

**A Leap of Faith:
Motivations for Place of Worship Redevelopment
in Vancouver**

**by
Scott Allan Erdman**

B.A., Simon Fraser University, 2002

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Approval

Name: **Scott Allan Erdman**

Degree: **Master of Urban Studies**

Title: **A Leap of Faith: Motivations for Place of Worship
Redevelopment in Vancouver**

Examining Committee:

Chair: Tiffany Muller Myrdahl
Senior Lecturer
Department of Gender, Sexuality, and
Women's Studies and Urban Studies
Program

Peter V. Hall
Senior Supervisor
Professor

Pamela Stern
Supervisor
Assistant Professor (Anthropology)
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Leslie Shieh
External Examiner
Co-Founder, Tomo Spaces

Date Defended/Approved: April 20, 2020

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Abstract

This research study explores the motivations for religious congregations in Vancouver, Canada that are redeveloping their sites, building housing (and other ancillary services and uses), while retaining their place of worship function. This is a recent development phenomenon for Vancouver, and at the time of research, no academic studies had yet addressed the topic for the Vancouver context. The purpose is to better understand what internal and external forces may be motivating congregations to pursue such redevelopment schemes, by focusing on their rationale, objectives, and experiences with the projects thus far, from the perspective of the congregations themselves. The lessons learned from this research aim to provide insight on place of worship redevelopment in Vancouver, with a focus on four case studies, and highlight the areas of convergence and divergence from place of worship redevelopment happening in other urban contexts.

Keywords: places of worship; church redevelopment; Vancouver churches; non-profit developers; urban development; housing

Disclaimer: During the research period, the study author was employed by the City of Vancouver Planning Department but was not involved in planning work related to place of worship redevelopment. The analysis and recommendations contained in this thesis are that of the author and do not represent any City of Vancouver position.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my dear friend, Lydia Frey. She left this world far too soon, but I was inspired by her insatiable love of learning and unending quest for acquiring new knowledge of all kinds. I know she would have been my biggest cheerleader during my research and would have been proud of me. Lyds, this is for you!

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Chapter 1. Introduction

This research project presents a thesis about a unique and emerging form of urban development in Vancouver involving congregations that are redeveloping their place of worship sites. My thesis research interest was inspired by my professional employment with the City of Vancouver. I work as a Rezoning Planner in the Planning Department, and although I have not handled them, in recent years noticed an increasing number of rezoning applications being submitted that involved church sites in Vancouver. These projects typically involved a local congregation partnering with a developer to redevelop their place of worship site, and build housing as part of the overall project. These new development proposals include a range in the number of housing units (numbering from just a few, to in the hundreds), and with a variety of housing tenures, including market strata (condominiums), but also market rental, non-market rental, social housing, and seniors housing. Many of the proposals also include a range of additional on-site amenities, such as childcare facilities, retail units, cultural and performance spaces, shelters, soup kitchens, and other services for the homeless, and meeting spaces for community groups. With most of these projects, the worship function is retained.

To pursue such type of redevelopment means a significant change in built form and function, and new challenges from an operation/service perspective (individual congregations typically aren't in the business of providing housing). What combinations of both external and internal forces are driving such purposeful change? Why here, and why now, in Vancouver? What may be motivating these congregations to pursue this? Financial benefits are likely a primary reason, but my curiosity was to learn more about the 'unseen' rationale and decision-making that is taking place 'behind the scenes' with these congregations. This is a relatively new phenomenon for Vancouver, but a growing number of these types of projects have been proposed (and approved) in recent years - approximately 18 since 2009, as seen below in Table 1 (which includes key details such as the tenure and number of housing units, the type of additional ancillary spaces, and the location and current status of each project), and on the map in Figure 1. Ultimately, this curiosity around wanting to understand the forces at play that initiated and influence the 'why' behind these projects lead me to my research question.

Table 1: Inventory of Place of Worship Sites Redeveloping in Vancouver (2009-2019)

Highlighted rows indicate places of worship ("PW") case studies researched in this study

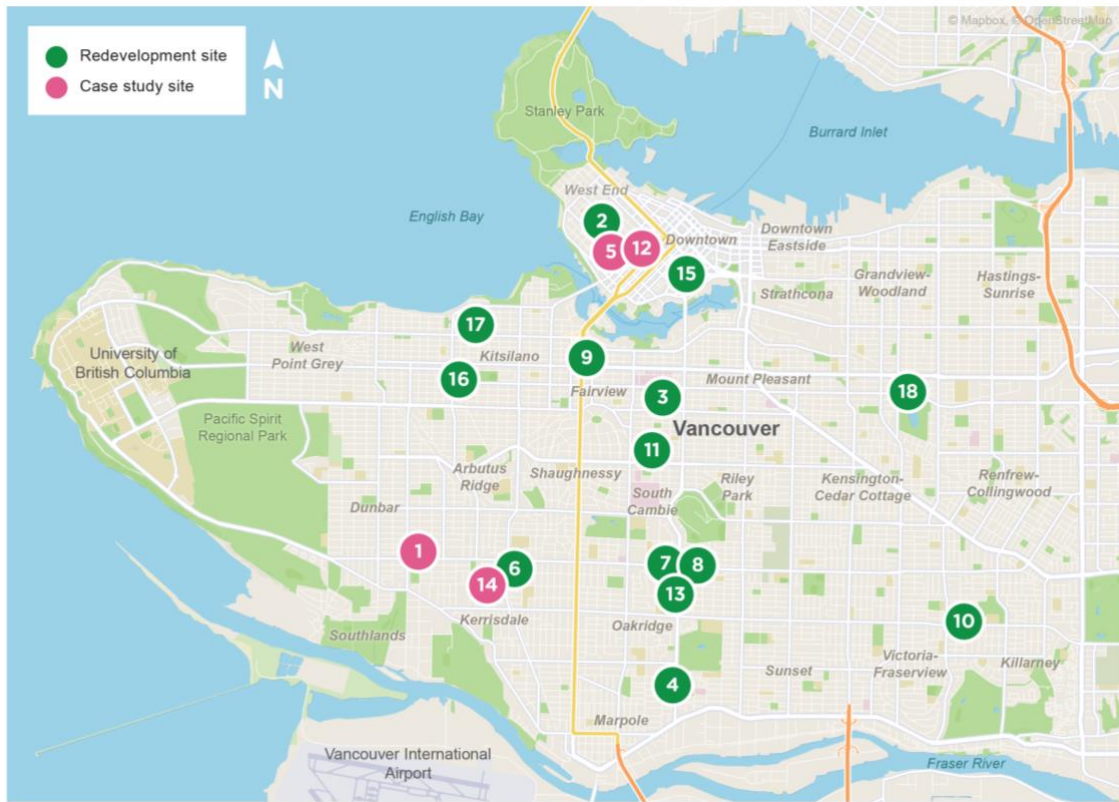
Map #	Name of PW	Address	Neighbourhood	Housing Details	Ancillary Use Details	PW Retained	Current Status
1	Knox United Church	3205-3221 W 41st Ave and 5590 Balaclava St	Dunbar	4-storey building with 66 units of market housing targeted to seniors.	Retain, restore and rehabilitate heritage church building. Replace the church annex building and associated community serving functions.	Yes	Approved December 1, 2009 Construction has yet to commence
2	St. John United Church	1401 Comox St	West End	22-storey building with 186 market rental units, 6 SAFER (Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters) units.	none	No (church had already closed)	Approved June 27, 2012 Completed
3	St. Vincent's Site - John Paul II Pastoral Centre	4899 Heather St	South Cambie	6-storey building with 9 social housing units (for retired clergy)	Includes new pastoral centre	n/a	Approved April 9, 2013 Completed
4	The Church of God	506 West 60th Ave and 7645-7675 Cambie St	Oakridge	Two 6-storey buildings with 129 secured market rental units.	Replacement church space	Yes, in new building	Approved July 8, 2014 Completed
5	Central Presbyterian Church	1155 Thurlow St (1108 Pendrell St)	West End	22-storey building with 168 market rental housing units, and 45 non-market rental housing units.	Replacement church space, retail space, preschool.	Yes, in new building	Approved July 15, 2014 Completed
6	Kerrisdale Baptist Church	2095 West 43rd Ave	Kerrisdale	4-storey building with 17 residential units	Retail space	No	Approved February 26, 2015 Under construction
7	Oakridge Lutheran Church	5688 Ash St	Oakridge	6-storey building with 46 social housing units.	Replacement church space, retail space.	Yes, in new building	Approved July 19, 2016 Under construction
8	Oakridge United Church	305 W 41st Ave	Oakridge	6-storey building with 49 market residential units.	Replacement church space.	Yes, in new building	Approved October 20, 2016 Under construction

Map #	Name of PW	Address	Neighbourhood	Housing Details	Ancillary Use Details	PW Retained	Current Status
9	Vancouver Masonic Centre	1495 W 8th Ave	Fairview	149 secured market residential units (mix of non-market and market units)	Restaurant included, in addition to replacement of the Vancouver Masonic Centre.	No, site was home to a Masonic Centre (no PW)	Approved January 24, 2017 Under construction
10	Fair Haven United Church	2720 E 48th Ave (6465 Vivian St)	Victoria-Fraserview/Killarney	4-storey building with 137 seniors social housing rental units	None	No PW on site (housing owned by Fair Haven United Church Homes)	Approved January 24, 2017 Under construction
11	The Ancient and Mystical Order of Rosae Crucis (AMORC), closed in 2010.	809 West 23rd Ave	South Cambie	6 market units (4 with lock-off secondary units), 2 laneway houses.	Some heritage features of original building incorporated.	No	Approved June 13, 2017 Under construction
12	First Baptist Church	969 Burrard St & 1019-1045 Nelson St	West End	57-storey building with 331 market residential units. 7-storey building with 61 rental units owned by the church.	Restoration of the church. New church ancillary spaces, incl. childcare, gymnasium, hall, retail unit	Yes, in original building	Approved July 26, 2017 Under construction
13	Chinese Presbyterian Church	6137 Cambie St	Oakridge	7-storey building with 20 market rental units.	Replacement church space. 68 childcare spaces.	Yes, in new building.	Approved September 19, 2017 Construction has yet to commence
14	Dunbar Ryerson United Church (now called Pacific Spirit United Church)	2165-2195 and 2205-2291 West 45th Ave	Dunbar	8-storey market residential with 2.5 storey townhouses and 4-storey podium, with 40 market units. 5-storey (incl. basement) infill beside church, with 32 units of social housing	Restoration, preservation, and heritage designation, and seismic upgrading of the church, incl. improvements to the sanctuary for enhanced music performance. A new community activity centre.	Yes, in original building	Approved October 31, 2017 On hold

Map #	Name of PW	Address	Neighbourhood	Housing Details	Ancillary Use Details	PW Retained	Current Status
15	Catholic Charities Shelter	118-150 Robson St	Downtown	29-storey tower with 6-storey podium. Includes 131 market housing units, hotel and related commercial uses	Heritage façade retention of Northern Electric Building on site, and funds to relocate the existing shelter to a new location off-site downtown.	No, site had a Catholic Charities shelter on-site, owned by the Catholic Church (no PW)	Approved July 10, 2018 Construction has yet to commence
16	City Life Church	2715 West 12th Ave	Kitsilano	2 3.5-storey townhouse buildings, with 14 market rental units	None	No	Approved April 2, 2019
17	Trinity St. Mark's Church	1805 Larch St	Kitsilano	63 secured rental units, with 20% of residential floor area for households earning a moderate income at rates affordable to them	None	No, PW relocated to another location and sold the site	Approved December 18, 2019
18	Lakeview United Church	2776 Semlin Dr	Grandview-Woodland	6-storey building with 104 social housing units	None	Yes, in new building	In review

The map below (Figure 1) indicates the location of all 18 place of worship sites that are redeveloping, between 2009 and 2019, with the four case studies researched in this study noted in magenta. The numbers on the map correspond with the numbers assigned to each project in Table 1.

Figure 1. Location of Place of Worship Sites Redeveloping in Vancouver (2009-2019)



As seen on the map, this recent place of worship redevelopment phenomenon is taking place across Vancouver, and is not simply a downtown phenomenon, nor restricted to a single neighbourhood. Four of the 18 projects are in the West End/Downtown, and 14 are located in other Vancouver neighbourhoods. At the time of research, of the 18 projects, four have been constructed and fully completed, seven were under construction, five had been approved (for rezoning) but construction had yet to commence, one project was on hold, and one was currently under review at the rezoning application stage. It's important to note that without contacting the projects directly, the current status of each cannot be confirmed, as there are many stages and actions associated with advancing a development that take place 'behind the scenes'

and may not be visible to those not involved in the project. Some of the projects that have had their rezoning applications approved may still be undergoing the latter stages of City review, such as awaiting development or building permits, and some may be about to start construction imminently. Potentially, some of these projects may be experiencing challenges with moving forward (such as with securing funding, or ensuring their developer partners wish to continue), but again, without reaching out directly to those involved, their status is not confirmed.

Some projects are able to advance quickly from rezoning approval to being fully constructed, whereas others experience delays throughout their process. Of the four projects that have already been completed (sites #2-5 in Table 1 and on the map in Figure 1), they are located throughout Vancouver, and include both larger tower projects downtown, and more modest midrise projects in lower scale or residential neighbourhoods. Neither location nor size of the project, therefore, appear to be determining factors in how quickly a project gets built, as there are examples of completed projects across Vancouver in multiple locations (i.e. not just downtown), and the scale of completed projects also varies (i.e. it's not just the large projects that deliver many housing units that are completed). From rezoning application submission to being fully built out is a process that takes several years, at minimum, and due to how recent this development phenomenon is for Vancouver, only a small number have been completed. More time is ultimately needed to conduct proper analysis regarding the timelines for this type of urban development.

1.1. Context

Vancouver has experienced significant population growth in recent years, from both internal migration within British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada settling in the region, but also due to high rates of international immigration. During this time, a large real estate and development boom has driven market land values to record-high levels. Year-after-year growth (with the exception of a recent 'cooling' of the market in 2019, although this is expected to rebound in 2020) has seen local property values increase at a much faster pace than local incomes. Land owners in Vancouver may have reaped property value increase windfalls, but this rapid skyrocketing has also resulted in a 'decoupling' of local land values from local incomes (which have not kept pace), and ultimately fostered a housing affordability crisis. Homelessness is at an all-time high,

rents have increased dramatically while vacancy rates remain below 1% (City of Vancouver, 2019), and those who are not already in the property market watch as dreams of home ownership become ever-more elusive. Despite the recent slow-down, Vancouver continues to be highly desirable location for property assembly and development, and a favoured investment market for local, national, and international buyers.

The rapid increase in property values has not just been limited to central/downtown sites, but instead has occurred across both the City of Vancouver as a whole (including its single-family home oriented neighbourhoods that have a more suburban character/form of development), and to neighbouring municipalities in the Metro Vancouver region. While the majority of new development in Vancouver is privately-initiated (i.e. the land owners or developers are private/market-oriented developers, and not government agencies), an increasing number of places of worship have been able to leverage the real estate spike for their own development opportunities. Recognizing that they may be 'cash-poor but land-rich', the real estate value increases and development pressures increase the economic viability of church (and other religious institutional) redevelopment projects. Many of the resulting partnerships from place of worship redevelopment have opted to include non-market housing units as part of their projects, with tenures including social housing, seniors housing, and non-market rental.

In a city like Vancouver that is currently experiencing a housing affordability crisis (Gordon, 2016; Korstrom, 2018; Ley & Lynch, 2012; Marowits, 2018, 2018; Vancouver, 2018), this emerging trend has particular importance as congregations explore redevelopment opportunities that result in additional units being added to the local housing stock, and in some projects, specifically target their new units for below-market rate tenure. While the causes of the current housing affordability situation are numerous, complex, and intertwined with many other factors (Gordon, 2016), it is important to note Vancouver's current real estate/housing climate that this phenomenon is taking place in, as part of framing this research. Indeed, citizens, businesses, organizations, and governments at multiple levels have been calling attention to the current state of Canada's housing market, in which many cities - not just Vancouver - are struggling with rising housing costs. Any increase in the affordable housing supply is a welcome relief to the housing pressures being experienced in Vancouver.

For congregations, the process of seeking authority for redeveloping their lands varies between different denominations (Christian, or otherwise.) Each denomination has its own structures and hierarchies in place which determines the model for governing the ownership of church lands. Control may exist at the local level (i.e. an individual congregation) or at a regional or national level. Most place of worship decisions (both the daily management of the services, programs, and maintenance of the structure, and the planning for its assets) are governed by a board of trustees. These are the congregation members responsible for ensuring that church property is managed and, if determined to be a desirable decision, disposed of in a responsible manner. Trustee members are typically congregation members who also have experience in fields useful for such management and decision-making, including those in the legal, financial, administrative, or even property development professions. While the trustees uphold the religious values of the larger congregation and denomination, their primary responsibility as 'stewards' is to maintain a fiduciary duty when making decisions about property sale or redevelopment (Sherlock, 2013).

This authority structure results in a fair amount of flexibility and independence for local congregations who are considering their redevelopment opportunities, in particular, if they are not considering out-right sale (i.e. the property is redeveloped, but the congregation that holds the land in trust for the church authority maintains complete or partial ownership rights of the property, thereby still keeping the church land asset within the portfolio of land assets retained by any regional or national church authorities.) Regional place of worship governing bodies are often referred to as 'Presbytery' (or 'Senate' or 'Diocese'), and they generally still have the ultimate authority regarding the disposition of land assets. In most cases, at a minimum, Presbytery must be contacted during the preliminary planning stage if redevelopment is being considered, so that at the very least tacit approval can be granted to a local congregation/board of trustees prior to entering into a partnership with a developer. Again, the ability of a Presbytery to prevent an individual congregation from redeveloping varies between denominations, and across local and regional contexts (i.e. some seem to govern with a 'heavier hand' than others, such as those that use a 'conciliar' framework, as opposed to a 'congregational' one.) Some denominations require more direct support and oversight by governing church authorities to allow for redevelopment, while others offer more freedom to individual congregations.

It is also worth noting that while this research topic uses the more inclusive term “places of worship”, all the sites noted in this thesis are Christian churches. My focus on these particular religious institutions/faiths is not intentional, but merely is a reflection of the current place of worship redevelopment context in Vancouver. Perhaps this is indicative of historical development patterns in Vancouver (i.e. large amounts of early settlers were of Christian faiths, although not exclusively so), hence the large supply of Christian churches. Vancouver’s population – and religious built form landscape – has become more diverse over time, with temples, mosques, synagogues and other places of worship to be found within City boundaries, but at the time of research, redevelopment projects appear to be limited to Christian churches.

1.2. Research Question

The question that guides this research project is:

What are the motivations for congregations in Vancouver that are redeveloping their place of worship sites, retaining their worship function, and including housing?

In addition to the primary research question around motivations, other sub-questions that were explored to supplement the above include inquiring how do these projects align with the mission of these congregations? Are the missions of these congregations changing as they come to appreciate redevelopment possibilities? In addition to the housing units and the retained place of worship function, many of these redevelopment projects include other services and uses. What are the implications for these additional facilities and expanded portfolio of services that serve a larger audience than just the church congregation and future housing unit residents? And lastly, as these place of worship redevelopment projects occur with more frequency, are there local networks of expertise (such as church liaisons, non-profit housing agencies, or development advisors) emerging that help to inform the decision-making of other congregations considering their options?

These sub-questions were useful to help ‘round out’ the conversations, and evolved during the flow of the interviews themselves. Responses to the sub-questions are reflected in the data analysis stage of this research, but in a supportive role to the

primary question, as part of understanding ‘the bigger picture.’ Further details can be found in the Methodology chapter (Chapter 3), and within the list of interview questions in Appendix A.

For the purposes of this research project, “place of worship” refers to the site and physical structure(s) that house the worship activities and associated uses, whereas “congregation representative” or “interviewee” refers to the key members/congregation leaders who were involved with the redevelopment process and interviewed in this research study.

1.3. Significance of this Research

Why does this research matter? What is the warrant that provides the justification for why this area of investigation has value? What can it contribute to the larger ‘universe of knowledge’ within urban studies?

Firstly, this is a relatively new type of urban development in Vancouver, and little is known about what may be prompting it. It’s happening as we speak, and therefore any writing on the Vancouver context has been limited to local media sources. This research provides an opportunity to be on the forefront of understanding something new and emerging. No academic studies have yet taken place to research and analyze the motivations of congregations in Vancouver pursuing redevelopment of their place of worship sites, *from their perspective*. This is an opportunity to contribute to the wider body of knowledge around place of worship redevelopment, and also posits Vancouver as unique in some ways, with a context, emerging results and themes, and challenges that differ from trends seen in other urban environments.

Secondly, this qualitative research can help to inform other congregations that are considering their redevelopment options. The congregational representatives who were interviewed offered advice based on their own experiences thus far. As more of these projects emerge in Vancouver, understanding the motivations of the congregations that have completed, or are currently pursuing, such projects has resulted in some lessons and best practices that can be shared, from those who have already ‘ventured down the redevelopment path’ themselves, which may help facilitate similar projects in the future. While redeveloping their place of worship sites brings an opportunity for

congregations to leverage their land assets to secure their futures and expand the range and type of community-serving spaces and programming they can offer, these projects also have their own unique set of inherent challenges and degree of risk involved. Based on the experiences of the four case studies explored in this study, this research offers some insights and advice for places of worship that may be considering their redevelopment options (noting this advice may also be applicable to other non-profit organizations, such as service clubs, legions, community halls, and those with strategic land assets but limited financial resources.) These insights are shared in Chapter 6.

Thirdly, for Vancouver, these place of worship redevelopment projects often produce affordable housing units for the city, and other community-serving amenities. These contribute to the ‘public good’ of their communities and should be encouraged, if not, at least better understood. An additional result of this research topic is a greater understanding of how congregations can play a vital role in offering solutions to urban housing affordability challenges, both in adding to the local housing supply and specifically-targeting non-market housing tenure options, and the ancillary services and spaces they offer within their facilities. Of the 18 projects noted in Table 1, a variety of housing tenures are proposed with each of them, including both market and non-market housing. The table below lists the number of units proposed, in total, as of 2019 (noting that project details, such as exact unit counts, may be revised following rezoning approval, and assuming completion of all 18 projects).

Table 2: Tenure of Housing Units Proposed for Place of Worship Redevelopment Projects in Vancouver (2009-2019)

Strata	Market Rental	Non-market Rental/ Social Housing
640	580	589

“Strata” housing is the term in British Columbia used to describe condominiums, and refers to a type of home ownership. “Market rental” are units that are secured, on title, as rental units that cannot be converted to strata units in the future. The definitions and classification of “non-market rental” and “social housing” is a bit complicated, as the City of Vancouver defines social housing as housing that is owned and operated by a government or non-profit society, where a minimum 30% of the units are rented to households with incomes below limits set by BC Housing. The remaining 70% may be

rented at other varying rates, including market rates, but the whole building is counted as “social housing”. This makes calculating the exact number of non-market housing that is provided in projects offering “social housing” challenging. As a result, the numbers in Table 2 may be imprecise with the delineation between “market rental” and “non-market rental/social housing”, with a wide range of rents charged to the units in each category. Despite this confusion, in a city like Vancouver with a housing affordability crisis, any provision of housing that is rented below market rates still has value in offering a more affordable alternative to home ownership alone, and these projects are delivering hundreds of such units.

Table 3: Housing Units Completed in Place of Worship Redevelopment Projects in Vancouver (2009-2019)

Total Units Proposed	Units Completed (as of 2019)	Units Pending
1,809	537	1,272

As seen above in Table 3, of the total number of 1,809 housing units (all tenures) proposed, as of 2019, 537 have already been built, and an additional 1,272 are pending. Combined, this type of urban development is delivering a significant amount of new housing in the City of Vancouver, with a considerable proportion that will be offered at below market rates (see Table 2), thereby helping to address housing unaffordability. This housing is in addition to the wide array of community-serving spaces and services offered through these redevelopment projects, such as childcare facilities, cultural and performance spaces, meeting space for local community groups, and services for the homeless and needy. Ultimately, these place of worship redevelopment projects are an opportunity to address many of Vancouver’s socioeconomic needs, offering housing, services, and programming for a wide array of the local population, from youth to seniors, delivered in projects located throughout the city.

This thesis concludes, in Section 6.3, with practical recommendations addressed to church congregations and other similar non-profit organizations. Before outlining the methodology that guided this research project in Chapter 3, or introducing the case studies that were the source of the data analyzed in Chapters 4 and 5, it is important to first understand the research that already exists regarding place of worship redevelopment. In Chapter 2 I identify what gaps there are in the academic

understanding of this development phenomenon, (especially in the Vancouver context), and positioning how the information gained from this research project can contribute to the overall theoretical body of knowledge of this subject area.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Since 2009, at least 18 place of worship sites in the City of Vancouver have pursued redevelopment. The scale of new development amongst these projects varies significantly, but housing units are frequently included as part of the projects, and most of them retain their place of worship function. Many of them are also expanding or adding new community-servicing uses as part of these developments, including childcare, retail, community gathering spaces, theatres, and shelter and services for the needy, such as soup kitchens and counselling/employment services. What is not clearly understood are the motivations for these congregations that are pursuing such purposeful transformations. Because this urban development phenomenon is relatively new for Vancouver, no scholars have yet studied this topic at the local scale, with only local media articles as a source of insight into the congregation's rationale (Ball, 2014; Bula, 2017; CBC News, 2016, 2017; Cheung, 2017; Fumano et al., 2019; Gold, 2015; Pablo, 2014; Stirk, 2016; Todd, 2019; Wood, 2018).

However, a review of academic literature provides a conceptual framework to better understand the larger context of what has already been studied with place of worship redevelopment elsewhere, including: religious institutions and the challenges that many are facing; an intentional shift in the role of churches within contemporary society, and; most of the academic research on place of worship redevelopment frames the discussion around a type of development known as 'adaptive re-use'. Vancouver's place of worship projects have not, generally, followed this path, and so this difference positions the local context as perhaps something that is unique for place of worship redevelopment.

Combined, these themes are useful because they help to understand the body of knowledge that already exists on this subject, have shaped preliminary propositions to explore what may be motivating Vancouver's congregations to pursue these types of projects, were used to help formulate the types of questions put forward to the congregation representatives in Vancouver that were interviewed, and ultimately were used to help guide the analysis of the qualitative data generated by the interviews, to see what similarities and differences may be noted when compared to these larger

bodies of knowledge, previous studies, and outside contexts. This helped to broaden the theoretical understanding of the insights of my own research.

2.2. Research Theme #1: A Means of Survival for Places of Worship

This literature theme explores existing research around how shifting trends in religion and place of worship attendance may be impacting the economic and social sustainability of places of worship, and therefore may be influencing the motivations of congregations to pursue redevelopment of their sites. In many cities in Western countries, increasing secularization and declining religious affiliation/identity have resulted in decreased attendance at many places of worship (Bibby, 2011; Brenner, 2016; Bruce, 2002; Clarke & Macdonald, 2011; Eagle, 2011; Frolick, 2016; Mann, 2000; Pew Research Center, 2013, 2015). While this decrease in attendance is not universal across all faiths, denominations, or locations, it is increasingly being cited by congregations in other urban environments as a primary rationale for considering their redevelopment options.

Many places of worship were built during early periods of urbanization, and today are some of the oldest structures in our cities. As these buildings age, congregations face increasing maintenance costs and substantial repairs to keep their buildings in operation. If a place of worship requires significant upgrades to keep the heritage structure functional, accessible, and comfortable/safe for use, the challenge arises for congregations that are experiencing declining attendance. With dwindling congregations to support maintaining their own infrastructure, congregations may be burdened with financial obligations beyond the means of a modest congregation. As the aging buildings begin to fall into disrepair, congregations are often faced with the difficult decision of choosing to either amalgamate with another congregation (to share the responsibility of caring for a single facility, with a combined larger congregation), or cease operating as a place of worship altogether if a new source of income cannot be attained (Frolick, 2016; Martin & Ballamingie, 2016).

However, in recent years, some congregations are realizing that their properties are perhaps not just a financial burden, but also may have the potential to be an asset that can be leveraged to bring an extended life to their place of worship. Many of these

places of worship, especially the oldest institutions, are located in central/historic neighbourhoods and their congregations, over the decades, have watched the city grow up around them. Older places of worship are often located on real estate that has increased substantially in value over time. Cash-poor but land-rich, congregations are increasingly turning to redevelopment opportunities to ensure their survival (Amayu, 2014; Frolick, 2016; Hackworth & Gullikson, 2013; Martin & Ballamingie, 2016; Mian, 2008). By partnering with a developer (private or government), these congregations receive an influx of funding to complete much-needed repairs and upgrades, supported by constructing new housing development on their properties. The choice of housing tenure constructed may be market strata (condominium) housing, which provides the congregation with a share of the profits of housing unit sales, (or from selling a portion of their land to a developer at the onset of a partnership), with profits to be channelled into building repair. Another option is to construct rental housing, owned by the congregation in trust for the larger church authority, which instead provides a smaller but steady stream of income over time. (Mian, 2008)

The above literature notes that redeveloping their properties with housing as a means to ensure their own survival has been cited by congregations as a primary source of motivation for place of worship redevelopment elsewhere, but is this also the case for Vancouver? Are local congregations experiencing a decline in attendance, or an increase in expensive maintenance and repairs of heritage buildings? Like congregations elsewhere, are they also strategically turning to redevelopment with housing as a self-serving means to secure the financial viability and sustainability of their institutions? What are the local considerations for these challenges and opportunities that congregations in Vancouver may currently be experiencing?

2.3. Research Theme #2: The Changing Role of Places of Worship

A second body of literature reviewed examines a more intentional change of position for congregations that are looking to redevelop their sites by adapting or expanding their role with the evolving needs of contemporary society. In addition to the self-serving benefits to be found through redevelopment and including housing, as explored above in section 2.2, many congregations are utilizing these projects to serve and benefit a larger community than just the place of worship's congregation. These

benefits may come in the form of expanding their portfolio of services and amenities that they offer, and by targeting the newly-constructed housing on their sites specifically for more affordable forms of tenure, such as social housing or below-market rental housing.

Many congregations have long prided their place of worship facilities for providing both spiritual and social justice services to their communities (Baker, 2007; Beaumont & Dias, 2008; Gladson, 2002; Himchak, 2005; Martin & Ballamingie, 2016; Smith, 2004; Williamson, 2015). In addition to being a place of worship, by providing the physical space, religious guidance, and community-building opportunities for members of their own respective faith communities, congregations have also offered services aimed to help the needy, including soup kitchens, homeless shelters, clothing drives, and fundraising efforts for poverty reduction (both locally and internationally). Serving the larger population of the context within which they are located (urban or otherwise) has historically been an extension of the 'mission' of many congregations as part of their Christian faiths, (and for other religions too), and their services have shifted over time to respond to the changing needs of the world around them.

As noted in other contexts, redeveloping their sites has in some cases provided the congregations with the financial means to both expand their existing services, and to add new community-oriented amenities that they can offer. These additional amenities include expanded facilities for the homeless, such as counselling/mental health and employment services, and other amenities for the neighbourhood, such as childcare, educational facilities, performance and rehearsal spaces for the arts and cultural community, and meetings spaces for local community groups and organizations (such as Boy Scouts, music and activity clubs, Alcoholics Anonymous, etc.). Redeveloping place of worship sites can result in an opportunity for these religious institutions to provide additional community-serving and ancillary spaces for both the faith and non-faith communities, thereby allowing congregations to continue with, and expand the range, of their missions (Baker, 2007; Martin & Ballamingie, 2016; Williamson, 2015).

Many congregations in various urban locales are also utilizing place of worship redevelopment to serve the community with a new kind of amenity, in addition to the types of services explored above – affordable housing. Providing forms of housing tenure that are more affordable than just market housing (i.e. condominiums) alone, faith-based groups can extend their missions to include housing that is more affordable

and accessible than what the market can offer. These can be delivered in a variety of tenures, including market rental, below-market rental, seniors housing, and social housing. Affordable housing as a 'service' to the communities is a new phenomenon for faith-based groups, but preliminary research indicates that some congregations elsewhere are motivated to leverage redevelopment opportunities to expand their social justice roles in their communities (City in Focus, 2007; Diduch, 2018; Krause, 2014; Mair, 2014; Martin & Ballamingie, 2016; Shook, 2012; Smith, 2004).

However, for congregations that are not specifically targeting non-market housing tenures, in some urban contexts, where market housing is the product that is included in redevelopment, these projects can unintentionally encourage gentrification in their neighbourhoods. If redevelopment results in housing units that are substantially more expensive than the surrounding neighbourhood, the existing residents not only cannot afford the new housing that's being supplied in the place of worship redevelopment projects, but may ultimately be displaced if new expensive/luxury housing results in an increase in value and pricing of the local market. Higher-end market housing may provide the congregations with increased financial viability for their own facilities, but may potentially alienate or price-out the residents in the communities they are located in. (Mian, 2008)

There is a limited amount of scholarly resources that identify place of worship redevelopments as opportunities to align the expansion of community-oriented services, or the provision of affordable housing units, with congregation's missions. Much of the material to be found on this subject area has been produced on behalf of faith-based organizations, or local media reporting on the congregation's perspectives. With more congregations choosing to align or adapt their missions to suit the changing needs of contemporary society, this thesis explores whether congregations in Vancouver are being motivated to redevelop by a purposeful desire to serve larger or more diverse communities in the neighbourhoods they're located in. This research is an opportunity to contribute to a small but growing body of literature on this subject area.

2.4. Research Theme #3: Adaptive Re-use

Research indicates that in other urban contexts, a redevelopment project that involves a place of worship site where there is a historic building present typically results

in the closing of the religious institution. The place of worship function ceases, and instead the original structure is retained and repurposed for other uses. This is a concept within urban studies known as “adaptive re-use” and its implications have been studied in depth in many cities elsewhere (Amayu, 2014; Cantell, 2005; Garstka, 2012; Mian, 2008; Mine, 2013). Adaptive re-use is the result of the building itself outlasting the original uses that took place inside it, but the original structure (at least the exterior) still has value in its retention.

As noted earlier, there are many congregations that have beautiful old buildings that they can no longer afford to maintain due to declining attendance/membership. When the place of worship closes, the building and land are usually sold, thereby ‘off-loading’ the religious institution with this costly asset, and providing a development opportunity for the new owners. Most often this involves the place of worship repurposed into private market housing (condominiums), which provides the greatest opportunities for profit-generating within the confines of place of worship heritage retention, to help offset the costs of reconfiguring and designing the interior for new uses (Langston et al., 2008; Mine, 2013; Shipley et al., 2006; Wilson, 2010). The place of worship, through the process of adaptive re-use, continues in built form, but not in function. As noted by the researchers referenced above, there are many benefits to adaptive re-use of a place of worship building, including economic (less time than brand new construction [sometimes], added value of heritage building means that units can be sold for more if being converted into housing); environmental (building isn’t demolished and sent to a landfill, and a reduction in new construction material needed for repurposed building), and; social (intrinsic value of the heritage building, structure is retained as a neighbourhood landmark, contributes to sense of place within a community).

However, some researchers have noted the negative implications of place of worship adaptive re-use. Nicholas Lynch, in particular, has written several articles (and his thesis) about a process that he describes as a “commodification of both religion and heritage” (Lynch, 2013, 2014, 2016). While he indicated support for the buildings being offered a new lease on life rather than being torn down after closing as a church, he was concerned with the growing number of ‘luxury lofts’ inside these churches. He further described this process as a unique form of gentrification, as the ‘secular embourgeoisement’ of inner cities that increasingly remakes the city as a place of capital

reinvestment, middle class colonization, and social upgrading. He discusses the discomfort that some have with the disconnection that the new, wealthier residents who are moving in have from these buildings that previously had played significant socio-cultural roles in their respective communities. While the structures remain as historic icons, the new tenants represent a demographic and cultural shift for the neighbourhood.

Understanding the development process and social/cultural impacts via adaptive re-use of places of worship elsewhere is important, as it may ultimately help to frame what makes Vancouver's situation unique. With the recent crop of place of worship redevelopments in Vancouver, most of them have resulted in the place of worship function being retained. Sometimes this is within a restored heritage structure, and sometimes this means allocating space for the place of worship returning as part of a new building. What does this difference say about Vancouver's context of places of worship if the religious institutions continue forward through these redevelopments? Are Vancouver congregations thriving and not experiencing declining membership? Are congregations expanding or reducing their place of worship function through these processes? Vancouver's places of worship redevelopments may be taking a path that appears to be less common than seen elsewhere, and this research is an opportunity to understand what conditions and ambitions may be setting Vancouver's place of worship redevelopment phenomenon apart from those in other urban contexts.

2.5. Conclusion

The literature noted above provided me with a starting point for understanding what factors have motivated congregations elsewhere to pursue redevelopment opportunities. This body of knowledge assisted with shaping my initial propositions for what may be taking place in the Vancouver context, and was drawn upon to develop the list of questions that I asked the key individuals involved in the place of worship redevelopment projects in the four Vancouver case studies. I later compared and analyzed the qualitative datasets produced by the interviews with the motivations cited in other contexts as an initial framework, to determine areas of convergence and divergence between the motivations cited by congregations in Vancouver and elsewhere. I noted these findings in the Case Studies in Chapter 4, and explored them further in detail in the discussions in Chapter 5. In addition, scholarly research on place of worship redevelopment often focuses on cases of adaptive re-use, which generally is

not the path that Vancouver congregations are pursuing. This research project ultimately provides an opportunity to contribute to the limited body of scholarly knowledge on place of worship redevelopment phenomenon in general, with a focus on the motivations from the congregations' perspective, in addition to a better understanding of the unique considerations and factors shaping the Vancouver-specific context.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

Preliminary research that I undertook in advance of commencing this research study indicated that there had not been any academic study of this topic in Vancouver, likely because it is such a new development phenomenon for Vancouver. The only information found on this topic during the research design stage had been in local media articles, as noted above in Chapter 2 (Literature Review). This made the phenomenon an excellent candidate for in-depth investigation through a research dialectic that is inductive, idiographic, and qualitative.

The methodological approach I used for attaining this research data was through conducting interviews with key representatives of local congregations whose place of worship sites are currently undergoing (or have recently completed) such redevelopment schemes. The purpose was not necessarily to find results or trends that are directly transferable to place of worship redevelopment activity occurring elsewhere, but rather to develop a thorough, detailed understanding of the specific conditions and characteristics unique to each place of worship site and congregation (via speaking with representatives) in Vancouver that was interviewed. Using a survey approach would have been easier if I had wanted to reach out to a larger number of congregations, but I would not have been able to elicit the detail-rich, individual stories that I was interested in learning about. Strategically, it was more effective to have a targeted approach to a select few congregations, rather than using a research methodology that covers broader territory, but only reaches relatively 'shallow' details.

Since 2009, there are at least 18 City of Vancouver place of worship sites that have undergone (or are currently undergoing) redevelopment that include a housing component. Included in Table 1 in Chapter 1 is an inventory of these 18 projects and some highlights of their key attributes. For the scope of this thesis, I chose to interview four of them in total. I initiated contact with the four churches via publicly-accessible email addresses available on the website of each church, and provided a consent form which included an overview of my research intentions and ethical considerations. In some cases it was a generic email address for the church, and in others it was an individual (usually the church minister.) Each church self-selected who amongst their

leaders or congregation members would be most suited to responding to my recruitment email and invitation to meet for an interview.

Of the 18 place of worship projects, the four that I had originally intended to interview were Central Presbyterian Church, Knox United Church, First Baptist Church, and Church A. Church A is a congregation that was approached to participate in the study, but did not respond. All the congregation representatives who did respond positively to the invitation offered permission to be named in the research, as part of their agreement for participation. I did not identify any place of worship congregations or individuals who did not respond out of respect for their privacy.

I selected these four because they offered a range of variables and criteria that make for strategic comparisons between them. Variables include location, amount and tenure of housing units proposed, ancillary services and spaces (both existing and proposed), and presence (or lack thereof) of a heritage structure. Comparison between pairs of place of worship projects with similarities, and pairs with notable differences, was seen as an approach to assist with my analysis of the material generated from interviews. My goal with this approach was to better understand if there are any shared or different internal and external factors that are influencing their motivations for redevelopment, to help me identify areas of divergence between their rationale for pursuing such projects, and to reveal details of their individual experiences during the decision-making and implementing of their proposals.

Regarding the four place of worship redevelopment projects specifically, two of them are downtown (Central Presbyterian and First Baptist) and two are in residential single-family home neighbourhoods within Vancouver (Knox United and Church A). There is a mix of housing tenures across the projects, including the provision of strata (condominium), market rental, non-market rental, social housing, and housing prioritized for seniors, in various combinations. All four contain a variety of ancillary services as part of their projects. Two of them have heritage structures retained (First Baptist and Knox United) and two of them will tear down the existing buildings and build replacement worship space within the new buildings (Central Presbyterian and Church A).

Following my initial contact with the congregation representatives of the four above-mentioned projects, two responded immediately with an interest in participating in

the research (Central Presbyterian and Knox United). Further invitations to First Baptist and Church A did not receive responses, so I selected two other projects from the list instead as alternates – Pacific Spirit United Church, and Church B. I selected these as appropriate substitutions for having comparable characteristics, at least in part, to the two congregations that did not respond to invitations to participate. I selected Pacific Spirit United as a substitute for First Baptist, as both churches are large scale projects that include heritage assets requiring protection and restoration, and propose multiple housing tenures in addition to a variety of community-serving uses. I selected Church B as a substitute for Church A, as both church redevelopment projects are more modest in scale, are in the same neighbourhood, are enabled by the same policies (Cambie Corridor Plan), and propose replacing an existing place of worship with worship space in the new building (i.e. no heritage assets).

A representative from Pacific Spirit United agreed to participate, whereas I did not receive a response from Church B. In the meantime, representatives from First Baptist, one of the original projects selected, responded positively to the invitation, bringing the total to four place of worship redevelopment projects as I originally intended. For analysis purposes going forward, I felt that the revised matrix of four provides enough similarities and differences, both in pairs and as individual cases, to offer sufficient research data and comparisons. Table 4 below highlights the key details and characteristics of the four place of worship redevelopment projects researched in this study, noting the location, proposed housing tenure, presence of a heritage building, and both existing and proposed ancillary spaces of each.

Table 4: Key Characteristics for Comparison of each Place of Worship Redevelopment Project

	Central Presbyterian	First Baptist	Knox United	Pacific Spirit United
Downtown location	✓	✓		
Residential neighbourhood location			✓	✓
Strata (condo) housing units proposed		✓	✓	✓
Rental or social housing units proposed	✓	✓		✓
Heritage building on site		✓	✓	✓
Replacement worship space proposed	✓			
Existing ancillary spaces and activities	✓	✓	✓	✓
New/expanded ancillary spaces and activities proposed	✓	✓	✓	✓

On the note of ethics and confidentiality, my intention from the onset was to be able to share the names of the place of worship sites and the respective congregation representatives that I interviewed in the thesis, and to not ask for confidentiality, as the purpose of the research is to share the unique experiences and stories of each congregation with the larger community. Also, by sharing the unique details of each place of worship redevelopment project, confidentiality would be very difficult to maintain, due to the easily-identifiable details of each project. I offered the respondents who opted to participate in the research to meet them at a location that was most convenient for them – in most cases at the place of worship site.

With regards to how many people to interview from each church, I let the respondents determine who within each congregation was most appropriate to speak with, and whether the interviews would be with an individual congregation representative, or in pairs or small groups. My rationale for this was to create an interview environment that was comfortable for all participants and conducive for rich story-telling, while also reducing any barriers/disincentives for participating in the study. This approach to interviewing people, of “talking to people on their own ‘territory’”, can facilitate a more relaxed conversation. It also offers you the possibility to learn more

about the person from seeing them in their own environment.” (Flowerdew & Martin, 2005, p. 118)

There were both potential risks and benefits to this approach. In allowing for congregations to self-determine the number of representatives present in the interview, should there only be one individual, more trust on my part would need to be placed in the comprehensiveness of that person’s responses. Having more than one person present could allow for ‘layering’ of responses, to build upon each other with additional details, and help with verification should there be differing opinions. However, there also ran the risk of individuals influencing responses during the interviews should more than one person be present, which could also affect the quality of the data collected. In my efforts to encourage participation, I felt it was best to let the congregations decide who and how many representatives I should meet with. Ultimately, of the four projects, three of them consisted of interviews with individuals, whereas only one church contacted opted to be interviewed as a pair.

With regards to a potential/perceived conflict of interest, while my career is as a Planner for the City of Vancouver, I have not been involved with any of the place of worship redevelopment projects interviewed, nor any listed in Table 1. All the congregations that I approached for interviews had already received rezoning approval from City Council (i.e. there was no risk for me to influence the outcome of their rezoning applications.) In the invitations to participate, and reiterated when I met them for the interviews, I disclosed to the congregation representatives who my employer is, and emphasized that I was approaching them as a graduate student researcher, and not as a city planner.

With considering the interviews themselves, I determined that a semi-structured strategy was the best approach for this type of research topic. In advance, I generated a list of directive questions to inquire about for the interviews, but only to use as a loose guide. (A list of questions is included in Appendix A.) There were certain components of their motivations that I wanted to know more about, but I wanted the interviewees to feel free to tell me what **they felt** was most pertinent to their congregation’s redevelopment journey. I also recognize that, as an outsider looking in, there was a lot that I don’t know about. I needed to leave room for the unknowns that would be revealed through the interview process – the unanticipated questions and topics that I would want to probe.

Flexibility, adaptability, sensitivity, curiosity, and open-mindedness were essential qualities I sought to utilize during the interviews. In their research on how best to conduct qualitative interviews, Earl Babbie and Lucia Benaquisto noted the value of maintaining this flexibility: "...one of the special strengths of qualitative interviewing is its flexibility. The answers evoked by your initial questions should shape your subsequent ones. It doesn't work merely to ask pre-established questions and record the answers. Instead, you need to ask a question, listen carefully to the answer, interpret its meaning for your general inquiry, frame another question either to dig into the earlier answer or to redirect the person's attention to an area more relevant to your inquiry. In short, you need to be able to listen, think, and talk almost at the same time." (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2010, pp. 326–327) Adopting this approach results in interviews performed as a malleable process, with the freedom to modify and redirect the flow of conversation, as needed, to maximize the opportunity to learn from the research participants.

Most importantly, I wanted the interviewees to feel relaxed and comfortable with me, so that a rapport of mutual trust and respect could be gained as they shared their experiences, rather than appearing that I was rushing through a list of generalized questions. I anticipated that each interview's conversation would follow a unique path, as individual as the congregations themselves, and so it was important that I not be overly rigid in my approach. I asked questions that invited stories rather than demanding answers. A metaphor that encapsulates this difference in approach, by social science researcher Steinar Kvale, compares the interviewer as a 'miner' or a 'traveller'. A 'miner' assumes that the person being interviewed has key information that must be 'dug out' from hiding, whereas as a 'traveller', the interviewer "wanders through the landscape and enters into conversations with the people encountered. The traveller explores the many domains of the country, as unknown territory or with maps, roaming freely around the territory... The interviewer wanders along with the local inhabitants, asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of their lived world." (Kvale, 1996, pp. 3–5). This is the perspective I aimed to embody when approaching the research subjects in this study.

Interviews ranged in length, but generally were between 60 and 90 minutes long. Following interviews, I transcribed the recorded conversations before beginning analysis. The completion of each interview was an ideal time to reflect on the approach thus far,

and decide if adjustments to the methodology was needed for making improvements for future interviews.

Again, it is important to note that the purpose of this research is to understand the motivations for congregations pursuing these projects, by speaking to self-selected representatives of each congregation, and to gain insight on the place of worship redevelopment phenomenon taking place in Vancouver, rather than looking for transferrable theories that are representative of church redevelopment projects in all urban contexts. I sought to gain a deeper understanding of these local place of worship redevelopment projects, to collect and compare their individual experiences, and to learn more about their rationale and their journeys, recognizing that this research may reveal some common patterns or inspirations shared amongst the four case studies, or it may not. Overall, the purpose for me was to 'pull back the curtain' and reveal the motivations for places of worship in the Vancouver context, in addition to noting what may (or may not) be unique about them when compared to place of worship redevelopment projects happening elsewhere.

Ultimately, this qualitative research gained its trustworthiness in multiple ways. My primary goal was to 'bring to light' information that could not be seen at present time (i.e. the motivations and decision-making processes 'behind the scenes' of the congregations who are choosing to redevelop.) By sourcing the information directly from the congregations (via representatives) themselves, rather than third party sources, and encouraging the representatives interviewed to be as honest and forthcoming as possible, my intentions were to be able to source qualitative material that was both comprehensive and accurate. Following analysis, I shared all case study summaries with the individuals who were interviewed, as a means of verifying accuracy and to check that my understanding of what was shared was correct. While some commonalities were expected between the four place of worship projects in Vancouver and those that are redeveloping in other locations (around Metro Vancouver, or elsewhere in Canada or other countries), the primary goal of this research was not to seek direct transferability to other place of worship redevelopment projects elsewhere. Rather, it was to reveal in detail the individual experiences of the four congregations interviewed, within the context of Vancouver, and note what unique variables and characteristics there may be when compared with findings in the Literature Review.

3.2. Data Analysis

My chosen methodology for this research question was interview-based qualitative research. While there are advantages to this form of research (getting information directly from the source to ensure accuracy, the ability to elicit richly-detailed narratives, and opportunities to explore unanticipated questions during the process), one of the challenges of this methodology is that it resulted in a very large amount of 'raw' qualitative data that was generated, and therefore transcription and all analytic steps that followed were very time-consuming.

3.2.1. Transcription

All the interviews were audio-recorded, and so an immediate first step for me following them was to transcribe the conversations. Initially, I transcribed all responses verbatim into Microsoft Word. I did not interpret the meaning of the responses, to avoid inserting of bias or any premature analysis. Transcribing all of the conversations 'as is' first allowed me to gain familiarity with the content, and to identify if there were any gaps in the line of questioning, or if responses were unclear (i.e. they didn't answer the question that was asked, responses are inaudible, or I didn't understand the meaning of what was said.) This was an opportunity to flag if any follow-up with the interviewees was needed, with more questions or with clarification, before analysis began. Ultimately this was not needed, as the content recorded was clear and understandable.

3.2.2. Memoing & Coding

Memoing and coding is a means to bring order and coherence to a mass of data, with the goal "to communicate a telling and focused story that can be understood by those not directly involved in their research – one that summarizes the material and addresses patterns and themes that are sustained by the data." (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2010, p. 380) This is the step where my analysis of the responses' content first began, first with pairing questions and responses together (wherever possible, recognizing that the conversations generally took a more 'free-flow' nature). Following this, I made notes of observations around key points, for further analysis later, and then with recording preliminary insight on what was being shared. This is an iterative process known as 'memoing', which then laid out the foundations for developing the notes that followed.

Beginning with identifying high level groups of ideas and themes, I grouped and coded responses in each round of subsequent review, beginning with broader headings and then followed with further separation into smaller streams or clusters of details. This helped me to form groups or 'branches' of information that was more digestible later for further interpretation.

3.2.3. Analysis & Interpretation

Following the initial rounds of memoing and coding, I began analysis to identify and organize the emerging themes (and sub-themes) from the details of the interviews. I conducted this analysis based on observable patterns that were revealed in the responses. In advance of conducting the interviews, I had developed some preliminary propositions around what may be motivating the congregations to redevelop. As the themes emerged, I noted areas that aligned with initial expectations, and ones that revealed surprising information. This approach gave me flexibility with memoing and coding of the analysis, to allow for room for the 'unanticipated' themes and observations.

I then compared responses with the criteria that I had used for selecting the four place of worship projects, to determine if there are any commonalities (or not) between them. Variables included location, type of housing tenure, amount of housing tenure, additional services that are provided beyond the place of worship function, and the presence (or lack thereof) a heritage structure. These comparisons between the four projects helped me to highlight areas of convergence and divergence across the four case studies. I also analyzed the emerging themes against the conceptual framework and literature review, to help frame the material in the datasets against previous academic research conducted on this topic (for place of worship redevelopments happening in other urban contexts), to see what similarities and differences may be noted when compared with these larger bodies of knowledge, previous studies, and outside contexts. This helped to broaden the theoretical understanding of the insights.

This is an approach consistent with analyzing raw qualitative data gained from in-depth interviews, where the amount of material generated can be very large, and due to the free-flow nature of conversation, it may not be well-organized in the transcription. (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2010; Flowerdew & Martin, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) I subsequently further organized and summarized the notes for each place of worship

redevelopment project to become the Cases shared in Chapter 4, with the analysis and discussion of this data and themes later shared in Chapter 5.

3.2.4. Verification

Once I felt comfortable that initial rounds of analysis had resulted in emerging themes around the congregations' motivations, I reported back to the individuals that were interviewed to share these. A copy of the interview transcript and summary of key themes and highlights from the conversation were provided via email, with a request for the interviewees to note any revisions or additional details, should I have missed key findings, or if I misinterpreted the information that was shared. This was an important step because it allowed me to check for understanding, to see if the generated themes in the summary had accurately captured their unique experiences, and ensured validity and trustworthiness by verifying the preliminary insights directly with the primary sources. It also allowed me to identify any gaps that should be filled with subsequent questions.

All interviewees responded to this request, and provided only minor revisions and clarifications to the summaries I had provided them. Their responses provided me with assurance that I had captured (and summarized) their stories accurately, and that key project details, their experiences thus far, and the primary and secondary motivations that I had noted in the summary reflected what was shared in the interviews.

3.2.5. Conclusions & Recommendations

Using the notes, initial summaries, interviewee feedback, and analysis of the generated themes, I developed discussion themes and conclusions which summarized the findings around the motivations for the congregations pursuing redevelopment of their sites. These discussions are shared in Chapter 5. As noted above, I drew these conclusions based upon the conceptual framework and literature review as a means of positioning what is unique about the Vancouver context and recent development phenomenon with place of worship sites. Part of my conclusions also noted limitations of this study, and included recommendations for further research, as I have noted in Chapter 6.

3.3. Analysis Justification

The justification I used for this research methodology and data analysis approach is based upon the nature of the research question. Through this research study, I seek to understand a phenomenon that is relatively new for Vancouver (has only been occurring since 2009, and in a relatively small number of cases), and for which there is an absence of academic research on this subject matter. Local media articles have featured some of the motivations expressed by the congregations in Vancouver for pursuing redevelopment projects with housing, but no comprehensive, scholarly research has yet taken place. The research dialectic for my study was therefore inductive, idiographic, and qualitative. Using interviews to ‘dive deep’ into the experiences, motivations, and internal decision-making processes of each individual congregation, I sought to reveal information that had not yet been ‘brought to light’ – the question around what forces and factors may be motivating these congregations to choose such a unique redevelopment path. By sourcing this information directly from the religious institutions and the people who are making and influencing these decisions, the qualitative data’s validity and trustworthiness is strengthened. There are no other sources of this information – the in-depth details and complex narratives unique to each project and congregation that was needed for me to conduct analysis to develop themes and conclusions could only come from the congregations themselves (via the congregation representatives interviewed). Validity is gained through the richness of the details gained through the in-depth, comprehensive interviews (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2010; Flowerdew & Martin, 2005). Surveys or questionnaires would have not revealed the complex nature of the behind-the-scenes motivations, making this research methodology the approach best suited for revealing and examining the motivations behind Vancouver’s place of worship redevelopment phenomenon (Burgess, 1984; Flowerdew & Martin, 2005; Silverman, 2000).

By relying on methods of analysis common to highly-detailed qualitative data, through noting observations, conducting several ‘filters’ of coding, grouping responses into relationships, and subsequent rounds of analysis, I proceeded thoughtfully and carefully to develop the ‘raw data’ into emerging themes, and from there into summaries of the case studies (Chapter 4), key themes and discussion (Chapter 5), and conclusions (Chapter 6). Verification of insights with the congregation representatives themselves

served as a 'safety net' to ensure that their experiences were accurately captured, and brought improved reliability and validity to the interpretation that followed. Transferability was not an intended goal of this research, as the purpose was to understand, in great depth, the experiences of the individual churches. Some of the challenges experienced and individual sources of motivations for the four case studies may have common roots with the other congregations in Vancouver undergoing redevelopment, or in other locations, but my research does not attempt to conclude that what is happening in Vancouver is directly transferable to the situation of congregations elsewhere.

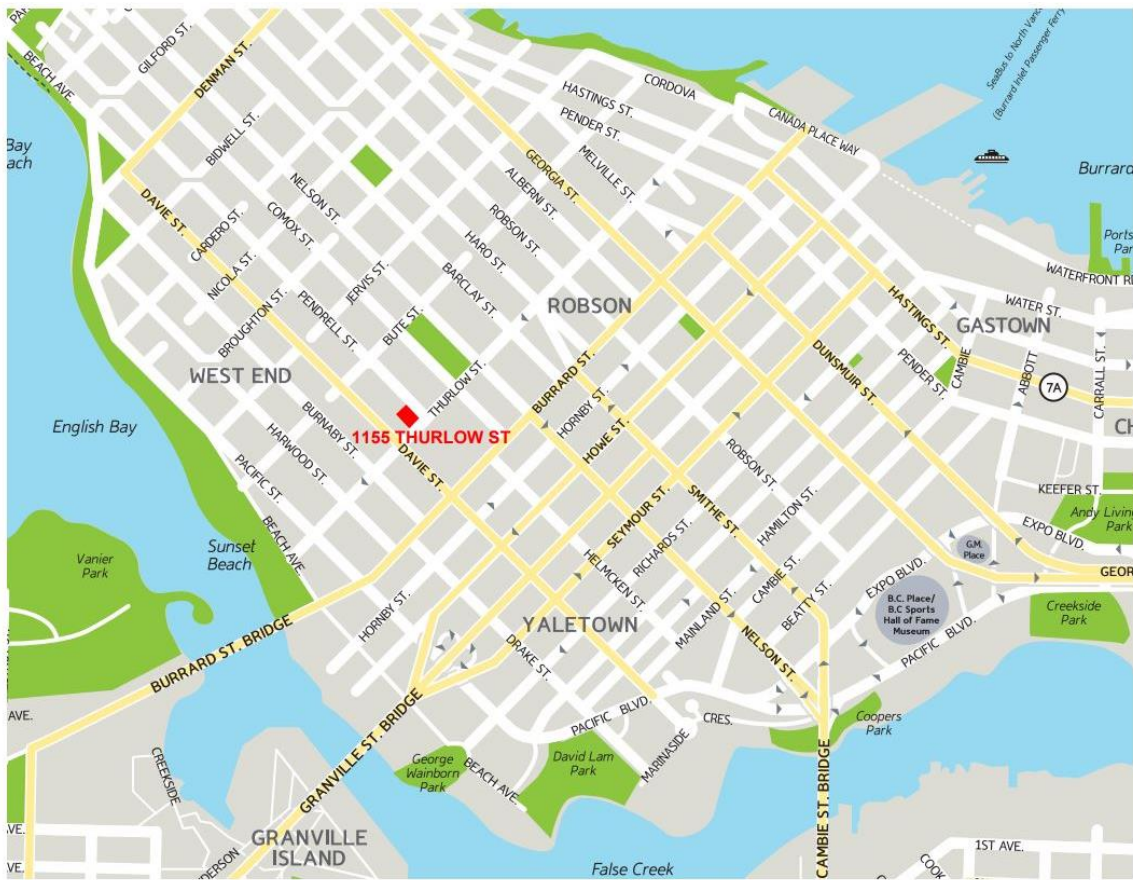
Chapter 4. Cases Studies

As described in Chapter 3, the methodological approach I chose for this research was to select four place of worship redevelopment projects in Vancouver to be interviewed (via congregation representatives) for a 'deep dive' discussion around their motivations for redevelopment, the specific details of their proposals, and their experiences with the process thus far. The following four case studies provide an overview of the key details, highlights, and themes for each of the four projects. Motivations for each of the individual congregations are noted in this chapter, with a comparison of key themes between the four Vancouver place of worship projects and congregations, and with the themes in the Literature Review in Chapter 2, further explored in Chapter 5.

4.1. Case #1: Central Presbyterian Church

Central Presbyterian Church is located at 1155 Thurlow Street, at the corner of Pendrell Street, in Vancouver's West End neighbourhood (see Figure 1). The interview took place with Reverend Jim Smith on February 19, 2019 at the church. Central Presbyterian's developer partner is Bosa Properties.

Figure 2. Central Presbyterian Church Location Map



Source: (*Rezoning and Development Permit Application, 1155 Thurlow Street (DE417385)*, n.d.)

Central Presbyterian's project consists of a 22-storey building atop an eight-storey podium, and includes 168 market rental housing units (to be owned and operated by Bosa), and 45 non-market rental housing units, a replacement church facility, childcare facility, and one commercial retail unit, all owned by the church (see Figure 2 for a rendering of the project). The project was approved by Vancouver City Council in July 2014 and was fully completed and occupied by late summer 2018.

Figure 3. Central Presbyterian Church Building Perspective



Source: *(Rezoning and Development Permit Application, 1155 Thurlow Street (DE417385), n.d.)*

4.1.1. Heritage/Existing Building

The previous church building was constructed in 1976, and was deemed to not have heritage value, having been described by Reverend Smith as “done kinda on the cheap, it was never designed nor built for the kind of use it was getting”. While it may not have been a beautiful building, “cinder block walls in the sanctuary”, the church building was shared by three congregations and in heavy use seven days a week, resulting in the need for room to grow. Central Presbyterian’s congregation had considered expanding their existing facility to meet their needs and increase capacity (physical space for both worship and their ancillary services), however, doing so would require bringing the existing 1976 building up to code, and they were concerned about

potential surprises/costs associated with this, for what would give them minimal additional benefit or space. They also considered purchasing the adjacent property for additional room to grow, but decided not to pursue this. This pre-existing context provided an opportunity for 'clean slate' redevelopment for Central Presbyterian, as they were not 'burdened' with a heritage asset that needed to be retained and maintained long-term. Their existing building could be demolished without municipal authorities or heritage advocates bemoaning the loss of a heritage asset, thereby clearing the site for future development.

4.1.2. Neighbouring Project

Inspiration for what could be possible on their site came from looking at a neighbouring church project. St. John's United, a nearby church just a few blocks away in the West End, had closed and the site was sold to a developer (Westbank). Under the City of Vancouver's STIR program (Short Term Incentives for Rental), the existing building (which also was deemed to have minimal heritage value, like Central Presbyterian), was torn down, and a new purpose-built market rental tower was constructed in its place. Approval of this project was granted by City Council in 2012, but before receiving this, the applicants hosted a public open house to gauge public opinion. One of Central Presbyterian's key elders, Gillan Jackson, attended the event and met that project's architect, Gregory Henriquez, resulting in the first connection being made.

The St. John's project proved to be instrumental in inspiring Central Presbyterian's congregation to imagine the possibilities for their own site. While it is not a direct project comparison, as St. John's had already ceased operating as a place of worship, and (unlike Central Presbyterian) the church function was not returning in the new project, its proposal acted as a first precedent and neighbourhood example of the development potential and scale of redevelopment that could be considered/supported for a West End church site.

4.1.3. Early Conversations

A small group of elders from Central Presbyterian (including Gillan and Reverend Smith) met with Gregory Henriquez to explore possibilities for their own site. The elders

discussed the current conditions and struggles with their existing facility, and expressed their curiosity and desire for redevelopment, inspired by St. John's, describing themselves as "land rich, cash poor, big dreams" as they approached this first meeting. The size of their lot (approximately 132 ft. by 132 ft.) was large enough that a 'tower and podium' model could be suitable for their site (this is a common building typology in Vancouver for new residential construction.) Henriquez proposed that if Central Presbyterian could raise \$30,000 for his services, he would create a design proposal for them. Interested in exploring this further, Central Presbyterian's congregation financed this proposition by borrowing \$20,000 from their Senate, and received a \$10,000 seed grant from CMHC (which was the only government money used in entire project). Henriquez presented to Central Presbyterian three initial options/scenarios for how a project could proceed.

4.1.4. Option 1 – 'Sell Right Away'

Under this option, Central Presbyterian would sell their property to a developer, which was estimated to be valued between \$6-7 million at that time. Central Presbyterian would then contribute approximately \$5 million for construction of their new worship space, to be included as part of the new development on the site. The advantages of this option include an immediate influx of cash for the church from the sale of their land, a new worship space would be provided to turn-key to the church, with money still leftover for them to use for other services and programs, and the developer would bear most of the risk of such a large project. However, this option includes several disadvantages, such as the risk of their land being undervalued/undersold, thereby not receiving a 'fair' share of funds for selling. Also, once their land is sold Central Presbyterian can never get it back (i.e. they lose control over the site), and the developer is in more of a position of power/influence for the project since they are the new site owner.

4.1.5. Option 2 – 'Sell After Rezoning'

In this scenario, Central Presbyterian goes through the rezoning process as the site owner while partnering with a developer, and then sells the site to the developer after the rezoning is approved. The advantages for this option are mostly the same as in Option 1, but perhaps with retaining greater control over the project's direction during

early stages. However, the disadvantages include a potential risk that after going through the expensive and time-consuming rezoning process, (i.e. 'bearing the brunt' of this preliminary work), they may face the same potential disadvantages as in Option 1 (losing control of their land and the project's next steps), depending on the partnership agreement with the developer.

4.1.6. Option 3 – 'Church As Developer'

Under this option, Central Presbyterian instead partners with the developer for guidance through the rezoning, design, and construction process, sells a portion of their land to the developer, and maintains ownership of the portion of the new building dedicated to their uses. The benefit gained for Central Presbyterian's congregation is a new worship space and the affordable housing they get to own. The advantages of this option include keeping the congregation in the 'driver's seat' throughout the rezoning process, as they retain ownership/control of their share of spaces in the new project. While there may be a reduced influx of funds upfront compared with Options 1 and 2, retaining ownership of the rental housing units allows for a long-term income stream for the church, to be directed into ancillary services and programming. The potential disadvantage of this option is that it is the 'more involved' path, by bearing more responsibility for the project's complexities (i.e. it would be easier to just sell the land and let the developer be the lead project manager).

4.1.7. Option 4 – 'Do Nothing'

This is the default option, to continue forward on their current path in their existing facility, and not redevelop their site. While this would be the least expensive and simpler option, resulting in less stress, it would not have alleviated their current challenges, and Central Presbyterian would lose the current opportunity to improve and expand their worship space, add to their portfolio of services, and lose the opportunity for a long-term income stream through the rental housing units.

Ultimately, after carefully deliberating the choices before them, and the potential benefits and trade-offs associated with each, Central Presbyterian's congregation chose to pursue Option 3, describing themselves as "small, but gutsy". Central Presbyterian

could potentially have made greater revenue, certainly upfront, to just sell their site under Options 1 and 2, but instead choose “mission over profit”.

Three different congregations share the worship space, including Central Presbyterian (approximately 60 regular members), Galilee (a Korean Presbyterian congregation with approximately 300 members, who contributed to financing of the project with \$500,000 from the National Presbytery to cover some of the interim costs for space when the new church was under construction), and Christ Alive (an LGBTQ congregation with approximately 12 members). Having three congregations cohabitating in a single place of worship allows for the sharing of spaces and the associated responsibilities of maintenance and operation (noting that Central Presbyterian is still the owner, whereas the other two congregations rent space as needed). Galilee and Christ Alive were consulted when the redevelopment project was first proposed, and updated regularly during the planning, but as tenants of the worship space owned by Central Presbyterian, it was Central Presbyterian that led the process and made the key decisions of how and when to move forward with the project.

4.1.8. Seeking A Development Partner

When faced with the next step of selecting a development partner, Central Presbyterian requested recommendations from Henriquez for who they could consider selecting as a project manager. Henriquez presented two options for developers for the church to partner with, and they chose to work with Bosa Properties. Part of the deal with Bosa was that the developer would pay all the ‘soft’ costs up front (consulting, design work, fees, etc.) During the interview, Reverend Smith claimed that even though the introduction was first made in 2010, the “paperwork wasn’t signed until 2014”, and that they “struck a deal on a handshake”, taking pride in their trusting relationship with Bosa. (The Bosa family are also Christians, which Reverend Smith noted that it added to that level of trust between them.)

In offering advice to other congregations pursuing redevelopment of their sites, Reverend Smith emphasized the importance of having a positive relationship between the congregation and their development team for the success of a project, advising others to “find the very best architect and lawyer you can, and an excellent development partner.” Further singing the praises of Central Presbyterian’s experience with their

professional team, he noted “their brilliance in architecture managed to translate all of our dreams and ambitions and aspirations and hopes and visions into designs, and Bosa managed to turn that into a physical reality.” Having that perspective from those involved at Central Presbyterian, that can only be offered once a project has been completed, is helpful in providing learning lessons for other congregations considering their redevelopment options.

4.1.9. City Process

The City of Vancouver required them to host a pre-application open house, to gauge community support. Central Presbyterian proposed that the information boards at the open house should showcase the history of the church and their involvement in the West End community for the last 75 years, in addition to presenting the project’s design (height, density, housing tenure, etc.) and explaining the potential of what additional benefits this project could allow the church to offer in a new, expanded facility. The application received 75 written submissions from open house, 75% of which were in support of the project. Central Presbyterian’s rezoning application was ultimately supported unanimously by City Council at their Public Hearing in July 2014.

4.1.10. Overview of Arrangement with Developer

The agreement between Central Presbyterian and Bosa was as such – the church contributed the property, while Bosa created a numbered company to do the construction. After the successful rezoning, the site’s value increased to \$75-80 million. Based on this new value, Bosa attained a mortgage to finance the project. In return, their arrangement was for Central Presbyterian to receive three air space parcels (an air space parcel is a volume of space, which can be a separate legal entity under different ownership from the remainder of the building), for the spaces to be owned by the church, delivered turnkey (fully completed and ready for occupation) to them (one for the worship space, a second for the retail unit, and a third for the church-owned rental apartments). The remainder of the building went to Bosa (for 168 market rental units.) Underground parking was to be shared between Central Presbyterian and Bosa. Reverend Smith described this as “win-win-win” for Central, Bosa, and City of Vancouver (who receive tax dollars from the development), noting that all parties involved benefitted in some way from the project.

4.1.11. Air Space Parcel #1 – Expanded Worship Space

The worship space in the new building is 50% larger than the previous one, and has an improved design to allow for increased versatility of uses in the space. Whereas the previous sanctuary sat 200 people, the new one now seats 320. In addition, the project added a separate chapel that can seat 60. To improve functionality of the worship space, they also included a narthex (the enclosed passage between the entrance and worship space), an atrium, and a multi-purpose room (which can be rented out to outside users, for additional income.)

In addition to the worship space, other uses, services and activities were improved and/or expanded in the new building, noting that many of them previously existed in the original facility. This includes a “community interface room” (multi-purpose space) with direct access to the street for both church and non-church groups/uses, which can be rented out for additional revenue to groups such as Elections Canada (as a neighbourhood polling station during elections), and various community groups, clubs, and organizations, such as for Boy Scouts or karate classes. A full commercial kitchen was built, to be used by their ‘food ministry’ which includes a community breakfast serving 250-300 people), in addition to a ‘bread ministry’ (which picks up leftover bread from bakeries and distributes them to the needy), and a ‘soup ministry’ (which provides free soup for seniors), along with a servery kitchen space adjacent the interface room.

Also included is a new childcare facility to replace their pre-existing space. The new childcare space is on the third floor in the podium and is licensed for 32 kids. While it is owned by Central Presbyterian, it is operated by the YMCA, and acts as an additional revenue source for the church. On weekends the space is used for Sunday School by the church. The new worship space can also be used for performance spaces, for groups such as the Vancouver Men’s Chorus, or for touring musicians, who use the sanctuary for music rehearsal and performing.

4.1.12. Air Space Parcel #2 – 45 Affordable Housing Units

The City of Vancouver initially wanted to own all/a portion of the affordable housing units, and lease them back to the church. Central Presbyterian was able to negotiate that they maintain ownership of the units, with the housing rates/affordability

secured through a Housing Agreement, required as part of approval of the rezoning application. The units are targeted to seniors, and affordability is secured through the housing charges (the rents of the non-market units). All units are below market rates, determined by CMHC for the relevant downtown zone and updated each October, with 20% of the units rented at no more than 90% of average market rates, 40% rented at no more than 80% of average market rates, and 40% rented at no more than 50% of average market rates.

Central Presbyterian was able to offer a higher degree of affordability because they have no mortgage on their property. The proposed units significantly exceed the City's minimum definition for social housing (defined as having at least 30% of the units rented to households with incomes below the BC Housing Income Limits (HILs)). The unit mix includes primarily studios and one-bedrooms (there are only three two-bedroom units, intended for those who live with caregivers). Central Presbyterian's housing units were built to same standards and with amenities similar to Bosa's market rental units in the project. While the church retains ownership of the 45 non-market units, Macdonald Properties (a property management company), maintains daily operations/maintenance of them.

Regarding what criteria Central Presbyterian used to select potential tenants, first priority was offered to seniors within the church's congregation. Following this were people referred by congregation members or from other local churches, and then to the general public. Reverend Smith noted that some residents in both the non-market and market units have begun attending service at the church, or volunteer in one of their ministries. This was an additional benefit that the congregation hoped would happen from the project.

For ownership of the affordable housing units, Central Presbyterian created a non-profit housing society (which is also a registered charity) to hold the units. In addition, they created a foundation to direct profits into, since the non-profit society can't retain profit. Any additional income from their rental units, the retail unit, other sources are directed into here, and the society is governed by a board made up of church members. Any profits they receive are used to pay for maintenance and operations of their own facilities, and can also allow the church to expand existing, and to create new, ministries without having to seek approval from Presbytery. The church is also

considering purchasing additional property (such as the neighbouring apartment building) to expand their non-market housing. The additional income sources offered by this redevelopment project ultimately bring increased financial autonomy to Central Presbyterian, and freedom to be creative with how they use their spaces.

4.1.13. Air Space Parcel #3 – Commercial-Retail Unit

The third air space parcel delivered to the church was for a small commercial-retail unit at the corner of their development. At the time of interview, the prospective tenant was 'Penguin Pick-Up', a delivery service for online shopping. Reverend Smith viewed this space as an additional means for the project to engage with the general public, and for additional income generation for the church.

4.1.14. Project Champions

When asked about the people who were involved who could be identified as 'project champions', Reverend Smith (church reverend), along with church elders Gillan Jackson, Ted and Margaret Noble, were identified. Reverend Smith and Gillan were seen as the 'primary leaders' during the project planning and construction. The congregation was kept informed and updated during this time, but once the project was launched, minimal consultation was needed. This relationship between the project champions and the rest of the congregation was one more of 'inform' rather than 'collaborate', implying that there was a great sense of trust between them.

4.1.15. Becoming a 'Vancouver Example'

Given that their project is fully completed and occupied, and has been viewed as a success by their own congregation, Reverend Smith has since done presentations for several other churches that are considering their redevelopment options (mainly in Vancouver, but also a group from a United Church from Melbourne), highlighting the process of how Central Presbyterian's new home came to be, and showcasing the project's benefits. He has also hosted cross-Canada webinars for CMHC, BC Housing, the Urban Development Institute, and other audiences (stating, however, that he's never been invited to do a presentation in his own Presbytery.) He noted that other

Presbyterian churches in the region may also be considering their redevelopment options, in addition to churches of other denominations.

When asked what lessons he had learned through the entire life cycle of the project, and, in turn, what advice he would offer to others who are considering their own redevelopment potential, Reverend Smith had the following to share: “Know why you’re doing what you’re doing, and have a good reason for it. If you are doing it as a congregation simply to survive, you’re probably not gonna survive it, cause it’s a 10-year process and it takes a lot of energy and effort and distraction doing it. But if you’re doing it for the kind of reasons we were doing it, which is to be able to do more of what we do here in the community, in terms of new ministries, in terms of worship capabilities, in terms of performance venues, etc. plus the housing on the side which is a real bonus.”

Reverend Smith has also emphasized the importance of having positive relations with the community that the church is situated in – a source of pride for him and the congregation. One example of this he shared described an encounter during the construction period: “But you see, one of the keys, is that we are connected with the community. So connected, that as the construction was going up, I’d stand on the sidewalk and people would come up to me and say ‘Wow, our church is really coming along!’ and I know that they’ve never been to a service in the 20 years that I’ve been here, but it’s ‘our church.’ That’s who we are in the West End – we are that community ‘thing’. We are a polling station, we have groups meeting, it’s just people familiar with us, and they know us. They know they’re welcomed here, so that’s the motif for it.” Having that community support during the planning/design phase is particularly important for a congregation to maintain their momentum during the long process, and ultimately will increase the likelihood of receiving approval by City Council.

4.1.16. Summary

Central Presbyterian’s experience has become an exemplary project for this unique type of place of worship redevelopment that others have sought out to learn from. Being one of the first of these types of these projects approved in Vancouver, their new development is now fully constructed and occupied, allowing other congregations considering their redevelopment options a real-world example to model after. Central Presbyterian’s timing was unique in that it received approval in advance of a Community

Plan being completed for the neighbourhood – instead, approval was granted due to the considerable amount of affordable below-market rate housing offered in the proposal, which the City deemed to be highly valuable. One of Central Presbyterian’s key advantages was that it was not burdened by an existing heritage structure on site. Instead, they were free to demolish their existing church and therefore develop their entire lot for new development, with new replacement worship space returning within the podium of the new building.

Pursuing redevelopment allowed the congregation to accomplish a number of goals, including expanding their worship space for their own and two partner congregations, expanding their existing ancillary services that provide community benefits (such as the childcare facility, and food services for the needy), and providing additional community-serving meeting spaces for groups not affiliated directly with the church. The project also provided a commercial space, owned by the church and leased to a private business, which the income from it can assist with financially supporting their own programs, and provided 45 non-market housing units which they retain ownership of.

All of these benefits were achieved through the development of market rental units to be owned and operated by the private developer partner (an additional benefit, as given the tight rental market in Vancouver, adding to the overall supply of secured rental housing is also desirable), and all without any government subsidy. As far as place of worship redevelopment experiences, Central Presbyterian’s project appears to have experienced very little neighbourhood opposition when compared with other church sites redeveloping in Vancouver. This could be due to their location (in a downtown neighbourhood with existing high-rises), and their good relations with the community.

Central Presbyterian’s motivations for redeveloping are a mix of both Theme #1 (self-survival) and Theme #2 (intentional shift) as noted in the Literature Review, but with a much greater focus on the latter, as their partner congregations were already helping with maintaining their existing facility. While the church did not appear to be at risk of closing due to declining membership, particularly as they shared their worship space (and therefore associated costs) with two other congregations, (one of which was quite large), but their existing facility was poorly designed and no longer met their needs. Replacement and expansion of their facility allowed them to carve out a more secure

future, in a more usable, versatile, and attractive building, and provide additional revenue sources to continue (and bolster) their community-serving programs. The expansion of their services, in addition to providing affordable non-market housing, allowed them to serve their neighbourhood in both broadened and new roles, thereby increasing their outreach and relevance, and extending their mission of service for those who need it in the West End (and Vancouver) communities.

4.2. Case #2: Knox United Church

Knox United Church is located at 5590 Balaclava Street in Vancouver's Dunbar neighbourhood. The existing church, annex, and parking lot sits mid-block between 39th and 41st Avenues, with the new development proposed for the southern end of the site (see Figure 3). Knox United's developer partner is Hon Towers, and while their rezoning application has been approved in December 2009, at the time of interview they were still awaiting approval of their Building Permit application, and construction has yet to commence on the project. The interview took place with Alan Mackenna, Chair of Knox United's Building Committee, on February 24, 2019 at the church.

Figure 4. Knox United Church Context Map



Source: (Rezoning Application, 3205-3221 West 41st Avenue and 5590 Balaclava Street, n.d.)

Knox United’s redevelopment project consists of a four-storey building with approximately 66 strata (condominium) units, to be sold by the developer. In return, Knox United receives restoration and heritage designation of their church building, replacement and expansion of their existing church ancillary space (which is used by both the church and outside community groups), and a replacement childcare facility. See Figures 4 and 5 below for building perspectives illustrating the proposed new buildings with the existing heritage church.

Figure 5. Knox United Church Building Perspective 1



Source: (*Rezoning Application, 3205-3221 West 41st Avenue and 5590 Balaclava Street, n.d.*)

Figure 6. Knox United Church Building Perspective 2



Source: (*Rezoning Application, 3205-3221 West 41st Avenue and 5590 Balaclava Street, n.d.*)

4.2.1. Existing Heritage Building & Adjacent Properties

The existing facility is a Tudor Revival/Gothic Revival wooden church built in 1948. The heritage building is a neighbourhood landmark, known for its role as an active venue for musical and cultural activities, and for providing local community groups

with meeting space. The church's sanctuary has excellent acoustics for live performances, and is used frequently by choirs, musicians, and touring groups, etc.

4.2.2. Existing Ancillary Spaces & Uses

The existing ancillary spaces, housed in a 1970s-era church annex building, includes a preschool (which has experienced financial struggles in recent years), a gymnasium, church office space, and meeting rooms for both church uses and community groups (used by Scouts, Cubs, Alcoholics Anonymous, other groups). In recent years, Knox United's congregation has experienced physical constraints and challenges with its existing facility, noting both increasing maintenance costs for the heritage building, and that the church annex is reaching the end of its economic life and is seismically vulnerable. This prompted a review and conversation about their existing land assets and options going forward.

4.2.3. Early Conversations

First conversations around the potential for redevelopment began around 2007. One of the church's assets is an existing surface parking lot, which the congregation realized it presented an opportunity (i.e. the physical space needed) for development. At the time, the City of Vancouver and the Province of British Columbia had funding available for development projects that offer a benefit to the community, which caught the interest of the congregation. They initially partnered with BC Housing for a seniors supportive housing project on their rear parking lot, but did not receive the grant, with fire/health risks due to limited access to the lot given as the reason. Instead, they were encouraged to assemble a larger property site.

Adjacent the church are several single family homes fronting 41st Avenue, all under a single ownership – these were identified as an opportunity for amalgamating with the church site. However, the existing owner was not interested and did not have the funding to participate in a joint project. The homes were eventually sold, and the new owners (from Dubai) had both the interest and financial means for a redevelopment. However, shortly after, the global recession meant a loss of funding available. Once again, the homes were sold, this time to a developer based in Calgary, and the new owners were interested in redevelopment on an amalgamated site.

The proposal was for the church to sell a portion of their land, and the City would sell their dead-end lane that was in-between, and combined with the land the houses occupied, this would be the site of the condominium development. The church would be paid cash for the land sale, and their existing ancillary space would be demolished and replaced with a new facility to be built on the rear parking lot. Market housing, adaptable for senior living, would be constructed only after the completion of the new church ancillary space. After deciding internally that redevelopment was worth pursuing, Knox United's congregation had to first seek permission from local Presbytery to redevelop.

Alan described this process as "first of all, the congregation says we'd like to develop, and to do that, we'd like to sell a part of our land. Next step, we go to the Court of the Church, a local Presbytery and we had to make a presentation to them – 'here's what we have to do, here's what our finances are, here's why we're doing it and why it's important.' They have an Executive and a Board, and they said 'no, you can't, we don't think it's a viable thing to do.' So we said 'just a minute, don't just sneak out the door.' So we continued our conversation, this is a very healthy operation, the way it should be. You just don't go out and arbitrarily sell your land and say 'sorry' afterwards. Anyway, we had good discussions with them, and they gave us ultimately full support to move ahead with the project."

Alan's description around the process for seeking approval from church authorities speaks to the hierarchical nature of church land governance. The individual churches are charged with maintaining, operating, and protecting their sites, in trust for the larger religious institution. It may be the individual congregations that initiate the redevelopment process, as they are acutely aware of the challenges and opportunities of their sites, but ultimately they must seek approval for Presbytery before entering into formal redevelopment agreements with developers.

4.2.4. Key Drivers & Motivations

When asked to identify their key drivers and motivations for pursuing redevelopment, Alan noted they had experienced a decline in church membership and could not afford maintenance costs for their heritage building and church annex, and was at risk of closing in a few years. "...but without that income, prior to receiving the cash payment for the land, we were heading fast to a brick wall, which a lot of churches

are. And that's one of the main reasons many of them are looking at their land and their property and selling, if they have it. Cause if we didn't do it, we wouldn't exist. And we figure that if the things we do are of enough value, that it warrants us giving up a part of our land. Without that cash, we would have to shut the place down in x-number of years. And that's a question of declining membership. It doesn't mean you're less effective, it just means you have less people. Less people equals less money to keep the place running. It's expensive to run one of these places. So you have to say, that if you can't do it, or can't do anything to maintain it, then you have to go. It's just a fact of life. So we chose not to go."

This type of situation, where there are increasing maintenance costs coupled with declining memberships and limited financial resources, has been well-documented in Theme #1 in the Literature Review, but I don't think that many churches are willing to be so upfront and open with sharing this challenge with others outside their communities. I would imagine that some might feel embarrassed or too shy to admit that their memberships have been declining, or that they are encountering financial struggles, so I was appreciative to hear Alan speak openly about the decisions before Knox United's congregation. In other interviews this was eluded to in a more indirect way, so I imagine many of Vancouver's churches may be experiencing similar challenges as Knox United.

The need to respond to a potential threat of future closure was coupled with a strong desire to continue being able to offer space for community groups, to serve the diverse needs of the neighbourhood and larger city, and wanting to be responsive to changing needs and trends in society. They also mentioned a desire to support the arts and music/culture by providing space in their future project – "one of our current focuses is to support the arts within our complex in a positive way. It's a common language – music or drama – so if you wanna communicate with people to find out how they connect with a better world, this is a great vehicle."

Furthermore, they expressed an intention to "bring people together", noting that "to address the matter of loneliness, which is something we can do something about by creating these programs and bringing people together in a place where they actually get to talk to each other. If you're just a close building/shut the doors...you're never gonna accomplish anything. The building doesn't make it happen, but it becomes a good core from which these things can happen." Adding on to this, Alan noted that while many

churches in North America are “only open on Sundays”, Knox would like to be more open to the neighbourhood, and sees its spaces and programming as a way to accomplish this. Alan summarized Knox’s motivations with noting “it was a combination of wanting to do something that was of value to the community, and allowing us to survive long-term so that we can maintain the services that we’ve been giving the community.” Combined, their existing financial struggles and their desire to continue and expand their community-serving spaces and activities amplified the congregation’s interest in pursuing redevelopment of their site.

4.2.5. Proposed Church Improvements

As part of the redevelopment project, the exterior of the church will receive heritage ‘B’ designation, protection, and significant restoration efforts. Alan stated that “this was part of the agreement. The City said ‘you can do all this, provided you allow this to become a heritage building, and then you’re responsible for upgrading it to basic standards, and maintaining it.’ It’s 70 years old, so in Vancouver’s terms it’s worth hanging on to. And we agreed that the outside of the building, the exterior, would be protected and we would agree to keep it up.” This speaks to the process of how these heritage church buildings receive designation, protection, and physical upgrades as through these redevelopment projects that require the site to be rezoned. It’s likely that the church congregation, prior to initiating a redevelopment of their site, is at least partially aware of the inherent value of their heritage buildings, and recognizes that they are worth saving and restoring, but during the rezoning stage it is the City which makes this action a requirement as part of the project seeking approval.

However, the interior will not receive heritage designation, at request of the church, as their preference is to maintain flexibility for future uses in case the church is ever sold to a non-faith group (i.e. ‘future-proofing’). While no change is proposed to the size or current uses of the sanctuary/worship space, Alan noted that “we deliberately negotiated that it would be the exterior only [that receives heritage protection]. Not that we would neglect the interior, but if we were to ever sell the property, it might sell as a school, so you could have music classes in there, and that was a concept that we wanted to keep open. It could be living quarters or a library or a concert hall or whatever. And I think that flexibility is good for the community too, so you’re not trapped into saying that you can only have a church here.” This desire to maintain flexibility for

how the heritage building is used in the future may be an indication that even with this redevelopment project, the church congregation may still be feeling uncertain about their ability to remain operating as a place of worship site for the long term. Should Knox United cease operating as a church, and sell their property in the future, the heritage building would be still be required to be retained, but the interior could be repurposed for other uses. Should this option be pursued, this would be an example of “adaptive re-use”, which as noted in Theme #3 in the Literature Review, happens frequently with place of worship sites in other urban contexts.

The proposed housing component consists of approximately 66 market condominium units, owned (and sold) by Hon Towers, a Calgary-based developer. Contained in a free-standing four-storey building, these future housing units would be designed to be ‘senior-friendly’, and include on-site services to meet seniors’ needs (but future residents would not be required to be seniors). An additional benefit of these senior-focused condominiums is adding to the overall housing choices that allow for existing residents in Kerrisdale/Dunbar to downsize out of a single-family home (the predominant housing form in the area) but still stay in their neighbourhood (i.e. to ‘age in place’). Alan did, however, express disappointment that the units will be built as market condominiums, instead of non-market seniors housing, as the congregation had originally envisioned.

4.2.6. New/Expanded Ancillary Uses

Through their redevelopment project, all of the existing services and uses, as described earlier, with the exception of the gymnasium, will return in a new church annex building (which will be of similar size to the existing one). The heritage building’s interiors will be protected, so that it can continue offering space and high-quality acoustics for musical performances.

4.2.7. City Process

As part of the rezoning process, the City played an active role with shaping the project components, requiring that the preschool use return in the new development, in addition to heritage protection/designation of the heritage church building. The City also expressed concern about potential noise issues from the proposed rooftop playground

for the preschool (despite being adjacent to a park). Alan expressed frustration with City processes, especially regarding the review timelines – “You know, I wouldn’t even begin to explain the process over at City Hall. It’s no secret in Vancouver that it’s very strangulated. It’s very slow. And if you read any current newspaper you’ll read that they’re planning to do things better, faster. But no criticism intended, but it’s dead slow, and gets snarled up. But I give them credit to try and improve that.” This concern about the amount of time it takes for a church site redevelopment project to make it through the rezoning enquiry and application phases is one that was commonly relayed across all four interviews.

Alan also noted that a change in staff/Council meant new policies and changing conditions applied to the project approval, advice between different departments can conflict with each other (due to competing interests); and the City required the provision of underground parking, which added to overall project costs. In the interview he commented, “we had to put two and a half levels of parking. Underground parking is great, but two and a half levels for the amount of use it will get... So it will be used for sure, but probably not to its fullest extent, but it will have all the equipment and safety and alarms because you have to. We could’ve done without all of that, but you can’t, ‘because it’s a by-law.’ That’s a million dollars cost!” The frustrations around requiring underground parking was stated in interviews with the other case studies too, noting the additional expense this requires. However, with Knox United (and others), there is a benefit to this parking requirement – the spaces may be required to meet the City’s parking by-laws, but by relocating future site visitors to off-street parking spaces, this can also help to mitigate the impacts on local streets, and may reduce this concern that is often heard from neighbours in opposition to these types of projects.

Further frustration came from an existing tenant in one of the assembled houses who wants to remain in the house for as long as possible. The individual will need to be re-located under the provisions of the City’s tenant relocation policies, and this caused an unexpected additional delay in the timeline.

4.2.8. Neighbourhood Opposition

This project experienced a fair amount of community opposition during the rezoning stage. While many local residents expressed support for the church, and for its

existing uses and for protecting the heritage building, they did not support the proposed means of achieving that (through increased density on their site). Feedback from the public, as noted in the Public Input Summary in the Council Report for this rezoning application, include concerns about several components of this proposal, including the modern design of the proposed buildings, which was seen to not fit with the neighbourhood character, and potential privacy and shadow impacts from the new four-storey building. In addition, concerns were noted about parking and traffic impacts to the adjacent streets. Members of the public, like the interviewee, also noted their preference for non-market seniors housing to be built, rather than market-rate condominiums.

4.2.9. Lessons Learned/Advice To Others

When reflecting about Knox United's experiences with pursuing redevelopment of their site, especially in light of the significant delays they have encountered (at the time of research they had received rezoning approval, but not yet completed their building permit application process), Alan highlighted that these types of projects take a significant amount of time and money, and that "expertise is needed to guide the process – resources, knowledge to sustain the project from concept to completion – from outside the church. Don't attempt to do it all on your own without professional support. Take a deep breath, look at the examples out there, and be realistic. It's gonna take you ten years, and don't fool yourself that it's gonna happen any faster".

However, despite the setbacks, Alan remains optimistic about the future of Knox United's project, and the potential benefits it can bring to the city - "It's always worthwhile – and don't quit. When you start something, finish it, if you possibly can. Especially if it has benefits that are obvious. Otherwise you have a city that's lined with financial companies and banks, and many restaurants. It's kinda dull, except you eat well."

4.2.10. Summary

Knox United is an example of a congregation with the best of intentions to redevelop their site, but has had to revise their original proposal, and has experienced significant setbacks, for reasons outside of their control. Like other congregations redeveloping in Vancouver, their motivations are aligned with both Theme #1 (self-survival) and Theme #2 (intentional shift) in the Literature Review, noting a stronger

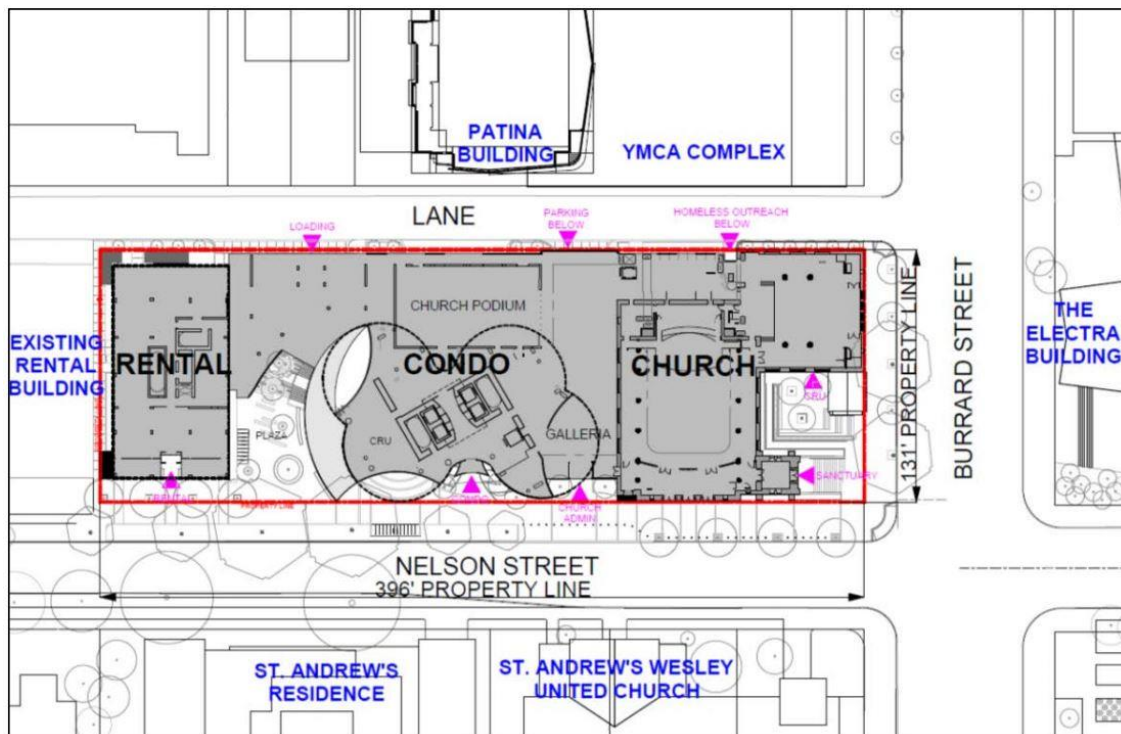
emphasis on Theme #1. Knox was forthcoming with the challenges they were experiencing prior to pursuing a redevelopment project – their worship space was in a beautiful heritage building, and while their facilities were well used for both musical and performance activities, and for its range of ancillary spaces, including a childcare and meeting space regularly used by several community groups, the church was struggling to financially support their current assets. With a diminishing congregation, and with expenses related to maintaining the heritage church and for upkeep of an aging 1970s-era annex, Knox was at risk of closure, barring a change in their course. Partnering with a developer to sell a portion of their land for housing targeted to seniors was a means to protect and restore the heritage church building, afford the construction of new replacement ancillary space, and be financially sustainable enough to continue offering services of benefit to the larger community.

Setbacks with prospective and initial partners meant a significant extension in the timeline of the project, and ultimately the development of market housing oriented to seniors, rather than a more affordable non-market tenure that they had hoped for originally. Other delays and barriers were related to global economic forces (i.e. the recession), more time needed than originally anticipated for land assembly and staging of project delivery, pushback from adjacent residents, and expectations from City staff that had cost implications. The result is that it has been 12 years since their initial idea for conceiving a development project, and construction has still yet to start. When the project is finally complete, the redevelopment will ultimately give Knox a new 'lease on life' with a secured future, and the continuation of the valuable services and spaces it can offer to the public. While the future housing may be market condominiums, with its design geared to seniors, this housing will offer an option for residents in Dunbar (a neighbourhood primarily consisting of single family homes) to downsize and age in place while remaining in their communities. The heritage building may have been a financial struggle for the church to maintain, but agreeing to restore and protect the highly-valued heritage asset also provided a 'policy window' for the City to consider the redevelopment project as a whole.

4.3. Case #3: First Baptist Church

First Baptist Church is located at 969 Burrard Street & 1019-1045 Nelson Street, on the border between Vancouver's West End and Downtown neighbourhoods, with the existing church at the eastern end of their site (see Figure 6). Their developer partner is Westbank, and their project, having been approved in July 2017, is now under construction. The interview took place with Steve Milos and Fred Liebich at the church on June 20 and July 4, 2019.

Figure 7. First Baptist Church Context Map



Source: (Rezoning Application, 969 Burrard Street & 1019-1045 Nelson Street, n.d.)

First Baptist's project consists of a 57-storey tower with 331 strata (condominium) units (to be sold by developer, Westbank), a seven-storey building with 61 social housing units (to be owned by church), seismic upgrade, conservation, and restoration of the heritage church, expansion of the existing church ancillary and community service uses, and the addition of a café. Figures 7 and 8 below illustrate the proposed new buildings adjacent the existing heritage church building.

Figure 8. First Baptist Church Building Perspective 1



First Baptist Church lies in the centre foreground of the rendering, with the proposed condominium tower directly behind it.

Source: (*Rezoning Application, 969 Burrard Street & 1019-1045 Nelson Street, n.d.*)

Figure 9. First Baptist Church Building Perspective 2



First Baptist Church is on the right side of this rendering, with the proposed condominium tower in the centre, and the social housing building on the left.

Source: (*Rezoning Application, 969 Burrard Street & 1019-1045 Nelson Street, n.d.*)

4.3.1. Existing Heritage Building & Adjacent Properties

First Baptist Church was built in 1911, and is a large stone landmark church located at a prominent intersection downtown. This site was chosen specifically for its key location – Vancouver was small, but expanding west at the time, and this site was at the edge of the city on a high point of land with woods behind it. The church strategically chose an area the city would grow towards/around, so they could have “a presence in

the growing city.” The church building was heavily damaged by a fire in 1932. Restorations at the time were modest, given the Great Depression and limited funds available. While the church exterior received designation in 1976 as an ‘A’ heritage building, in its current state it is vulnerable to earthquakes, and therefore in need of a seismic upgrade. Other small additions to the church building have been made over time, including ‘Pinder Hall’, and all are in need of upgrading and repair, as the current lay-out is inefficient, not universally accessible, and under-sized for existing uses and programming.

Over time, First Baptist has acquired neighbouring properties to the west of the church, including a lot that is now used for surface parking, the ‘Mitchell Residence’ – a two-and-a-half storey wooden house with a coach house at the rear, with nine existing rental housing units (all offered at below market rates), the ‘Hobbit House’ – a two-storey wooden house, used for church gathering space and ancillary services, and a four-storey apartment building with 23 rental units.

Existing ancillary services in their facility, all of which are to be retained in their new project, include a homeless shelter, kitchen/food services for the needy, counselling services, youth ministries (which provides food and spaces for children and teens to gather), seniors services (including for those with Alzheimer’s disease), ESL classes, support for international missionaries, rehearsal and performance spaces for local choirs, musicians, and touring groups, and a childcare facility.

4.3.2. Physical Constraints

Over the course of the place of worship’s lifespan, increasing maintenance costs for the heritage building have been identified, associated with both the age and the seismic vulnerability of the stone building. In addition, many of their ancillary services are in spaces not designed for such uses (e.g. their gymnasium is used as a homeless shelter during winter months, and their kitchen is on a separate floor from where food is served/consumed.) First Baptist’s existing physical spaces limit their capacity to deliver their wide-ranging portfolio of community services, and there are no opportunities to expand or add new services within their existing facility. The physical constraints of First Baptist’s assets were highlighted as a challenge they faced – one best resolved through redevelopment of their site.

4.3.3. Key Messages & Themes Emphasized by Interviewees

The interviewees multiple times made a point to separate the different meanings of the word “church”, i.e. the building itself vs. a group of believers, the latter being of most importance and key distinction. The church view themselves as offering “salt and light” for Vancouver, both historically and in present day. In their description, “light” being moral/ethical guidance, and a beacon of hope and good will. For them, “salt” means being part of the ‘flavour’ of a mixed, diverse community and the larger city, and a ‘preservative of moral fibre’ for Vancouver.

The interviewees also expressed a strong desire to be adaptive to the changing environment and needs of the community. Historical examples of this adaptiveness include their acquisitions of neighbouring properties, small additions to the church building, including the addition of Pinder Hall (and subsequently dividing it in half at a later date), to respond to opportunities (i.e. adjacent land for sale) and being able to offer new ancillary services. They emphasized a desire to “not be stagnant”, and instead be responsive to changing times.

An additional point that was highlighted by the interviewees was to draw a distinction between different denominations and their respective opportunities and responsibilities. According to the interviewees, Baptist churches have more limited means, and need to take care of themselves and their properties, compared to Catholic churches which have more resources and financial support for property acquisition and maintenance. Baptist churches are congregational and democratic in structure, and not hierarchical. I did not explore or verify this statement around any differences in financial support between different denominations through this research, nor question them further on this statement, so I am unable to comment on the details of the church’s current finances. However, when I reviewed the summary of public input received on this project during the rezoning application stage, concerns from the public noted the height of the tower, and the lack of affordability of the condominium units. It’s possible that perhaps the church is sensitive to this criticism on the ratio of market housing vs. non-market housing that their project proposes, and felt a need to justify the large amount of condominium units because they were not receiving additional financial support from higher levels of their own governance.

First Baptist's congregation takes pride in their intentionality to play an active role in the neighbourhood and the city, and to "put in the work" to serve the local community. Their faith guides their actions, based on three themes noted, and they want the redevelopment project to reflect these values. The first of which is "God is good", with a desire to have their building and services they provide be representative of this. The second is "We, as a church, are alive", and the desire to be active, relevant, and can affect positive change in their surrounding environment by expressing their faith. Lastly, a third theme shared is "you are welcome", which is a purposeful expression to be inclusive, diverse, and to attract a variety of people, while not be 'overbearing' with messages around their faith.

Fred and Steve elaborated on this further, noting that "it was driven by a heartfelt desire to be true and obedient to Jesus' commands. It never has been motivated by desire for profit or to monetize an asset or anything like that. We're not doing this because we're great humanists, we're doing this because we love God and we love our neighbour, and we're trying to be obedient to Jesus. That's the driving force behind everything. We asked for the Lord's guidance and to help us to discern his will, because it gets difficult. Do you have a shelter program, or do you have seniors housing, or do you have childcare? You can't do everything, so what are you being called to do?"

The interviewees further emphasized the continuing relevance of churches in contemporary society, and they see this project as an opportunity to increase that role by expanding and improving what they can offer. During their interviews, I observed that the interviewees' faith was much more 'up front and centre' during the conversation around their intentions, hopes, and goals for the project, when compared with other churches interviewed. While other congregation representatives interviewed also mentioned comments around 'being called' by God to serve, and that they felt their redevelopment projects were a means to bring benefits to their congregations and the larger community/Vancouver, stating their faith as a primary motivation was less prevalent in interviews with other churches. With the First Baptist interviewees, they alternated between positioning themselves as not wanting to be overbearing with messages around their faith, but also talked often about their desire to change people's lives by sharing the gospel. Perhaps this reflects a desire to achieve some sort of 'balance' between the two.

4.3.4. Early Conversations

When asked about how and when First Baptist's congregation first discussed the idea of redeveloping their site, in the late 1990s, it was the approaching change in millennium that prompted an internal conversation to examine their current assets and needs, and an interest to collate ideas for how the church could change in the future, with an emphasis made for long-term views, i.e. a 100-year time frame. The congregation recognized that many churches at the time were selling their central properties, 'cashing out' on their high-value real estate assets, and moving to suburban locations to 'follow the families'. However, First Baptist's congregation had no interest in leaving their current site, and preferred to remain in the city centre. This position is reflected in their mission statement of "a community following Jesus, with a heart for the city, and beyond." This later became the name for the redevelopment project, now known at First Baptist as "Heart For The City".

This led to an 'envisioning task force' in the late 2000s to solicit ideas from the congregation, to 'dream big' for what the church could do in the future, which became a two-year long process. Task force members were selected from the congregation, and had varied backgrounds and skill sets, previous or current leadership roles, and could offer diverse perspectives. Senior Minister Darrell Johnson played a key role as a 'champion' of these early conversations, and helped to frame key principles for guiding initial concept development. The task force solicited ideas from the larger congregation by hosting meetings, 'town halls', and through individual conversations.

Members of the task force recognized early on that there would be a lot of ideas generated, which would therefore require them to prioritize the options and services most important to members. The homeless shelter, childcare, and providing housing were ultimately identified as early priorities. They also recognized that redevelopment of the site would be needed to meet the congregation's desire to improve and expand their services, as achieving these goals would require significant funding beyond the means of the church (as is). Their faith and their mission to serve those who need help the most ("the marginalized and the underprivileged"), rather than seeking out opportunities to maximize profit for the church, was given by the interviewees as the principal driving force in their early conceptual stage. Any revenue for the church from the redevelopment would be used to rehabilitate their heritage building, for the non-market

housing they would own, and for the expansion of the services, meeting space, and programming they offer in their ancillary spaces.

It is unlikely that any church would be forthcoming even if this was not the case (i.e. if their goal was to maximize profit.) However, their emphasis throughout the interviews on trying to maximize the number of social housing units and to expand their portfolio of community-serving spaces and programs, and their challenges with their internal deliberations on trying to prioritize what community benefits they could deliver through this redevelopment project, aligns with their stated motivations to maximize benefits through this project as a means to “serve God” and “extend their mission” through what they can offer the public.

During the planning stages of the project, when the envisioning task force was exploring what uses and programs could be expanded through a redevelopment project, some members of the congregation were hesitant about expanding the existing homeless shelter. The interviewees relayed these concerns during the interview: “I remember specifically participating in some of these debates. ‘Oh, that shelter brings people into the church building that are maybe pretty seedy and undesirable and maybe dangerous and risky. Aren't you going to be having seniors here as well? That's a very dangerous mix.’” The interviewees noted this discussion around potential conflict of different users of the church space as something that the task force deliberated over, but ultimately it was agreed that including (and expanding) the homeless shelter space in the future ancillary spaces would be a benefit. The interviewees commented that “our church is a diverse group. There are people with opinions, that say, ‘oh no, those people, you don't want them in your building.’ The other side of that is that Jesus himself in his day, he was friends with the lowest, the outcasts in society of his day. And we are called to do the same. And we believe that that's important. And so I remember some were expressing that concern, and it's a legitimate concern. So that what can we do? How should we adapt our facility and our design in order to reasonably address that, but not shut it out to you. And we want to welcome people in. One of our pastors for the shelter ministry, he always emphasizes that we benefit as much in learning from these people, bringing them into our church body. That it's worth it. We need to do this. It's good for us.” This commentary speaks to the challenging discussions and deliberations that take place during the planning stages of these redevelopment projects – the difficulty of balancing and responding to a wide variety of diverse opinions within a

congregation, while collectively trying to agree on what path is 'best' for the church, and what ancillary services to prioritize through these projects.

The interviewees felt that the redevelopment opportunity was "their calling" to do something special and good for the community. They expressed a desire to make future spaces more versatile/multi-purpose, so they can serve a variety of activities and users. A sub-group was later formed to focus on the housing needs of the project. Participating members also recognized early on that the church restoration and seismic upgrades would likely be very expensive, which would limit opportunities to direct any potential additional funds into ancillary services, and so maximizing the condominium portion of the project would provide more funding for their needs, because "the scale of money that that requires is not something that you can raise with bake sales."

Having been through the planning process and now seeing their project under construction, when asked what advice they would offer other congregations who are considering their options, Fred and Steve emphasized to "make sure your congregation is united behind your planning, and have a clear vision and agreement on what you're aiming for." Reiterating that potentially difficult choices would have to be made when deciding what services and spaces should be prioritized in a project, they advised other congregations to "determine what your priorities are, and be realistic about what you can deliver. Ask what is your purpose for existing as a church, what are your spheres of influence, and what is God calling you to do at this point in time?" An example of this includes the deliberation around the homeless shelter, as relayed earlier. Another one includes the decision to pursue a ground-floor café, which was seen as "an avenue to make our church more known publicly. It's just a very non-threatening way to extend a welcome to the city on a very prominent street. How can you be more welcoming and inviting to people who don't go to church?"

Also, there was an emphasis to focus on design criteria that would provide dignity for users of their services, and members did not want to include any services that they felt would be 'in conflict' with their existing services and attendees, such as a bar/alcohol sales. The café was chosen as a better fit to welcome non-churchgoers into their space, as opposed to a business which sold alcohol, which was viewed as "that wouldn't sit well with us. The reality is we have people in programs at the church who have in the past struggled with substance abuses, and quite frankly, that's something that as a church we

don't care to promote or support.” This commentary also speaks to the potential challenges of how to balance outreach and appeal to those who don't attend religious services, while also respecting the needs of existing members and users of their ancillary spaces.

4.3.5. Seeking A Development Partner

When asked how the congregation went about selecting a development partner, they noted that early on there were concerns shared over the 'high risk' inherent in a large-scale redevelopment, recognizing that the church is inexperienced with development, doesn't have the appropriate in-house resources (both knowledge and capital) to bring the project to life, and will need to rely on outside funding sources and professional expertise to guide them. First Baptist had some seed money to pay for consulting services to help them develop a process for selecting a development partner. This process prioritized both a “capacity to deliver the congregation's goals” and a “fit with their values” as key selection criteria. Selection began with twelve prospective developers, later narrowed down to six, and then to a final three. Westbank was chosen based on their expertise and resources available, their 'shared vision' for the redevelopment and recognizing the uniqueness of their site, and their portfolio of previous successful projects in Vancouver. Bing Thom was later selected as the architect. The interviewees noted that while he did not have a faith background, he took the time to get to know the congregation's values, desires, and understood their vision for the project. Regarding how best to navigate the process of selecting a professional team, and the long relationship a congregation will have with their developer partners, Fred and Steve recommended other congregations should “seek professional advice, but let your vision and your purpose guide them, and not the other way around. Manage your risks, especially financially, and don't let yourself get taken over by the professionals involved in the project.”

4.3.6. Key Drivers & Motivations

When asked to summarize the key drivers and motivations for pursuing redevelopment of their site, the interviewees highlighted three principal drivers. The first driver is to restore and protect their heritage building, “and so with that comes both the beauty and the constraints of a heritage building and the enormous costs to upgrade and

seismically upgrade a building.” The upgrades required to make a large stone church building more seismically-resistant are extensive and very costly. When describing what was required, the interviewees explained, “you’re basically putting in a steel frame inside and essentially hiding it. In order to support the rock walls, which by nature are very fragile and it’s like a pile of rubble in an earthquake, so you have to hold all of that together with steel structures, all while maintaining the heritage, both exterior and interior. It’s very complex. Essentially the entire interior has to come out and then you put in the frame with high-strength concrete and steel. So the interior shrinks by a few inches on each side, but it should be, in the end, almost invisible to the average person. And then the other piece is the roof - the rafters are wooden, and at this point we have, basically, a tar and gravel shingle roof and that’s not good in the long term. So we’re gonna put up a slate roof on top of that and a steel structure up there to tie things together at the top so that the walls don’t flop around.” The costs to undertake such a seismic upgrade are likely well beyond the existing financial means of most churches, including First Baptist, as these costs could easily run into the millions of dollars.

The second driver is grow their membership, and serve additional people through an expanded capacity of their community services in purpose-built spaces (noting the existing limitations and challenges of their space constraints). Regarding the size of their membership, Fred and Steve noted that “contrary to popular public opinion, some churches are not dying, and we have full intent and we will grow again. I’m fully confident of that. During this time we’ve had some decline, however, we will grow again.” Their desire for expansion (of membership and range of services) is inhibited by physical space constraints, describing their ancillary space “like a rabbit’s warren – it’s incredibly constrained and that has been a big problem for us.”

The third driver shared was a continuing goal to provide affordable housing, and help “build community” – “the church really feels strongly about housing and helping marginalized people. And therefore, our rental building, modest though it is in my view, and I wish it was way bigger, we hope to truly apply in a beneficial way to the city. We hope to be more than just a landlord. We actually want to build a community of people together.”

It was recognized that the cost implications for the above-noted drivers are significant, and beyond the means of First Baptist’s current financial abilities, and so

providing a significant amount of strata development would be needed to fund all of this. It was noted again the congregation's desire to be welcoming and inviting to those who don't typically attend church services, so this project is also an outreach effort to the community.

4.3.7. City Process

Similar to other congregation representatives interviewed in this research study, the interviewees expressed frustration with City processes, especially noting the limitations of existing planning policy and urban design considerations imposed by the City. They also highlighted the slow timelines for review and receiving feedback, ("don't underestimate how long it's going to take, make sure you have the determination and resources to complete your goals"), and how differing priorities between City staff and the church representatives lead to compromise with some aspects of project development, "don't underestimate the influences that the City can have on your best laid plans."

4.3.8. Proposed Housing

The residential portion of the project contains two key components – the condominium housing and the social housing. The first, and much larger, is the condominium tenure, which will consist of approximately 331 market-rate units, to be owned and sold by the developer, Westbank. These will be constructed in a 57-storey building, which is the maximum height allowed by West End Community Plan (which provides the rezoning planning policy for this site), and will include 57% family housing (two or more bedrooms.)

The proposed social housing will be built in a separate, adjacent seven-storey building, and will contain 61 units owned by the church (and later maintained by a property management company). Of these 61 units, 41 will be rented to households with incomes below housing income limits at rents no more than 30% of household income. This affordability is secured through a housing covenant. The remaining 20 units will be rented at market rate, or whichever rate the church decides/is able to offer once the units are completed. As for potential future tenants, they have not yet been chosen, but the social housing units will likely appeal to seniors (64% of them are studio or one-bedroom

units). The interviewees stated that these units may also be targeted to church staff, and new immigrants and refugees.

4.3.9. New/Expanded Ancillary Uses

All of the existing uses listed above will return in the new project, with a focus to expand them where possible, including an expanded counselling centre, kitchen/dining facilities for homeless population, expanded church administrative space, a 37-space childcare facility (to be owned by the church), galleria/event space that will connect the existing church with the new church ancillary spaces, an expanded gym/recreation facility, a café, a fully-restored Pinder Hall for larger events such as seminars, concerts, weddings, and memorial services, and improved acoustics, equipment, etc. for performances in the sanctuary.

When considering how best to accommodate and facilitate the above-noted services and facility improvements, the interviewees noted an interest in designing the ancillary space to maximize flexibility, so that they can host/serve multiple activities and users throughout different days and times. Ultimately, their desire for the new home is to be able to “meet the material, physical, and spiritual needs” of the city, and offer “cradle to grave” services for the community.

4.3.10. Summary

First Baptist Church is, by far, the largest of the church redevelopment projects currently active in Vancouver. The enormous scale of their project is a result of both their willingness to ‘dream big’ for how they can serve both their members and the community at large, but their development opportunities were primarily driven by location-specific planning policies (i.e. the West End Community Plan paved the way for allowing the City to consider significant increases in height and density on their block). Their project includes a 57-storey tower of strata (condominium) housing, reiterating that in the absence of government funding, it is market housing that pays for the other improvements and benefits in these redevelopment projects. Including a significant amount of market housing allowed First Baptist to support a laundry list of benefits, including extensive (and expensive) seismic upgrades to their heritage church, a complete re-build of their ancillary spaces (allowing for an expansion of their existing

community-oriented services), and the provision of non-market housing, which the church will maintain ownership of.

The interviewees were very deliberate in the messaging of their key drivers and motivations for pursuing redevelopment, which was to restore and protect their heritage building, grow their membership and serve additional people through expanded ancillary space and programming, and provide affordable non-market housing as an additional benefit for the community. Like other congregations in Vancouver, First Baptist recognized that they had valuable assets (a large lot in a central, downtown location) to be leveraged, to execute their vision of an expanded role in both the immediate neighbourhood, and within Vancouver's social fabric. The motivations for First Baptist's congregation align closely with the experiences of other congregations noted in Theme #2 (intentional shift) in the Literature Review – a strong desire to redefine their ways of relevancy in a shifting society, and continue to offer services and spaces that meet the needs of their communities, focusing on the homeless and marginalized. As with other congregations undergoing similar projects, First Baptist's representatives viewed their future non-market housing as an additional benefit they could offer the city, and an extension of their mission to do 'good will.'

4.4. Case #4: Pacific Spirit United Church

Pacific Spirit United Church, formerly known as Ryerson-Dunbar United Church, is located at 2165-2195 and 2205-2291 West 45th Avenue, in Vancouver's Kerrisdale neighbourhood. Their site is divided by Yew Street, with the 'west site' containing the existing church and the proposed social housing and replacement Activity Centre, and the 'east site' containing the existing Activity Centre and houses, proposed to be developed into a mid-rise and townhouse development (see Figure 9). Their developer partner was Wall Financial (until they backed out of the project), leaving their current project status 'on hold'. The interview took place on July 4, 2019 with Gordon Esau, Head of Pacific Spirit United's Property Development Committee.

Figure 10. Pacific Spirit United Church Context Map



Source: (Rezoning Application, 2165-2195 and 2205-2291 West 45th Avenue, n.d.)

The place of worship redevelopment project for Pacific Spirit includes an eight-storey building with townhouses, and four-storey stacked townhouses, with a total of 40 strata (condominium) units (to be sold by developer), located on the 'east site', a five-storey building with 32 social housing units (to be owned by the church), a seismic upgrade, restoration and heritage designation of church building, and replacement and expansion of existing church ancillary space ('Activity Centre') used by both the church and community/cultural groups, including rehearsal and performance space, all to be located on the 'west site'. See Figures 10 and 11 below for renderings illustrating the proposed new buildings next to the existing heritage church.

Figure 11. Pacific Spirit United Church Buildings Perspective 1



Source: (*Rezoning Application, 2165-2195 and 2205-2291 West 45th Avenue, n.d.*)

Figure 12. Pacific Spirit United Church Buildings Perspective 2



Source: (*Rezoning Application, 2165-2195 and 2205-2291 West 45th Avenue, n.d.*)

4.4.1. Existing Heritage Building & Adjacent Properties

The current Neo-Gothic stone church on site was built in 1928, and it replaced a previous wooden structure. The church is a neighbourhood landmark with notable stained glass windows, and known for its role as an active venue for musical and cultural activities. The building has an 'A' listed heritage designation. Multiple additions were made over the years, including an 'Activity Centre' built in the 1950s across the street from the church, which houses most of their ancillary services. The church also acquired neighbouring properties along their block over time, comprising three single family homes which are currently being rented out to tenants.

4.4.2. Amalgamation with Dunbar

Ryerson United and Dunbar Heights United Churches amalgamated into the Ryerson site in 2016. They were relatively close to each other geographically, with long histories in their respective neighbourhoods. United Churches, historically, were "neighbourhood churches", serving residents in the immediate area, during a time when people walked to church. Regarding the decision to amalgamate, as noted by Gordon, "this is a phenomena which is not uncommon among churches. With changing demographics, and changing trends in society, we combined with Dunbar which gave us one robust congregation as opposed to two. Both congregations had actually been remarkably stable, but there's more vitality out of having two, so we brought them together, and that's working well." Both congregations were viewed as having a lot of "commonality", and the Ryerson site was selected as the better long-term option of the two for amalgamation. Regarding the Dunbar site Gordon stated that "we still own that site. Ultimately the plan is to sell it at some point in time, and we're using both sites at this time. It does not have an A-listed heritage building on it, which makes it simpler. It's got a very nice church on it, but it doesn't come with an extensive piece of history." Gordon did not comment if there are any intentions to eventually redevelop the Dunbar site in the future, but the sale of this property could be considered by the amalgamated congregation to help with financially supporting the spaces and programs of the Ryerson site, or it may be a candidate for a redevelopment project of its own.

4.4.3. Existing Ancillary Services

Pacific Spirit United has a wide range of ancillary spaces and services, but they are best known for their performance space in the main sanctuary which is renowned in BC for its excellent acoustics, and is used actively by local choirs, musicians, and touring groups. They also rent their spaces out, at reduced rates, to support community cultural groups – “it’s part of the DNA of the church.” Additional uses and activities offered by Pacific Spirit United include space in the Activity Centre that is used both for church functions (weddings, funerals, etc.) but also for gathering space for community and cultural groups, such as Cubs, Scouts, and Alcoholics Anonymous, rented out at highly reduced rates. The church also provides support for refugee families and funding for First United Church in the Downtown Eastside and its programs, in addition to support for international aid-related programs. A preschool is also located on their site.

4.4.4. Physical Constraints

Like other places of worship researched in this study, Pacific Spirit United’s congregation is experiencing challenges related to the physical constraints of their existing facility. They are faced with increasing maintenance costs for the aging heritage building, and are aware of the current seismic vulnerability of its stone building, noting that upgrades are cost-prohibitive. Pacific Spirit United’s Activity Centre is heavily used, and the building is reaching the end of its economic life.

4.4.5. Early Conversations

The church members recognized that the Activity Centre needed to be replaced, and funding to do so could come from the sale of their additional properties. A consultation process was launched with the full congregation, and received near unanimous support for pursuing a redevelopment project. Gordon noted that “the decision to proceed with the redevelopment came out of a consultation process with the full congregation, and it’s had near unanimous support right through the process. We have not had internal dissention over this plan. And one of the things that we discovered, the United Church looked at congregations that are thriving across the country, and Ryerson was profiled in that a number of years ago. And one of things they found with congregations that are thriving had in common, is that a lot of them were

engaged in some kind of project of this nature, that instead of creating dissention and difficulty, it tended to be a unifying factor.” The prospect of a renewed facility was seen to “unite the congregation together”, with Gordon adding that “even as difficult as it is, with the amount of volunteer time it requires, and capital resources, it’s still been positive, because it gives people a sense that they’re working together on something they can understand.”

While Gordon stated that there wasn’t any dissention within the congregation around how/if to redevelop Ryerson’s site, I would be surprised if there were no concerns or hesitations noted by at least some congregation members, as some other churches interviewed have shared. Perhaps this is because the current and future services and activities are not seen to conflict with each other (i.e. there isn’t a homeless shelter like there is with First Baptist’s project)? Given that this redevelopment project has now reached a roadblock with having to seek a new developer partner, it’s possible that the congregation will be less unified now on how best to resolve the situation.

This initial engagement led to the formation of the Property Development Committee, with members recruited by the lead minister. Members were identified from the existing congregation, and selected for their different experience and skill sets they could offer. As described by Gordon on how the Committee came together, “my joke is that the only way you get off the committee, which I’ve been on for nine and a half years, is to die. The committee members have stayed consistent and carefully selected. We have three very recently retired corporate lawyers, we have a VP of finance for a bank, we have a CPA finance type person, we have a community health nurse, we have a retired former senior international banker. The committee was carefully selected so that it came with the skillset that we needed, and I think the lead minister who recruited us also recruited people who would have the stomach to last in the process.”

It’s worth noting that Pacific Spirit United is located in Kerrisdale, which is one of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in Vancouver. Perhaps the large amount of ‘in-house’ talent available, with a range of members with professional backgrounds in law and finance, who are well-suited for leading redevelopment projects, is a reflection of the church’s location, resulting in many skilled, professional members available? Would a church in a less-affluent neighbourhood have as many of the same professions available to draw from? Either way, having access to such skill-sets would prove advantageous to

any church who is considering redevelopment, and is looking for keen and knowledgeable volunteers to help lead their congregation through the long and complex process of rezoning and development.

Gordon was keen to participate, having felt that he was “being called” to offer his services, (he is a lawyer). On what it means “to be called”, Gordon said “my understanding of what that means, in my own context, is that I felt this was important for the church, the community, and the City of Vancouver, and I should do it because it’s important and I’ve been asked to do it. It’s been a long, arduous job, but I feel strongly about it. You need that to last through.”

4.4.6. Seeking A Development Partner

In selecting a potential development partner, the Committee invited proposals from the development community. This process was organized by a lawyer from Dentons with who had previous experience coordinating public-private partnerships. At the conclusion of this, Wall Financial selected as the successful proponent.

4.4.7. Key Drivers & Motivations

When asked to identify the key drivers and motivations for pursuing a redevelopment project of their site, Gordon noted two principal drivers - the first being an interest in replacing the 1950s era Activity Centre with a new facility to house their ancillary services, and secondly, restoring and protecting the heritage building, noting that known issues included the building envelope, the need for a roof replacement, and the seismic vulnerability of the stone church would require extensive and costly upgrades – “we decided to pursue redevelopment basically because we needed to replace an aging Memorial Centre, which is our Activity Centre, and this was the way that made economic sense to do it. Restoring the heritage ‘A’ building was also a critical part of it – both needed to be done. The heritage restoration that the church needed to do was primarily dealing with envelope and replacing the roof. The City has added a very high level of earthquake proofing, which comes with considerable costs.” Gordon summarized their intentions by stating that “our desire is to continue everything we’ve been doing for decades, and add the social housing element to it, so we’ll ensure the church will continue to provide what it is to the city and the community – the

community/culture space, the worship space, and being able to hold weddings, funerals, baptisms, etc. in addition to worship, and we'll be able to continue all that, plus the other things we deliver, plus 32 units of social housing on top of that.”

Both motivating drivers come with significant costs associated with them. The market housing component of the proposed redevelopment is what is expected to provide the financial support for these significant improvements, in addition to the funds for the construction of the social housing units. Fortunately for Pacific Spirit United’s congregation, their location and land assembly over the years meant that they had significant land assets that could be leveraged to finance the redevelopment of their site. Gordon also recognizes that Pacific Spirit United’s congregation is not alone in this characteristic, noting that “for what’s driving churches and other non-profits to consider utilization of their under-utilized sites, churches in particular because of their long history occupy some tremendously strategic pieces of real estate, which properly used, can enhance the City of Vancouver.”

4.4.8. Proposed Church Improvements

The primary scope of future work with the church building is to complete significant seismic improvements to the vulnerable heritage stone building. As part of these efforts, the exterior of the church will receive heritage designation, while the interior will have its high-quality acoustics protected, with other spaces that will be renovated and modernized to make them more versatile/multi-purpose, and used in conjunction with the new Activity Centre. No change in size to the sanctuary or other worship spaces is planned.

4.4.9. Proposed Housing

The new residential space included in the redevelopment consists of two different tenure components – the market housing, and the social housing. The market component will provide 40 condominium units, which are to be owned and sold by the partner developer, (originally Wall Financial). They will occupy the additional lots across the street from the church building where the existing Activity Centre and houses stand now, and will include an eight-storey building, a four-storey building, and ground-oriented townhouses. 88% of the market units will include family housing (i.e. two- or three-

bedroom units). This new market housing, in addition to providing the funding to pay for the redevelopment project, will offer a secondary benefit of adding new housing choices (strata condominiums, townhouses) to the Kerrisdale neighbourhood, which is primarily single-family homes or rental apartment towers.

The social housing will be built adjacent the replacement Activity Centre, and will consist of 32 units owned by the church (but operated by a property/rental management company). All 32 units will be rented at below market rates, according to the following ratios: one third at shelter rates (the monthly amount provided by the Province of British Columbia for welfare and disability assistance for shelter); one third at HILs driven rates (Housing Income Limits as set by BC Housing, with rent set at 30% of gross household income), and; one third at DCL waiver rates (the maximum rent that can be charged for the housing units and still qualify for a Development Cost Levy waiver by the City of Vancouver. The waiver is offered for secured rental housing, and the rates are based on the average rents for all housing in Vancouver built since 2005, as determined by the CMHC each fall)

While not exclusive, the focus of the social housing will be for seniors, and so the units are mainly studios and one-bedrooms. When asked why seniors were the targeted demographic for the non-market units, Gordon commented that “the church just felt it was important because we’re in a part of our community, even with market housing, one of the focuses is age in the community, which has been an issue because there’s not sufficient space for that, and we think there’s been not a lot of focus on that by the City, but it was well-received. It’s a need that we perceive, and the demographics of the church is older, so it’s a need we can see and relate to.” Targetting seniors also provides opportunities for neighbourhood residents to downsize but remain in Kerrisdale (i.e. to age in place). Targetting seniors for their non-market housing is a common theme stated across all four case studies. Reflecting the comments in the interviews, this serves a perceived need in Vancouver to have more housing options appropriate for seniors in the city, and is a reflection of the demographics of many congregations’ memberships, so there is a benefit to the people who are enabling the redevelopment project by putting their sites forward, and there is also a benefit to the larger community.

4.4.10. New/Expanded Ancillary Uses

All the existing ancillary uses listed earlier will return in the new project, in the expanded replacement Activity Centre. To ensure affordability of these spaces is maintained for the many community groups that use the church's meeting spaces, access for these community/cultural groups will be secured through a covenant on the site. This ensures that access and affordable rates cannot be revoked or reduced in the future, thereby protecting the community-serving spaces for future users.

4.4.11. City Process

Gordon expressed frustration with multiple areas of City processes, noting he felt that some City staff were too focused on short-term concerns and issues. Pacific Spirit United's congregation wanted to approach the project with a focus on the long-term vision, which is also a different time scale than that of developers. Gordon commented that "the church is thinking in decades or centuries, which is fundamentally different, and as we work with the developers that becomes abundantly clear. As we work with the City, it's clear that for City staff that's something that some of them have to reach to understand. And so the dynamic of 'okay, let's see how many dollars we can grind out of the developer' doesn't fit as well when you work with a non-profit. The objective is 'how much can we accomplish.'"

As shared with other church projects, Gordon noted that City review processes are slow, and that staff turnover was significant during the project's rezoning timeline, which meant for shifting opinions and changing advice regarding the proposal under review. In addition, the Inclusion of social housing was at the request of the City, which affected the economic viability of the project.

4.4.12. Neighbourhood Opposition

This project experienced significant community opposition during the rezoning stage. Many residents expressed support for the church, and for its existing uses and for protecting the heritage building, but did not support the proposed means of achieving that. Concerns noted in the public consultation summary in the Council Report for this rezoning application include concerns about the proposed height of the new building

being out of scale for the neighbourhood character, and parking impacts and increased traffic on a street that is also a designated bike route. The existing church already has significant parking impacts on the neighbourhood, with visitors for worship service and special musical, cultural, and other performance events. As Gordon noted in the interview, “we’ve put considerable pressure on our neighbours, because the church was built in the era before, when people walked to church, and before we delivered so many cars on a Sunday or for a choir concert or a lecture or whoever is playing there, and our neighbours have been incredibly understanding.” Underground parking will be provided through this project, which the church hopes will help alleviate these concerns.

4.4.13. Developer Withdrew

Wall Financial, their development partner, withdrew from the project after the rezoning application received Council approval, and so the project has not yet proceeded to the Development Permit stage. Reiterating the frustrations that come from the extended timelines needed for place of worship redevelopment projects to receive approval, Gordon noted “...it requires a tremendous amount of time and money, and it’s illustrated to me one of the drivers of why we have housing issues in the City of Vancouver, because the sheer cost of moving forward with development at this particular period in time is tremendous, and the timelines are ferociously long. Fortunately, the church thinks in long-term planning, but it doesn’t easily allow a church to adjust to changes in the market. So, if the market is always rising, you never have to think about this, but if the market falls... You have to realize you’re in it for the long term and you need strong experts and lots of time and resources in order to accomplish it.”

Gordon did not elaborate on the reasons for the developer deciding to withdraw, but likely it is because the developer no longer considered the project to be profitable enough/economically viable for them to continue forward, due to changes in the real estate market. The church will now need to find a new partner, and may request revisions to the design that was approved to help improve the project’s viability.

4.4.14. Summary

Pacific Spirit is another example of a congregation with a vision for redeveloping and a clear understanding for the benefits it could bring them and the larger community,

but experienced significant challenges along the way. In this case, the project experienced substantial community opposition during the rezoning process, focused mainly on a change/loss in neighbourhood character due to the proposed scale of the new buildings, and potential local traffic and parking impacts. Following rezoning approval, the private developer partner withdrew from the project, leaving the redevelopment proposal in limbo, and Pacific Spirit United's congregation in an awkward position of having to seek out a new developer. While the interviewee was reluctant to share details of the rationale behind the developer's decision, a likely reason is that the project was no longer seen to be economically viable, possibly due to a shift in the local housing market, thereby removing the profitability of the market housing necessary to support the other components of the project. The fate of Pacific Spirit United congregation's redevelopment dreams remains to be seen at present time.

Pacific Spirit United's motivations, like the other congregations interviewed for this research project, are a combination of reasons and factors in their decision-making, aligning with both Theme #1 (self-survival) and #2 (intentional shift) in the Literature Review. The interviewee did note their declining membership over time, and recognized the potential to course-correct from potential closure by pursuing amalgamation with another neighbourhood congregation, and by exploring a redevelopment scheme that would provide financial support in a unified facility. In addition, by leveraging their property assets they had assembled historically for the development and sale of market housing, Pacific Spirit United's congregation was able to restore and protect their heritage building, which includes performance space recognized for its excellent acoustics (a value to both their members and outside performers/audiences), replace their aging ancillary space so they can continue (and expand) their community-serving programs and highly-used meeting spaces for community groups, and add non-market housing into their portfolio of services they can offer Vancouver. As with other congregations that have identified their needs and goals, Pacific Spirit United's recognized that there would be substantial costs for protecting the heritage church and constructing the new Activity Centre and social housing units, and that it is the sale of market housing that makes these goals possible, and provides financial sustainability for the congregation to continue forward.

Chapter 5. Key Themes & Discussion

This chapter uses the details of the case studies to develop a list of themes describing the motivations for why the four congregations in this research project are pursuing redevelopment of their place of worship sites. The chapter is split into two sections, beginning with Primary Motivations which outlines the principal forces that shape the decision-making of congregations considering their redevelopment options. These Primary Motivations draw upon the Literature Review in Chapter 2 to help understand how the rationale and factors with the four Vancouver case studies align with the experiences of congregations elsewhere, to determine areas of convergence and divergence between them.

Additional Themes & Discussion explores other secondary motivations and details, outlining commonalities with the experiences of congregations pursuing redevelopment, the opportunities and challenges that lie therein, and key messages that emerged from analysis of the qualitative data sourced through the interviews. These additional discussion points outline unique conditions of the individual experiences of each congregation, and note where the four Vancouver cases offer new insight into the larger 'knowledge universe' of place of worship redevelopment.

5.1. Primary Motivations

5.1.1. Heritage Buildings

As highlighted in the interviews, the presence of a heritage structure presents both a 'burden' and an 'asset' to a congregation, and has been stated by the congregation representatives as a primary motivator for considering redevelopment. As these buildings age, the need for more significant maintenance and repairs, or in some cases extensive heritage restoration and preservation efforts, increases over time. The scale of these projects and their associated costs can be a significant financial burden, compounded if there is a shrinking congregation to pay for these expenses. This concern of impending financial responsibilities for maintaining their assets was shared across all three congregations interviewed that had a heritage building – Knox United, Pacific Spirit United, and First Baptist – who all have churches constructed 72, 92, and 109 years ago, respectively. This motivation aligns with the experiences of

congregations in many other urban contexts, as noted in Research Theme #1 in the Literature Review (Frolick, 2016; Mian, 2008; Williamson, 2015).

Due to their recognized value as heritage assets, the City of Vancouver has often identified their significance long before redevelopment was proposed, and placed them on the Heritage Register, thereby discouraging their demolition, as in the case of First Baptist, Pacific Spirit United, and Knox United. However, formal heritage designation and restoration of the building is subsequently required by the City during the rezoning process through a Heritage Revitalization Agreement, as part of the conditions of approving their rezoning application. This is a legal agreement secured through rezoning by-law enactment that formalizes the rehabilitation, long-term protection, maintenance, and conservation of the heritage building, which must be completed prior to the occupancy of the new buildings being proposed. This protection of the heritage building in perpetuity therefore places limitations on what can be built on their properties, (i.e. the congregations are prohibited from demolishing the church and building new development on top, thereby limiting where new development can be constructed on their site), and prompts costly efforts to restore key heritage features of the building. In addition, as noted in the Literature Review (Amayu, 2014; Garstka, 2012; Hackworth & Gullikson, 2013; Javed, 2012; Lynch, 2013) heritage assets also have intrinsic value as neighbourhood landmarks and contribute to a community's sense of place, both for those in the faith community, and for those who may not attend religious services or participate in other activities at that place of worship, but appreciate its architectural, cultural, and heritage value. As noted by the authors above, this personal attachment by the larger community also adds additional pressure on a congregation to retain their heritage buildings.

An additional challenge with owning a heritage building is that these historical structures were built during a time when there was limited knowledge of Vancouver's high risk of earthquakes, and do not meet contemporary seismic building code. In the cases of both First Baptist and Pacific Spirit United, the churches are large stone structures, which are particularly vulnerable to collapse during an earthquake. This presents both a concern for safety (threat of loss of life if the church collapses), and very significant costs to rehabilitate the buildings to prevent this, likely beyond the existing financial means of the congregation. (Knox United also has a heritage asset, but as it is a wood-framed structure, its building materials would be more flexible and resilient in an

earthquake, when compared with stone. Seismic upgrading of the church building was not stated as a motivator for them.)

In addition to the heritage church building, several of the congregations also have ancillary structures on site that house additional activities and services, such as church offices, meeting spaces, gymnasiums, classrooms, childcare, and homeless services. Many of these buildings, while younger than the church buildings, were also not built with seismic resiliency in mind, and are therefore vulnerable to earthquakes, as in the case of Pacific Spirit United, Knox United, and First Baptist. The need for expensive upgrades or replacement of these ancillary structures is cited as an additional motivator for congregations to consider redevelopment, to pay for these significant costs.

Heritage buildings, however, may also present an opportunity for congregations to redevelop. For sites where there are limited City policy opportunities to consider significant change through rezoning, the protection and restoration of a heritage building may provide a 'policy window' for considering proposals for larger scale redevelopment than what would normally be permitted at their location under existing zoning. An example of this is with Knox United and Pacific Spirit, which are located in residential neighbourhoods (Dunbar, Kerrisdale) that are primarily low-density single-family houses. In their rezoning applications they were able to leverage heritage policies at the City of Vancouver that incentivize heritage protection by allowing for additional height and density on site, to compensate for the associated costs (*Rezoning Application, 2165-2195 and 2205-2291 West 45th Avenue, n.d.*; *Rezoning Application, 3205-3221 West 41st Avenue and 5590 Balaclava Street, n.d.*). Without this heritage asset, their ability to receive approval for the construction of mid-rise residential buildings would have been much less likely. Citing heritage building retention and upgrades to churches that serve as neighbourhood landmarks may also help with minimizing the amount of public opposition to these projects, (i.e. most people would support protecting a beautiful old church), making them potentially more tenable to those with concerns around change in their communities.

Conversely, the lack of a heritage building present on site removes many of the previously-mentioned challenges around the City requiring building retention and expensive upgrades, as was the case with Central Presbyterian, whose church was built in 1976 and was deemed to not have heritage value. By not requiring the retention of

their existing building, Central Presbyterian was free to clear their site and construct a new building. This allowed the church to use their entire lot to build a large tower and podium structure, and the opportunity to create a new, improved worship space within the podium of the new structure. Reverend Smith indicated that their previous church was a cinder-block structure that was under-sized for their uses, and not a particularly attractive building, so there was no sentimental pressure by their own members, or the surrounding neighbourhood, to preserve their existing building.

The presence of a heritage building that requires long-term retention, maintenance upgrades, and restoration was stated as a motivator in three of the four case studies researched. However, in conversation with the congregation representatives, and in review of the Council Reports associated with each of the redevelopment projects, in truth these heritage building-related actions are requirements by the City, as part of conditions for approval for their rezoning applications, and not optional. In two of the cases, extensive (and expensive) seismic upgrades to stone church buildings were also required. While the church congregations may have had some knowledge of this potential risk to their churches from earthquakes, and would have also likely have recognized and appreciated the inherent value of their heritage asset prior to pursuing these projects, it might be more accurate to say that this is an external force (from the City) that the churches have accepted and adopted as one of their own primary motivations. The congregations may not have initiated the projects based on recognizing the risk and benefit to the public of these old buildings, but it would be hard for them to disagree with City directions that required their retention and protection. Also, once the potential risk was brought to their attention, church congregations would naturally want to minimize the threat of their buildings collapsing on them in the event of a major earthquake, and would recognize that redevelopment of the site would provide the financial means to pay for this (as noted with First Baptist and Pacific Spirit United). Ultimately, this may have been an externality that was quickly adopted and accepted by the congregations as a key motivator for them to pursue redevelopment of their sites.

5.1.2. Functional Constraints

The second primary motivator shared across all four interviews was the sentiment of being hindered or limited by the size and condition of their existing ancillary

facilities, and the recognition that redevelopment would provide an opportunity to improve their spaces, and expand the range and types of services they could offer the larger community.

Besides the principal structures of their worship spaces (i.e. the original church building itself), three of the four churches (Knox United, Pacific Spirit United, First Baptist), at different points in time, constructed additions to the church buildings, or additional free-standing structures on the site, to house ancillary services (Central Presbyterian's 1976 building already included both worship and some additional ancillary space). This includes space for congregation needs, such as office space and meeting rooms for church staff, or gathering spaces for congregation members for after-worship services, weddings, funerals, baptisms, etc. Also included are services and spaces that serve the larger community (some of whom may also be members of their faith community), including classrooms/ESL services, meeting spaces for community-serving groups (such as Boy Scouts, Alcoholics Anonymous, etc.), rehearsal and performance space for live music, gymnasiums for recreational programming, childcare facilities, and a range of services for the needy, such as kitchen and dining facilities, shelter, and programming space for services geared towards the homeless/needy. A mix of these services was already existing (in various combinations, as noted in the Cases above) at all four of the Vancouver place of worship projects researched in this study. Two of the case studies (First Baptist and Pacific Spirit United) also had housing on their sites as part of adjacent properties the congregations owned, rented out at below-market rates.

The congregation representatives for all four churches expressed a desire to be able to serve a greater number of people through their services (i.e. offer improved/expanded versions of their existing services), and the desire to provide new programming, services, and spaces they did not currently offer. Many of them stated that their existing ancillary spaces were already at capacity or over-crowded, or that their services were operated out of spaces that were not originally designed for that use (e.g. First Baptist's Pinder Hall was divided in half at one point in time to include space for a gymnasium for children attending the church, and for community recreational programming, but it also was used as a homeless shelter during colder months). The interviewees also noted that while they had the demand and a desire to improve/expand these services, they did not have the financial means to do so. Redeveloping their sites was widely recognized as an opportunity to provide the funding (through sale of a portion

of their land, through a payment agreement with the developer partner, or through a stream of income from on-site housing), to construct expanded/new purpose-built facilities for their ancillary activities, and provide a funding source for the operation of these services, with contingency funds for future needs.

A common theme shared across the congregation representatives interviewed was a passionate view that the ancillary services they offered are an extension of their mission – to serve those in need, and to be positive influences in their communities. Interviews with the congregation representatives revealed how they felt this desire ‘to serve’ was at the core of their Christian faith. The services they offered had been in place for decades, and they saw the value to the community in continuing – and ideally expanding – this role.

Also commonly stated was a strong desire to be adaptable to changes in society, and to be able to respond to shifting needs in the future. While all the congregation representatives noted that their worship service attendance had declined over time, but that they felt confident this trend would reverse in the future, they also saw their ancillary services as a means to continue and expand their relevance in contemporary society in new ways. Without reducing the services they offer their congregation members and faith community, redevelopment could allow them to expand their scope of who – and how – they serve those in need.

All four projects include housing as part of their redevelopment, with three of them (Central Presbyterian, First Baptist, and Pacific Spirit United) also including non-market housing. These congregations saw providing more affordable housing tenures than what market housing alone can offer as an extension of their mission, and a new way to serve their communities. More details about the proposed number of units, tenures, rents/charges, and targeted tenants are noted in the Cases above (Chapter 4), and in the Housing theme later in this chapter.

Even though providing these ancillary spaces and services, and the inclusion of non-market housing, comes at a significant cost to the congregation, many of them made a point to state that they chose a purposeful position of ‘mission over profit’. The congregations recognized that among their options was the choice to simply sell their lands, situated in prime real estate with very high value, take the profits from that sale,

and relocate the church to cheaper land elsewhere. Or, they could have pursued maximizing the amount of strata housing development on their sites, which would have resulted in the greatest opportunity for revenue generation (for the congregation and for the developer). Instead, they deliberately opted to pursue opportunities to extend their mission through expanding their ancillary services, and by providing more affordable housing than what the market can provide, as part of their redevelopment projects. This desire to expand their community roles to being more than 'just a place of worship' that offers religious services on Sundays, but instead to also contribute to their respective communities by offering spaces and services for all residents, and especially targeting those who need assistance the most, aligns with research on congregations in other urban contexts, as noted in Research Theme #2 in the Literature Review (Baker, 2007; Diduch, 2018; Krause, 2014; Mair, 2014; Sherlock, 2013; Smith, 2004).

5.2. Additional Themes & Discussion

5.2.1. Early Planning Challenges

Across the four place of worship projects and congregations were some common challenges that they all indicated they had experienced at their early planning stages of their proposals. Prior to submission of a formal rezoning application, the congregations need to develop a proposal for their redevelopment. This requires knowledge resources and expertise in fields (architecture, building development, construction, interior design, financing, legal matters, etc.) that may not be readily available 'in-house' (i.e. within their own congregation members' or leadership team's skill sets.) The congregation members may have already developed a concept of what type of project they would like to pursue through their own internal engagement activities, but turning ideas and preliminary concepts into realistic, achievable developments – and navigating the long and challenging process to accomplish this – requires guidance and trust in services/individuals outside of their worship community. Having to seek out the advice of professionals in the development industry, and then to put the future of their sites in the hands of such 'outsiders', can be well beyond the place of comfort for the congregation members, and requires a bit of a 'leap of faith'.

Acquiring access to these aforementioned professional services – and paying for them – is often a significant financial barrier at the initial onset of planning. Consultant

and developer/architect fees easily run into the tens of thousands, just for developing a preliminary design. As noted above, many congregations are struggling to take care of their existing facilities, and do not have the cash reserves to invest in these services. For many a congregation, this initial barrier could be insurmountable enough that a preliminary concept dreamt up by their members may never see the light of day. If the congregation does not already have funds in place (i.e. their own 'seed money'), then securing funds from Presbytery, or accessing grants from various levels of government (such as CMHC), are two possible means of securing funding for this initial cost.

Once a proposal begins to come together, and the costs associated with providing certain services and amenities, combined with the income expectations of the development, become more apparent, the realities of financial viability begin to reveal themselves. The congregation representatives interviewed shared that there was no shortage of interests and desires by their respective members to provide a generous range of ancillary services and an abundance of non-market housing, however, the financial limitations of the project forced them to identify their priorities of what services, spaces, housing tenures, and number of units they could offer. This required having challenging internal conversations among their members to consider what options they felt best aligned with their mission and had the most value/positive impact to their congregation and their communities, and make deliberate decisions on selecting what uses and spaces to prioritize.

The interviewees stated that, overall, the idea-generating and concept-developing stage was a positive experience for those involved, and that ultimately the process of pursuing redevelopment projects 'brought the congregation together.' Conflict was only briefly mentioned by one of the churches (First Baptist), but it's likely that there were more challenging deliberations and a diversity of opinions and levels of support (or lack thereof) across the congregations' memberships than what was presented. With all four projects, the churches are past the initial planning and rezoning approval stages, which itself is a long and complex process. Perhaps by already being 'over this mountain', in hindsight they are viewing the early stages in a positive light. Any congregation member who was in opposition to the project, or had concerns about whether it was in the best interest of the church, may not feel comfortable presenting themselves, certainly to an outsider like me conducting research. Of the four cases, only Central Presbyterian's project is completed. Perhaps, because of having reached this

stage, with the new worship space, rental units, and ancillary spaces fully developed and occupied, any congregation members who may have noted concern at the beginning have since been assuaged. It's also possible that anyone in opposition has left the congregation.

5.2.2. Location Opportunities

As noted across other urban contexts in Literature Theme #1, as some of the oldest buildings/land owners in their cities, places of worship often sit on highly valuable real estate that has increased in worth significantly over time. Many of these are in central locations, such as downtown or in inner city neighbourhoods that have become high density over time, (as in the case of First Baptist and Central Presbyterian, which are both in the West End on Vancouver's downtown peninsula). However, even congregations with sites in more 'suburban' or low-density locations have witnessed substantial growth in the value of their land holdings, such is the case for Knox United and Pacific Spirit United, which are both located in wealthy neighbourhoods on Vancouver's expensive west-side (Dunbar and Kerrisdale). Overall, these locations in Vancouver have presented an incredible and unique opportunity for the congregations to leverage that high value to their advantage through redevelopment, to carve out new sustainable futures for the churches, and to offer more services and spaces for the community. "Land rich, cash poor" is an apt phrase commonly used to describe many of their situations, and this has proven to be particularly accurate in Vancouver, which, as noted in the Context section earlier in this thesis, has seen skyrocketing property values in recent years.

Because the congregations have held such strategic locations for extended periods of time, it has also given them a historical advantage to purchase additional property at times when land values were lower. The ability to have been able to assemble land in the past further maximizes their opportunities to leverage these properties in the present. The larger the land assembly owned by the congregation, generally, the more that can be developed on it. This is also advantageous if the congregations are owners of a heritage asset (i.e. the church building) – having additional land in their ownership means that they can both retain their heritage building, and still have the physical space to construct housing in new buildings adjacent the church. The ability to create a land assembly with adjacent properties proved to be an

advantage for both First Baptist and Pacific Spirit United in Vancouver. In each case the market and non-market housing proposed will be built on the additional properties the churches had acquired over time, providing the funding to retain their respective heritage assets, and plenty of space to build the housing and expanded ancillary spaces.

Tying in to the above is noting that many congregations, even without large land assemblies in their ownership, have existing surface parking lots that can be developed on. As with the land assemblies above, these parking lots were built at a time when land was at less of a premium than today. By being free of obstructions that inhibit development elsewhere (i.e. no heritage building, additional structures, or trees to remove), they provide physical space that is easier to develop on. Both Knox United and First Baptist are in possession of surface parking lots, and propose utilizing them for their new development projects.

5.2.3. City Policies

The ability of the four congregations in this research study to maximize development on their sites was ultimately shaped by the existing City of Vancouver policies around planning, housing, and heritage that apply to their specific locations. This was particularly acute in the case of First Baptist, where the site was within the planning scope of the West End Community Plan ('WECP'). The WECP, approved in 2013, outlines a blueprint for the future of the West End and set out to embrace population and economic growth, while maintaining and enhancing the quality of community life. The WECP identified locations where growth in the neighbourhood was anticipated and desirable, and provided directions around maximum height and density to shape such growth. For First Baptist, their site happened to be located within the 'Burrard Corridor' sub-area of the WECP, which was an area within the West End where significant population growth was anticipated. Here, towers up to 550 ft. could be considered, subject to view cone restrictions, shadowing, and other urban design considerations. This is some of the tallest (potential) heights to be found in Vancouver, and presented an incredible opportunity for First Baptist to redevelop with significant height and density, thereby maximizing the amount of housing (market and non-market) on site, and pay for substantial seismic rehabilitation of the heritage building, and expand their community-serving spaces.

As for Central Presbyterian, the creation of the WECP was underway, but not yet completed/approved, when their proposal came forth. Typically, when a Community Plan is still under development, there is an interim rezoning policy put into place that prohibits rezoning activity until the Community Plan is completed. Exceptions can be made, however, for proposals that address important citywide priorities, including those with the provision of social or supportive housing. Central Presbyterian's non-market housing component, supported by market rental housing, met this definition, and was therefore allowed to proceed. The proposed built form, with a tower at 22 storeys (207 ft.) atop an eight-storey podium, was deemed to be supportable by staff, as it acted as a neighbourhood transition between the prominent mass of St. Paul's Hospital to the east, down to the lower scaled residential area to the west. The West End also has many high-rise residential buildings of similar height. Additional support through the City's Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2012-2021 was also used to allow for the consideration of both Central Presbyterian and First Baptist's rezoning applications, as both projects provided non-market housing.

Knox United and Pacific Spirit did not have the same planning policy opportunities to be considered for substantial increases in height and density, as First Baptist and Central Presbyterian did. Directions around land use and change for their sites came from the Dunbar Community Vision and Arbutus Ridge/Kerrisdale/Shaugnessy Community Vision, respectively, which both support heritage retention and the provision of seniors housing in their neighbourhoods, without providing site-specific maximum height or density levels that can be considered to achieve these goals. In addition, a combination of housing and heritage policies (Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2012-2021 and Heritage Policies and Guidelines) were also applied to consider their rezoning applications. Due to the single-family home character of both Dunbar and Kerrisdale, and neighbourhood sensitivities around preserving this, substantial increases in height and density would not be supported here like they could be in the West End.

The specific location of each place of worship proved to be both an opportunity and a limitation, depending on whether they were sited in areas with planning policies that allowed for substantial increases in height and density, such as the West End, or ones that prioritized preserving existing character, such as Dunbar and Kerrisdale. It is important to note that these over-arching planning policies were based on location and

neighbourhood character, not on the existing uses of sites. The places of worship affected by these policies simply happened to already exist at these locations – the planning policy was not influenced by their place of worship use. The impact and ability of these City of Vancouver planning policies to either enable and support, or minimize and prohibit, increases in height and density in a neighbourhood has been identified as an area worth further research. How policy could be adapted to the specific needs and opportunities for places of worship and their respective congregations in Vancouver is beyond the scope of this thesis, but is also highlighted as an area for further development and exploration in Chapter 6.

5.2.4. Housing

As noted above in the Cases, and in the discussions around Primary Motivations, providing housing as part of their redevelopment is both a means of survival of the congregations, and an extension of their mission by providing a service to help their communities (the ‘service’ being non-market housing). All four of the congregations interviewed have market housing as a component of their projects, and three of them (Central Presbyterian, First Baptist, and Pacific Spirit United) also include non-market housing. Knox United’s housing has been designed for, and will be marketed to, seniors, but its tenure is not exclusive to that demographic, and the housing will be sold at market rates. Knox United congregation representative expressed some disappointment in this, as they had initially hoped to be able to provide a more affordable form of housing as part of their project.

As described in the Cases (Chapter 4), the non-market housing in these projects consists of rents or housing charges at different rates, to assist with improving affordability while also keeping the project viable. With Central Presbyterian, First Baptist, and Pacific Spirit United, the non-market housing units are owned by the congregation (‘in trust’ for the denomination/governing religious institution that they are a part of), but will be operated by a housing management company, as determined by the church authorities. Their non-market tenure is secured on title through a housing covenant, as part of receiving approval by City Council for their rezoning application.

With the congregation representatives for the four churches, one of the common criticisms received is the amount of strata housing that is being built on their sites – a

much larger ratio of the overall number of units being provided with each project than perhaps what many (including some of the congregations) would prefer. However, an important reminder is that it is the provision of strata housing, to be sold at market rates, that provides the financial income for these projects to be viable. With high costs associated with the other project components (heritage restoration, expansion of ancillary spaces and community-oriented services, and provision of non-market housing), a critical amount of strata housing is required to be built and sold, to 'make the numbers work' for the entire project.

With all four place of worship projects researched, seniors are a targeted demographic for future residency in the housing units. A focus on providing non-market housing for seniors is both a reflection of needs within the larger Vancouver community, and their own congregation members, who tend to be older in age. Offering an affordable place for their senior members to live in was identified by the congregation representatives as a source of pride, and something that was 'fair' since it was the congregation and its decision to pursue redevelopment that enabled these housing units to come into existence, so therefore the benefits of them should first be offered to those within their own faith community.

5.2.5. Community Serving Spaces

As highlighted above in the Cases (Chapter 4), a range of ancillary spaces exists at all four places of worship, both in their original arrangements as they exist today, and with improved/expanded spaces and services in their redevelopment proposals. The renting of their spaces at often below-market rates provides a highly valuable resource to local community groups, such as Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, etc. who have limited financial means to pay for meeting space. Local congregations and their sites in Vancouver therefore play a key role in supporting the sustainability of these organizations, clubs, and groups that serve the larger community in a multitude of ways. All the congregation representatives interviewed recognized and emphasized the importance of being able to offer this, and were interested in providing improved or expanded spaces through their redevelopment plans. The continued provision of these spaces to these groups can be secured through the rezoning process via a 'Community Use Agreement', which is a legal agreement that ensures access by cultural and community non-profit users in the

shared amenity spaces, with the specific users and number of days and hours outlined in the agreement, as was the case with Pacific Spirit United.

Three of the four places of worship (Knox United, First Baptist, and Pacific Spirit United), in their existing heritage buildings, are also recognized for providing high-quality and affordable performance and rehearsal spaces for local and travelling musicians, choirs, bands, and other arts and cultural performances. These redevelopment projects provide an opportunity to protect and secure the heritage sanctuaries of the older churches, often known for having excellent acoustic spaces, and offer improvements to these spaces (electrical, lighting, seating, universal accessibility, etc.) to make them more functional and versatile for a wide variety of users. In the case of Central Presbyterian, their new worship space and sanctuary as built in the podium of the project includes built-in features such as flexible seating, modern equipment for music and vocal projection, and space to add a raised stage, resulting in them also becoming a new local option for musicians and cultural groups looking for a space to rehearse and perform.

5.2.6. Church Authorities

Different places of worship have their own relationships with their governing authorities based on the hierarchical structures of their respective religious denominations. In some cases, congregations are more independent in their abilities to propose redevelopment on the lands that they are 'in trust' of, and only need tacit approval, whereas others are required to follow more formalized processes. In some cases, there is reluctance to offer support to the congregations for such redevelopment proposals, as with Knox United, which needed to have multiple conversations with church authorities before being granted permission. All four of the congregation representatives indicated that very limited, or no financial support, was provided by Church Presbytery or Senate. Perhaps this is characteristic of the denominations of the churches interviewed (Presbyterian, United, and Baptist) in general, and less case-specific to these Vancouver churches.

5.2.7. Role of Congregation Members

In all four cases, each congregation had one or more 'project champions' whose keen and dedicated involvement from early planning stages through the stage of

receiving rezoning approval from Council was viewed as being critical to the success of the project. In some cases this was the Minister/Reverend/Pastor, as with Central Presbyterian and First Baptist, and in other cases it was key elders and congregation members that co-spearhead the project, such as with Knox United and Pacific Spirit United. In all cases, it was the hard work and long-term commitment of multiple key members that helped to launch the redevelopment process initially, and keep the project moving forward through the challenges that presented themselves ahead. As noted with Knox United, the congregation experienced substantial delays during early stages of their project, but thanks in no small part to perseverance and dedication of their time, the project continues to move forward today, despite initial setbacks. With Pacific Spirit United, they will now need to rely on the same dedication of their in-house leadership team to seek out a new developer partner, and regain momentum for their stalled project.

All of those who were interviewed spoke to the concept of 'being called' for their own personal primary reasons for their involvement as project coordinators. This desire to put their skills, time and energy, their dedication to their faith and their place of worship, and their willingness to serve 'a higher power for the good of their church and their communities', motivated them to become involved and volunteer their services from early stages through the long timeline of seeking project approval. Their personal faiths were at the centre of this, with several stating that they felt that God had called upon them to step into their project champion roles.

In all four congregations, various forms of 'committees' or 'task forces' were created to lead the redevelopment process. These groups were typically composed of the key religious figure at the church, in addition to church members who either self-selected themselves to participate, or were chosen/requested by the key religious figure to assist. These groups were initially charged with leading the process for engaging with the larger congregation, to first determine what uses, activities, and services should be enhanced or added into their respective place of worship portfolios, to identify priorities, to develop preliminary concepts for the scale of the project, and to select options for how best to achieve the congregation's goals and aspirations. Once the project was underway, these groups would continue engaging with their congregations to keep them informed about how the process was unfolding, and propose resolutions to any challenges that may have arisen.

5.2.8. Multiple Congregations

Of the four congregations interviewed, one of them (Central Presbyterian) shared their worship space with multiple congregations, which has the potential to be both a challenge to the operation of their place of worship, and an opportunity for redevelopment of their site. Prior to the project, Central Presbyterian was already sharing their space with two other congregations – a large (300+ membership) Korean congregation, and a small (approximately a dozen members) LGBTQ congregation. This meant that between the three congregations, and the many other additional services and activities taking place in their building, the church was in use every day of the week. While sharing worship and ancillary space with other groups can pose the risk of conflict if there is a ‘landlord and tenant’ relationship between the principle congregation and the others who rent out space and if their priorities and/or future goals are not aligned, with Central Presbyterian it ultimately provided further support and a stronger rationale for expanding the church. Central Presbyterian’s membership was smaller (approximately 60 members), however, the combined desire of the congregations for improved spaces, especially for the larger Korean congregation which put the church at capacity, provided further justification that a new church was needed. The Korean congregation was also able to leverage some additional funding sources to help provide financial support to the project, especially during the construction stage when the congregations needed temporary space to worship in during the interim.

5.2.9. Declining Membership & Amalgamation

As noted in existing research highlighted in Theme #1 in the Literature Review (Bibby, 2011; Brenner, 2016; Bruce, 2002; Clarke & Macdonald, 2011; Eagle, 2011; Frolick, 2016; Pew Research Center, 2013, 2015), many congregations throughout North America are experiencing declining membership due to increasing secularization and declining religious affinity/identity in contemporary society. This decline compounds the threat of closure for many places of worship with congregations that are experiencing increasing maintenance costs of their aging buildings, and have fewer members able to support these financial responsibilities. Leveraging their land assets by redeveloping their sites to provide the means to repair an existing building and provide continued financial support for their activities is commonly used to secure the futures of these churches. While this phenomenon has been well-researched, it can be a challenge to

track this decline in place of worship attendance as there is no formal statistical reserve of this information (i.e. Census Canada does not request/record this type of data). As it is a sensitive subject for many congregations, it can be difficult to gain an accurate or detailed understanding of membership changes experienced over time.

This was the case during interviews with the four case study congregations in Vancouver. All the congregation representatives, directly or indirectly, did reference at some point during the interviews that their congregations, too, have experienced membership decline over time, and the challenges that this presents. The only interviewee that was more upfront that this decline posed the potential threat of closure for their congregation was for Knox United. Pacific Spirit United's interviewee did note that due to declining membership, and a shift in the role of worship spaces from serving a more immediate/neighbourhood-focused community to a larger neighbourhood/regional audience, they opted to amalgamate their congregation (which was originally called Ryerson United) with Dunbar Heights United. 'Pacific Spirit' is the new name of this amalgamated congregation. Amalgamation as an option to increase the size of a congregation and share responsibilities for maintaining a single worship space, instead of two or more congregations struggling to take care of multiple buildings, is also a common option for survival, as noted in the Literature Review.

What was also common across all four churches interviewed was an inherent, strong belief that this phenomenon of declining membership would reverse in their futures. They all saw their redevelopment projects as the beginning of a 'new chapter', and that their renovated and expanded spaces, which could attract additional users and increase their relevancy and service in the large communities, would ultimately help improve their membership numbers. The addition of housing on their sites was also stated across all congregation representatives as an opportunity to connect with more people, who could access their ancillary spaces and services, and that some of the future residents of their housing units may also become worship members.

It is too soon to know if this optimism around these redevelopment projects resulting in increased membership or attendance at their religious services will be fulfilled. The redevelopment of place of worship sites, with the worship function retained, is a relatively new phenomenon for Vancouver, and at this stage most of the projects have not yet been completed. Of the four case studies in this research study, only one

of them (Central Presbyterian) is fully built and occupied, and at the time of interview it had been open for less than a year. The positivity that was relayed in the interview may be partially influenced by the on-going excitement from being in their new home.

Revisiting these projects in the future to verify if the congregations have positive updates around their memberships would be both interesting and helpful to understand the longer-term impacts of these projects. It is also worth noting again that it is difficult to obtain an accurate sense of membership attendance over time, since Census Canada does not track these, so a great deal of trust must be placed in relying on congregations to share their own tracking and observations. In the meantime, it remains to be seen if these place of worship redevelopment projects are enough to turn around the larger trend of shrinking congregations.

The expansion of the churches' ancillary services and spaces may, however, result in increased use and attendance of the programs and facilities that the churches offer. With their intentions to broaden their portfolio of services, and desire to find relevancy in new ways, this is also an opportunity to redefine how we measure the 'success' of churches. Having less of a focus on how many bodies are in the pews on Sunday morning vs. how many neighbourhood residents access their ancillary spaces and services throughout the week may become a more accurate means to define and gauge 'success' and the overall value that they offer the communities they're situated in.

5.2.10. Neighbourhood Opposition

The presence of neighbourhood residents' opposition, and its ability to potentially influence a project's outcome, was noted as a common experience amongst all four case studies. Although the scale of development varied greatly across all four cases (from four storeys to 57 storeys), the four projects experienced a range of neighbourhood opposition to their proposals, with some common themes for the source of concern. The key concerns voiced by residents varied across the cases, but there were some commonalities (primarily height and traffic concerns) across all four.

With Knox United, concerns from the public were regarding the scale and modern character of the proposed residential development not fitting in with the traditional residential neighbourhood, the impacts of the proposed height (four storeys) and density,

including shadowing and privacy impacts, traffic and parking impacts to the local streets, and the proposal not providing seniors housing as anticipated in the Dunbar Community Vision. With First Baptist, concerns were focused on the height of the tower (57 storeys) with an impact to views and shadowing for an adjacent residential tower, traffic impacts to already congested streets, and lack of affordability for the proposed strata units. For Pacific Spirit, it was with the proposed height and density of the tower (8 storeys), local traffic and parking impacts to a street that is a designated bike route, resulting in safety issues, loss of neighbourhood character for the existing single-family home area, and lack of consistency with the planning policies for that neighbourhood. For Central Presbyterian, concerns were with neighbourhood impacts (including loss of views and privacy concerns), the height and density (22 storeys) as being inappropriate for the location, increased traffic, and the impacts of social housing on neighbourhood safety.

From the interviews with the congregation representatives, and by reviewing the Public Input sections of each of their Council Reports, Central Presbyterian's proposal seemed to have generated less opposition than the other three (*Rezoning and Development Permit Application, 1155 Thurlow Street (DE417385)*, n.d.; *Rezoning Application, 969 Burrard Street & 1019-1045 Nelson Street*, n.d.; *Rezoning Application, 2165-2195 and 2205-2291 West 45th Avenue*, n.d.; *Rezoning Application, 3205-3221 West 41st Avenue and 5590 Balaclava Street*, n.d.). Further research into why a place of worship congregation-led rezoning application does (or sometimes does not) generate neighbourhood opposition, and what can be done to minimize this, is a topic beyond the scope of this thesis, and has been noted as an area to be explored in future research in Chapter 6.

5.2.11. Frustrations With the City

The congregation representatives interviewed during the data collection phase noted multiple frustrations with 'the City' (i.e. City staff direction, City processes, City policies, or City Council), and many of these concerns were shared universally across all four cases. A highlight of their challenges is noted in the following text.

Interviewees expressed frustration with City staff wanting to shape/influence the details and outcomes of their redevelopment proposals. This includes requiring the provision of certain uses (e.g. the City required the childcare use be returned as part of

Knox United's new development, and that social housing be included with Pacific Spirit United's project), and negotiating the ownership of community amenities (e.g. City's desire to own the non-market housing in Central Presbyterian's project, which the congregation did not concede to.)

The maximum height and densities considered in each proposal were highly regulated by limits of City policies. On sites where this was prescribed by a Community Plan (such as the West End Community Plan for Central Presbyterian and First Baptist), place of worship redevelopment proposals could not exceed the maximum height and density levels as noted in the Community Plan. On sites where there was not a Community Plan offering clear guidance on form of development, it was sensitivity to adjacent built forms and neighbourhood context, in addition to community opposition to more height and density, that limited the proposed form of development (such as with Knox United and Pacific Spirit United). This can be especially frustrating for a congregation, as the less height and density that they are permitted to build (especially with regards to market strata housing), the less profit can be made from a project, which ultimately limits the amount of non-market housing or community amenities they are trying to deliver.

The most common frustration shared amongst the interviewees was the length of the overall timeline, with all four noting that their projects, from when their initial proposal was first introduced to City staff, to the internal staff review process (with subsequent requests for revisions to the original design), to approval by City Council at Public Hearing, to going through the permit review process, took significantly more time than they had anticipated. Many of them noted that when they factored in their preliminary discussions with their own congregations and their respective developer/architect/consultant teams, the total amount of time was close to ten years. This proves to be a challenge for congregations to maintain momentum and volunteer retention within their own teams, and primarily with sustaining the finances needed to see these projects through to completion.

Further adding to the frustrations noted above, the extended review timelines meant that there was often a change in City staff assigned to their project during its lifetime. This meant, at times, shifting advice regarding supportable form of development

and community amenities during the application review stage, resulting in additional revisions to their projects.

Congregation representatives also noted during the application review stage, in their conversations with City staff, conflicting advice between departments, or competing priorities of the City leading to unclear directions. Examples of this include being required to maximize affordable/non-market housing within their projects, but also being given limitations on the height, density, setbacks, and siting of their proposed buildings, combined with additional directions around heritage preservation, tree retention, public realm improvements, public vs. private ownership of the housing or the proposed amenities, and community access agreements to future on-site amenities, all of which affect the complexity and economic viability of their projects.

Parking was a sensitive issue, with some of the interviewees expressing frustration that the requirement to meet the Vancouver Parking By-law resulted in the inclusion of underground parking, which added significantly to their overall costs.

Some interviewees also felt that City staff were overly sensitive to adjacent buildings and uses, or to neighbourhood residents' concerns about the size/scale of their proposed projects, which resulted in direction to reduce the heights, density, and massing, increase the setbacks, or relocate the siting of some proposed uses, of their projects.

5.2.12. Developer Partner

The relationship with their partner developer is essential to the success of any place of worship redevelopment proposal. It is the developer who has the financial means and professional skills/resources to take a project from a design concept through the long and challenging process of seeking approval, and then ultimately being constructed and occupied. In the case of all four congregation representatives interviewed, it was private developers who partnered with the congregations on the projects (as opposed to a government partner.) In the case of private developers, it is understood that their involvement is due to the opportunity of being able to make a profit on these projects through the sale of strata housing (Knox United, Pacific Spirit United, First Baptist), or through a steady income stream from market rental housing (Central

Presbyterian). This research study focuses on the perspectives and individual motivations of the congregations for why they are pursuing redevelopment projects, but seeking a greater understanding for why private developers opt to partner with congregations in these unique projects (beyond just the opportunity to make a profit) is a subject area identified as one worthy of further research in Chapter 6.

Unfortunately, the backing out of private developers can pose a significant challenge for congregations, as happened with two of the local projects researched. With Knox United, during early stages, their developer partner changed twice before they even reached the stage of rezoning application submission. This led to an extension in the timeline overall, and having to restart with a new partner each time, who may have different priorities, motivations, and expectations for what the project will deliver to them.

With Pacific Spirit United, their development partner decided to no longer participate in the project following approval of the rezoning application by City Council at Public Hearing. This has meant that their project has stalled for the time being, until a new developer partner can be found. When pressed about the rationale for why the developer backed out, the interviewee was reluctant to comment on this subject.

In both cases, it is likely changing economic conditions which affected the project's overall financial viability, and therefore meant a potential reduction in profit for the developer. A project's height, density, and housing unit numbers are confirmed through the rezoning application stage, and for the developer, there is an amount of profit that is assumed will be available with these fixed development figures, for their involvement to be justified/worth their time. If the real estate market shifts during the time following their approval, and housing prices decrease, this could mean that the profit margin diminishes or even ceases to exist altogether.

This is likely the case with Pacific Spirit United, as the Vancouver real estate market has softened since 2017 when their project was approved. Going forward, it is likely that Pacific Spirit United's congregation has limited options, including waiting until the market rebounds and their approved scheme is viable again, finding a new developer partner who feels they can proceed in the present market with their approved height, density, and housing unit numbers, or rezoning their site again for additional

height, density, and housing unit numbers, to make the proposal more financially viable in the current real estate market.

5.2.13. Precedents & Emerging Networks

This type of development phenomenon is relatively new for Vancouver, but as more projects are proposed and receive approval, with each additional successfully-completed example, there is an opportunity for congregations to learn from each other's experiences. Of the four churches interviewed, Central Presbyterian's project is the only one that is fully completed and occupied, and is now seen as a local 'success story'. Since their project completion, they have been contacted by other congregations, both local and international, who are considering their redevelopment options. By looking at existing precedents, congregations may be able to avoid some of the challenges encountered by other congregations who already went through the process, and learn from their experiences. While each project will be unique, there are enough commonalities between the conditions that many congregations are facing, and the opportunities that exist to address them through redevelopment, that reaching out to local precedents may be a prudent exercise in due diligence. An emerging network of local expertise may be in the process of forming in Vancouver as congregations learn from one another and seek to consider and refine their own redevelopment proposals.

Outside the congregations who are leading their own place of worship redevelopment projects, there also seems to be an emerging network in Vancouver of consultants and non-profit developers who specialize in offering professional services geared to social purpose real estate development, including place of worship sites, such as Metro Vancouver Alliance (Ritchie, n.d.), Terra Housing Consultants (*Terra Housing Consultants*, n.d.), and Catalyst Community Development Society (*Catalyst Community Developments Society*, n.d.).

In summarizing these key themes, the emerging pattern of place of worship redevelopment in Vancouver is primarily motivated by the responsibilities, challenges, and opportunities from owning aging (but well-located) heritage assets, combined with existing facility constraints and a desire to not just maintain, but improve and expand their portfolio of community-serving uses and spaces. Further exploration around these conclusions is explored in detail in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6. Conclusion, Limitations of Research, & Recommendations

6.1. Conclusion

This research has contributed to the overall body of knowledge of literature on place of worship redevelopment as a unique type of urban development. As noted through this research project, congregations redeveloping their sites to build housing, and include many other types of ancillary community-serving uses and spaces, while still retaining their place of worship function, is a relatively new phenomenon in Vancouver. This research has provided insight into the ‘behind the scenes’ motivations for why congregations are pursuing these projects, with a focus on four case studies in Vancouver.

The common narrative on this topic, primarily in media but also well-documented in existing scholarly research on places of worship in other cities, frames the story as congregations struggling to survive in contemporary society. As noted in Theme #1 in the Literature Review, many churches are facing significant challenges from a dual threat of increasing maintenance costs associated with aging facilities, and dwindling congregations to support such responsibilities. Facing a risk of amalgamation with another congregation, or closure altogether, many congregations, indeed, are turning to development opportunities to leverage their valuable land assets by redeveloping their sites with housing, allowing for financial sustainability.

An emerging understanding, as noted in Theme #2 in the Literature Review, highlights a more deliberate, purposeful position of intentional adaptation. Congregations are utilizing these redevelopment opportunities to expand their portfolio of services to the communities that they’re situated in. Many places of worship already offer community-serving activities and spaces, but through revenue gained from redevelopment, the range and variety of these ancillary uses and spaces can be expanded. As an extension of their mission to ‘do good will’ in the world, these services are a means to bring new and expanded relevancy, meaning, and users/beneficiaries to the place of worship’s range of functions. The provision of new housing attained through these redevelopment projects, especially when affordable non-market housing tenures are chosen, is viewed as an additional benefit that can be offered to the community.

In addition, as part of framing the context of existing knowledge on this subject, there is a significant amount of research that focuses on the repurposing of church buildings that have ceased to operate as a place of worship. Referred to as ‘adaptive re-use’, this research explores the variety of creative uses for places of worship that opted not to (or were not able to) redevelop their sites, as noted in Theme #3 in the Literature Review.

Detailed analysis of the qualitative data gained through this research project has revealed that, for the four case studies interviewed, the recent development phenomenon is not a situation of ‘either/or’, of redeveloping to survive, **or** redeveloping to intentionally shift their role as a place of worship, but rather that, motivations are a **combination** of several factors, influences, challenges, and opportunities. While all four congregations noted a variety of challenges they faced prior to pursuing redevelopment, including heritage church structures requiring extensive seismic retrofitting and repairs, aging and undersized/underperforming annex/ancillary spaces, and/or declining attendance at their religious services, at the front and centre of discussions was a deliberate and purposeful drive to shift their courses towards an evolving role within contemporary society, by leveraging these projects to deliver an expanded suite of community-serving spaces and uses, beyond being just a place of worship for the members of their faith community. Again, the range of ancillary services being delivered through these projects is extensive, and includes high-value amenities such as childcare facilities, food and shelter programs for the needy, performance space for cultural uses, and affordable meeting spaces for local community-serving groups. In addition, the ability to protect and restore heritage buildings, and provide more affordable forms of housing than what the market alone can bear in Vancouver, also offers significant benefits to the community.

The excitement of a new project may have been at the forefront of their minds during the time of research, which may result in a greater focus on the ‘good news’ of their forthcoming developments, but even for the two congregations that had experienced delays due to losing their developer partner, the primary motivations shared concentrated on the opportunities for extending their mission and for serving their communities in new and expanded ways. There was a keen-ness to ensure that this ‘side of the story’ was brought to light, rather than what they viewed as the ‘typical’, limited view of congregations struggling to survive. Whether the congregation

memberships of these four churches increase or not as a result of these projects remains to be seen in time. Although there are a few recent examples of local congregations closing and selling their assets, in general, the place of worship redevelopment trend in Vancouver appears to be eschewing the path of closure that leads to adaptive re-use of their heritage buildings, as noted extensively in other urban locales, in Theme #3 in the Literature Review.

The purpose of this research project was to reveal the details of the motivations and unique experiences of four individual congregations in Vancouver that are pursuing redevelopment. While the lessons learned from their stories may not be directly transferrable to the situations of other congregations in other urban contexts, their ability to leverage their land assets for redevelopment projects, many of which produce a significant number of housing units and an extensive amount of ancillary spaces and services, likely are amplified by the extraordinary land values and intensive housing demand in Vancouver. The high value of land, combined with planning policies that allow for significant increases in height and density, result in lucrative opportunities for congregations to redevelop their sites and provide abundant funding to restore heritage buildings **and** still be able to deliver a range of ancillary amenities and benefits, including non-market housing. Congregations in other urban contexts may not have the same redevelopment opportunities afforded by their own local real estate markets, thereby reducing their potential to leverage their own property assets to the same extent as those in Vancouver.

Ultimately, what the analysis and key findings of this research study may be revealing is a potential emerging 'Vancouver Model' of the place of worship redevelopment phenomenon, the result of various forces and factors unique to this urban context at present time. The motivations revealed during this study indicate that the rationale for pursuing redevelopment contain elements noted in **both** Theme #1 of the Literature Review (increasing financial challenges due to asset maintenance, with dwindling congregations to support them, leading to a reactionary response to ensure self-survival), and Theme #2 (a desire to lead purposeful and directive positive change to meet the shifting needs of society, and with the provision of affordable housing as an additional benefit that can be offered to the community, as an extension of their Christian missions to do 'good will'), however, with a much greater emphasis on the latter motivations. The ability to focus on intentional, mindful change may be a 'luxury' offered

by the lucrative Vancouver real estate market, in addition to an emerging network of expertise as places of worship learn from example, seeking guidance from other church sites that have already redeveloped their sites into successful projects.

Because this type of development pattern is relatively new for Vancouver, further observation over time is needed to determine if this pattern is sustainable for the long-term, or if the current projects coming forward between 2009 and 2019 are the result of a temporary, localized convergence of high property values, under-utilized land assets owned by well-situated congregations, an awareness of increasing maintenance costs for heritage assets combined with a desire to maintain and/or expand community-serving spaces and programming, and a recognition that redeveloping their sites with the provision of strata/condominium housing can support these goals, all fuelled by an insatiable real estate market that puts congregations in the driver's seat for leading intentional, purposeful change. This recipe may be unique to Vancouver, or perhaps Vancouver is simply at the forefront of this type of development phenomenon, with only a matter of time until congregations located in other expensive real estate markets 'wake up' and realize their own potential to chart a new course for their assets by redeveloping their sites with housing, and maintaining their place of worship function.

While the potential for revenue generation, security of their futures, and expansion of their roles in a changing society is significant, this research project has also revealed the inherent risk of this type of redevelopment. Such redevelopment projects are complex, take a significant amount of time and resources (financial and human), and are at risk of temporary suspension or cancellation due to unexpected changes in their developer partner relationships. A downward shift in the real estate market also has the potential to affect the economic viability of these expensive projects, which can leave the congregations in a position of having to seek out new partners who can see the project through to completion. Entering into the multi-year process of pursuing rezoning and development requires a 'leap of faith' on the part of congregations.

6.2. Limitations of Research

The limitations for this research project was to focus on the motivations for congregations in Vancouver that are pursuing redevelopment of their place of worship sites, that include the provision of housing while retaining their place of worship use. A

research dialectic that was inductive, idiographic, and qualitative was selected as an appropriate methodology to reveal the details of the experiences, motivations, and internal decision-making processes of four churches selected in Vancouver, using in-person interviews with key congregation representatives to collect the data. As part of framing the scope for this research project, other questions that could have been explored around place of worship redevelopment in Vancouver, or tangential areas of interest connected with this topic, were noted. During the collection of the qualitative data, and analysis of the themes around motivations, including reviewing the congregations' overall experiences, the challenges they faced in the development process thus far, and external factors shaping their respective project outcomes, potential areas for future research emerged. The following outlines three topics not explored in detail as part of my research study, but that could make for related and interesting suggestions for future research on place of worship redevelopment.

6.2.1. The Developers' Perspective

This research project focused exclusively on the perspective of the congregations to 'tell their own stories' of why their churches decided to pursue redevelopment. Every one of these projects required a developer partner, who brings the professional expertise and financial capital needed to transform a concept into a real-life project. An additional area of research could be to explore the developers' perspective around what motivated their initial interest to become involved. Obvious assumptions would include their potential to make a profit from the project, but there could be other factors influencing their willingness to help guide place of worship site redevelopments, which are complicated projects with inexperienced clients. As revealed through this research project, sometimes the developer partners rescind their participation at later stages, leaving the congregation to seek a new partner to help bring their project to completion. As proposed in Chapters 4 and 5 of this research study, the loss of economic viability due to a shift in the local housing market is a likely contender to explain why. Further research could help reveal the background for why developers pivot at later stages, and perhaps result in recommendations to help prevent this, or mitigate the challenges that fall upon congregations when it does occur.

6.2.2. Planning Policy, City Staff & Council

The role of planning policy, City staff, and City Council, as part of the overall regulatory framework for how place of worship redevelopment projects get approved, would also benefit from detailed research to explore its role. As noted in Chapter 5 of this research study, planning policy has a direct role in creating both the opportunities and the limitations for rezoning projects involving place of worship redevelopment. In most cases, the planning policy that enables such redevelopment is location-specific, and not user-specific (i.e. the congregations are an unintended benefactor of said planning opportunities – the policy was not crafted for them specifically.) As of 2019, the City of Vancouver has no comprehensive city-wide planning policy that specifically targets places of worship. Other municipalities may have policies that are crafted to help guide, and perhaps even incentivize, place of worship redevelopment.

As rezoning planning policy can be discretionary and open to different interpretations, the ability of City staff to influence place of worship redevelopment projects is another area well-suited for further research. Individual staff members and different departments may have differing (and sometimes competing) priorities. How does this factor into the shaping of a development proposal?

And lastly, as City Council are ultimately the ones who approve place of worship projects, how do their interests, priorities, and political objectives influence when and if a place of worship rezoning application is 'given the green light' to go forward? Research into the above could help better understand how City planning policy can enable, prohibit, or incentive place of worship redevelopment, and the role that City staff and Council can play (in Vancouver, and other municipalities for cross-comparison).

6.2.3. Neighbourhood Opposition

Finally, as revealed through this research project, not all place of worship redevelopment projects elicit the same reaction from neighbourhood residents as each other. Some projects appear to go through the development process with minimal neighbourhood opposition, whereas others experience significant resident pushback. Further research into why some projects prompt opposition and some don't, and the role

that neighbourhood feedback has on the development and likelihood of approval of a place of worship project could be an additional avenue for research exploration.

6.3. Recommendations

As noted throughout this research, place of worship redevelopment projects present tremendous opportunities, unique challenges, and potential risks for congregations. By leveraging their strategic land assets for development, congregations can deliver projects that benefit both their own worship community, and the residents of the urban context that they're situated in. Based upon the experiences shared in the four case studies in this research study, and from material in the literature review for projects in other cities, the following insights are shared through a list of recommendations. This advice may be useful for other congregations who are considering their redevelopment options, but it may also be applicable for other property owners with strategic land assets who are experiencing similar challenges and opportunities, such as legions, community halls, neighbourhood houses, and social enterprises/non-profit societies.

Firstly, recognize and anticipate that these types of redevelopment projects are complex, and take a significant amount of time. From project conception to completion, this process takes many years, and as a result, should not be viewed as a 'quick fix' to remedy any challenges that you, as a congregation, may be facing. Delays throughout various stages of the process are common, so initial timeline estimates should be generous and flexible, to respond to unforeseen speed bumps you may encounter along the way. This is particularly important to highlight for any congregation who may be approaching a redevelopment project as a means of survival, due to financial struggles or a dwindling membership. Because of the significant costs and timelines involved, there is the potential that a shrinking congregation may not last through the process long enough to reap the benefits of a completed project.

Secondly, these projects are inherently complex, and require significant expertise and knowledge from outside the congregation. Your most important relationship in these projects is the one that you will have with your developer partner, as they are the people who will help turn your congregation's dreams into physical reality, by navigating the long and complex process with architects, consultants, lawyers, city staff, construction trades,

and the public. This relationship will require you to place an incredible amount of trust in them, likely more than you are initially comfortable with, and so it is vital that you select your developer partner very carefully. Do your research on prospective partners first, to determine if their professional reputations and previous project successes will meet your needs, and converse with them extensively before making any commitments so that you can assess if they are the right fit for your congregation, and that they will work hard to understand your needs, your values, and your vision for this project. The initial consulting fees, as part of project scoping before a formal partnership is made, is an expensive but necessary investment upfront. These can run into the tens of thousands, so be prepared to spend some money as part of the developer selection process. Conducting some preliminary design scoping before committing to a particular scheme or developer will also assist with illustrating and communicating the vision of what the project can deliver both to your own congregation members, and to prospective partners.

Third, temper your expectations for what these projects can deliver, as the costs associated with construction and delivering these benefits is likely more than you are anticipating. Your dream wish list of what you would like the project to achieve is likely extensive, but as you enter the process you will likely encounter limitations to what can be built, and other external factors, that will affect the overall 'bottom line'. Your developer partner will expect a certain amount of profit from this venture, so do not expect their involvement will be delivered as charity. Think of this journey as an iterative process, where you will have to adapt and shift as the project progresses. Be prepared to identify the priorities of your congregation – ask yourselves what are the most important deliverables from this project, and keep focused on them. You may not be able to achieve 100% of everything you would like to, but 'don't let perfection be the enemy of the good.' Prioritize your needs and clearly communicate this to your developer partners and all those involved.

Fourth, select internal 'project champions' carefully. These will be the key members who will form the task force or development committee for your congregation, and who will have the time, energy, and passion to stay committed to seeing this project through to completion. These people will also need to act as liaisons between your full congregation and your developer partner, communicating needs, updates, and 'reality checks' in both directions. Look for a diversity of skill-sets within your own congregation

for those who can assist, and select those who can be trusted to best represent the needs of your full faith community.

Adding on to the advice above, regarding the need to prioritize project deliverables, and with selecting project champions carefully, expect that at some stages your congregation may experience conflict between members. These projects will seem intimidating at the beginning, and your congregation will have a diversity of opinions and ideas for what to strive for, and how best to move forward. Anticipate that conflict may arise, and take the time to resolve any issues immediately. Rely on your project champions, and refer to the larger purpose of why your congregation is pursuing this project, to help navigate any potential friction, and to keep members focused on the needs of the larger community rather than individuals. Be brave enough to have honest conversations with each other about balancing needs vs. wants, and associated trade-offs.

Fifth, it is likely that housing is the mechanism that is being used in the project to pay for all the other benefits being delivered. Note that there are both pros and cons of pursuing strata housing vs. rental housing as those levers. Strata housing, through the sale of condominium units, is likely the best opportunity to maximize revenue potential up front, but once sold, will be out of the hands of the congregation, and additional revenue should not be expected in the future (think of it as a 'one shot deal'). On the other hand, providing rental housing may not deliver the same kind of initial 'windfall', but it will deliver a 'slow and steady' income stream over time, allowing for continual revenue potential. Note that rental housing will require an operator to take care of the day-to-day management of the units, on behalf of your congregation.

Sixth, while ultimately your congregation will understand their own needs best, and how you would like to utilize this redevelopment opportunity to secure a new future for your place of worship facility, consider how the project can also deliver a range of amenities, services, and spaces for users beyond your immediate faith community. By diversifying your portfolio of benefits that you can offer others, you can further strengthen your role as a community partner and social service provider for residents of all kinds, and expand your role as a community hub to meet the ever-changing needs of society.

Expanding on the advice in the paragraph above, use your existing community relationships to gain support and mitigate any potential neighbourhood concerns around your project. Depending on where your facility is located, you will likely experience some opposition to the type of change that your project will bring to the neighbourhood. Existing residents can be very sensitive to projects that are perceived to negatively affect 'neighbourhood character', and even though you may be approaching this project with the best of intentions, some people will likely express apprehension. Communicate with neighbours early on, and frequently throughout your process, to understand their concerns. Showcase all the community benefits that your facility offers now, and demonstrate what new and expanded amenities and services you will be able to deliver through this project. Highlight how this project will benefit the larger community and serve a variety of needs, beyond just the immediate faith community of your congregation.

And lastly, take the time to learn from other places of worship who have already successfully ventured down the path of redevelopment and come out the other side. While the challenges, needs, and aspirations are unique with each congregation, there is also likely a lot of commonality shared between sites. Learn from the experiences of others, (both positive and negative), so that you may avoid any potential pitfalls, and can maximize the benefits from your project. Most congregations will be keen to share their lessons learned with you, as they have with me, and in Vancouver there appears to be an emerging network of local expertise as more sites redevelop. Take advantage of this opportunity to consult with your place of worship peers, to help you prepare for your own journey. The consistent message that I've received from the interviews held during my research is that while these projects are time-consuming and challenging, they are ultimately worthwhile, and have great potential to bring significant benefits to congregations and their communities.

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Appendix. Interview Questions

The following is a list of potential topics to cover in an interview. Again, the goal is to not 'cross every one of these off the list', but rather use them as launch pads for initiating the interview, and then see where the conversation takes me. "Tell me about:"

- 1) Who you are, your role with the church, and your involvement with the redevelopment project?
- 2) A brief history of your church (the building, its members, its mission, its role in the community and surrounding neighbourhood.) How has your congregation changed over the years?
- 3) Do you offer any other services in addition to being a place of worship? Besides the faith community, who else uses your services and spaces?
- 4) Why did the church decide to pursue redevelopment? What were the needs and aspirations that prompted this? Tell me about the church's motivations.
- 5) Was the decision supported by all members? Was there a 'champion' or 'leader' of the project? How did the decision-making process unfold?
- 6) Are you able to share with me any of the financial considerations (generally)?
- 7) Which developer and architect team did you partner with? Did you pursue a developer? Or vice versa?
- 8) Please give me an overview of the project (i.e. what do you plan to build?).
- 8) What form of tenure and amount of housing are you building? Why? Will you own or manage it yourself?
- 9) Is there a heritage building on site? If so, how will it be affected by this project?
- 10) Is the place of worship changing in size or form? How will this project affect the existing place of worship function?
- 11) What additional services or amenities are being expanded or added because of this project? Why were these services selected?
- 12) What lessons have you learned from this experience? What advice would you give other places of worship who are considering redevelopment? What do you know now that you wish you knew at the beginning of this journey?
- 13) Who else should I speak with?
- 14) Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?