. The film highlights the developments of MacLean Park and Skeena Terrace as new housing for families to live in "dignified surroundings" and a "healthy environment."[175]

While it is neither overt nor explicit, what the film is advocating for is the elimination of working-class material culture as not having a place in a modern and growing city; this is further complicated because many of dwellings are inhabited by racialized minorities. Social geographer Delores Hayden advocates for the preservation of working-class culture within cities. She argues that urban planning decisions are often attempts "to 'erase' or clean up the working-class material culture because it doesn't fit the visual narrative of the city."[176] In Vancouver, the visual narrative of the city was being redefined using the language of modernity. One of the ideas of modern urban living was the separation of work and home, which was promoted in the establishment of the suburbs. A modern urban environment also had new and homogenous housing stock to replace its older dwellings. Strathcona was a visual and material rebuke to both of these ideas, which is why in the City's mind it needed to be razed and redeveloped. The top-down decision-making was based on promoting an aesthetic vision of the future that did not consider the impact it would have on the lived reality of the residents.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrated how colonialism established a set of municipal structures and domestic norms during the process of taming the land in order to define and regulate acceptable urban settlement, which are again reproduced during the post-war period under the guise of urban renewal. I have outlined four aspects of urban planning—vision of the future, use of experts, surveying, and mapping—that have been presented as neutral and objective in the process of urban development but have been used as tools of oppression and marginalization. The use of maps, surveys, experts, and

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[175] ibid., 0:11:57.

[176] Delores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 20.

the creation of a vision of the future have perpetuated a colonial legacy in Vancouver that has entrenched a top-down approach to civic planning under the guise of urban renewal and high modernism from the 1950s through to the mid-1970s. This chapter has also focused on how urban renewal plans and practices, in the neighbourhood of Strathcona, should be viewed as an iteration of municipal colonial norms of how land should be used.

In the film, *To Build A Better City*, the City is presented as the benevolent caretaker of the downtrodden by providing them with new modern towers to live in instead of their damp and dreary dwellings. The closing sequences show children happily playing together in their new surroundings but features few adults adjusting to their new dwellings. The film closes with the statement that the city of Vancouver requires the "sustained interest, cooperation and encouragement of all citizens" in order to grow into the modern city it aspires to be.[177] Yet, the increasing bureaucratization of urban planning entrenched a colonial paradigm into Vancouver's growth that expressly excluded such citizen cooperation. In the next chapter, I will show how the tools used by the state to justify the oppression of a group of people can be used by the oppressed people to tell their story of belonging and connection, thereby illustrating that there is nothing neutral or objective about the planning policies used to guide urban development. As Chapter Three will show, the residents of Strathcona have a contrary view of Vancouver's urban development and by using the tools of colonialism, they fought the taming of their neighbourhood and asserted that their personal identities and attachment to the structures within their neighbourhood have value and should be preserved.

[177] "To Build A Better City," 0:12:07. This appears to be an indirect reference to Harland Bartholomew's call the action in *The Appearance of the City* published in 1948.

Chapter 3.

Building a home in the city

“The process is the people”[178]

On July 17, 1968, the federal government approved for Paul Hellyer, as Minister of Transport, “to establish a Task Force on Housing.”[179] The federal government was not formally involved in the development of housing across Canada, as the responsibility fell to the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and there was no federal minister with an equivalent portfolio; however, Hellyer recognized that the expansion of highways and urban transportation networks had significantly and disproportionately impacted the living environments of the poor and racially marginalized communities in urban areas. Hellyer spent the summer gathering interested urban scholars, economists, sociologists, builder-developers, planners, and mortgage lender representatives to join him in a cross-Canada tour “to examine housing and urban development in Canada and to report on ways in which the federal government, in company with other levels of government and the private sector, can help meet the housing needs of all Canadians and contribute to the development of modern, vital cities."[180] Starting in September 1968, the Task Force visited twenty-seven different urban areas, collected 250 briefs, and held meetings, both formally and informally in the neighbourhoods most affected by urban development. Members of the Task Force also “visited close to 20 individual housing projects across Canada.”[181] The resulting report stated that housing “projects were ghettos of the poor; people who lived in them were stigmatized in the eyes of the rest of the community; social and recreational facilities were inadequate or non-existent; privacy was lacking and vandalism present."[182] Federally funding public housing had not created

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[178] SPOTA Early History, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-4 File 7.

[179] “Opening Letter to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau” *Report of the Task Force on Housing and Urban Development.* Published January 22, 1969.

[180] “Opening Letter to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau”.

[181] *Report of the Task Force on Housing and Urban Development*. Published January 22, 1969, 19.

[182] *Report of the Task Force on Housing and Urban Development*. Published January 22, 1969, 19.

a vision of a modern urban future for low-income residents, as it was depicted in *To Build A Better City*.

Paul Hellyer and team spent November 7-8, 1968, in Vancouver to hear briefs from builders, real estate corporations, and others interested in improving housing in the city. He spent the evening of November 7, 1968, at Skeena Terrace, a newly constructed public housing unit located near Broadway and Boundary Road. Many of the residents at Skeena Terrace had been displaced by Phase I and Phase II of urban renewal in Strathcona with the construction of MacLean Park Public Housing and Raymur Place. At this open forum with Hellyer, Fred Soon shared the loss of his home through expropriation, and SFU university student Shirley Chan presented the plight of the remaining Strathcona residents, who had recently received their expropriation notices. The City of Vancouver had planned to start demolition in Strathcona for Phase III of their urban renewal project on January 1, 1969, and was counting on $2.5 million in federal funding, which would be matched with $1.25 million from provincial funding and $1.25 million from municipal funding to redevelop the neighbourhood. The funding application had been delayed because urban planners and city officials could not agree on what the new construction should look like, and they were having difficulty getting private developers lined up who were willing to invest in new construction in other parts of the neighbourhood. Phase III was slated to begin with the 600-block of Keefer Street, where Shirley Chan lived with her family. In a crowded room at Skeena Terrace, she confronted Hellyer: "you claim to give fair market value for a home, but is it fair? How do you judge the 'Value to Owner' when the home is in an area I have grown up in?"[183] These two questions give insight into the differing views of housing in Vancouver between the City Council, who was authorizing the demolition of the neighbourhood, and the residents who lived there. In order for a house to have market value it must been viewed as an economic commodity, but Shirley Chan's use of the word "home" rather than house indicates that it is more than a mere economic commodity and that the physical location of her childhood experiences also have value. The City had categorized the individual dwellings based on their aesthetic and economic value as a structure; however, Chan gestures towards a domestic environment that is beyond her family's home and encompasses both the past and the present, as well as desire to

[183] Dave Hardy, "Hellyer Disgusted by Poverty Tales" *The Vancouver Sun*, Nov 08, 1968.

remain there in the future. She furthers her impassioned plea for neighbourhood preservation by saying, "Besides, I have grown up in that area and I love it. How can you repay me for having to move away?"[184] Sympathetic to her family's plight, Paul Hellyer agreed to meet Shirley Chan and Darlene Mazari, Coordinator of Local Area Services, and Penelope Stewart, a UBC Social Work student, at 6 am the next day, ahead of his full day of meetings, in order to walk around the neighbourhood to gain a better understanding of the City's inaccurate description of the condition of housing and the need for improved municipal maintenance.[185] Informally meeting with residents was not out of character for Hellyer; he enjoyed sitting in kitchens gathering stories and walking the streets with residents as his guides.[186]

Upon completing his collection of stories and statistics in early December 1968, Paul Hellyer recommended that the federal government put a freeze on any future urban development schemes until there was a better understanding of who would be impacted and how public housing could more effectively meet the needs of those it was intending to serve. As he wrote in his report "housing and urban development are, after all, people problems, tied every bit as much to human desires and prejudices as to scientific graphs and calculated logic."[187] Hellyer's Task Force on Housing exposed the conflicting ideas of what a sense of home in the in city entailed because housing is not just a structure that could be classified by a set of external features without also recognizing that the dwelling had personal meaning for the people who are inhabiting it. Cities could not continue to build using federal funds without recognizing that construction impacted the lives, dreams, and futures of people. Hellyer was concerned that cities were destroying "perfectly habitable houses" in an attempt to rebuild; he wanted stronger federal government support for schemes that promoted renovation and rehabilitation.[188] The

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[184] Dave Hardy, "Hellyer Disgusted by Poverty Tales" *The Vancouver Sun*, Nov 08, 1968.

[185] Jo-Anne Lee, "Gender, Ethnicity, and Hybrid Forms of Community-Based Activism in Vancouver, 1957-78: The Strathcona story revisited," *Gender, Place & Culture* 14:4 (2007): 381-407; DOI: 10.1080/09663690701439702; Redevelopment: Acquisition and Clearance Section 23, National Housing Act Project 1, 1959; Redevelopment: Acquisition and Clearance Section 23, National Housing Act Project 3, 1962.

[186] Interview with Lloyd Axworthy, Hellyer's personal assistant, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 724-S4:1980-250.04 Box 708-A-01.

[187] *Report of the Task Force on Housing and Urban Development*. Published January 22, 1969, 7.

[188] Marc Denhez, *The Canadian Home: From cave to Electronic Cocoon* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994), 145.

report moved the focus away from housing as an economic commodity, to shelter as a human right.[189] It recognized the lack of housing for elderly who want to age in place, students, Indigenous peoples, and declared "non-white housing is a 'national shame'."[190] These cross-country meetings with the Task Force shifted the understanding that neighbourhoods should not be razed and expected to conform to the needs of the city. The Task Force called into question the performance of urban renewal by examining who it impacted. Housing was a part of an urban environment, and changes in urban development needed to ensure existing residents had a place to live. The colonial progress narrative of creating civilization out of the wilderness in Vancouver had not considered the impact on people because shaping the built form was considered more important than ensuring that residents had a stable place to live and could maintain their sense of home.

The freeze on urban renewal funding in December 1968, and the shift in understanding of who was most affected by poor housing allowed for the residents to galvanize federal support for their desire to preserve their neighbourhood. On December 14, 1968, the residents formed the Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association (SPOTA) "…to ensure that the people who live in the area will be fully informed and that their interests and their community will be protected."[191] They charged $1 for residents to become a member of the association to help them cover costs of communication, and an Executive was elected, and block captains were formally assigned. With the formation of SPOTA in December 1968, Bessie Lee recognized that the success of their neighbourhood organizing would rest on the inclusion of non-Chinese residents in their efforts.[192] Hellyer further supported the residents in Strathcona by publicly saying that, "one of the best things has happened in Vancouver and perhaps nowhere else in Canada is that people are interested in where and how they live and they want to be part of planning for the betterment of their living conditions."[193] Since the City of Vancouver was unable to proceed with their plans for Phase III without federal

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[189] *Report of the Task Force on Housing and Urban Development*, 22.

[190] Ibid., 20.

[191] An Overview of the Strathcona Experience with Urban Renewal by a Participant, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-C-03 File 2, 10.

[192] SPOTA Early History CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM734-S1 583-B-4 File 09.

[193] SPOTA Early History CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM734.S1 583-B-4 File 09.

financial support, on January 1, 1969, further demolition was halted. The top-down approach to urban renewal could no longer view the remaining houses in Strathcona as a *tabula rasa* as it was depicted in *To Build A Better City* because the residents, with Hellyer's support, made it clear that the land was not empty and should not be depicted as a black rectangle on a map; it was full of people who considered the area their home. In a brief from SPOTA to City Council on January 2, 1969, they state, "we, the undersigned, are not against progress and we believe that many physical improvements are needed in the Strathcona area. However, present and future urban renewal plans have largely ignored human needs and feelings. Many social problems have been created and few have been solved."[194] The freeze on urban renewal funding ushered in a shift in understanding that the people affected by urban change should have a voice in redevelopment. By highlighting people's attachment to where they were living and recognizing that it should be taken into consideration, the performance of top-down urban planning was halted in Strathcona, and grassroots, citizen-led bottom-up planning emerged.

This chapter unpacks Rachel Bowlby's first definition of domestic—to domesticate or to tame—from the perspective of the residents for whom this is happening. The residents of the city form a sense of attachment to the place where they live and work. Cities cannot be reduced to a visual form reflecting the idea of modernity because the structures within the urban environment are always in relationship with the people who inhabit the space. The film *To Build A Better City* offers the top-down view of why and how the neighbourhood of Strathcona should be tamed, but the residents viewed the taming of their neighbourhood as a destruction of their personal identity as the city attempted to shape its urban identity. In the film, the residents are not given a voice to express their feelings about having their neighbourhood demolished or their forced relocation into public housing. The film does not recognize that Strathcona is home for the residents living there. Understanding the concept of home in the city in the post-war period requires an examination of the interplay of philosophical and ideological views of both space and place, as well as the intersection of time, because as urban scholars Michael Darroch and Janine Marschessault point out, "cities are not images but living entities deeply connected to and fabricated through collective memories, social

[194] SPOTA Early History April-June 1969, CVA, SPOTA fonds AM 734 S1 Box 583-B-3 File 6.

relations, and built structures expressed in material culture."[195] As Darroch and Marschessault illustrate, too much of urban planning and design has focused on cities as spaces to be developed, and has forgotten that the changes will impact the people living there, often in surprising and unexpected ways. That sense of attachment is foregrounded in Blunt and Dowling's definition of home as "a place/site, a set of feelings/cultural meanings, and the relations between the two."[196] Home in the city requires an awareness of how previous, as well as current, definitions of place and cultural meanings intersect and overlap in a specific location and at a specific time contribute to an imagined future of that home. Blunt and Dowling argue that regardless of the discipline, "thinking about home has been geographic, highlighting relations between place, space, scale, identity and power."[197]

The City of Vancouver was using its power as the governing body to examine the neighbourhood of Strathcona as an objective space needing to be made over. It was one of several spaces in the city designated as blighted and in need of improvement. As illustrated in Chapter Two, this bird's-eye view objectively slots the landscape into lots, traffic routes, residential, commercial, and industrial structures and areas. The lots are designated according to colonial land use guidelines and the structures are regulated by zoning and by-laws, which are considered culturally appropriate uses of power to regulate the urban environment. Through these legal tools, what was perceived as an "empty space" became a clearly defined area with distinct boundaries and regulations. However, a top-down delineation of space misses the relational connections between people who inhabit the area. Place has a different meaning for the residents inhabiting the area because, while they live within the boundaries and regulations laid out by the city, they infuse the area with personal meaning, and in this way the place becomes home. Places have subjective and emotional attachments.[198] These subjective and emotional attachments were not acknowledged during the colonial mapping of the city because they did not fit with the rational and objective nature of surveying. Subjective and emotional attachments are also mostly expressed orally, but such statements again

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[195] Michael Darroch and Janine Marschessault, eds., *Cartographies of Place: Navigating the Urban* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 3.

[196] Alison Blunt and Robin Dowling, *Home: an Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 2.

[197] Blunt and Dowling, *Home*, 2.

[198] John Agnew, *Place and Politics: the geographical meditation of state and society* (London: Routledge, 1987).

are often dismissed because of their lack of objectivity and ability to quantify them. As discussed in the Introduction, residents had been organizing through the Chinese Benevolent Associations, the Chinese Property Owners Association, the Italian Property Owners Association, and the Strathcona Area Council, and they had clearly expressed their subjective and emotional attachments to their neighbourhood to try and persuade civic officials to stop its demolition. Fred Soon had written several letters to City Council regarding the demolition of his home, and Shirley Chan spoke to City Council in October 1968.[199] Yet, none of their arguments for preservation had been accepted; Phase III was slated to demolish 32 blocks displacing an additional 3,000 people. I argue demolition and displacement happened because the framework of municipal colonialism is based on a white, middle-class view of urban development, and the neighbourhood did not reflect the class and racial background of those in power. Viewing urban renewal as a second-wave municipal colonialism from the perspective of the residents illustrates how attachment to place and feeling a sense of belonging to where they were living was an effective way of organizing themselves and speaking back to those in power.

This chapter is another palimpsestic layer in my critical place inquiry as I examine how the residents worked within, through and against the colonial framework. To illustrate SPOTA's grassroots organizing, I'm drawing from McKenzie's "concept of performance as the embodied enactment of cultural forces."[200] In this instance, the cultural forces at play in the proposed urban renewal of Strathcona are part of the colonial performance of whiteness because the grid system, adopted from British ideas of urban development as outlined in Chapter Two, become more clearly entrenched into the land through the creation of artificial boundaries that often do not adhere to the natural topography; within those boundaries there is also a greater regulation as to what can occur where, through zoning and by-laws, which in the process shapes who belongs there. This colonial performance of whiteness is further reinforced through place naming as discussed in Chapter Two. As McKenzie suggests, there is duality to performance to "reaffirm existing structures" but to also "transform or transgress" those structures.[201] Over time, the residents had shaped their neighbourhood in ways that had transgressed

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[199] "Fred Soon," CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, COV 465-1 Box 44-C-1 File 5 and SPOTA fonds, AM 734 Box 583-D-2 File 9; Allan Fotheringham, *The Vancouver Sun*, October 23, 1968.

[200] Jon McKenzie, *Perform or Else*, 8.

[201] McKenzie, *Perform or Else*, 8.

the dominant white narratives of acceptable domesticity, and as a result the City determined it needed to be re-tamed and re-civilized through urban renewal. The very fact that the place was considered a heterogenous collection of structures and land uses meant that it became easier to justify its demolition, especially when the structures did not conform to larger narratives of the city's desired urban aesthetics. This becomes a performance of aesthetics guided by urban development policies rather than a performance of function for the people who are living there. From the perspective of the City, the performance of the neighbourhood is dependent on regulating the built form to appear cohesive and orderly to match the larger narratives of creating a civilized urban form out of the wilderness. This act of erasing people from the process stems from, "the unidirectionality of meaning making and communication… [and] reflected the centuries-old privileging of written over embodied knowledge."[202] In the post-war period, regulating the visual form became necessary because, despite dividing the territory into lots and promoting an ownership model of housing, people used the land in ways that were meaningful to them.

In this chapter, I propose that the residents were advocating for a performance of neighbourhood that strengthened their connections between people and place. They wanted to resist the further taming of their neighbourhood. Since the majority of the residents in Strathcona were immigrants, the connections they formed with each other upon arrival to Canada enabled them to navigate colonial structures that marginalized them politically, economically, and socially.[203] Some of the residents were second and third generation who had lived in the neighbourhood for decades. Home was not just the individual dwellings they occupied, but their connections to their neighbours, the neighbourhood's proximity to shopping in Chinatown and the various Chinese Benevolent Associations, Chinese language schools, as well as walkable employment, affordable housing, churches, and community spaces. Strathcona Elementary School formed the anchor point within the multicultural neighbourhood as a gathering place for

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[202] Diana Taylor, *The Archive & The Repertoire* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2003), 8.

[203] Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996); Paul Yee, *Saltwater City: an Illustrated History of the Chinese in Vancouver* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2006); Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Towards Orientals in British Columbia.* 3rd ed. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002).

the community.[204] The neighbourhood was an embodied space, which residents mapped through walking and forming connections. Their personal histories were woven into the social fabric of the neighbourhood, and their sense of belonging was strengthened through the connections they had made with each other as a result of class and/or racial marginalization.

Drawing from the work of Sara Ahmed and Selena Couture, a key point that I am advancing in this chapter is that the residents' counter-organizing towards the urban renewal of Strathcona needs to be viewed within the context of a colonial performance of whiteness in how the City of Vancouver defined the neighbourhood, sought to shape the visual aesthetics of the structures, and tried to disrupt the rehabilitation process by viewing the area as a space, and not a set of relationships and an attachment to place.[205] Gaining an understanding of the narratives guiding urban renewal and rehabilitation is an important part of addressing the colonial performance of whiteness within urban decision-making practices. These practices have become so internalized that they are no longer questioned. This chapter exposes the difficulties in developing an agreement between the three levels of government and a group of citizens committed to preserving their connections to each other and to the wider urban environment. SPOTA's activism challenged the definition of a neighbourhood, as well as the class and racial assumptions embedded in policy-making and practices. The first block demolished, as well as the block slated for demolition to eventually replace MacLean Park, were identified as having a large population of Chinese residents. This was a targeted removal of Chinese homeowners; however, what is frequently positioned as a separate story is the previous removal of Black residents as part of the building of the Georgia viaducts. Establishing whiteness as the dominant ideological feature of the City's approach to the urban landscape draws on the tools established in municipal colonialism. These structural tools not only shaped the landscape, but also shaped who was seen as belonging within that landscape. However, under the guise of improving visual aesthetics and creating a progressive and modern environment, race fades into

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[204] Stanley D. McLarty, *The Story of Strathcona School 1873-1961* (Vancouver 1961); Daphne Marlatt and Carol Itter, *Opening Doors in Vancouver's East End: Strathcona* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 2011 Reprint).

[205] Sara Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness." *Feminist Theory* 8, no2 (2007): 149-168; Selena Couture, *Against the Current and into the Light: Performing History and Land in Coast Salish Territories and Vancouver's Stanley Park* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019).

the background of the discussion. Additionally, race becomes a tricky part of the discussion from the point of view of the residents because there is no singular group within the neighbourhood of Strathcona. Positioning arguments about neighbourhood redevelopment as purely racially or class motivated threatens to obscure the larger thread of colonialism that I have identified as governing urban planning in Vancouver. Promoting homogeneous styles of architecture and patterns of development based on British notions of acceptable domesticity further entrenches, while simultaneously rendering invisible, the performance of whiteness at the heart of municipal colonialism. This is what the heterogeneous population of Strathcona was additionally fighting against in seeking to protect their homes. Viewing urban renewal as second-wave municipal colonialism instead highlights the structural and ideological nature of settler-colonialism because it is impossible to discuss urban growth without the embedded notions of whiteness.

In Chapter Two, I showed how the tools of colonialism—maping, surveying, using experts, and creating a vision of the future—were used to reaffirm municipal colonialism in the post-war period, but in this chapter, I illustrate how these same tools were employed by the residents to both transform and transgress the understanding of their neighbourhood. The City viewed the neighbourhood as a collection of pieces that were not conforming, and by removing the pieces, they could create a new cohesive whole; however, SPOTA challenged the idea that removing pieces will not have ramifications on the idea of neighbourhood as a home because a removal of the structures was also an erasure of their patterns of movement, their life histories, and their hopes for the future. They were arguing for a bottom-up embodied performance that seeks to transgress the performance of municipal colonialism by advocating for an integrated holistic view of their neighbourhood. This embodied practice of residents shaping the neighbourhood as home conflicted with the performance of Vancouver becoming a cosmopolitan city during the post-war period. In doing so, the residents illustrated that it was not just the colonial tools that led to the dispossession of Indigenous communities of their land; it was those tools, in combination with power and the intent to promote a performance of whiteness in domestic spaces in particular, that was used as justification for dispossession.

Neighbourhood as Place

In order to understand why preserving neighbourhood as home became important for SPOTA, I draw from a range of interdisciplinary scholars who discuss the importance of place. Urban studies researcher Hazel Easthope argues that "while social constrictions of space and time are usually agreed upon within large social groups, constructions of places are more commonly disputed."[206] The activism in Strathcona showed that their neighbourhood was more than a geographically defined space bounded by Hastings Street and Prior Street to the north and south and Campbell Avenue and Gore Avenue to the east and west. SPOTA's activism was important for the ways in which it countered the narrative established in *To Build A Better City* (as a neighbourhood space needing to be tamed) by establishing the neighbourhood as a place, rich in intercultural connections and histories. As Lucy Lippard suggests, "the intersections of nature, culture, history, and ideology form the ground on which we stand—our land, our place, the local."[207] In order to fully understand the local neighbourhood of Strathcona, and how it became defined as their land and their place, I argue that the intersections of nature, culture, history and ideology need to be separated out and understood on their own terms; only in this way can we then come to a greater understanding of the importance of their interconnectedness. This is not to dismiss or ignore the fact that the residents in Strathcona are settlers on stolen Indigenous land. The story of Strathcona is not just a reciting of its settlement history, but a recognition that settlement history presents a particular set of ideas of what the land should do and could do for the people living there; immigrants to North America believed that accessing stable and secure housing would allow them a better future. Yet, within that settlement, the residents still wanted agency and choice to create a sense of home that was important and meaningful to them.

Urban planner Cliff Hague suggests that "place identities are formed through a milieux of feelings, meanings, experiences, memories and actions that, while ultimately personal, are substantially filtered through social structures and fostered through

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[206] Hazel Easthope, "A Place Called Home," *Housing, Theory and Society*, 21:3, 129.

[207] Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Sense of Place in a Multicentered Society* (NY: New Press, 1998), 7.

socialization."[208] Early colonial settlement denied Indigenous communities of their attachment to place, their oral histories, and their existing structures; second-wave municipal colonialism denied people's existing attachment to their houses, businesses, and social institutions, their personal histories embedded in the neighbourhood, and their personal vision their future. Vancouver was drawing from previous grand plans to redefine itself in the post-war period; however, these ideas did not reflect the lived reality of many of the residents. Hayden asserts, "the places of everyday urban life are, by their nature, mundane, ordinary, and constantly reused, and their social and political meanings are often not obvious."[209] SPOTA called attention to the importance of the everyday aspects of their neighbourhood in defining of their sense of self and personal as well as collective histories. In this way, they challenged the dominant assumptions of the function of ordinary and mundane places in daily living. I think what is significant is that the residents in Strathcona demanded that the social and political meanings of their neighbourhood reflect how they defined themselves.

The proximity to Chinatown had economic, social, cultural, and historical value to many of the residents in Strathcona, and relocation to other parts of the city would break those important connections. Furthermore, there were several Chinese language schools set up across the street from Strathcona, which made it easy for students to attend after the regular school day. Many residents argued that forcing relocation would significantly disrupt their children's ability to maintain their cultural heritage because traveling by bus to get to Chinese language school would be difficult. The connections to their community and continuity of their culture were important, and there was an ease in maintaining these social and cultural ties within walking distance. While Chinatown offered important social as well as economic connections for many of the residents in Strathcona, the demolition of the neighbourhood would also cause the destruction of many important local economic enterprises. Many residents ran small-scale businesses out of their homes and had been able to do so for decades. Women also often worked as seamstresses in their homes, ran brothels, provided for boarders, or ran small restaurants out of their front rooms.[210] The demolition of the neighbourhood would

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[208] Cliff Hague, and Paul Jenkins, eds. *Place Identity, Participation and Planning* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 7.

[209] Delores Hayden, *The Power of Place*, 227.

[210] Marlatt and Itter, *Opening Doors*; Kiyoko Tanaka-Goto ran a brothel 137-140; Mary Trocell Vejjacic's mother provided for boarders, 93-99.

destroy the networks that they had created. But it was also a passive way of destroying these home economies all together as the establishment of a new business elsewhere in the city would require permits and licensing that had been grandfathered into the neighbourhood of Strathcona. It would also mean that the reestablishment of these businesses within the neighbourhood would be nearly impossible because the new public housing units were significantly smaller and the majority of them did not have street level access, thereby making it more difficult to maintain their existing ways of economic independence. These forms of livelihood often benefited women and gave them a means of financial independence that would be lost if they were forced to relocate to a different part of the city and rebuild their network or were forced into a smaller dwelling in public housing which would limit their opportunities for additional income. Residents would become increasingly dependent on the state as well because demolition would mean the loss of backyards and often front yards for growing vegetables to feed their families. These structural changes to Strathcona would reinforce the performance of whiteness by enforcing the middle-class value of the separation between work and home.

Framing the activism of SPOTA through the lens of home and place-making reveals the ways in which people have formed their identity to the wider area they have been living in. Nicki Gregson and Gillian Rose argue "that both performance and performativity are important conceptual tools for a critical geography concerned to denaturalize taken-for-granted social practices, and concur with [geographers'] emphasis on the creativity of everyday life."[211] Gregson and Rose's work illustrates the importance of looking at how residents fit within the urban colonial landscape, and also the ways in which they seek to push against it to create material and symbolic practices that are meaningful to them in their everyday life. This attachment to local structures determined their patterns of movement because their interactions with others were shaped by how they moved through their neighbourhood, which in turn shaped their personal identity and sense of belonging to the place. As geographer Yi-Fu Tuan argues, "to be forcibly evicted from one's home and neighbourhood is to be stripped of a

[211] Nicki Gregson and Gillian Rose, "Taking Butler Elsewhere: Performativities, Spacialities, and Subjectivities," in Michael R Glass and Reuben Rose-Redwood, *Performativity, Politics, and the Production of Social Space* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 38.

sheathing which in its familiarity protects the human beings from the outside world."[212] Urban renewal was a stripping of the familiarity of home, which was especially important for socially, economically, and racially marginalized residents who historically had been excluded from developing a sense of home in other areas of the city. While the city characterized the neighbourhood as essentially placeless because of its non-conforming uses of space, feminist geographer Doreen Massey advocates for a bringing together of space and place because our understanding of place is interconnected with space, as well as time. She argues space has been highly politicized and connected to power. She suggests that "what is special about place is precisely that 'throwntogetherness', the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now—both human and nonhuman."[213] Cities, therefore, are both a space and a place because of the interaction between humans and structures. Yet, from a top-down perspective the 'throwntogetherness' of the neighbourhood, with the non-conforming uses of space and the mix of residential, commercial, industrial structures, was precisely why it needed to be razed.

SPOTA recognized that in order to preserve their neighbourhood, they needed to present an alternate view of Strathcona than the one presented in *To Build A Better City*. SPOTA challenged these civic conceptions of their neighbourhood by using the tools of colonialism to illustrate a bottom-up approach to create a view of their neighbourhood that illustrated connection, rootedness, and belonging, and not decay. Lucy Lippard suggests that "land, history, and culture meet in a multicentred society that values place but cannot be limited to one view."[214] SPOTA started by building relationships and by strengthening systems of communication to be more inclusive and by closely examining the structures of power that kept decision-making removed from the people it affected. By ensuring that meetings were public and were held within the neighbourhood in the evening so people could attend and share their concerns, SPOTA provided opportunities for residents to participate in decision-making rather than being informed of changes, as had been the City's pattern of communication. To communicate more effectively with the residents, SPOTA ensured that all materials were written in English and Chinese. A block captain was responsible for disseminating information to each household within

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[212] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perceptions, Attitudes and Values* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 99.

[213] Doreen Massey, *for space* (London: Sage Publications Inc., 2005), 140.

[214] Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*, 9.

their assigned area, and personally dropped off flyers, surveys, and other correspondence, so that each resident had an opportunity to ask further questions or to get verbal clarification. This personal connection between neighbours helped build trust in SPOTA, as the advocating body, by ensuring that residents were informed of meetings and had opportunities to share their thoughts on neighbourhood rehabilitation.

Porteous and Smith suggest that "place is meaningful to people, and that the place called home is the most meaningful of all."[215] SPOTA recognized that they needed to tap into emotional aspects of place in order to gather evidence to support their desire to remain in the neighbourhood. While each resident had their own ideas of what made their neighbourhood home for them, as the residents started to meet regularly, a collective sense of home in the neighbourhood began to form. "It is one of the obvious facts of life, so often overlooked," Porteous and Smith assert, "that people are not merely attached to other people but also to familiar objects, structures, and environments that nurture the self, support the community of life, and act as props to memory and identity."[216] By creating an intergenerational, multicultural, and multilingual organization they strengthened the commonality that their neighbourhood had felt like home for them and wished to remain there, regardless of whether they rented or own their personal dwelling.

By meeting regularly and sharing their wishes and dreams for the future of Strathcona, the residents were strengthening their sense of place. Geographer Tim Cresswell suggests that place is made up of three attributes—sense of place, which comprises the subjective feelings associated with a place; locale, which provides the context for social relations; and finally location, which is a place's connections to other spaces.[217] In the case of Strathcona, urban redevelopment was concerned with improving the visual aesthetics of the location. In the process of deciding what the neighbourhood should look like, the locale and sense of place got dismissed. As Cresswell argues "place, then, needs to be understood as an embodied relationship with the world. Places are constructed by people doing things and in this sense are never

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[215] Douglas J. Porteous and Sandra E. Smith, *Domicide: The Global destruction of Home* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 6.

[216] Porteous and Smith, *Domicide*, 6.

[217] Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 156.

‘finished’ but are constantly being performed.”[218] The performance of place is complex and involves a multi-layered adherence to many cultural scripts. While municipal colonialism can be examined as a performance of power within the city in how it shapes the built form, there is an equally important performance of habitation enacted by the citizens of a city in how they choose to perform their understanding of home and domesticity within the confines of the urban environment.

The freeze on urban renewal funding represented a shift in the colonial conceptions of space and provided an opening for residents to assert the value of their sense of place. They developed their own narrative of their neighbourhood and their performance of place and asserted that it had value. The first aspect of the narrative they claimed was that their neighbourhood was multicultural. They asserted that this had value in how they structured their meetings to have a Chinese translator, and that their written documents were in English and Cantonese, and often in Italian and Portuguese. The goal of translating was to ensure that people had a common understanding of what the City was proposing, and how it would impact the residents. The second aspect of the narrative that the residents asserted was that their income did not determine the importance or value of their houses to them. They were willing to acknowledge that their homes needed repairs, but that the lack of repairs was connected to their lower and often precarious income and was not a reflection of the value of the structure itself to them personally. The third aspect of the narrative that they asserted was that their history in the neighbourhood had value and was an important part of how they defined their sense of self and belonging. The fourth aspect of the narrative was that their connections to each other and their existing patterns of movement through the neighbourhood for economic and social reasons had value. While many of the residents owned their own homes, thereby willingly belonging to the colonial narrative that housing is an economic commodity and a secure form of investment, they asserted that this was not the only sense of attachment to the land that they felt. They also asserted that those, who for whatever reason, did not own a house still should have their own sense of belonging and attachment to the neighbourhood protected. This recognized that there were multiple ways to demonstrate belonging and attachment to a neighbourhood. As a result, their recommendations for how their neighbourhood should be improved rested

[218] Tim Cresswell, *Place: a Short Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 69.

on the importance of people maintaining connection to their neighbourhood over their life course. They were advocating for a place to call home.

Hospitality

SPOTA drew on the embodied practice of homemaking and on intercultural, multi-generational connections through hospitality. This began in the early fall of 1968, with the Chans holding several meetings in their home to foster connections between neighbours, social workers, and law students in order to strategize the best approach to stopping the demolition of their homes. This required an extension of self to invite others into their home environment as guests. To challenge the way decisions were made about their neighbourhood, SPOTA recognized that the distance between decision-makers and the residents likewise needed to be reduced. They hoped that when elected officials heard stories about Strathcona and what the destruction would mean to them and their families, that SPOTA would start to gain political support for their cause. I am drawing from the work of Kuokkanen in their exploration of hospitality, as well as Jo-Anne Lee's examination of hospitality within Chinese culture, specifically the particular hybrid form that developed in Strathcona.[219] Jo-Anne Lee, a resident, organizer, and academic, analyzes the role hospitality played in Strathcona neighbourhood activism. She argues that "culturally hybrid forms of engagement arose in the intensities of cultural difference and power invented out of necessity by those marginalized from the reins of political power."[220] They used hospitality strategically to nurture connections because they recognized that many decisions made about the city's development had happened behind closed doors at private parties, on golf courses, and in exclusive clubs.

In a SPOTA Executive meeting on January 26th, 1969, they decided to develop "a phoning list [that] was made up of twenty-three SPOTA people who were each

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[219] Rauna Kuokkanen, "Hospitality and the Logic of the Gift in the Academy" in *Reshaping the University: Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemologies, and the Logic of the Gift* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Jo-Anne Lee "Gender, Ethnicity, and Hybrid Forms of Community-Based Urban Activism in Vancouver 1957-1978: The Strathcona story revisited" Gender, *Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 14:4: 381-407. DOI: 10.1080/09663690701439702.

[220] Jo-Anne Lee "Gender, Ethnicity, and Hybrid Forms of Community-Based Urban Activism in Vancouver 1957-1978: The Strathcona story revisited" *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geograph*y 14:4, 394. DOI: 10.1080/09663690701439702.

assigned to call specific aldermen, explain the brief and ask for support."[221] SPOTA recognized the value in creating personal connections with officials in order to advocate for change, and they understood the need to build connections over food, drink, and celebration rather than only presenting their views at city council meetings. The elected officials were also invited to attend a Chinese New Year Party as special guests on February 15, 1969. Tickets to attend the evening were sold to residents for a modest cost to cover the buffet banquet held at a local restaurant.[222] As Hayne Wai pointed out this was a deliberate action on the part of SPOTA to change the ways in which meetings occurred.[223] SPOTA placed high value on providing hospitality to elected officials, city planners, and others interested in offering their support by recognizing that change could happen through the building of relationships with each other over food and drink.

Figure 3.1. SPOTA Banquet Dinner
Source: CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM734-S4-: 2009-008.35 Box 198-E-08

SPOTA's Executive was strategic in their planning and preparations, and assigned tables to all the elected officials coming to attend the event to ensure that they were sitting with residents. This allowed the residents an opportunity to share their stories

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[221] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5, 25.

[222] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 583-E-07 File 5.

[223] Hayne Wai, Personal interview, November 6, 2021.

about the neighbourhood. From this evening, City Councillor Harry Rankin showed his support for the “the idea of meeting with Aldermen and Planners. He also suggested a walking tour of the neighbourhood to show that houses could be repaired.”[224] From their extension of hospitality they were able to gain a greater understanding of how to work within the existing systems of power to better position their brief as Rankin also suggested that they stack the gallery with residents when they presented their views to City Council. On March 8, 1969, members of the SPOTA Executive met with MLAs Evan Wolfe and Herb Capozzi. “They suggested that SPOTA should devise an alternative (to urban renewal) and constructive plans to offer to the various levels of government.”[225] SPOTA switched tactics from defending their neighbourhood from urban destruction towards becoming active agents in offering suggestions to create long-lasting and meaningful change in their neighbourhood. This shifted the dynamics of the performance of urban planning in Strathcona because it was no longer being driven solely by a top-down approach by elected officials; instead, the residents recognized their own power in guiding change from the bottom-up by forming relationships with those in power who were sympathetic to their plight. By forming connections between elected officials and Strathcona itself, SPOTA was able to dismantle the distance between where decisions were made and who those decisions affected. Officials became part of the neighbourhood through the act of sharing food, drink, and conversation.

Walking Tours

The residents recognized that data collected by the windshield surveys conducted by city officials gave a skewed view of the neighbourhood because the focus was on the individual houses and not the neighbourhood as a whole.[226] The walking tour with Paul Hellyer on November 8, 1967, became foundational to SPOTA’s approach of meeting with elected officials. As Hellyer walked through the neighbourhood, he gained his own firsthand data, both of the people living there, but also of the actual state of the

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[224] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 583-E-07 File 5.

[225] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971.AM 734-S4 583-E-07 fld 5 p

[226] Leonard C. Marsh, *Rebuilding A Neighbourhood: Report on a Demonstration Slum-Clearance and Urban Rehabilitation Project in a Key Central Area in Vancouver* (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia, 1950); City of Vancouver Redevelopment: Acquisition and Clearance Section 23, National Housing Act Project 1 Prepared by The Technical Planning Board November, 1959; Redevelopment: Acquisition and Clearance Section 23, National Housing Act Project 3, 1962.

housing. He pointed out that the neighbourhood was not crowded in the way that the city reports had characterized it. The key difference between Strathcona and other neighbourhoods in the city was the smaller lot size, which meant there were smaller front yards, and garages and sheds took up a significant portion of the rear yards, which gave the impression of a crowded space. However, the post-war view of urban development favoured spaces between houses, well-kept front yards, and freshly painted exteriors. In many ways, the neighbourhood of Strathcona was never going to conform to that domestic cultural norm because the lots were 25' rather than the 33' lot found predominately on the east side of the city, and lots on the west side were 40' to 66' or larger. As Hellyer pointed out, "the neighbourhood was not crowded, the lots were just smaller, which gave the appearance that it was."[227]

Figure 3.2. 400 block of Heatley Street looking North from Pender Street.
Source: These houses were considered too close together and should be demolished. CVA, Art Grise fonds, AM1536-: CVA 70-77 Box 174-D-03.

By walking through the neighbourhood, Hellyer was participating in a bottom-up approach to planning by gaining a perspective of how individual structures were connected to people's daily lives. As sensory ethnographer Sarah Pink argues, this

[227] Moira Farrow, "Hellyer's Goal: Save Old Homes," *The Vancouver Sun*, April 18, 1969.

approach of placing oneself in the setting to be studied is important because "everyday life is not to be seen as something that is static, but a dynamic and changing site."[228] SPOTA repeatedly hosted walking tours for elected officials and others interested in their desire to preserve their neighbourhood. This allowed them to explain that the neighbourhood's mix of housing styles reflected the needs of the people living in the neighbourhood. These stories and personal identities became part of understanding that the houses were also homes for people. The importance of the neighbourhood for the current residents, who had long histories within the neighbourhood and many connections to each other as well as to the existing built form, did not mean that they wanted their place to remain the same. By walking with elected officials and narrating their personal histories of the neighbourhood, SPOTA provided a dynamic view of home within their neighbourhood.

Figure 3.3. 1011-1039 Keefer Street
Source*:* MacLean Park Public Housing is featured in the left-hand side of the photograph. CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, COV-S535-F4-: CVA 786-46.10 Box F21-A-05 File 09.

[228] Sarah Pink, *Situating Everyday Life* (Los Angles: Sage, 2012), 28.

Figure 3.4. 1109 E. Pender Street
Source: The small apartment building with commercial space on the ground floor added to the lack of cohesion in the neighbourhood. The residents were adhering to the dominant norms of acceptable housing with the picket fence denoting the property lines. CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, COV-S535-F4-: CVA 786-46.06 Box F21-A-05 File 09.

Harry Rankin, a left-leaning City Councillor, encouraged the residents to continue to invite elected officials to walk with them, to see firsthand what was needing repair, and to hear the stories about the residents.[229] In this way SPOTA invited people into their performance of home in the neighbourhood by ensuring that officials could see, feel, smell, hear and often taste what made their nodes of relationships important to them. Anthropologist Tim Ingold advocates for an understanding of place as one that is connected to our senses. He suggests "that people's knowledge of the environment undergoes continuous formation in the very course of their moving about in it."[230] It is the embodied performance of moving around that creates an understanding of place. It was through this process that SPOTA ensured that the residents' lived experiences were captured and that changes to the neighbourhood were noted for the ways in which they would affect the many lives who had formed a constellation of connections between each other and to the existing structures. The walking tours of their neighbourhood

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[229] SPOTA Early History April-June 1969, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 583-B-3 File 6.

[230] Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London: Routledge, 2000), 230.

became another form of hospitality in which elected officials were invited to experience the residents' understanding of place.

After months of walking with elected officials, and building connections between neighbours through regular meetings, SPOTA felt hopeful that their desire to rehabilitate their neighbourhood would be supported when Hellyer came to meet with civic officials in April 1969 to further discuss urban renewal funding. The City provided an upscale venue for the meeting at the newly opened Bayshore Inn in Coal Harbour. With its views of Stanley Park and the North Shore mountains, city officials were subtly reinforcing the larger urban narrative that the built environment should complement the natural environment. SPOTA was not invited to participate in the meetings with civic officials and planners to discuss the rehabilitation of their neighbourhood. Instead, members of SPOTA met with Hellyer at his hotel room to discuss their needs and a potential strategy to gain control over the rehabilitation of their neighbourhood.[231] As part of the City's agenda, a bus tour of Strathcona was scheduled following the meetings, a strategy to reinforce a view of the neighbourhood similar to the windshield surveys used to form the Vancouver Redevelopment Study in 1957. Unbeknownst to civic officials, Hellyer invited Shirley Chan and Harry Con to join the bus tour to narrate the impact of previous urban renewal plans and to describe the needs of the neighbourhood in order to ensure the planners and other officials did not overlook people and their lived reality and personal histories in their discussions of improvements.[232] Chan pointed out what residents had done to improve their dwellings, but also pointed out to the invited guests the ways in which the City had failed in their responsibilities to maintain the neighbourhood by halting civic maintenance, as well as the houses they had purchased for eventual demolition that they had let run derelict. She was also able to point out aspects of the neighbourhood that did not need improvement and those areas that were important to the residents. This detailed narration by residents contrasts with the City officials' desire to drive through the neighbourhood in a bus holding their own conversations. The view from the bus windows created a top-down gaze of the neighbourhood rather than experiencing the place from the perspective of the residents. To reinforce Strathcona as a meaningful place, the residents continued to take groups on walking tours of their

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[231] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971.AM 734-S4 583-E-07 File 5.

[232] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 583-E-07 File 5.

neighbourhood throughout the spring and summer of 1969. The pace of the walks was leisurely. By walking, the residents were able to explain that houses needed a coat of paint rather than being listed for demolition. This allowed officials to not only see the neighbourhood, but to also get a feel for the place by looking at material structures through the everyday practice of walking through the different areas.

The walking tours were important because it was through walking to get food and other supplies from Chinatown and downtown that the residents formed an understanding of their neighbourhood as home, and by taking others on a tour they were able to share their sense of home in the neighbourhood. Blunt and Dowling argue that "home is lived; what home means and how it is materially manifest are continually created and recreated through everyday practices."[233] For the residents of Strathcona, the collection of architecturally diverse structures and the integration of residential, commercial, and industrial buildings within a few blocks formed their sense of home. Walking was an important means by which the residents showed their attachment to the neighbourhood by pointing out the buildings that the City had declared uninhabitable and how the residents thought they could be improved rather than demolished. In this way, the residents were able to show that the neighbourhood was a collective whole rather than individual houses on individual streets. Gaining an understanding of the neighbourhood was undertaken by SPOTA through conversation and the slower pace of walking rather than by relying on data collected by the city. This created a personal connection between the bodies and the neighbourhood itself rather than the impersonal bird's eye view of looking at maps and data.

Surveying the neighbourhood

While the walking tours disrupted the previous form of data collection through conducting windshield surveys, SPOTA recognized that they needed to use additional tools to create a more robust understanding of their neighbourhood as home. Similar to the City of Vancouver, SPOTA sent out a survey to all the residents in the area; however, their survey was translated to ensure that the residents knew exactly what they were responding to. In April 1969, the block captains hand-delivered a two-page bilingual (English and Chinese) survey to each residence in order to gather information

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[233] Blunt and Dowling, *Home*, 23.

about their history in the neighbourhood. The residents were also supported in how they answered the survey because they understood why their responses were needed and how the information they provided would be used. The SPOTA survey collected personal information about each resident and provided opportunities for them to include other thoughts, feelings, and insights about their neighbourhood in the collection form. In addition to their name and contact information, residents were asked to identify whether they were an owner or a tenant and how many adults and children lived in their dwelling. This information helped SPOTA to create a stronger narrative of home within the neighbourhood because they wanted to demonstrate that urban renewal would not just demolish 504 units as dwellings appeared on city records, but those units housed 1,644 residents who wanted to remain in their neighbourhood.[234]

Most of the residents had lived in the neighbourhood for over ten years, and out of the 375 returned questionnaires, only four residents wanted to move out of the neighbourhood.[235] However, when asked if they would be willing to repair or renovate their property, most of the residents said it would depend on whether the city would rescind their urban renewal schemes and would provide them with the security that they would be allowed to remain in their dwelling. They understood that their individual dwelling's economic value was tied to the value of other properties in the neighbourhood and the maintenance of city streets. A letter to City Council from SPOTA on May 16, 1969, reported the results of their survey, and following the advice given by Wolfe and Capozzi, SPOTA outlined a suggested plan for urban rehabilitation. They requested that the funding from the federal government originally promised to the City of Vancouver for Phase III of demolition and rebuilding be used as to support rehabilitation in the form of grants and loans. Furthermore, they advocated that as the experts of their own neighbourhood they were best suited to make the rehabilitation plan. "We urge the government to accept our proposal to make urban renewal of the Strathcona area an experimental project where citizens are encouraged to actively participate in renewing a

[234] SPOTA Fonds--housing questionnaires, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-C-01 File 01.

[235] SPOTA Fonds--housing questionnaires, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-C-01 File 01.

community."[236] The residents were advocating for their own agency in improving their sense of home in Strathcona.

Unmapping and mapping the neighbourhood

By applying the lens of performance studies to the urban development, the colonial practice of mapping as a tool to attempt to eliminate the stories embedded in the landscape becomes more apparent. This, however, goes against the very idea of what a place is. Place is something that is embodied and performed. Dwight Conquergood asserts that "de Certeau's aphorism, 'what the map cuts up, the story cuts across,' also points to transgressive travel between two different domains of knowledge: one official, objective, and abstract—'the map;' the other one practical, embodied, and popular—'the story,' "[237] The residents in Strathcona disrupted the process of mapping in their neighbourhood by adding the stories. After SPOTA conducted the aforementioned survey, they created a series of hand-drawn maps that gave individual lots the names of the people living there with their phone numbers.

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[236] SPOTA Fonds--housing questionnaires, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-C-01 File 01.

[237] Dwight Conquergood, "Performance Studies Interventions and Radical Research" *Drama Review* 46, 2 (T174), Summer 2002.

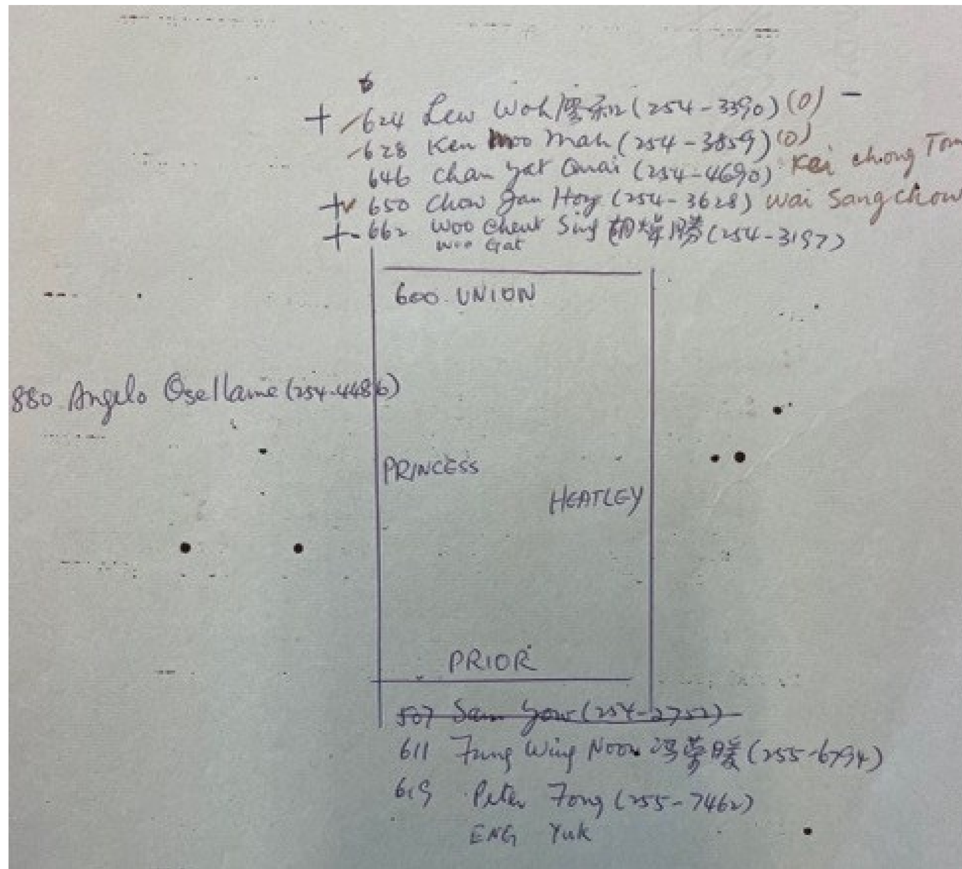

Figure 3.5. This was repeated for all the blocks in the neighbourhood.
Source: "Housing Questionnaires," CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734- S1 Box 583-C-01 File 01.

This told a story of attachment and belonging to a landscape. This illustrated what Lucy Lippard suggests when she says that "place is latitudinal and longitudinal with the map of a person's life. It is temporal and spatial, personal and political. A layered location replete with human histories and memories, place has width as well as depth. It is about connections, what surrounds it, what formed it, what happened there, what will happen there."[238] SPOTA Executive continued to annotate their hand-drawn maps to include further details from their surveys.

Mapping is both a political and personal tool of illustrating belonging. Razack argues that "just as mapping colonized lands enabled Europeans to imagine and legally claim that they had discovered and therefore owned the lands of the 'new World,' unmapping is intended to undermine the idea of white settler innocence (the notion that European settlers merely settled and developed the land) and to uncover the ideologies

[238] Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*, 7.

and practices of conquest and domination. In unmapping, there is an important relationship between identity and space."[239] Both the city officials and the residents came back to the map as an understanding of place because it was an easily understood visual representation of the neighbourhood. The City of Vancouver mapped out the neighbourhood based on its existing perceptions, and also its perceived potential after demolitions occurred. The City of Vancouver's map had classified each dwelling unit's condition based on a windshield survey; they were physically removed from the dwelling itself and made a judgement about the aesthetics of the house itself. SPOTA disputed this form of assessment of their neighbourhood, and they claimed that the City had spoken only in generalities and photographed the worst houses, and used them to define the whole of the neighbourhood. They sought to counter the narratives put forth by the City of Vancouver by conducting their own surveys, which involved going door-to-door and collecting information from residents in the language in which they were most comfortable conversing. After knocking on doors and chatting with neighbours, SPOTA classified each unit with a name and phone number and connected it with the survey data. This helped to illustrate that the neighbourhood was a collection of people who had personal histories rather than reducing them to a subjective visual depiction of their dwelling. The act of creating their own set of maps, which told a very different story of their neighbourhood, disrupted the sense of power the City held to decide who lived where in the city.

Conclusion

Despite their efforts to build connections, many municipal officials did not want to engage with the SPOTA Executives except by sending information letters about city policies and procedures; however, federal and provincial officials quickly became allies and supported SPOTA's efforts to stop urban renewal from going through. After Paul Hellyer resigned from his position on April 24, 1969 due to clashes with Pierre Trudeau over the full implementation of the Task Force Report, Shirley Chan felt that their position going forward was in jeopardy because he had been a significant ally.[240] Pierre

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[239] Sherene Razack, *Race, Space, and the Law*, 5.

[240] "An Overview of the Strathcona Experience with Urban Renewal by a Participant By Shirley Chan For ACTION RESEARCH Secretary of State Dept. Vancouver BC March 31, 1971," CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-C-03 File 2.

Trudeau appointed Robert Andras to replace Hellyer in the newly created role of Minister of Urban Affairs. Andras quickly became aware of the complexity of urban renewal versus rehabilitation in Strathcona, and he agreed to personally visit the neighbourhood in the summer of 1969. In order to show their continued support for neighbourhood rehabilitation, SPOTA organized a neighbourhood-wide Paint-Up/Clean-up event on July 13, 1969.[241] This event was designed to encourage all the residents to take an active role in showing their desire to rehabilitate their homes by cleaning up gardens, empty lots, and undertaking exterior home improvements, if they could afford to do so. The event focused on hospitality and celebration, with members of the Executive organizing and hosting an afternoon social event at Strathcona Elementary School field.

Unbeknownst to SPOTA, City Council authorized another study done of Strathcona regarding the feasibility of rehabilitation to present to Andras on August 7, 1969. The study only covered half of a block and stated that rehabilitation was not possible because the residents would be unable to pay for the needed repairs.[242] SPOTA nominated a delegation of twelve members to meet with Andras to "stress the human part of rehabilitation and saving the residential community."[243] They had also been gathering data on the condition of housing in their neighbourhood and had determined that 253 buildings were "capable of being improved," and "213 were in good or excellent condition."[244] Only "38 buildings [were] considered in the 'worst possible condition'."[245] They also noted that "171 lots [were] vacant or had unused buildings" on them.[246] After hearing both the City's and SPOTA's points of view, "Mr Andras stressed the importance of having citizens involved and indicated he would not support any

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[241] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5.

[242] "An Overview of the Strathcona Experience with Urban Renewal by a Participant By Shirley Chan For ACTION RESEARCH Secretary of State Dept. Vancouver BC March 31, 1971," CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-C-03 File 2.

[243] "July 28, 1969 SPOTA Executive Meeting," SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 583-E-07 File 5.

[244] SPOTA Early History January-March 1969, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734 S1 Box 583-B-3 File 3.

[245] SPOTA Early History January-March 1969, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734 S1 Box 583-B-3 File 3.

[246] SPOTA Early History January-March 1969, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734 S1 Box 583-B-3 File 3.

scheme that did not have citizens involved from the beginning."[247] Andras strongly supported rehabilitation, as guided by the residents, which gained the support of the provincial government. The City of Vancouver, however, was a reluctant partner in this agreement because it meant a loss of control and power over how the neighbourhood would grow. The Planning Department had invested time and energy into creating a set of plans that would increase the land values by increasing the densification by putting in tall towers to ensure the space reflected the larger civic image of becoming a modern city—these traits were considered key in the performance of second-wave municipal colonialism. Shifting the control of the urban renewal funds to a committee guided by residents was a radical departure from previous urban development practices across North America. "As Marzari sums it up today, 'Strathcona was the first community that stood up and said, 'You can't do this to my neighbourhood.'"[248] All of SPOTA's methods involved time and connection, which were frequently dismissed by City representatives as well as City Council as not having any clear value in examining the performance of urban development.

This chapter illustrated how SPOTA used the colonial tools employed in the dispossession and displacement of people from their land to tell a story of place, connection, and belonging. First, SPOTA challenged the visual depiction of their neighbourhood as an objective and neutral visual guide of where things belong by creating countermaps, and by hosting guided walking tours through the neighbourhood to illustrate the flaws and bias of the city-produced maps. While city maps showed boxes on a grid, which removed the human stories from the view, SPOTA consistently put forward that each address represented a family, and demolishing their home left those families with few options for alternative rental housing as well as denied them of the perceived rights of stability and safety that came with home ownership. Second, SPOTA repeatedly challenged the use of experts to determine who best understood the needs of rehabilitation within the neighbourhood. SPOTA argued that since they lived within the neighbourhood that they best understood what their neighbourhood needed. They challenged the idea that expertise was removed from relationships by illustrating how drawing from their lived experiences could effectively guide the rehabilitation of the

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[247] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, 61, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5.

[248] Harcourt et.al., *City Making in Paradise*, 54.

neighbourhood. They wanted to hire their own planners and architects to advocate for their point of view; however, they struggled to fund the expertise needed to rehabilitate their neighbourhood, and the City of Vancouver could draw from large coffers and a Planning Department, city engineers, and private developers willing to construct new housing and commercial areas according to the city's wishes. SPOTA's activism challenged the colonial structures embedded in municipal policy, and specifically in how decisions were made about the urban environment, by disrupting the top-down approach to urban planning and by ensuring that the residents of the neighbourhood had a clear role in the decision-making process. SPOTA's activism highlighted that the intent to dispossess and displace in second-wave municipal colonialism reflected a lack of understanding and value of people's sense of home and place.

My discussion of the neighbourhood of Strathcona highlighted how "cities are enormously complex palimpsests of communal history and memory."[249] Scraping portions of the neighbourhood clean in an attempt to create something new does not acknowledge the idea that there would be something that would remain, which was people's memories and attachment to the land. The residents in Strathcona were not adverse to their neighbourhood changing over time. They acknowledged that there were numerous repairs that were needed and housing in many places was inadequate. However, the difference was that they wanted the story of who belongs in their neighbourhood to remain. They wanted to ensure that people would not be displaced in the process. While some parts of the neighbourhood were scraped clean through early demolition, they tried to ensure that the narrative of belonging of low-income residents was allowed to remain.

Once SPOTA had secured the right to rehabilitate their neighbourhood and formed an equal partnership with the City of Vancouver, the Province, and the federal government, with the CMHC acting as its representative, the work of figuring out how best to undertake the rehabilitation of housing and neighbourhood redevelopment would take place. With the formation of the Strathcona Working Committee (SWC) in September 1969, SPOTA was able to operate as a "fourth level of government" in all

[249] Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*, 196.

decisions surrounding the rehabilitation of their neighbourhood.[250] This was considered an experimental project, and decisions made regarding changes in this neighbourhood would not carry over to other areas of the city. SPOTA continued to use hospitality to strengthen the set of relations between people within the neighbourhood and with officials who were living outside of the neighbourhood. Through regular meetings amongst the SPOTA membership, Executive, and elected officials and planners, their understanding of the neighbourhood was strengthened, and through several protests that will be discussed in Chapter Four, their relationship to their place was refined. As Chapter Four illustrates, this process was not smooth because they City drew on several departments at the federal level, who were not attached of the Strathcona Working Committee, to try to push their agenda of redevelopment through. SPOTA's continual advocacy and push towards rehabilitation exposes the complexity of navigating bureaucratic structures and various government departments to try to ensure that their neighbourhood was not further marginalized structurally as well as socially. The residents of Strathcona viewed their neighbourhood as a constellation of associations that formed an interconnected whole, which they defined as home. The negotiations between SPOTA and the municipal, provincial, and federal governments reveal differing views of how a neighbourhood should be defined and what is the role of the neighbourhood in the functioning of the city overall. Cities grow and change over time, but traces of the past remain including the palimpsestic layers of a colonial bureaucracy.

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[250] Dan Campbell Interview, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM734-S4---: 1980-250.02-: 1980-250.02.1 Box 708-A-01.

Chapter 4.

Rebuilding the neighbourhood as home

> *"The urban scene seemed to abound with bureaucrats--but to be sadly lacking in dreamers."*[251]

Through their strong advocacy of neighbourhood preservation, SPOTA was granted the right to become a "fourth-level" of government on September 9, 1969, when City Council approved forming the Strathcona Working Committee (SWC) with federal and provincial representatives to develop a plan for urban rehabilitation. This would be the first time that federal, provincial, and municipal funding would be used to rehabilitate a neighbourhood rather than demolish it. Vancouver City Council decided to place Maurice Egan, head of the Social Planning Department, to chair the committee rather than a member from the structural side of the Planning Department because they had "spent three years and thousands of dollars drawing up controversial reconstruction plans for Strathcona" without getting any plans approved for funding.[252] City Council accepted the decision to Marianne Linnell's proposal to appoint the Social Planning Department with "no discussion" and "without opposition" to oversee the rehabilitation of Strathcona.[253] Echoing Foon Sien Wong's sentiments expressed four years earlier, Linnell stated that "we've got to be less concerned with bricks and stones and more with people" and the emphasis needed to be on working with the residents rather than continuing to design new structures.[254] Though the contract referred to the residents as "Strathcona ratepayers," which effectively excluded tenants from the decision-making, SPOTA, however, agreed to be the residential representative body, and held tenants and home owners as equals in decision-making within their own meetings and advocated for their needs for home and place within the neighbourhood.[255] Continuing

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[251] *Report of the Task Force on Housing and Urban Development*. Published January 22, 1969, 13.

[252] "Strathcona Project Gets Council Nod" *The Vancouver Sun* Sept 10, 1969, 10.

[253] ibid.

[254] ibid.

[255] "Agreement Birmingham and Wood [architects] and City of Vancouver, 1970. December 18, 1969 Letter from Strathcona Working Committee to City Council regarding the urban renewal area," CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-C-02 File 01.

the importance of hospitality and open conversation over food and drink, the first meeting of the SWC took place at the well-known HoHo restaurant on Main and Columbia on September 17, 1969, where the group informally discussed how the committee should be set up. This was the first time that citizens would be included in a neighbourhood redevelopment scheme, and there was no precedence for the organization of it or the decision-making process. Maurice Egan recorded notes and ideas on a restaurant napkin. The first formal meeting of the SWC was held at the YWCA on Pender Street on October 1, 1969. They decided that the meetings would take place at a location within the neighbourhood, be as informal as possible, and would work by consensus.[256] This disrupted the format of the prior decision-making process about the neighbourhood because previous plans had been made behind closed doors in City Hall. Holding meetings within the neighbourhood shifted the perspective from a space gazed at from a distance with a bird's eye view to a place in which the bodies of the decision-makers were now located within the neighbourhood itself. The guiding principles for the SWC were to honour "the desire of residents to stay in the area, to preserve their homes and to participate in upgrading the community."[257] The structure of decision-making and the framing of residents' desires as guiding neighbourhood change was a disruption to the previous top-down urban development narratives; however, City Council made it clear that this was only "an experimental project," and it would not set a precedent for other urban redevelopment schemes within the city.[258] Egan was chosen to chair the meetings. King Ganong, from CMHC, represented the federal government, Everett Brown represented the province, and Harry Pickstone, was the consultant from the Planning Department, to support structural improvements. SPOTA was represented by Harry Con or Shirley Chan.

The previous chapter established the differing definitions of neighbourhood as a place within a larger urban environment, and the process through which the residents negotiated forming the SWC. Recognizing the differing views of neighbourhood, the SWC had three aims in drafting an agreement between the residents and all three levels of government: to ensure that the neighbourhood was structurally and socially improved

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[256] "Agreement: Birmingham and Wood [architect] and City of Vancouver, 1970. Formation of SWC document," CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-C-02 File 01.

[257] ibid.

[258] SPOTA Early History, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-3 File 4.

after over a decade of neglect; to rehabilitate existing housing stock through homeowners getting grants and/or loans to improve their dwellings; and to construct new housing within the neighbourhood to meet the needs of low-income residents. For the ease of reading, the three aims of the Strathcona Rehabilitation Agreement will be outlined in three separate chapters. This chapter explores the difficulties of creating meaningful and long-lasting neighbourhood-wide rehabilitation within the existing municipal colonial structures—zoning, bylaws, sewers, roads, and street lighting, as well as social services. Chapter Five discusses the process of rehabilitation to individual dwellings, and Chapter Six examines the construction of new housing. Collectively, they explore the difficulty of neighbourhood planning from a bottom-up approach because of the existing colonial structures and cultural norms regulating notions of acceptable domesticity and homemaking.

This chapter elaborates SWC's work towards neighbourhood rehabilitation in relation to Bowlby's second definition of domestic: "to make like the home country." The act of making like the home country by those in power, I argue, is framed as a colonial agenda. In the post-war period the understanding of the "home country" becomes more complicated and nuanced in how the colonial norms become embedded in cultural ideas of home, especially in connection to a multicultural neighbourhood whose residents bring their own views of and values from their home country. Framing urban renewal as second-wave municipal colonialism highlights the structural layers of colonialism. Despite the SWC meeting on a regular basis to determine the terms of rehabilitation of their neighbourhood, the development and later execution of the Strathcona Rehabilitation Agreement was a slow and bumpy process because of the multiple ideas of "home country" layering over each other in a settler-colonial city with a neighbourhood that is settled by predominately Chinese immigrants. There are multiple definitions of home country, and differing ideas of what makes a neighbourhood home for settlers. This chapter presents six different cases in which the terms of the neighbourhood rehabilitation aims were transgressed by separate municipal departments who wanted to implement projects reflecting their own agenda rather than working collaboratively with the residents. SPOTA's felt these additional points of conflict with other government departments interfered with their desire to ensure that the built environment promoted a sense of safety and belonging for the residents living within the neighbourhood. These violations of the aims of the development of the Strathcona Rehabilitation Agreement

reveal the difficulty of ensuring that the neighbourhood was rehabilitated as a cohesive unit because it required the cooperation of multiple departments within the City, as well as the provincial and federal governments to provide the legal means to allow the residents' desired improvements to come to fruition.

Unlike the City of Vancouver, SPOTA recognized that the structural aspects of the neighbourhood had the potential to either enhance or destroy their sense of home, so they wanted to be involved in every aspect of the decision-making process, and with every department that was responsible for making structural changes in their neighbourhood, as well as to work on developing the social aspects of the neighbourhood concurrently in order to foster a sense of belonging. They viewed the structures and the people as working in relationship with each other. The performance of neighbourhood belonging was illustrated as fluid and dynamic, and rested on dialogue between citizens and between citizens and officials and challenged the idea that imposing a set of structures onto an area would automatically improve the lives of the residents in the neighbourhood. In order to preserve the spirit of the agreement and to strengthen the sense of belonging within their neighbourhood, SPOTA drew on their established networks of communication to mobilize people both within and outside of their neighbourhood to support their desire to rehabilitate their neighbourhood to ensure that their sense of home was preserved in the present and into the future. This understanding of the neighbourhood as conforming to a conception of home as a relational connection between others and the built form becomes the through line of SPOTA's advocacy because they continually draw on their connections with each other in order to strengthen their voice in their disputes with how the City of Vancouver was not participating in good faith with the residents in rehabilitating their neighbourhood.

This chapter outlines the ways in which SPOTA drew on the performance of hospitality and protest in order to strengthen the relationships between residents and elected officials, as well as, members of the CMHC and planning departments to create an understanding of the importance of place for the residents. This experimental form of bottom-up decision-making gives the agency to the people who will be most affected by neighbourhood change. It recognizes that in the functioning of the neighbourhood, they were the experts, and their understanding of the future was very different when the emphasis was on maintaining connections and ensuring that the neighbourhood remained affordable after rehabilitation. By looking at these six cases, I illustrate how the

structural aspects of the city, which are presented as neutral, can actually disrupt people's sense of home if they are not implemented with thoughtful consultation with the residents they will impact.

Creation of a new plan

SPOTA recognized that they needed to operate within the existing colonial structures by using a master plan to guide the rehabilitation of the neighbourhood because this type of document was recognized as a tool to keep all levels of government and the residents accountable to each other as they sought to achieve the aims of rehabilitation. Since the boundaries of the area had changed numerous times with each iteration of a redevelopment plan by the City of Vancouver, the first decision made by the SWC was to determine the boundaries of the rehabilitation area. The northern boundary ran along the lane between Hastings Street and Pender Street in order to exclude the commercial areas of Hastings from the rehabilitation plan, but to preserve the greatest number of residential structures. The eastern edge ran north-south along Campbell Street between Hastings Street and Prior Street; this excluded Raymur Public Housing from the rehabilitation plans despite the fact that many of the Raymur residents used the area amenities and travelled the streets and had previously been considered a part of the neighbourhood. This decision was made based on the school catchment boundaries as the children in Raymur Public Housing attended Seymour Elementary School and not Strathcona Elementary School. The western boundary was Gore Street, which did include MacLean Park Public Housing within the rehabilitation boundary, but excluded Chinatown because the City of Vancouver had designated it a separate neighbourhood when it divided up the East End in 1964. The southern boundary was Prior Street, which also included two blocks south of Prior of primarily residential development along Atlantic Street and Malkin Avenue. This encompassed thirty-two blocks of primarily a mix of residential units—single-family dwellings, small apartment buildings, row housing, and rooming houses. The municipal colonial performance of land use was reiterated with by defining neighbourhood boundaries and by creating a written document to guide rehabilitation. The rigidity of the boundaries does not reflect the fluid ways in which people use cities to meet their needs or how they might define their neighbourhood as home, and a written document becomes difficult to encompass a range of needs. In order to disrupt the pattern of top-down decision-making, SPOTA

members at the SWC ensured that they reported regularly to the Executive and to the residents through general meetings to keep the decision-making process as transparent as possible, and to encourage residents to bring forth suggestions and concerns to ensure that the written document reflected the needs of their lived reality.

However, SPOTA recognized that they needed to ensure that the expertise they were drawing from reflected their community values and believed rehabilitation was an important and feasible goal. Unlike previous plans, the rehabilitation plan needed to be an open and transparent process that placed the needs and wishes of the residents over the potential future profitability of the land. SPOTA recognized that part of the imbalance of power in decision-making stemmed not just from financial aspects but also from the post-war period's reliance on the "rule of the expert."[259] Previous experts who developed master plans for the City of Vancouver did not live in the neighbourhood, or often even in the city, so therefore they had little understanding of the unique needs of the area and of their lived reality.[260] The residents argued that living within the neighbourhood gave them expertise in what the needed improvements were. SPOTA had little experience in structural planning but recognized that they would be deeply affected by changes in the urban environment because they had already felt the impact of the changes in zoning, the demolition of several blocks of housing, and the loss of park space. They recognized that they did not have the same access to technical experts, as the three levels of governments did, when it came to discussing zoning or land use guidelines or minimum standards for housing, nor did they have the financial means to acquire this expertise. For the decision-making process to be fair and equitable, SPOTA asked for their own experts to be paid for out of the SWC budget to ensure that the residents understood the technical jargon and that decision-making represented their point of view.[261] They challenged the idea of who controls the power to decide, and, respectfully asked that it be placed in their hands so that they could make informed decisions that best suited the

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[259] The post-war period increased qualifications and bureaucratic processes guiding urban growth and development.

[260] Thomas Mawson was a British trained planner who resided in Lancaster, UK. He developed a Master Plan to guide the urban development for the city in 1911. Harland Bartholomew and Associates were an American firm based in St Louis. They developed two Master Plans for the City of Vancouver in 1928 and in 1946-49, they developed a suite of booklets guiding development.

[261] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5.

neighbourhood. SPOTA wanted to ensure that the funds promised to the City of Vancouver for the demolition would be used to improve the physical and social environment. They argued that the original $5 million budget should be used to support residents to improve their existing housing and to upgrade the existing civic infrastructure and to expand community amenities. The creation of the Strathcona Rehabilitation Plan took nearly two years and encompassed both guidelines for changes within the larger neighbourhood and grants for improvements for individual dwellings.

On October 14, 1969, Birmingham and Wood were chosen by SPOTA to become their technical at improving the area as a tourist destination, and their offices were located in Chinatown so they were familiar with and in close proximity with the neighbourhood.[262] SPOTA would be the client, and the initial report would be used to inform SWC, and the Board of Administration, who then informed City Council, as to the feasibility of rehabilitation. In order to maintain their transparency with the residents, SPOTA held a public general meeting on October 19, 1969 to inform residents of the "new plan which would come from the grass roots rather than from the top down."[263] SPOTA recognized that they were challenging the process of previous urban development because "there were no experts in rehabilitation in Canada, and the problems of rehabilitation have never been worked on or solved."[264] This provided SPOTA with a unique opportunity to become national leaders in how neighbourhood rehabilitation could take place. The terms of reference for the Birmingham and Wood report were submitted to the Board of Administration on December 18, 1969, for their evaluation as to the feasibility of rehabilitation, which was then forwarded to City Council, with the Board of Administration's own editorial amendments and recommendations. While approval for the plan from within the SWC ultimately needed to have full support from the federal and provincial representatives as well, the layers of civic bureaucracy made it cumbersome to come to agreements.

SPOTA wanted the entire neighbourhood to be evaluated by Birmingham and Wood because they recognized the destructiveness of the previous block-by-block demolition, but the City of Vancouver would only agree to a preliminary examination of

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[262] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, 75, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5.

[263] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, 75.

[264] ibid., 75.

two blocks—Blocks 82 and 84, located on either side of the proposed new MacLean Park—and wanted the focus of the study to focus on the structures of the buildings, thereby perpetuating the notion that they were of paramount importance, and the people living in them and their unique individual needs were irrelevant to the overall study. The Board of Administration, headed by Sutton Brown, persuaded City Council to require limits on what the SWC was allowed to do by holding meetings with government officials without members of SPOTA present.[265] Birmingham and Wood were required to provide a report on the following four aspects of Blocks 82 and 84:

i) structural conditions of the buildings and other structures

ii) the general appearance and external and internal finishing and decoration of the said buildings and structures

iii) the landscaping and general appearance of the yards

iv) the electrical, plumbing, sanitation, sewage disposal and heating systems used in and in conjunction with the said buildings and structures

v) the protection of the health of the occupants of the said buildings and structures[266]

Points ii and iii, however, reflected settler-colonial constructions of what was an acceptable performance of domesticity and landscaping, and needed to be resituated within the context of what is important for the owner or tenant, whose different senses of home often reflected their different diasporic journeys to Vancouver. For example, many residents used their front gardens for vegetables to feed their own families and to share with neighbours, which disrupted the cultural norms surrounding domestic landscaping, especially in front yards. Based on a recommendation from the Board of Administration, City Council wanted to "ensure that the majority of the said buildings and structures would satisfactorily fulfill the purpose for which they were designed for a period of at least ten (10) years from the date of this agreement but not exceeding twenty (20) years from such date..."[267] The inclusion of this point into the agreement angered many of the

[265] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, 79, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5.

[266] Agreement: Birmingham and Wood [architects] and City of Vancouver, 1970, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-C-02 File 01.

[267] Agreement: Birmingham and Wood [architects] and City of Vancouver, 1970, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-C-02 File 01.

residents because they did not want a time limit on the rehabilitation of their neighbourhood. They feared that the City was merely giving a token agreement to participate in rehabilitation and was planning on demolishing the neighbourhood at a later point.

Since Birmingham and Wood were employed by SPOTA, they undertook a comprehensive survey of the two blocks by interviewing residents as well as undertaking a close structural analysis of each dwelling unit. In Block 82, they documented that "there are 35 houses and two stores. 21 owners and 8 tenants were interviewed."[268] This represented 93 adults and 47 children living within the block. All of the owners and two of the tenants intended to stay in the neighbourhood for the long term. In Block 84, "there are 19 houses, one apartment and a church, 13 owners & 3 tenants were interviewed"[269] This represented 67 adults and 29 children living in houses, and 68 people living in the apartment. Of the people interviewed, fifteen people intended to stay. While it was clear based on the survey responses that the residents would like to remain in their neighbourhood, they expressed reticence to fully commit to the rehabilitation of their individual dwelling because the zoning was still light industrial, and there was an overall mistrust in the government because homeowners had been paying property taxes for thirteen years and there was a lack of civic improvements made during that time.[270] "The question of rehabilitation depends on what standards are required as inhabitable and how much it will cost the owners. Until such questions [are] clear, there will be no commitment from people."[271] SPOTA advocated for a set of acceptable standards, advice to residents, and owners needing some form of overall plan to ensure that rehabilitation aims were clearly communicated. In addition, there needed to be a convenient location for residents to access this information, and also to be able to meet to exchange ideas.

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[268] SPOTA fonds—questionnaire responses, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM734-S1 Box 583-C-1 File 02.

[269] SPOTA fonds—questionnaire responses, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM734-S1 Box 583-C-1 File 02.

[270] SPOTA fonds—questionnaire responses, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM734-S1 Box 583-C-1 File 02.

[271] SPOTA fonds—questionnaire responses, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM734-S1 Box 583-C-1 File 02.

Birmingham and Wood supported a more holistic approach to developing the neighbourhood and recognized that the need for a new park, the poor street conditions, and traffic connections all impacted the residents' sense of home. They conducted multi-modal data collection, which included 600 elementary school students' thoughts on the neighbourhood and what their wishes were for the future. Dave Spearing spent two weeks in classrooms collaborating with teachers to gather insight as to the needs of the neighbourhood. Depending on their age and level of English proficiency, students submitted drawings, short pieces of writing, or longer paragraph submissions. New Canadians were included in the student data collection and were asked to share examples from their home country, thereby recognizing that there were differing ideas of home country that should be included. The students' responses were posted in the hallways of Strathcona Elementary School for the neighbourhood-wide Plan-In held on April 26, 1970. Birmingham and Wood wanted to "engage the people of the area in Seminar-level dialogue about the various aspects of their community and environment."[272] The whole family was invited to participate. The desire to attend this event was so high that a second location was set up at the Pender Street YWCA to give everyone interested in contributing an opportunity to participate. Participants were arranged in mixed-age tables with paper, pens, and a tape recorder to capture their discussions. Residents were given an opportunity to vocalize their fears, needs, and dreams for the future. Seniors wanted to age in place, teenagers wanted more things to do, parents wanted daycare, and they needed a building to access these services.[273] Many property owners feared that if they fixed up their property it would affect their property assessment, and result in increased property taxes. From their conversations with residents and extensive data collection, Birmingham and Wood determined that "effective rehabilitation is impossible without the support and participation of the residents in the area."[274] Furthermore, "rehabilitation must be equitable, and the equity must be obvious."[275] Birmingham and Wood's approach to data collection reflected

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[272] Strathcona Area Rehabilitation Project "Interim Report" Appendix F: Plan-In, May 24, 1970 (Birmingham and Wood), CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-D-3 File 9.

[273] Strathcona Area Rehabilitation Project "Interim Report" Appendix F: Plan-In, May 24, 1970 (Birmingham and Wood), CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-D-3 File 9.

[274] Strathcona Area Rehabilitation Project "Interim Report" May 24, 1970 (Birmingham and Wood), 5, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM734-S5 Box 583-D-3 File 9.

[275] Strathcona Area Rehabilitation Project "Interim Report" May 24, 1970 (Birmingham and Wood), 6, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-D-3 File 9.

SPOTA's initial attempts to survey the neighbourhood. They ensured that every member of the community was given an opportunity to voice their concerns and suggestions rather than imposing ideas onto the neighbourhood as previous community consultations had done.

Coordination of Services

The consultants from Birmingham and Wood recognized that rehabilitating the neighbourhood structurally as well as socially would require the coordination of several departments. The difficulty of coordinating services revealed the lack of communication between different departments at all three levels of government, as well as the layers of bureaucratic policies and procedures preventing rehabilitation according to the needs and wishes of the residents. The performance of settlement and the establishment of bureaucratic policies and procedures to regulate urban growth were designed to perpetuate a vision of the colonial home country's racial and class exclusionary structures. Despite the expansion of the City's bureaucratic structure in 1966 to include a Department of Social Planning as separate from the Department of Planning, it appeared difficult to actually implement social and structural change simultaneously when it came to assessing the neighbourhood's needs and deciding what could and should be included in the urban rehabilitation scheme because race and class inclusion in the built form had not been a consideration before. SPOTA wanted all aspects of the neighbourhood to be improved simultaneously because they recognized the integrated nature of improving their neighbourhood as home, but the City preferred to take a piecemeal approach. While SPOTA had the support of social planner Darlene Mazari and Margaret Mitchell from Alexandra House (Neighbourhood House Association), along with other social workers, to help advocate for improvements in the social environment, SPOTA was stalled by which level of government was responsible for payment of these improvements.

These disparate approaches came to a head over the discussion of what to do with the expansion of the school, community centre, and park space within the neighbourhood. SPOTA argued that since the school already formed a natural gathering space within the community that additional community facilities should be added on to the existing building; however, to do so would require further funding because the $5 million set aside for the rehabilitation of Strathcona did not include the expansion of

social services only structural improvements. Funding for the expansion of the school fell under provincial jurisdiction and the expansion of the community centre and park space fell under the domain of the Parks Board. SPOTA was aware of the differences between the west and east sides of the city's amenity development and were advocating for equal treatment. A community centre had been slated construction in their neighbourhood in 1960. The Chinese Benevolent Association, Chinese Property Owners Association, and the Chinese Canadian Citizens Association had all written the Mayor and City Council in the fall of 1960 advocating for the preservation of housing within the neighbourhood and for the new community centre to be constructed in False Creek Park.[276] However, despite the lack of adequate recreation facilities, the community centre was not constructed and False Creek Park became a City Works Yard. The negotiations for a community centre were further complicated because the Parks Board was not part of the Strathcona Working Committee, and often made decisions independently from City Council and the Planning Department regarding the development of park spaces within the neighbourhood based on their prior agreements with the City.[277] SPOTA developed their position on their proposed community centre and recreation facilities.[278] They argued that there needed to be continued integration of services to ensure that neighbourhood rehabilitation would meet their needs, particularly with the expansion of services for seniors and providing more daycare spaces within the community.[279] This required the cooperation of both the provincial government to provide the funding and the municipal government to build the expansion. SPOTA continued to argue that expanding services within the community by growing an existing structure made it easier for people to access them because it was already a familiar building and people felt comfortable going there.

However, expansion of the school and community centre was halted with a provincial freeze on funding on August 26, 1970.[280] This further exacerbated the

[276] Miscellaneous C Chinese Property Owners, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, COV S20 Box 068-B-06 File 04.

[277] The City had negotiated with the Parks Boards regarding the use of MacLean Park to construct the first phase of MacLean Park Public Housing. The Parks Board was promised Block 76 as replacement.

[278] "Executive meeting February 4, 1969" SPOTA Early History April-June 1969, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 583-B-3 File 6.

[279] SPOTA Early History April 1971 to July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 583-B-4 File 9.

[280] SPOTA Journal 1968—1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 583-E-07 File 5.

preparation of the rehabilitation plan because the residents wanted the social inequities of their neighbourhood to be improved in tandem with the structural inequities, and for the recreation facilities, proposed a decade earlier, to be finally built. Furthermore, SPOTA knew community centres had been built in Dunbar, Kerrisdale, Kitsilano, Marpole, Sunset, and Hastings in the post-war period. They pointed out the inequity of amenities between wealthier areas of the city and Strathcona, which indicated the perpetuation of class differences in the city based on earlier settler patterns. A smaller community centre was eventually built attached to Strathcona Elementary School, and Britannia Community Centre was constructed near 1st Avenue and Commercial Drive to provided recreational facilities to residents in the neighbourhood.[281]

Zoning

After defining the boundaries of the neighbourhood, and gathering information about the needed social improvements, the next aspect of developing the rehabilitation plan was to determine the zoning designation to guide the structural improvements. Zoning is a particular performance of municipal colonialism, which directly shapes the relationship between the built form and the urban inhabitants through regulating what kind of structures can be built, where they can be built, and how the structures can be used. According to urban historical geographer, Richard Harris, Vancouver was the first city in North America to establish zoning restrictions to regulate neighbourhood growth to ensure that new construction was homogenous and conformed to the existing housing forms.[282] The zoning regulations in Vancouver were modelled after the land use guidelines established in the CPR developed neighbourhood of Shaughnessy in 1914 and were adopted by the municipality of Point Grey in 1922. The Shaughnessy Heights Act of 1914 was created to ensure the strictly residential neighbourhood reflected British styles of architecture and landscaping, and all new construction needed to be approved

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[281] Strathcona Community Centre, CVA, Urban Design Centre fonds, AM 989 Box 600-F-1 File 13; SPOTA Early History, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-3 Files 2 and 3.

[282] Richard Harris, *Creeping Conformity*, 124. In a Technical Report prepared for Vancouver City Planning Department in September 1978, it states "in 1922, Clause 4 of the Municipal By-law prevented any except homes 'with or without stables…or other necessary outbuilding,' to be built in Point Grey. It was nothing less than Canada's first zoning law." City of Vancouver fonds, COV S40 Box 121-B-2 File 2.

by the CPR to ensure design, materials, and labour met the standards laid out.[283] Furthermore, ownership of property contained restrictive covenants to restrict buyers to a certain race and class to ensure that the neighbourhood reflected the wealthy, white elite. It also restricted land use within the neighbourhood to only residential, thereby creating a clear separation between home and work. Shaughnessy's built form reflected the "home country" and symbolized colonial power in Vancouver and reinforced ideas of wealth and status in the city. When the municipalities of Point Grey, South Vancouver, and Vancouver were amalgamated in 1929, Harland Bartholomew's Plan for the City of Vancouver recommended that the City needed to adopt clear divisions between residential, commercial, and industrial areas, and clear zoning should be implemented to ensure that the city itself had a more cohesive feel.[284] This ensured the performance of the city was sculpted from the top-down, and that the different areas of the city became homogenous in purpose, and form, which as a result regulated what and where people were able to engage in residential, commercial, and industrial activities.

In response to Harland Bartholomew's Plan for the City of Vancouver, Strathcona was zoned as six-storey light industrial in 1929.[285] This had a significant and direct impact on the neighbourhood of Strathcona because it was shaped by an earlier urban performance, which did not regulate the use of space through zoning or other land use guidelines. As a result, the housing in this neighbourhood architecturally reflected an eclectic range of styles, setbacks, and sizes based on owner need and were often added to over time, rather than following a set of design principles in the way Shaughnessy was developed. This range of housing styles and forms, from single-family dwellings, to apartments, to bachelor suites and rooming houses, provided stable housing for a range of incomes, as well as for a range of housing needs, all within close proximity to Chinatown, downtown, and industrial areas for employment.

Light industrial zoning was likewise a way to push people out because, even though the neighbourhood was full of houses, buyers had difficulty getting mortgages since banks considered residential mortgages in an industrial area to be a poor risk, and

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[283] Nathaniel Lauster, *The Death and Life of the Single-Family House: Lessons from Vancouver on Building a Livable City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2016), 73.

[284] Harland Bartholomew and Associates, *Plan for the City of Vancouver*, 1928.

[285] The Strathcona Rehabilitation Project Documentation and Analysis, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 730-S4 583-E-8 File 5.

sellers could no longer expect to receive market value for their homes. According to local historian, and Strathcona resident, John Atkin, “homeowners felt the effects of the [Bartholomew’s Plan] immediately, when they found that lending institutions didn’t consider a home in an industrial district to be a good risk.”[286] This change in zoning also allowed for small businesses, such as auto-wrecking and junkyards, to establish themselves on empty lots in the predominately residential area, which further dropped property values in the neighbourhood because the existing housing stock no longer conformed to the legal parameters laid out by the city, and these businesses visually disrupted the streetscape in a way other home-based businesses did not. The City permits office also denied permits for upgrading or improving housing because of the non-conforming status of residential properties in an industrial area, which meant houses could not be legally maintained or upgraded. This had the effect of depreciating land values in the entire neighbourhood, and also changed the parameters for what kinds of civic maintenance and infrastructure improvements were needed. Since the value of their housing dropped for existing homeowners, it was cheaper for the City of Vancouver to purchase the houses they had planned to eventually demolish as part of urban renewal. Then once housing was demolished, the block would be rezoned to allow for the construction of multi-dwelling units within the new zoning parameters. Since the neighbourhood’s zoning structure was changed on a block-by-block basis, the City of Vancouver placed the neighbourhood in redevelopment status, which made it even more difficult for homeowners to sell. This gave the City more flexibility to expropriate properties that did not conform to the existing zoning and to maximize the profits off the land by dropping the land values when they wanted to buy up lots, and then by changing the zoning to multi-dwelling residential to encourage new private development. This performance of using municipal regulation to guide the progress of urban development encouraged profit over the needs of the people, thereby repeating the colonial process of moving people off a section of land to make it more profitable for developers.

The eclectic pattern of development of the neighbourhood further shaped the commercial practices within the neighbourhood. Many residents supported their families

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[286] John Atkin, *Strathcona: Vancouver’s First Neighbourhood* (Vancouver: Whitecap Books Ltd, 1994), 60.

by running their business out of their home.[287] This allowed husbands and wives to work together, and without the separation between work and home children were supervised as they played in the neighbourhood. For example, there were several backyard bakeries, a sausage making facility, corner stores with housing attached or apartments above, as well as junk yards and other light industrial establishments.[288] For many families, running a home-based business allowed women to be involved in the enterprise and it eliminated other operating costs, which made a small business more financially feasible. By placing zoning restrictions on the neighbourhood, the City of Vancouver could passively eliminate these mixed uses of land, and in the process sever people's forms of employment, and their more flexible ways of generating an income. The act of applying zoning to the rest of the city became a tool to push people who were low income and Black, Indigenous, or peoples of colour out of the city. This was because many of these families relied on home-based businesses for their economic survival due to poor wages and employment instability, which meant that their housing was not purely residential. In addition many residents prioritized the ability to walk easily to employment and commercial areas because they did not have the financial means to either own a car or take transit; in short, they did not desire a separation between work and home. Regulating and reinforcing the separation between home and work through zoning is portrayed as an objective and neutral set of land use guidelines, but in reality, it further entrenched municipal colonialism into the landscape by controlling residents' economic stability.

For SPOTA, understanding the different zoning restrictions for their neighbourhood became essential for understanding how a neutral term coded an area in a very specific way, which had been used to demolish the material culture of working-class families without invoking ideas of race or class. Zoning became a way of regulating a space when it had not developed the way the city would have liked by creating a more homogeneous environment. During the negotiation process between the SWC and the other three levels of government defining how rehabilitation should take place, zoning designations became a source of conflict because residents were aware of how the previous designation of light industrial zoning was used to destroy their sense of home

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[287] Daphne Marlatt and Carol Itter conducted a series of interviews in the 1970s and published their summaries in *Opening Doors in Vancouver's East End: Strathcona*.

[288] Marlatt and Itter, *Opening Doors*.

and place within the neighbourhood by no longer providing a residential level of civic maintenance. SPOTA discussed ideas of zoning as "something that reflects the feel that people want to remain here, to live in their homes, not to sell homes for a profit."[289] They acknowledged that property ownership was both an economic commodity, but also provided the feelings of stability and belonging.

SPOTA argued that the performance of their neighbourhood needed to be inclusive and to allow people to age in place. In order to ensure that this could happen, they recognized that they needed to gain control of the zoning placed on the rehabilitation area because they were aware of how the City had used this set of legal parameters against them in the past. Advocating for RT-2 zoning for the entire neighbourhood would allow for change and growth to happen within the neighbourhood without it disrupting the sense of scale of housing or causing financial strain on the existing residents by increasing their property taxes. RT-2 zoning would "permit the construction of new single family houses, duplexes and small, low density apartment developments and the conversion of existing buildings for multiple use, but [would] not permit the higher density apartments with heights up to 120 feet permitted by the present RM-3 zoning."[290] By changing the zoning to RM-3, the City of Vancouver hoped to lay the infrastructure for greater density in 10-20 years[291] because the City-owned lots—22 single lots, 9 groups of two lots, 6 groups of three or more lots—had been purchased to ensure that they had greater options for profit in the future by putting in multi-unit dwellings.[292] This prediction of future need poses an interesting set of expectations about the idea of housing because the City was predicting that the results of the rehabilitation would only last a short period of time, and that over time, the City would be able to implement their desired changes. The residents in the neighbourhood wanted it to be governed by RT-2 zoning in order to prevent tall apartment towers from going in, and to keep the scale of new structures in line with the existing built forms and to ensure

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[289] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, 75, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5.

[290] SPOTA Early History April 1971 to July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-4 File 9.

[291] SPOTA Early History April 1971 to July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-4 File 9.

[292] "Standing Committee of Council on Planning and Development July 15, 1971," 8, Strathcona Sub-Area, Vancouver Scheme 3, urban renewal, vol. 6, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S2 Box 583-E-5 File 6.

that developers could not buy up the empty and City-owned lots to put in multi-storey structures.

The residents desired to preserve their sense of home into the future because people within the neighbourhood had been participating in the larger cultural narratives that home ownership would ensure them a stable, secure future, and by investing in housing they would be able to have made a significant financial investment for retirement.[293] The changing of zoning to light industrial had already lessened the value of their financial investment and created housing insecurity for the future. The City had stopped maintaining the civic infrastructure because it was deemed unnecessary for an area under redevelopment status. They had already seen the City put in zoning in their neighbourhood to ensure that the City could maximize profit and were aware that differences in zoning regulations also meant differences in property taxes. An increase in property taxes could make the area unaffordable for many families who were struggling financially. SPOTA argued that changing the zoning from RT-2 to RM-3 would push some people out of their housing. With RT-2 the land value would be half the value than if it was zoned RM-3.[294] Zoning also affects the cost of public services. For example, if the neighbourhood was zoned RT-2 they would be assessed $23 to put in curbs in front of a 25' lot but would pay $57 for the same service if designated RM-3.[295] For low-income families, and those with precarious employment, these designations had a significant impact on their limited financial means. In meeting on April 18, 1971, the SWC determined that changes to the zoning designation should be done through a public hearing to ensure that all residents had a chance to voice their concerns.[296] The neighbourhood was eventually zoned at RT-2 to ensure that the scale of the new housing construction remain similar to the existing housing stock, and that property taxes remained lower.

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[293] This will be developed in greater depth in Chapter 4.

[294] SPOTA Early History, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-3 Files 2 and 3.

[295] SPOTA Early History, CVA. SPOTA fonds, AM 735-S1 Box 583-B-4 File 9.

[296] SPOTA Early History, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-3 File 4.

Freeway Protests and Finalization of the Strathcona Rehabilitation Plan

Figure 4.1. Freeway Protestors
Source: *The Vancouver Sun* November 4, 1967.

An integral part of the post-war city performing its modernity was through the construction of transportation networks joining newly constructed suburbs with the urban core. The construction of the freeway was another example of how the narrative of progress was more important than the people and businesses that were disrupted and demolished for the sake of moving people from the surrounding suburban areas to the downtown core of the city. These large construction projects favoured the automobile and displaced existing residential, commercial, and industrial areas through the widening and expansion of freeways. This view of transportation expansion privileges the needs of the car over the needs of the people. In early 1970, the proposed freeway development through Strathcona presents the first difficulty of defining neighbourhood boundaries and determining what this neighbourhood is within the realm of the larger city. As part of Sutton Brown's twenty-year plans for the City of Vancouver, a San Francisco consulting firm was hired to conduct a study and write up a proposal to determine the best route for a third crossing of Burrard inlet.[297] *The Vancouver Transportation Study* recommended enhancing travel for private automobile and did not include expanding or even improving

[297] Hayne Y. Wai, *Vancouver Chinatown 1960-1980: A Community Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1998), 9.

public transit. The proposal also stated that demolishing historic sections of Chinatown was a necessary part of the process. As Hayne Wai observes, “while the City attempted to present the freeway as something that would benefit Chinatown, community leaders were not fooled.”[298] The freeway debates also drew in support from residents outside of Chinatown and Strathcona. This was not the first time that residents had protested the construction of the freeway in Vancouver. Five hundred people attended the first public meeting at City Hall on November 23, 1967, but only the Chinese Benevolent Association was able to voice their opposition during the three-and-a-half-hour session. A second public hearing was held in early December 1967 at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, with over 800 people in attendance. By January 1968, City Council had cancelled the Carrall Alignment, which would have destroyed the historic section of Chinatown, but did approve the Georgia Street viaduct to replace the existing decaying viaduct. This resulted in the City of Vancouver quickly buying up and demolishing housing and businesses along the western edge of the neighbourhood, which resulted in the destruction of the predominately Black community known as Hogan’s Alley. The construction of the freeway would remove more houses and disrupt people’s sense of home by increasing the amount of traffic on the edge of the neighbourhood, which in turn would cause increased noise and dirt. The public support against the construction of the freeway, and the cancelling of the Carrall Alignment, gave Strathcona residents a sense that there would be no further intrusions into their neighbourhood.

However, in January 1971, in a meeting about the Georgia viaduct, a plan was released regarding the demolition of six blocks at the southwestern edge to expand the approach to the viaducts along Union Street and Prior Street at Gore Avenue. This transgressed the boundaries of the neighbourhood as defined by the SWC and the aim that they would be able to guide the rehabilitation of the neighbourhood and would be able to preserve the existing housing stock. The freeway debate also exposes the larger difficulties in ensuring housing in the city because the freeway was funded and regulated by the federal government. The federal government had little understanding of the impact of the decision because they were only looking at what made sense in terms of a geographical space to route traffic through the city and not in terms of a place in which

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[298] Hayne Y. Wai, *Vancouver Chinatown*, 9.

people had cultivated a sense of home in. This again reflects a top-down approach to planning which privileges enhancing a progress narrative.

The public narrative of the freeway protests has presented it as a main event of SPOTA's organizing, which misses the growing discontent that had been building for years.[299] Historian Tina Loo illustrates that the neighbourhood advocacy performed by the SPOTA executives was "part of a transnational moment of protest and challenge to expert authority."[300] Her work is situated in a broader national context of relocation schemes across Canada in which she identifies the similarities and differences of how citizens responded to being displaced by the state. While she does construct a thorough and thoughtful argument as to how the SPOTA Executive engaged with the municipal government to ensure that their neighbourhood was protected from demolition, she does not illustrate how their advocacy and protest highlighted the importance of a neighbourhood as home, nor does she explore the significance of multigenerational, multiethnic groups working together for a common goal. The analysis diminishes the importance of home and the need to preserve it. In the celebratory text, *City Making in Paradise*, the authors illustrate nine decisions that have distinguished the City of Vancouver as distinct from other cities in North America. One significant decision, they argue, was SPOTA's protest of the construction of a freeway through their neighbourhood. The halting of the freeway effectively shaped the entire city and surrounding region by stopping the freeway from slicing through downtown Vancouver, thereby making it the only city in North America to not have a freeway system cutting through its core.[301] Urban planner John Punter suggests that, "the citizen campaigns against the freeways in Vancouver were a pointed expression of the changing political climate in the late 1960s and a testament to growing opposition to the kind of development favoured by the Non-Partisan Association and civic administrators."[302]

While I am not denying the emphasis on the changing climate in municipal politics, I argue that focusing on the shift in power municipal political parties rather than

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[299] The Museum of Vancouver has a display discussing the freeway protests and SPOTA's mobilizing concerned citizens to stop the freeway. It situates it within other significant events in the 1960s, such as the birth of Greenpeace, and growing counterculture in Kitsilano.

[300] Loo, *Moved by the State*, 159.

[301] Harcourt, et al., "Chapter 2 Saving Strathcona," in *City Making In Paradise*.

[302] Punter, *The Vancouver Achievement*, 25.

the agency of citizens still favours a top-down approach to examining the changes in the urban environment because of its focus on the political structures supporting change rather than residents from the bottom-up advocating for their sense of place. There is acknowledgement that SPOTA was influential in ensuring that the freeway did not go through; however, the impact of that decision and how it disrupted people's sense of home is only just now being written about. For example, the construction of the Georgia viaduct, which was the beginning of the larger freeway development, displaced the Black population that had settled in that area.[303] In this way viewing the urban developments as second-wave municipal colonialism further highlights the continuation of both the policies and procedures as well as cultural attitudes in place to ensure displacement predominately affected working-class material culture. However, I argue that shifting the focus of the protest onto the preservation of home moves the performance of urban narratives away from the colonial progress narrative that the land needed to become civilized. Shifting the focus on the ways in which residents joined together reveals the performance of the ways in which the neighbourhood became personally important to individuals who had been creating a new life and dreams for the future further emphasizes how attachment to place was destroyed in progress narratives.

SPOTA mobilized residents quickly and efficiently through their established network of block captains and through the relationships they had cultivated with the media and elected officials at their banquets and other social gatherings. Moreover, their protest was not framed as an anti-car protest, but as a home preservation protest. They wanted to ensure that their neighbourhood remained safe and quiet. SPOTA felt that the desire for the City to put through the freeway was an underhanded way of not honouring the existing rehabilitation agreement the three levels of government had established with the residents. It became a clear example of departments not talking to each other; the highways department was not aware of the decisions being made with the neighbourhood, and Sutton Brown was still attempting to push through his twenty-year vision for the city. The City of Vancouver argued that the freeway going through the city would provide greater access to the downtown core, and there were several large retail and commercial developments in the works, and that construction had already started on

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[303] Wayde Compton, *After Canaan: essays on race, writing, and region* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2010).

Pacific Centre Mall, which was to form part of Project 200.[304] Despite months of negotiation, the City was still expecting that the neighbourhood would acquiesce to the dominant progress narrative of becoming a modern and progressive city and relied on departments not directly affiliated with the SWC to help thwart the rehabilitation process.

Organizing the protests and garnering the support of the media divided the energies of SPOTA. Shirley Chan became the media spokesperson and reported to SPOTA Executive. The Executive decided to lobby both the aldermen and their wives about using Union and Prior as one way streets connecting to the Georgia viaduct.[305] A letter mailed out to wives of elected officials stated: "we, the women of Strathcona area, as homemakers and mothers appeal to you to understand the situation and ask that you strongly support us if the City Council passes the Union and Prior couplet. We oppose the couplet on humanistic, economic, esthetic, [sic], and cultural grounds. The safety of all persons, especially the elderly and young are concerned."[306] The letter further reinforced the sensory aspects of their domestic environment by stating that "the air and noise pollution passing through our doors will drive us out of our peaceful homes."[307] After two years of attempting the negotiate with the City of Vancouver, the stress of the freeway, and the City's stalling and coming to great disagreement around the use of their own consultants, the minutes from the January 26, 1971 Executive Meeting reveal that decision-making within SPOTA was starting to fracture; there were also fears expressed that the project would get straight-jacketed by having too much red tape and "experts" from the city level.[308] The plans to construct the Union-Prior couplet to connect to the Georgia viaduct violated the aims of rehabilitation in Strathcona because widening the streets would destroy homes. In addition to the proposed destruction of homes, the 800 block of Union Street received noticed that there would be 77 cents increase per foot on their taxes in order to pay for extra heavy duty asphalt in anticipation that the City would

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[304] Project 200 Vancouver Waterfront Development, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, COV S648.

[305] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, 89, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5.

[306] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, 90-91.

[307] ibid., 91.

[308] "January 26, 1971 Executive Meeting Minutes," SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5.

put the freeway through there.[309] This placed further economic hardship on low-income families. In addition, the proposed freeway would go right next to Seymour Elementary School and right through Britannia Senior Secondary School grounds, and while both of those schools were outside of Strathcona's boundaries, residents wanted to protect the residential areas and to ensure a sense of safety within the neighbourhood. The SPOTA Executive resolved to become more aggressive in their approach to ensure that city-owned lands would not get issued development permits. SWC wanted to continue to work with the School Board and Parks Board to ensure cohesive development. They wanted to ensure that the neighbourhood developed as a whole.[310]

In order to strengthen their organizational structure, SPOTA decided to incorporate as a society. In a brief presented to City Council from SPOTA, they state that the Union-Prior couplet creates a "no-man's land of property" and violates the principles of rehabilitation by trapping houses in between the two widened streets.[311] Two days later, on February 12th, 1971, the City Clerk advised SPOTA of another Council resolution regarding 800 Keefer Street as a way of eliminating housing in between the Union-Prior couplet. These homes would be demolished to expand park space near Strathcona Elementary School; this directly violated the aims of the SWC, as the goal was to ensure that homes remained in the neighbourhood. SPOTA worked tirelessly to gain support to stop the freeway from being constructed through their neighbourhood. On February 23, 1971, SPOTA submitted a petition to City Council signed by 109 UBC students and twenty Chinese Associations who opposed the freeway and offered their support to SPOTA's position to preserve housing.[312] As a result of SPOTA's effort the freeway was not constructed through Strathcona.

Despite spending over a year hashing out the terms of the Strathcona Rehabilitation Agreement, SPOTA still had difficulty working with the City of Vancouver to ensure that Strathcona was rehabilitated according to their desire to preserve their

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309 "January 26, 1971 Executive Meeting Minutes," SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5.

310 SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 583-E-07 File 5.

311 "Brief February 10, 1971," SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5.

312 "Petition February 23, 1971" SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5.

neighbourhood. The layers of bureaucratic policies and procedures put into place by Sutton Brown to ensure power and decision-making remained in the hands of the few angered SPOTA. In their view, the "Board of Administration was breaking the spirit of co-operation and consensus which the existence and operation of the SWC tried to establish."[313] The residents had organized in good faith and had the support and cooperation of the federal and provincial governments to rehabilitate their neighbourhood, but they were continually hindered by the City Council. The City of Vancouver stalled the process by not agreeing to pay for Birmingham and Wood's consulting fees, and by holding in-camera meetings with City Council discussing the redevelopment of Strathcona.[314] This prevented SPOTA representatives from advocating for their point of view. SPOTA strongly expressed that the "residents should not be pressured to participate in the rehabilitation demonstration project."[315] They wanted to protect people's sense of agency, whereas the City of Vancouver wanted to impose a top-down directive that residents needed to adhere to.

SPOTA continued to nurture good relations between the residents and elected officials by hosting banquets and special events to illustrate their continued desire to foster a collaborative and collegial relationship between residents and those in positions of power. In order to strengthen neighbour-to-neighbour connections, they began producing monthly newsletters in an attempt to counteract the poor communication on the part of the city.[316] This helped to inform the residents about what was happening in their neighbourhood, but also became a way for residents to contribute content, which ranged from alerting neighbours of a string of robberies, to informing readers about new jobs available. Through the newsletters SPOTA sought to strengthen the relations between different cultural groups within the neighbourhood by producing information in a

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[313] SPOTA Early History AM 734-S1 583-B-3 File 4.

[314] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5.

[315] "Formation of SWC document," Agreement: Birmingham and Wood [architect] and City of Vancouver, 1970, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-C-02 File 01.

[316] Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association newsletters, 1972-76, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-F-2 File 2.

bilingual (Chinese and English) and often trilingual (Chinese, English, and Portuguese) format.[317]

Figure 4.2. Group of community members gathered in front of SPOTA building.
Source: CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4-: 2009-008.14 Box 198-E-08.

SPOTA established a permanent headquarters at 820 Jackson Street. SPOTA had always held their meetings within the neighbourhood and ensured that the space was large enough to hold the residents who might want to attend their monthly meetings. It was important to maintain the accessibility for the residents and not to make them convenient for City officials to attend. In this way they shifted the decision-making power by inviting people into the neighbourhood rather than having decisions made in City Hall being imposed on them.

After several in-camera meetings held by City Council in the winter of 1971, SPOTA voiced their complaints to Dan Campbell, MLA, and Robert Andras, MP. Both men agreed that the City of Vancouver was hindering progress and issued their support of SPOTA. Dan Campbell offered to enact provincial authority to force the City of Vancouver to commit to the plan and get started on the implementation of it.

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[317] Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association newsletters, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-F-2 File 1.

The final document was hashed out in the Gibb's Boys Club over two weekends in April 1971. It was affectionately referred to as the "Purple Cabbage" because it contained many pages and was printed on purple paper. With the signed Strathcona Rehabilitation Plan, the Strathcona Working Committee changed its name to the Strathcona Rehabilitation Committee (SRC). They had started implementing the rehabilitation project and were improving their homes in good faith. The goal was to rehabilitate the existing housing stock and create new housing on City-owned lots over the next three years.

Firehall Protests

Figure 4.3. Fire Hall Protest Parade
Photo Credit: Hayne Wai, personal collection.

Shortly after SPOTA halted the further demolition of their neighbourhood by successfully winning the fight against the City of Vancouver over the construction of a freeway through Strathcona, a second intrusion into their neighbourhood's sense of home erupted over the proposed development of a fire hall on the privately held property within the neighbourhood boundaries. As part of Redevelopment Project No. 2 Strathcona Area-Vancouver plan, the City of Vancouver sold a section of land to a private developer, "Orientif Properties Ltd. [who] submitted a proposal for the

construction of 126 housing units on two parcels located between Pender and Keefer Streets at Dunlevy."[318] These parcels of land were located kitty-corner to Strathcona Elementary School. However, Orientif Properties Ltd, had been sitting on the land for several years and they had not constructed any new housing.[319] This became a contested parcel of land within the neighbourhood boundaries because SPOTA wanted to ensure that land developed would provide housing to meet the needs of the people living within the neighbourhood and not become a higher-end residential construction to maximize developer profit. The City of Vancouver decided to purchase the lots back from the developer to use them for their own purposes. Similar to the construction of Phase I and Phase II, the outer edge of the neighbourhood boundary came under the City's control in an attempt to shape the neighbourhood to serve the needs of the city as a whole. Based on the size of the lots, the City decided to relocate No. 1 Firehall there because its current building was in need of expansion and there was not land available next to it. Relocation of the No. 1 Firehall became more complex because it would become the largest one in the city and the new facility needed to be almost 50,160 square feet to accommodate for the repair of engines, a larger structure for training purposes, as well as larger grounds to conduct drills. The needs of the new firehall are very different from the needs of other neighbourhood firehalls.[320]

The Strathcona site was chosen as an appropriate location because the Marsh Report, completed in 1950, indicated that there was a greater risk of fire in Strathcona, though there was no clear evidence that this was true. This fear of fire persisted into other reports done by the City of Vancouver in 1957. The film, *To Build A Better City*, also references the likelihood of fire twice as further justification as to why the City needed to demolish the neighbourhood.[321] However, when Birmingham and Wood expanded their data collection in the spring of 1970, they interviewed the Fire Chief, who stated "Strathcona has a <u>low</u> incidence of fires compared with the City as a whole even

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[318] Strathcona Sub-Area, Vancouver Scheme #3, Urban Renewal, vol 8 Jan 1972-Apr 1972, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S2 Box 583-D-7 File 8.

[319] The development of this site with housing is discussed in greater depth in Chapter Six.

[320] CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, City Planning S465-1 44-C-1 File 3.

[321] To Build A Better City, 0:3:28 and 0:7:13.

though its 'hazards' are higher."[322] The Fire Chief observed that residents would often respond to help put a fire out before fire crews arrived since many of the residents were retired, or worked from home, and there was a high proportion of people who walked the neighbourhood compared to other more car-dependent areas of the city. "City Council decided to proceed with the proposal on the basis of recommendations from the Fire Chief [of the need for a larger training site]. However, the City's Planning Department has emphasized that a firehall on this site is incompatible with the surrounding residential environment."[323]

SPOTA, once again, drew on their communication network to mobilize support to stop the firehall from moving into their neighbourhood. A memo from councillor Marianne Linnell on December 14, 1972, to social planner Ray Young outlines that it is not just the firehall needing to go in; it is the fact that it is yet another intrusion on the neighbourhood. She reminds him that "rehabilitation of a community is a radically different process from urban renewal."[324] She states: "it would be a serious mistake on the part of Civic officials to maintain that the issue is as objective and as simple as the location of a firehall."[325] She frames her argument from the bottom-up by stressing that the social needs of the community must be recognized. Site D, the proposed site of the new firehall, was a highly traveled route by people going to Chinatown to go shopping, and it was in the same area as Pender Street YWCA, Chinese United Church, Chinese Public School, Strathcona Elementary School, and the Community Centre. In Linnell's opinion, firehalls shouldn't be located near places of assembly or where large numbers of people are walking, congregating, or near parking lots. She closes her memo by stating: "since it is clear that some people are bothered by the noise of a firehall there should be consideration to not place it near where people live, especially since people who are low income have limited ability to relocate." [326] Linnell was advocating for the preservation of people's sense of home, and she recognized that low-income residents

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[322] Strathcona Area Rehabilitation Project "Interim Report" May 24, 1970 (Birmingham and Wood) Appendix B Fire Hazard Interview with Bowman-Davis Chief Fire Inspector VFD, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-D-3 File 9.

[323] Strathcona Sub-Area, Vancouver Scheme #3, Urban Renewal, vol 8 Jan 1972-Apr 1972, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S2 Box 583-D-7 File 8.

[324] CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, City Planning S465-1 44-C-1 File 3.

[325] "Memo," 2, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, City Planning S465-1 44-C-1 File 3.

[326] "Memo," 4, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, City Planning S465-1 44-C-1 File 3.

had fewer options to find affordable housing elsewhere in the city. Young in turn recommended that the Fire Chief consult with SPOTA and SRC to see if the new site fell within the Strathcona rehabilitation boundaries. He was advocating for the care of people who may be relocated if that is determined as the best location.[327] However, SPOTA was promised the preservation of homes in the neighbourhood, and turning this larger plot of land into a firehall site violated the aims of rehabilitation and the goal to increase more affordable housing.

The proposed firehall site galvanized a younger generation of Chinese-Canadians, many of whom were university students and Canadian-born. to step up to protect Strathcona from further destruction as they realized that the government was not committed to honouring the rights of Chinese citizens.[328] According to Paul Yee, for many of the younger members their activism was a way to assert their Asian identity and to protect the community.[329] For Hayne Wai, Strathcona was the neighbourhood his grandparents lived in; they were relocated in the early phases of urban renewal, and Wai recognized the injustice of it.[330] The City of Vancouver was not negotiating with SPOTA, nor was it committing to rehabilitating the neighbourhood. SPOTA gained the support of the media and held a protest march to protect their neighbourhood. On December 10, 1972, "hundreds of protesters were led by the lion dancers and drummers of the Wong Ha Athletic Association," towards Strathcona School to participate in a public meeting.[331] Candidates for the upcoming municipal election expressed their opposition for the proposed fire hall site. As promised, the newly elected 1973 City Council rescinded "the firehall proposal in favour of family housing on the site."[332] They were able to successfully stop the firehall from being constructed in the midst of their neighbourhood. These lots were finally developed into the Mao Dan Cooperative Housing complex, which is discussed in further detail in Chapter Six. Fire Hall No. 1 was eventually constructed on the southeastern edge of the neighbourhood boundary off Prior Street.

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[327] "Letter dated Dec 20, 1972, from Ray Young to Mike Harcourt and Darlene Mazari," CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, City Planning S465-1 44-C-1 File 3.

[328] Hayne Wai, Vancouver Chinatown, 12.

[329] Wai, 12.

[330] Personal Interview with Hayne Wai. November 6, 2021.

[331] Wai, 12.

[332] ibid., 12.

Park Space

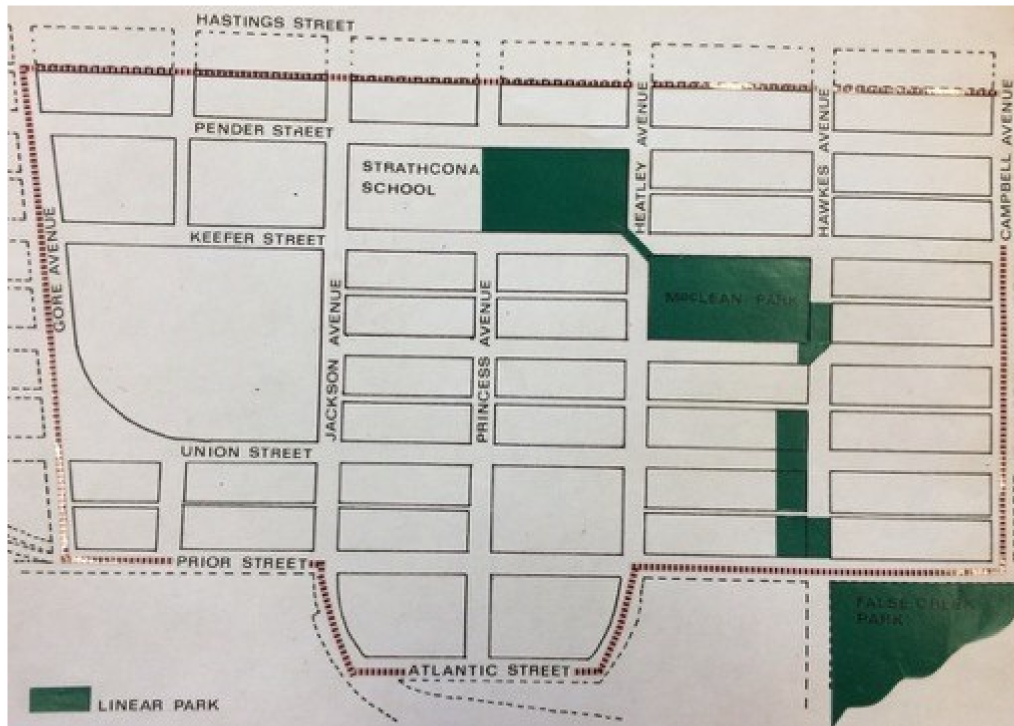

Figure 4.4. Proposed New Park Space, 1975
Source: CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734 Box 583-F-2 File 7.

As SPOTA gained control over the rehabilitation of their neighbourhood, they began to assert that their neighbourhood should have the same features and amenities as other neighbourhoods in the city, and that what was lost during the construction of public housing should be replaced. The development of park space within the neighbourhood became another contentious issue between the Planning Department, the Parks Board, and SPOTA. The cultivation of park space formed a significant part of the city's municipal colonial narrative with Stanley Park touted as the "jewel of the City."[333] The development of park space was a dominant feature of Harland Bartholomew's master plan created in 1928 to guide the City of Vancouver's amalgamation with the municipalities of Point Grey and South Vancouver and reiterated this again in 1946 with the list of recommendations in the booklet Parks and

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333 Sean Kheraj, *Inventing Stanley Park: an Environmental History* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 2.

Recreation.[334] He encouraged the construction of new parks spread throughout the City of Vancouver to ensure that all neighbourhoods had access to park space, and which would form the hub of the neighbourhood. MacLean Park was established in Strathcona in 1913 by the Vancouver Parks Board. This park space covered a city block between Dunlevy and Jackson, and Union and Georgia Streets. It was one of the first supervised playgrounds in the city offering programming for summer months for elementary-aged children and had a small wading pool. The Parks Board agreed to relinquish MacLean Park to the City of Vancouver for the construction of MacLean Park Public Housing in 1963. The removal of the park was positioned as an easy and efficient use of land, with little regard for the impact it would have on the families living in the neighbourhood. This left the neighbourhood without any park space for children to play in. They would need to cross busy Hastings Street to play at Oppenheimer Park or play in the muddy slough of False Creek flats. As a result, children played in the street or in empty lots scattered throughout the neighbourhood. Ironically, images of children playing in the street were featured in the film *To Build a Better City,* which was used to justify the continued need for urban renewal in the neighbourhood.

The City of Vancouver Parks Board had neglected park development in the neighbourhood because the Planning Department had not decided where to place the new park as part of their Phase III urban renewal scheme. However, because the Strathcona Rehabilitation Plan defined neighbourhood residents' sense of home as extending outside of their housing to include the surrounding civic infrastructure, SPOTA wanted a swimming pool to replace what was lost when the park was demolished, and tennis courts because they felt their neighbourhood deserved to have amenities found in other park spaces across the city. However, this posed a significant challenge because they wanted to increase park space without eliminating more housing.

The Park Board operated as a largely independent body from the Planning Department, and often from City Council, and it was also not part of the SRC. In early February 1972, the Parks Board decided to go ahead with "the appraisal and purchase of homes in the south half of Block 76 without prior consultation with the Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association and the Strathcona Rehabilitation

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[334] Bartholomew and Associates, *A Plan for the City of Vancouver*, https://archive.org/details/vancplanincgen00vanc and *Parks and Recreation* https://archive.org/details/preliminaryrepor00vanc [Accessed June 20, 2023].

Committee."[335] These intended purchases contradicted decisions made in a meeting on January 13, 1972, in which SPOTA's right to guide park development fell under the Strathcona Rehabilitation Plan. SPOTA quickly mobilized and conducted its own survey of thirteen homeowners on that block—eight wanted to stay and to rehabilitate their homes, two were willing to go with the majority, two wanted to sell, and one could not be located. Since the majority of the homeowners wanted to remain in their dwellings, SPOTA argued that that the Parks Board should not further expropriate existing housing. In order to preserve the greatest number of housing units, SPOTA agreed to the development of park space adjacent to Strathcona Elementary School and the development of Strathcona Linear Park to ensure that more park space was added to the neighbourhood overall without increasing demolition as the Parks Board had originally planned. Strathcona Linear Park followed design features more commonly found on the west side of the city, by closing off street traffic, and with its meandering path, and spots for rest; it connected the extended park space to the newly constructed Strathcona Park on the False Creek Flats.

On June 17, 1973, after almost a year of negotiations with the Parks Board and the City of Vancouver Planning Department, SPOTA hosted a celebration for the approved Strathcona Linear Park and provided an opportunity for residents to share their ideas with Don Vaughn, who had been hired to create the landscaping design.[336] A further opportunity to submit design ideas was held in July 1973 as part of the Asian Cultural Festival.[337] Throughout all the planning for the new park space, SPOTA Executive ensured that residents were informed of opportunities to submit their ideas, and if they were unable to attend other celebrations, ideas could be dropped off at SPOTA headquarters at 820 Jackson Street.

SPOTA further clashed with the Parks Board over the types of trees selected to be planted along the MacLean Park perimeter and within the Strathcona Linear Park. SPOTA felt that they should have a part in the decision-making process, since the

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[335] "Letter from SPOTA to Park Board George Puil, the Chairman of the Board Feb 24, 1972" Strathcona Sub-Area, Vancouver Scheme #3, Urban Renewal, vol 8 Jan 1972-Apr 1972 AM 734-S2 Box 583-D-7 File 8.

[336] Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association newsletters, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-F-2 File 1.

[337] SPOTA Newsletters, 1972-76, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-F-2 file 2.

rehabilitation funds were paying for the improvements within their neighbourhood; however, the Parks Board felt that they did not need to include community representatives within the decision-making process. The clashes over decision-making reflected the difficulty of different bureaucratic structures accepting that SPOTA had been granted the opportunity to operate as the "fourth-level of government" in the neighbourhood rehabilitation. The residents continued to assert that the neighbourhood was home and pushed back against the municipal colonial decision-making process of the Parks Board.

Streetscapes

After more than a decade of minimal civic maintenance, the residents demanded improvement be made to the structural aspects of their neighbourhood. These upgrades would improve safety, but also foster a sense of home pride in their neighbourhood. The City of Vancouver had been derelict in their obligation to maintain the neighbourhood to a residential standard because Strathcona had been rezoned as light industrial and then placed in redevelopment status. Since the City had decided that the neighbourhood was derelict and should be demolished, they stopped maintaining the civic infrastructure within the neighbourhood because they could divert the maintenance funds elsewhere. They were enforcing their power by actively not doing something in order to more cost effectively demolish the neighbourhood. This maintains a top-down view of what a neighbourhood is for and whose needs it should serve; it should fit into the city's overall view of a progressive and orderly environment rather than meet the needs of the current residents. As improvements to the park space were made, and as residents started the individual rehabilitation of their dwellings (as will be discussed in Chapter Five) and the Strathcona Area Housing Society (SAHS) began to oversee the construction of new housing in the neighbourhood (as will be discussed in Chapter Six), SPOTA advocated that the structural improvements to the neighbourhood be carried out at the same time, so that the residents knew that the entire neighbourhood would be rehabilitated and that work would not be completed in a piecemeal fashion. It was hoped that residents would continue to improve their dwellings when they realized that the city infrastructure was also being improved.

The streetscape became a contentious issue with the rehabilitation of Strathcona because the City of Vancouver had collected property taxes for thirteen years from the

residents without maintaining the existing streetscapes with repaving, fixing street lighting, street cleaning, or enforcing bylaws with empty and derelict lots, which became dumping grounds for garbage. The residents sought to hold the City accountable for the maintenance. As part of the rehabilitation, the City was required to improve the sewer system and repave the roads as well as ensure the general safety of the streets. The neighbourhood had been very hilly, and over time there was an effort to flatten the roads to reduce accidents. This process, however, had left some residential buildings well above street grade and some well below. The City, however, had not maintained the bulkheads, concrete barriers to protect the houses below street grade, which would ensure that houses could remain on stable ground and were not prone to flooding, and as a result some houses had damp basements.

In addition to upgrading sewers, the street lighting, sidewalks, curbing, and paving were improved. SPOTA wanted to ensure that their neighbourhood was improved as a cohesive whole rather than on a block-by-block basis because they recognized that improvement needed to be done equally so that all the residents would benefit from the upgrades. The costs of maintenance went over budget because the City wanted it to be upzoned to RM-3 zoning, anticipating increased densification at a later point in time. This change in structural upgrading reflected the City's desire to demolish the neighbourhood in ten to twenty years, and to construct their planned towers. SPOTA argued that they did not want their property taxes increased to accommodate for these improvements because the goal of rehabilitation was to ensure that their neighbourhood maintain a sense of home and remained affordable for the people currently living there, they had negotiated that the zoning would be RT-2. The performance of municipal colonialism was hovering under the surface as the City Engineering department went ahead with the structural upgrades for RM-3 zoning, but the residents were not charged increased property taxes.

In this final clash over streetscapes during the implementation of the Strathcona Rehabilitation Plan, residents also intervened to assert their own diasporic version of Bowlby's second definition of domestic—"to make like the home county." SPOTA argued that in every aspect of the neighbourhood there should be ways for people to feel a sense of belonging and connection to each other, as well as to where they or their families had migrated from. The street names were a reflection of the colonial heritage of the neighbourhood. They sought to disrupt the colonial heritage by creating bilingual

street signs to reflect the large Chinese population living in the neighbourhood. This installation of bilingual street signs became a performance of place that transcended its colonial heritage by making it personally meaningful to the groups of people living there and inscribed its cultural history into the way-finding of future generations, thereby altering their performance of belonging. Following San Francisco, the residents advocated for street signage in the neighbourhood to be both in English, and with Chinese phonetic characters below, so that arriving residents could navigate their way around the neighbourhood streets even though they were not proficient in English. This action, I suggest is an important part of the performance of place by making the navigating of the neighbourhood meaningful to them. It also forms a significant part of a palimpsestic legacy of activism left in their neighbourhood of who was living there at the time of rehabilitation. SPOTA's proposal for bilingual street signage was initially denied by the City of Vancouver as being too costly. The City argued that producing the extra lettering on the street signs would make them more costly to produce, and that they would need to replace them more often because they would become "collector's items," and be stolen more often.[338] However, SPOTA continued to argue that they would be an important part of the neighbourhood to foster a sense of belonging and way-finding. The bilingual street signs became a visual marker of the performance of domesticity—in the sense of making "like the home country"—because they reflect a blend of both the settler-colonial heritage as well as the Chinese immigration.

[338] S.R.C. Correspondence, 1974-1976, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-D-3 File 4.

Figure 4.5. Bilingual Street Sign
Photo Credit: Jennifer Chutter

Conclusion

While SPOTA worked tirelessly to protect their neighbourhood from destruction, they were also actively involved in creating a sense of belonging to ensure that the built environment met the needs of the residents living in the area. Drawing on the long-standing narrative of the neighbourhood as a landing pad for new immigrants to the city, SPOTA wanted to ensure that existing residents and newcomers would get the support that they needed to feel that they belonged, and that the community of Strathcona would feel like home to them. The desire to control the zoning in the neighbourhood and the freeway and firehall protests revealed the City's differing views of the neighbourhood as home. For SPOTA home meant that they had some aspect of control over the wider boundaries of their community and what happens within those boundaries. Intrusions into that sense of control came both from a safety perspective and from a sensory perspective. They recognized that improvements in the structural aspects of the city needed to be done in tandem with improvements in the social aspects of the city. Structurally, the street lighting, street paving, curbing, and guttering was replaced and improved, along with putting in new park space and trees—all without increasing property taxes. Socially, SPOTA improved three aspects of the neighbourhood: improving park space, expanding social services, and increasing walkability. Unlike the two previously constructed public housing units with their lack of social infrastructure and

limited spaces for children to play in, SPOTA advocated for their children to have parks to play in, for their seniors to have gathering places, and for services to be offered within the community, so that people could access them easily, and where possible in the language they felt most comfortable speaking in. However, as Tina Loo points out, while the residents did get the opportunity to rehabilitate their houses, the city still was able to push through their agenda of upgrading the neighbourhood's infrastructure to accommodate greater densification in the future, which the residents were against.[339]

This tension between colonial structures embedded in municipal decision-making to reflect the "home country" and SPOTA's desire to ensure that their neighbourhood reflected their understanding of "home country" as immigrants was not easily resolved. This was a result, I argue, of the layers of bureaucratic processes and departments at all levels of government that had difficulty collaborating with a small group of passionate residents in order to write new cultural narratives of what it means to feel at home in a neighbourhood. The support to maintain the colonial structures are vast and part of the larger cultural narratives of what makes a neighbourhood, and unless these bureaucratic layers are thoughtfully dismantled, it will be easy to dismiss neighbourhood activism as being a result of a particular moment in time and need rather than as providing insights into oppressive structures. The narrative of home in the neighbourhood was defined by a sense of security by protecting the boundaries from intrusion, as the freeway and firehall protests revealed, and promoting a sense of belonging by improving the social amenities. The following two chapters explore another palimpsestic layer of the performance of the domestic with respect to the rehabilitation of individual dwellings and the construction of new housing and their connection to Bowlby's third definition of domestic—relating to household and family. Chapters Five and Six both reveal additional layers of home as a site of security and belonging in relation to the rehabilitation and construction of individual dwellings.

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[339] Tina Loo, *Moved by the State*, 194.

Chapter 5.

Rehabilitating homes in the neighbourhood

> *"If a man's clothes are worn and out of date, he may still wear them to keep him warm. If you take them away and give him their market value, he will be left a cold and naked man."*[340]

As discussed in Chapter Four, preservation of the Strathcona neighbourhood rested on defining the boundaries and addressing the structural aspects of the city that needed to be improved; these changes in zoning, improvements in sewers, street lighting, sidewalks, and paving required a macro-view of the land because SPOTA wanted the neighbourhood to be redeveloped as a whole and not on a block-by-block basis, as the previous demolition for the construction of Raymur Place and MacLean Public Housing had been done. Rehabilitation of individual dwellings, however, required a micro-view of each block to ensure that they were redeveloped in tandem with the neighbourhood as a whole. This chapter traces the guiding settler-colonial ideals embedded in the prioritization of the construction of the single-family dwelling as the preferred model of housing in Vancouver and illustrates how this re-enactment of second-wave municipal colonialism influenced the approach to neighbourhood rehabilitation in Strathcona. While this chapter overlaps chronologically with the previous one, I have chosen to develop the complexity of Rachel Bowlby's third definition of the domestic, which is defined as household and family, separately in order to highlight how Strathcona's residents, individually, perform home. House and home become important lenses for examining the performance of second-wave municipal colonialism; these structures shape an imagined future both for the city as well as for the residents because of the multiplicity of meanings tied to a single dwelling, and because families and households use their domestic space in ways that are personally meaningful to them. Chapter Six unpacks the complexity of household and family with the construction of new affordable housing within the neighbourhood. These two chapters explore the cultural aspects of second-wave municipal colonialism and the varying degrees that immigrants have adopted them. This is useful because it reveals that SPOTA's activism

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[340] Strathcona Area Rehabilitation Project "Interim Report" May 24, 1970 (Birmingham and Wood), CVA, SPOTA fonds AM 734-S5 Box 583-D-3 File 9.

cannot be viewed in direct opposition to or as an anticolonial approach to urban development, but instead shows how cultural norms around housing have been deeply internalized and are difficult to disrupt. Many of the residents had moved to North America with the belief that their dreams for a better future would be granted because land was available for them to build a home. For many immigrants the dream was to own a single-family dwelling because home ownership would ensure a sense of belonging and citizenship.

Settler-colonialism scripted a narrow and specific performance of domesticity and promoted architectural styles based on ideas that reflected a white, middle-class Anglo-society. Urban renewal drew on the colonial narratives of housing as a tool to tame the landscape and by extension the inhabitants, equating the display of Victorian domestic ideals with good citizenship. This was further reinforced by promoting home ownership as a means to obtain a stable, secure future, and as a way of demonstrating one's citizenship. [341] The post-war period reanimated these colonial views in order to justify urban renewal and the demolition of houses without recognizing that residents had always found ways to subvert these dominant narratives. Declaring Strathcona a rehabilitation area becomes a transgressive act when viewed alongside the City's attempts to enact second-wave municipal colonialism. There are many ways in which second-wave municipal colonialism was enacted in Strathcona as it pertained to individual dwellings. More specifically, the activism of SPOTA challenged the cultural norms attached to housing by advocating for rehabilitation in three distinct, yet intertwined, ways. First, they exposed the myth that the disrepair of the house was the fault of inhabitants by showing the impact of municipal decisions and societal inequities, and their effects on housing. Second, by including homeowners and tenants together as equal members of SPOTA, the organization ensured that renters would have access to safe, secure, and affordable housing, and that their sense of home and belonging to a neighbourhood was not predicated on ownership or income. Lastly, by showing that the value of the house was not solely based on its economic worth, SPOTA illustrated that housing was more than a commodity and was integral in defining a sense of self in relation to place; this was done by ensuring that residents were able to determine if they wanted to rehabilitate and what improvements would be made to their individual

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[341] Brian J. McCabe, *No Place Like Home: Wealth, Community, and the Politics of Home Ownership* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

dwellings. Whereas Chapter Four provided the macroanalysis of the significance of rehabilitation in countering colonial narratives of the neighbourhood as a whole, this chapter provides a microanalysis of the significance of rehabilitation by showing how SPOTA's activism worked against, through, and within these larger cultural narratives in order to show how protecting an individual's sense of home could guide urban rehabilitation.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the survey SPOTA conducted in April 1969 indicated that, despite watching blocks of housing around them get demolished, the vast majority of residents wanted to remain in Strathcona and were willing to rehabilitate their houses. SPOTA recognized that the micro-view of their individual senses of home was predicated on rehabilitating their personal dwellings regardless of whether they rented them or owned them, and that the rehabilitation of individual houses would contribute to the overall improved aesthetics of the neighbourhood, which in turn would strengthen the collective sense of home within neighbourhood. SPOTA requested that the funding from the federal government originally targeted for demolition and rebuilding be used instead for providing grants and low-interest loans to help residents improve their dwellings. They were not advocating for fair market value or replacement housing elsewhere in the city; SPOTA asserted that treating a dwelling as an economic commodity was not its primary value to many of the residents. They argued that the residents knew best what their individual houses needed in order to enhance the functionality and structural repairs of their homes. The residents did not want a top-down view of how their homes should be improved imposed on them; instead, they wanted to be actively involved in the rehabilitation of their personal dwellings.

An examination of SPOTA's success in this regard is an important contribution to the scholarship on neighbourhood activism because it provides a counter-narrative to the many case studies in which marginalized citizens lost their sense of home.[342] J. Douglas Porteous and Sandra E. Smith argue that the destruction of a home

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[342] Tina Loo, *Moved by the State: forced relocation and making a good life in postwar Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019); Debbie Becher, *Private property and public power: eminent domain in Philadelphia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Nicole Yakashiro, " 'Powell Street is dead': Nikkei Loss, Commemoration, and Representations of Place in the Settler Colonial City" *Urban History Review*, Vol 48 Iss 2 (Spring 2021): 32-55 and "Daffodils and Dispossession: Nikkei Settlers, White Possession, and Settler Colonial Property in Bradner, BC, 1914-51" *BC Studies* no. 211 (Autumn 2021): 49-78.

environment should be referred to as “domicide,” which they define as “the deliberate destruction of home against the will of the home dweller.”[343] They suggest that the action involves a person with more power acting under the guise of the “common good” to deliberately destroy the home of someone or a group of people with less power.[344] The act of killing a home is often given other names, such as eviction, expropriation, urban renewal or gentrification. The work of Porteous and Smith outlines numerous examples of how state power has destroyed people’s homes through the development of progress narratives that views land as open and available to be used more productively by, for example, flooding farming communities in order to develop hydroelectric dams. Porteous and Smith argue, however, that there are no cases in which people have successfully fought against the intended acts of domicide, and close their argument by suggesting that “domicide will be eliminated only if such alternative spaces have the courage to become an ethical platform from which to speak truth to power.”[345] I suggest that SPOTA is one such alternative space, and that it successfully halted the domicide of their neighbourhood. It did so by insisting that urban renewal funds be used to rehabilitate their neighbourhood instead, and by working with all three levels of government to ensure that existing homeowners and renters were able to get access to these funds. As will be discussed in Chapter Six, SPOTA also sought to create new forms of housing within their neighbourhood to ensure that more people could get access to affordable housing, which highlighted the structural inequities in providing adequate housing for families who are low-income, and for households for whom family dependents includes parents, and not just children.

While the Strathcona Working Committee (SWC) attempted to disrupt the existing planning process by including SPOTA, as the fourth-level of government, to represent the residents as equal members of the decision-making process with regards to rehabilitation, the City of Vancouver had difficulty in giving up its position of power and participating willingly in the “experimental project” as evidenced with their numerous “in camera” meetings. Housing was an object to be defined and controlled by the state

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[343] Porteous and Smith, *Domicide*, 3.

[344] Porteous and Smith, 5.

[345] ibid., 242.

through regulations and by-laws.[346] Recognizing that the performance of home was different from the performance of housing was a radical departure from public housing construction in Phase I and II of urban renewal because the City of Vancouver demolished a variety of structures in Strathcona and replaced them with uniform and homogeneous low-rise apartment towers as a symbol of a modern and progressive urban environment. The City controlled the performance of housing in a specific manner and expected the residents to fit into their new domestic environment regardless of their personal needs or desires. Drawing from Rose-Redwood and Glass I am examining, in this chapter, how performativity "can be employed to naturalize or subvert the sovereignty of political authority."[347] The City of Vancouver wanted to naturalize their views of housing by asserting their power over the neighbourhood to create a homogenous area that maximized the profitability of the land. From their top-down perspective, the City of Vancouver imagined a homogenous urban environment would emerge over a twenty-year period as block-by-block demolition and new construction led them towards a future cosmopolitan city status. By contrast, SPOTA imagined, from their bottom-up perspective, that stable and secure housing, regardless of whether it was rented or owned, would allow a brighter future for families, and that existing dwellings should be allowed to remain in order to achieve that desired future. SPOTA wanted to subvert the City's political authority by advocating for rehabilitation. Both the top-down and bottom-up performances of housing rested on controlling and shaping individual dwellings in order to achieve the dreams and wishes of an imagined future and required controlling the performativity of the dwelling without interference from the other.[348] This created a tension between the residents and the city officials because rehabilitation required an acceptance that the eclectic range of dwelling structures—from single-family dwellings, to row houses, to bachelor suites, to small apartment buildings— within Strathcona had value as they are for the residents, and that the performance of maintaining them would not disrupt the City of Vancouver's desire for cosmopolitan city

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[346] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5.

[347] Rueben Rose-Redwood and Michael R. Glass "Introduction" in *Performativity, Politics, and the Production of Social Space,* Michael R. Glass and Rueben Rose-Redwood, eds. (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), 2.

[348] The complexity of this performance of property is outlined in Nicholas K. Blomley, "Performing Property: Making The World," *Canadian Journal of Law and Jurisprudence* Vol. XXVI, No. 1 (January 2013): 23-48. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0841820900005944

status. Developing a rehabilitation plan proved to be complex because different forms of housing met a range of needs and incomes, and each type of dwelling required different approaches. The performance of home could not be easily defined or regulated.

Housing as a symbol of colonialism

The construction of the single-family dwelling became a defining symbol of the displacement of Indigenous communities and the establishment of "civilization" on the land. The house as culturally symbolic had been established for several centuries by the time settlement occurred on the west coast of British Columbia. Historian Paige Raibmon argues that "colonial society from the nineteenth century through to the present has focused on houses as representative of material forms of culture—as culture in practice."[349] Her work illustrates how the promotion of single-family dwellings and British domestic ideals were used "to replace multifamily longhouses with Victorian-style nuclear family dwellings."[350] Raibmon illustrates how the house and the domestic goods therein came to represent the moral character of the inhabitants.[351] While the focus of Raibmon's argument examines how Aboriginal everyday life was put on display for the white gaze at the Chicago's World Fair, migrant spaces, and tourist destinations along the West Coast, her work is useful in exploring how "spectacles of Aboriginal domestic space provided a jumping-off point for the stories viewers told themselves about themselves."[352] These stories knit together the settler-colonial ideals of domesticity and the larger progress narratives of the state with regards to housing in order to further justify settler-colonialism. Visible evidence of Victorian ideals of domesticity became tangible examples that the efforts of missionaries, especially, were civilizing the First Nations communities in their "performance of everyday life."[353]

Historian Adele Perry also examines a colonial view of housing in her discussion of how the construction of Victorian-style housing in nineteenth century British Columbia reshaped the "gender, family, and social structures" of Indigenous communities along

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[349] Raibmon, "Living on Display: Colonial Visions of Aboriginal Domestic Spaces," 10.
[350] Raibmon, "Living on Display," 1.
[351] Raibmon, 2.
[352] ibid., 5.
[353] ibid., 2.

the West Coast.[354] She argues that "more than simply reflecting the organization and use of space, homes, like maps, actively shape the way people both imagine and live their social roles."[355] Perry further states that "housing was not simply a matter of wood, mud, and mortar or even human shelter, it was an animate social force that was generative of proper gender roles, work habits, and domestic ways."[356] Both Raibmon's and Perry's work illustrates how the performance of housing shaped the material culture of British Columbia to reflect a predominately Victorian style of architecture, as well as domestic living environment. Moreover, their arguments establish how the narratives of a respectable Victorian exterior, with the markings of civilized domesticity, such as a tidy garden and fresh paint, reflected the moral and civilized nature of the inhabitants.[357] Their work is important in understanding the cultural construction, as well as the performativity, of the symbolic meanings attached to housing because houses are a long-standing, visual marker of cultural values on the land; this makes it difficult for the cultural values to change because they are replicated over time and become accepted as the norm. While their work largely focuses on how the construction of Western-style housing was both adopted and challenged by Indigenous communities along the West Coast of British Columbia, both Perry's and Raibmon's arguments are useful for establishing a set of colonial norms for how missionaries, government officials, and arriving settlers perceived the role of housing in society, which then becomes part of government structures to further guide urban development.

In Vancouver, the construction of two neighbourhoods, Shaughnessy Heights and the University Endowment Lands near the University of British Columbia, I argue has shaped the narrative of acceptable housing within the city by further embedding the importance of cohesive urban development that promoted a Victorian style of architecture and reinforced an Anglo, upper-class heritage. By further taming the landscape through the creation of an orderly layout of street grids, and by promoting the domestic ideals of the home country through the construction of single-family dwellings based on a British architectural aesthetic, the expectation was that the household and

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[354] Adele Perry, "From 'the hot-bed of vice' to the well-ordered Christian home" *Ethnohistory* 50:4 (fall 2003), 588.

[355] Perry, "From 'the hot-bed of vice' to the well-ordered Christian home," 588.

[356] Perry, "From 'the hot-bed of vice'," 587.

[357] Raibmon, "Living on Display," 7.

family would also come to reflect a civilized and progressive nation. These large, planned neighbourhood developments planted cultural narratives within the domestic environment, which became an iterative performance of acceptable housing within the city as similar styles of middle-class housing, albeit on a much smaller scale, were repeated, particularly on the west side, as the city's population grew. Over time, the cultural values displayed symbolically in the architecture and landscaping become protected through legal parameters, by-laws, and policies enforced by the municipal government to ensure that residents are adhering to the prescribed cultural norms attached to housing. Historically, people in positions of power resided on the west side of Vancouver in the wealthier neighbourhoods, so the housing norms surrounding them became part of the civic structure.

With early colonial settlement, the counter-narrative was the range of displays of Indigenous life available for public consumption, but as the city grew, older, low-income, and working-class neighbourhoods were used as a counter-narrative to illustrate the city's progression. The single-family dwelling was the symbolic representation of civilizing both the land and its inhabitants. Since most of the neighbourhood of Strathcona was established when settler-colonial ideals dominated the cultural understanding of housing, unpacking the visual symbolism of late-Victorian culture becomes an integral part of understanding why the City of Vancouver was pushing for urban renewal of Strathcona because 43% of the housing stock was older than seventy years, and 45% of the housing was between 51-70 years old.[358] The houses were no longer performing the material culture of the city because, according Harland Bartholomew and Associates, "the older portions [of the city] present a barren, awkward, frontier-like appearance."[359] The use of the term "frontier-like appearance" echoes earlier settler-colonial patterns, which Bartholomew was encouraging the city to move away from. John Atkin suggests that "at the same time the word "blight" entered local planning language as a condition considered to threaten cities all across North America; concurrently, there arose the feeling that Victorian architecture and design were both unfashionable and ugly."[360] While the material performance of housing was shifting away

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[358] "April 15, 1971 Draft #1 of Strathcona Rehabilitation Program," SPOTA Early History, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-4 File 9.

[359] Harland Bartholomew and Associates, *The Appearance of the City*, 1947, 11.

[360] John Atkin, *Strathcona: Vancouver's First Neighbourhood*, 73.

from a British aesthetic, the symbolic performance of housing representing modernity and citizenship heightened in the post-war period.

Second-wave municipal colonialism was an attempt to create uniformity and conformity in the material performance of housing in the city by expecting the existing non-conforming housing stock to disappear and new uniform housing to replace it. The neighbourhood of Strathcona, as I have shown, had the visual markers of becoming "uncivilized," and in order to ensure that it was re-tamed, housing needed to be destroyed and created anew by razing all existing structures and creating a new orderly appearance of modern housing stock.[361] While the City of Vancouver was adopting more modernist styles of architecture in the post-war period, rather than continuing to promote Victorian architectural styles, they were still enacting urban renewal as a way to civilize the landscape through the construction of housing with the expectation that it would promote a civilized society. This pattern of shaping domestic spaces to fit the city's larger urban narrative was not new in the post-war period; it was part of a longer pattern of the removal of existing housing from Stanley Park, Coal Harbour, the Kitsilano waterfront, and along the beach front in English Bay and Sunset Beach in order to allow the city to visually perform its urbanity by showcasing the natural environment. This top-down urban planning narrative gained bureaucratic strength in 1951 with the creation of the Planning Department, which placed greater emphasis on shaping the inner parts of the city's domestic spaces to conform to the larger urban narratives of becoming a modern city using the tools of colonialism, as discussed in Chapter Two. In the same way that Stanger-Ross provides the framework for understanding how municipal colonialism normalizes the use and regulation of land within the urban environment, Raibmon's and Perry's work lays the foundation for the idea that houses are an unexamined symbols of colonialism. If houses are "culture in practice," as Raibmon suggests, then houses cannot be identified as merely structures on the landscape with economic value; their cultural value must also be examined for the ways in which the house normalized who should live within it and how those inhabitants should perform their domesticity, which became increasingly regulated by the state. Rose-Redwood and Glass argue that "regulatory practices can be seen as performative to the extent that

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[361] Rhordri Windsor Liscombe analyzes Vancouver's shifts in planning models and the implementation of modernist design in "A study in Modern(ist) urbanism: planning Vancouver, 1945-65," *Urban History*, 38, 1, (2011): 124-149.

they succeed at bringing into being the very effect that they proclaim."[362] The City's attempts to regulate the performance of housing through the demolition of existing housing stock and the construction of public housing rested on settler-colonial ideas that housing was a way of civilizing.

While there is the dominant narrative that well-kept single-family dwellings represent civilized inhabitants, both Raibmon's and Perry's work suggests that adherence to this performance was neither even nor absolute, because inhabitants used the house to construct cultural and personal meaning. Raibmon's work illustrates how many high-ranking Indigenous individuals adopted colonial domestic culture, such as "shingles, hinged doors, milled lumber, and windows, to display their power and status."[363] Perry's research illustrates how the Tsimshian adopted Victorian style single-family dwellings but used the interior of their homes to reflect their cultural practices and definitions of kinship.[364] Perry's argument is useful for understanding the complexity of the relationships people have with their dwellings and how people use the interior of their homes in ways that are meaningful to them. While the state can prescribe the cultural norms typically attached to houses, the practice of using them has always been fluid and determined by individual dwellers' values and how they adapt the structure to suit the needs of the household and family. As Raibmon suggests, "the notion that outside mimicked inside was less a statement of the status quo that it was a wishful prescription—an interpretation that observers attempted to impose, against the natural grain of the evidence before them."[365]

By promoting rehabilitation of the existing housing stock, Strathcona residents were calling attention to both the culturally constructed notions of acceptable housing and the personal ways in which their dwellings were used. Previously, the City of Vancouver had used bureaucratic means to "tame" the landscape and to shape the urban environment to reflect the values of the "home country," which in turn would cultivate an ideal of family and household that would promote a civilized and progressive country. This became an iterative mindset in the development of urban spaces. SPOTA

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[362] Rueben Rose-Redwood and Michael R. Glass, "Introduction," 2.

[363] Raibmon, "Living on Display," 9.

[364] Perry, " 'from hot-bed of vice'," 604-605.

[365] Raibmon, 7.

exposed the multiplicity of ways of forming family and household and asserted that it had value and a place in the neighbourhood and that their needs should be the starting place in the discussion of housing.

Additionally, promoting the preservation of the existing housing stock drew attention to the fact that there were multiple ideas of a “home country” within a multi-cultural neighbourhood, and that the residents needed to work together to find a common ground to ensure that everyone’s sense of home was preserved. Unlike other areas of the city that had a more uniform housing stock, as well as inhabitants with similar socio-economic and cultural background of inhabitants, Strathcona’s settlement history had a more fluid sense of cultural heritage because of the integration of different cultural groups using the same area over time. As a result, the housing also changed to suit the needs of the inhabitants socially, economically, and culturally. Homes previously owned by the wealthy were vacated as more middle- and working-class families moved in. Some of these larger houses were divided to accommodate two or more families, and some took on boarders in order to meet mortgage payments. A neighbourhood formerly dominated by single-family dwellings changed as small apartments were constructed over stores and small businesses established storefronts within their home or yards. Rooming houses near the industrial areas provided affordable homes for seasonal workers, and as a result the neighbourhood had a higher population of single men compared to other neighbourhoods in the city. Over the decades, housing was designed, modified, and used to suit the needs of the people living in the neighbourhood and did not conform to the main cultural narratives the city was attempting to tell, namely, that neighbourhoods should be homogenous, and there should be a separation between work, leisure, and home. By declaring the Strathcona Rehabilitation Project an experimental area, the City conceded control over the narrative of housing in Strathcona, which required a recognition that the development of housing in other parts of the city had worked to exclude people, often based on class, race, gender, and marital status. However, the ensuing discussions of how to provide rehabilitation grants further complicated the ways in which people were excluded.

Rehabilitation grants debates

While many scholars have examined the connections between property ownership and the structuring of society by race and class,[366] I am interested in the ways in which the colonial narrative placed emphasis on the house as a desirable economic commodity, and then conflated house and home as meaning the same thing, which promoted the notion that ownership of a house and land would provide the feelings of safety, security, and belonging to the country. This established a dynamic in which arriving immigrants sought to own a home in order to ensure they could achieve the feelings of belonging to the country. The performativity of housing has been prescribed by the state as a top-down approach to living in a city, which is regulated by municipal by-laws and further reinforced through cultural norms in that dominant architectural styles, decoration, and landscaping mostly reflected a white, middle-class Anglo-society. Urban renewal undermined this narrative because home ownership status was declared null and void in the face of demolition in order to achieve the City's narrative of what the built form should look like. The City declared that the homeowners were not performing property in a way that was considered acceptable, and as a result should lose their property and were expected to inhabit a dwelling that structurally and aesthetically conformed to the city's larger urban narrative. The City of Vancouver documents consistently describe the Strathcona structures listed for demolition as housing units, dwelling units, or properties.[367] They are not referred to as homes, which would evoke ideas of family, safety, security, and a sense of place. As Tuck and McKenzie argue, "when land is recast as property, place becomes exchangeable, saleable, and steal-able."[368] In second-wave colonialism, the economic productivity of the land, again, was

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[366] David Freund, *Colored Property: state policy and white racial politics in suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Benjamin Looker, *A Nation of Neighbourhoods: Imagining Cities, Communities, and Democracy in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

[367] Leonard C. Marsh, *Rebuilding A Neighbourhood: Report on a Demonstration Slum-Clearance and Urban Rehabilitation Project in a Key Central Area in Vancouver* (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia, 1950); City of Vancouver Redevelopment: Acquisition and Clearance Section 23, National Housing Act Project 1 Prepared by The Technical Planning Board November, 1959; Redevelopment: Acquisition and Clearance Section 23, National Housing Act Project 3, 1962; City Planning Department, Urban Renewal: Proposed Study Under Part V of the National Housing Act. Vancouver: City Planning Department, 1966; City Planning Department, Strathcona Sub-Area Report Urban Renewal Scheme No. 3 Vancouver: City Planning Department, 1968.

[368] Tuck and McKenzie, *Place in Research*, 64.

more important than people's connection to where they are living and how they are using their dwelling. I argue that this language is used purposefully because it creates a separation between people and the impending destruction of the neighbourhood's community and corresponding family histories. In characterizing the neighbourhood as one full of derelict housing units and mixed uses, the City of Vancouver justifies the improvement of the neighbourhood based on aesthetic reasons without getting into the tangled difficulties of discussing who will be relocated.

In this section I want to elaborate on the ways in which the performativity of home ownership has been used to naturalize ideas of citizenship. Home ownership became particularly important for the Chinese community, who had been marginalized with the Chinese Head Tax and were historically limited as to where they could live within the city. With the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1947, many single men were finally able to bring over family members and to create what they perceived as a sense of belonging in the city by purchasing a house for their family to live in. Many Chinese families, like the Chans, purchased in Strathcona to maintain their connection to Chinatown, the Chinese language school, and Benevolent societies without knowing that the neighbourhood was placed in redevelopment status.[369] They felt that expropriation violated their rights as property owners, and as residents who had just gained rights as citizens. In this way the residents were participating in second-wave municipal colonialism.

The residents believed that owning a house was not only a financial investment, but also a means to ensure that they had stability and security within the city and that it provided them with a sense of belonging because of the intertwined nature of home ownership and citizenship. The Birmingham and Wood assessment report revealed "there [was] a high proportion of outright ownership in the area. Among the cases interviewed, over 50% had clear title—about 30% had mortgages of $2,000 at 6% to 7%—the remaining 20% had mortgages of $4,000 to $5,000 at 7.5%"[370] The residents had ascribed to the colonial narrative that ownership of their housing would provide them with feelings of safety and security. They were invested in their property and 80% of the

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[369] Richard Nann, "Relocation of Vancouver's Chinatown Residents under Urban Renewal," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare* Vol 3: Iss 2 (November 1975): 125-130.

[370] Strathcona Sub-Area, Vancouver Scheme 3, urban renewal vol. 3, 6, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S2 Box 583-E-5 File 3.

mortgages held were far less than the value of the house before the neighbourhood was put in redevelopment status.[371] Rehabilitation would allow them to not only preserve their financial investment, but to also ensure that they could maintain their sense of belonging to the neighbourhood, thereby allowing them continued participation in second-wave municipal colonialism.

Qualification process

By bringing in the emotional or affective performances of home, SPOTA was expanding the value of housing to something beyond just an economic commodity. This expansion of value of the house to encompass intangible characteristics did not fit within the existing bureaucratic structures, nor did the City have the means with which to calculate the value of a home for the residents to ensure that they were fairly compensated for it. By allowing people to rehabilitate their housing, it required accepting that the state of housing disrepair was not correlated with the character of the inhabitant, but it was the result of City decisions and structural inequity. While the City of Vancouver had agreed to participate in the SWC, they did not want to provide grants for the residents to improve their housing because of the belief that the inhabitants lacked an understanding of how to perform acceptable domesticity. As Raibmon and Perry show equating the morality of the inhabitant and the display of citizenship with housing and domestic goods began with government officials and missionaries evaluating First Nations adoption of Western-style housing. Mariana Valverde further illustrates how the emphasis on moral and social reform continued into the early twentieth century with her examination of moral panics in English Canada led by church officials.[372] She argues that the regulation of domestic spaces was actually an attempt to regulate race, class, sex, and gender. Joy Parr further elaborates on how these views shaped the consumption of domestic goods in the post-war period.[373] The consumption of Canadian made goods was a way to display one's moral character and good citizenship. In an

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[371] Based on acquisition of houses during Phase I and II, houses in the neighbourhood were purchased by the City for between $5,500-$8,000, though the files indicate that this was $500-$1500 below what they were worth, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, Series 305 Redevelopment files subsequent to the 1957 Vancouver Redevelopment Study, COV-S305 Box 3-F-40.

[372] Marianna Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

[373] Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

interview, Everett Brown, the Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Provincial representative on the SWC, recognized the conflation of housing and citizenship. He stated: “we felt a certain moral obligation because we had damaged that community rather badly by urban renewal [in Phase I and II] and therefore common justice required that we do something to fix it up again.”[374]

Unlike the rehabilitation of the neighbourhood as a whole, where upgrading and repairing the physical aspects of it was easily documented, evaluated, and planned for, determining how the rehabilitation funds should be distributed to help individual homeowners was a slow and lengthy process. SPOTA again asked Birmingham and Wood to help them develop a framework for how grants or loans could be distributed to residents in a fair and equitable way. The Birmingham and Wood report revealed that many people did not do smaller maintenance projects because they feared that their house would be demolished.[375] These relatively small repairs added up over time and became more costly and time-consuming to undertake. While SPOTA pushed for the neighbourhood to be rehabilitated as a whole, rather than on a block-by-block basis, Birmingham and Wood asserted that the residents should have choice and agency over if, when, and how they rehabilitated their individual dwellings, because home is both personal and individual.[376] Each family and household had different rehabilitation needs. “SPOTA supported a universal grant to residents because together they had suffered through decades of sub-standard municipal services, years of the development freeze and threat of demolition; together they had collectively fought off urban renewal and the bulldozer; then together they ought to benefit from a rehabilitation program.”[377] The initial proposed grant was $5000 per household; this number “was developed to compensate for the thirteen years of government indecision as to the future of the area which resulted in deferred and delayed maintenance. The $5,000 figure was established by averaging

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[374] Strathcona Sub-Area, Vancouver Scheme 3, urban renewal vol. 3, 26, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S2 Box 583-E-5 File 3.

[375] Strathcona Area Rehabilitation Project "Interim Report" May 24, 1970 (Birmingham and Wood), CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-D-3 File 9.

[376] Birmingham and Wood, “Rehabilitation Through Co-operation in Strathcona,” 124, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, PAM 1970-83.

[377] Questions and Answers or An Analysis of The Strathcona Rehabilitation Project's Planning Process Submitted to CMHC from SPOTA September 1973, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S2 Box 583-E-7 File 4.

the normal maintenance on a home in the area and the average income of the area."[378] The Birmingham and Wood Report suggested that in addition to the $5,000 grant that the residents should qualify for an additional low-interest loan of up to $5,000 to ensure that all the required repairs could be completed.[379] This sum recognized that each house had economic value to the homeowner. Since they advocated for the preservation of housing within Strathcona, "SPOTA felt that rehabilitation assistance based on means would be unjust, unfair and encourage divisivness [sic], suspicion and jealousy within the community."[380] They understood that there were wide-ranging factors that contributed to the state of housing disrepair, and that by providing all households the same amount, regardless of income, would be the fairest way of distributing the rehabilitation funds:

> For example, a household even though in relatively good condition owned by a senior citizen with a low income but having accumulated moderate savings, would probably qualify for the maximum rehabilitation assistance. In contrast, a person with a large family, living in a house in poor condition, with little or no savings, and who after many years of industriousness finally was receiving a moderate income, would be eligible for little or no rehabilitation assistance, even though he was a long-time resident in the area and had contributed greatly to the community effort to stop urban renewal in favour of rehabilitation.[381]

While SPOTA continued to advocate for equal rehabilitation funding amounts, the Board of Administration continued to advise City Council against agreeing to the formula proposed by Birmingham and Wood. At the same time SPOTA was trying to ensure rehabilitation grants would be available to individuals, their energies were further divided as they attempted to mobilize to block the freeway construction through their neighbourhood, as discussed in Chapter Four. On January 12, 1971, the Board of Administration issued their detailed annotation of the Birmingham and Wood Report to the Planning and Development Committee and City Council, stating that the two-block

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[378] Strathcona Sub-Area, Vancouver Scheme 3, urban renewal vol. 3, 2, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S2 Box 583-E-5 File 3.

[379] Board of Administration Response to Birmingham and Wood report, 4 SPOTA Early History, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-4 File 4.

[380] "Questions and Answers or An Analysis of The Strathcona Rehabilitation Project's Planning Process" Submitted to CMHC from SPOTA September 1973, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-7 File 4.

[381] Questions and Answers or An Analysis of The Strathcona Rehabilitation Project's Planning Process, Submitted to CMHC from SPOTA September 1973, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S2 Box 583-E-7 File 4.

study was not reflective of the neighbourhood as a whole, and that the emphasis of the report focused too much on the social aspects of the neighbourhood and not enough on the structural costs of rehabilitation. [382] Their response reaffirmed the irrelevance of the emotional and affective performances of home in Strathcona. Furthermore, the Board's response to the report argued that loans or grants could not be given for rehabilitation because the "City has no legal authority to participate in loans to individuals"[383] SPOTA was invited to present their views on February 4th, 1971, at City Hall. Harry Con felt that the location made it difficult for residents to get there, and he proposed the Pender Street YWCA as an alternative location to make it more accessible for residents to attend; however, the meeting remained at City Hall further reinforcing the top-down performance of municipal power, and also violating the guiding principle that meetings would take place in the neighbourhood. At this meeting, Harry Con continues to advocate for the residents by stating:

> We the residents, want action now. We have been patient and cooperative throughout the study. We have begun renovating on our own to the extent that we could afford…We want to improve our community. But to proceed, we need your assistance and your continued support. You cannot fail us at this crucial stage. We ask you to give your staff and the senior governments' the leadership they require to implement this programme…To this we would like to suggest that City Council arrange a meeting in Strathcona Area, with the Citizens and the Federal abd [sic] Provincial Ministers responsible for housing to proceed with the rehabilitation project in our area as soon as possible.[384]

After months of back-and-forth negotiation, SPOTA's desire to ensure all residents had equal access to funding was leaked to the press. Once news of how the rehabilitation funds were being used became more widely known in articles in both *The Province* and *The Vancouver Sun* newspapers, letters of complaint started to be sent to City Council as well as to the Strathcona Rehabilitation Committee office.[385] These letters reflected the dominant view that the residents were not deserving of grants and lacked a context for how the City of Vancouver had enacted zoning changes and bylaws

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[382] SPOTA Early History, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-3 Files 2 and 3.

[383] SPOTA Early History, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-3 Files 2 and 3.

[384] SPOTA Early History, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-3 Files 2 and 3.

[385] "City Council and Province disagree on grant plan," *The Province* March 24,1971. "Andras Clarifies Problem: Strathcona's $2.5 million confirmed" *The Vancouver Sun* 25 March 25, 1971.

to marginalize the homeowners in Strathcona. One letter stated: “it is apparent that if a citizen of this country wants special dispensation from his government, he should allow his home to become a run-down and dilapidated eye-sore in the community, keep all his money in the bank or under the mattress, and cry poverty.”[386] The letter-writer argued that low-interest loans would be more appropriate, and saw grants as charity for a particular group of residents, when it is clear that there are people outside of Strathcona who could also qualify. Another letter echoed the same sentiment that low-interest mortgages should be available to all rather than grants because the writer knows “from personal experience that there are some property owners living in this area that have other real estate holdings and are in a far better financial position than some of those paying the subsidy.”[387] He goes on to state he wishes “to register [his] most vehement objection to giving grants to property owners in the Strathcona Area of Vancouver.”[388]

Frustrated by the City of Vancouver stalling on deciding regarding issuing grants, provincial representative Dan Campbell stated that the Strathcona Working Committee had until April 30, 1971, to finalize the rehabilitation plan, or the provincial funds would be withdrawn. Robert Andras supported the province’s ultimatum, and he insisted that work had to begin by July 1, 1971. SPOTA recognized they had to compromise because the City was firm in their conservative position. In order to come to some agreement, the SWC held lengthy negotiation meetings over the weekends of April 6-7 and April 22-23, 1971. “SPOTA finally chose to sign the compromised recommendations thus agreeing to what they considered an inadequate program rather than no program.”[389] SPOTA settled on a maximum $3000 grant/loan formula based on an income qualification of making $10,000/year or less rather than the $5000 universal grant that they had initially proposed. The federal and provincial portions of funding were considered a grant, and the city portion was a loan; residents had three years to pay

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[386] “Mr. John Seahuber Burnaby—letter of complaint dated March 27, 1971,” Strathcona Sub-Area, Vancouver Scheme 3, urban renewal, vol.5, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S2 Box 583-E-5 File 5.

[387] “Mr. W. A. Ferguson, Burnaby—letter of complaint dated March 25, 1971,” Strathcona Sub-Area, Vancouver Scheme 3, urban renewal, vol.5, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S2 Box 583-E-5 File 5.

[388] “Mr. W. A. Ferguson, Burnaby—letter of complaint dated March 25, 1971,” Strathcona Sub-Area, Vancouver Scheme 3, urban renewal, vol.5, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S2 Box 583-E-5 File 5.

[389] Questions and Answers or An Analysis of The Strathcona Rehabilitation Project's Planning Process, 34, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-7 File 4.

back the city portion, and the rest would be forgiven. "The working committee members agreed…all residents who resided in the area prior to March 1, 1971, would be eligible for the rehabilitation programme. Further the individual must remain in residence for three years after completion of the rehabilitation work or repay the grant/loan."[390] This restriction was put in place to ensure that land speculators could not buy up properties in the hopes of getting access to grant-loans with a view to improving the dwelling as a prelude to quickly selling the property at a profit once the neighbourhood started to become rehabilitated.

The early discussions of who should get grants focused on homeowners because they were deemed to be the ones most invested in the neighbourhood. However, SPOTA recognized that the narrative of home ownership excluded tenants, who were equally involved in organizing and supporting the preservation of Strathcona as home. By including tenants as equal members in decision-making, SPOTA framed the rehabilitation of housing from the perspective of belonging and not purely from the perspective of economic means. Absentee landlords of single-family dwellings were eligible for grant-loans to improve their rental properties within the neighbourhood because SPOTA recognized that many tenants had been active in supporting rehabilitation, and they wanted their dwellings to be improved. Landlords of apartment buildings or smaller multiple suite units could receive up to $1000/unit and did not have any income restrictions.[391] However, SPOTA stipulated that the residents should not experience any undue hardship or rent increases for a three year period after the work had been completed to ensure that people continued to have a sense of home within their community, and they were not pushed out after rehabilitation.[392] Residents could also receive a retroactive grant for work started on April 1, 1970 or later to support the residents who had already begun rehabilitating their property. In this manner, the Strathcona Working Committee met the April 30, 1971, deadline by resolving the terms of the grant-loans.

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390 Questions and Answers or An Analysis of The Strathcona Rehabilitation Project's Planning Process, 43, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734 -S4 Box 583-E-7 File 4.

391 SPOTA Early History April 1971 to July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-4 File 9.

392 SPOTA Early History April 1971 to July 1971, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-4 File 9.

The SWC changed its name to the Strathcona Rehabilitation Committee (SRC) in order to reflect the commitment to rehabilitation. In May 1971, two further additions were made to the rehabilitation plan. Harry Con advocated that "apartments and conversions should be treated the same as single family dwellings."[393] This would provide landlords the opportunity to apply for grants to improve their rental accommodations, thereby further protecting tenants in the neighbourhood from living in poor housing. Moreover, there was an additional clause to also protect renters in apartments for three years from rental increases as a result of the improvements. Lastly, the SRC settled on the definition of rehabilitation in a full day meeting on May 29, 1971. Rehabilitation was defined as:

> (1) Renovation and repair to existing residential buildings
>
> (2) demolition of sub-standard sheds, garages, fences and similar structures
>
> (3) The demolition and reconstruction of a sub-standard residential building as determined by the Committee
>
> (4) Extensions that are necessary to bring a residential building to the minimum space standards of the National Building Code.[394]

Federal funding was assured because the SRC had met Andras' stipulation that the terms of the agreement be settled by July 1, 1971.

Home as Identity

The grants allowed the residents to work within the post-war domestic culture narratives. By providing funding to improve the exterior of their homes, residents were able to maintain the long-standing colonial narratives of acceptable domesticity as they restored their houses to reflect a tidy, well-kept society, and the interior improvements further supported the rise in domestic culture as a reflection of citizenship. At the same time, allowing residents to access grants in order to shape their performance of home in ways that were meaningful to them becomes a strong counter narrative to the second-wave municipal colonialism that the City sought to enact with the construction of public

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[393] Strathcona Sub-Area, Vancouver Scheme 3, urban renewal, vol. 5, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S2 Box 583-E-5 File 5.

[394] SPOTA Early History, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-3 Files 2 and 3.

housing. Joanna Richardson argues that the performance of home is essential in the creation and recreation of one's "identity and place in the world."[395] It is the recognition and preservation of individual agency and choice that highlights the transgressive nature of rehabilitation funding because it allowed individuals to maintain their sense of place within the neighbourhood in ways that were meaningful to them.

In order to support people getting their grants/loans, the Strathcona Rehabilitation Project (SRP) set up an office within the neighbourhood. "The project office was located in a two-storey house situated conveniently within the project area [at 636 Hawks Avenue]. Used furniture was chosen in a deliberate attempt to provide an informal, comfortable, domestic atmosphere."[396] This choice for the rehabilitation centre is significant in two ways. First, the location of the project office within the neighbourhood disrupts the colonial form of decision-making, which had occurred at a distance from the location to be developed. In this case rather than planning decisions and grant applications going through City Hall, decisions happened *in situ* with planners, city engineers, and a project manager working within the rehabilitation site. Second, the use of a house rather than a commercial or civic space disrupts the visual symbolism of SPOTA's power and decision-making practice was centred in the home. The decorating of the house was intentional to ensure that people felt welcomed and could ask for help without feeling intimidated. The filing cabinets, along with other office equipment, were kept on the second floor so as not to disrupt the main floor domestic atmosphere where people could meet and share their wishes and dreams for how the grant could transform their living spaces. The SRP ensured that a translator was available to support residents to understand how they could use the grant and the stipulations of the repayment of the loan portion. Residents from the neighbourhood also volunteered their time to support grant applications or to answer other questions, and the site office was open until 8pm several nights a week to ensure that people could be accommodated after work hours. SPOTA continued to reinforce the idea that meaningful change would happen by gathering in each other's homes to discuss and build relationships with each other by also renting another house at 820 Jackson Street to hold their meetings in and to be a

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[395] Joanna Richardson, *Place and Identity: The Performance of Home* (London: Routledge, 2018), 5.

[396] The Strathcona Rehabilitation Project Document and Analysis, 24, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, City Clerk's report files, COV-S-40 Box 120-G-01 File 92.

destination for people to share their concerns and ideas for the neighbourhood. Both of these houses visually reinforced the importance of home for the residents and the idea that change needed to happen from the bottom-up with decisions being made in the area that would be affected by them.

The SRP grant approval process guided applicants through the rehabilitation to ensure that residents were making informed choices in how to fix their homes without losing their individual agency and autonomy over the process. The project office compiled a list of general contractors, carpenters, foundation specialists, stucco and plasterers, painters, window installers, plumbers, electricians, roofers, and heating companies. These companies had been vetted by the Better Business Bureau, and they understood the nature of the rehabilitation grants within the neighbourhood. This allowed residents to solicit quotes for work to be done without needing to find the companies to bid on the jobs. Since the labourers had an established relationship with the SRP, residents knew that should the work not be completed as requested, or there were issues with payments, that the SRP would act as an intermediary on their behalf. The first 110 applications came in within a few days of the SRP opening acceptance of them.[397] By May 1972, the SRP had 157 applications from the 530 structures within the neighbourhood, of which only 28 had been approved.[398] The bureaucratic structures for evaluating the applications, and the approval processes were time-consuming because each application needed to be evaluated individually. In many cases it took months to get approval because the City wanted detailed income records, mortgage records, land title searches, and other supporting justification to ensure that applicants were not applying for grants or loans fraudulently. The time spent on gathering, collating, and evaluating the documents is an example of the bureaucratic processes embedded in second-wave municipal colonialism. SPOTA had advocated for a much simpler approval process of a $5000 grant regardless of income, which placed a greater trust in people's ability to improve their dwelling as they saw fit. Many homeowners had a long list of repairs they wanted completed, and many had to decide on their priorities once the estimates came in. Some residents had savings or family support to undertake further repairs beyond what they were approved for based on their income. By May 1972, in order to streamline the process of getting grants to homeowners more efficiently, Jim

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[397] Moira Farrow, "Old houses torn apart—and rebuilt," *The Vancouver Sun* May 27 1972.

[398] Moira Farrow, "Old houses torn apart—and rebuilt," *The Vancouver Sun* May 27, 1972.

Lowden, the SRP manager, suggested that people get approved for the maximum amount that they were eligible for to ensure that if there were cost overruns that they were able to cope with the increase or that if they decided to do more work that they did not need to reapply for a further amount.[399] The SRP recognized that the bureaucratic processes were slowing down the approval process, and they wanted to ensure that people would be able to qualify for the grants by the deadline of December 31, 1973.

As more people applied for grants, the SRP collected more information about the owner and how they were using their grant monies in order to provide a more detailed report once the experimental project was completed. The *Vancouver Sun* also featured a detailed story on the rehabilitation grants and what one couple was able to use them for.

[399] "Letter from SRP to Planning Department May 8, 1972," Strathcona Rehabilitation Project: grants, loans and applications, 1972, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734 Box 583-D-3 File 7.

Figure 5.1. Rehabilitation in Action
Source: Moira Farrow, "Old houses torn apart—and rebuilt," *The Vancouver Sun* 27 May 1972.

For Wong Young, a pensioner, and Yee Shee, his wife, the rehabilitation grant enabled them to replace the roof on their small turquoise one-bedroom bungalow at 833 Keefer Street. Wong came to Vancouver from China in 1920, and worked as a kitchen helper, and his wife "had a job peeling shrimps in a fish packing plant on the Vancouver waterfront."[400] Wong spoke some English, but his wife spoke none; the support in accessing the grant, translating their needs and wishes for how they wanted to utilize the funds, and the financial support for housing improvements created a more equitable housing environment for a couple who had been marginalized socio-economically for decades. In addition to their new roof, they were able to install "a new gas furnace to

[400] Moira Farrow, "Old houses torn apart—and rebuilt," *The Vancouver Sun* May 27, 1972.

replace an old oil stove which was the only source of heat."[401] Their bathroom flooring was replaced as well as their tub, but the sink and toilet were deemed still functional, and replacing the hot water tank and painting the interior was prioritized to maximize the $3000 grant. As a result of the rehabilitation grant, they were able to comfortably stay in their house, maintain their social community, and continue to grow vegetables in their back garden—all of which would have been lost if they had been forced into a low-income public housing high-rise unit.

While the City of Vancouver declared the majority of the housing stock in Strathcona in need of demolition in 1957 due to the age of the housing and its structural decay, half of the homeowners who qualified for grants undertook exterior repairs to remediate decay and structural issues. Many of the houses had smaller general maintenance repairs which had been neglected over the past decade; these included painting the exterior, adding new stucco or siding, replacing downspouts and gutters, and repairing roofing. Some of the owners replaced windows and exterior doors with aluminum ones, which were costly improvements, but would not require continued maintenance and replacement in the way wood ones would. Other homes had more significant exterior repairs to foundations, drain tile, porches, and other structural issues resulting from the natural slump of houses over time.[402] Several homeowners had drainage issues repaired; however, there were disputes as to whether the owner should be responsible for making these repairs because the City had neglected the bulkheads, which had caused water seepage in lots below the street grade.[403] While the residents were repairing the visible portions of their houses to conform to the larger cultural narratives of acceptable domesticity, they were also challenging the notion that houses had a life expectancy and that demolition was the only solution to decay.

Half of the grants were for improvements to the interior of houses. This I would argue significantly disrupted the settler-colonial view of housing because homeowners were using government funding to improve the interior of their homes in ways that were meaningful to them and not visible to others. These improvements added to both the

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[401] Moira Farrow, "Old houses torn apart—and rebuilt," *The Vancouver Sun* May 27, 1972.

[402] Strathcona Rehabilitation Claim April 20, 1972-December 1974, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, COV S305 Box 100-G-7 File 19.

[403] Strathcona Rehabilitation Claim April 20, 1972-December 1974, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, COV S305 Box 100-G-7 File 19.

value, the functionality, and the enjoyment of the home. Owners received financial support to make major improvements to their homes by replacing the plumbing and upgrading the wiring as some of the residences were nearing seventy years old. Other owners converted their coal and wood heating sources to electrical heat and installed furnaces and new hot water tanks. Several families replaced their appliances, and others replaced their kitchen and bathroom tile, put in new kitchen cupboards, and installed new flooring throughout.[404] Several homes had dirt basements and crawl spaces, so many owners used their grants to seal and cement these areas of their homes.[405] For families with more than two children or who had extended family members living with them, the grants provided the means to convert basements or other areas of the house into extra bedrooms. These interior improvements reinforced the idea that home is defined by individual families and households.

Landlords were also eligible to receive grants to improve the units in their building, or to do further maintenance. By ensuring that landlords could get access to grants, SPOTA protected the tenants' sense of home and their need for safe, secure, and affordable housing. Some landlords of single-family dwellings did qualify to receive a grant, and improved their rental properties; however, "absentee landlords, particularly those with multiple [suites] and apartment properties, expressed very little interest in the program."[406] This posed a challenge to SPOTA because they had advocated that no one be forced to rehabilitate their property, but also recognized that by not improving the rental housing continued to marginalize tenants and had the potential to maintain the run-down appearance of the neighbourhood.

In order to ensure all buildings in the neighbourhood were able to be rehabilitated the SRP successfully submitted revised qualification criteria for grants by providing four additional cases that should qualify for housing rehabilitation funding. This change recognized the needs of those who had lost their sense of home through expropriation, those who were tenants, and those who lived in other forms of housing other than

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[404] Strathcona Rehabilitation Claim April 20, 1972-December 1974, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, COV S305 Box 100-G-7 File 19.

[405] Strathcona Rehabilitation Claim April 20, 1972-December 1974, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, COV S305 Box 100-G-7 File 19.

[406] The Strathcona Rehabilitation Project Document and Analysis, 24, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, City Clerk's report files, COV-S-40 Box 120-G-01 File 92.

apartments and single-family dwellings. In Case 1, they wanted to ensure former residents of the Strathcona project area, who had lost their housing through expropriation, could access rehabilitation funding as partial financial compensation. SPOTA estimated that around 200 people would qualify based on the funding parameters. Case 2 supported resident tenants in the project area who had purchased homes after April 1, 1971. SPOTA anticipated few people would qualify under this measure, but it would ensure that new homeowners who had supported the rehabilitation of Strathcona would be able to secure funding, whereas those who had made a timely purchase after the rehabilitation project had been approved would not get access. Case 3 recognized that there were fifteen properties in the neighbourhood—nine were owned by the Roman Catholic Church and six were owned by Chinese family organizations to house elderly men at minimal rent—that provided stable and secure housing for people who might not be able to otherwise afford it. The SRP argued that these properties should have the owner's income waived as part of the grant application process because they offered a valuable service to the community by providing housing that is minimal to non-profit, and that as charitable organizations they should be eligible to receive funding to undertake needed exterior or interior repairs. Case 4 argued that rooming houses should be included in the rehabilitation program in the same way apartments were considered eligible for rehabilitation. There were fifteen rooming houses within the rehabilitation area, which provided housing for approximately 367 residents. The SRP advocated that residents should be eligible for $300/suite to undertake interior repairs or decorations to make their dwelling feel more like a home.[407] These changes to the granting guidelines further reinforced the recognition that the goal of neighbourhood rehabilitation was to strengthen a sense of home, which was not de facto attached to living in a single-family dwelling, as the dominant post-war cultural narratives kept implying. SPOTA recognized that their neighbourhood provided a sense of home for a large population of elderly single men, many of whom were living on a fixed income, and who did not have the financial means to improve their home environment.

Few of the SPOTA Executive qualified for homeowner grants to rehabilitate their own houses. Their activism and energy helped preserve their neighbourhood as home

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[407] Strathcona Rehabilitation Project: grants, loans and applications, 1972 CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-D-3 File 7.

but did not result in personal gain as most did not qualify based on the income restrictions. One exception was Tom Mesic, who was active on the Executive for years, and who volunteered his time on the housing committee. He owned two houses in Strathcona and qualified for $2634 grants for each house.[408] He was able to put concrete in the basement and replace the drain tiles, insulate the attic and basement walls, paint the exterior, replace the roof, repair the porch, and put in new floor coverings in both houses. One of his houses, at 636 Hawks Street, he rented out to the SRP for the rehabilitation grant office.

In total, only 233 houses were improved using the grants; this totaled approximately $850,000 of the total $2 million set aside for housing rehabilitation.[409] Some of the homeowners were able to rehabilitate their property using their own means, but the income cap of $10,000 excluded many homeowners from participating in getting access to funding, and many landlords chose not to participate in improving their rental accommodations. SPOTA pushed to try to get the terms of the grants changed to open up access to more homeowners before the December 31, 1973 deadline. SPOTA remained steadfast in their desire to ensure that the money set aside to improve the existing housing stock be used for the intended purpose, but the City of Vancouver incurred nearly half a million of cost overruns with the rehabilitation of sewers, sidewalks, street-lighting, paving, and other structural improvements, which ended up being covered by the housing grant surplus.[410]

Conclusion

Rehabilitation in Strathcona required challenging the notion that houses in the neighbourhood were not beyond repair or that housing had a natural life expectancy. From a top-down perspective, experts had justified the demolition of the neighbourhood by classifying individual dwellings from very good to very poor in a windshield survey done in 1957 by the Planning Department. Furthermore, houses had fallen into greater disrepair since the City of Vancouver had placed the neighbourhood in redevelopment

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[408] Strathcona Rehabilitation Claims 1-36 April 20, 1972-December 1974, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, COV S305 Box 100-G-7 File 16.

[409] SPOTA Newsletters, 1972-1976, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-F-2 File 2.

[410] SPOTA Newsletters, 1972-1976, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-F-2 File 2.

status, which made it nearly impossible to get building permits to do further repairs or improvements, and residents were reticent to invest in additional improvements as they watched surrounding blocks get demolished. By wanting to rehabilitate their houses, the residents were also asserting a desire to remain in the neighbourhood over the course of their life. This reveals that the house is more than an economic commodity, and that providing grants and loans for improvements was a recognition that people had different ways and needs to make the house into a home that was meaningful for them, and that they wanted to raise their families in that dwelling in particular. After more than a decade of housing insecurity, and with the support of the federal and provincial governments, SPOTA was able to ensure that housing within Strathcona was rehabilitated rather than demolished. As a result of the restrictive income requirements, however, fewer people were able to qualify for the grants than SPOTA had initially proposed, though some of the homeowners were able to pay for improvements themselves to ensure that their dwelling maintained its economic value by matching the improvements in surrounding housing stock and in the structural elements of the neighbourhood. While some of the SPOTA Executive expressed disappointment that the final rehabilitation plan did not achieve the goals they had set out to achieve, they did succeed in changing national policy in order to facilitate grants for rehabilitation rather than cities receiving money for demolition.[411] They successfully centred residents' voices as the ones who should be guiding urban growth and development.

SPOTA's modest successes in rehabilitating housing stock in their neighbourhood coincided with several significant changes at the municipal level. In 1968, a new municipal political party started to make inroads into the city council. The Electors' Action Movement (TEAM) focused on citizens having an active role in politics in order to foster significant change in the city. In 1972, TEAM successfully came to power; one of the members was Mike Harcourt, who had been involved in the early organizing of SPOTA. The end of the NPA's decades-long pro-development civic policies opened up a brief era in Vancouver's urban development which recognized citizens as having an essential role in guiding its growth.

[411] An Overview of the Strathcona Experience with Urban Renewal by a Participant, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-C-03 File 2.

According to Will Langford, one of "the TEAM-led council's first actions was to encourage Sutton Brown to leave his position."[412] As the chair of the Board of Administration, Sutton Brown had dominated civic decision-making for two decades, and his departure marked the beginning of fostering more citizen engagement in guiding urban development. Rather than long-range planning, like Sutton Brown's 20-year plans, TEAM "looked to improve the quality of life in the city on a smaller scale in ways that benefitted the middle class."[413] TEAM recognized the value of residents' expertise in how the neighbourhood they were living in functioned, how growth should happen and how it would impact the current dwellers. SPOTA's successful social and structural rehabilitation plan of their neighbourhood became a framework for how governments and residents could work together. This change in municipal leadership and decision-making was further supported by the federal and provincial governments, who also recognized the success of citizens guiding rehabilitation. This disrupted the notion that urban development could and should occur from the top-down. Recognition of and support for bottom-up planning led to several new federal initiatives to support residents getting access to federal funding to improve their neighbourhood as well as their individual dwellings. In June 1973, Local Area Planning (LAP) programs were implemented across the city in the 22 neighbourhoods, whose boundaries were defined in 1964 by United Community Services, and "were to be an attempt to work with all the variables that affect the quality and effectiveness of an individual neighbourhood's environment in both the physical and social sense."[414] LAP initiatives focused on improving housing in neighbourhoods by pushing for more affordable housing, and the inclusion of subsidized housing within the ordinary market housing rather than creating separate high density social housing. Housing was at the forefront of neighbourhood discussions across the city during the 1970s, with concerned citizens calling greater attention to the importance of rehabilitation over redevelopment, and the need for tougher by-laws to ensure that housing was not "bought, deteriorated, then sold for development."[415] Furthermore, there was a push for tenants to "be involved in total

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[412] Will Langford, "Is Sutton Brown God?," 37.

[413] Langford, 38.

[414] Public Response to a Review of Local Area Planning, September 1978, CVA, City Planning Department, PD 2296.

[415] Public Response to a Review of Local Area Planning, September 1978, CVA, City Planning Department, PD 2296.

community planning" and for "family housing [to] be planned for in every community."[416] This short-lived program provided other citizen groups an opportunity to express their concerns and become actively involved in improving the housing in their neighbourhood to ensure that their performance of home continued to reflect the needs of their family and household.

In addition to LAP, the federal government also initiated the Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP), which allowed a group of residents to apply for funding to make small changes to their neighbourhood.[417] The federal government provided the funding for the improvements and the municipal departments undertook the required work. This allowed for neighbourhoods to get small grants to put in, for example, pedestrian controlled walk lights, or more park benches. In order to offer more financial support to improve housing stock, the federally funded Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) provided "grants and loans for home repair to homeowners and landlords" in areas of the City that had active Neighbourhood Improvement Programs to ensure that dwellings and the neighbourhood could be developed in tandem with each other.[418]

SPOTA's successful organization challenged the colonial progress narrative by emphasizing the value of community connection and cultivating a sense of home within the neighbourhood, and by preserving and improving existing housing stock to reflect the needs of the people living there. Yet, as the housing stock started to improve, SPOTA started to push the city to enforce by-laws regarding untidy yards and non-conforming uses of space in fourteen deteriorating properties, which indicates how deeply internalized the colonial cultural norms were surrounding the performance of domestic space. However, this insistence of expecting housing to conform appeared to contradict SPOTA's aim that no one would be forced into rehabilitating their dwellings. As Gregson and Rose suggest, "since performances of subject positions are iterative, slippage is

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[416] Public Response to a Review of Local Area Planning, September 1978, CVA, City Planning Department, PD 2296.

[417] This was in place from 1973-1978.

[418] Grandview—Woodlands Area Policy Plan Part 1 Grandview-Victoria, 2, CVA, COV S62 88-G-4 File 3.

always possible, and…this applies too to the spaces produced through them."[419] I argue that while SPOTA was able to successfully push against a top-down urban performance of housing that rested on demolition in order to create a new iteration of domesticity that reflected a cosmopolitan city, with immigrant families maintaining through a parallel performativity of home ties to their respective home countries, the existing norms around these non-conforming and derelict spaces represented a slippage in SPOTA's transgressive performance. While SPOTA suggested that four of the properties could be improved with the enforcement of city by-laws, ten would need to be purchased in order demolish them to make something else.[420] In such cases, they identified the owner, photographed the offending site, and described how the lot and structures did not conform to their view of the neighbourhood. SPOTA further outlined estimated costs to purchase the derelict houses and either demolish them or redevelop them into more habitable spaces. While they advocated for resident choice as to whether or not they wanted to rehabilitate, and wished to ensure that the neighbourhood's eclectic housing styles were allowed to remain, these examples show that there was difficulty in allowing some forms of non-conforming housing use to remain within the predominantly domestic space that was expected to reflect a household and family, and not junk heaps in yards, or give the appearance of being abandoned. As the neighbourhood started to improve, SPOTA began to explore other options to provide access to housing for low-income residents on the city-owned lots. Chapter Six discusses the formation of the Strathcona Area Housing Society (SAHS), a not-for-profit housing development corporation, and their construction of five phases of new low-income housing that continued to challenge the colonial housing narratives by providing different ways of using lots within the neighbourhood to ensure that residents continued to feel a sense of home. This chapter read in parallel with Chapter Six reveals another palimpsest layer in understanding the complexity of providing a sense of home for individual households and families.

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[419] Nicky Gregson and Gillian Rose "Taking Butler Elsewhere" in Michael R. Glass and Reuben Rose-Redwood, eds., *Performativity, Politics, and the Production of Social Space* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2014) https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203094587.

[420] Urban Renewal Strathcona-General Sept 1973-Dec 1973, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, COV S648 Box 854-A-5 File 2.

Chapter 6.

Building new homes in the neighbourhood

> *"Mau Dan has plain, clean lines. Steep mocha coloured stucco walls wrap around private courtyards. A maze of sidewalks and stairwells is lined with bamboo. Balconies abound. Windows are multiple-choice, long and thing, squat and curved, angled and jutting."*[421]

Fred Soon immigrated to Canada in 1921 in his early teens and lived with his father in community houses along Keefer and Pender, where they shared a kitchen with other single men working in a range of manual labour jobs.[422] While he had aspirations to finish high school, and then go onto trade school, Soon's father discouraged him from further education due to the lack of career options for Chinese immigrants. Soon worked a variety of jobs to make ends meet and saved his limited income. He purchased a house at 626 East Pender Street in Strathcona to live in with his wife and was able to walk to his work at the post office downtown. As a Chinese immigrant to Vancouver, it was important to Soon to live close to Chinatown and to volunteer at the various Chinese associations nearby. By purchasing his own home, he had created a vision of his future that ensured a sense of economic and social stability, and he was willingly participating in, but also complicating the colonial narrative of property ownership as a racialized minority because it gave him security as a Canadian citizen. Soon had clear title to his house before his retirement and was planning to remain in the neighbourhood and to continue volunteering within the community.[423] In September 1965, Soon received a letter that said his house would be expropriated and demolished as part of Phase II construction for more public housing within Strathcona. Soon wrote a letter to City Council pleading his case; losing his home would require taking on a new mortgage close to retirement, as housing elsewhere in the city was more expensive than what was offered by the city to purchase his property. Some of his neighbours sold their homes to the city, but many wanted to stay. By February 1966, Soon moved out of his house on East Pender and purchased a new home at 1328 East 37th Avenue because his wife

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[421] Shelly Fralic, "Hopeful Housing," *The Vancouver Sun*, April, 01, 1982.

[422] Marlatt and Itter, *Opening Doors*, 147.

[423] Fred Soon, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-D-2 File 9.

was becoming increasingly distressed with the state of their housing insecurity. As a result of moving, Soon experienced "social alienation," financial strain from moving to a more expensive house, and increased costs, such as transportation to get to work.[424]

By August 1967, the City of Vancouver had demolished his home on East Pender Street without notifying Soon or compensating him for his house. Soon hired a lawyer to fight for his rights because he understood that the property was legally his, as he did not sell it or sign off on it to the City; therefore, the City had no right to order its demolition. Soon's lawyer, however, did not argue on his behalf, and Fred Soon was not given notice to appear in court to plead his case. The amount of $6600, which was considered the value of the house, was put "in Trust" to the lawyer and not given to Soon.[425] This amount did not reflect the value of the house as a piece of property, nor did it reflect the value of the house as a home providing a sense of security and belonging as well as reflecting Soon's dreams and wishes for the future. Soon tirelessly wrote letters to Council, and the Planning department, as well as other elected officials that he thought would be sympathetic to his case. The expropriation of his individual dwelling had precipitated three related losses: the loss of his house as an economic commodity, the loss of his personal sense of home, and the loss of home as belonging to a neighbourhood. Despite no longer living in the neighbourhood, Fred Soon maintained close ties with the Chinese Associations and his former neighbours in Strathcona. He went with Shirley Chan and others to meet with Paul Hellyer on November 7, 1968, at Skeena Terrace, and told his story of loss. By December 1968, Fred Soon joined 500 concerned residents who formed the Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association (SPOTA) and continued to volunteer his time on the SPOTA Executive to ensure that housing within the neighbourhood would be preserved. Soon hoped that he would be able to get compensated for the loss of his house and would be able to get access to new housing to move back to Strathcona—the neighbourhood that he had always considered home.

I open this chapter by going back to the pre-history of SPOTA in order to set up its focus on an important new juncture in its evolution as an advocacy organization for the residents of Strathcona. More specifically, this chapter provides an illustration of how

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[424] Fred Soon, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-D-2 File 9.

[425] Fred Soon, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-D-2 File 9.

SPOTA, by forming the Strathcona Area Housing Society (SAHS)—a not-for-profit housing association—sought to ensure that new construction in their neighbourhood reflected the needs and desires of the low-income residents who had been pushed out by expropriation or who wanted to live close to Chinatown and downtown. The goal of the housing committee was to ensure that any new development within the neighbourhood would not displace anyone, but instead would ensure that people retained their sense of belonging within the community. I continue to build on Bowlby's concept of the domestic in relation to household and family as established in Chapter Five by illustrating how the narrow definition of family within bureaucratic structures makes it difficult for people to provide a sense of home that accounts for and accommodates (quite literally) their relatives wishing to live with them. In what follows I attempt to show that by challenging such narrowness, Strathcona residents' bottom-up approach to housing redevelopment provided a counter-narrative to second-wave municipal colonialism that sought to demolish in order to construct large homogenous housing developments. The residents recognized that neighbourhoods need to grow and change over time, and they had no interest in blocking development and growth. They merely recognized that neighbourhood growth and the arrival of private developers had a precedent of displacing the existing inhabitants of the neighbourhood over time, and they wanted to prevent that from happening. The SAHS was made up of citizens currently living in the neighbourhood; they approved the design and construction of new housing rather than acceding to an outside developer designing according to city specifications in order to maximize their profits. None of the committee members or those involved in the administration of it had any experience in developing and managing the construction of multiple million-dollar housing projects.[426] While their endeavour was bold and ambitious and had the support of the provincial and federal governments, they faced repeated setbacks when it came to implementing their plans because their approach disrupted the bureaucratic structures attached to housing construction permits, mortgage lending, and payments. The construction of housing was a reflection of settler-colonialism and ideas of citizenship, and over time the construction had become increasingly bureaucratic as a reflection of municipal colonialism. This

[426] The SAHS was largely volunteer run. They hired lawyer Murray Grant for a period of time and Richard Moore as a project manager. Both men lived outside of the neighbourhood and correspondence indicates that they did not fully grasp SPOTA's and the SAHS' vision. Penelope Stewart was hired to work in the office managing the applications.

made the performance of new models of housing challenging because they needed to fit within the existing bureaucratic frameworks of by-laws, permits, and property taxes, which guided the material conceptions of housing, but also sought to challenge the existing symbolic conceptions of housing by ensuring that designs reflected the needs of low-income households and families. Examining SAHS through the framework of second-wave municipal colonialism highlights the difficulty of creating anticolonial housing policies because the bureaucratic policies and procedures are deeply intertwined with the cultural norms of domesticity and reinforce each other.

The SAHS recognized that they needed to develop a framework to deal with people equitably to ensure that they were meeting their mandate to provide housing for low-income families, but also recognized that people had internalized ideas that home ownership would provide them with stable and secure housing for the long term, and as a result it was difficult to convince people that other forms of land tenure would offer them the same stability and security. This also required the development of policies and procedures that some people felt were more rigid than the perceived autonomy of home ownership. The SAHS developed five phases of housing over an eight-year period to cater to different groups of people. Joe Wai was the lead architect on four out of five developments, and he sought to use land and space within the neighbourhood to maximize the development of the area, while at the same time ensuring that housing was affordable. His designs allowed for the densification of the neighbourhood while at the same time reflected the needs of the community. As a result of the new construction, the SAHS challenged the idea that the neighbourhood aesthetic needed to be uniform in order to be functional, by illustrating that the successful performance of home required that a connection to place be maintained while at the same time providing new structures. However, as this chapter will additionally show, the cultural narratives surrounding housing and home are deeply embedded in people’s understanding of the world, which in the language of performance theory has been shaped by the rituals of doing that have been at once mundanely and coercively repeated over time. In other words, it is difficult to develop new performative models of housing—new ways of “doing home”—that will continue to promote belonging and inclusion when home ownership of a single-family dwelling is still perceived as the most desirable form of housing.

Formation of the Strathcona Area Housing Society

Once SPOTA secured the right to rehabilitate their neighbourhood, the association formed several committees to work on the different aspects of the physical and social improvements needed within their community. As SPOTA gained momentum, a group of residents concerned with housing formed a sub-committee in order to find out how they could better serve the housing needs of people in their neighbourhood. Their concern with the development of new low-income housing within the urban core was mirrored in other more inclusive and affordable housing developments within Vancouver.[427] The development of the south side of False Creek in 1972 has gained the most attention in the existing scholarship on housing construction in Vancouver during the 1970s.[428] The development of False Creek drew on the approach to neighbourhood redevelopment established by the Strathcona Working Committee, with the cooperation of the three levels of government working to provide funding for new housing, and the concurrent development of social and community amenities to ensure the neighbourhood functioned as a cohesive unit. However, I argue that the development of False Creek still follows a settler-colonial narrative. The former industrial site was considered a *tabula rasa* and a wasted area of the city that needed to be tamed because it was impeding the overall development goals of Vancouver becoming a cosmopolitan city. The process of development of False Creek was still from a top-down perspective with experts deciding the best use of land. The experts attempted to promote a more inclusive form of neighbourhood development by constructing low-, middle-, and higher-income housing on leased land, and by establishing cooperative housing, both of which challenged the dominant narrative of home ownership in the City of Vancouver. However, with the emphasis on expanding access to the sea wall and the promotion of a leisurely lifestyle, False Creek perpetuated the urban narrative proposed by Harland Bartholomew and Associates, who emphasized that urban development must reflect the

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[427] Cooperative housing was established in Champlain Heights, Dunbar, Kitsilano, and downtown Vancouver in the 1970s. The Vancouver Special also offered an affordable housing solution for families.

[428] David Ley, "Co-operative housing as a moral landscape: Re-examining 'the postmodern city' in Duncan, James S, and David Ley, *Place/Culture/Representation* (London: Routledge, 1993) https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203714034 and "Waterfront Redevelopment: Global Processes and Local Contingencies in Vancouver's False Creek" in *New Urbanism* (London: Routledge, 2012); John Punter, *The Vancouver Achievement: Urban Planning and Design* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003).

beauty of the natural environment. The much larger urban development project of False Creek has overshadowed the significance of SPOTA's grassroots organizing, and their desire to provide new affordable housing within an existing neighbourhood without disrupting their existing sense of home. I am using the development of False Creek as a counter example of the performance of housing in Vancouver that moved away from the ownership model. The approaches to land use and styles of housing were similar, but SPOTA's inclusion of prospective residents in the design process set it apart from False Creek. Strathcona established housing for and with the people who had applied to live in the newly constructed housing units rather than the new residents conforming to housing designed by experts.

While the members of SPOTA were very concerned with the rehabilitation of existing housing stock in the neighbourhood, they were equally concerned with the development of new housing on the lots that the City of Vancouver owned, many of which were purchased by the city during the process of urban renewal in Phase I and II, with the anticipation that Phase III would be quickly approved by the Federal government. Some of the houses were rented out, but many were demolished shortly after their purchase and the lots were left vacant. Many of the lots became derelict and were full of discarded pieces of furniture and rusting out cars, and some lots were turned into de facto parking lots for surrounding businesses. SPOTA was concerned that the positive press their neighbourhood rehabilitation initiatives had received, combined with the significant structural and social improvements already made, would result in land speculators buying up lots to develop for profit, and all the efforts to maintain the neighbourhood would be lost.[429] They also feared that the City of Vancouver could undermine their rehabilitation efforts by developing the lots they currently owned in ways that did not reflect the overall rehabilitation goals of the neighbourhood.

By June 1973, the housing committee realized that they should incorporate as a Community Development Corporation. Over the previous months, the housing committee had conducted extensive research about how other Community Development Corporations had been set up across the United States and Canada by examining case

[429] Neighbourhood Development Proposal, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-D-1 File 2.

studies in Ohio, Chicago, Rochester, Newark, Winnipeg, and Quebec.[430] After several months of further discussion and research, the SPOTA Executive decided to form a separate legal entity that was accountable to SPOTA, but was responsible for the construction and sale of new housing within the neighbourhood. SPOTA realized that forming their own housing society would give them the benefits of incorporating as a company but with no personal liability, while also giving a clear legal framework for handling any problems that had the potential to arise with contractors and other tradespersons.[431] Furthermore, "government subsidies [were] easier to get if [they were] a non-profit company."[432] In continuing with their desire to strengthen community ties, the SPOTA Executive expressed to their members that the construction of new housing within the neighbourhood would be "a means of bringing people together to do things for themselves."[433] They argued that the value of a not-for-profit housing corporation was that it would keep the decision-making within the neighbourhood to ensure that new development reflected the goals of neighbourhood rehabilitation that they had already established. Over the summer of 1973, the SPOTA Housing Committee continued to discuss how a housing corporation should be developed, and the criteria by which to determine who should get access to the new forms of housing. They developed a bilingual (English and Chinese) application form for interested people. The housing committee recognized that they needed to have clear criteria to guide their selection process.

It was in this spirit, then, that SPOTA formed the Strathcona Area Housing Society (SAHS), a non-profit housing development society with the aim of building high-quality and affordable housing for low-income families in September 1973. This was an innovative approach in Canada because the construction of housing was largely controlled by property developers and not a non-profit organization made up of citizens

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[430] Housing Committee and Community Development Corporation 1970-73, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-6 File 11.

[431] Housing Committee and Community Development Corporation 1970-73, 2, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-6 File 11.

[432] Housing Committee and Community Development Corporation 1970-73, 2, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-6 File 11.

[433] Housing Committee and Community Development Corporation 1970-73, 6, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-6 File 11.

from the very neighbourhood in which new housing would be constructed.[434] The SAHS also established a clear relationship between SPOTA and prospective residents to ensure that all applicants would be dealt with equitably and that personal relationships between residents and members of the SPOTA Executive would not cloud the decision-making process. Over the course of several meetings, the housing committee outlined the functions of the SAHS: to build and renovate older houses, to secure land through leasing from the province and to purchase empty lots using the surplus of Strathcona Rehabilitation Project monies for a down payment, and to secure financing through CMHC mortgages, in order to develop a neighbourhood plan by ensuring that new structures "complement existing housing and other land uses and future picture of community."[435] Furthermore, they sought "to provide low-cost housing with controlled resale"[436] in order to minimize land speculation by developing cooperative housing and other forms of strata title. They recognized that in order to be successful and to truly represent all of Strathcona's residents that they needed to "experiment with different and innovative land uses."[437]

SPOTA and the newly formed SAHS debated five different forms of housing approaches: "cooperative housing, home owner assistance programme, non-profit foundation, limited dividend programme and private development."[438] There were between 60-70 City-owned lots scattered throughout the neighbourhood available for new construction or housing renovation. "Upon review of the alternatives and their implications, the SPOTA Executive unanimously agreed on three principles:

1. That housing should accommodate some latitude of income level with $10,000 per annum as a mean.

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[434] The Kinew Housing Incorporated was another Canadian Neighbourhood Development Corporation who provided housing for First Nations and Métis community in Winnipeg. Housing Committee and Community Development Corporation, 1970-73, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-6 File 11.

[435] Housing Committee and Community Development Corporation, 1970-73, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-6 File 11.

[436] Housing Committee and Community Development Corporation, 1970-73, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-6 File 11.

[437] Housing Committee and Community Development Corporation, 1970-73, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-6 File 11.

[438] Committee Meeting Notes CVA Housing Committee 1973-1975, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-6 File 10.

2. That it is possible for prospective residents to have title to the house they occupy.

3. That strict controls be implemented to safe-guard land and house speculation in resale."[439]

SPOTA worked with the provincial government to explore options for new construction that would prevent land speculators from gaining access because the lots were considerably cheaper than the rest of the city after over a decade of depressed land values, and residents feared multiple lots would be purchased and developed by private developers hoping to make a quick profit. The provincial government proposed to buy the empty lots from the City of Vancouver and lease the land back to SAHS on a 60-year term as a way of controlling land speculation within the neighbourhood. The provincial government was willing to support a cooperative housing approach as a way of providing low-income housing for families; however, SPOTA raised concerns about smaller groups forming within the neighbourhood who might have differing ideas of how the neighbourhood should develop, and it was difficult to imagine housing options that would provide the same forms of security and stability within the urban environment because, performatively, home ownership continued to be cited as the cultural norm. Ownership and land use were so closely intertwined that it was difficult to shape a new set of norms for residential development in an urban environment. While SPOTA initially dismissed the option of cooperative housing, they quickly realized that building cooperative housing on provincially owned land leased back to them on a 60-year term would provide more affordable housing options for people.

SPOTA and SAHS worked closely with Joe Wai, an architect with Thompson, Berwick, Pratt and Partners, to come up with housing solutions for residents eager to get access to stable housing within Strathcona. Wai proposed that they should complete three demonstration projects in order to "galvanize and articulate the direction for the kind of housing our neighbourhood needs and desires. The houses should be economical but must also be in keeping with the character of our neighbourhood."[440] Though Wai does not clearly define the character of the neighbourhood, his designs did

[439] "Committee Meeting Notes" Housing Committee 1973-1975, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-6 fld 10.

[440] "Letter from Joe Wai to Shirley Chan dated June 22, 1973," Housing Committee 1973-1975, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-6 File 10.

fit in with the height of the existing structures, while at the same time maximizing the size of the lots. Following Birmingham and Wood's Plan-In approach to gather ideas from the residents, as discussed in Chapter Four, the housing committee proposed a "Design-In" in January 1973 with prospective residents to find out what they wanted from their housing. This was a radically different shift from how previous forms of housing were constructed in the city, as usually only wealthy residents would work with an architect to help design their house. Architect-designed homes allowed for the individual dwelling to reflect the personal needs of the household and family. The housing committee recognized that, in terms of the performance of domesticity, people use their homes in ways that are personally meaningful to them, and that many residents lived with other relatives who formed part of their family unit. Drawing from Bowlby's third definition of domestic: meaning household and family, I am suggesting that the construction of new housing by SAHS reflected that the needs of the family should be of paramount importance with the design of the house rather than houses designed according to British cultural aesthetics. Residents felt that the construction of public housing undermined their desire to live with parents or in-laws because the new units were much smaller, and there was little affordable accommodation in close proximity for seniors on a fixed income.

With these housing needs in mind, the plans for new housing "evolved through a series of weekly meetings with the SPOTA Housing Committee" over a period of six weeks in late spring of 1973.[441] The basic plan emphasized an open concept family-kitchen-dining area with flexible bedroom usage, which could be configured as either three or four rooms depending on the family's needs. The new dwellings were "all around 1,000 [sqft] with optional basements, though they are recommended."[442] The new residents would be able to configure the basement to further meet their individual needs. Architect Joe Wai creatively used the 25' lot in order to maximize the housing availability. Some lots were consolidated in order to build multiple units. Other lots had a front and back construction. However, many of his plans were not initially approved by the City of Vancouver because they did not conform to the norms and expectations of

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[441] Housing Committee and Community Development Corporation, 1970-73, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-6 File 10.

[442] "Committee Meeting Notes" Housing Committee 1973-1975, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-6 File 10.

what housing should look like in the city. It came down to aesthetics over the true purpose of housing, which was to provide affordable shelter for the greatest number of people. After much back-and-forth with the Planning Department, Joe Wai was able to get approval for a modified version of his original design.

The goal of SPOTA and the housing committee was to develop a long-term stable community, and they hoped that if current and prospective residents had a degree of agency in planning their housing, that they would be more likely to actively participate in the various groups within the community. The SAHS had the difficult challenge of not only figuring out what kind of housing was needed in their neighbourhood, but also who should get access to the newly constructed housing.[443] After lengthy debate, SAHS and the SPOTA Executive developed a priority scale of how they would determine who would get access to new neighbourhood housing. They developed this set of criteria: "1. Persons who were expropriated, 2. Who rent and do not already own homes, 3. Have families, 4. Low and moderate income, 5. Living in Strathcona for a longer period of time."[444] They wanted to ensure that people who were currently renting would have access to home ownership before people who currently owned housing but who wanted to purchase newer housing. All of these criteria, however, became less straightforward and clear when applied to individual circumstances and cases. While much of the housing developed ensured that families had an affordable place to live, the neighbourhood also had a high percentage of single men who had no families to take care of them in their old age. Their needs posed a different demand on the existing housing stock because the goal was to ensure that no one would lose their sense of home. This required thoughtful planning of how seniors could age in place.

While the SAHS had visions of transforming housing in their neighbourhood by maintaining control of the construction of new housing within the boundaries of the Strathcona Rehabilitation Project, this ideal faced several difficulties in navigating the

[443] They also explored the idea of becoming landlords of some of the rental housing in the neighbourhood. SPOTA argued that they would like to use some of the money left over for housing rehabilitation to improve the rental housing in the neighbourhood but are concerned that doing so would increase the rents in the neighbourhood. The owner of a rooming house at 404 Union Street offers to sell it to SPOTA at a reduced price in order to prevent the sale of it going to someone outside of the neighbourhood; however, the SAHS did not have the financial means to purchase the rooming house and undertake the required repairs. Housing Committee 1973-1975, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-6 File 10.

[444] Housing Committee 1973-1975, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-6 File 10.

bureaucratic structures in order to construct different forms of housing within the city. The SAHS's goal of wanting to ensure that people could get access to affordable housing and could live in a safe, stable, and secure neighbourhood often conflicted with the more dominant housing narratives, which emphasized the development and ownership of single-family dwellings as the standard performative script for land use. These conflicts reveal the complexity of municipal colonialism; not only was it structural in relation to land use guidelines and policies, but it was also a deeply internalized cultural value that home ownership was the only pathway to citizenship. These were difficult to navigate in second-wave municipal colonialism because the bureaucratic processes and the cultural view was supported by mortgage lenders, who had clear frameworks for the approval and administration of financial practices for home ownership, but they did not have the same mechanisms for approval of cooperative and strata housing. This resulted in SAHS having difficulty in getting mortgages and paperwork processed because there were no systems in place to accommodate for the difference.

The meeting minutes from August 20, 1974, reflect how they reiterated their goals: "we will be providing housing for as many as 500 new residents in our community. We should think carefully about the selection process. It has been stated before that we get a mix of families, age, and size. These new families will be residing in Strathcona for quite some time. We would like some stability."[445] This view reinforced their desire to ensure that new construction provided a sense of home. They had had around "200 applications on file for almost two years of people who wanted to get access to housing in the neighbourhood."[446] The board debated for many months the best approach to determine eligibility for the first phase of housing. The SAHS approach to ensuring affordable housing for new residents was very different than the approach ensuring affordable housing in False Creek. Each application was a reflection of a family's or an individual's desire to live in Strathcona, in particular for what it offered them in terms of proximity to Chinatown, downtown, and other amenities. For many applicants, they had

[445] "Strathcona Area Housing Society: Housing Committee Minutes July 18, 1974-77" Strathcona Area Housing Society Committee Minutes, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-1 File 1.

[446] City Planning—Strathcona Community, CVA, City Planning fonds, S465-1 Box 44-C-1 File 3.

existing networks of friends and families living within Strathcona, and they wanted to maintain these connections.

Phase I

Figure 6.1. Strathcona Co-operative Housing
Photo Credit: Jennifer Chutter

Full of design ideas and enthusiasm, the Strathcona Area Housing Society tackled their first project. In order to highlight the importance of citizens taking control over the construction of new housing within their neighbourhood, SPOTA alerted the media and invited elected officials to participate in the Strathcona Co-Operative Housing Demonstration Project Sod-Turning Ceremony on October 26, 1974. This project, designed by Joe Wai, provided seven infill housing units on five lots on the 700 block of Union Street; it was affectionately referred to as SCOOP. Wai designed seven adjoining townhouses, which shared garden space. This new design challenged the idea of housing within the neighbourhood in two ways. First, cooperative housing was used as infill housing within an existing neighbourhood, which showed that housing form and ownership models do not need to be uniform within a city in order for people to maintain

a sense of home. Unlike the implementation of cooperative housing in False Creek, this development was small scale and designed to use the narrow 25' lots in order to provide more affordable housing. Second, they illustrated how the density of the neighbourhood could be increased without disrupting the overall neighbourhood aesthetic.[447] Rather than falling back on the city's architectural design rhetoric of the single-family dwelling, Wai challenged the ideas of zoning and floor square ratios to offer new and innovative views of how urban space could be used. Wai understood the need to preserve people's sense of home, and their desire to remain in the neighbourhood, and the limitations of the public housing units that the City of Vancouver had already produced in the neighbourhood.

This further challenged the idea that a home was individual and ownership based. By sharing land, and sharing the ownership of the units, SCOOP performatively disrupted the idea that the only option for people who are low-income should be rental units provided by the state. Many of the applicants for the first SAHS development were from people who had been relocated out of the neighbourhood because they sold their house during the urban renewal scheme or had been forced to move because the place they had been renting had been sold. SCOOP creatively used the land to increase the densification of the neighbourhood, while at the same time creating affordable housing for families. Occupants moved into their new homes in March 1975, and it was decided that the new residents would do the landscaping collectively in order to keep costs low.[448]

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[447] Row housing was constructed in the neighbourhood in the early 1900s as a means of providing affordable housing for predominately bachelors; however, in the city-wide plan created by Harland Bartholomew, he recommended the removal of row housing in the city because it created a slum-like appearance. The aim of housing construction in the city should be single-family dwellings aimed at enticing middle-class families to remain in the neighbourhood.

[448] Strathcona Area Housing Society: Housing Committee Minutes July 18, 1974-77, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-1 File 1.

Phase II

Figure 6.2. Phase II housing
Photo credit: Shirley Chan, Housing Committee and Community Development, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S1 Box 583-B-6 File 11.

The lots for Phase II had been purchased by the provincial government from the City of Vancouver, and then were leased back to the Strathcona Area Housing Society to construct affordable housing on. By leasing the land back from the province, SPOTA and the SAHS were able to ensure that development would reflect the needs of the neighbourhood. They further secured the development by registering it as a strata corporation rather than individual private lots, which would ensure that houses could not be redeveloped or altered without going through the strata corporation. SAHS asked for changes to be made to the Strata Titles Act in order to reflect their desire to protect the properties they were constructing.[449] The existing strata legislation was for condominiums, but the designs for Phase II were smaller free-standing houses on shared land. On July 7, 1975, the SAHS held a workshop on condominiums in order to educate people as to what it meant to live in a condo with a strata governance, as this change in housing legislation occurred in 1966 and very few people had experience

[449] SAHS Phase II Correspondence, 1976-77, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-2 File 3.

living in this form of housing. The cost to attend the workshop was $3.00; the charge was to cover the labour costs within SAHS that had been previously unaccounted for.[450]

Construction started on the second phase of housing development on August 18, 1975, with the hopes that all the homes would be complete by mid-April 1976. By September 12, 1975, they had 131 applicants for the strata-titled Phase II units.[451] Between October 6-17, 1975, members of the SAHS interviewed the successful applicants and provided detailed information on financial and legal matters. Prospective residents of Phase II needed to provide a $5000 deposit to SAHS by November 14, 1975, to secure ownership of their new dwelling. Each application was reviewed to see if the prospective homeowners met the criteria laid out by the SAHS. The SAHS negotiated with the BC Department of Housing for mortgages to be at 10%, with the possibility of the interest rate dropping to as low as 5% to ensure that the residents' monthly mortgage payments did not exceed 30% of the family income.[452] This was to ensure that homeowners could remain in their home if they faced financial hardship or changes in their household income. The mortgage was also for 35 years with five-year terms instead of the standard mortgage for 25 years. The SAHS supported prospective homeowners in filling out their mortgage applications and grants for additional funding from the provincial government: either a $5000 second mortgage to help with the down payment with an interest of 8.75%, or a $1000 grant for prospective homeowners who had the down payment.[453] The average price of the mortgages in Phase II was $30,000. Prospective homeowners had the option to pick out different grades of carpeting and light fixtures, which altered the final cost of the house slightly. In addition to receiving more affordable mortgage rates, homeowners were also able to qualify for a $280 reduction in property taxes because the dwellings were constructed on land leased from the province. Phase II development would be run as a strata corporation with fees of $25/month to ensure the maintenance of buildings and lots. By taking on the role of a

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[450] Strathcona Area Housing Society: Housing Committee Minutes July 18, 1974-77, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-1 File 1.

[451] SAHS Phase II Financial Accounts, 1976, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-2 File 4.

[452] Phase II: Certificates of Encumbrances, 1976, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-2 File 1.

[453] Phase II: Certificates of Encumbrances, 1976, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-2 File 1.

mortgage broker and negotiator with the provincial government, the SAHS was able to secure affordable homeownership for people who were low income.[454]

Phase II, while adhering to the idea of home ownership, challenges the colonial narrative of what the housing form should look like. Joe Wai creatively designed houses to fit into the existing neighbourhood but challenged the zoning rules for RT-2 by proposing to place three strata-owned townhouses on a double lot and four on a triple lot. This disrupted the idea that a single lot should have one house with large setbacks and backyards. Wai's designs also offered flexibility in how the interior space could be used; the bedrooms on the upper floor could be configured to either have two bedrooms, plus a small den, or four smaller bedrooms. This form of designing allowed families with more than two children, or those living with extended family greater housing options, to access affordable housing close to Chinatown.

However, the construction of this phase of housing ran into several difficulties in navigating the bureaucratic layers of government approvals. In a letter from Tom Mesic, president of SPOTA, to Lorne Nicholson in the BC Department of Housing, he pleads the case that "SPOTA's Infill Housing Project is experiencing a serious cash shortage because of the length of time required for dealings with the Department of Housing."[455] The province was supportive of the innovative designs that SPOTA was proposing but lacked a flexible structure to fund non-profit housing initiatives. This illustrates that the history of housing is built for profit rather than for people. As Kwok Chiu, the housing coordinator, repeatedly argues in letters to different government departments, this form of strata housing is the first of its kind in Canada and as a result requires a new kind of BC Strata Title Act.[456] There were several delays in getting people into the houses, and the houses themselves had many construction deficiencies, which were not quickly resolved. One of the construction deficiencies was water ingress due to the natural topography of the neighbourhood, in which some of the houses were constructed below street grade and some were constructed above. SPOTA argues that it was the City's

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[454] Phase II housing: 3 houses per double lot at 663 Prior, 823 Prior, 833 Prior, 711 Union, 831 Union, 861 Union--4 houses on this one, 620 E. Georgia, 656 Keefer, SAHS Correspondence 1975, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-1 File 4.

[455] Letter dated 25 November 1975 SAHS Legal Documents Phase II, 1974-76, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-2 File 7.

[456] Phase II Correspondence, 1975-77, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-2 File 3.

responsibility to improve drainage in the neighbourhood and they were slow to construct ballards and to upgrade the sewer systems. The process of the SAHS broke down because it was not clear who was responsible for fixing the deficiencies. Many residents of Phase II wrote letters of complaint, which were directed to Joe Wai, which he then directed towards the construction company. Without a clear process for resolving these forms of conflict, tensions escalated.

Despite these challenges, performatively speaking, Phase II development can be measured a success. While the cost of the development was over $1 million, this still came in slightly under budget. And the SAHS had managed to adhere to their mandate of providing affordable housing within their neighbourhood. This time, however, instead of encouraging the new residents to collectively landscape the shared yard space as in Phase I, a landscape architect was hired to do the landscaping around the units prior to residents occupying their new dwellings in April 1976.

Phase III

Figure 6.3. Joe Wai Special
Photo Credit: Jennifer Chutter

As the success of SAHS began to grow, so did the problems with leadership and finances. The SAHS grew out of SPOTA's grassroots organizing, and while SAHS was navigating new bureaucratic terrain as a not-for-profit housing development corporation, they were still reporting to SPOTA. The lines of communication became blurred between the SPOTA Executive and the SAHS, especially with complaints from the new residents regarding Phase II housing. Layered into this was a lack of communication and disagreements around the set of criteria of who should get access to new housing and why. Most of Phase II housing was purchased by homeowners who were from outside of the neighbourhood. This decision was starting to cause problems for both people on the Executive and for other residents in the neighbourhood. Many felt current tenants, existing homeowners, and long-time residents, who had had their housing expropriated and were living elsewhere in the city, like Fred Soon, should be given priority for purchasing new housing in Phase III, which would be single-family dwellings. Tom Mesic, chair of SAHS, expressed his concerns that there had been a considerable amount of time spent "building houses for families outside of the area who have no commitment to the area in the first place."[457] Mesic further suggested that by prioritizing current residents, it would allow people who did not qualify for the rehabilitation grant because their household income was considered too high to get access to new housing rather than attempting to finance further repairs on their own, which could be considerably higher than taking on a new mortgage.

Mesic's concerns challenged SPOTA to reexamine their ideals surrounding the role of housing within the neighbourhood, and points to the complexity of developing new housing while at the same time preserving the neighbourhood. While they recognized that new housing was essential in their neighbourhood, the SPOTA Executive members were also wrestling with the more intangible ideas of home. In the process of trying to create a new form of housing in the neighbourhood, they ended up defaulting to the economic commodification of housing, meaning that those with the financial means got access to housing in Phase II. In this way they were perpetuating rather than challenging second-wave municipal colonialism. Favouring the economic commodification of housing caused problems because the new residents were not involved in the fight to save the neighbourhood, nor were they involved in the decision-

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[457] "Letter to SPOTA Executives from Tom Mesic dated February 7, 1976" Phase III, Miscellaneous 1975-76, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-3 File 5.

making to start a housing association; in other words, there was an evolving tension between the current residents and the new residents. Arguably, the new residents had some legitimate reasons to complain to SPOTA and to SAHS about their new homes; there were several water ingress issues and repairs were slow in coming because it was not clear who had the responsibility for fixing them. Some residents went directly to SPOTA Executives to plead their case, and others wrote letters to the SAHS, but there was no clear process for resolving the complaints. These tensions mirror the reactions the residents had towards the City of Vancouver's Redevelopment Plan in 1957. SPOTA began their neighbourhood organizing by questioning the right of the city to shape the neighbourhood for future residents rather than protecting it for the current residents. While their organizing and the rehabilitation of existing housing stock protected the rights of current residents, it became more difficult to hold these principles when it came to building new housing stock because of the complexity of assessing who should be able to access a sense of home within the neighbourhood because it was difficult to determine whether income, or personal history in Strathcona should take precedence.

On February 29, 1976, the SPOTA Executives spent the day sorting through the complaints from Phase II and worked to develop a clearer decision-making structure with the hopes of smoothing out the process for Phase III and Phase IV. By the end of the meeting the Executives had established a clearer division of responsibilities between SPOTA and SAHS. SPOTA would be responsible for the type of tenure, type of financing, approval of preliminary decisions and the selection criteria for prospective applicants. SAHS assumed responsibility for day-to-day decisions, authorizing payments, liaising with and supervision of staff and consultants, approval of final decisions and working with the housing manager on the selection of applicants. The housing manager's job was also more clearly defined.[458]

The next challenge the SAHS faced was securing financing in order to pay for the new developments. With Phase II under construction, SAHS needed to start construction on Phase III and Phase IV simultaneously because the project needed to be to the foundation level by June 30, 1976, or the leasehold lots would revert back to

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[458] "Workshop Minutes of SPOTA's Executives February 29, 1976," Phase III, Miscellaneous 1975-76, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-3 File 5.

City of Vancouver.[459] This gave them four months to advertise for prospective homebuyers, finalize the designs, submit all the building permits, hire a construction company and lay the foundations on 28 lots.

Phase III lots were scattered throughout the neighbourhood. The aim was to produce affordable single-family dwellings within the parameters of the narrow 25’ lot. Joe Wai was again the architect for the new housing design. Similar to the Vancouver Special, his design maximized the lot lines and provided a liveable design for families in narrow three-storey homes. This form of architectural design, while catering to the specific small lot size, continued the narrative of the importance of ownership of a single-family dwelling within the neighbourhood rather than challenging that narrative as Wai had with his designs for Phase I and Phase II. At the same time, with the development of Phase III, Joe Wai made a different kind of performative intervention into normative domestic building models in the city by suggesting a change in the zoning guidelines for RT-2 to allow for double lots to have three separate housing units on them, and for the triple lots to have four housing units. Changes in the zoning would also allow for greater square footage of individual lots. These changes to the regulations would allow for a gentle densification of the neighbourhood while at the same time maintaining the overall neighbourhood aesthetic of low-rise development. However, their design challenged the settler-colonial norms surrounding domestic landscaping because the narrow design virtually eliminated a side yard which gave the neighbourhood a crowded appearance. Wai suggested, however, that the goal of this form of development would allow for more families to move into the neighbourhood.[460] While Wai had submitted this request for exemption in March of 1975, the City of Vancouver stalled their decision and excluded Wai and other members of SPOTA and SAHS from their deliberation meetings.[461] The City of Vancouver had issued an ultimatum that construction needed to be started by December 31, 1975, and without a clear decision from the City, SAHS did not want to proceed with their development plans, and Wai dropped his proposed changes. This was a repeated pattern with the City of Vancouver and points to the ways in which the

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[459] “Letter to Tom Mesic from Richard Moore dated March 4, 1976,” Phase III, Miscellaneous 1975-76, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-3 File 5.

[460] SAHS Phase II, Correspondence 1975-76, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-2 File 2.

[461] “Letter from Joe Wai to George Chatterton December 19, 1975,” SAHS Phase II, Correspondence 1975-76, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-2 File 2.

bureaucratic structures of second-wave municipal colonialism continued to forestall the neighbourhood's attempts to perform alternative models of housing and domesticity.[462]

It was estimated that the project would cost between $1,140,000 and $1,168,500 to account for rising materials and labour costs.[463] SAHS was faced with the difficulty of cash flow to pay the architects and construction crews for work already in progress:

> because the land [was] owned by the Crown it [was] not possible for the banks to obtain a mortgage or other acceptable security on the funds advanced. Further, there is no equity or substantial personal guarantee as is normally required. After lengthy discussion, the position taken by both the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and the Bank of British Columbia is that they would not make the loan without an unconditional full-liability guarantee from the government.[464]

This was a new form of collaboration between the provincial government and a citizen-organized non-profit housing association had still not put bureaucratic structures in place to ensure that housing could actually be constructed. SAHS needed to secure interim financing from a bank to ensure that work was paid for as construction was taking place, knowing that the balance would be paid off once new homeowners secured mortgages to pay for their housing. Previous forms of land tenure favoured private development companies because they could secure mortgages on the lot they owned more easily in order to start construction. With leased lots, the land tenure resides with the province, which resulted in SAHS having few options for securing financing. Financing through the CMHC also proved to be problematic because it required a higher income to qualify for the mortgage and prospective buyers could only secure a mortgage of a maximum of $22,000; for a house that was anticipated to cost between $42-46,000, the down payment required would be untenable for most.[465]

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[462] By the mid-1970s, the Vancouver Special, another controversial housing design, was at the height of its construction. This design also challenged the settler-colonial framework of acceptable domesticity and landscaping. See Jennifer Chutter, "What's so Special about the Vancouver Special?" MA Thesis, 2016, https://summit.sfu.ca/item/16832.

[463] "Handwritten document of estimated costs." No date or author given," Phase III, Miscellaneous 1975-76, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-3 File 5.

[464] "Letter to George Gray, Director of Financial Planning and Control, Department of Housing, Victoria from Richard Moore, SAHS Housing Manager, on behalf of Tom Mesic dated September 25, 1975" Phase III, Miscellaneous 1975-76, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-3 File 5.

[465] "Handwritten notes in the file," No author and no date, Phase III, Miscellaneous 1975-76, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-3 File 5.

This continued emphasis on housing that was ownership-based illustrates the difficulty of subverting master narratives that home ownership was the most stable and secure form of housing. While prospective buyers had a limited view of what housing could offer them and favoured fee-simple ownership, the state compounded the difficulty of many residents getting access to mortgages with their definition of family and dependents. The SAHS was also struggling with how to define family because in a meeting held on September 9, 1975, it is noted that the state defines family as a "man and a woman and a child."[466] However, this idea was challenged by several members of the SAHS and SPOTA. As Bessie Lee points out, "we should define family in Chinese terms to the Department of Housing."[467] For Chinese families there was a stronger cultural obligation to take care of parents and other relatives in their old age and housing grants needed to recognize that the dependency of the elderly on their children was the same form of financial dependency as young children. To preserve the neighbourhood as home required an understanding of the cultural values people were bringing from their home country and the different ways people defined household and family. Lee, SPOTA's Vice-President, pointed out in a passionate letter to the Mortgage Approvals Committee dated Dec 10, 1975, that there was a cultural difference that is not accommodated for in the current mortgage restrictions.[468] While SPOTA was trying to advocate for a multicultural view of neighbourhood rehabilitation by translating newsletters and briefs, and hosting bilingual meetings, it was also recognizing that there were different cultural needs when it came to housing, which posed some challenges when designing and advocating for neighbourhood-wide changes in housing policy. Lee explained that Chinese families were responsible for their parents and would like to get a mortgage because they were still caring for dependents even though they do not have children.[469] This distinction of who was considered a dependent for the sake of getting a mortgage exposed the inherent cultural bias within the bureaucratic structures that favoured white buyers for whom taking care of their extended family was not part of their cultural norms. Not only was housing embedded into the culture to reflect an economic

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[466] "Meeting minutes September 9, 1975," Strathcona Area Housing Society: Housing Committee Minutes July 18, 1974-77, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-1 File 1.

[467] "Meeting minutes December 1, 1975," Strathcona Area Housing Society: Housing Committee Minutes July 18, 1974-77, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-1 File 1.

[468] "Letter from Bessie Lee to Mortgage Approvals Committee dated December 10, 1975," SAHS Phase II, Correspondence 1975-76, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-2 File 2.

[469] SAHS Phase II, Correspondence 1975-76, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734 Box 583-E-2 File 2.

commodity, but the subtle regulation of who could get access to a mortgage, limited who got to live in those stable, secure, and safe dwellings. As a result, there were few options for elderly Chinese to live close to Chinatown and to be able to socialize with their peer group.

On October 15, 1976, SAHS issued a press release to twenty-two local newspapers advertising the sale of housing in Phase III with an anticipated occupancy date of December 1, 1976. They emphasized the development of the housing was by a not-for-profit housing association, and that the housing qualified for government grants to make the purchase of it more accessible. After much discussion within SPOTA, they determined that "priority [would be] given to families with children who do not presently own their home."[470] This reinforced the dominant idea that home ownership was an essential prerequisite to raising children in a stable and secure environment. While renters were considered equal partners in the development of SPOTA, it appeared that they were slowly being pushed out as a priority with the construction of new housing. SPOTA's less innovative housing design did make it more marketable, and it was more affordable than other single-family dwellings in the city, but this still did not alleviate the challenges of providing affordable housing for many families because of the difficulty in acquiring mortgages for homeowners who wanted to count their elderly parents as dependents.[471] The state structures still favoured the nuclear family as the model homeowners.

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[470] SAHS Press Release 1976 Phase II, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734 Box 583-E-2 File 09.

[471] Phase III housing was around $42,000, whereas the Vancouver Special, another affordable housing option, was $65,000 during the same time period. The Vancouver Special was larger and had the option of converting the dwelling into a two-family unit to make it more affordable to own by renting out one suite. See Jennifer Chutter, "What's so Special about the Vancovuer Special?" MA Thesis, 2016, https://summit.sfu.ca/item/16832.

Phase IV

Figure 6.4. Phase IV Housing
Photo credit: Jennifer Chutter

As the connections between neighbours grew, so did their understanding of the diverse needs of people within their neighbourhood. Phase IV of housing recognized that the SAHS had predominately been concerned with developing housing for families, which follows the post-war housing development narratives that families in stable and secure homes would form the foundation of society. However, by the mid-1970s, this narrative was starting to be questioned as all citizens should have access to safe, secure, and affordable housing regardless of whether they have children or not. SPOTA felt that they had "a civic responsibility to assist in the housing crisis."[472] The fact that residents considered it their civic responsibility to assist in the housing crisis indicates that they understood the importance of creating stable, secure, and safe homes for people. They were not choosing to profit off the housing crisis, but instead sought to ensure that their role as a fourth-level of government was used to benefit residents in their neighbourhood, as well as to provide housing access to people who were

[472] SAHS Correspondence 1976, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-1 File 5.

frequently excluded from ownership based on the existing grant and loan plans, which often favoured families. In the press release distributed to multiple newspapers and radio stations across the city, the advertisement for Phase IV stated: "if you have had difficulty in obtaining financing for a home because you don't have a child, you are single, or you are close to retirement, then this program may be your answer."[473]

SPOTA and SAHS recognized that "a neighbourhood benefits from diversity" and that "all incomes, all ages and we should try to accommodate all these people as homeowners if possible."[474] The continued emphasis on home ownership over building other forms of housing illustrates the difficulty in disrupting the larger cultural narratives that claimed home ownership was the only means to ensure stable, secure, and affordable housing, and in this way the SAHS is perpetuating second-wave colonialism rather than challenging it as they had in the first two phases. The development of the five lots on the north side of 700 block Keefer Street as "self-help" housing was aimed to improve quality "while cutting costs by utilizing the ideas and skills of owners."[475] Despite Joe Wai working on designs for Phase IV, the SAHS decided to go with Bruno Freschi's designs for this stage of building because he appeared more responsive to the small group of interested homeowners in helping them to collectively design their units. Similar to the development of Phase I and II, those interested were invited to develop plans collaboratively with the aim of promoting a sense of community between neighbours. While Phase I constructed seven units on five lots, the aim for this development was to construct eight to ten units of considerably smaller units. The SAHS "also considered that houses could be built as they are afforded."[476] One proposed design scheme suggested that they start with a smaller home with a low build cost but create a design that would be a flexible enough to add on to it at a later point, up to a maximum of 850 sq ft. This necessitates designing an expandable house.[477]

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[473] SAHS Press Releases 1976 Phase II, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-2 File 9.

[474] SAHS Correspondence 1976, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-1 File 5.

[475] "Homeowners supply skills" *The Vancouver Sun*, August 21, 1976.

[476] SAHS Correspondence 1976, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-1 File 5.

[477] SAHS Correspondence 1976, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-1 File 5.

This suggests a more fluid and dynamic performance of housing construction as John Turner and Robert Fitcher were advocating at the time.[478] They argue for fewer restrictions on allowing low-income families to build their own dwelling because "lower-income families have more capacity to satisfy their housing needs than public agencies have assumed."[479] By promoting housing that could change and expand with homeowner needs, the SAHS recognized that people would like to have options to remain in their neighbourhood, but that housing needs change over the course of one's lifetime. This demonstrates an understanding of home that was not only both flexible and fluid, but also was attached to the wider neighbourhood rather than just to the dwelling itself. In order for residents to feel a sense of home both within their individual dwelling and within the neighbourhood as a whole, the SAHS was attempting to provide prospective homeowners with a degree of performative agency and choice in how they chose to "do" their housing over time. But at the same time, SAHS needed to move quickly on the project because of the looming December 31, 1976, deadline for completion. After making such progress on Phase I and II, the SAHS did not want to lose momentum for construction on both Phase III and Phase IV, nor did they want to see the lots revert back to ownership by the City. The City's top-down performance of control over the development of the lots put pressure on SAHS to solve complex housing and home-making needs. The SAHS set a deadline of August 31, 1976, for prospective applicants to submit a statement of interest.[480]

As SAHS became more adept at developing new housing, and despite their proven success in constructing new housing under budget, one of their central difficulties still was securing interim financing to pay for the construction of the new phases of houses. Members of SAHS drew on their strength of sharing the story of their neighbourhood in each letter they sent out asking for further financing support beyond what they were able to secure with provincial loans and CMHC grants. SAHS was challenging the existing narratives about who should get access to housing by advocating that income should not be a barrier. In a September 27, 1976 letter from Martin Draper, Bank Manager Community Saving Branch, to Mr. DJ Morris Manager

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[478] John F.C. Turner and Robert Fitcher eds., *Freedom to Build: Dweller Control of the Housing Process* (New York: Macmillian, 1972).

[479] Turner and Fitcher, *Freedom to Build*, 7.

[480] SAHS Press Releases 1976 Phase II, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734 Box 583-E-2 File 9.

Mortgages & Consumer Credit, he suggests that they needed to integrate the changes made by the provincial government in providing the second mortgage program, to issue people with the financing for down payments, and the federal initiatives of AHOP, NIP, and RRAP (discussed in Chapter Five) to how financing is approved for low-income prospective homeowners.[481] Draper recognized that experimenting with the way mortgages are granted "assumes that change, for the most part, [that] originates in a very basic way with disengaged rather than engaged people (i.e. you and I (the engaged) won't push for housing for low income people because we are not low income and already have a house)."[482] They offered their support for helping prospective homeowners to get access to the housing market. By securing different forms of financing for prospective residents, the SAHS was able to challenge the structural inequities regarding home ownership and provide avenues for more equitable access. The recognition that low-income residents faced bureaucratic and financial barriers getting into the housing market allowed the prospective buyers to work within a colonial framework to access home ownership. Despite the challenges in making it accessible and equitable, home ownership was still the preferred option because the material and symbolic cultural performances of home made it appear as the only stable and secure housing option.

[481] "Letter from Martin Draper to Mr. D.J. Morris," SAHS Correspondence 1976, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-1 File 5. This appears to be an early iteration of Community Savings, a credit union on Commercial Drive.

[482] SAHS Correspondence 1976, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-1 File 5.

Phase V

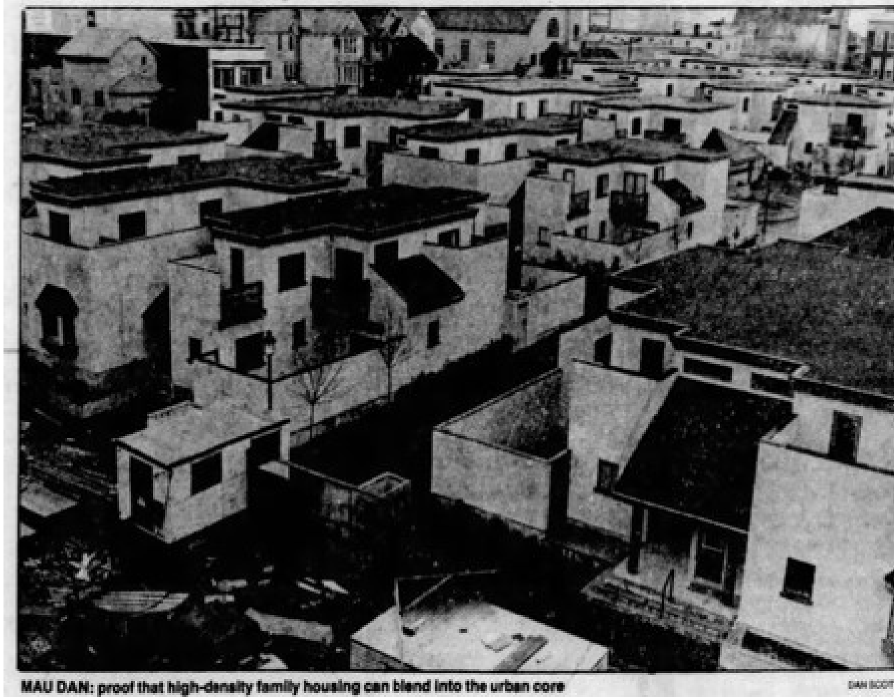

**Figure 6.5.	Phase V housing Mau Dan**
Photo credit: Dan Scott, Shelly Fralic, “Hopeful Housing” *The Vancouver Sun*, April 1, 1982.

The discussion of this last phase of housing in the neighbourhood requires setting a historical context because proved to be the most contentious and difficult development within Strathcona. Phase V was eventually constructed on the two parcels of undeveloped land located on Blocks 72 and 73, adjacent to Strathcona Elementary School, in 1982, a decade after the Strathcona Rehabilitation Plan was signed. These two blocks had been expropriated and mostly demolished by the City of Vancouver in the early 1960s at the beginning of urban renewal in the neighbourhood, and before the formation of SPOTA. Blocks 72 and 73 were divided into seven parcels of land for private developers to bid on for redevelopment. One parcel was acquired by Christ Church of China and another by Chau Lien Kon Sol Society to develop a senior citizens development; the existing seniors housing unit owned by the Chau Lien Kon Sol Society was slated for expropriation and demolition with the construction of the Georgia viaduct.[483] These two developments were completed before SPOTA had gained the right

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[483] Redevelopment Project Area A-6 (North) Blocks 72, 73 [correspondence] June 1968-October 1970, CVA, City Planning fonds, Series 305, 100F7 File 4.

to rehabilitate the neighbourhood. Sites C & D, located on either side of Dunlevy Street, had been sold to a private developer, Mr Quon Shum of Orientif Importers, in 1967, and by November 1968 Orientif Importers had purchased the remaining three parcels of land on Block 73 to acquire the whole area.[484] In addition to the private ownership of nearly two blocks within the rehabilitation area, SAHS faced numerous setbacks and cost increases in getting approval from the City of Vancouver to develop the sites, and different Chinese Benevolent societies began to contest SPOTA's control over neighbourhood rehabilitation.

Since these two sites had been sold to a private developer before the Strathcona Working Committee (SWC) had been established, the City of Vancouver proceeded with their original terms of sale. The City of Vancouver granted the sale with the stipulation that housing development needed to begin by April 30, 1969, or else the land would revert back to ownership of the City. The City of Vancouver had planned a blend of private and public housing and commercial development with the remaining blocks in Strathcona as they prepared their final proposal for federal urban renewal funding in 1968. Hellyer's freeze on urban renewal funding and SPOTA's growing activism in early 1969 disrupted the City of Vancouver's development plans. Due to the lack of clarity over how future developments would transpire, Orientif Importers stalled on submitting plans for the new higher end housing development, but on July 30, 1969 they were issued a development permit.[485] However, they did not start construction on the site because the neighbourhood was declared a rehabilitation area a few weeks later, and in September 1969, the SWC was formed with all three levels of government, and SPOTA, who were representing the residents. The mandate of the SWC was to develop a plan to rehabilitate the neighbourhood, but it did not include working with a private developer who had made prior plans with the City of Vancouver. When the SWC decided on the boundaries for the rehabilitation area, the privately owned plot of land fell inside the boundary; therefore, SPOTA argued that it would be included in their overall neighbourhood rehabilitation plan. Orientif Importers contacted the Law Department at the City of Vancouver asking for clarification as to how they should proceed with their medium-density development named East Village. The letter asks "is East Village to be

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[484] Redevelopment Project Area A-6 (North) Blocks 72, 73 [correspondence] June 1968-October 1970, CVA, City Planning fonds, Series 305, 100F7 File 4.

[485] City Planning, CVA, COV fonds, S465-1 Box 44-C-1 File 3.

a jewel amongst repainted old houses surrounded by blighted roads? … Or will East Village be only the first of many sparkling developments?"[486] The City had already closed the lanes to maximize the development area, and Orientif was finalizing their financing to start construction.[487] SPOTA insisted that the existing housing stock should be preserved and that low-income housing should be provided for residents to replace the dwellings lost during the expropriation and demolition on Blocks 72 and 73 years earlier. SPOTA's rehabilitation plan countered the vision that Orientif Importers had already developed for their plots of land within Strathcona's rehabilitation boundaries.

Concerns about the ownership of Sites C & D were first raised on November 4, 1969, at the third formal meeting of the SWC.[488] SPOTA recognized the potential for rehabilitation of their neighbourhood to be blocked by a developer who had a prior agreement with the City of Vancouver. One early suggestion was that the area should be converted into a park space to replace MacLean Park, which had been expropriated to build MacLean Park public housing. However, SPOTA wanted to ensure that housing was preserved at all costs, and the large area had the potential to provide more housing for low-income residents.[489] Despite entering into a formal working agreement with the provincial and federal governments to work with SPOTA, the City of Vancouver continued to meet with the Urban Renewal Co-ordinating Committee, which was made up of representatives from different city departments, to discuss development plans with Orientif Importers and other private developers who were interested acquiring land. On September 11, 1970, after a full year of meeting with the SWC, the City of Vancouver agreed to the closure of Dunlevy Street to create a 38' pedestrian mall in order to ease the development application of new strata housing by Orientif Importers.[490] While SPOTA was advocating for RT-2 zoning to ensure that housing remained smaller in scale and more affordable, the City changed the zoning for Blocks 72 and 73 to CD-1 to ensure the greatest flexibility in what could be built on Sites C & D. Orientif Importers

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[486] "Letter from Orientif Importers. 110 East Pender Street to Mr Elliot of Law Dept City of Vancouver October 21, 1969" Redevelopment Project Area A-6 (North) Blocks 72, 73 [correspondence] June 1968-October 1970, CVA, City Planning fonds, Series 305, 100F7 File 4.

[487] Redevelopment Project Area A-6 (North) Blocks 72, 73 [correspondence] June 1968-October 1970 100F7 File 4 Series 305.

[488] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971 AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5.

[489] SPOTA Journal [for the period] October 1968-July 1971 AM 734-S4 Box 583-E-07 File 5.

[490] Redevelopment Project Area A-6 (North) Blocks 72, 73 [correspondence] June 1968-October 1970, CVA, COV fonds, Series 305 Box 100-F-7 File 4.

submitted several development plans to the Urban Renewal Coordinating Committee that were declined for not meeting different building code regulations; they continued to ask for extensions to start construction.[491] In 1971, Orientif Importers sold off a portion to another investor, Vandy Developments, in an effort to secure further financing for their developments.

By July 1971, the Strathcona Rehabilitation Agreement had been signed and rehabilitation applications were going through the approval process. By the end of 1971, construction still had not started on Sites C & D and Orientif Importers had violated their contract with the City of Vancouver. The City of Vancouver offered to buy back the lots for three times the original sale price five years earlier.[492] However, the City of Vancouver was still unwilling to relinquish this parcel of land within the boundaries of the rehabilitation area. Instead, the City had wanted to construct the fire hall on this site, but as illustrated in Chapter Four, SPOTA argued that they should gain control over the land because they wanted to ensure that housing, appropriate for the needs of the neighbourhood, was constructed and that they did not lose control over the boundaries of the neighbourhood. SPOTA feared that the City would wrest control of the area by using the lots they already owned to disrupt the larger vision they had for their neighbourhood. Since Sites C & D covered a larger area than the individual lots within the neighbourhood, the redevelopment of it had the potential to provide significantly more housing for low-income residents. After a year of gaining public support and protesting, combined with a change in City Council, the proposed firehall was rescinded in early 1973, and discussions began again between SPOTA and the City as to what kind of housing development would be possible in such a large area of the neighbourhood, as plans for the first four phases of housing were on individual lots or two or three lots together. SPOTA knew they were working with a very tight timeline to develop new low-income housing within the neighbourhood to prove that their desired counter-narrative to public housing could be successfully accomplished. The development of Sites C & D revealed contrasting performances of property; the City of Vancouver wanted to encourage a profit-driven development model by increasing the density to ensure they could accrue higher revenue through property taxes, whereas

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[491] Redevelopment Project Area A-6 (North) Blocks 72, 73 [correspondence] June 1968-October 1970, CVA, COV fonds, Series 305 Box 100-F-7 File 4.

[492] Hayne Wai, *Vancouver Chinatown 1960-1980: A Community Perspective*, 12.

SAHS wanted to ensure affordable housing to replace what had been demolished over a decade earlier.

SPOTA worked with Britannia Design and Joe Wai to put together a comprehensive proposal for new housing units; Tom Mesic presented it to City Council on June 14, 1973.[493] Instead of letting SPOTA and SAHS develop Phase V exclusively, City Council formed the Site C & D Coordinating Committee and opened up development to other bidders. On January 9, 1974, five groups—SPOTA, Chinatown Lions, Shon Yee Association, Villa Cathay, and the Chinese Senior Citizen Association—presented development proposals. SPOTA and Shon Yee Association were the competitive bids, but while SPOTA was open to working with another association to develop low-income housing, the Shon Yee Association was not. The Shon Yee Association had proposed a twelve-storey tower with personal care and senior citizen units, and a townhouse complex of 72-three bedrooms units.[494] SPOTA objected to this proposal because the high-rise was not in keeping with the rest of the neighbourhood's single-family dwellings and low-rise apartment buildings. Both proposals stipulated that in order for housing to be affordable to low-income residents the price per square foot needed to be at $2.50. The differing views on how the parcels of land should be used reveal the complexity of building housing for a range of needs, both in the present and for the anticipated future needs of an aging population. Furthermore, the stakes of the conflict challenged what the role of housing should play within the neighbourhood because in order to construct more affordable housing, the density needed to increase, which would disrupt the existing visual aesthetics of the neighbourhood of low-rise apartments and single-family dwellings. Once again, SPOTA and SAHS fostered an open design process by hosting six preliminary meetings within the community, and finally settled on a design plan and filed the appropriate development permits in June 1974, thereby adhering to the bureaucratic framework established by the city.

Meanwhile, the City of Vancouver was caught in a legal battle with Orientif Importers and Vandy Developments over finalizing the sale of Sites C & D. The developer refused to sell the land back to the city, and the price of the land and building

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[493] City Planning, CVA, COV fonds, S465-1 Box 44-C-1 File 3.

[494] City Planning, CVA, COV fonds, S465-1 Box 44-C-1 File 3.

materials kept escalating. SPOTA knew that they would not be able to both buy the land and make a new development that would be affordable for the low-income residents and seniors who needed to be housed in the neighbourhood unless they were able to get further grants or other forms of government support.[495] The colonial view of land as for profit and not as for home became more and more entrenched as the legal battle dragged on. This had very real economic consequences for SPOTA's desire to ensure affordable housing for families and seniors within the neighbourhood. By June 1976, Sites C & D were still tied up in the legal battle, but SPOTA was issued a bill to renew the development permits because they had not started construction on Phase V. Jo-Anne Lee, president of SAHS, pleaded with Alderman Mike Harcourt, who had been involved in the early grassroots organizing of SPOTA, to intervene on their behalf.[496]

On May 15, 1979, City Council finally granted SPOTA "six months to negotiate land price and tenure with the Supervisor of Properties and arrange financing of a family housing project and if successful a further six months to obtain necessary permits and proceed with development in accordance with approved use and guidelines."[497] SPOTA countered that "it [was] the City's obligation to see to it that a most appropriate form of development can be implanted economically without sacrificing the long term goal of this historic inner city neighbourhood."[498] The cost of the land had jumped from $6.00 a square foot in 1974 to $13.00 a square foot five years later, which they felt made it unfeasible for the area.[499] Despite the delays, "it has been SPOTA's firm policy that any project proposed for Sites C & D must contribute to the overall revitalization of the community."[500] The organization remained committed to ensuring that bottom-up planning and development of a larger area would not repeat the destruction that public housing projects had created in their neighbourhood. The proposed development

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[495] A Proposed Development for Sites C and D by Strathcona Property Owners & Tenants Association, 15, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, S40 121-B-07 File 7.

[496] "Letter from Jo-Anne Lee to Mike Harcourt," SAHS Correspondence 1976, CVA, SPOTA Fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-1 File 5.

[497] A Proposed Development for Sites C and D by Strathcona Property Owners & Tenants Association, 2, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, S40 121-B-07 File 7.

[498] A Proposed Development for Sites C and D by Strathcona Property Owners & Tenants Association, 15, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, S40 121-B-07 File 7.

[499] A Proposed Development for Sites C and D by Strathcona Property Owners & Tenants Association, 15, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, S40 121-B-07 File 7.

[500] A Proposed Development for Sites C and D by Strathcona Property Owners & Tenants Association, 3, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, S40 121-B-07 File 7.

recognized the need for a variety of housing forms, and price ranges, as well as the need for space and greenery to provide a sense of home.

In 1980, SPOTA and SAHS finally got the right to build on Sites C & D. It took two years to turn the empty parcel of land into “a mixture of townhouses and apartments providing tangible proof that high-density housing can blend into the urban core with a minimum of fuss.”[501] By providing a blend of cooperative units and ones that were strata-titled owned, SPOTA and SAHS were able to create a mixed income complex, while at the same time ensuring that families could live affordably close to Chinatown. For Tom and Doris Chen, it allowed them to retire close to Chinatown after living in North Vancouver for fifteen years. They were able to be close to friends and Doris’s elderly father, who resided in Chinatown. For the Leungs, a family of six, the three-bedroom co-op provided affordable housing and ease of shopping and communication for the recent immigrants from China. The 44-unit low-rise apartment block was finished in 1983, and it ensured that some housing was specifically for seniors. SPOTA worked for a decade to ensure that the construction of new housing in their neighbourhood met the needs of low-income families and seniors, while at the same time maintaining the balance between densification and height to ensure Strathcona had a cohesive sense of home.

It is not clear why the City of Vancouver resisted the development of Sites C & D in Strathcona. The terms of the Strathcona Working Committee were clearly established in the fall of 1969, and rehabilitation of the existing housing stock began in earnest in the spring of 1972. Different forms of housing ownership were expanding across the city, with the construction of new strata-owned apartments being constructed in both Kerrisdale and the West End, and new large cooperative housing developments in False Creek and in Champlain Heights, and smaller ones elsewhere in the city, providing more affordable forms of family housing. The difficulty of constructing Phase V of housing does illustrate the challenge of constructing larger developments within the existing neighbourhood to meet the needs of the current residents. While Sites C & D could be viewed as a *tabula rasa*, though on a much smaller scale than previous developments, performatively the actual doing of bottom-up planning and development did not transfer easily on to this space. Unlike the development of False Creek, for example, the empty land would not tie into the larger urban narratives of becoming a cosmopolitan city. The

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[501] Shelley Fralic, “Hopeful housing,” *The Vancouver Sun*, April 1, 1982.

development of Sites C & D did not link to the sea wall or have a view of the water or mountains. By developing Sites C & D, SPOTA successfully maintained the boundaries of their neighbourhood by tirelessly advocating for more family housing within their neighbourhood to replace what was lost in the early stages of urban renewal.

Conclusion

The work of the Strathcona Area Housing Society was an ambitious endeavour to provide not-for-profit housing for a group of neighbourhood residents. Their desire to create a cohesive community was often subverted by newer residents wanting individual autonomy. This was a labour of love born out of a desire to preserve a sense of place, which resulted in many changes in leadership and organizational structure as SAHS tried to figure out better approaches to accommodate the interested applicants who wanted access to housing in their neighbourhood. As their numerous planning and designing consultations indicated, they recognized that home was deeply personal. The meetings and personal connections ensured that people understood the parameters of what they were agreeing to with leased land, cooperatives, and strata-titled ownership. This form of emotional labour was unrecognized in the construction of housing because within an economic model focused on profitability, it was difficult to account for a non-profit organization's attempts to support people's wishes and dreams for an imagined future in the structural environment. But in fact, it was the emotional connections that allow people to feel a sense of place and of belonging. At the same time, it also highlighted the difficulty in disrupting the colonial norms surrounding the ownership of a single-family dwelling, as people had internalized that this was the only way to achieve a sense of belonging, safety, and security. All of this posed some challenges with the construction of new housing because of the guidelines SPOTA and SAHS set out regarding who should get access to new housing. For example, "Mr. Giovannia at 881 Union [requested] permission to buy a provincial infill lot next to his parents (one of three lots in a row). He [had] lived [there] all his life."[502] They did not approve his request because the leased lots were supposed to be for new non-profit housing. This illustrates the difficulty in providing a sense of home for people within the neighbourhood because Mr Giovannia's emotional sense of place and belonging clashed with the legal

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[502] Strathcona Area Housing Society: Housing Committee Minutes July 18, 1974-77, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-1 File 1.

parameters for new development. Mr Giovannia wanted to remain on the street where he grew up and maintain the connection to his parents, which is what SPOTA had been advocating for over a decade. Yet in his case, he lost his sense of home because of the structural framework regulating the performativity of new housing within the neighbourhood did not support his desired performance of home.

Patricia Canning illustrates a second case in which the parameters set out by SAHS became difficult to apply. Ms Canning was involved in SPOTA as well as in setting up the criteria for the SAHS for housing selection. She wanted to purchase one of the new housing developments, but was excluded because her son did not live with her and she was not married to her current partner. She attempted to argue that her partner's mother counted as a dependent, but the restrictions for Phase III were limited to families which were defined as a man and woman and child. Canning then tried to access housing in Phase IV, which was restricted to childless couples, but SAHS would not accommodate living with her mother-in-law. Ultimately, she withdrew her application and deposit.

While SAHS was innovative in its land use with its designs and its land tenure to ensure affordability, they still defaulted to the state definition of domestic as a reflection of the nuclear family. These cases and conflicts illustrate the difficulty of placing the ideas of home within an economic structure because the ideas of home are expansive and change over the course of the one's life as different needs arise; the structure itself, however, is expected to accommodate for all those needs and remain stable. There is both a scripted and unscripted performance at play here. Many people were having difficulty seeing and understanding that home ownership does not necessarily lead to a stable and secure future. For example, those who had their home expropriated had come to realize that home ownership was meaningless in the eyes of the city officials wanting urban renewal, and they had few means to stop the process. In this regard, Mr. Fred Soon, whose personal history in Strathcona opened this chapter, posed another challenge to the parameters set up by SAHS. He remained committed in supporting SPOTA and was on the executive committee for many years despite no longer living in the neighbourhood. He wanted to purchase a new house in Strathcona in order to spend his retirement there and maintain his connections to the Chinese Benevolent Associations that he was involved in. However, according to the parameters set out by SPOTA and SAHS, new housing was prioritized for people who did not currently own a

house and had families, which prevented Mr. Soon from moving back into the neighbourhood that he felt was home. Despite numerous letters to City Council, Darlene Marzari, and SPOTA, Fred Soon did not qualify for housing in Strathcona under the rehabilitation guidelines. His pension from the post office, once he retired in February 1973, made his income too high to qualify for low-income housing,[503] and while members of SPOTA's executive were sympathetic to his case, especially after he volunteered his time to support urban rehabilitation, they felt than an exception could not be made to provide an opportunity to build a new house on one of the empty lots.[504] During SPOTA's September 16, 1975 meeting, there was an extended discussion with Fred Soon about why he wouldn't qualify for housing in the new infill housing. "This is not meant to fault the person who owns a home because this is being done by his own efforts and it is not his fault that he has an advantageous financial position." The minutes document a back-and-forth argument between members of the SAHS until Bessie Lee calls the meeting back to order, noting that the issue really should have been discussed three years ago.

This raises the question of whether feelings of home and belonging should have a time limit. It also points to the difficulty of dealing with unique applications—especially ones from people who are well-known to the Executive—that prove exceptions to SPOTA's own rules. Fred Soon had been part of SPOTA since December 1968, and had volunteered his time and energy to support their efforts. He had purchased and lived within the neighbourhood for decades prior to his legal battles with the City of Vancouver regarding his house, but ultimately according to the definitions SPOTA had developed for screening applicants to get access to housing, Fred Soon was denied the right to access new housing in Strathcona. After nearly ten years of letter writing, and self-advocating, Fred Soon was unable to get back into the neighbourhood that he had previously called home because he did not fit into the domestic parameters of household and family. Ironically, SPOTA and SAHS in the process of advocating for the preservation of home within Strathcona by resisting the taming of their neighbourhood through urban renewal, by ensuring that differing cultural backgrounds of the home countries were acknowledged, and by securing housing for low-income families, had

[503] Fred Soon, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S5 Box 583-D-2 File 9.

[504] "SAHS Minutes September 9, 1975" Strathcona Area Housing Society: Housing Committee Minutes July 18, 1974-77, CVA, SPOTA fonds, AM 734-S3 Box 583-E-1 File 1.

performed a version of the very rigid bureaucratic gatekeeping that they were trying to avoid. The deeper layer of house and home becoming conflated was maintained throughout their rehabilitation process as the palimpsestic layer of municipal colonialism rather than completely disrupting second-wave municipal colonialism.

Chapter 7.

Conclusion

Vancouver is full of examples of its settler-colonial history, often hidden in plain sight under heritage plaques celebrating the architects, or first homeowners of single-family dwellings. Drawing from Rebecca Schneider's examination of historical reenactments, I suggest that housing is a performance of settler-colonialism that is reenacted over and over again. She suggests "if the past is never over, or never completed, 'remains' might be understood not solely as object or document material, but also the immaterial labor of bodies engaged in and with that incomplete past."[505] I suggest that the material object of housing and the bureaucratic structures keeping the domestic norms in place allows us to reenact a settler-colonial past in the way we live and move through the city. By looking at urban renewal as second-wave municipal colonialism I sought to emphasize the continuation of both the material and symbolic performances of domesticity and housing based on settler-colonial norms.

This project sought to make connections between colonial structures and how they disrupt people's attachment to land. Rather than viewing colonialism as a single event, I argue that it needs to be viewed as a structure that has guided decades worth of decisions on how an urban environment should grow and change over time. In order for reconciliation to happen, understanding both the events that caused the dispossession of Indigenous lands and the perpetuation of a second-wave municipal colonialism in the successive settler structures built upon those lands need to be examined. While the residents in Strathcona were predominately non-Indigenous, the ways in which they argued for the importance of their home sheds light on how state decisions have been made to disrupt people's sense of home and place.

However, what remains of SPOTA's story in public narratives of Vancouver's history is the fact that the residents blocked the freeway from going through downtown. This fact is touted as significant in many urban history texts on the city because it makes

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[505] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 33.

the City of Vancouver unlike many other urban areas in North America.[506] The lack of a freeway is celebrated as unique to the City's built form and is presented as clear proof that Vancouver is a city that does not need to conform to the urban norms in North America in order to be considered legitimate as a cosmopolitan city.[507] While this does set the City of Vancouver apart from other cities in North America, this is not the most significant aspect of SPOTA's advocacy. What was striking to me about SPOTA's activism is that they inserted their bodies and their labour into the narrative of housing in the city and challenged the colonial norms of domesticity.

Their protection of their whole neighbourhood and their promotion of a variety of inclusive forms of housing does not become the dominant narrative of the city because it challenges the colonial view of how people should live in the city. One could argue that the development of the South side of False Creek also promoted inclusive forms of housing in the city; however, this development project was driven by the Federal government rather than from grassroots organizing growing out of the needs of an existing neighbourhood. Unlike the development of a variety of housing and home ownership options on the South side of False Creek, the redevelopment of the neighbourhood of Strathcona was considered an "experiment." I argue that the success of Strathcona's neighbourhood advocacy has mostly gone unnoticed in research because it does not fall under the larger urban narratives of what the City of Vancouver was striving to become. False Creek has garnered long-standing attention because it is located on the seawall, which feeds into the larger city narratives of leisure and the promotion of park space.[508] Strathcona lacks the same park amenities and connections to the seawall to make it a destination in the way that Yaletown, on the north side of False Creek, became in the late 1990s. Thus, what remains in urban history discussions of Strathcona is the narrative of the freeway, which I argue perpetuates a top-down view of land in which the transportation route becomes the discussion point and the

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[506] John Punter, *The Vancouver Achievement: Urban Planning and Design* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003); Mike, Harcourt, Ken Cameron with Sean Rossiter, *City making in paradise: nine decisions that saved Vancouver* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2007).

[507] Lance Berelowitz, *Dream City: Vancouver and the Global Imagination* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2005).

[508] These were established by Thomas Mawson and Harland Bartholomew and Associates in their grand redevelopment plans in 1911 and 1928, respectively.

opportunities to use land in ways that are personally meaningful is not part of the discussion.

I argue that viewing urban planning changes through this lens of second-wave municipal colonialism sheds light on the understanding of the colonial structures embedded in civic policies. I argue that looking at the parallels between language use and policies guiding the performance of urban settlement and housing construction illustrates the continuity of colonialism both in urban planning, and popular culture. Examining the performativity of colonialism by looking specifically at the tools used to justify exclusion and dispossession enables a more nuanced discussion of urban development to emerge because, as my research shows, SPOTA used the inherited tools of colonialism to illustrate a very different view of their neighbourhood. By creating their own maps and using surveys to collect data on the residents, and by supplementing this information with walking tours and photographs, the residents in Strathcona showed that their neighbourhood was not decaying or derelict. SPOTA's neighbourhood advocacy and use of the tools of colonialism exposed the idea that there was nothing neutral or objective about mapping and urban renewal. They illustrated how the City of Vancouver characterized their neighbourhood as crowded and derelict by exposing the structural decisions made by the City of Vancouver early in its settlement and throughout the 1950s, which led to the physical decline of the neighbourhood. Yet, municipal colonialism remains as the throughline guiding Vancouver's housing policies today.

What remains of urban rehabilitation is an important question to ask because unlike the City's wish to demolish the area after 10-20 years by mollifying the current residents, the developments constructed by the Strathcona Area Housing Society still remain as viable forms of architecture within the urban environment. The neighbourhood continues to thrive as the city has continued to grow, yet now the very retention of the built form achieved by SPOTA makes in a rapidly gentrifying neighbourhood. Housing availability and affordability also remain a contentious topic in Vancouver's urban development. With the rental market currently hovering around 0.9% availability,[509] and

[509] Claire Wilson, "Metro Vancouver's rental vacancy rate drops as demand, prices soar: CMHC" Business in Vancouver, January 26, 2023, https://biv.com/article/2023/01/metro-vancouvers-rental-vacancy-rate-drops-demand-prices-soar-cmhc [Accessed: June 19, 2023].

with the average house price in the city at $1,123,400,[510] it is clear that Vancouver has chosen not to solve the housing problems Leonard Marsh pointed out in 1950, when he stated: “already the price of housing is unaffordable for most.”[511] Furthermore, he expressed concern about the lack of available rental options. There is still a housing crisis in Vancouver, and demolishing parts of east side neighbourhoods and constructing new housing that is largely unaffordable for the people currently living there reflects shades of Vancouver’s urban renewal policies in the 1960s. It was a choice on the part of government officials to continue to keep policies and procedures in place to ensure that housing remained and continues to remain unaffordable. But as this project has shown, imagining neighbourhoods as home and preserving housing in order for low-income families to affordably remain in the city is possible. I think it is important to highlight this brief moment in Vancouver’s history when all three levels of government worked with residents to ensure that their sense of home was preserved. It is important to draw attention to the fact that constructing not-for-profit housing is possible. In these ways SPOTA successfully disrupted the progress narrative embedded in second-wave municipal colonialism.

As my project has shown, there are two challenges in trying to solve the current housing crisis. The first challenge is the multiplicity of meanings of the word domestic and home. As SPOTA’s activism showed housing needs to reflect the values of household and family, and those values are tied to gender, sexuality, race, cultural background, and class. It is difficult to establish policies and procedures that ensure everyone’s housing needs are met. SPOTA sought to preserve a blend of residential, and commercial establishments within their neighbourhood, as well as to expand their park space to ensure that people’s sense of home could be also met within a wider area. The lack of civic planning for a range of household needs both within individual dwellings, but also in the neighbourhood as a whole, became particularly apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic as lockdowns occurred and people spent long days indoors and were encouraged to stay within a smaller geographical area of the city. Many discovered that their home did not meet the needs of the household and family, nor did their surrounding neighbourhood offer a range of commercial options. Strathcona

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[510] “Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver” The Canadian Real Estate Association, https://creastats.crea.ca/board/vanc [Accessed: June 19, 2023].

[511] Marsh, *Rebuilding a Neighbourhood*, 4.

offers a template for future neighbourhood redevelopment; it is not just about providing affordable housing, but also about providing nearby commercial amenities and park spaces to foster a sense of home.

The second challenge in solving Vancouver's housing crisis is recognizing that a home does not mean the same thing as a house as an economic commodity. The narratives around the ownership of housing are directly linked to settler-colonialism and the displacement of Indigenous caretakers of the land. In this respect, the Squamish development at Seńáḵw and the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh [MST] Nations are important disruptions to the housing narrative in the city in its aims to provide rental housing and affordable homes.[512] As the City of Vancouver moves towards its goal of becoming a City of Reconciliation, it needs to examine the history of its housing policies and how they were used to exclude.[513] Since housing makes up the predominant land use in the city, housing policies and the history of neighbourhood development are of particular importance. Vancouver's long-standing progress narrative does not include attachment and connection; it is based on ideas of aesthetics and efficiency. Planners Libby Porter and Janice Barry further suggest that interrogating the performance of how land has been divided up in the past and examining the process of who decides who lives where is an important part of decolonizing the city, as many of these planning structures are still in place in cities today.[514]

Though Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang argue that we cannot truly decolonize the city because land cannot be transferred back to Indigenous populations, I suggest that we can change the structural narratives guiding Vancouver's urban development away from a colonial framework by ensuring that housing policies and land-use guidelines do not continue to follow a policy of exclusion and dispossession.[515] Porter and Barry advocate for decolonizing planning because "planning as it is conceived and performed

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[512] "Project Details," Seńákw NCH'KAY West, 2023 https://senakw.com/vision [Accessed: June 19, 2023], and "Jericho Lands," Canada Lands Company https://www.clc-sic.ca/real-estate/jericho-lands [Accessed: June 19, 2023].

[513] "City of Reconciliation" City of Vancouver https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/city-of-reconciliation.aspx [Accessed: June 19, 2023].

[514] Libby Porter and Janice Barry, *Planning for Coexistence? Recognizing Indigenous Rights Through Land-use Planning in Canada and Australia* (London: Routledge, 2016).

[515] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Unbecoming Claims: Pedagogies of Refusal in Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 20 (6) (2014): 811-818.

today in settler states is an innate part of the process that makes and remakes colonial spatial and political authority normal and coherent."[516] By looking at how colonial ideas of planning and private property combined together to shape a narrative of settler-colonialism in which occupying the land has become naturalized and normalized, and by looking at why and how people settled in this specific location on the West Coast, I have traced the thread of colonialism in present land use guidelines and popular discourse in how we talk about house and home in Vancouver. Looking at the ways in which people resisted the narrow view of how to live and who could live in the city gives insight into how to advocate for something new. In order to come to an understanding of how to decolonize the city, we must first begin to understand how housing has been developed in the city through a consistent colonial paradigm. By putting western theories of urban development and civic living in dialogue with writings by Indigenous scholars, and by emphasizing ideas of home, I have illustrated a different way of looking at urban growth in order to show an "embodied and conceptual relationship to the land."[517]

I argue that for the City of Vancouver to enact true and meaningful reconciliation, it requires a scraping back of the layers of the existing narratives that have determined *how* people get to live in this city and *who* gets to live in this city. The leisurely cosmopolitan city to which Vancouver aspires to be is predicated on an ownership model of land use and creates a hierarchal structure of who gets to keep and maintain a sense of belonging to their part of the city. In other words, by looking at how people have created a sense of home in Vancouver, I hoped to illustrate how people form a sense of attachment to their neighbourhood that both supports and counters the dominant narratives established by the city.

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[516] Porter and Barry, *Planning for Coexistence*, 5.

[517] Brenna Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 194.

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