

Neighbourhood Planning and Community Support for New Multi-Family Housing Projects in Vancouver

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Ethics Statement



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Abstract

This research study investigates community support and concerns for new multi-family housing projects in Vancouver. It examines the approaches that planners and developers use at the neighbourhood planning and development application stage to increase community support and mitigate concerns for these types of projects. The research also suggests new approaches and strategies that planners and developers could take to increase community support and mitigate concerns for new multi-family housing.

The key findings of this study indicate that housing affordability, the height of buildings, community amenities, design, community character, and parking/traffic concerns are the main issues that arise in the discussions regarding support for and opposition towards new multi-family housing developments in Vancouver. This paper discusses the importance of early and frequent community engagement, neighbourhood planning, and developer contributions (community amenities) to achieving community support for new housing projects. However, this paper also reveals that policies related to improving housing affordability and providing community amenities can result in polarizing viewpoints within the community. Further clarity, accountability, and education regarding how community amenities and new housing are delivered is needed for both market housing and affordable housing. The study also finds that planners and developers should continue to enhance community engagement techniques to build community support and improve multi-family housing project outcomes.

The lessons learned and recommendations provided in this paper add to the body of literature on smart growth and the “barriers” to developing new housing in transit-oriented locations. The findings in this paper will be useful to planners and developers, as well as to other related stakeholders who work in the fields of housing policy and transit-oriented development.

Keywords: Multi-Family Housing; Community Support; Smart Growth; Transit Oriented Development; Housing Affordability; Infill Housing; NIMBY; Equitable Development

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List of Acronyms

BIA	Business Improvement Association
DCL	Development Cost Levies
CACs	Community Amenity Contributions
FSR	Floor Space Ratio
UDI	Urban Development Institute

Glossary

* Note that these definitions apply specifically to the City of Vancouver context.

BIA	Business Improvement Association. BIAs are registered as non-profit organizations under the BC <i>Societies Act</i> .
Community Amenity Contributions (CACs)	CACs are cash contributions by property developers which can be required when City Council grants development rights through developer-initiated rezoning.
Condominiums	Buildings in which units of property are owned individually, while the common property is owned jointly by all of the owners.
Density (residential)	The number of households, persons, or dwelling units in a given area (or for a specific development site).
Density Bonusing	Density bonuses/bonusing offer developments a level of density that surpasses the allowable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) in exchange for amenities or housing needed by the community.
Development Cost Charges/Levies	Development cost charges/levies are monies that municipalities and regional districts collect from land developers to offset that portion of the costs related to these services that are a direct result of new development.
Floor Space Ratio (FSR)	This is a measurement of a building's total area relative to the area of the site on which it is located. For example, a building with a density of 2.0 FSR has a built area equal to twice that of the land on which it is located.
Height	This is how tall a building is from the ground to its highest point.
Inclusionary Zoning	Inclusionary zoning is a municipal planning ordinance that requires a given share of new construction to be affordable for people with low to moderate incomes.

Laneway House	A laneway house is a small, detached home built on a single-family lot at the lane. Laneway homes are permitted in addition to a secondary suite in the main house, and like secondary suites, are for rental or family occupancy only and cannot be strata-titled.
Public Benefits Strategy	A Public Benefits Strategy identifies the needs of the new and existing population, assesses area services compared to City-wide service levels, estimates costs, and identifies funding sources over a year 30 period.
Rate of Change Regulations	Requirements in the City's Zoning and Development By-law preserve existing rental housing by requiring one-for-one replacement for redevelopment projects involving six or more dwelling units.
Rental Official Development Plan	The Rental Housing Stock ODP preserves existing rental housing by requiring one for one replacement of existing rental units for redevelopment of projects involving the demolition of existing rental housing.
Rezoning	A rezoning is a legal change to a bylaw to permit an alternate type of development. A rezoning is either initiated by City staff following a change in policy for an area, or by the public, through a rezoning application submitted by a developer. City Council can approve, refuse, or amend re-zonings after a Public Hearing.
Secure Market Rental/Purpose Built Rental Housing	Apartments or buildings where 100 per cent of the residential units are rental. Through regulation, the residential housing units are secured for 60 years or life of the building, whichever is greater.
Social Housing	Housing for low and moderate income singles and families, usually subsidized through a variety of mechanisms. The current model in Vancouver is a self-contained unit, with a private bathroom and kitchen, owned or operated by government or a non-profit.
Vancouver Building By-law	The Vancouver Building Bylaw regulates the design and construction of buildings, as well as the administrative provisions related to permitting, inspections, and the enforcement of these requirements.

Zoning

Zoning is the legal tool used to regulate how land can be developed. Each zone or area in the city has a zoning schedule that sets out rules for a building's use, siting, maximum density, height, etc.

Chapter 1.

Introduction

A review of the academic literature on the concept of smart growth reveals a consistent argument made by planners, policy-makers, and academics about the benefits of concentrating new multi-family housing developments in existing neighbourhoods and near frequent transit. Nonetheless, planners and developers throughout North America have frequently experienced community opposition when trying to implement this type of growth pattern.

Since the 1970s, the City of Vancouver has promoted policies to advance the urban intensification of housing. These initiatives have generally been successful in the central core of the city (downtown and False Creek areas). Over the past three decades, most of the new multi-family housing built in Vancouver has been concentrated on former industrial lands. This has received less public opposition, as residential uses were generally viewed by the public as more favourable than to the former industrial activities. These industrial lands were also detached from the residential neighbourhoods of Vancouver, as they were mostly surrounded by commercial and waterfront uses (Punter, 2003).

However, with shrinking re-development opportunities in the central core of Vancouver, the City has introduced initiatives over the past decade to densify already established residential neighbourhoods (outside of the central core). This has often been met with public resistance, which has delayed or prevented new multi-family housing units from being developed (Quastel et al., 2012).

In addition to the growing popularity of “smart growth” principles amongst planners and policy-makers in North America, a more compact form of housing near the core of cities has increased in popularity amongst new homebuyers and renters (Burda et al, 2012). Through an analysis of demographic trends in the US, Gallagher (2014) illustrates that low density peripheral suburbs are generally declining in consumer desirability because of an increased appetite to live in more densely populated neighbourhoods closer to the core of cities and near good transit. In Metro Vancouver, there is a very strong consumer demand to live in multi-family housing in or near the core of Vancouver. The popularity of living in these areas is reflected in the relatively high real estate prices in these locations (Punter, 2003).

In order to live in these increasingly desirable locations, multi-family housing is often the only housing choice that people can afford (as opposed to more expensive single-family homes). Thus, multi-family housing is becoming increasingly suitable for individuals and families who want to live in a specific location for lifestyle, work, or commuting reasons, yet cannot afford the price of a single-family dwelling, and/or are willing to trade space (and often a backyard) to reduce their housing costs (Obrinsky and Stein, 2007).

In summary, the development of new multi-family housing in Vancouver meets two important goals: 1) it helps to achieve principles related to “smart growth”, and 2) it helps to facilitate the availability and diversity of new homes in order to better match emerging consumer preferences to live in more urban and transit-oriented locations. Section 2.1 addresses how the City of Vancouver’s plans and policies are related to the implementation of smart growth and housing affordability/diversity.

1.1. Research Questions

Given the importance of permitting new multi-family housing projects in Vancouver, the challenges related to achieving community support for these types of projects deserves further investigation.

Therefore, my research question is: *How have planners and developers mitigated community concerns and increased community support for new multi-family housing projects¹ in Vancouver?*

I have developed three sub-questions to help guide my research. These sub-questions are answered by studying two specific neighbourhoods (and their community planning processes) and four multi-family housing projects in Vancouver as well as their development application processes.

The three sub-questions are:

1. What are the themes of community support and opposition for new multi-family housing projects in Vancouver?
2. What strategies do planners and developers employ during the community planning and development application process to increase community support and mitigate community concerns for new multi-family housing projects in Vancouver?
3. What new strategies might planners and developers explore to achieve greater community support for these types of projects?

¹ My definition of “multi-family” housing includes apartment and townhomes, as these are the encouraged uses within the City of Vancouver’s multi-family zoning districts.

Chapter 2.

Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of the following literature review is to establish a foundation of evidence to support my research questions and to create a conceptual framework to inform my data collection methods and analysis.

First, the literature review will explore the concept of smart growth. This will include an explanation for why new multi-family housing projects – particularly in urban locations near transit – have become a prevalent form of housing that planners and academics promote under the concept of smart growth.

The City of Vancouver and Metro Vancouver (the regional body responsible for coordinating land use designations and other services in Metro Vancouver) have emphasized the importance of locating new multi-family housing projects in strategic locations, particularly in “urban centres” and “frequent transit corridors”. Metro Vancouver and the City of Vancouver’s policy rationale for promoting this type of housing is rooted in their aspirations to improve the environment, economy, and housing diversity and affordability, all of which are goals of smart growth.

Metro Vancouver’s Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) (2011) encourages this type of development in transit-oriented locations in Vancouver and the City of Vancouver has promoted this form of development in its Regional Context Statement (City of Vancouver, 2013a), which demonstrates how the City’s existing plans and policies support the goals and strategies identified in Metro Vancouver’s RGS.

More specifically, the City of Vancouver has promoted the supply of new market and subsidized multi-family housing projects in its recently approved Community Plans for Grandview-Woodland, Marpole, West End, Mount Pleasant, Norquay, and the Downtown Eastside. Furthermore, the City's housing affordability and diversity strategies (Housing & Homelessness Strategy, 2011; Mayor's Task Force on Housing Affordability, 2012; and Secured Market Rental Housing Policy, 2012) encourages new market and subsidized multi-family developments.

In addition, Vancouver's most recent transportation plan (Transportation 2040) recognizes the importance of a more compact built-form to support walking, biking, and transit, and the Vancouver Economic Action Strategy (2013) acknowledges the importance of creating more diverse and affordable housing forms in Vancouver, as high housing prices have been cited as a barrier to attracting companies and employees to Vancouver.

This paper also provides a review of the literature on barriers to the successful implementation of smart growth policies. One of the more prevalent barriers discussed in the literature relates to the concept of 'not in my backyard' (NIMBY). A review of NIMBY and how it manifests within the context of achieving new multi-family housing, in urban and transit-oriented locations will provide a foundation for understanding neighbourhood concerns about new multi-family housing projects in Vancouver.

Lastly, I will review literature on strategies to increase community support for new multi-family housing projects. The literature makes a strong case for planners and developers to explore more effective techniques at the neighbourhood planning and development application stage in order to help increase community support for projects that adhere to smart growth principles. A review of this literature will provide a foundation for analyzing the techniques used by planners and developers in Vancouver, as well as the effectiveness of these techniques with regard to increasing community support for new multi-family housing projects.

2.2. Smart Growth

The concept of “smart growth” has emerged as a response to the negative consequences of sprawl. Sprawl refers to dispersed, segregated (single-use), low density, automobile-oriented neighbourhoods on the outskirts of cities (Beck, Kolankiewicz & Camarota 2003). Sprawl is widely documented in the planning literature as an unsustainable growth pattern that has resulted in a range of environmental, public health, social, and economic challenges, and should be halted in favour of more compact forms of development (Soule, 2006).

Smart growth, as an alternative to sprawl, offers a more compact, mixed, multi-modal development pattern. Several studies have attempted to summarize the core aspects of smart growth. Downs (2005, p. 368) concludes that the most common principles that reflect a strategy to achieve smart growth include:

- Limiting outward extension of new development in order to make settlements more compact and preserve open spaces;
- Raising residential densities in both new-growth areas and existing neighbourhoods;
- Providing for more mixed land uses and pedestrian friendly layouts to minimize the use of cars on short trips;
- Loading the public costs of new development onto consumers via impact fees rather than having these costs paid by the community in general;
- Emphasizing public transit to reduce the use of private vehicles; and
- Revitalizing older existing neighbourhoods

Frequently used terms related to the implementation of smart growth include *urban intensification* and *infill development*, which refer to development occurring within the existing built boundaries of a city.

Criticisms of smart growth mostly derive from groups (often suburban developers) who believe that the “management” of growth has negative societal and economic consequences. They argue that more of a “free market” approach to property

development should occur, particularly as it relates to new greenfield development. They argue that smart growth “harms consumers and infringes on freedom” and restrictions of new housing supply around the periphery of cities can lead to more expensive housing prices (Litman, 2015a, p.10).

Litman (2015a) argues that these conclusions ignore the high infrastructure and transport costs of greenfield development. These conclusions also ignore the environmental degradation of suburban sprawl that occurs as a result of the larger “footprint” on the landscape. Suburban sprawl can also lead to many indirect economic, social, and public health consequences (Novaco & Gonzalez, 2011).

There are other, however, more legitimate concerns with smart growth that seem to have wider support in the literature. Smart growth fails to address social concerns like gentrification and housing affordability (Litman, 2015a; and Downs, 2005), which are discussed in more detail in the section below.

2.3. Multi-Family Housing & Housing Affordability

While the smart growth literature advocates for more affordable housing options (Litman, 2015a & 2015b) in compact areas, it falls short in terms of how to achieve this goal and defining exactly what “more affordable housing options” means.

Although Anthony Downs (2005) is generally a supporter of smart growth, he explains how smart growth policies have been known to escalate housing prices rather than decrease them. This is generally because of land use policies that limit the land supply. In a region with growing demand, a lack of land supply can increase housing prices (Downs, 2005). Cutler (as cited in Litman, 2015b) argues that it is the combination of land supply restrictions on the periphery of a region (suburban sprawl) and higher density infill development that tend to make housing more expensive.

Supporters of smart growth argue that increases in prices are a reflection of the desirability of these communities and that rising prices can be improved through

increased densities (new supply) and decreased unit sizes. Further, transportation costs are significantly reduced in smart growth locations (Alexander and Tomalty, 2002; Filion, & McSpurren, 2007; Litman, 2015a).

Although there is a rough correlation between higher-density, multi-family housing and various definitions of “affordable housing,” in the academic literature, assuming that these terms are synonymous is problematic. Multi-family units can come in several types (townhome, garden apartment, low-rise, mid-rise, high-rise), different sizes, and different levels of quality. The price per square foot for renting or purchasing these units can vary significantly based on factors such as the age, location, and quality of the dwelling unit.

Lee et al. (2008) use the example of Vancouver to argue that density does not necessarily equate to affordability. They note that increasing housing supply in Vancouver has not resulted in lower rates of home ownership or lower rental prices. They argue that land values continue to rise due to the high demand for housing in Vancouver and the increased attractiveness of areas in Vancouver. Increasing the supply of market housing has helped middle to high-end income earners who want to live in Vancouver, yet has failed to improve housing options for many low and middle-income earners. Thus, if a higher level of affordability is to be achieved, more direct approaches such as the use of inclusionary zoning² should be employed in order to ensure the construction of non-market and market rental housing in new developments (Lee et. al, 2008).

Lee et al. (2008) recognize that if middle and lower income housing is not available in Vancouver, people will seek affordable housing further away from the central city – often on the periphery of the region in auto-oriented areas. This results in increased transportation costs, which reduces the savings of living on the periphery of the region, and has environmental consequences. Lee et. al (2008) note that a smart

² Inclusionary zoning is a municipal planning ordinance that requires a given share of new construction to be affordable for people with low to moderate incomes.

growth pattern of development has many benefits unrelated to housing affordability. For example, it promotes walking and biking as alternative transportation modes, a greater utilization of transit, and high levels of public and private goods and services in the local neighbourhood.

The “commodification” of housing also presents a challenge with regard to housing affordability and raises concerns about new development in Vancouver. The commodification of housing occurs when a home is bought for investment purposes rather than shelter. Housing speculation, foreign investment and the purchase of vacation or secondary properties are examples of the types of housing commodification that have increased housing prices in Vancouver. The commodification of housing has resulted in housing that is targeted towards investors, but not always suitable or affordable for residents who live in the city (Rothberg, 2008). However, a significant portion of “investor driven” housing in Vancouver (particularly condominiums) is rented to locals and therefore provides a source of new rental housing in Vancouver. Nevertheless, condominiums do not provide a secure form of housing for renters, as owners can evict their tenants (City of Vancouver, 2013).

Nonetheless, there is a belief in the literature that if zoning substantially restricts the development of new multi-family dwelling units, it poses a barrier to the provision of more affordable housing forms. Since higher-density, multifamily housing are generally more affordable than low-density, single family housing, zoning barriers to higher-density and multi-family housing can be considered a barrier to the improvement of housing affordability (Knaap et al., 2007). Multi-family housing is generally more affordable than single-family housing in similar locations. It is suitable for individuals (and increasingly families) who are willing to trade space in order to reduce their housing costs (Obrinsky and Stein, 2007).

Overall, this literature review has revealed the importance of new multi-family housing supply in strategic locations. However, it has also shed light on the challenges related to housing affordability and gentrification that are associated with the smart growth model.

Policy-makers in Vancouver have recognized the connection between new multi-family housing supply and enhancing housing affordability and diversity. They have thus developed the following policies to promote the supply of new multi-family housing in Vancouver:

- Metro Vancouver Affordable Housing Strategy (updated 2016)
- Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy (2011)
- Mayor’s Task Force on Housing Affordability (2012)
- Vancouver Housing and Homelessness Strategy (2011)
- Secured Market Rental Housing Policy (2012)
- Updated Community Plans (2012- 2015)

All of these policies advocate for increased multi-family housing supply across the entire housing continuum (non-market and market, and rental and strata). My research therefore includes a diverse range of case studies in order to include elements of the entire multi-family housing continuum: social, rental, and ownership housing. Further, all of these policies particularly emphasize the creation of more rental and social housing in Vancouver, partly in light of the affordability challenges related to ownership housing in Vancouver.

2.4. Community Opposition and Support for New Housing

Although the academic literature provides strong support for smart growth, its implementation can be difficult to achieve. Community opposition to infill development is one of the barriers to achieving smart growth identified in the literature.

Community support for new housing and opposition towards it influence the “politics” behind land use decisions. Theories about these politics generally fall into two groups. The “growth machine” theory argues that city zoning officials use zoning and other land use regulations as tools to distribute development in ways that benefit business and real estate elites. Other local government theorists focus instead on the political power of homeowners and their concerns about property values. From this

viewpoint, policymakers cater to homeowners' demands for low property taxes, high levels of public services and public amenities, and protection from new housing development in or near their neighbourhood in order to protect the value of their property (Been et al, 2013).

The "growth machine" theory has been typically thought to describe urban land use politics, while the "home-voter" theory explains suburban land use. More recently, Been et al. (2013) explain how cities have begun to engage in land use practices long associated with suburbs, such as downzoning land to more restrictive regulations and imposing substantial fees for development approval. Been et al. (2013) believe that this shift should lead to a re-examination of conventional perceptions of urban land use politics. Through an examination of re-zonings in New York City, Been et al. (2013) reveal that home-voters play a more powerful role in urban politics than academics, policymakers and judges have long assumed.

Community opposition is often discussed in the planning literature and in planning practices under the concept of NIMBY. Dear (1992, p. 288) defines NIMBY as "the protectionist attitudes of and oppositional tactics adopted by community groups facing an unwelcome development in their neighbourhood". McConnell and Wiley (2010) explain that residents who have lived in a neighbourhood for a long period tend to be suspicious of change in their community, particularly when new uses, people, and densities are introduced.

The literature notes that residents' overarching concerns about new housing development are that densification will negatively impact the character of their community; result in less green space; (Jenks et al. 2000; Woodcock et al. 2008); put stress upon local services (including schools, parks, and transportation), and; impact the value of established home prices due to the neighbourhood's changing characteristics (Schneider, 1989). Related concerns are growing fears regarding increased crime as well as prejudices against individuals with different ethnicities and a different socio-economic background (Tighe, 2010). I used these five overarching concerns as a basis to help me identify themes related to community opposition in Vancouver.

Fisher (1993) draws on the academic literature of social psychology to comprehend and address conflict at the inter-group level. Conflicts of values, interests, needs or power can cause inter-group conflict. A home represents a sense of physical, social, and economic safety to many people. Anything that seems a threat to this safety can produce strong protectionist sentiments. White and Ashton (as cited in Wynne-Edwards, 2003) argue that such sentiments can be a strong motivator that unites neighbourhoods and bring much of the NIMBY opposition to new housing projects. This can be particularly true for projects that are designated as “affordable housing”, which strengthens the fear of “strangers” even more.

There are reasons, however, for home-owners and renters to want more housing in their communities. Obrinsky and Stein (2007) indicate that the potential opponents and potential supporters of housing are completely different audiences with completely different interests. Community members who support new multi-family housing tend to want the benefits that come from responsible development. They may be excited about the creation of new/diverse types of housing, affordable housing, community amenities, and the jobs or tax revenues associated with retail and development.

There are also strategies that planners and developers use to help “shape” support for new multi-family housing. These include strategies related to community engagement and community planning and project outcomes (further discussed in section 2.5 below).

2.5. Addressing and Overcoming Community Opposition (The Role of Planning, Planners, and Developers)

As discussed in the sections below, the literature identifies the important role that planners and developers play in shaping community support for new projects. More specifically, the literature focuses on strategies used by developers and planners to: 1) improve community engagement, and 2) improve project and planning outcomes.

For this paper, I have decided to examine the role of both planners and developers. While there is extensive literature on how planners and planning policies can help shape smart growth, there is a lack of research on how real estate developers can do the same (Downs, 2005). Beuschel and Rudel (2009, p. 98) note that real estate developers have played a critical role in shaping urban landscapes over the past 50 years, yet have “rarely been a focus for study”. They emphasize the importance of studying developer behaviour and strategies in order to engender more effective policy outcomes.

2.5.1. Improving Community Engagement (Community Planning and Projects)

The strategies employed by planners and developers to engage with a community can impact community acceptance of new multi-family housing projects.

Community engagement related to new development can occur at the community planning stage as well as at the development application stage. A Community Plan (also referred to as a Comprehensive Plan) is a policy-oriented document that provides a regulatory framework for fostering new development (Berke, Godschalk, and Kaiser 2006). Community Plans help to inform infrastructure and amenity decisions related to new development. They are developed through a deliberative, community-wide planning process that specifies a community’s goals and aspirations for future development (Dalton and Burby 1994; Berke, Godschalk, and Kaiser 2006).

It is believed that greater public participation in the community planning process can lead to stronger plans, greater support for development, and more successful implementation (Burby 2003; Berke, Godschalk, and Kaiser 2006). The development of successful Community Plans can help to energize, engage, and inspire the public to support key planning principles and ideas (Bunnell and Jepson, 2011). Increased engagement can mean less community cynicism and opposition, and lower costs for later on, as it prevents complaints at the implementation stage (Sipila & Tyrvaenen, 2005; and Shipley & Ultz, 2012).

Mascarenhas & Scarce (2004) argue that the legitimacy of the engagement often makes a planning process acceptable to the residents. Innes and Booher (2010) explain how a well-mediated planning process can produce consensual planning outcomes among diverse stakeholders with respect to issues such as new housing supply.

The community engagement strategies that the literature identifies as helpful to improving community support for planning and development processes can be divided into seven groups: 1) consult early; 2) consult frequently; 3) promote collaboration between key stakeholders in the community; 4) ensure that individuals in the community have the proper information (separate facts from myths); 5) listen carefully and alter projects/policies in an effort to create mutual benefits; 6) identify and engage allies in the community, such as local business and housing advocacy groups, and; 7) engage individuals with less dominant voices in the community (Chapple et al., 2010; Innes and Booher, 2010).

I used these seven goals to help frame my interview questions and the analysis of the communication strategies used by planners and developers. I wanted to know if planners and developers were trying to achieve these goals, and if so, which ones were prioritized and which ones seemed to have the most effective outcomes.

In trying to achieve these goals, some planners and developers recommend an approach that uses studies, images, credible experts and practitioners, development tours, and other positive, concrete references to reassure residents about planning and project outcomes and address any possible misconceptions (Chapple et al, 2010; Pendall, 1999).

In addition, some common approaches to specific situations include emphasizing the community (as opposed to regional) benefits that result from well-designed infill housing and the character, urban design, and community-building aspects of a neighborhood. In the case of affordable housing projects, a common approach is conveying a positive image of people who need such housing (Chapple et al, 2010;

Goetz, 2008). I drew upon these approaches to help frame my interview questions and analysis.

Overall, broad evidence suggests that applying the community engagement strategies discussed above can help to produce outcomes that increase a community's receptiveness to new housing supply (Innes and Booher, 2010).

2.5.2. Changes to Planning & Project Outcomes

In addition to the previously discussed community engagement strategies, the literature explains how changing project and planning outcomes can increase support for new projects.

In general, most people are not completely opposed to new multi-family housing projects in their neighbourhood. Rather, they have strong preferences related to project design, project scale, siting, and the amenities and infrastructure investments that come with new growth (Matthews et al, 2015).

There is evidence suggesting that new developments are more likely to be supported if they deliver direct benefits. Litman (2015b; p. 48) states that "smart growth requires policy instruments that compensate local neighbours for the negative impacts of infill development and can overcome local opposition, so urban communities will shift from not in my backyard to yes in my backyard."

Unless incentives are provided, residents will not want to accept infill development in their areas and assume localized costs with no obvious benefits (Sturzaker, 2011). However, it is recognized that compensation alone is insufficient. The planning system needs to support a sense of local and individual identities in order to gain support for new development. This includes making efforts to preserve or enhance the desirable traits of the neighbourhood as well as its social identity and fabric (Sturzaker, 2010).

Matthews et al. (2015) conducted research using survey data collected in the United Kingdom (UK) to determine what additional benefits from new development would be required for residents of the UK to shift to support new housing development. Although UK cities are not necessarily an ideal comparison to Vancouver, Matthews et al. (2015) was the only study that I could find that examines the types of benefits required to increase community support for new housing projects. Their results will inform my conceptual framework and help me to determine the type of incentives used in Vancouver to gain community support.

Matthews et al. (2015)'s study suggests that additional benefits to a community could change attitudes towards new housing development. The study's results show that different benefits have varying appeal and that offering several benefits is necessary to changing attitudes significantly.

The most important side benefit found in Matthews et al. (2015) is the certainty of improved employment opportunities for locals, as local communities tend to be particularly concerned about economic well-being (Bramley and Kirk, 2005; cited in Matthews et al, 2015). However, the importance of "employment opportunities" generated by new development likely varies for different communities based on their economic performance and demographic composition.

The next most important benefit is enhanced greenspace and parks. Schools, leisure facilities and shops come third in the ranking, although these are commonly already delivered through the UK planning system or policies and conditions on mixed use developments. Other variables that influenced support for new development included certainties regarding improved medical facilities and financial incentives from senior/regional government agencies to improve the local infrastructure for existing residents (including transportation upgrades) (Matthews et al, 2015).

Other strategies not tested in the study discussed above found instances of local planning authorities and housing associations using the provision of affordable housing for local people to overcome opposition to new housing (Yarwood, 2002). This suggests

that communities might be more willing to accept new housing in their neighbourhood if the residents of the community are given the first priority for that housing.

In order to address concerns about the displacement of current residents by more affluent newcomers (i.e. gentrification), inclusionary zoning could be required for new developments and rent controls could be established to keep existing housing affordable. Housing replacement ordinances³ can ensure that affordable housing is not lost in the construction of new housing. Such measures help to ensure that new housing does not drive low-income residents out of a community (Harmon, 2003).

In addition, developers can influence public support through a commitment to meeting the ideals of the community (e.g. enhanced greenspace) and exercising their capacity to realize them (Laurian et al. 2004). For instance, Bueschel and Rudel (2009) argue that developers sometimes benefit from a green orientation directly through the sale of homes or indirectly through improved relationships with important people in a community. Adopting green practices can serve niche markets and please the planning officials with whom developers have continuing and sometimes long-term relationships.

In sum, the literature has identified the following policy and project changes that developers and planners can utilize in order to increase community support for new development:

- Change project design (enhance design);
- Change scale of project (height);
- Change location of projects;
- Enhance affordability of projects (or the affordable components of projects) and implement measures to protect affordability in the community;

³ Housing replacement ordinances require developers undertaking a project that removes affordable housing from the community, either through demolition or conversion, to make a significant contribution toward replacing that stock. It generally ensures that there is no net loss of affordable housing.

- Enhance greenspace and parks;
- Enhance green features of new buildings;
- Provide certainty of local employment opportunities;
- Protect existing characteristics of a neighbourhood (e.g. heritage protection or strategies to enhance a “main street”)
- Invest in infrastructure related to growth (transportation, roads, pipes, etc.). This includes investments from senior/regional government agencies.
- Invest in community amenities related to growth (e.g. community centres, leisure facilities, school/medical upgrades). This includes investments from senior/regional government agencies.

The strategies discussed above helped to provide a thematic framework for categorizing the interview responses of developers and planners and the findings generated by the document analysis.

Overall, the literature review has provided a framework to help identify opposition to, and support for, new multi-family housing projects in Vancouver and identify the strategies used by planners and developers to increase community support and mitigate concerns regarding these types of projects. I have identified the community engagement strategies used by planners and developers that are mentioned in the literature and also noted changes to projects and policies that might increase community support for new development.

Chapter 3.

Research Methodology

As noted in the literature review, the research questions I am exploring can be addressed by examining specific housing projects as well as the policies that support the creation of new housing and amenities linked to new development (i.e. Community Plans).

For this paper, I have examined both multi-family housing projects and policies (Community Plans) in Vancouver in order to facilitate a more complete understanding of my research topic.

Two Updated Community Plans

I have focused on two communities in Vancouver: Marpole and the West End. Therein, I have examined Community Plans, which are the most recent policies related to the approval of new multi-family housing. The West End Community Plan was approved in 2013, and the Marpole Community Plan was approved in 2014. Community Plans in Vancouver are policy documents that provide guidance and direction on a range of topics, including: land use, urban design, housing, transportation, parks and public spaces, social planning, cultural infrastructure, heritage features and community facilities. City Council policies require that Community Plans respond to city-wide plans, policies, and goals and aspirations, including those related to land use and transportation (City of Vancouver, 2013b).

The community planning process (i.e. the creation of Community Plans) is a focus of this study as issues related to the densification (new multi-family housing) of

neighbourhoods arise during this process. Community Plans are based on community consultation and establish the zoning by-laws that determine the location and type of development that can be built in a neighbourhood.

My justification for studying two communities is that it allows for greater insight into the strategies used in different areas of the city and the different types of opposition and support that occurs throughout the city. The two communities selected also offer a diverse range of housing projects types (single-family, town-homes, apartment, rental, ownership, and social housing) to analyze.

Additional criteria used for selecting these communities includes:

- Recently updated Community Plans;
- Recently approved multi-family housing projects, and;
- Areas well-served by frequent transit and/or located near jobs, which adhere to the principles of smart growth and thus are appropriate locations for new multi-family housing projects.

Four Development Applications

In addition to the two Community Plans, I examined four development applications, two in the West End and two in Marpole. The development projects for each community are listed below in figure 1.

I wanted to select one project that was approved before the Community Plan was finalized and one project that was approved after the Community Plan was finalized for each neighbourhood. The purpose of this was to determine the impacts that the Community Plans had on public opposition towards and support for new multi-family housing projects. The literature review indicated that neighbourhood planning (i.e. community engagement and early consultation) were important to building trust and mitigating concerns about new development. The literature review also found that early public consultation and engagement can help reduce concerns during the project implementation stage.

Further, I also wanted to examine whether going through the community planning process helped to avoid or focus particular development proposals on particular aspects identified during the community planning process. Finally, I wanted to select projects with a mix of ownership, rental, and social housing in order to capture the different perspectives related to each type of housing tenure.

Figure 1 – Selected Multi-Family Housing Projects

Project Name or Address	Neighbourhood	Approval Date	Details of Project
1401 Comox Street. The Lauren, by Westbank	West End	Approved in 2012 (Before Community Plan)	21 storey. 100% rental units. STIR ⁴ incentives used.
1171 Jervis street. The Jervis, by Intracorp.	West End	Approved in 2015 (After Community Plan)	19 storey, condo and 20% social housing units. Includes ground floor retail.
Granville & 70 th (Safeway Redevelopment), by Westbank.	Marpole	Approved in 2012 (Before Marpole Community Plan)	16 storey; 14 storey; and townhouses at grade.

⁴ City's Short Term Incentives Rental (STIR) program. From 2009 to 2011, the City of Vancouver conducted the STIR program, to encourage new rental building projects by offering incentives to developers.

375 West 59th Avenue. Belpark, by Intracorp	Marpole	Approved in 2015 (After approval of the Marpole Community Plan)	Two 6 storey buildings and one 5 storey building
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Document Analysis & Interviews

In order to gain insight into the Community Plans and the four projects, I conducted document analysis and semi-structured interviews.

The document analysis served two primary purposes: 1) to identify the documented feedback the City received from the public regarding the Community Plans and the projects, and; 2) to identify the policy and development project adjustments that were made as a result of the public feedback.

For the document analysis, this paper relies entirely on City of Vancouver staff reports to Council or other City documents (e.g. the Community Plans) which are posted on the City’s website. An examination of staff reports to Council was the most effective and efficient way to identify the community concerns and responses noted by planners and developers, as the City of Vancouver summarizes public feedback before a project is approved and details how (or if) the developer addressed those concerns. Feedback on these projects also occurs via the City’s Urban Design Review Panel, as comments from the Panel’s meetings are summarized by staff and posted on the City of Vancouver’s website.

Staff summarized public feedback on the Community Plans in their reports to Council and identified the policy responses that occurred as a result of that feedback.

The interviews with key informants first helped to confirm if policy responses and project adjustments were the result of public feedback. Second, the interviews helped to

determine the rationale behind the policy changes and the strategies used by planners to achieve greater community support and mitigate community concerns. Third, the interviews helped to determine whether the City and developers perceived the changes to projects and policies as positive factors that helped to increase community support for new development. Finally, the interviews helped to establish the relationship between Community Plans and projects and whether going through the community planning process helped to avoid or focus particular development proposals on particular aspects identified during the community planning process.

Overall, the key informant interviews were intended to address the following:

1. Confirm aspects or themes of public support for and opposition towards the two Community Plans and four projects.
2. Identify and confirm the strategies used by planners and developers to increase community support and mitigate concerns for new multi-family housing projects in the two Community Plans and four projects.
3. Identify the perceived effectiveness of these strategies according to planners and developers.
4. Identify new strategies that might achieve greater community support for these types of projects.

In his manual on qualitative interview methodology, Herbert Rubin explains that selected interviewees selected should be experienced and knowledgeable about the topic of study. Furthermore, he asserts that they should be able to provide a variety of perspectives on the topic to the interviewer (Rubin, 2005).

For this study, I interviewed seven people: one Community Planner for the Marpole Community Plan; one Community Planner for the West End Community Plan; and three Planners (two Rezoning Planners and one Project Planner) and one developer who could speak about the selected multi-family development projects after approval of the Community Plans. I also interviewed the Senior Policy Advisor & Vice President of

the Urban Development Institute (UDI). One of the UDI's mandates is to "provide a voice for the development industry" in Vancouver. I therefore consider the UDI's opinions to reflect many of the opinions of developers in Vancouver.

For the most part, my interviews were conducted after the document analysis had been performed. However, I also conducted some additional document analysis based on feedback from the interviews.

I began my interviews after I had developed a strong understanding of the concerns regarding the new multi-family housing projects in the two communities and four multi-family housing projects as well as an understanding of the changes that occurred in the selected Community Plans and the multi-family housing projects as a result of public feedback. The information from the public documents were compared to and reconciled with the information from the interviews in a process of triangulation.

The interviews were semi-structured, with a mix of open-ended and closed questions. My data analysis entailed identifying common themes among respondents' data. The interviews helped me to determine the extent to which the information obtained reinforced or contradicted the information I analyzed in the document analysis.

When I selected planners, I ensured that they could speak about the changes to the Community Plans and the selected multi-family housing projects. While I was unable to interview the Rezoning Planner who worked directly on the 1401 Comox Street project, the three other Project/Rezoning Planners and the West End Community Planner provided me with enough information about this project to inform my analysis and findings.

For this research, I interviewed the developer of the two projects approved after the Community Plans. I decided to interview the developer of these two projects as I wanted to understand the impact of the Community Plans on new development applications. These two projects were built by the same development company. Thus, I

only had to interview one development company for the two projects. I ensured that the developer I interviewed could speak on behalf of the changes made to both projects and address how these changes related to community feedback and policies in the Community Plans. The developer was also able to provide insight on the contrast of issues that arise, from a developers' perspective, for projects with and without updated Community Plans in Vancouver. If I had more time, and if it was not for scheduling difficulties, I would have also interviewed the developer of the two projects that were approved before the Community Plans (one development company built these two projects as well). However, the key informant interviewees were able to provide sufficient information to inform my findings and analysis and complement the document analysis for these two projects.

The interview with the developer lasted approximately two hours, as there were a number of questions about the two different projects and communities. All of the other interviews lasted approximately one hour.

Declaration of Employment & Research Motivation

Prior to and while conducting this study, I worked as a Policy Analyst at the Urban Development Institute in Vancouver. This research was conducted independently of my position, and therefore the recommendations in this study are not representative of the UDI.

My interest, education, and professional background in urban planning shaped my desire to study this topic. I approached this research as a proponent of smart growth and with an appreciation for the importance of attaining community support for new multi-family housing projects.

I believe that planners and developers should continually strive to *earn* community support. As stated in the literature review, developers and planners can improve policy and project outcomes by gaining a deeper understanding of community concerns and support with regard to new housing. In conducting this research, I therefore wanted to improve my understanding of community concerns and support for new housing in Vancouver. Further, I wanted to examine whether policy and project outcomes were in line with community aspirations.

I also believe that neighbourhood planning helps to address the complexities that are associated with new developments. As stated in the literature review, most people do not completely oppose or completely support new developments. Rather, they have strong preferences related to the type of development that occurs in their communities. Neighbourhood planning can help to identify these preferences and yield policy solutions that respond to them accordingly. Furthermore, I believe that developers and planners can and should help to shape a community's visions and aspirations through community engagement and education about local and regional planning issues.

Chapter 4.

City of Vancouver Policy Context Related to New Multi-Family Housing Projects

This chapter identifies policies related to the approval of new multi-family housing projects in Vancouver. I identify and briefly explain the policies that impact community opposition and support for new developments. In order to determine which policies to focus on, I drew upon issues raised in the literature review that were related to public support for and opposition towards new housing projects.

The policies discussed below relate to the following aspects of new development: design, scale, housing affordability, amenities, sustainability, and traffic/parking. The identification of these policies helped to frame my interview questions and document analysis. I wanted to understand how these policies contribute to public opposition and support for new multi-family housing projects in Vancouver. My analysis regarding the impacts that these policies have on community receptiveness to new housing is presented in chapters 6 to 9.

4.1. Community Planning Policy (Community Plans)

The literature review discusses community planning and its impact on public support for new housing. Community Plans establish the high-level policy framework for new development in Vancouver neighbourhoods.

Community Plans are policy documents that provide guidance and direction on a variety of topics ranging from land use and urban design to housing, transportation, and community facilities. Community Plans are meant to provide clear but flexible

frameworks to guide change and development in Vancouver’s neighbourhoods over a period of 20 – 30 years. Each Plan considers long-range and shorter-term goals, and works within the broader objectives established for the entire city (City of Vancouver, 2013a). Community Plans will be further discussed in Chapter 5 and 6.

In areas where there are no Community Plans, Official Development Plans (ODPs) are commonly in place. ODPs typically encompass large geographical areas and a broad range of topics, and cover a long-term time horizon similar to that of Community Plans (City of Vancouver, 2016a). ODPs are generally in place for Vancouver’s newer neighbourhoods such as Yaletown, Coal Harbour, and Southeast False Creek, for which zoning was converted from industrial to residential uses. An ODP is a comprehensive plan that dictates public policy in terms of transportation, utilities, land use, recreation, and housing.

4.2. Zoning By-Laws (Type & Height)

The literature identifies the “type” and “height” of development as having an impact on community support for new housing. The City of Vancouver regulates the type and height of development through zoning. The City is divided into many zoning districts and each district has its own set of by-laws and schedules, which dictate:

- The City's objective for the district;
- Land use regulations (i.e. maximum heights, setbacks, and floor areas, and;
- Other aspects of development for the zone (City of Vancouver, 2012b).

Zoning districts are used to implement the directions in the Community Plans and the ODPs. Therefore, they will be referred to in this work when they are set out within the discussions of Community Plans and new multi-family housing projects.

4.3. Design Guidelines & Urban Design Panel

The literature review identified “building design” and “urban design” as having an impact on community support for new development. City of Vancouver zoning by-laws include urban design requirements for the private and public realms, which relate to streetscape character and building design.

The City of Vancouver also has an Urban Design Panel (UDP), which advises City Council and staff about development proposals or policies, including major development applications and rezoning applications. The UDP also helps the City of Vancouver Planning Department and City Council to create urban design policy, but does not approve or refuse projects or make policy decisions. However, the intention of the UDP is to enhance the design of building projects in Vancouver (City of Vancouver, 2013c).

The City of Vancouver also has established 27 protected “view corridors” to protect views of the North Shore mountains, the Downtown skyline, and the surrounding water. These corridors are established through the City’s General Policy for Higher Buildings (City of Vancouver, 2012c).

4.4. Financing Growth (Development Cost Levies & Community Amenity Contributions)

The reviewed literature found that developer contributions to infrastructure and community amenities had an ability to impact community support for new projects.

In Vancouver, Development Cost Levies (DCLs) are collected from developers to help pay for facilities related to new growth, including parks, childcare facilities, replacement housing (i.e. social/non-profit housing), and various engineering infrastructure (City of Vancouver, 2015a). The City of Vancouver also receives Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) from developers for new multi-family housing projects that proceed from developer-initiated re-zonings. According to the City,

“contributions are provided by property developers when City Council grants development rights through rezoning ... CACs help the City build and expand facilities, including: park space, libraries, childcare facilities, community centres, transportation services, cultural facilities, and neighbourhood houses”. CACs can also go towards affordable housing (City of Vancouver, 2015).

CACs offers typically include either the provision of on-site amenities or a cash contribution towards other public benefits. According to the City of Vancouver, CAC rates consider community needs, area deficiencies and the impact of the proposed development on City services (City of Vancouver, 2015a). CACs in Vancouver may be charged at a fixed rate (based on pre-determined needs) in certain neighbourhoods (determined by the community planning process). When a fixed rate does not apply, a “land lift” approach is used which determines the increase in land value from a re-zoning on a case-by-case basis. Both approaches to collecting CACs are used in Marpole and the West End, depending on location and the scale of development within each neighbourhood.

Developers in Vancouver also make contributions to public art. The City of Vancouver’s Public Art Policy requires re-zonings for a floor area of 9,290 m² (100,000 sq. ft.) or greater to contribute \$1.81 (2014 rate) per buildable square foot for public art (City of Vancouver, 2015b).

4.5. Traffic & Parking Measures

The literature review found that parking and traffic concerns related to new growth impact community opposition to new housing. The management of on-street and off-street parking and investments in walking, biking, and transit infrastructures can help to mitigate the impacts of new growth in neighbourhoods.

As growth occurs in Vancouver, the City manages both on-street and off-street parking regulations. As the demand for on-street parking has grown, the City of

Vancouver has introduced new regulations under parking bylaws in more areas of the city. This includes parking permits in designated neighbourhoods (City of Vancouver, 2015c).

The City of Vancouver manages off-street parking requirements by enforcing minimum parking requirements for new developments. This ensures that new developments can accommodate all new residents' vehicles and averts parking challenges on the streets (City of Vancouver, 2015c). *Transportation 2040*, the City's most recently approved Transportation Plan, identifies strategies for traffic calming in Vancouver and investments in walking, biking, and transit infrastructure (City of Vancouver, 2015d).

4.6. Green Building Requirements

The literature review found that the enhanced green features of new buildings had an impact on community support for new housing projects.

In an effort to reduce the environmental footprint of Vancouver's buildings, the City requires (since 2011) that all new buildings on re-zoned sites be built to meet the LEED Gold standard⁵. These requirements are outlined in the City's "Green Buildings Policy for Rezoning" (2014a). The impact of green buildings on community receptiveness to new housing will be explored in more depth in the document analysis and interviews.

⁵ LEED, or Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design, is a green building certification program that recognizes best-in-class building strategies and practices. To receive LEED certification, building projects satisfy prerequisites and earn points to achieve different levels of certification.

4.7. Housing Affordability Policies (Social and Rental)

The literature found that new affordable housing units had the ability to increase and/or decrease community support for new development.

When new multi-family housing projects are approved in Vancouver, the City often imposes “affordability requirements” (depending on the neighbourhood and the zoning district). This can include a requirement for major projects to provide 20% of their housing as social housing units. In some areas there are also requirements to build new secured market rental housing (based on a density increase and other incentives provided to the developer). This occurs under the City’s Secured Market Rental Housing Policy, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5. Further, the developer’s CAC cash contribution can also go towards the City’s Affordable Housing Reserve Fund to support affordable housing projects (City of Vancouver, 2015e).

The literature review also found that the impacts that redevelopment can have on tenant displacement effect community opposition to new projects. In Vancouver, developers must complete a tenant relocation plan when re-development displaces or impacts tenants in existing residential rental units. At the time when the developments and Community Plans for this research project were selected, tenant relocation guidelines stipulated that relocation plans were required to provide each tenant with two months’ free rent; re-imbusement for receipted moving expenses, and; the first right of refusal to re-locate into a replacement rental unit on the site or a rental unit/other form of affordable housing the developer offers elsewhere (City of Vancouver, 2015f). The City of Vancouver updated its tenant relocation policies on December 10, 2015, which included the requirement that developers provide tenants with up to six months free rent in addition to the previous benefits (City of Vancouver, 2015).

Chapter 5.

Background on Recently Approved Community Plans in Vancouver & Community Context

5.1. Purpose of Community Plans in Vancouver

On July 28, 2011, City of Vancouver staff brought forward a report to Council that recommended creating new Community Plans in three Vancouver neighbourhoods: Grandview-Woodland, Marpole and the West End. These neighbourhoods were selected because they had outdated Community Plans and were subject to recent spot-rezonings⁶ that resulted in neighbourhood controversy.

⁶ According to the City of Vancouver, a spot re-zoning is generally defined as a rezoning application that is not anticipated by city-wide or neighbourhood policy (City of Vancouver, 2016b).

Figure 2 – New Community Plans in Vancouver



Source: City of Vancouver (2012d)

At the same time, the City believed that this was an opportunity to examine the community planning process itself and consider areas where it could be improved. Two key policy questions were explored during the Community Plans process:

- How can the City better balance City-wide policy with neighbourhood perspectives?
- How can the City better manage development pressures and address demand for local amenities? (City of Vancouver, 2011a).

Community Plans are intended to shape development and set public amenity priorities. They are also meant to address increasing development pressures in established neighbourhoods by providing clarity about the nature and scale of new development (building forms, heights, land use, etc.) while remaining flexible enough to allow new ideas to emerge during the subsequent development processes (City of Vancouver, 2011a). Lastly, the Community Plans are intended to focus on enhancing and diversifying public involvement. This focus includes the need to continuously improve and re-think approaches and techniques for public engagement in community

planning, which provides opportunities for broad, diverse and meaningful participation that enables Plans to reflect the widest possible range of perspectives (City of Vancouver, 2012d).

5.2. West End Community Context

The West End is a diverse community that is home to people of a range of ages, incomes, ethnicities, and sexual orientations (City of Vancouver, 2013d). As such, it acts as the “landing pad” for many new residents to Vancouver. While the West End has 7.4% of the city’s population, it received 14% of new Vancouverites in the 2001 to 2006 period. The West End is also a highly mobile community. Almost two thirds of its residents (66.4%) moved between 2006 – 2011, which is a higher proportion than the average proportion of movement in the city overall (50.2%) (City of Vancouver, 2013d).

A high proportion of young adults live in the West End. The 20-39 age group in the West End is currently 48% of its population and the West End has consistently had the highest proportion of this population in Vancouver (currently at 34% overall for the city) (City of Vancouver, 2013d). In 2011, the West End was the fourth most densely populated community in Vancouver. However, its population increased at a lower rate (19%) between 1981 and 2011 compared to the city’s overall population increase (42.8%) (City of Vancouver, 2013d).

In general, the West End is a modest income neighbourhood. Its median household income (\$38,581) is lower than in the city overall (\$47,299). Concurrently, the percentage of low income West End households (32.8%) is higher than in the city overall (26.6%) (City of Vancouver, 2013d).

The West End has around one third of Vancouver’s purpose-built rental housing stock and has the second highest proportion of renters in Vancouver (81% of households rent) (City of Vancouver, 2013d). Many West End residents live close to where they work, reducing their need to own a vehicle. Fifty-two percent of employed West End residents work in the downtown peninsula, and almost two-thirds work in

Vancouver's central area. Living close to work explains the high walk-to-work mode share in the West End (40%), which is the highest in the city (City of Vancouver, 2013d).

Residential buildings in the West End are almost entirely multi-family structures. However, there are a variety of building types from different phases of development within the multi-family built form. Accordingly, the West End is often noted for its distinct character and charm. There are currently 121 buildings located in the West End that are on the City of Vancouver's Heritage Register (City of Vancouver, 2013d).

5.3. Marpole Community Context

Marpole is a community composed of long-time residents, families, seniors, students, and newcomers (City of Vancouver, 2014b). It is a primarily residential neighbourhood with a mix of housing types. There are approximately 10,100 units of housing: 55% are apartments and 56% are rented, and 639 of the units are social housing (2.6% of the city's stock). West 70th Avenue is the general divide in Marpole between the low-rise apartments to the south and single-family and duplex homes to the north (City of Vancouver, 2014b).

From 1981 to 2011, Marpole had a population increase of 43%. This is in line with the city as a whole, which grew by 41% over this time. Marpole's population density is 43 people per hectare, which is lower than the citywide average density of 54 people per hectare, but roughly average when compared to neighbourhoods outside of the central area of Vancouver (City of Vancouver, 2014b). Residents of Marpole have a lower median housing income (\$41,125) in comparison to residents in the rest of Vancouver (\$47,299). Within Marpole, there is a high income gap between renters and owners. Renters' median household income is about half the median income of homeowners (City of Vancouver, 2014b). Further, there are many young families in Marpole. In 2011, 38% of all households in Marpole had children, compared to 30% citywide. Sixty-eight percent of families in Marpole had children living at home, compared to 58% citywide (City of Vancouver, 2014b).

Forty percent of trips within Marpole are made by walking, biking, or transit, compared to 47% citywide. Marpole has relatively good bus and rapid transit service, but is split by five major arterials: Granville Street, Oak Street, Cambie Street, SW Marine Drive, and West 70th Avenue. High traffic volumes, auto-congestion, and few crossings along these arterials can make walking and bicycling in the area unpleasant and difficult (City of Vancouver, 2014b).

Chapter 6.

Document Analysis of the Marpole and West End Community Plans (including Public Feedback)

During the creation of the Marpole and West End Community Plans, City staff documented the concerns and input that residents expressed about policies that would increase the supply of new multi-family housing projects in their communities. These were collected in “public feedback” documents and summarized in reports to Council before the Community Plans were approved.

This chapter identifies the key themes that emerged during the documented public feedback process related to concerns about new multi-family housing projects in Marpole and the West End as well as support for these projects. In addition, this chapter identifies the policy responses made by the City of Vancouver to accommodate neighbourhood feedback about new housing development or amenities and infrastructure related to new growth. Identifying these policies helped me to frame my interview questions with the Community Planners who worked on the Community Plans; enhanced my understanding of how the policies influenced community support for new multi-family housing projects in these communities; helped me to frame my interviews with the developer and re-zoning/project planners, and; helped me to gain an understanding of whether the changes in policies that were made between the first draft of the Community Plans and their final versions aimed to increase community support for new housing projects. I also wanted to identify the communication strategies that the planners used to gather feedback and educate the community about the Community Plans and understand whether these strategies helped to achieve community support for new housing. The findings from the interviews with the Community Planners are incorporated into this chapter.

6.1.1. West End Community Plan

According to the City of Vancouver (2013c), the public process for developing the West End Community Plan involved more than 6,500 people who attended events or responded to on-line surveys. Events and means of outreach included open houses, citizen circles, ideas fairs, workshops, and “walkshops” that covered a variety of themes (e.g. neighbourhood character, housing supply, laneways, shopping streets, heritage, etc.)

According to the City of Vancouver, staff engaged with and received input from a broad range of people to understand the pertinent issues and help to develop and refine the Plan’s directions and policy. These people included residents (renters and owners), business owners, Business Improvement Associations (BIAs), community groups, seniors, youth, developers, the LGBTQ community, multilingual groups, heritage advocates, service providers, academics and others. According to the City of Vancouver, the many viewpoints that were heard helped to ensure the planning was inclusive and incorporated input reflective of the West End’s diversity of people (City of Vancouver, 2013c).

The total process of developing the West End Community Plan took twenty months to complete and included ongoing public consultation, the presentation of draft strategies, the reception of feedback on these strategies, and the completion and approval of the Final Plan.

Key Issues Raised and Policy Directions and Responses

In a report to City Council (City of Vancouver, 2013c) prior to the approval of the Plan, staff summarized the “high level” key issues that had been raised throughout the planning process. These issues and the City’s policy responses to them are summarized below.

Neighbourhood Character Retention

- Concern: Residents expressed a fear that re-development would result in a loss of the “green and leafy” character of the West End’s residential streets.
- Policy Response: Most of the Community Plan focused on growth along the arterials⁷ of the West End (Davie, Denman, Robson, Georgia, and Burrard street). The Plan included an enhanced Public Realm Plan to protect and enhance “green leafy residential streets”.

Housing Affordability

- Concern: Housing affordability for families with children and social housing for seniors were identified as key issues in the West End. The need for new rental housing and social housing was emphasized by the community, as social housing units can be secured at below market prices and rental housing can offer an alternative to pricier condo living.

Policy Response: The West End Community Plan delivers approximately 1,600 social housing units. It allows 950 units to be delivered through “density bonusing⁸” along Lower Davie, Lower Robson, and the area between Thurlow and Burrard streets. The Plan calls for 650 of the social housing units to be developed through City partnerships with non-profits, as described by the Plan’s Public Benefit Strategy. Fifty percent of the social housing units will be two and three bedroom spaces for families with children.

⁷ The West End Community Planner mentioned that Vancouver generally tries to focus most of its new growth along or near to major arterials, which seem to minimize the disruption to community character (and thus ameliorate public opposition) and are closest to public transit.

⁸ Density bonuses offer developments a level of density that surpasses the allowable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) in exchange for amenities or housing needed by the community (City of Vancouver, 2016c)

The Plan identifies new market rental housing opportunities (approximately 1,900 units) that includes for families with children. The Plan also identifies new opportunities for home ownership (approximately 4,000 units), mostly along West Georgia and Burrard Streets. With respect to new market rental and ownership housing, the City requires that at least 25% of units have two and three bedrooms and are located on lower floors, which is in accordance with the City's High Density Housing for Families with Children Guidelines⁹. Further, the Plan reinforces the importance of the City's "Rate of Change"¹⁰ regulations as a tool that protects rental housing stock from re-development within the older residential areas of the community.

Community Facility Investment

- Concern: Residents expressed a need for a re-investment in community facilities due to the community's aging population and the lack of space caused by its growth. The top facilities that were identified as needing to be upgraded included the West End Community Centre, Joe Fortes Library, an Aquatic Centre, and Qmunity¹¹.
- Policy Response: The Plan includes expanding and upgrading these community facilities, mostly via CACs and DCLs collected through new development. The CACs and DCLs from new development will generate over \$300 million for the West End. As the Plan moved from draft (emerging directions) to finalization, increased clarity was provided about CAC priorities and how the CACs will be spent over the next 40 years.

⁹ The intent of these guidelines is to address the key issues of site, building and unit design, which relate to residential livability for families with children. The developer is encouraged to consider creative approaches to accomplishing the objectives stated by the guidelines.

¹⁰ Vancouver's Rate of Change Guidelines govern the demolition or change of use or occupancy of a rental housing unit (City of Vancouver, 2007)

¹¹ Qmunity is an LGBTQ community centre located in the West End.

Local Business Viability

- Concern: Commercial streets in the West End were identified as needing revitalization and renewal. This was largely requested by the West End Business Improvement Area (BIA) (West End Community Planner, Interview, March 4, 2016).
- Policy Response: The Plan specified that Denman, Davie, Robson and Alberni streets would be improved with wider sidewalks, decorative lighting, better access to transit, and new public spaces. The Plan identified that new development would help to fund these improvements. Additionally, new housing opportunities were focused on areas close to local businesses in order to support the businesses' viability.

The West End Community Planner noted the importance of gaining the local business community's support for the West End Plan. The leadership and support provided by the BIA inspired residents and other organizations to support the emerging ideas in the Plan (West End Community Planner, Interview, March 4, 2016).

Parking & Transportation

- Concern: Residents expressed concerns about new growth and the impact it will have on parking and transportation in the West End. Further, residents identified a need to improve access to on-street visitor parking in the residential areas, a need for full-time parking along the commercial streets, and a need to improve walking and cycling infrastructure.
- Policy Response: The Plan identified opportunities to improve access to on-street parking, such as extended parking hours (no removal during rush hours) along major streets. It introduced parking meters in some of the residential areas in

order to better manage visitor parking spaces. The Plan also identified improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure within the West End.

Laneways

- Concern: Residents identified that the laneways in the West End could use more green space and that there could be opportunities for small-scale infill development. The West End has some of the widest lanes in Vancouver (10 metres), which makes it easier to explore laneway development opportunities.
- Policy Response: The Plan allows for mini-apartment buildings and stacked townhouses to be built behind existing towers or low-rise buildings in the laneways. This will be the first neighbourhood in Vancouver to explore this type of development. The Plan determined that the units can only be offered as rental housing units, which is a key priority identified by West End residents in order to maintain the affordability of the units (rental units are inherently more affordable than condominiums in Vancouver). During the planning process, the City of Vancouver created a Laneways 2.0 document, which included design renderings and conceptual examples of what could take place in the laneways.

The West End Community Planner explained that conceptual examples, design renderings, and walking tours of the laneways helped to gain community support for this concept. There was a lot of positive community feedback about developing the laneways due to the small scale of the housing.

Additional Comments from the West End Community Planner

The interview with the West End Community Planner confirmed that planners met frequently with the community to learn about its concerns and to communicate changes in each iteration of the draft Plan until the Community Plan received the Council's final approval. The West End planning team wanted to hear from people who did not typically participate in the public consultation processes. The Planner mentioned

that the most “dominant voices” were often that of community members who are resistant to change. Thus, it was important to reach out to as many people as possible to gain an understanding of the range of perspectives in the community. The West End Planner wanted to establish a strong “presence” in the community, which included attending various community events and festivals (e.g. Car Free Festival and the West End Farmers Market).

The West End Community Planner also emphasized the importance of building trust with the community. This required being as transparent as possible about the planning process and the City’s goals and aspirations. It also required listening well to residents’ concerns, which necessitated various communication techniques. One of the most effective community engagement techniques was walking tours (“walkshops”) of the West End, which allowed residents to voice concerns about various issues and identify opportunities for the neighbourhood.

The Community Planner also expressed the importance of building connections between leaders and stakeholders in the community. The planner conducted outreach to various groups such as the West End BIA and the Mole Hill Community Housing Society to build relationships and connections in the community. Building connections amongst “community champions” was an important strategy for the West End planning team to generate support in the community for issues identified in the Plan.

Housing affordability was a major theme throughout the development of the West End Community Plan. Specifically, the West End Community Planner mentioned that a lot of the planning team’s efforts were focused on explaining housing affordability issues to residents and providing insight into the policy options available to achieve new affordable housing in the community. The Planner explained that “the social and rental housing requirements in the Community Plan helped to gain support from residents ... and support from community groups”.

However, the West End Community Planner explained concerns about the new housing proposed for the Lower Davie area of the West End. Residents expressed concerns about the loss of views and shadowing impacts that would result from new development in this area. The West End Community Planner mentioned that this was a difficult policy issue to deal with, as the community had expressed a strong desire for more social and market rental housing, but there was resistance to the buildings proposed to accommodate that desire. Ultimately, the West End Planner believed that focusing the growth on the arterials would have the least amount of impact on the character of the neighbourhood.

The Community Planner mentioned that the CAC package derived from new development for the Plan was valued at over \$300 million and helped to achieve community support for the Plan. The West End planning team had to reach out to the community frequently and use various engagement methods, to educate the community about the amenity upgrades that would be achieved through new development. The West End planning team reached out to various groups and organizations who could speak about the benefits of the amenity upgrades that would be provided by the Plan. Many of these groups and organizations, such as social and housing providers, will directly benefit from the way in which the CACs are spent, as the money will be allocated to causes that align with their goals and aspirations. Finally, the West End Community Planner mentioned that a diverse range of groups attended the City Council meeting to show support for the Plan.

The West End Community Plan won the Planning Institute of British Columbia's 2014 Excellence in Policy Planning Award (City and Urban Areas) for its innovative policies and comprehensive public engagement approach (City of Vancouver, 2014c).

6.1.2. Marpole Community Plan

According to City of Vancouver (2014b), the public process for creating the Marpole Community Plan involved the participation of more than 7,800 community members who attended events and responded to questionnaires. Throughout the planning program, staff engaged with a broad range of community members representing a range of cultural backgrounds, ages, incomes, and including both renters and owners. Staff gathered input at a wide range of events and activities, including: open houses, workshops, walking tours, storytelling events, meetings and focus groups, stalls at community events, committees, workshops, info sessions, and advisory board meetings. The planning process for the creation of the Marpole Community Plan took two years to complete.

Key Issues Raised & Policy Directions/Responses

In a report to City Council (City of Vancouver, 2014b) prior to the plan being approved, staff summarized the “high level” key issues that were raised throughout the planning process. A number of key issues and concerns were raised as priorities for consideration throughout the planning process, and new issues emerged as the planning evolved.

The following is a summary of the key issues that were raised and the policies that related or responded to new developments in the Plan.

Residential Character

- Concern: Residents expressed their desire to protect single-family areas and focus growth along major streets. The Marpole draft Plan released in 2013 identified several areas in Marpole that were to change from single family dwellings to townhouses and duplexes. Consequently, a large number of Marpole residents expressed concerns about their perceived loss of the neighbourhood’s single-family home character.

Policy Response: Residents' concerns resulted in changes from the first draft to the final Plan that aimed to maintain the neighbourhood's single family character. There was a substantial reduction in the amount of single family lots zoned for redevelopment in the final Plan. However, some residents west of Cambie Street expressed support for the original draft land use Plan, which permitted their blocks to be converted to higher density townhouses/duplexes and apartment buildings. The Marpole Community Planner (Interview, March 15, 2016) revealed that this occurred because single-family homeowners realized that they would be able to sell their properties for higher than market prices if their land was re-zoned. The Marpole Community Planner further mentioned that some single-family home owners had been approached by real estate brokers who were trying to assemble lots for re-development purposes. The brokers tried to convince the residents to sell their properties for land assembly¹² purposes, with the intention of allowing a developer to build higher density homes on their land. This created confusion for some residents, as they were not sure what was allowed to be done to their property.

The interviews with key informants revealed that after the Marpole Plan had been approved, some residents asked to re-zone their homes (and in some cases, re-zone entire streets) back into the Marpole Community Plan, as this would allow them to receive above-market prices for their homes (via developers buying their homes for land assembly purposes). The UDI representative who was interviewed (Interview, April 4, 2016) said that the City should have done a better job of explaining this opportunity to single family home owners from the very beginning of the Community Plan process. It seemed like it was not until the end of the process, or after it, that residents realized the profits that could be achieved by selling/re-zoning their homes.

¹² Land assembly occurs where more than one house (usually blocks) are sold (and packaged together by a realtor to sell to a developer) and demolished to make way for townhouses and condominiums

Housing Affordability

- Concern: Residents expressed a desire to see a range of affordable housing types made available to the community, including housing for seniors and family with children, and social and supportive housing. However, some residents were doubtful that the proposed new housing forms would be affordable. Some residents expressed concerns over the tenure of future residential units and whether those units would be occupied by residents or remain empty as investment properties. There were also concerns about the potential impacts of growth on the security of housing for renters and low-income households (e.g. tenant displacement due to re-development).

Policy Response: The Plan includes policies that encourage a wider variety of housing options, such as townhouses for families with children and requirements for two and three bedroom units in new apartment developments. The Plan set out to protect rental housing in the community and identify areas in which to expand the rental stock with new apartments and allowing some lock-off rental suites in townhouse developments. The Plan identifies opportunities for providing 1,085 units of social and supportive housing.

Transportation and Connectivity

- Concern: Some residents felt that new development and population growth would worsen current traffic congestion and parking challenges. The community also expressed a strong desire to improve the safety, comfort, and convenience of walking and cycling connections across major streets and to key community destinations, the Canada Line, and the Fraser River.
- Policy Response: The Plan identified ways to improve pedestrian and cycling routes (which will be funded through new development). In addition, it specified that developers would be required to provide a minimum amount of on-site parking for new developments.

Community Facilities

- Concern: Residents asked for sufficient community amenities to support a population increase and for the aging Marpole Library and the Marpole-Oakridge Community Centre to be upgraded.
- Policy Response: The Plan identified that CACs will be used to renew the community centre and the library. The Marpole Community Planner indicated that there was strong support for these community upgrades (Interview, March 15, 2016). Lastly, the Plan specified that new development will generate up to \$300 million for Marpole in CACs and DCLs.

Parks and Open Spaces

- Concern: There was concern that Marpole's existing park space and park conditions would not meet the needs of a growing population. There was particular interest in seeing newer, larger greenspaces in the Lower Hudson area and along the Fraser River.
- Policy Response: The final Plan committed to acquiring new land for park spaces, ideally along the Fraser River. Money for these spaces would come from new development (CACs and DCLs).

Local Business Vitality

- Concern: There was a strong desire to see a renewal and revitalization of the Granville Street shopping area that included a greater diversity of shops and services. There were also concerns about the preservation of the existing industrial lands and the types of jobs they supported, and support for office growth where possible.
- Policy Response: According to the Plan, new housing density near the major shopping areas of Marpole will add people and vitality to the neighbourhood.

According to the Marpole Community Planner (Interview, March 15, 2016), the Marpole BIA made a strong case for new residential density as a strategy for improving conditions for local businesses.

The Plan identified streetscape and public realm improvements to help renew and revitalize the Granville Street shopping area, which included increased sidewalk width on Granville Street, street trees, and amenities such as bench seating and bike racks. The Plan also confirmed the importance of preserving the existing industrial lands in Marpole.

Desire for an Official Community Plan

- **Concern:** Some residents suggested that an Official Community Plan (OCP) should be developed for all of Vancouver before the Marpole Community Plan was approved. One of the reasons for this was that residents wanted clarity on population growth projections for Marpole and other Vancouver neighbourhoods.
- **Policy Response:** The City has no plans to create an OCP for Vancouver. According to the previous General Manager of Planning in Vancouver, the amount of time and resources that would be necessary to create an OCP are not manageable (O'Connor, 2015).

Critique of Thin Streets Proposal

- **Concern:** In the draft Plan, residents expressed opposition to a “thin streets” proposal that would add an extra house to some single family streets in Marpole (on the corner lots of certain streets). These homes would be owned by the City of Vancouver and used to provide affordable housing for families.
- **Policy Response:** The City removed this idea from the final Plan as a result of the negative public feedback. The Marpole Community Planner revealed that the strong opposition to the “thin streets” proposal was due to concerns that the design of the new corner homes would negatively impact the character of single-

family residential streets in Marpole. The Marpole Community Planner also suspected that some of the single-family residents had concerns about the type of people who would be moving into the affordable homes in Marpole. More specifically, there could have been a fear of low-income people moving into Marpole's single-family areas.

Additional Comments from the Marpole Community Planner

The Marpole Community Planner (Interview, March 15, 2016) noted that the majority of the community opposition was focused on the proposed policies to add housing density (townhomes, duplexes, and apartments) to the single family neighbourhoods in Marpole. Most residents seemed more supportive of focusing development along the major arterials. They strongly supported the removal of the "thin streets" proposal.

At one point, there was a lot of community opposition to the draft Plan. The Marpole Community Planner mentioned that staff listened carefully to the community's concerns and made policy changes to reflect what they heard. This primarily led to a reduction in the quantity of new homes included in the final version of the Plan.

The Planner noted that some residents and stakeholders only raised concerns near the end of the planning process. The Planner explained that this was because there had been a lack of awareness about the planning program amongst some residents. Therefore, Marpole planners had to explain and educate residents who weren't previously involved in the process about issues that emerged in the draft Marpole Plan. This required additional meetings with the community in which various communication and education techniques were used. Planners even went to some residents' homes (kitchen table talks) to discuss the changes to the Plan.

Planners had to be as transparent as possible about the rationale for the changes and provide a lot of clarity to the community about the process and timelines moving forward. The Planner believed that providing clarity and tweaking policies in

response to community feedback helped the Marpole residents to change their attitudes and become more supportive of the final version of the Community Plan.

The Marpole Community Planner mentioned that issues related to providing new social and rental housing emerged in the planning process, but were not as dominant of a theme in comparison to the previously discussed West End planning process. Most of the “public benefits” discussion in Marpole seemed to focus on how the CACs would be used for community facility and park upgrades. However, there were concerns about protecting the existing market rental housing buildings in Marpole from re-development. The Marpole Community Plan protects the majority of the existing market rental housing stock from re-development.

The Marpole Community Planner mentioned that Marpole Planners built relationships with various leaders, groups, and organizations in the community. This was important in order to build awareness about various issues in Marpole and gain support for the Plan.

6.2. Summary Comments on Both Community Plans

The West End and Marpole Community Planners revealed the following themes about the Community Plans and the City of Vancouver’s approaches to community opposition towards and support for new multi-family housing projects.

- Educating the community about the need for community planning and new housing options was important to increasing community support. Various visual presentations, meeting styles, workshops, open houses, and walking tours helped to educate the community about various neighbourhood issues.
- Providing ongoing clarity about the proposed policies and changes to those policies helped to build trust and gain community support. Sometimes there was confusion in the community regarding proposed policies, in which case the

Community Planners needed to spend a lot of time clarifying the Plans. Developing clear policy directions that the community could easily understand as a result of the consultation was critical to achieving support.

- Meeting frequently with community groups and residents, and identifying their concerns, was important to building community support and trust. Strong listening skills were essential to this process.
- Developing policies related to housing affordability was important for both communities and particularly important in the West End. Residents in both the West End and Marpole had a fear that new housing (particularly market ownership housing) would be too expensive for locals to purchase. Therefore, policies related to protecting the existing rental housing stock and promoting a supply of new rental and social housing was critical to achieving community support.
- The allocation of CAC funding to identified community facility upgrades and park upgrades was critical to achieving community support for the Community Plans. Community desires related to expanding green space were particularly important in Marpole. The reason that green space was not so critical an issue in the West End could be because the West End is so close to Stanley Park (the largest park in Vancouver).
- Preserving “community character” was an important theme for both communities, but it seemed to be more prevalent in the West End. This might be because there is a more diverse range of dense housing stock (age and types) in the West End than in Marpole. A lot of the focus in the West End was on preserving its existing character and how new development should reflect the existing character. West End residents were adamant that they did not want the West End to suffer from “Yaletownization”. Some Marpole residents wanted to preserve the single-family character of the neighbourhood, but the Marpole Community Planner noted that

there was some discussion about “enhancing” the character of Marpole through new ground-oriented town/row-house forms.

- Traffic and parking concerns related to new development were identified in both communities. Marpole and West End residents seemed to be most concerned about the loss of on-street parking and increased traffic flow in their communities. The West End and Marpole Community Planners noted that this is a particularly challenging area of policy to deal with. There is growing evidence in the planning literature that providing too much parking encourages more automobile use and can add to the cost of building homes (Metro Vancouver, 2012). Finding a balance between lowering on-site parking requirements and ensuring on-street parking challenges do not increase for residents can be difficult to achieve. Further, in order to mitigate concerns about traffic, planners emphasized the importance of investing in bicycling, walking, and transit infrastructure. This required them to educate the communities about investing in non-automobile transportation infrastructure as a strategy to reduce automobile dependency.

Chapter 7.

Multi-Family Projects Before Community Plans

According to interviews with planners and documents obtained from the City, one of the main reasons for the creation of the Community Plans was related to spot-rezonings in the West End and Marpole. Two particular projects characterized as spot re-zonings raised a lot of concerns in Marpole and the West End. These two projects were at 1401 Comox street in the West End and at 70th & Granville street in Marpole (Safeway re-development). Both projects occurred without being accompanied by updated Community Plans. Many residents in both the West End and Marpole, and in other neighbourhoods in Vancouver at the time, had wanted updated Community Plans before the new projects proceeded (Key Informant Interviews, January – April, 2016).

At the time when the development applications for the projects were submitted, the most up-to-date Marpole Community Plan had been approved in 1980. The Plan provided direction on topics such as street and parks improvements, traffic management, housing, and shopping area revitalization (City of Vancouver, 2015g).

In the West End, there was no Community Plan in place at all. In 1986, Vancouver City Council adopted the West End Commercial Policy Plan to ensure that commercial services were available and accessible to area residents. A year later, the West End Residential Areas Policy Plan lead to new residential zoning and guidelines, including measures to provide future services, facilities, and park space for the community (City of Vancouver, 2015h).

Given that up-to-date Community Plans were lacking for both these projects, the most recent policy that they fell under was the City's Short Term Incentives Rental

(STIR) program. From 2009 to 2011, the City of Vancouver administered the STIR program to encourage new rental building projects by offering incentives to developers. In return, developers agreed to provide up to 100 per cent of the units in their developments as rentals for the life of the building, or for 60 years, whichever came first. Incentives to developers included: DCL waiver (on rental units only); parking requirement reductions (on rental units only); increased density; and expedited permit processing (City of Vancouver, 2016d).

STIR has now morphed into the City's Rental 100 program, which provides the same type of incentives as STIR, but only applies to buildings which are 100% rental projects. The Rental 100 program also allows discretion with respect to unit size/finishing and limits on the maximum amount of rent that developers can charge if they utilize the DCL waiver (City of Vancouver, 2016d). Regulations on maximum rents were established in response to community pressure for the new rental units to be "affordable". Interviews with key informants revealed that both STIR and Rental 100 were created in response to the City of Vancouver's strong desire to improve housing affordability for city renters, particularly in light of Vancouver's low rental vacancy rates.

7.1. 1401 Comox Street (The Lauren)

The following details about this project were obtained from the City of Vancouver's staff report to Council prior to approval of its development (City of Vancouver, 2012e).

The project at 1401 Comox street ("the Lauren") is a 22-storey residential building providing a total of 186 market rental housing units (rental only building). The project was approved in 2012, before the approval of the West End Community Plan. The project was completed in 2014. The project took three years to receive approval and Westbank Corporation was its developer.

The rezoning application was submitted under the City's STIR program. Under the provisions of the STIR Program, the developer requested that the DCLs, estimated at \$1,408,659, be waived for this development. The City agreed to the request. No CACs were offered, as is normal for most rental projects in Vancouver¹³. The City considers rental housing to be a "public benefit" and the public benefit accruing from these 186 rental units is their contribution to the city's rental housing stock.

The City's Public Art Program required a public art budget of approximately \$225,037 for this project. The project also included public realm enhancements, including a landscaped corner bulge at Comox and Broughton Street and pedestrian scale lighting on Comox Street. Lastly, the project incorporated an open space along the Comox Street frontage and converted it to a children's play area, community gardens, and an open lawn area.

Public Concerns About the Project and Response by City & Developer

According to City of Vancouver documents, West End residents expressed many concerns about this project when it was first proposed. There were three versions of this application to accommodate community concerns.

According to staff's report to Council (City of Vancouver, 2012e), the original application, submitted in 2009, proposed an increase in the overall maximum density from a Floor Space Ratio (FSR)¹⁴ of 1.5 to 7.5 for the proposed 22-storey market rental residential tower and a proposed 3-storey free-standing townhouse building. The

¹³ The City's Real Estate Services staff reviewed the applicant's development pro-forma. The review concluded that after factoring in the costs associated with the provision of market rental housing units, there was no increase in the land value generated by the rezoning (i.e., the additional density improves the economic viability of the rental housing but does not create any lift in land value. If there was an increase in the land value, then a CAC would be applied, which typically occurs for strata projects).

¹⁴ FSR is a measurement of a building's total area relative to the area of the site on which it is located. For example, a building with a density of 2.0 FSR has a built area equal to twice that of the land on which it is located.

buildings would provide 193 market rental units, including 13 townhouses at ground level.

There was a lot of consultation with the neighbourhood on this proposal and two significant revisions of the original application were submitted in response to this feedback: 1) To address concerns that the proposal did not provide enough neighbourhood benefits, a community facility was incorporated into the smaller building (eliminating one townhouse) and six of the proposed housing units were designated for inclusion in the SAFER Program¹⁵, and; 2) To address concerns regarding the character of the 22-storey tower, modifications were made to its architectural expression.

After these changes were made, additional public feedback was received and the application was revised again, then received by the City in November, 2011. This application included the following changes:

- To address concerns about the height of the building, the roof-top amenity space was relocated to the main floor, bringing the height of the building down from 66 m to 61 m while still retaining 22 storeys;
- To address residents' concerns about shadowing on the nearby Broughton mini-park, the tower was sculpted and repositioned on the site, and;
- To provide more green space between the tower and its neighbour to the west, the small free-standing building containing the community amenity facility and townhouses was removed, increasing the interior side yard from 0.8 m to 8.5 m.

The revisions that led to the final approval of the project in 2012 resulted in a slight reduction in the number of housing units. There were 186 market rental units in total, including six townhouses at grade. As a result of the design changes discussed above, the density was slightly reduced to 7.19 FSR.

¹⁵ SAFER = Shelter Assistance for Elderly Renters

Those in support of the application expressed the following:

- Proposed height and density can comfortably be accommodated.
- Support for the modern character of the proposed building.
- Support for the provision of new rental stock.
- Support for the provision of the six housing units under the SAFER Program.
- Understanding that a greater supply of housing is required for the increased affordability of rental housing.

The key concerns raised were:

- Density and building height, and associated shadowing and view impacts.
- Inappropriate building character within the West End context.
- Inadequate building setbacks on Broughton Street.
- Lack of on-site green space.
- Inadequate parking and increased traffic.
- Lack of public benefits to the community.
- Lack of affordability for the housing units.
- Need for a community plan prior to any further development.

Additional Information from Interviews with Planners

The key informant interviews with City of Vancouver Planners revealed that a lot of the debate about this project related to questions regarding the affordability of the new rental units that would be supplied. In addition, there was a substantial focus on the lack of an updated Community Plan to approve this project.

Most of the public support for The Lauren came from residents who supported the STIR program, as they identified the need for new rental housing in Vancouver.

Another key concern was the height of the building, which was supported by the substantial increase in zoning on the site from an FSR of 1.5 to 7.19. Many residents believed that this was too much of an increase. Michael Geller, an outspoken developer and architect in Vancouver, critiqued the height of the tower. In his blog, he stated:

“While I support the idea of density bonuses to achieve new rental housing, even new market rental housing, I could not endorse a project at 5 times the permitted FSR, regardless of the merits of the design, talent of the architect, or community spirit and capability of the developer.” (Geller, 2013).

According to one planner, now that the building is complete (and occupied), the community seems to have a more favourable impression of it, particularly in terms of its character and design. There are some concerns that the rents are very high, although the planner noted that this is generally the case for new buildings. One of the planners mentioned that it would be interesting to conduct a post-occupancy survey of the building in order to determine how pleased residents of the building are and what adjacent neighbours think of the development now that it is complete and occupied.

The fact that less townhouses were included in the final project was a disappointment for some. Townhouses, which are suitable for families, are rare in Vancouver (particularly in the West End). Consequently, West End residents have expressed a desire for more family friendly housing options in the community.

7.2. Safeway Redevelopment (Granville & 70th)

The following details of this project were obtained from the City of Vancouver’s staff report to Council prior to the approval of its development (City of Vancouver, 2011b).

This project was approved in 2012, before the approval of the Marpole Community Plan, and is now complete. The project proposal was made under the “negotiated” stream of STIR, whereby incentives, including increased density, could be tailored to the specific project. The project took three years to receive approval.

The development consists of four main built-form components: retail uses including a new Safeway and liquor store, a 16-storey residential tower, a 14-storey

residential building, and a seven-storey multiple-family building with townhouses at grade. There are a total of 357 residential units in three buildings, with 31 of the units as market rental units under the STIR program.

The City waived the DCLs applicable to the rental component of the development, estimated at \$216,468. A DCL of approximately \$3,558,815 and a public art contribution of \$655,783 were paid. The City concluded that after factoring in the costs associated with the development of market rental housing units, the resulting increase in land value warranted a CAC of \$1,800,000, which was provided by the developer. Staff recommended that the CAC be unallocated at the time of this development, pending decisions about a future Marpole planning program.

As part of the application process, the City hosted two open houses to review and discuss the application. The first open house was a city-led public information session held at the Marpole Oakridge Community Centre, which was attended by over 200 people. The common concerns raised by the public at this open house were related to height of the project, density, traffic, and the lack of a Community Plan to provide guidance for development applications in the area.

As a result of the open house, the developer revised the project by making the following changes:

- the height of the residential tower along Granville Street was reduced from 24 storeys to 16 storeys;
- FSR was reduced from 3.14 to 2.81;
- two floors were deleted from the residential building situated along Cornish Street;
- the total number of residential units was reduced from 404 units to 357 units;
- a publicly accessible pocket open space was added along Cornish Street frontage, and;

More retail floor space was added to the proposal.

A second open house was held on December 7, 2010 at Marpole Place. The format was an open house/presentation by the developer and City staff followed by questions from the public. While members of the public voiced their concerns regarding the project at the meeting - particularly with respect to height, density and traffic matters - the comment forms received showed more support than opposition to the revised proposal. Of the 90 comment forms received, 49 supported the project, 31 objected to it, and 10 were unsure. Some residents liked the design, and local businesses seemed to be in favour of the project. Further, some residents were in favour of the new housing supply, particularly because it offered a rental housing component and the new townhomes. The revised version created after the second open house was eventually supported by Council.

Interview with Rezoning Planner on Project

The Rezoning Planner (Interview, February 23, 2016) for this project mentioned that a lack of a Community Plan was a major concern for the community. There were also concerns about the rental rates for new buildings and whether the condominium units would be affordable. Traffic and parking concerns were also identified as major issues. The Rezoning Planner mentioned that this could have largely been attributed to the fact that Marpole is mostly a single-family neighbourhood with on-street parking concerns and it is difficult to find parking in order to shop on Marpole's main retail street (Granville street).

Height and scale were also identified as major concerns for the project. The Rezoning Planner explained that the project ignited concerns in part because there had been a small amount of change in Marpole during previous decades leading up to this project. The Planner provided a letter to the Vancouver Courier from 2011, in which Claudia Laroye, the Director of the Marpole Business Association and a Safeway project supporter, stated the following: "This recent flurry of activity, after 30 years of very little or no major development, has caught many citizens off guard, and has made many people apprehensive about the future possible changes to the Marpole community. It is

clear that there is a need for greater and more intensive public discourse, community engagement, and balancing the needs of all stakeholder groups." (Tromp, 2011)

However, the Rezoning Planner mentioned that if this project were to be proposed today, within the context of a Community Plan and with more surrounding density in place, it might receive more support from the community. At the time, the proposed development was taller than what Marpole residents were accustomed to.

The Rezoning Planner mentioned that Rezoning/Project planners play a "neutral role" during the development application process, while developers play a more "active" role in pursuing community support and "selling" the project to the community. Developers also usually hope that some of the residents in the community become buyers of their projects, so it is important for them to establish good relationships with the community. The Rezoning Planner said the developer tried to generate support for this project by reaching out to the community and "activating" the voice of project supporters.

The Rezoning Planner emphasized that City of Vancouver planners try to reach out to as many residents as possible to hear from people who do not commonly participate in the public consultation processes. This can be achieved through various types of public engagement, such as surveys sent to homes, online questionnaires, advertisements in local papers, and in-person opportunities to discuss and learn about the development application. Lastly, the Rezoning Planner also noted that most opposition to developments in Marpole come from single family home owners, that older people are more likely to oppose new projects than younger people, and that the local business community generally supports new projects because it benefits from residential growth.

7.3. Summarizing Comments on 1401 Comox Street & Safeway Redevelopment

Residents expressed frustration that these projects were approved without a Community Plan. Even though the City's STIR policy was new at the time these developments were proposed, there was a lack of specifics regarding where the new rental projects would be located and a lack of parameters regarding the height of the new rental buildings. Residents felt like these projects were being imposed on their neighbourhood. Further, there were concerns that the new rental housing units would not be affordable and concerns about providing incentives to developers (e.g. DCL waivers and parking reductions) for building for-profit market rental projects.

As well, because these projects had rental components, no CACs were offered by the developer for the 1401 Comox street project and a reduced CAC was offered for the Safeway redevelopment project. Planners noted that it was difficult to explain to some residents that the "lift" in the land value was going towards new rental housing. Some residents did not care that new rentals were being offered and preferred the City to spend the money on community amenities (Key Informant Interviews, January – April, 2016). Both projects highlighted the polarization that can occur in the community about whether to prioritize housing affordability or community amenities.

Developers needed to propose a certain amount of density (height) in order to generate a "land lift" for their projects. The community identified height (significant increases in FSR) as a concern for both projects, but a reduction in height would have reduced the developer's ability to provide as many rental units and/or CACs.

Chapter 8.

Multi-Family Housing Projects after Approval of the Community Plans (Approved in 2015 & 2016)

This chapter examines the two development projects that were carried out after the approval of the Community Plans in the West End and Marpole (one for each neighbourhood). I used document analysis (staff reports to Council) to analyze public feedback related to the two projects. I also analyzed changes to the projects that resulted from public comments. More specifically, I identified changes made to these projects from the time when they were first officially submitted to the City of Vancouver as a proposal to the time when the development applications were approved by the City of Vancouver.

The changes that took place helped me to structure the questions I asked developers and planners about the rationale for the changes and whether they had any impacts on public support for or opposition towards the projects.

Lastly, I used the interviews and document analysis to examine the interactions between the Community Plans and the projects.

8.1.1. 1171 Jervis Street (The Jervis, West End)

The following details about this project were obtained from the City of Vancouver's staff report to the Development Permit Board prior to the project being approved (City of Vancouver, 2015i).

The development application at 1171 Jervis Street was approved at the City's Development Permit Board meeting on May 4, 2015. The developer for this project is Intracorp. The project is a 19 storey mixed-use building with one level of commercial space on the first floor and the remaining space containing 91 dwelling units (63 market/28 social housing), all over three levels of underground parking.

This project was the first tower development to receive approval in the West End after the adoption of the West End Community Plan in November, 2013. The West End Community Plan provides the policy framework for such developments to occur. The Plan identifies corridors in the West End as areas for growth, as they are well-served by transit, services, and amenities. The project is located in the Lower Davie Corridor of the West End Community Plan, which encourages new development opportunities by pre-zoning sites for higher densities.

Social housing requirements are also a component of the West End Plan, and are specifically intended to be achieved in this area of the West End. Social housing requirements for this site resulted in 28 social housing units being provided. The pre-zoning on this site does not require CACs to be paid. Instead, the CACs are the social housing units, which will be turned over to the City upon completion of the project. DCLs were required to be paid for this project.

The site is located on a four-lot assembly at the northwest corner of the intersection of Davie and Jervis Street. It contains three existing dwellings and one apartment block with a total of seven units. The developer provided a tenant relocation plan for the four lots, which are being demolished, and went beyond the requirements of the City's Rate of Change Guidelines (shown below in figure 3).

Figure 3 – Tenant Relocation Plan for 1171 Jervis Street Project

Rate of Change Guideline Requirements	Tenant/Household Relocation Plan Offer (Negotiated with the Developer)
2 months free rent	\$2,500 flat rate. This works out to between 4 months rent for people in the apartment and 6 months rent for people in the rooming house
Reimbursement for receipted moving expenses	\$750 towards moving expenses, paid directly by Intracorp to the moving company
Assistance in finding a rental unit or other form of alternative affordable housing	The developer engaged a housing consultant to work with the tenants to determine their housing needs and to assist them with finding a new home.
First right of refusal to relocate into a replacement rental unit on the site	While right of first refusal will be offered for this project, it will be limited based on the number of units for singles contained within the building, as the units are family oriented as per the West End Plan.

The proposed building includes 75 units (82% of total) with two or more bedrooms that may be suitable for families with children. The City's High Density Housing for Families with Children Guidelines therefore apply.

Public Feedback Process

This application only took twelve weeks to process (from proposal to final approval). No public hearing or re-zoning was required for this project. These steps were eliminated as a result of changes to zoning after the West End Community Plan was adopted.

Nevertheless, the City optionally hosted an open house on March 2, 2015. Forty-one people attended the open house and the city received fourteen written comment forms. The Project Planner interviewed for this development mentioned that the “optional open house” was provided because this was the first development to occur in the West End subsequent to the approval of the West End Plan. The City therefore wanted to ensure that this project did not generate a high amount of controversy and that West End residents were given opportunities to provide feedback. Further, this was the first project in the West End to incorporate social housing units as part of a condominium project, so planners were interested to receive feedback on that aspect of the project (Project Planner, Interview, February 19, 2016). The Project Planner noted that the City has continued to hold open houses for other new projects in the West End subsequent to the approval of the Plan, even though this is not required.

According to the City’s Development Permit Board Report (City of Vancouver, 2015i), the City received twenty-four written (including e-mail) responses. Three respondents requested additional information about the application, five expressed support for the project, and sixteen wrote to either express direct opposition or voice concerns (as outlined below).

Staff summarized the following key concerns amongst the public (City of Vancouver, 2015i):

- Social housing – there were concerns that the number of social housing units included in the project to be rented at or below provincial limits was too low.

Thus, residents wanted more social housing units rented at or below provincial limits to be included in the project.

- Construction noise & other impacts - there were concerns about the anticipated noise of construction, the disruption it would cause, and its traffic impacts. Residents of the surrounding properties wanted to see construction activities carefully handled in order to minimize impacts.
- Access to light and views - there were concerns about how the proposed building would limit light and block existing views for residents living in surrounding buildings.
- Heritage retention - there were concerns about the loss of the three heritage buildings currently on the site. Consequently, there were requests for the developer to acknowledge the previous existence of these resources.
- Material expression - one respondent described the overall design as a “boring” high rise. The limited amount of retail frontage on Davie Street was a concern for another one of the respondents.

The proposal was reviewed by the City of Vancouver’s Urban Design Panel (UDP) on March 11, 2015, at which time it was unanimously supported. The UDP mentioned that the developer should consider improving the colour and material palette of the building, and also consider expanding the brick component around the façade of the podium. Overall, the panel determined that the proposal “was a well-developed and rational scheme”. In fact, some Panel members thought the tower and/or the podium could be several storeys taller (City of Vancouver, 2015i). However, these views did not impact the building, as the Community Plan had limited its height (Director of Development at Intracorp, Interview, March 16, 2016).

Interviews with Planner and Developer

The interviews with the Project Planner (February 19, 2016) and the developer (March 16, 2016) revealed the following key points about this project:

- The developer mentioned that most of the adjustments to this project were a result of feedback from City staff. The developer acknowledged that there was a fair amount of back-and-forth between the City and the developer before the project was presented to the public. A few changes were made to the architectural expression of the building (colours and materials), the positioning of the building on the site, and the design and entry to the social housing units.
- The developer met with neighbours to discuss the project before submitting their application to the City.
- The developer mentioned that the tenant relocation plan was a major component that helped to mitigate concerns about this project, particularly amongst City staff. The developer explained that there was a lot of collaboration between the developer, the City, and the tenants to develop a tenant package that the residents felt comfortable with.
- Both the Project Planner and the developer attributed the “success” of this project (in terms of a fast permitting process, a low amount of community concerns, and good design) to the fact that a Community Plan was recently approved that established design guidelines and pre-zoning for the site. The pre-zoning allowed for a faster approval process – as there were clear guidelines regarding the height, design, and social housing requirements for this site.
- The developer and the Project Planner could not confirm how the social housing units would be allocated for this development. It was agreed that if there had been greater clarity (upfront) about who would be eligible to live in these units, or

if West End residents had been given a priority, there might have been more community support for this project.

- Parking was not identified as a concern for this project. This could be because the project is in a downtown neighbourhood that has a lot of transit and walking options. The developer was confident that it had provided enough on-site parking for the project.
- Planners played a “neutral role” in the project approval process. The Project Planner wanted to ensure that the project adhered to the West End Community Plan, and wanted to educate the community about how this project fit within the Plan. The Project Planner also wanted to identify concerns about the project and work with the developer to mitigate those concerns, if possible.
- The developer mentioned that it played a more “active” role in terms of trying to attain community support for this project. However, the developer mentioned that after the updated Community Plans, there was less of a need to try to “sell the idea” of the project. Instead, there was a focus on mitigating the concerns that had been raised by residents and City staff. The developer only needed to make minor changes to the project in order to mitigate concerns that arose during the public feedback process (mostly from City staff regarding the architectural expression of the project).
- Even though the prices of the condos were not known at the time of the development application, after the project was approved West End residents criticized the high prices advertised for its condo units. The developer confirmed that all the units are being sold for over \$1 million, excepting the 20% social housing component of the project, which will be provided at a mix of market and below-market rents. The developer mentioned that the project was “positioned as a luxury building”, primarily due to the constraints of density on the site. As land costs were high, as was the cost of building the social housing, providing a “luxury building” made good financial sense to the developer. The developer

further noted that if there was more density allowed on the site, the units might have had slightly lower prices, depending on the pertinent market and company factors at the time.

8.1.2. 375 West 59th Avenue (Belpark, Marpole)

The following details about this project were obtained from the City of Vancouver's staff report to Council before the approval of the project (City of Vancouver, 2015j).

This project was approved by Council in December, 2015. It rezoned one large parcel located at 375 West 59th Avenue from RS- 1 (One-Family Dwelling) District to CD-1 (Comprehensive Development) District in order to allow for the construction of three six-storey residential buildings.

In total, the project provides 155 dwelling units (38 one-bedroom units, 81 two-bedroom units, 31 three-bedroom units and five four-bedroom units), and over one and a half levels of underground parking (229 underground parking spaces). To provide for greater diversity of unit type and improve affordability, five of the larger units were designed to include lock-off units¹⁶.

The site is currently occupied by the Amherst Hospital, a private 62-bed community care facility. The Langara Golf Course is directly north of the site, while an existing three-storey townhouse development that includes 43 strata residential units is directly east of it.

Due to the site's relatively large size and unique context (no lane access and adjacency with the Langara Golf Course), staff considered this site anomalous. Higher densities can be considered for anomalous sites in the Marpole Community Plan through

¹⁶ A lock-off unit is one in which a bedroom is self-contained (with kitchen and bathroom) and can be rented out as a separate unit. The Marpole Community Plan allows for lock-off units, which may be rented on some sites (City of Vancouver, 2014b)

a re-zoning, based on urban design and public realm performance. Staff concluded that a density of 2.66 FSR was appropriate for this site. The developer had proposed an FSR of 2.83, but the City required the developer maintain it at 2.66.

The development conforms to the City's Green Building Policy for Re-zonings, meaning that the project is eligible for a LEED Gold rating. Lastly, Section 8 of the Marpole Community Plan (the "Housing" section) calls for 25% of the units to be suitable for families (two and three bedrooms or more). This project provided 117 of the 155 units as two, three and four-bedroom units, which meant that 75% of the total units were suitable for families with children.

Public Benefits

A DCL of \$2,161,943 was provided for this project. Projects referenced in the Marpole Public Benefit Strategy (in the Marpole Community Plan) that are eligible for DCL funding (and thus funding from this project) include a new traffic signal at 61st Avenue and Cambie Street to increase pedestrian's and cyclist's safety and comfort; the acquisition and development of a new waterfront park and/or trail near the Fraser River; Winona Park improvements, and; the Hudson Bikeway. A public art contribution of approximately \$293,998 was paid.

The developer paid a total CAC package of \$6,582,675 using the City's target CAC rate of \$55 per square foot, which is based on the net additional increase in floor area (119,685 sq. ft.). Staff recommended that the cash CAC be allocated to the following identified community needs, based on the Marpole Community Plan Public Benefits Strategy:

- \$3,291,337 (50% of total CAC package) toward the City's Affordable Housing Reserve to increase the affordable housing supply in and around the Marpole area.

- \$2,962,204 (45% of total CAC package) toward community facilities and/or childcare serving residents and/or workers in or near to Marpole, including a minimum of \$500,000 toward the renewal of Marpole Place.
- \$329,134 (5% of total CAC package) towards citywide heritage conservation efforts (City of Vancouver, 2015j).

Public Feedback Process

The City of Vancouver Rezoning Centre webpage included notification and application information as well as an online comment form. A rezoning information sign was also posted on the development's site. A community open house was held on April 28, 2015, which was attended by staff, the developer's team, and approximately 38 residents from the area. The City received a total of 20 written responses to the application via email or comment form.

Comments with respect to the application focused on:

- Height and density – The building was felt by many to be too tall for the area, with a height of four or less storeys suggested as more appropriate. Further, some residents suggested pushing the height to the site's western edge in order to reduce the site's impact on eastern neighbours.
- Traffic – Many concerns were expressed about existing traffic conditions, specifically along 59th Avenue. Some people felt that the development would increase traffic in the neighbourhood.
- Shadowing and privacy – There were concerns about reduced solar access and reduced daylight to units and private outdoor spaces for existing adjacent neighbours. In addition, there were concerns about a loss of privacy for adjacent neighbours due to the building's height and siting.

- Building setbacks – Some felt that the proposed building was too close to the street and adjacent buildings. They suggested that the setback for the buildings be increased from 10 feet to 15, noting that 18 feet was more in line with the neighbourhood’s character and the setbacks of existing buildings.
- Neighbourhood character – There were concerns that the neighbourhood character would be negatively affected by the proposal. Specifically, there was a concern that the area’s quiet nature and sense of openness would be diminished.
- Design – the design was criticized for being “unattractive” and too similar to other buildings proposed along the Cambie Corridor.
- Neighbourhood infrastructure – Concern was expressed about cumulative increases in density negatively affecting community facility-building capacity, including the capacity for schools and community centres. (City of Vancouver, 2015j)

In the staff report to Council (City of Vancouver, 2015j), staff note that the proposed development was generally consistent with the Marpole Community Plan in terms of height and density. In response to public feedback and to better follow the built form guidelines in the Marpole Community Plan, staff recommended the following changes, which the developer adhered to:

- Deletion of a proposed bridge along Alberta Street to break the building into two building elements and reduce overall building length along Alberta Street. The developer explained that the City requested this change for urban design purposes.
- Reductions in building massing at the eastern edge of the site and the relocation of the east building, both of which aimed to provide an improved interface with adjacent residential development, and;

- Revisions in massing to enable the retention of mature trees located along West 59th Street.

The staff report notes that the reductions in building massing to the north and east buildings were intended to reduce shadow and privacy impacts to the residential units and patios that face the subject site.

Interviews with Planner and Developer

The interviews with the Rezoning Planner and the developer for this project revealed the following:

- The Rezoning Planner explained that planners play a “neutral role” during the public engagement process. They focus on listening to stakeholders, identifying their concerns, and ensuring that the application conforms to the Community Plan. The developer played a more active role in terms of community engagement than the planner, aimed to achieve the community’s public support.
- The Rezoning Planner confirmed that public discourse during the feedback process focused on specific details of the project, such as shadow analysis and setbacks. The Marpole Community Plan, however, dealt with higher-level issues in the community, such as how amenities should be spent, overall housing supply, and diversity issues.
- The developer and the Rezoning Planner explained that the immediate neighbours (adjacent to the site) expressed most of the concerns about the project. Most of these concerns were related to the shadowing impacts the development would have on some units. The developer met with residents who would be impacted by the shadowing to make alterations to the project.
- The developer and City of Vancouver planners met with the community frequently (particularly with residents in the adjacent strata building), and focused

on listening to residents as well as being as transparent as possible about the steps of the project as it moved forward. Both the developer and the Rezoning Planner explained that being able to fully understand the community's concerns and tweaking the project accordingly was important to gaining more support.

- The developer and Rezoning Planner mentioned that there were fears related to increased traffic and a potential loss of on-street parking. The Rezoning Planner and the developer had to explain to the community that the developer was accommodating the increase in vehicles through the buildings underground parking structure.
- Educating the community about the project's position as part of the recently approved Marpole Community Plan helped provide residents with a context for why the development was occurring. This helped to reduce opposition to the project. At the Public Hearing I attended for this project (December 14, 2015), two Councillors referred to the Community Plan as justification for approving the project. One Councillor explained that if she did not approve the project, she would be "violating" the Community Plan. The backing of a Community Plan seemed to provide all of the Councillors with more confidence to support this project. The project was supported unanimously by City Council. The developer noted that he felt a lot of support from staff and Council for this project, largely because of the recently approved Community Plan.
- The developer and the Rezoning planner confirmed that they collaborated together significantly on this project. There was a lot of back and forth between the developer and the City before the project was shown to the public (pre-application meetings). There was also a lot of communication between the developer and City staff during the development application and public feedback processes.
- The developer placed a lot of their efforts at the Public Hearing on accommodating neighbourhood concerns in order to avoid opposition to the

project. The developer believed that by accommodating neighbourhood concerns upfront, their company saved about six months in processing time. If a lot of concerns had been voiced at the Public Hearing, the developer would have had to make alterations to the project and re-submit their application to the City, which would have created significant delays.

8.2. Summarizing Comments on 1171 Jervis (the Jervis) & 375 West 59th Street Projects (Belpark)

Both the planners and the developer for these two projects believed that Community Plans helped to reduce public opposition to the projects. Planners mentioned they were able to have more constructive and focused conversations with the community as a result of the Community Plans.

Overall, there seemed to be less of a focus on “if” the projects should proceed (unlike the projects approved before the Community Plans) and more of a focus on “how” the projects should proceed. Projects approved after the Community Plans did not experience as many revisions as projects approved before the Community Plans. Further, the approval process for the projects approved after the Community Plans were much shorter (12 weeks for the 1171 Jervis Street project and one year for the 375 West 59th Street project) in comparison to the projects approved before the Community Plans (three years for each project). While shorter approval processes might be insignificant for the residents of Marpole and the West End, they are generally viewed positively by developers and City planners, as it reduces staff time and resources.

In addition, parking and traffic seemed to generally be more of an issue in Marpole than in the West End, likely due to the single-family nature of the area in which the Marpole developments were occurring. This was a similar finding for the projects approved before the Community Plans.

Both the developer and the planners believed that the CAC contributions (to include the social housing requirements for the Jarvis Street project) helped to achieve community support for these projects. CACs were provided as a cash contribution for the 375 West 59th Street project towards affordable housing, community infrastructure, and heritage preservation. Whereas the CAC for the 1171 Jarvis Street project was used to provide on-site social housing units.

The developer for these two projects highlighted the importance of pre-application meetings with City staff and with residents. The developers approach was to reach out to residents very early in the process and to be as transparent as possible about their intentions. The developer noted that they usually do this, as it helps to build trust and presents a positive image of their company. It was also important for the developer to build good relationships with the residents of these communities, as some of them could be potential buyers (i.e. looking to downsize in Marpole or to upsize to a 2 or 3-bedroom condominium in the West End).

Chapter 9.

Discussion

This chapter discusses themes that emerged from the analysis of the four multi-family housing projects and two Community Plans in Vancouver. The discussion includes a reflection on the reasons for opposition towards and support for the projects and on the strategies that the planners and developers used to increase community support and mitigate concerns for new multi-family housing projects. This chapter also reflects on how the findings of this study relate to the findings in the literature review.

9.1. Major Themes of Opposition and Support in Vancouver

Based on the document analysis and interviews, prevalent themes related to concerns and support regarding new multi-family housing projects in Vancouver include:

- Absence or Presence of Community Plans;
- Housing affordability (high prices and concerns with tenant displacement);
- Impact of new development on community infrastructure (public benefits);
- Impact of new development on blocking views/casting shadows (height);
- Impact of new development on traffic and parking;
- Impact of new development on the character and fabric of the community;
and
- Building and urban design issues

Each of these topics will be discussed in more detail below. Community concerns that were identified in the literature review but did not emerge in this study will be noted.

9.2. Impact of Community Plans (“Pre-Planning”)

The projects in Marpole and the West End were very contentious prior to the approval of the Community Plans. A lot of the tension was focused on the lack of an updated community planning process and policy framework to approve these projects.

The planners who worked on the two multi-family housing projects after the approval of the Community Plans explained that how a clearer policy framework impacted the development approval process and community support. The Community Plans “shifted the conversation” to what planners and the developer mentioned as a more “focused discussion”, which planners and the developer viewed as a positive outcome. This included conversations that were more focused on the details of the projects (colours, shadow impacts, parking, etc.), as opposed to examining whether the projects should proceed or not (which consumed a lot of time for the projects approved before the Community Plans).

Both the planners and the developer noted that the Community Plans allowed politicians to feel more “confident” supporting the projects. For instance, the Marpole Community Plan had an impact on politicians’ confidence to support the West 59th Street project in Marpole. At the Public Hearing for this project, Councillors mentioned the benefit of having the Marpole Community Plan in place as a reason to support the project, as well as future projects in the neighbourhood. Some Councillors mentioned that they would be “violating” the Community Plan and disrespecting the two-year consultation process that led to the development of the Plan if they did not approve the project (Public Hearing, December 15, City of Vancouver).

The projects approved after the Community Plans had less public feedback compared to the projects approved before the Community Plans. The developer and the

planners believed that if the amount of public feedback received is small, it usually means there is less public opposition to a project. The developer mentioned how this is a general understanding amongst developers, planners, and public officials in Vancouver.

However, less feedback on projects could just be a result of “consultation fatigue”, given that both West End and Marpole residents had been consulted with for approximately two years on the Community Plans. Furthermore, while the community planning processes might have made it appear like there was less public opposition to the development projects, it could have just appeared this way because the community thought the projects were a “done deal”, given that the Community Plans had been recently approved. Some residents might have refrained from voicing their concerns because they believed it would not make a difference to the outcome of the development proposals.

Even though residents were generally pleased with the introduction of the new Community Plans in Marpole and the West End, some residents felt it was unfair for these Plans to be advanced in the absence of a City-wide Plan. The developer, planners, and UDI representative mentioned that the lack of a City-wide Plan in Vancouver has long been a concern for some residents and stakeholders. The developer did mention, however, that it is common for some people to complain about the “process” if they do not like the “project outcome”. Further, one of the planners stated that the request for Community Plans from residents could have just been a tactic to delay projects from occurring in their community.

9.3. Housing Affordability

The results of the document analysis and the interviews on projects revealed that housing affordability is a major concern in Vancouver. The narrative associated with housing affordability in Vancouver is complex. Some residents, particularly those in the West End, fear that new development will make housing less affordable because it could lead to the displacement of low income renters through the re-development of older

rental buildings. Concerns about issues related to gentrification were also expressed. However, a large proportion of the new housing forms in the West End Community Plan are designated for social and rental housing, which is a policy response to improve housing affordability.

Concerns related to housing affordability and displacement were more apparent in the West End than in Marpole. This is likely because the West End is primarily comprised of renters. Many residents in Marpole wanted to maintain the “single family character” of the neighbourhood. Nonetheless, some Marpole residents supported new housing options that provided alternatives to single-family housing. One reason for this is that such options would allow single-family home owners to “age in place” by moving to a smaller housing unit in the neighbourhood. Protecting older rental buildings in Marpole from re-development was also identified as a concern (Marpole Community Planner, Interview, March 15, 2016).

All of the key informant interviewees, particularly the UDI representative and community planners, agreed that all types of new housing supply are important from an affordability perspective. They particularly thought it was important to diversify Vancouver’s housing stock, which includes introducing more family friendly housing options (townhomes and 2 & 3 bedroom apartments). The interviewees also agreed that the benefits of new housing supply in terms of housing affordability need to be better communicated to the public.

Planners and the developer also mentioned the lack of clarity regarding the housing affordability components of new developments. Sometimes it is not made clear to the public that developers are providing cash contributions to the City’s Affordable Housing Reserve (as part of the CAC contribution for new developments). In addition, it is not made clear who will be receiving the social housing units and what the cost of rent will be. The community showed interest in the social housing component of the 1171 Jervis Street project and asked questions about the eligibility requirements for the social housing. Both the planner and developer for this project mentioned that at the time of the development application, it was not clear how the social housing would be allocated.

The developer believed that more support for the project could have been achieved if the allocation of the social housing was more clear, or perhaps prioritized for West End residents.

There were also community concerns about whether the new rental housing units for the 1401 Comox and Safeway developments would be “affordable”. In response to these concerns, the City created a policy outlining the maximum rents (updated annually) that could be charged for new rental housing projects if the developer receives the DCL waiver through the City’s Secured Market Rental Housing Policy.

9.4. Public Benefits (Updating of Community Infrastructure)

Both the developer and the planners explained that there was little discussion or controversy regarding how the public benefits should be allocated for the projects after the Community Plans had been approved. The Community Plans outlined how much money would be collected through new development and how the money should be spent.

For the projects approved before the Community Plans, there were concerns and differences of opinion in the community about how to spend the “lift” in the land value for the re-zoning projects. Planners mentioned that since these projects were carried out in the absence of updated Community Plans, it was difficult to have a conversation with the community about how the amenities should be created and whether the “lift” in the land value should go towards building new rental/social housing units or towards other community priorities.

Planners, the developer and the UDI representative were in agreement that the City taking the “lift” in the land value and spending it on community amenities was important to achieving community support for new projects in Vancouver. This aligns with findings in the literature review that emphasized the importance of incentives/direct benefits to motivate local residents to accept growth in their community. However, the key informants believed that the more clarification there is how CACs are spent on new

developments, the easier it is to achieve community support. The UDI representative and the developer believed there should be greater accountability regarding how the CAC money is spent in Vancouver, and that it should be spent in a timely manner and stay in the community accepting new development. They believed that this would be important to gaining support for new housing projects.

9.5. Height of Buildings

Even though the Community Plans established clear guidelines regarding the height of new buildings, concerns lingered regarding the height of the buildings during the public feedback process for the projects approved after the Community Plans.

In particular, there were concerns about the buildings casting shadows on adjacent properties and blocking views. The Rezoning/Project Planners and the developer mentioned that they were able to accommodate some of the neighbourhood concerns by making alterations to the projects in order to lessen shadowing impacts, such as altering building set-backs and the building's sculpture and design.

Issues related to shadowing and blockage of views were rarely discussed during the Community Planning stage, but were discussed more during the development application process. The Rezoning and Project Planner and the developer mentioned that issues related to shadowing and blockage of views can get lost in the larger discussions during the Community Plans process. Consequently, shadowing and blockage of views can catch residents by surprise when an actual development application proceeds.

9.6. Traffic & Parking

There were traffic and parking concerns for the projects in both Marpole and the West End. However, the document analysis and interviews revealed there were more concerns in the former than in the latter. This is likely because Marpole is more single-

family and car-oriented than the West End, and because many of the residents in Marpole enjoy free on-street parking. Some of the planners mentioned that the establishment of a Community Plan did not mitigate concerns about traffic and parking and pointed out that such concerns are common when new development is occurring.

According to the UDI representative, there is a significant gap between what planners and developers think is good parking policy versus what the public thinks is good parking policy. An oversupply of parking is often viewed positively by residents. However, planners, developers, and academics increasingly voice concerns about the negative impacts that an oversupply of parking can have on housing affordability and auto-dependency (Victoria Transport Policy Institute, 2016; Metro Vancouver, 2013).

9.7. Character and Fabric of Community

The literature identified efforts to preserve or enhance the desirable traits of a neighbourhood, its character, and its social identity and fabric as important to achieving community support for new development.

In the West End, there was a strong push by residents to preserve the character of the neighbourhood's "green and leafy" residential streets and a clear desire for the West End not to become like Yaletown. In Marpole, residents wanted to maintain the single-family character of the neighbourhood. Their resistance to changing the single-family character may have been rooted in their desire to maintain the existing single-family built form from a design perspective. Alternatively, resistance to change could have been more related to a desire to maintain the family-oriented "social identity" of the area. The Marpole Community Planner noted that "residents were concerned ... they felt that the family-oriented nature and character of the neighbourhoods would be threatened by new development". Ironically, the City of Vancouver's desire to have more townhomes in Marpole was actually related to the goal of creating more affordable family housing options.

The literature review also identified that a desire for new retail helped to achieve community support for housing. Marpole residents expressed a desire for Granville Street, the main shopping street in Marpole, to be “revitalized” through new retail options. The Marpole BIA believed that new housing developments near the arterials would help to revitalize the shopping areas of Marpole. In contrast, West End residents expressed a fear of retail gentrification because new development and subsequent rent increases for retail spaces might cause local businesses to be priced out of the area.

9.8. Issues Related to “Fear” of New Residents & Crime

The literature review indicated that a fear of having new residents with different socio-economic backgrounds move to a community can cause opposition to new housing. Overall, it did not appear that fear of new people dominated the discourses related to new housing in the West End and Marpole. However, in the West End residents indicated that they did not want their neighbourhood to “turn into” Yaletown. This could have been due to the perception that Yaletown is a relatively high income area, rather than just a comment on its built form (modern high rise condominiums).

The Community Planner for Marpole believed that the affordable housing options proposed, including the “thin streets”, might have generated some fears about the type of people who would move to the area. However, this was never specifically stated by residents. In addition, issues related to a fear of crime did not arise in any of the discussions about the projects or the Community Plans.

9.9. Building and Urban Design

Planners and the developer believed that building design or architectural expression and urban design influence community support for new development. The developer noted that many of the architectural changes to their projects were due to requests from City staff. Planners noted Vancouver’s high standards for building and urban design. They believed that these standards should be maintained and should

evolve to meet the needs of different contexts and different neighbourhoods. Essentially, planners and the developer believed that well-designed projects are important to achieving community support.

9.10. Green Building Features

In their interviews, planners and the developer expressed the belief that public support was not influenced by the green building features of the projects, given that these features were not raised during the public consultation process. The Project/Rezoning Planners said that they rarely or never hear concerns voiced about this issue.

However, the lack of concern about green features in the Marpole and the West End projects could have been because the developer and planners did not put much effort into promoting the “green” features of the projects. A lack of public interest in “green buildings” does not mean that green building requirements are not worth achieving, as the planners mentioned that they have merits unrelated to the attainment of public support.

9.11. Jobs Generated from New Development

The developer mentioned that their company and developers in general do not promote the jobs that will be generated by their projects during the public consultation process. Planners confirmed that the City likewise does not promote the jobs generated by new projects either. The Community Plans have sections and strategies on the economy, which include outcomes such as enhancing retail streets and preserving industrial lands. However, there is no mention about the jobs that will be created from new residential construction in either the Marpole or Vancouver Community Plans.

9.12. Communication, Outreach & Collaboration Strategies

The planners and the developer emphasized the importance of utilizing strong communication and outreach strategies to mitigate the community's concerns and increase its support for new multi-family housing projects. To this end, the planners and the developer emphasized the importance of early and frequent consultation with residents.

Collaboration between planners and developers was mentioned in the literature review as being important to achieving community support. The community engagement strategies identified in the literature review as helping to build community support for planning processes were utilized by the Vancouver planners referenced in this research. These strategies included: 1) consulting early; 2) consulting frequently; 3) promoting collaboration between key stakeholders in the community; 4) ensuring that individuals in the community have the proper information; 5) listening carefully to feedback and altering projects/policies in an effort to create mutual benefits; 6) identifying and engaging allies in the community (such as local business and housing advocacy groups), and 7) engaging with less dominant voices in the community. In addition, the Vancouver planners used various engagement and educational techniques that were identified in the literature review, including: development/walking tours, studies, workshops, and images. They also emphasised community benefits, community character, design, and affordable housing (all of which were identified in the literature review).

The literature review indicated the importance of developers collaborating with the community, which occurred for all of the projects discussed in this paper. The West End Project Planner and the Marpole Rezoning Planner praised the community outreach approach taken by Intracorp for their projects on 1171 Jervis Street and 375 West 59th, and particularly commended their willingness to meet with the community, listen to its members, and alter their projects to address community concerns.

The developer met early with the communities in the West End and Marpole, listened carefully to their concerns and ideas, altered project features, and used images and renderings to help gain community support (all of which are strategies identified in the literature review). The project at 1171 Jervis street had the least collaborative effort between the developer and the residents of the projects addressed in the paper. The reason for this was that the process was truncated, as the site was pre-zoned, and the approval process only last 12 weeks. Consequently, the opportunity for community engagement was limited.

The interviews revealed that there was a high level of collaboration between the developers and the planners on the projects. However, there was less collaboration between planners and developers on the Community Plans. The collaboration between developers and the residents during the community planning process was considerably less than the collaboration that occurred between them once the projects were underway. One planner mentioned that it would be beneficial for developers to play a more engaging role in the Community Plans process. This Planner believed that attending public meetings would give developers a good opportunity to better understand the community and build trust with its residents. The UDI representative mentioned that developers often shy away from trying to influence the outcome of Community Plans, as they do not want to be viewed as acting in “self-interest” if they advocate for new housing development. The UDI representative further stated that City of Vancouver staff sometimes caution developers and the UDI to stay away from community engagement to avoid the appearance that they are acting in “self-interest”, which could result in a “backlash” and thus increase opposition to new development.

Although the literature review highlighted the importance of community-developer interaction, the Marpole Community Planner criticized the “real estate industry” and particularly realtors for trying to persuade single-family residents to include their homes in designated rezonings in the Marpole Community Plan. The Planner stated that realtors approached residents to try to convince them to seek zoning changes for their properties as the prices of their properties would exceed market prices if a developer purchased their property for land assembly purposes. The Marpole Community Planner

believed that the tactics used by the realtors confused some of the residents. The Planner believed that the Community Plan should be viewed as a “contract” between the City and the residents, and that it would be unfair to change the Community Plan just because a few residents and developers could make extra profits. The Marpole Community Planner, stated (March 15, 2016, Interview):

One of the challenges in Marpole was the knocking on the doors during the planning program from those in the real estate industry ... and that's really unnerving for people who are unsure about changes in their community ... it created confusion. It makes resident feel like the community is going to change wholesale. It put a lot of pressure on residents ... and some of them are older, more vulnerable, or speak English as their second language. The pressure resulted in confusion and contributed to opposition to development.

However, if the Marpole Community Plan had included more opportunities to build townhomes, it would have aligned with the City of Vancouver's goal to offer more family-friendly housing options, particularly for families who cannot afford single-family homes. This issue highlights an ongoing challenge in Vancouver about development, profits, and community opposition against/support for new housing. The document analysis and interviews revealed that some residents believe that new development is only approved to serve the interests of the real estate development industry, which is similar to the “growth machine” theory discussed in the literature review. At the same time, however, the outcome of new development can help to advance the social goals desirable to many Vancouverites, sustainability advocates, and business leaders. It was not surprising to learn that some single-family homeowners wanted to sell their homes for re-zoning purposes, as the literature review notes that residents are more likely to want development to occur in their neighbourhood if it has a “tangible benefit”. In this case, the “tangible benefit” is that Marpole single-family home owners would make an extra profit in selling their homes. The UDI representative noted that single-family home owners only fully understood the profits they could achieve from selling their homes at the end of or after the Marpole Community Plan process. The UDI representative believed that Marpole single-family homeowners might have advocated for more density during the Marpole Community Planning process if they had known upfront the profits

they could achieve from selling their homes. If homeowners increasingly recognize the profits they can achieve from densification, the “home-voter” theory may evolve to incorporate home owners as a more business-minded advocacy group pushing for development. Over time, and particularly in land-constrained regions, home owners might collaborate more often with the development industry to add a new element to the “growth machine”.

9.13. Summary of Policy Issues and Strategies

The chart below (figure 4) summarizes the major community concerns with new development in Vancouver and the policy responses made by the City of Vancouver to mitigate these concerns.

Figure 4 – Community Concerns and Policy Response by the City of Vancouver

Public Issue	Policy Tools (Response)
Housing Affordability Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Social housing requirements -Tenant relocation requirements -Rental housing incentives. Caps on rent rates if a developer takes advantage of City incentives (DCL waiver) under Secured Market Rental Housing Policy -Family housing requirements (requirement for 2 & 3 bedroom units) for social and market housing (depending on area) -Zoning for a diversity of new housing

	forms (town-homes, apartments, rental housing, laneways, duplex, triplexes, etc.)
Design – maintaining and/or enhancing neighbourhood character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Neighbourhood Design & Built Form Guidelines (part of Community Plans and zoning by-laws) -Urban Design Panel review of projects -Public Realm Principles (as part of Community Plans) -Collection of Public Art Fees for Major Re-zoning Projects
Traffic & Parking concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Minimum and maximum parking requirements -On-street parking restrictions -Traffic calming measures -Investment in bicycle, walking, and transit infrastructure.
Ageing Community Infrastructure (pressure from new development)	-Collection of Community Amenity Contributions and Development Cost Levies for community infrastructure (community centres, daycares, etc.)

Enhancement of Green Space	-Collection of DCLs and CACs to be allocated towards park improvements and acquisitions
Energy Efficiency of Buildings	-Green Rezoning Policies
Protection of heritage	-CACs towards Heritage Preservation
Request for Community Plans and City-wide Plan	-New Community Plans in Vancouver (e.g. Marpole and West End). -No movement on City-wide Plan.
Height of Buildings	-View corridors protection policies & zoning by-laws (established through the City's General Policy for Higher Buildings)
Initiatives to hire locals	-No local employment policies in place. -This has occurred, however, for some projects in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside ¹⁷ .

¹⁷ This was mentioned by the UDI representative and West End Community Planner

9.14. Moving Forward (New Strategies & Approaches)

Key informants were asked questions about what could be done to achieve greater community support for new multi-family housing projects in Vancouver.

A common response related to providing more clarity and accountability with respect to how CACs are collected and spent. In addition, the informants mentioned that it was important to provide the community with further clarification and education about housing affordability as well as clarity regarding who receives the social housing units in new projects (i.e. if they are prioritized for local residents).

Some of the interviewees believed that education regarding the importance of new housing supply and particularly its relationship to housing prices is important. They also mentioned that the “rules” regarding the price of market housing and how it relates to supply, demand, and the diversity of housing stock should be better explained to the community. In addition, the interviewees stated that the benefits of transit-oriented development should be explained more often to the community, particularly with respect to its impact on sustainability and neighbourhood revitalization benefits.

Both the planners and the developer noted the importance of continually working on and refining their communication outreach and engagement strategies with the public. One of the planners noted that “additional training in these fields are always helpful and increasingly becoming more practical”. Similarly, the literature review identified tools and methods related to public engagement and outreach as important strategies for building community support for new housing.

Key informant interviewees were asked questions about receiving support from those who worked outside of the planning and development professions. According to the literature review, community leaders and senior level government support are factors for increasing public support for development. The key informants believed that having greater support from individuals who work outside of the planning and development professions would help to achieve greater community support for new development. This

could include community and business groups becoming more involved in helping to advocate for the importance of new housing supply in strategic locations. The UDI representative noted that “there are a bunch of groups that support the concept of density, yet are absent from public hearings and community planning meetings” (Interview, April 4, 2016). The West End planner noted “how having support from the local business community is important ... it can help to spread support to others in the community” (Interview, March 4, 2016). Lastly, some of the key informant interviewees believed that senior levels of government such as Metro Vancouver, TransLink, and the BC Government could provide resources to help achieve community support for new housing projects. They also suggested that the B.C. Government should invest more money into social housing in Vancouver (as more social housing is a critical need in Vancouver).

The UDI representative mentioned that if the B.C. Government tied community infrastructure spending on transit expansion to new housing targets near transit, it might help to achieve more density near transit stations. This incentive-based approach would need to be explained to the community. For instance, the residents of Kitsilano might be more accepting of density increases in their neighbourhoods if it were accompanied by Provincial transit investments (e.g. the Millennium Line SkyTrain extension along Broadway to UBC).

Chapter 10.

Recommendations

The recommendations in this chapter attempt to balance the interests between community, government, and private sector and takes the intersection of these interests into account. The recommendations identify promising strategies for planners and developers to achieve greater community support and mitigate concerns about new multi-family housing projects.

The recommendations are also useful to academics and individuals who work in the fields of housing affordability, smart growth, and transit-oriented development, as these fields have identified community opposition as a challenge to building new multi-family housing projects.

Community Plans

The results of this research indicate the importance of Community Plans to increasing community support and mitigating concerns for new multi-family housing projects in Vancouver. Community Plans provided the policy context and much of the “pre-planning” for the projects addressed in this paper with respect to the appropriate location, types, heights, designs, and amenities related to new housing projects.

The City of Vancouver should consider creating new Community Plans for other neighbourhoods in Vancouver that are appropriate locations for new housing supply but have outdated policies. The creation of a City-wide Plan should be considered as well, as it would enhance the policy context and framework for new housing projects in Vancouver.

Role of Planners

Throughout this research, the different roles of Community Planners and Rezoning/Project Planners has been apparent. Rezoning/Project Planners indicated that they took a “neutral” approach when relating to the community during the development application process, whereas Community Planners took a more persuasive and informative approach with respect to the Community Plans. The Planners explained that the community planning process is focused on educating and informing residents about the opportunities and trade-offs of growth, whereas the development application process is focused on ensuring that the project adheres to the broader policy context (specifically the Community Plans) and mitigating community concerns.

Rezoning and Project Planners should forego this sense of neutrality and instead adopt some of the strategies used by Community Planners to educate the community about the importance of new housing supply and to gather feedback on broader community issues. To this end, they should adopt some of the skills and language used by Community Planners. In other words, Rezoning and Project Planners should adopt more holistic roles in terms of their interactions with the community. This is particularly important as some residents might only be exposed to the development application stage, and not have a chance to provide feedback during the community planning process.

Community Planners should give more consideration to the issues that Rezoning/Project Planners have to confront. This includes taking more time to explain to residents the impacts that new development will have on shadowing and blockage of views. Residents should be informed about the issues upfront as much as possible, as opposed to being informed later, at the development application stage. Although this might result in a decrease of density in some cases, it would ultimately result in less controversial outcomes for residents. An upfront understanding of the impact of development could also lead to more focused CAC conversations. Since CACs are intended to mitigate the impact of new development, that understanding could allow CAC conversations to focus on the issues that are most impacted by new projects.

Role of Developers

Developers play an important role in helping to enhance community support for new housing projects in Vancouver. They place most of their efforts on community outreach during the project application process, but seem to avoid engaging with the community during the community planning process.

Given that the Community Planning process determines building opportunities, including building heights and amenity packages, developers should use the process as an opportunity to more directly and actively engage with the community. They should meet with community members during this process to learn about their housing preferences and needs. This would help to build trust between the community and developers (a key finding in the literature review) as well as inform residents about the opportunities of building new housing supply and help them to understand the economic opportunities, challenges, and financial realities of development projects.

Housing Affordability, Diversity, and Availability

This research found that there is uncertainty about how new social housing units in neighbourhoods will be distributed. The City of Vancouver should provide greater clarification regarding the social housing units provided in new developments. In particular, clarification should be made regarding the price ranges of the units and how or if they will be prioritized for local residents.

Residents of Marpole and the West End raised concerns about new housing units being vacant in their communities. A report released in March, 2016 on empty homes in Vancouver found that 7.2% of the apartments in Vancouver are empty (Ecotagious, 2016). In addition, residents of Vancouver have raised concerns about the impact of foreign investment on housing prices.

On July 25th, 2016, the B.C. Government announced an additional 15% tax on the purchase of homes by foreign nationals and foreign controlled corporations, and provided the City of Vancouver with the legislative authority to apply this tax to empty

homes. The aim of these measures are to improve housing affordability in Vancouver (B.C. Government, 2016). These measures should be closely evaluated and updated accordingly in order to ensure that they are achieving their intended outcomes. They should be implemented in a manner that aligns with the economic and social goals and aspirations of Vancouver, while taking the jobs and amenities generated by the property development sector into account. Moving forward, the City of Vancouver should explore policies and incentive programs to encourage the efficient use of new housing supply in order to alleviate concerns about “empty homes” in neighbourhoods.

Finally, developers should propose more of their projects as rental housing developments. New rental housing was identified in this research as an important need in Vancouver. Rental housing also generates fewer concerns than condominiums about the commodification of housing (e.g. speculation, foreign investment, and empty homes). Developers should also propose more of their projects as family-friendly housing developments (e.g. townhouse and 3 bedroom units). New family-friendly housing was identified as a community priority in Vancouver and developers might achieve greater community support for their projects if they provided a greater supply of rental and family-friendly housing. The City of Vancouver will need to ensure there is a suitable policy framework with the right types of incentives for developers to prioritize this type of housing.

Community Amenity Contributions

The findings of this research indicates that CACs are important to achieving community support for new housing projects. Residents and developers want CACs to be spent in a timely manner and remain largely in the communities where new growth is to occur. The City of Vancouver should therefore strive to provide more clarity and accountability with respect to how CACs are spent. CACs should be spent in a way that reflects the needs and desires expressed in the community planning process and spent in a timely manner. The timely delivery of CACs could strengthen trust between the City, developers, and the residents, which the literature review identifies as an important aspect of community planning and engagement.

Developers, and the development industry in general, including the UDI, should demonstrate greater support for the collection of CACs in Vancouver. The development industry should take more credit for the CACs they provide to the City. It is important for developers and the City to communicate the benefits of CACs more clearly and frequently to the community. At the same time, developers and the UDI should keep the City more accountable with respect to how and when the money is spent and if the spending decisions match resident and new home-buyers' concerns.

Height of Buildings

The impact of "height" was mentioned frequently as a concern about new development in Vancouver, specifically in terms of its impact on shadows and blockages of views. The City of Vancouver has housing targets that it is trying to achieve, yet zone for the majority of new housing to be located on major arterial roads. This encourages taller buildings to be constructed on the arterials in order for the City to meet its housing targets.

The City of Vancouver should consider lowering the heights of buildings on arterials and spreading out the development opportunities in the neighbourhoods (to include more duplexes, townhomes/row-homes and low/mid rise apartments). If growth is spread out to more sites, including residential streets, the height of arterial buildings could be lowered.

Senior Government Advocacy

The literature review noted that it was important for senior levels of government to help shape community preferences for new housing. Some of the key informant interviewees believed that Metro Vancouver, the BC Government, and TransLink should play a larger role in helping to achieve community support for new multi-family housing projects in Vancouver. Therefore, planners and developers in Vancouver should seek greater levels of support from these elements of government. For instance, Metro Vancouver and TransLink staff could attend community meetings to speak about the

importance of new housing supply from a regional perspective. At the same time, Metro Vancouver and TransLink staff could focus their efforts on areas of regional significance (e.g. near SkyTrain stations and Urban Centres).

The findings of this research indicate that communities are concerned about the impact that new growth will have on parking and traffic. Further investment in the transit system would help to alleviate these concerns, as it would encourage less automobile use. The City of Vancouver and developers should advocate that senior levels of government must increase funding for public transit expansion in Vancouver and the rest of Metro Vancouver. The B.C. government should follow the recommendation of the UDI representative to establish a framework for tying major transit investments to new housing supply targets in communities. This could incentivize residents to want more housing in their community. Further, according to the literature, infrastructure upgrades for new housing had an ability to increase community support for new development.

Chapter 11.

Conclusion

This research has contributed to the overall body of literature on smart growth by providing useful insights as to how planners and developers can increase community support and mitigate concerns for new multi-family housing projects in Vancouver. The research has also shed light on the major themes of opposition and support for new multi-family housing projects in Vancouver.

The research identified a range of community concerns related to new housing in Vancouver, in the height and design of new buildings as well as impacts on traffic, parking, community character, housing affordability, greenspace, and local infrastructure. The research found that neighbourhood planning in Vancouver helps to identify and address many of these concerns and that modifications to projects can influence community support.

This study found that early, frequent, meaningful, and responsive community consultation between communities, developers and planners is key to achieving community support for new housing in Vancouver. Educating the community about local and regional issues (including the importance of new housing supply) during the neighbourhood planning and development application process also supports the achievement of community support. It is important that developers and planners keep this in mind as they move forward with new housing projects and Community Plans.

Housing affordability is likely the most significant concern in Vancouver that needs to be further addressed by governments, developers, and planners. However, this concern needs to be balanced with the City's desires to attain CACs. Although CACs

can add to the cost of market housing (B.C. Government, Ministry of Community, Sport, and Cultural Development, 2014), they are desired by local residents. Without CACs, there would arguably be less new housing supply in Vancouver, which helps make housing more affordable (Coriolis Consulting, 2014). Local residents increasingly want more affordable market and non-market homes. Consequently, policy-makers, developers, and residents should collaborate in a very transparent manner and discuss strategies to improve housing affordability while maintaining reasonable collections of CACs.

A lesson learned from this study merits mention. That is, if increasing community support for new multi-family housing is the goal, developers should enthusiastically contribute back to the City, whether it is in the form of building affordable housing units and/or rental housing and/or family-friendly housing, or by providing CACs. Moving forward, the development community must accept this responsibility and acknowledge it as their “social license” to build homes in Vancouver. However, all the relevant stakeholders, including community groups and developers, should keep the City more accountable for how it spends CACs and ensure that new affordable housing units are delivered in a timely manner with mechanisms in place to prioritize the low-income residents of communities in which new growth is to occur. These efforts could increase community support for new multi-family housing projects.

Vision Vancouver, the current leading municipal political party in Vancouver, has won the past three municipal elections in part by advancing a “pro housing” agenda (Olsen, 2014). This might be indicative of a growing acceptance of new housing types in Vancouver. It seems inevitable that housing growth pressures will continue to occur in Vancouver, given that housing affordability is an ongoing challenge, that single-family homeowners are increasingly recognizing the profits that can be achieved through re-development, and that the real estate/planning industry entails a large portion of Vancouver’s economy. Moving forward, planners need to manage this growth in a balanced manner and address the community concerns that arise in the process. This study has identified neighbourhood planning as a key factor that can manage growth effectively and promote more responsible and equitable development.

It is also important to note that “good planning” should not necessarily always be measured by what achieves the “most community support”. For instance, some forward-thinking policies such as reduced parking requirements might not be the most popular outcome for the nearby residents of a new development. While building an over-supply of on-site parking might be a good strategy to alleviate immediate community concerns, it is poor policy from a sustainability perspective. Creative public communication strategies are needed to address situations like this. There are trade-offs that should be explained to the community in a transparent and informative manner. For instance, reduced parking requirements result in reduced construction costs, which allows for the City to gain potentially higher CACs. Alternatively, the cost savings could result in less expensive homes. The City should provide the public with more information about these issues in order to achieve improved policy outcomes.

11.1. Research Implications & Future Research

This research has provided insight on the themes of opposition towards and support for new multi-family housing projects in Vancouver and the strategies used by planners and developers to achieve community support and mitigate concerns for these types of projects. The results of this research have led to recommendations regarding approaches that could be taken to further increase community support for new multi-family housing projects in Vancouver.

There is a gap in the academic literature regarding the strategies used by planners and developers to achieve community support for new multi-family housing projects. This research provides a valuable contribution to the literature in addressing this shortfall. Its findings and recommendations will be useful for planners, developers, smart growth advocates, housing affordability providers, policy-makers, academics, and politicians.

Future research could examine other neighbourhoods in Vancouver and broaden the interview subjects to include community leaders, residents, politicians, and other

non-planning policy-makers who influence the development process. It could also focus on certain segments of the new multi-family housing sector, such as new rental housing, social housing, or market ownership housing. Finally, it could compare community responses to these different types of new housing projects and the strategies used by planners and developers to promote different segments of the housing market.

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