3. Grounding CityPlan in Communities

City-wide Directions
- Community Visions
- Area Plans 18 Mos.
- Neighbourhood Plans, Rezonings 14 mos.

Each Step Builds on Previous Decisions
Strategic Planning Process

1. Mandate the Planning Process
2. Assemble Information/ Ideas/ Options
3. Analyze Choices & Consequences
4. Recommend Directions = Council Adopts
5. Prepare City-wide Policy Plans & Actions
6. Prepare Area Plans & Action Priorities
7. Council/Board Adopts = Implement Plan
8. Monitor Plan
CityPlan sets Context for New Area Plans
Regional Advice

CityPlan Directions

Advise Council Decisions
Budgets
Land Use

Next Steps

City-Wide Policy Plans

Citizens Understand
Difficult Choices

Area Plans - Zoning
Community Plans take City-wide policies and scale them to the neighbourhood level.
Life Style or Life Cycle Communities?
Example Mixed Messages

- Preserve Single-Family Neighbourhoods
- Increase Housing Variety
CityPlan Neighbourhood Directions: 80% Support

- Increase Housing Choice in Single Family Areas
- Provided Growth Pays for New Services
New Suburban Directions

- Add Housing Capacity and Choice
- Add Jobs and Services close to Home to Minimize Travel
- Make More Efficient Use of Existing Services.

Public Recommends Planning Priorities
CityPlan
Funding Directions=
Financing Growth Strategy

- Make More Efficient Use of Existing Services

- Growth Pays for Services (Recover 80%)
Community Visions
“Ground” CityPlan

- Locate Center(s)
- Increase Housing Choice
- Parks, Public Places, Greenway Opportunities
- Service Priorities
- Adjustments to Program Delivery
- Priorities for Capital Funds
- Community Initiatives
Citizen Advisory Groups: Accountability

Community Groups
Advise Staff on Process

City Perspectives Panel
Advise Community Bring other Community Perspectives
Biggest Plan Making Challenge

- Keep your eye on the ball
Tasks which matter most should never be at the mercy of tasks which matter least.

Solving Immediate Problems

Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams ("NIST")

- City of Vancouver staff, school and health workers collaborate across departmental and agency boundaries to help communities solve problems that require an integrated approach.
CITYPLAN REZONING POLICY - BEFORE AND DURING NEIGHBOURHOOD VISIONING

[FORMALLY ADOPTED AS “REZONING POLICY - BEFORE AND DURING CITYPLAN NEIGHBOURHOOD VISIONING”]

Adopted by City Council January 18, 1996

Principles
The following rezoning policy is based on two principles:
• respecting already adopted policies and plans; and
• not preempting or diverting the Neighbourhood Visioning process by rezonings which set new directions or preclude options in a neighbourhood.
Community Visions
18 Month Process

Creating a Community Vision

Step 1
Getting in Touch
• publicize the Community Vision process
• first newsletter
• meet community groups
• Community Vision Fair: "kick off" event

Step 2
Creating Ideas
• Community Workshops: residents create ideas and options on Vision topics
• displays, meetings, open houses

Step 3
Choosing Directions
• from Step 2 results, define draft Vision Directions
• send Community Vision Survey to all households, businesses, and owners
• newsletter, displays, meetings
• analyze survey response, find out what has community support

Step 4
Finalizing the Vision
• prepare Community Vision using results from Step 3
• send Vision to Council for approval
Vision Step 1 - Getting in Touch

Get Involved. Help decide the future of your neighbourhood.

CityPlan Dialogues

Through CityPlan, Vancouver residents and City Council agreed on these directions and priorities for the City's future:

- Strengthen neighbourhood centres
- Improve safety and better target services
- Reduce reliance on the car
- Improve the environment
- Increase the variety and affordability of housing
- Define neighbourhood character
- Diversify parks and public places
- Involve people and redirect resources

Visit Community Visions Fair at Renfrew Park Community Centre on April 6 & 7. Let us know what you value and what you want to change.

Community Liaison Groups for Hastings-Sunrise and Renfrew-Collingwood

The City is seeking people to participate in the Community Visions Program as members of Community Liaison Groups in Hastings-Sunrise and Renfrew-Collingwood.

The Community Visions Program brings the broad scope of CityPlan, which will guide major decisions in Vancouver over the next 25 years, to the local level. Generated through broad public participation, a Community Vision will describe what residents, workers and business owners want for their community.
Vision Step 2: Creating Ideas

- Events, workshops
- Newsletters
- Meetings with area groups
**Vancouver is a city of neighbourhoods and most neighbourhoods have their own shopping areas or neighbourdhood centres. Here are some features that make neighbourdhood centres attractive:**

- Banners
- Speciality retail and restaurants
- Street trees
- Public spaces
- Beautification
- Building design
- Benches/street furniture
- Safety
- Places to meet and relax
- Local

**Which of the following features are most important to you in choosing where you do your shopping? Choose 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street banners/public art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of shops and services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low prices</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of goods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street trees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benches/street furniture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places to meet and relax</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractive buildings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (use stickie)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vision Step 3
Choosing Directions
Education & Feedback

RETURN YOUR CHOICES SURVEY TODAY!
Staff take to the streets
Area Plans: Community Recommends Local Service Priorities

Limited Funds
Community Musical Chairs
Locate Neighbourhood Greenways
Address Transportation Issues
Residents Focus on Their Housing Needs: Personalize Choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Household</th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Existing*</td>
<td>Estimated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Households 15 - 24 years; mainly singles, couples, or sharing</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established Couples and Singles 25 - 54 years; no children</td>
<td>1325</td>
<td>1115</td>
<td>-210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with Children 25 - 54 years; with children at home</td>
<td>2810</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>-410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature Households over 55 years; mainly no children, or have left home</td>
<td>2465</td>
<td>4660</td>
<td>+2195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Households</td>
<td>6730</td>
<td>8280</td>
<td>+1550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Future Housing Supply and Demand

Put a dot on your home type, and what you foresee...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>single detached</th>
<th>suite in a house</th>
<th>duplex</th>
<th>rowhouse/townhouse</th>
<th>low rise apartment</th>
<th>5+ storey apartment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>right now</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I live in</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>in 10 years</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see myself in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>in 20 years</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see myself in</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community Identifies Opportunities to Increase Housing Choice to Meet their Needs

- Suites
- Infill Vacant Sites
- Redevelop Sites with Redundant Uses
- C-2 Housing Above Shops
- Create/Improve Neighbourhood Centers
Locate New Housing Opportunities

Row Houses, C-2 Mixed Use Along Shopping Streets
Increase Housing Choice and Sustainability
30,000 + Units Outside Central Area
Create/Expand 19 Neighbourhood Centers
Step 4  Finalizing the Area Visions

Vision area boundary

Previously planned areas to be "re-Visioned" later

West Point Grey

Dunbar

Arbutus Ridge/Kerrisdale/Shaughnessy

Ark's Visions

Oakridge

Combine with Station Plan

Riley Park/South Cambie

RPSC

Kensington-Cedar Cottage

Renfrew Collingwood

Hastings Sunrise

Victoria-Fraserview/Killarney

Sunset

Marpole

Edward St

Burrard St

16th Ave.

Granville St.

Church St.

Main St.

Eadington St.
Implementation: City Projects Driven by Community Priorities
Neighbourhood Centres

- Shopping Area Program
- Housing Area Plan
- New Schedules, Rezonings

New Zoning Process

14 – 18 Months Per Centre
Neighborhood Centers
Build Around Existing Shopping Streets

Add housing to support commercial/shopping

Create public places

Cluster Community Services

Convenient for walking, biking, transit
Community Vision To Neighbourhood Center: Knight & Kingsway

KENSINGTON-CEDAR COTTAGE

approved by City Council JULY 28, 1998
Neighbourhood Centres:

Add Housing to Strengthen shopping areas

Create public places

Cluster Community Services

Convenient for walking, biking, transit
Neighbourhood Centers

- Kick-off
- Newsletters
- Translation
- Open houses
- Work Groups
  - Shopping
  - Housing
- Survey
- Plan
  14 – 18 months
Example Neighbourhood Centre Process
Community Work Groups Help Plan Process & Options
For Broader Community Input
Neighbourhood Centres

In Renfrew-Collingwood, the major neighbourhood centres or shopping areas are:

- Kingsway (Kanata to Rupert)
- Collingwood BIA (Kingsway from Rupert to Boundary)
- Rupert and 22nd Avenue
- Grandview Highway (Kanata to Boundary)
- Others (use stickers)

- Do you do your weekly shopping in any of these areas?
  - Yes
  - No

- Which of the following features are most important to you in choosing where you do your shopping?
  - Choose 5

  - Cleanliness
  - Parking
  - Weather protection
  - Street banners/public art
  - Variety of shops and services
  - Personal Service
  - Low prices
  - Quality of goods
  - Street trees
  - Benches/street furniture
  - Safety
  - Places to meet and relax
  - Attractive buildings
  - Other (use stickers)

Vancouver and most neighbourhoood conditions:

- Banners
- Specialty retail and restaurants
- Street trees
- Public spaces in new developments
- Beautification programs
- Building design guidelines
- Benches/street furniture
- Places to meet and relax
- Homes above stores
- Local festivals
Neighbourhood Centre Program:
New Housing Combined with
Shopping Area Improvements
Initiatives to Support Local Businesses and Improve Services: $2.4 Million

- Street / Public Realm Improvements
- Community Facilities
- Create BIA (Business Improvement Association)
Community wants:

• To Close Flea Market
• New Grocery Store and Library
Signature Re-Development
373 Units Plus Shops, Library
Three Storey Apartments

- Surround Signature Development
- at heart of neighbourhood centre

High Rise King Edward Village
Housing Above Shops
Interface
Behind the shops?
Improved C-2 Housing Above Shops

Better mixed use design: upper setbacks, breaking up scale, small shops, awnings

Front “N” Zoning: Construction meets acoustic standards to reduce street noise

Setbacks at the rear: less impact on neighbours at rear

Rear Setbacks reduce Impact on Neighbours
Housing Surrounding the Center?

Existing: 1,500 “Single-Family” Homes
An Exploration of New Housing Types

- A menu of housing varieties
- Community & Developers work together to develop options
Consider

Affordability

+Developability

- one parking space per unit, at-grade
- small land assemblies: 2 - 3 lots
- pre-zoning by City
Impact Analysis

How Vancouver’s Single-Family Residents feel about Higher Density Housing

How Vancouver’s single-family residents feel about higher density housing.

VANCOUVER PLANNING DEPARTMENT
JUNE 1996
New Neighbours Conclusions

- Lingering uncertainty of land value impacts when sell
+ Provides housing choice for area residents

Mix works best when:
• Near mixed use area,
• Clearly family housing
• Improvement over previous uses
• Provides community amenity

Had hoped study would lead to design guidelines to increase acceptance. Guidelines not seen as a way to significantly improve acceptance prior to rezoning.
Existing Homes

Example Designs
For New Infill Homes

Laneway Housing
Tour Existing Examples
Kingsway and Knight New Housing Types

RM-1 Courtyard Rowhouse  
Units 1,200 – 2,400 Sq. Feet.

RT-10 Small House / Duplex  
25-46 Units Per Acre
Surveys:
- Mail in
- Scientific Sample
- Sample Control
Public Hearing
Council Approves New Zoning
Provides Housing Choice

Close to Shops and Services

Infill

Housing Above Shops

Suites

Center Core
MY PLAN...

WE SHOULD...

Yes in My Back Yard

Vote for our Plan
Bold Steps
Before CityPlan - After CityPlan:

Support for Increasing Housing Choice in Knight & Kingsway
Implementation Plan Adopted
City-Wide DCL Revenues

Revenue allocated to:

- Parks (41%)
- Replacement Housing (32%)
- Engineering (transportation) (22%)
- Childcare (5%)
“NIMBY” to “YIMBY”

- Build community contacts and good will over time
- Actively engage residents and building industry
  Considering information, choices, options
- Respect Community + Bring “goodies” to the table
Process: 3 Steps over 10 years
Each Step Builds on Previous Decisions
Community Based Strategic Planning

Conditions for Success

- Building Political Support
- Engaging the Public
- Sustaining Involvement
- Addressing Uncertainty
Building Trust

- Financing Growth $
- Rezoning Policy while planning underway
- Terms of Reference:
  - Clarify Right to Be Heard
  - Council’s Right to Decide
- “City Hats” Peer Review
- Neighbourhood “personalizes” City Directions One Size doesn’t fit all
Council Attends Planning Events
Surveys: Educate and Feedback
Explore New Engagement

World Café Principles

- Set the context
- Create Hospitable space
- Explore questions that matter
- Encourage everyone's contributions
- Cross-pollinate and connect diverse perspectives
- Listen for patterns, insights & deeper questions
- Harvest and share

Design:

www.worldcafe.com

World Café Guidelines

- Have Fun!
- Facilitate yourself & others
- Play, draw, doodle
- Listen - together for patterns, insights, & deeper connections
- Contribute your thinking
- Focus on what matters
- Speak with your mind & heart
- Slow down so you have time to think & reflect
- Listen to understand, share through dialogue
- Connect ideas
- Harvest and share
Participation = Community Spirit = Residents Improve Community = See Results
Over 70 Citizen Implementation Committees Involving Over 1,000 people Balance Process With Products
Challenges Suburbs

Aging Residents  Limited Housing Choices  Resist Change
Life Style Communities

Public Engages in Difficult Choices

Life Cycle Communities
Increase Housing Choice  Efficient Use of Existing Services

New Directions
Find ways to Maintain Engagement & Build Buy-In while Reducing Process Time
Today: Grounding CityPlan in Communities

Each Step Builds on Previous Decisions
10 Plans = Adds up to 10 years!
Seek New Tools for Plan Implementation

Cities Least Revenue
Top of Mind for Services

Zoning Blunt Tool
Trust is Fragile

Vancouver EcoDensity Initiative
Transferability? Building Resilient Communities  Changing Context

- Economic Uncertainty
- Climate Change
- Right to inclusion
- Public Distrusts Authority
Inclusiveness = Robustness

“Tell me, I forget.
Show me, I remember.
Involve me, I understand.”

Chinese Proverb
Housing Choice 1986

How Vancouver’s Single-Family Residents feel about Higher Density Housing

How Vancouver’s single-family residents feel about higher density housing.
VANCOUVER PLANNING DEPARTMENT
JUNE 1986
What Are the Impacts?
How Real are the Concerns?
The City of Vancouver is searching for ways to increase housing choice. Since there is almost no vacant land left in the city, any new demand for housing must be met by increased densities. Also, the city's population is aging and family structures are changing. Couples whose children have left home, single-parents, and non-related persons sharing accommodation have housing needs different from the traditional family. These needs are not necessarily met by the existing housing stock.

One way to increase the number of dwellings and choice of housing types is to rezone to permit secondary suites, small lot infill, or medium-density multi-family housing such as townhouses or apartments. However, when higher density housing is proposed in single-family neighbourhoods, existing residents are apprehensive. There is usually controversy about the impact of change on livability and property values. But some projects do get built despite heavy neighbourhood opposition.

The Vancouver Planning Department wanted to find out what happens after a higher density development, built in a single-family area, becomes part of the neighbourhood. Are pre-construction fears realized? Are there ways to improve the fit between new and existing housing? If a good fit can be had, then more housing could be introduced into existing communities, thereby increasing housing choice and making more efficient use of existing services.

To explore these questions we studied six higher density developments built in Vancouver's single-family areas over the past seventeen years. This brochure presents the answers we found.
Project Selection

Over the past two decades forty multi-family projects have been approved in Vancouver’s single-family areas. In addition, several “thin houses” have been built on existing narrow lots which predated current minimum lot size regulations for houses.

We selected five multi-family projects ensuring that we had both east and west side locations, both market and non-market developments, larger and smaller projects, and some variation in the dates of construction. Some of the projects had generated a lot of controversy, and others less. To these five multi-family developments we added an early “thin house” which had created controversy with its neighbours.

The following pages give detailed development data and descriptions of these six projects.

Research Methods

We wanted to find out what neighbours had felt at the time the development was proposed, and what they feel now. For the former, we reviewed the rezoning and development permit files which contain correspondence, petitions, public hearing minutes, and newspaper clippings. From these sources we were able to identify the main areas of concern.

To find out how people feel today we interviewed residents of properties directly abutting the higher density developments and sampled the opinions of people living one to several blocks away. Impact statements were probed through questions on design, landscaping, maintenance, privacy, parking, views, traffic, noise, people, and property values.

At least 60% of adjacent house-holds were interviewed, and in four of six cases, 95-100% were interviewed. In all, forty-four of these adjacent neighbours were surveyed. We took care to include all who were on record as having expressed pre-construction concerns and who still lived there. We asked what their pre-construction concerns had been and if they felt the neighbourhood consultation process had been adequate. If the respondent had moved in since construction, we asked whether it had affected their choice of home.

A shorter interview was conducted with people living farther from the projects, anywhere from a few houses to several blocks distant. In all we surveyed twenty-two of these less proximate neighbours.

To obtain alternative perspectives on the impacts of the projects, we reviewed development permit drawings, made site visits, and gathered information from city directories, census statistics, property assessment data, and project managers. We also sought professional advice from an urban designer and a real estate researcher.

In reviewing the lessons learned from this study, the reader must keep in mind that we looked at the impact of new developments from the viewpoint of the single-family neighbours and not from the perspective of the project residents, who may have a different point of view.

Findings

How do single-family residents living near multi-family developments feel about their higher density neighbours? We heard three replies.

• People living one to several blocks away say the higher-density developments have little or no impact on them, though they hasten to add that no more should be built in the area.

• Neighbours who have purchased homes since the project was built and people living in single-family homes located near non-residential uses, such as shops, generally accept multiple housing as part of the neighbourhood mix.

• Long-term single-family residents whose properties abut a multiple development, built in an otherwise single-family area, are as opposed to the development today as they were when it was built. Most of the neighbours opinions described in this booklet are those of these adjacent single-family homeowners.

This booklet describes why some people remain strongly opposed to multiple housing built in otherwise single-family neighbourhoods while others accept some mix of housing types. Detailed findings are reported under the topics of people, environment, economics, public process, and lessons learned from our study of how some of Vancouver’s single-family residents feel about higher density housing built in their neighbourhood.

### Typical Interview Locations

- **Site:**
- **Adjacent neighbours:**
- **Less proximate neighbours:**
THIN HOUSE
9640 West 15th Ave, Vancouver, B.C.
Date Permit Issued: June 1968
Developer/Sponsor: Walter Lloyd
Architect: Peter Waddell
Building Type: Single-family house
Tenure: Market ownership
Site area: 926 sq. m (995 sq. ft)
Floor area: 488 sq. m (528 sq. ft)
Floor Space Ratio: 0.51
Units: 1
Net Unit Density: 0.6 unities/ha, 27 unities/acre
Site coverage: 32.0%
Parking: 1 under grade, 1 under grade, 37 total
Previous Site Use: Vacant
Adjacent Development: The sloping, irregularly shaped site occupies about one
new block. Single-family houses are on two sides of the road, as well as on the street to the south and west. A local
park is situated across the street to the north.

SOUTH TWINS COURT
2950 East 30th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C.
Date Permit Issued: June 1975
Developer/Sponsor: Aquilini Construction Ltd.
Architect: C.K. & Associates
Building Type: Two three-storey apartment buildings with interior double-loaded corridors, plus one two-storey
commercial along Kingsway frontage.
Tenure: Market rental and ownership
Site area: 2223 sq. m (24.0 sq. ft)
Floor area: 754 sq. m (2.6 sq. ft)
Floor Space Ratio: 0.34
Units: 66
Net Unit Density: 0.9 unities/ha, 36 unities/acre
Site coverage: 30.0%
Parking: 81 underground, 18 on grade, 20 total
Previous Site Use: Vacant
Adjacent Development: The single-family houses are located across the street to the west and south, as well as across Princess Avenue to the east. The south side streets and commercial uses are located along the adjacent Kingsway frontage as well as on the north edge of the site.

WEST 41ST PROJECT
2880 West 41st Avenue, Vancouver, B.C.
Date Permit Issued: April 1976
Developer/Sponsor: U.B.C., Non-Profit
Architect: Ron D. & Associates
Building Type: Four-storey buildings with one-storey units entered from grade and two-storey units above entered from
exterior access galleys.
Tenure: Market ownership
Site area: 1603 sq. m (4.4 sq. ft)
Floor area: 2374 sq. m (254 sq. ft)
Floor Space Ratio: 0.49
Units: 56
Net Unit Density: 0.9 unities/ha, 16 unities/acre
Site coverage: 30.0%
Parking: 50 underground, 26 on grade, 56 total
Previous Site Use: Vacant
Adjacent Development: The single-family houses are located across the street to the north, 180 two-storey
houses and Queen's Avenue to the west.

SHANNON MEWS
1135 Granville Street, Vancouver, B.C.
Date Permit Issued: November 1973
Developer/Sponsor: Wall & Redekop Ltd.
Architect: Arthur Erickson
Building Type: Two blocks of two-storey
townhouses entered from grate. Two
storey apartment buildings (one with
entries from one side, one with
interior double-loaded corridor.
Existing townhouses. Ground-floor
commercial and ground-floor
canopy.
Tenure: Market rental
Site area: 409.8 sq. m (441 sq. ft)
Floor area: 247 sq. m (269 sq. ft)
Floor Space Ratio: 0.60
Units: 8
Net Unit Density: 0.5 unities/ha, 19 unities/acre
Site coverage: 30.0%
Parking: 16 underground, 16 on grade
Previous Site Use: Private estate
Adjacent Development: Single-family houses are located across the street to the north and west, as well as
across the Granville Street arterial to the east.
Concerns: Overcrowding, Strangers

Findings: “People”

• Not seen to contribute to “overcrowding”
• Concern “not family people” though many had raised families in the area
• At least half of new residents came from area
When a higher density development is proposed, existing residents express pre-construction concerns about who and how many people will move into the neighbourhood. There are fears that having more people in the area will overcrowd community facilities, and bring more noise and litter. Sometimes concerns center on the increased number of children, especially teenagers. Even more frequently raised is the question of who the new neighbours will be. Some worry that the new neighbours will have different life styles and little commitment to the community. We surveyed existing residents and representatives of the new developments to find out whether these fears are justified.

The Neighbourhood Today

More People All the projects studied did, of course, bring more people into the immediate neighbourhood since all of the sites were originally relatively undeveloped. Of neighbours who were interviewed, not one felt that the project had contributed to overcrowding of community facilities. It is quite likely that these developments are too small to have had any impact, relative to the size of the area as a whole.

Euclid Square and Access Co-op, as non-market family housing, have brought children into the areas. At Access Co-op, one neighbour said he had been worried about this but that problems had not arisen while a second cited more litter and nuisance. In the case of Euclid Square,
a family in the area and now want the smaller size, greater security, and lower maintenance of an apartment or townhouse without leaving the neighbourhood. Others are young singles or couples raised in the area.

In Euclid Square, a lower-income family rental housing development, previous addresses of over half of the families were clustered within a several block radius of the site. To some extent this reflects the selection policies of the project managers, the Greater Vancouver Regional District Housing Corporation, whose policy is to house needy families from the neighbourhood.

Access Co-op had a larger catchment area, with relatively few residents from the immediate neighbourhood. This is partly because it is a cooperative, which people choose because of its tenure, with location being secondary. The development is also somewhat unique in that many of the units are specially designed to meet the needs of the disabled who are drawn from further afield.

Through interviews we found that single-family neighbours are generally not aware of who lives on the site, and do not realize such a high proportion come from the surrounding neighbourhood. This may be explained by the fact that there is very little social interaction between the single-family residents and their new neighbours. Euclid Square, where interaction between children occurs, is an exception. Its neighbours say the residents are families, more or less like themselves, needing a little help. Access Co-op neighbours are more apprehensive and unclear about who lives in the project, even though they know that some families do. At Shannon Mews, West 41st, and South Twins Court single-family residents thought their new neighbours were similar in income level while different in lifestyle. However, the neighbours of these projects, and Access as well, felt that the residents by and large were not "family people" and that this was inappropriate in their "family" area. Most did not seem to realize that many of the single-family homes in their area might be occupied by empty-nesters or childless couples just like those in the developments.

Generally, our respondents see the possibility of themselves ever moving into accommodations similar to the projects as rather remote. Where they do consider that they might in future want this type of accommodation, many specified they would prefer to be closer to transportation and shopping than most of these projects are.

**Summary** We found that most project residents come from the neighbourhood. However neighbours have little awareness of who actually lives in the site. They feel that while residents may be similar in income they are different in lifestyle — not the type of "family people" that are predominant in the area. The judgement seems to be largely made on the basis that the housing form or tenure is different, and to be compounded by the general lack of social interaction between project residents and neighbours.
Concerns:
• Increased density
• Not “in character”
• Overlook, Overshadow
• Overspill parking
• Traffic

Results:
• No impact identified one to three blocks away
• Immediate neighbors still strongly against
  • Good design did not mitigate concerns
• More accepting if:
  • Improved derelict site
  • Provided amenity such as park
When a higher density development is proposed for a single-family neighbourhood, residents commonly express concerns for its effect on their environment. One widely voiced apprehension is that the housing will be out of harmony with the area by virtue of its size, density, lower maintenance levels, or simply by being different. Fears that the project will generate too much traffic and create parking problems on adjacent streets are almost always present. These factors were mentioned in connection with all of the developments we studied.

Less frequently neighbours identify certain specific potential impacts such as infringement of privacy, loss of sun, or view. Both the West 41st Project and the Thin House generated pre-construction concerns over privacy and sun. After living near higher density developments what do nearby single-family neighbours say about environmental impacts?

The Neighbourhood Today

Appearance and Context Before seeing the developments through the neighbor's eyes, let us view them through the eyes of a professional urban designer.

Looking at numerical densities first we find that, with the exception of South Twins Court, the projects' floor space ratios* are no higher than that allowed for single-family houses anywhere in the city. However, "units-per-hectare" measurement is two to three times that of the adjacent neighbourhoods. This means they are composed of a larger number of smaller units per hectare, but within roughly the same building bulk relative to site size. In fact, the area has a high proportion of basement suites and illegal duplexes; the differences in the unit-per-hectare measurements may not be as great.

However, of more significance is the larger site size relative to the area norm, and the fact that the developments are generally different housing forms. Instead of being separate, detached dwellings with their own front doors, they are townhouses, stacked townhouses, and apartments. Some of the units have entrances at grade, some from elevated outdoor galleries, some from interior corridors. Dwelling units are joined by shared walls, and floors and ceilings, into larger building masses. An exception to this is the Thin House, which is a single-family excellent and, in four cases, care was taken to ensure the preservation of existing trees on the site. Maintenance of buildings and grounds is good in all cases, sometimes better than the surrounding houses.

What are the neighbours' opinions on these issues? We found in our survey that generally their reaction to the design of the projects as individual buildings was neutral, with both positive and negative comments. Landscaping and maintenance were seen as positive by many respondents. Given this, it is remarkable that in four cases—the West 41st Project, Shannon Mews, Access Co-op and the Thin House— the overwhelming response of the neighbours to the question of whether the design of the project fits the area is that the development "spoils the neighbourhood" and "does not belong here."
If this reaction is not to the architectural quality of the building, to the landscape, or to the maintenance, where does it come from, and why are two of the projects — Euclid Square and South Twins Court — better accepted? Again, let us look at the projects through the eyes of our urban designer.

There are many different ways in which an architect can attempt to make a building fit into its surroundings, even if it is by its nature different. These include preserving some elements of the previous development or site, copying the form and style of surrounding development, ensuring that the building height and massing are not obtrusive, or simply hiding the development as much as possible.

All six projects are low rise, with only two reaching three storeys (South Twins Court and West 41st Project). Beyond this, they vary considerably in the amount of effort put into contextual fit.

Shannon Mews retains the grand isolation which it had as an estate. The old vine-covered brick wall is kept, with discreet breaks for auto entries. Generous setbacks accommodate a wide band of old trees surrounding the site. The new buildings are low key with old brick, fir and glass providing a subdued setting for the estate’s mansion, carriage house, gatehouse and formal gardens which have been kept and renovated.

The Access Co-op shows a lot of effort made to bring a domestic scale and character to a large development. The low heights of buildings which follow the land contours, staggered unit faces, on-grade front doors, individualized roofs, variations in colour schemes, and narrow clapboard with contrasting tiles and trim all contribute. However, the angled orientation of the main building masses and the sheer size and visibility of the project inevitably set it apart from the neighbourhood.
The design of the West 41st Project borrows little from its neighbours aesthetically or in terms of height and massing. It relies on retention of existing trees and an impressive front hedge to separate it visually. Its location on a major street flanked by a large seniors' development also means that it is not really located in a homogenous single-family area in any case.

The design of Euclid Square owes much to the demands of providing low-cost family rental accommodation, and efforts at contextual design are minimal. However, its low pitched roofs, stained wood siding and white stucco are not out of place in the neighbourhood. Units are not individualized and the building orientation does not reflect the area patterns.

South Twines Court, on the contrary, makes no effort at concealment, or at blending into the neighbourhood visually.

The Thin House uses the existing holly hedge and large boulder to achieve complete effacement, and cannot be seen from the street.

Going back to the neighbours for their reaction to the projects, it is very interesting that the two projects which seem to have made the least effort at contextual design are better accepted. It could be theorized that a contributing factor is the degree of heterogeneity of the surrounding neighbourhoods. Both Euclid Square and South Twines Court are in areas which have a lot of inconsistency — various lot sizes, irregular street layout, and diverse house sizes and forms. In addition, both are located on the edges of residential areas, near other types of land uses such as the commercial strip along Kingsway, and the warehousing on Euclid. The residents may have a mental image of their neighbourhood which is less rigid than those living in the more homogeneous areas around Shannon Mews, Access Co-op, and the Thin House, and therefore be more willing to accept differences in housing form.

A second factor which may relate to acceptance of these projects is the perception of a number of respondents that the developments are an improvement on the previous district unattractive condition of the site. However, while this was also mentioned in the case of the Access Co-op it was not enough to outweigh other negative perceptions.

Privacy, Sun, and Views The urban designer's examination of the projects showed that in most cases efforts have been made to be considerate of neighbours privacy, sun, and view. There are lapses of course. The West 41st and Access developments overlook adjacent backyards.
The Thin House, while conforming to all the zoning regulations which bind a normal single-family house, nevertheless creates a high blank cinder block wall running almost the full length of the west side of the lot. This is visually obtrusive to the west neighbour, and blocks the sun to some degree. However, it is probably no worse than what might occur were a typical new house to be built on a normal sized lot next door.

Access Co-op heights have been carefully adjusted to maintain views for uphill houses. While South Twins Court and Euclid Square both eliminate views which used to exist for adjacent houses, the flat nature of the land makes it almost impossible for any type of development to do otherwise.

Generally, the neighbours' responses to the survey were similar to the observations of the urban designer. There were a number of complaints about privacy and a shadowing problem was raised by several people on the north side of the West 41st Project. This was due partly to the large trees which were retained on the site as a buffer between the new development and its neighbours. View blockage was mentioned by several people living near South Twins Court, and one person across the street from Euclid Square. But they generally acknowledged that, given the flat land, it could not be helped.

Traffic and parking. Overspill parking does not seem to be a problem except in the case of the Access Co-op and South Twins Court. In the first case, it may be a result of the lower than usual parking requirement allowed for social housing. Lack of parking garage security may be discouraging use of underground parking at South Twins Court.

In most cases, the design of the parking areas and driveways is careful and attractive. Again, exceptions are Access Co-op and South Twins Court where on-street parking could have been better buffered from adjacent buildings.

Residents around South Twins Court and Access Co-op complained about overflow parking. Traffic was cited as a problem by neighbours of Euclid Square. South Twins Court, and Access Co-op though residents also acknowledged that in most cases the problems could not be attributed to these projects in particular.

Environmental Impacts Summary

Having discussed environmental impacts of new developments on neighbouring areas, are there some general conclusions that can be drawn?

Firstly, from an urban design perspective, the projects are generally good to excellent. Several developments show careful efforts to fit into the area character or else to design the buildings so that they are not obtrusive.

Most area residents agree with the urban designer that the new developments are well designed. People living one to several blocks away say the new developments have little or no impact on them.

But owners of abutting properties, in otherwise exclusively single-family neighbourhoods, say they feel as strongly against the new development today as they did when it was proposed. Concerns have not faded nor changed with exposure in spite of substantial efforts to design projects so as to reduce the impact on neighbouring properties.

It is important to remember that many of the concerns expressed in the preceding pages were issues raised by adjacent neighbours in predominantly single-family neighbourhoods.

In some areas neighbours were more accepting of the new developments. Existing residents were more likely to accept developments which improved a previously derelict site, where they can identify a specific benefit, such as a park, built in conjunction with the project, or where the higher density housing is part of an already mixed-use neighbourhood. Some single-family owners in mixed neighbourhoods said they prefer multiple townhouses to commercial uses.

We had hoped that this study would help us to prepare design guidelines for incorporating higher density housing into single-family neighbourhoods. However we concluded that better design does not substantially increase project acceptability. Location of multi-family housing on the fringe of single-family areas and near shops and transportation was found to be more important to community acceptance than good design.
Concern: Impact on property values and stability (rentals)

Results: Little or no impact on tenancy or land values
Uncertainty when sell
Economics

For most people their home is their most valuable asset, so concerns over economic impacts are frequently expressed when higher density developments are proposed nearby. Will the project decrease the desirability of their property and hence its value? Will many neighbors decide to rent out their houses, or sell them and move? What will this do to the area’s housing market, and resale value? Will the development encourage speculation?

Sales, Tenure Changes, and Speculation

Using city directories, we plotted changes in occupant ownership for properties adjacent to four of the projects over a period of years before and after they were built. This enabled us to infer what sales activity there had been. The Thin House could not be included due to incomplete directory information prior to 1976, and Access Co-op is so new that sales patterns cannot be traced.

In only one case was there a change which seems to be related to the project. This was with South Twins Court, where in 1978 four of the five houses across the street from the development went from owner occupancy to rental. These gradually returned to ownership and in 1981 only one rental unit was listed. The pattern, combined with the fact that the street in question intersects Kingsway, suggests that speculative interests may have been at work, anticipating the possibility of another apartment zoning, and have later become discouraged.

To further explore possible changes in the number of rented homes, we looked at listings for what we called the immediate area of projects — a radius of two blocks or so — for the year of the development permit application, two years later, and in 1981. Again, Access Co-op could not be included.

With the exception of the Thin House, the areas show a consistent pattern. The number of rental properties increased by from one to three houses during the two years after the development was built. All cases show a decrease again in 1981 back to roughly the same level as in the year of the development permit application. The exception, the Thin House area, showed a continuous decrease in rental properties from eight in 1978 to six in 1979, to three in 1981.

The rental patterns in the immediate area of the projects were then compared to the data on rentals available for their larger census tracts. The proportions of rental in the immediate areas within two blocks...
of the projects at the time of construction and in 1981 are consistent with those in the larger census tracts.

All these findings point to the conclusion that the projects have had little or no long-term effect on number of house sales or home rentals in the immediate neighbourhood.

**Property Values** In our survey we asked neighbours if they felt the project had affected their property values. A majority of those around Access Co-op expressed concern over lowered values as did several near the West 41st Project. While the current Thin House was not seen as devaluing nearby properties most neighbours felt that any more in the area would have a serious effect. While no respondents near Shannon Mews felt their property values were affected, several felt this was because of the unusual circumstances of the property having been an old estate and that further higher density development would have an effect.

Conversely, one respondent each, near Euclid Square and South Twins Court felt the projects had increased their property value. One felt that a similar development was likely in this block, and that he would profit by the sale of his land. The other simply felt that the project was a definite improvement over the previous vacant lot which had been used as a dumping ground, and that this improvement had increased the desirability of his own lot.

In estimating what the actual impact of the developments has been on adjacent property values we looked at the assessed value of the land in 1984, and tried to find instances where a land value adjacent to the project site differed from land value nearby, and whether this difference could be attributed to the projects' presence. To do this we examined the assessment records and discussed with assessment authority staff the reasons for any variations.

Land value assessment is based as closely as possible on the market value of the land. Assessors, reviewing land sales data, establish an "area norm" for land value related to lot size. They then carefully look at each piece of property and adjust the value to account for certain factors they have found to be significant in affecting market value. These

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Public process

The public consultation process which occurs prior to the decision on a rezoning has changed a good deal over the period of time represented by these projects. The minimum public involvement required under law is a public hearing. By the mid-seventies, Local Area Planning programs had recognized the importance of citizen participation, and the Planning Department routinely organized one or more public information meetings to discuss rezonings before the formal public hearing. In some cases in recent years, public input has been sought even earlier in the process. An example is Access Co-op where design guidelines were developed for the site and discussed publicly before the rezoning was considered.

We received varied responses from neighbours about their satisfaction with the neighbourhood consultation process which preceded approval of the projects. Euclid Square neighbours did not feel they were consulted or well informed but were not particularly concerned by this. In the case of South Twins Court, they felt involvement had been limited but they were quite satisfied with it. Residents around Shannon Mews, Access Co-op, and the West 41st Project felt that while there had been adequate information and opportunity to express their concerns, they were convinced that it had done no good, that consultation was only a formality and the decision had already been made. Thin House neighbours were also dissatisfied with the process.

There are a number of likely reasons for these responses. Residents near Euclid Square had very little pre-construction concern, and so logically would not find the public process lacking. In addition, they got a needed park for their neighbourhood along with the development. South Twins Court neighbours fought a successful battle to get the originally proposed six-storey building reduced to three, and had few other concerns. The Thin House, coming in under existing regulations and not requiring a rezoning did not require even a public hearing. Thus neighbours found it had been approved before they knew anything about it, and they fought a rear-guard action. They do feel some satisfaction with the fact that they managed to achieve the retention of the hedge and tree in the front yard, and that they later stopped a second thin house from being built beside the first.

The original rezoning of Shannon Mews predated any real attempt at a public consultation process. The public fight lasted a number of years and was particularly bitter. At one point the Council of the day approved a significant change to the terms of the original CR-1 zoning without any public consultation whatsoever. So in this case the neighbours' reaction is to a process which actually was quite insensitive.

With Access Co-op and West 41st Project, misunderstandings seem to have played an important role. Neighbours of Access Co-op were under the impression that the project was to be solely or primarily for handicapped tenants. They felt the project was misrepresented. In addition, despite a long and thorough process which included the development of special guidelines for the site, they felt that Council and certain local community groups had already made up their minds to approve the project and were not prepared to listen to the objections of the nearer neighbours. Neighbours of the West 41st Project said they had believed it to be an ongoing non-profit co-op of housing for university people, and were upset to find out later that it was a builder's co-op and that units have since been sold for high prices.

In a number of cases, we found that people believe that the "Application Notice" sign that appears on a site means the project has already been approved and that it is too late to do anything. In the case of the Access Co-op, people interpreted the drawings and model which the architect brought to the meetings as evidence that the project was finalized.

These observations on process must be tempered with a realization that in the four contentious cases what neighbours wanted was the cancellation of the projects, and not merely alterations to them. Their lack of success in this is probably the strongest factor in their dissatisfaction.

Summary Neighbour dissatisfaction with the public process is common. The idea that no one really listened to concerns or that the projects were misrepresented is at the root of much of this feeling, although the actual facts of the process vary in each case.
Generalizing about higher density housing in single-family areas on the basis of six cases is a risky business. Nevertheless, there are certain patterns which may provide lessons.

We hoped to find single-family neighbours would, over time, accept new higher density housing. What we found was that among adjacent residents, who lived in the area prior to the new development, the resentment generated by the proposal for redevelopment does not die down with the passage of time. However, counteracting this finding to some degree is the observation that people who live even a short distance from the project, though they may have voiced pre-construction concerns, report that now the project has little or no effect on them. We also found that adjacent neighbours who have moved in after the project was built have much less objection to it, understandably since if they did they would not have chosen their current house.

We found that although the negative feelings towards projects are to some degree associated with specific environmental concerns such as infringement of privacy, interference with sun or view, additional noise, or traffic and parking problems, this association is relatively weak since many of these impacts are not attributable to the projects per se, a fact that is recognized by most respondents. Most neighbours feel neutral about the design of the project itself, and many feel positive about the landscaping and maintenance.

The chief environmental factor associated with negative response is the feeling that the project simply does not belong in the context of the single-family area by virtue of its being a different generic type of housing. Despite quite successful design efforts to help the projects "fit" or "hide", many respondents claim it "doesn't belong in the neighbourhood." The projects seem to assault the mental image people have of what their area is and should be.

Related to this, and adding to it, is the neighbours' lack of knowledge about who their new neighbours are, and their opinion that they are not "family-people". We found that in fact over half the residents of the projects are area people at a different stage in their life cycle. Existing residents seem to form opinions on the basis of housing form, and this is reinforced by lack of social contact between the two groups.

There is also a widespread concern that projects have affected property values, even though we could find no factual documentation of this when we examined property assessments.

Studies suggesting that concerns about new neighbours are probably unfounded are no comfort. Nearby residents are living with uncertainty. What price will their house bring when they sell? Will more high density housing be built nearby?

Balanced against these concerns are the findings that new developments meet the needs of area residents who sell their single-family homes and move into higher density housing. Studies of resident satisfaction in new multiple housing suggest that, were we to study satisfaction, we would probably find it to be high.

How can the needs of families seeking affordable housing and area residents seeking smaller housing be balanced with the concerns of nearby single-family owners? Some answers can be drawn from the two projects — Euclid Square and South twins Court — which, while not positively embraced by the community, are better accepted.

New infill housing is better accepted by nearby single-family residents if it is:

- Located in already heterogeneous areas near transportation, shopping, and other services;
- Clearly family housing;
- An improvement over previous (derelict or incompatible) uses; and
- Accompanied by a community facility such as a park.

In conclusion, the study helped clarify the realities — and the myths — of single family residents' feelings about higher density housing developments near their homes. This understanding is something the City and its citizens must take into the balance as they approach decisions about how to increase the housing choices in Vancouver.
New Neighbours Conclusions

- Lingering uncertainty of land value impacts when sell
+ Provides housing choice for area residents

Mix works best when:
  - Near mixed use area,
  - Clearly family housing
  - Improvement over previous uses
  - Provides community amenity

Had hoped study would lead to design guidelines to increase acceptance. Guidelines not seen as a way to significantly improve acceptance prior to rezoning.