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Devoting an issue of Plan Canada to ‘housing’ presents the Editorial Board with a daunting challenge. How does one do justice to a topic as complex and varied as housing? Realistically, we could have published an entire issue on any one of three or four sub-themes, so please consider the articles in this edition as a down payment.

A case in point is the topic of ‘housing affordability.’ The articles by Jason Syvixay and Kalen Anderson, and by Leslie Shieh present different perspectives on how to fill in ‘the missing middle,’ a term that has quickly become a code word for what might well be unsolvable problems. Is ‘the missing middle’ about built form, urban economics or the challenge of how to squeeze in more density without destroying the neighbourhood? Or all of the above? There is even a new book devoted to this piece of the affordability puzzle.

Ren Thomas offers us a comprehensive cross-country round-up of municipal approaches to rental housing, identifying some of the more innovative solutions being pursued. To illustrate how challenging it is to address affordability in a meaningful way, the topic can also be seen through the lens of sustainable development. Can housing be green, energy efficient, successful in the marketplace and affordable? Gordon Harris shows us that it can.

Judging from the large number of submissions addressing the many dimensions of social housing – from which we could only select three for this issue – Canadian planners are adamant about the need to protect existing social housing assets; Sarah Cooper explains why. At the same time finding ways to develop new social housing in environments that are not always accepting is a challenge that Shad Mayne and Patricia Maloney, and Shayne Ramsay and Karen Hemmingson navigate us through.

There are also challenges in attracting an equitable mix of housing to locations served by rapid transit in hyper-active markets like the Lower Mainland. The article by Raymond Kan, James Stiver, and Lilian Chau focuses on transit oriented development (TOD), but is also about affordability and integrating social housing. For the analytically minded, Archana Vyas and Indro Bhattacharyya describe how to apply statistical rigour to implementing an affordable housing strategy, balancing practical realities such as the availability of amenities with a breakdown of demographic differences across the Region of Peel’s three municipal entities (Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon).

Adoption of the National Housing Strategy has seen the role of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) evolve. One of the four pillars of CMHC’s new mandate is to promote excellence and innovation in the housing research and data sector. Keith Stewart and Bert Pereboom unveil CMHC’s bold initiative designed to connect public policy with market dynamics through development of two simulation models. These models will be available to policy makers to facilitate decision-making for affordable housing at both the micro and macro scales. Planning effectively for housing in Indigenous communities is another theme that could have occupied an entire issue of Plan Canada. Shelagh McCartney and Michael McKay describe development of community-based housing metrics to create culturally appropriate housing in the North.

No edition of Plan Canada devoted to ‘housing’ would be complete without a critical discussion of planning education efforts to teach the next generation of planners how to achieve progressive results in spite of the complexities of housing policy and the intricacies of the marketplace. Carolyn Whitzman examines the past, present, and future education needs in this important area.

Glenn Miller RPP, FCIP is based in Toronto where he contributes to the work of the Canadian Urban Institute as a senior associate. He was editor of the Ontario Planning Journal from 1986 to 2011.

Ryan Walker RPP, MCIP is Professor and Chair of the University of Saskatchewan’s Regional and Urban Planning Program. He is co-editor of Canadian Cities in Transition: Understanding Contemporary Urbanism (Oxford University Press, 2020). Contact: ryan.walker@usask.ca.

Endnote
La question du logement

Consacrer un numéro de Plan Canada à la question du logement comportait un défi de taille pour le comité de rédaction. Comment rendre justice à un sujet aussi complexe et hétérogène que le logement ? En réalité, nous aurions pu publier un numéro entier sur chaque sous-thème de la question, ce qui en dit long sur sa profondeur et son contenu.

La question de l’abordabilité du logement en est un bon exemple. Les articles de Jason Sywixay et Kalen Anderson et de Leslie Shieh présentent différentes perspectives sur la façon de combler le « milieu manquant », un terme qui esquisse en quelques mots des problèmes qui pourraient bien se révéler insolubles. Le « milieu manquant » concerne-t-il la forme construite, l’économie urbaine ou le défi de savoir comment augmenter la densité d’un quartier sans en détruire le caractère ? Ou tout cela à la fois ? Il y a même un nouveau livre consacré à cette question du casse-tête de l’accessibilité financière.1

Ren Thomas nous offre un tour d’horizon complet des approches municipales en matière de logement locatif à travers le pays, en identifiant certaines des solutions les plus innovatrices qui sont explorées. Pour illustrer à quel point il est difficile d’aborder la question de l’abordabilité des logements d’une manière significative, le sujet peut également être considéré dans l’optique du développement durable. Le logement peut-il être à la fois écologique, écoénergétique, prospère sur le marché et abordable ? Gordon Harris nous démontre que cela est possible.

À en juger par le grand nombre de soumissions portant sur les nombreuses dimensions du logement social – parmi lesquelles nous n’en avons retenu que trois pour ce numéro – les urbanistes canadiens sont fermement convaincus de la nécessité de protéger les actifs existants du logement social. Sarah Cooper nous explique pourquoi. Parallèlement, Shad Mayne et Patricia Maloney et Shayne Ramsay et Karen Hemmingson nous aident à trouver des moyens de créer de nouveaux logements sociaux dans des milieux pas toujours accueillants, cela constituant un défi que nous nous devons de surmonter.

Il est également difficile d’atteindre un éventail équitable de logements dans les endroits desservis par le transport en commun rapide dans les marchés hyperactifs comme le Lower Mainland. L’article de Raymond Kan, James Stiver et Lilian Chau porte sur les AATC, mais aussi sur l’abordabilité et l’intégration du logement social.

Pour les esprits analytiques, Archana Vyas et Indro Bhattacharyya décrivent comment appliquer la rigueur statistique à la mise en œuvre d’une stratégie de logement abordable, en soufflant des réalités pratiques comme la disponibilité des services et les différences démographiques dans les trois entités municipales de la région de Peel (Mississauga, Brampton et Caledon).

L’adoption de la Stratégie nationale sur le logement a fait évoluer le rôle de la Société canadienne d’hypothèques et de logement. L’un des quatre piliers du nouveau mandat de la SCHL est de promouvoir l’excellence de logements, en soufflant des réalités pratiques comme la disponibilité des services et les différences démographiques dans les trois entités municipales de la région de Peel (Mississauga, Brampton et Caledon).

L’initiative audacieuse de la SCHL visant à relier les politiques publiques à la recherche et des données sur le logement. Keith Stewart et Bert Pereboom dévoilent l’initiative audacieuse de la SCHL visant à relier les politiques publiques à la dynamique du marché par l’élaboration de deux modèles de simulation. Ces modèles seront mis à la disposition des décideurs pour faciliter la prise de décision en matière de logement abordable, tant à l’échelle microéconomique que macroéconomique.

La planification efficace du logement dans les communautés autochtones est un autre thème qui aurait pu faire l’objet d’un numéro entier de Plan Canada. Shelagh McCartney et Michael McKay décrivent l’élaboration de paramètres de logement communautaire pour créer des logements adaptés culturellement dans le Nord.

Aucune édition de Plan Canada consacrée au logement ne serait complète sans une discussion critique des efforts de formation urbanistique pour enseigner à la prochaine génération d’urbanistes comment obtenir des résultats progressifs malgré la complexité des politiques du logement et les complexités des marchés. Carolyn Whitzman examine les besoins passés, présents et futurs en matière d’éducation autour de cette importante question.

Glenn Miller UPC, FICU et Ryan Walker UPC, MICU


Note en fin de texte
Today, planners’ conversations about the ‘missing middle’ are centred on returning our built landscapes to a smaller, more human-scale. Imagine medium-density housing positioned in older and core neighbourhoods. Along with these housing typologies, we would hope to see more people, trees, parks, open spaces, gathering spaces, and opportunities for human connection.

The term ‘missing middle’ refers to multi-unit, medium-density housing that, in terms of scale and density, falls between single detached homes and tall apartment buildings. It includes row housing, triplexes/fourplexes, courtyard housing, and walk-up apartments. These housing forms are considered “missing” because they have been largely absent from urban streetscapes in Canada, including Edmonton.

The City of Edmonton recently turned its gaze towards the ‘missing middle,’ developing an arsenal of strategies from a nationally-recognized Infill Roadmap to the Missing Middle Infill Design Competition to help reverse housing displacement to the suburbs. The goal is to plan and design for healthy, vibrant, human-scale, and aesthetically-enriching infill housing in the city core.

**MEET ME IN THE MIDDLE**

Aspirational, intergenerational, contextually-sensitive designs proposed as part of Edmonton’s Missing Middle Infill Design Competition

By Jason Syvixay and Kalen Anderson

**SUMMARY**
Societal and economic challenges have driven people away from core and mature neighbourhoods to settle on the fringes. This slow loss of people in central neighbourhoods has cost Canadian cities billions in new infrastructure and servicing. This shift in population, however, has also inspired many municipalities, including Edmonton to develop strategies to nurture a more compact urban form, from its Infill Roadmap to the Missing Middle Infill Design Competition, which challenged teams of architects and builders/developers to design a multi-unit, ‘missing middle’ housing development that was thoughtful of neighbourhood context, economically feasible and well-designed to work in Edmonton.
Meet me in the middle

EDMONTON'S HOUSING EVOLUTION
Edmonton’s current interest in filling in the ‘missing middle’ has its origins in attempts to repair damage done to the city’s mature neighbourhoods during a period of rapid growth in the 1960s. A program of urban renewal, often referred to as ‘de-slumming,’ focused on removing sub-standard housing adjacent to the central business district while preserving the character of suburban communities. These initiatives failed to attract new housing, resulting in a legacy of surface parking lots that remained undeveloped for decades, creating a sharp division between ‘core and suburb’ across the city. Between 1971 and 2011, the population of

The term ‘missing middle’ refers to multi-unit housing that falls between single detached homes and tall apartment buildings.
older neighbourhoods declined by more than 70,000 but continued to grow in the suburbs.

Today, Edmonton is asking itself: What are we hoping to achieve over the next 40 years as the city grapples with plans to double its population? What choices do we need to make to become a healthy, urban, and climate resilient city of 2 million people that supports a prosperous region? Providing accessible, diverse, and affordable housing, citywide, is central to tackling these questions.

THE INFILL IMPERATIVE

Edmonton is once again experiencing rapid growth, with its population increasing by 72,000 in the past three years alone. Although the city’s mature neighbourhoods have recently benefited from redevelopment through infill, the wholesale demolition of small-scale housing in the past to make way for highways and high-rise apartment towers has left a bad taste in the mouths of many residents. So, where to next?

The conversation began in 2014 with development of the city’s first Infill Roadmap, which focused on facilitating gentle density – small-scale, low-density infill redevelopment. The second edition, published in 2018, was more ambitious. The document sets out to improve knowledge, promote collaboration, and better explain the rules, addressing the question, “How do we welcome more people and homes into Edmonton’s older neighbourhoods?” The 2018 Infill Roadmap firmly shifted the focus of city building in the direction of ‘the missing middle,’ encouraging a variety of medium-density housing forms.

The Roadmap identified 25 actions aimed at creating new opportunities for medium-density development by managing population growth in a rational and contextual manner, responding to changing economic and cultural housing needs, reducing the city’s ecological footprint, maximizing existing and future infrastructure investments, and maintaining neighbourhood vibrancy.
So what has been achieved so far? While many of the actions are still underway – with changes to zoning and policies to enable infill to develop as-of-right in places that typically did not allow it – the real proof of the project is in the collective commitment from Council, administration, and the larger community to advance citywide changes.

DESIGN MATTERS
As Canadian cities grow, redevelop, and change, perennial questions about how to better design for density and diversity bloom across the urban and political landscapes. In an ongoing effort to build better places for more people, communities large and small are grappling with similar issues when it comes to redeveloping and retrofitting existing neighbourhoods, corridors, and centres. There are also many real and relevant fears about massive change and incoming monolithic designs that might negatively alter the community. If the urban renewal efforts of the 1960s taught planners anything, it is that design matters, and that people, not planners or projects, should come first.

The Missing Middle Infill Design Competition held in 2019 turned its gaze to medium-density or ‘missing middle’ housing and how to develop housing that is both economically-feasible and well-designed. Increasing the city’s housing choices, particularly how to integrate more housing in the ‘missing middle’ range, is an important part of The City Plan – Edmonton’s future growth strategy for a city headed towards a metropolitan area of two million people.

Endorsed by The Alberta Association of Architects, the 2019 competition drew proposals from teams of architects, builders, and developers from across Canada and abroad. Their task: design a ‘missing middle’ housing development on five city-owned parcels of land at the northeast corner of 112 Avenue and 106 Street in the Spruce Avenue neighbourhood. Their prize: national publicity, the opportunity to purchase this prime site and build their winning design, city-led assistance throughout the rezoning and development permit application stages, and waived rezoning fees.

GLOWING COMMUNITY ENDORSEMENT
The competition criteria were created with input from the Spruce Avenue Community League and Spruce Avenue residents. Prior to the start of the competition, residents participated in a community workshop to refine the criteria used to evaluate submissions. Two residents from the community were selected as community advisors to ensure that community perspectives provided by the Spruce Avenue Community League and Spruce Avenue community were considered during the jury deliberations.

To provide applicant teams outside of Edmonton a sense of the neighbourhood’s flavour, an Esri StoryMap of the neighbourhood profile and context analysis of Spruce Avenue was developed. The analysis was also gifted to the Spruce Avenue community as a living repository of stories, data, and information about the neighbourhood.

THE WINNING DESIGN
Nearly 100 renderings were received, along with 30 proformas or proposed budgets, outlining hard and soft cost assumptions for planning, development, and construction, as well as anticipated revenues. It is estimated that the submissions represented more than half a million dollars of architectural design work from applicant teams consisting of architects, builders, developers, landscape architects, and other design professionals, from Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Seattle, in addition to preliminary registrations from

London (UK), Regina, Hamilton, Toronto, and Oklahoma City.

The first-place winning design, The Goodweather, by developer Part & Parcel, builder Studio North, and architect-of-record, Gravity Architecture, won for its contextually-responsive design and its high degree of construction viability and replicable design elements. The Goodweather proposal articulated well-conceived semi-private spaces and amenities, such as courtyards, and it activated the street by situating residences close to the sidewalk.

The Goodweather synthesizes a variety of existing typologies into an exciting new configuration that brings together many demographics and generations into one pocket of the community. In total, there are 56 dwellings: 14 townhouses designed for young families, 21 single bedroom loft dwellings for students and young professionals, and 21 ground-level dwellings designed for seniors. There are 14 single car garages and six guest parking stalls, all accessed from a laneway.

“We felt a responsibility to create vibrant social spaces, so, from the start we knew that the development had to be focused around a common courtyard,” said Mark Erickson of Studio North. “We wanted it to be a beautiful space that residents of the community would feel proud of and want to spend time in, extending their living space and making an outdoor living room. Just like Edmonton’s storied river valley that cuts through the downtown, the courtyard of The Goodweather is a meandering, forested path flanked by terraced dwellings on either side.”

GOOD DESIGN SUPPORTS MORE GOOD DESIGN

The impacts of the Missing Middle Infill Design Competition have been far-reaching across the City of Edmonton. Many of the runners-up in the competition were connected to other city teams, surplus land sites, and development projects. The project served as a precedent for other national and international design competitions. Many of the insights from the competition are informing current City of Edmonton planning efforts, from the Municipal Development Plan to the rewriting of the Zoning Bylaw.

As new plans and policy initiatives like the Infill Roadmap and City Plan begin to contemplate the types of urban spaces and places that are needed to help people live prosperous lives, design remains a fundamental pillar in the ways in which spaces and places can be used, enjoyed, and accessed. The Missing Middle Infill Design Competition submissions, and the range of aesthetics and uses they proposed, are helping the City of Edmonton get to the heart of these discussions.

Learn more about Edmonton’s infill context at www.cityofedmontoninfill.ca or about the Missing Middle Infill Design Competition by visiting www.edmontoninfilldesign.ca.

**Jason Syvixay** is an urban planner and public relations professional currently completing his PhD in Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Alberta. He has worked as the managing director of the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ, a planner with HTFC Planning & Design, and now with the City of Edmonton, focusing on infill policy and development.

**Kalen Anderson** has worked for the City of Edmonton for over a decade, and is based in its Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development Department. She leads a multidisciplinary team and is currently the Director of Edmonton’s City Plan, to grow from 1 to 2 million people in a manner that is healthy, urban, climate resilient and supports a prosperous region.
CHALLENGES IN FILLING THE MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING GAP

By Leslie Shieh

SUMMARY
For decades, planners have advocated for the creation of livable, walkable neighbourhoods. A key element, referred to increasingly as ‘the missing middle,’ is ground-oriented housing that fills the gap between single-family dwellings and high-rise towers. This article identifies some of the obstacles limiting their development.

RÉSUMÉ
Depuis des décennies, les urbanistes ont prôné la création de quartiers où il fait bon vivre, où il est possible de marcher. Un élément clé, de plus en plus connu sous le nom de « milieu manquant » est essentiellement une formule de logement qui s’inscrit entre la formule unifamiliale et les tours d’habitation. Cet article rend compte de certains obstacles à son développement.

A term gaining popularity is “the missing middle,” which refers to low-rise housing forms such as duplexes, townhouses, and courtyard apartments that bridge the gap between single-family dwellings and high-rise condominiums.

INTRODUCTION
The quest for housing affordability, particularly in larger Canadian cities, is closely linked to the challenge of densifying single-family neighbourhoods. A term gaining popularity is “the missing middle,” which refers to low-rise housing forms such as duplexes, townhouses, and courtyard apartments that bridge the gap between single-family dwellings and high-rise condominiums. American architect, Daniel Parolek, who introduced the term, emphasised that their small building footprints, shared walls, and simple construction make missing middle housing forms more affordable and compatible with single-family homes.

To gently add density in many neighbourhoods zoned for single-family use, the City of Vancouver has introduced as-of-right development for duplexes, secondary units, and laneway suites. Of the missing middle housing forms, we have seen less of the low-rise, ground-oriented apartments in the new construction housing stock. This article identifies some development challenges that may explain why they are not being built.

SIGNIFICANCE OF MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING FORMS
The argument for introducing more diverse housing forms into mature neighbourhoods is not only about density. The integration
of density supports greater amenities for walkable neighbourhoods such as small retail shops, car sharing, and public transit. Furthermore, as the makeup of Canadian families evolves with societal and demographic shifts, missing middle housing offers more choices to meet the needs of diverse families, from single-parent to multi-generational households. Greater housing choice of the right supply is particularly important in a city like Vancouver, where housing prices have risen faster than average income.

DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

The 2016 Census showed that about one-third of Vancouverites lived in apartment buildings less than five storeys in height. It further revealed that Vancouver’s stock of low-rise apartments is aging, with more than half built before 1980. Only 4% were built between 2011 and 2016. Understanding why so few are being constructed at this scale underscores the challenge ahead. Some of the reasons could include the following.

1. Builders of missing middle housing are smaller development firms

Smaller development firms are less able to acquire, hold multiple sites, and undertake several projects simultaneously. Therefore, their output capacity is less than that of high-volume condominium developers.

2. Land zoned for as-of-right development is limited

Currently, in most single-family areas, one lot could have four dwelling units – a duplex and a secondary rental unit in each. To increase the number of dwelling units would require rezoning. Small-scale developers usually avoid the rezoning process because it adds time, incurs additional carrying costs, and increases risks.

3. The challenges of rezoning discourage missing middle housing development

Rezoning applications typically attempt to maximize the number of units in order to justify the increased time, effort, and risk. The results favour efficiency (e.g., smaller units off of double-loaded corridors) over designs that would be perceived as more compatible in single-family neighbourhoods, but more expensive, such as courtyard apartments.

4. Rezoning conditions can be onerous for the development budget of smaller-scaled projects

An important rezoning requirement is the Community Amenity Contribution which seeks to capture about three-quarters of...
the value gained from the additional density to fund local public amenities. Vancouver’s Green Building Policy for Rezoning requires residential projects to meet the more expensive buildings standards (e.g. Passive House). Also, in addition to the Development Cost Levy required of all new developments for infrastructure improvements, developers may be required to contribute to other servicing upgrades, such as sewer and streetlights. While all these costs can obviously be justified, the standards and specifications have, for the most part, been calculated for larger developments, where costs can be pro-rated across more units.

**CONCLUSION**

The missing middle housing gap draws attention to the tension between housing options, affordability, and livability. A recent competition for missing middle housing organized by Vancouver’s Urbanarium society found that, without incentives, projects would not be affordable for middle-income families. (Founded by Ray Spaxman RPP, FCIP, former City of Vancouver Director of Planning, the non-profit Urbanarium encompasses a group of Vancouver urbanites that includes architects, planners, and other citizens passionate about citymaking.)

Solutions, possibly involving non-market mechanisms such as rental or price restriction covenants or community land trusts, will require collaboration involving multiple city departments, developers, and the community. Greater coordination across city departments could benefit smaller-scale rezoning projects, setting the scene for a more streamlined development approvals process and longer-term initiatives such as support for prefabrication and digital tools to reduce construction waste.

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**Leslie Shieh** PhD, RPP is the co-founder of Tomo Spaces, a Vancouver-based firm with a focus on social purpose real estate. Recently, she was part of the team whose project won second place in the Vancouver Urbanarium’s Missing Middle Housing Competition. (ls@tomospaces.com)

**REFERENCES**

INTRODUCTION

Until the adoption of the National Housing Strategy in 2017, Canadian municipalities were in a state of limbo. Unable to build rental housing on their own, and unwilling to forgo the increased property taxes often incurred with condominium development, production of rental housing was often minimal. But in the meantime, rental housing emerged as a critical housing and tenure type: market ownership grew out of reach for many, particularly single-person, immigrant, and senior households. Households may rent for a longer period of time or even forgo ownership completely.1 Demographic shifts2 and labour market shifts favouring shorter-term, lower-paying jobs3 have also contributed to an increase in demand for rental housing. Before the National Housing Strategy recently introduced new programs to fund rental housing in municipalities, some cities developed strategies of their own.

This article presents the results from a study of rental housing policy across 15 Canadian case studies, including plan/policy analysis, a survey, meta-analysis, and policy learning workshops. The case study cities were chosen for their range of approaches to rental housing, and can be grouped into three categories:

SUMMARY

For many years, Canadian cities have struggled with housing affordability and with building new rental housing, a critical housing type for many households. What kinds of policy approaches are planners, developers, and non-profit housing organizations using to preserve existing rental units and to build new ones? Cities across the country are using innovative approaches, and planning tools and regulations are only part of the story.

RÉSUMÉ

Pendant de nombreuses années, les villes canadiennes ont peiné à offrir des logements abordables et à construire de nouveaux logements locatifs, un type de résidence essentiel pour de nombreux ménages. À quelles approches stratégiques les urbanistes, les promoteurs et les organismes de logement sans but lucratif ont-ils recours pour préserver les logements locatifs existants et en construire de nouveaux? Partout au pays, les villes recourent à des approches novatrices, et les outils et règlements urbanistiques ne sont qu’une partie du tableau.

Most cities still struggle to protect existing rental housing units.
RESEARCH RESULTS

The main barriers faced in the development of rental housing, and its protection, were investigated in a survey of 102 planners, developers, and non-profit housing organization staff working in the case study cities. Barriers included:

- Difficulties coordinating partnerships/lack of communication, especially between stakeholders within their own region
- Lack of funding from federal and provincial governments, and inflexible government funding programs (participants noted that they not yet accessed new funding through the NHS)
- Administrative burden associated with policies, programs, and strategies
- Lack of community support for densification and multifamily housing outside core area
- Lack of data on rental housing supply

An analysis of the official plans, housing strategies, programs, and bylaws for each case study showed that policy approaches fell into four categories (see Figure 1).

Every city used the ‘universal’ approaches, but few integrated ‘uncommon’ or ‘unique’ approaches such as municipal development corporations/non-profits and land banks. Stronger policy wording was often matched with funding. For example, Edmonton introduced a program to create approximately 75 new secondary suites and add another 75 new secondary suites per year from 2013-2016, facilitated through a program that funded up to 50% of renovations up to a maximum of $20,000. In Vancouver their inclusionary zoning policy requires 20% of residential floor space for affordable housing for sites over two acres in size, and their 10-Year Affordable Housing Delivery and Financial Strategy (2018) proposed increasing the requirement to 30% (20% social and 10% moderate income housing). In the Cambie Corridor Plan (2018), specific areas such as the Oakridge Municipal Town Centre allow the development of 100% secured rental buildings with 20% of their floor area designated as social housing to be turned over to the City, or with up to 25% below-market rental housing.

Unique approaches often required the cooperation of the provincial government, and it was clear that some municipalities benefited from these strong relationships. In Montréal and Sherbrooke, the Société d’habitation du Québec (SHQ) runs AccèsLogis, a provincial program supporting the crowdsourcing of public, community, and private resources to create permanent rental housing for low- to middle-income households or permanent housing with supports for seniors. Community groups, non-profit organizations, and public agencies that have the support of the municipality and community (e.g., local charities, public agencies, private companies, or public fundraising initiatives) can apply. Municipalities contribute a share to AccèsLogis: Sherbrooke contributes 15% to projects in the region, and aims to add 239 new units from 2016-2019. The survey participants noted that overcoming the barriers to rental housing provision involved cross-sector collaboration (e.g., Ottawa, Calgary, and Vancouver have established collaborative networks) and communicating the benefits of rental housing to the public (e.g., Edmonton has seen some success in educational events).

Most cities still struggle to protect existing rental housing units: the only tool used was a bylaw on condominium conversion, and the units that are most often protected are those initially funded through provincial or federal programs. Although they do a better job of implementing new rental units, most survey respondents noted that even when the city had set targets for new units, they did not meet their targets. Participants in Calgary, Edmonton, Montreal, Vancouver, and Victoria indicated that their city had taken a leadership role, establishing programs, making changes to their zoning plans, and obtaining investments from provincial governments.

A meta-analysis of the case studies (comparing data across the cases) showed that several key factors made a difference in their current practices of protection and implementation, as shown in Figure 2.

For municipalities who want to increase their rental housing stock, a starting point could be determining whether they can expend more effort strengthening the factors that are most critical to them. Participants in our Halifax-based policy learning workshops found that many of the ideas from other cities could be integrated, but some were not appropriate in their geographic or political context. For example, the rural parts of Halifax

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**PROGRAM COMPARISON**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIVERSAL</th>
<th>COMMON</th>
<th>UNCOMMON</th>
<th>UNIQUE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent supplements</td>
<td>Condominium conversion policies</td>
<td>Municipal development corporations</td>
<td>Vancouver: Rental 100 Secured Market Rental Housing Policy, Foreign Buyers’ Tax, Vacancy Tax By-Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renovation/rehabilitation programs</td>
<td>Reduction/elimination of development fees</td>
<td>Plans emphasizing affordable housing near transit</td>
<td>Saskatoon Rental Development Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies encouraging secondary suites</td>
<td>Capital grants for new rental units</td>
<td>Housing reserve funds</td>
<td>Province of Québec AccèsLogis Program</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Sale of municipal land for affordable housing</td>
<td>Land Banks</td>
<td>Province of Manitoba Rental Housing Construction Tax Credit Program</td>
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<td>Inclusionary zoning</td>
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<td>Property tax exemptions</td>
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Figure 1. Policy and program approaches used to protect/implement rental housing.
Regional Municipality would not be able to use density bonuses, and lack of trust between governments and private developers has hindered the development of partnerships. Participants felt that roles and responsibilities of the organizations needed clarification, and planning tools could work if they were flexible enough to be used throughout the region. Because capacity is still an issue (most organizations only have one staff person working on housing), a central organization that could provide information to individuals or organizations looking for information on rental housing would be beneficial. Building capacity in the non-profit sector, especially on the financing and development of rental housing, and improving public support for multi-family developments and rooming houses, were considered critical.

While planning tools, by-laws, and programs were critical in rental housing protection and implementation, cities with strong collaboration practices and partnerships tended to have more effective and comprehensive approaches. Discussing goals and values, sharing data and other information, and learning from each other are necessary in the development of municipal policy solutions.

### Figure 2. Critical success factors in rental housing protection and implementation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Factor</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy Intent</td>
<td>Clear goals or targets for protection/implementation of rental units, linked to an implementation strategy or action plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Strength</td>
<td>Specific and strong wording on protection/implementation, linked to funding or other supports [e.g., technical advice]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Enforcement</td>
<td>Enforcement and monitoring of progress towards goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Tools</td>
<td>Widespread use of tools [e.g., tax exemptions, streamlined processing of applications]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration/Partnerships</td>
<td>A high level of collaboration and established partnerships, a major overlap in goals and vision, and very clear roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergovernmental Cooperation</td>
<td>Local plans and policies clearly align with provincial priorities and programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Leadership</td>
<td>Strong leadership from a municipal organization/department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Funding</td>
<td>A wide range of grants and support for protection/implementation [e.g., capital grants, advice for municipal staff, sharing technical expertise]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter Vulnerability</td>
<td>Higher than average vacancy rates, few tenants paying 30% or more of their pre-tax income towards rent, low monthly rents, most units in good condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Preferences</td>
<td>High preference for rental tenure and/or low preference for ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Support</td>
<td>Strong public support for rental, multifamily, and other dense housing types</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regional Municipality would not be able to use density bonuses, and lack of trust between governments and private developers has hindered the development of partnerships. Participants felt that roles and responsibilities of the organizations needed clarification, and planning tools could work if they were flexible enough to be used throughout the region. Because capacity is still an issue (most organizations only have one staff person working on housing), a central organization that could provide information to individuals or organizations looking for information on rental housing would be beneficial. Building capacity in the non-profit sector, especially on the financing and development of rental housing, and improving public support for multi-family developments and rooming houses, were considered critical.

While planning tools, by-laws, and programs were critical in rental housing protection and implementation, cities with strong collaboration practices and partnerships tended to have more effective and comprehensive approaches. Discussing goals and values, sharing data and other information, and learning from each other are necessary in the development of municipal policy solutions.

**Rental housing approaches across Canada**

**Ren Thomas** RPP, MCIP is Assistant Professor at the Dalhousie University School of Planning and editor of Planning Canada: A Case Study Approach, a compilation of case studies in Canadian planning. In addition to the rental housing study, she just finished a study of non-profit housing in Halifax as part of a Canada-wide study on neighbourhood change led by J. David Hulchanski. Research reports for both studies can be found on her website, www.renthomas.ca. Contact: ren.thomas@dal.ca

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**Endnotes**

SUSTAINABLE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Naïve dream or economic imperative?

By Gordon Harris

SUMMARY
In a housing market that is increasingly unaffordable, there is a misconception that profitable new product must be spartan and not necessarily aesthetically pleasing – and that we have reduced scope for achieving a higher standard of sustainability. But Gordon Harris’s experience in developing the community of UniverCity on Burnaby Mountain in Metro Vancouver proves the opposite to be true. In a climate changing world, green, energy efficient buildings are essential and, during all of their lifetime, the most affordable. Developers who hope to thrive will also find that beauty is as saleable as accessibility and sustainability. Aiming higher pays off.

RÉSUMÉ
Dans un marché immobilier de plus en plus inabordable, on croit à tort que les nouveaux produits rentables doivent être spartiates et pas nécessairement esthétiques — et que nous disposons de marges réduites pour atteindre un niveau de durabilité supérieur. Mais l’expérience de Gordon Harris dans le développement de la communauté d’UniverCity à Burnaby Mountain dans le Grand Vancouver prouve le contraire. Dans un monde en évolution climatique, les bâtiments verts et écoénergétiques sont essentiels et, pendant toute leur durée de vie, les plus abordables. Les promoteurs qui souhaitent prospérer constateront également que la beauté est toute aussi monnayable que l’accessibilité et la durabilité. Viser plus haut rapporte.

Truly Sustainable development is a high bar, but it can be cleared.

The rigours and risks of housing development make it easy to despair – to think that it is impossible to build homes, neighbourhoods, and communities that are beautiful, sustainable, and affordable. But the record shows that achieving this standard isn’t just possible; it may be the only way to sustain our profession itself.

Of course, there is a risk, right off, of getting tripped up on terms. For instance, I included beautiful in the mix, even though it is a subjective term that some might challenge as a luxury feature. But if you’re building ugly buildings, your principal contribution to affordability is that you’re lowering the neighbourhood property value. Planners are creating the communities of tomorrow, places where we all have to live. Why wouldn’t we take the care – and make the quicker sale – by producing attractive product?

The definition of sustainable is similarly slippery, largely because the word is misused so often to mean “incrementally better.” Truly sustainable development – development that meets the needs of the present without compromising options for the future – is a high bar, but it can be cleared. The SFU Community Trust built the UniverCity Childcare Centre (seeking certification as the first Living Building in western Canada), on time, under budget and for 18% less...
than conventional childcare centres being constructed at the same time. We all can aim higher – on every project – and we must.

Affordability can be equally hard to define or achieve. In Metro Vancouver, the composite benchmark price for all homes is nearly $1 million; for detached homes, it’s $1.4 million. So, casual references to “affordable” housing tend to be dismissed as sardonic or unrealistic. Yet, there are models, innovations, and government programs that can help us deliver homes that people can afford.

In the true low-income market, direct public investment is almost essential. But moving up, there are also indirect vehicles, such as CMHC and BC Housing programs that provide preferential financing rates to help developers supply product for lower-income consumers. This intervention works more easily with purpose-built rental, where affordability is secured in favour of the end user. Developers who retain ownership on rental buildings can leverage financing-cost savings to set and keep rents lower and still make a return on investment. This doesn’t work in condo projects. On those, even if a developer offers an initial discount, unit
value tends to rise quickly to market average. The first buyer might get a windfall, but the stock is unlikely to remain “affordable.”

SFU Community Trust avoided this problem with a building called Verdant in the Burnaby Mountain community of UniverCity in 2007. As an institutional landowner acting on behalf of Simon Fraser University, we leased a development parcel at less-than-market value to a developer, Vancity Enterprises, that agreed to provide the ultimate product exclusively to SFU faculty and staff at a 20% discount. Crucially, the buyers also accepted a covenant on title, decreeing that, when they sold, they would pass the discount along. It’s worked brilliantly. Owners have enjoyed relative increases in equity and new buyers still have access to a discounted product – the popularity of which is evident in the 300-person waiting list we maintain for the 60 units.

This illustrates one of the challenges in creating more affordable units. In the ensuing 12 years, no one else seems to have copied our success, perhaps because even institutional landowners are reticent to forgo full market value on development parcels when they are eyeing that income for other

UNIVERCITY ENERGY REQUIREMENTS:

**Intent:** Reduce the use of non-renewable fossil fuel resources and decrease the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions.

- Buildings to meet or exceed Step 2 of the Building Code
- All buildings connect to the low-carbon District Energy System (DES)
- Fundamental building systems commissioning required
- Part 3 wall performance to R-15, reduced thermal bridging, argon windows, warm-edge spacers
- 100% LED lighting
institutional objectives. Still, for SFU, which is competing for talent in a prohibitively expensive housing market, there’s no question that this has been a worthwhile investment.

There are other models. The Whistler Housing Authority has developed property with a similar up-front land discount (effectively “zeroing” land value), but rather than locking in a pre-set discount, the Authority capped the allowable equity increase based on the Consumer Price Index and inflation rates. The model has worked well, with one caveat. In a market where values have increased much faster than inflation, the buyers, and the benefits, get stuck; long-term owners – even those who no longer need a subsidy – can’t afford to upgrade because their equity increase hasn’t kept pace. So, the units don’t turn over and new Whistler workers are still struggling to find homes.

The Toronto-based non-profit, Options for Homes, takes a different approach, providing a 15% discount to eligible buyers and then recapturing the discount, plus appreciation on the discounted amount, when the unit turns over. In 25 years, Options (which now has $1 billion of product in development in the pipeline) has used this model to build more than 3,000 homes – in the process, building a working fund of more than $100 million.

Density bonusing and/or rezoning to increased density is another important vehicle for working toward affordability. This reflects the simple pressures of supply and demand. Jurisdictions across the continent have capped supply by limiting density. In locations like Toronto and Vancouver, high demand has driven costs beyond most buyers’ capacity. We’re hearing more about cities, or states, removing those density limits. Minneapolis and Seattle have begun to up-zone single-family neighbourhoods en bloc, and Oregon has banned single-family zoning in any community over 25,000. This is sure to have an impact as developers begin to meet demand in neighbourhoods that are highly valued for their convenience and livability.

The Canadian response has been less bold. In Toronto, the term “yellowbelt” was coined to describe neighbourhoods where densification increases are limited to allowing secondary suites and laneway housing – a loosening of restrictions that still falls short. A City of Vancouver policy to allow duplexes on single family lots also looks positive, but, at best, promises a doubling of density in neighbourhoods where the market would absorb a much larger increase.

Admittedly, this is complicated by the limits of infrastructure. Existing pipes and power lines may support a simple doubling of density in some single-family neighbourhoods, but a bolder density increase may be required to offset infrastructure upgrades in others. So, the middle-ground of multiplex or townhomes may sometimes not be economical without considerable subsidy.

Politicians must live with the preferences of their voters, so it is encouraging to see courageous initiatives such as the City of Burnaby’s new policy to offer a 20% density bonus to any developer who will keep 20% of the resulting product in an affordable range. If this helps deliver adequate supply, the market should find a price that is affordable.

This does not mean that such a market is “unfettered.” The market is fettered by a host of public policies, everything from zoning and tax policy to the regulations governing (or ignoring) the international

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movement of capital. There also are significant private advantages: for example, big city homeowners who caught the rising price wave in the last generation now have an equity position that will be extraordinarily difficult for current renters to ever match. We need to make policies – and to build product – that will serve people on both sides of that divide.

A final comment on the capacity to use purpose-built rental housing to improve the quality, performance, comfort, and long-term affordability of new buildings, and to raise the bar for the marketplace. One challenge in the hot condo sector is that builders are incentivized to limit their costs to remain competitive and to deliver prices that first time buyers can still afford. Many sustainability features needn’t cost more in a well-planned building – there needn’t be a “green premium.” As mentioned, a zero-footprint building was built at UniverCity for significantly less than a conventional structure. Good planning and execution also increase the chances that projects or neighbourhoods will be highly livable, which is the ultimate long-term value protection. But the economics of building for quick sale, as opposed to long-term rental, can still militate against sustainability. For example, it’s cheaper to build with less insulation and baseboard heaters, even if operating costs will then be higher than for buildings that are well-insulated and connected to a neighbourhood energy utility. Accordingly, a purchaser can buy low, but loses in the long-run with high operating costs, whereas an owner-operator can amortise the higher capital cost and enjoy a lifetime saving.

UniverCity addressed that problem by demanding a higher environmental performance standard and by building a low-carbon energy utility. We are also developing a new 90-unit rental building inspired by the Passive House standard, that will connect to the same energy utility. Thus, even as we have improved performance standards by regulation, we have also simplified the complexity of our mechanical systems, thereby lowering the costs for market developers, who can deliver competitively priced homes that are more efficient, more comfortable, and more liveable.

In conclusion, it makes social, economic, and environmental good sense to demand, plan for, and build homes, neighbourhoods, and communities that are beautiful, sustainable, affordable – and liveable. Really, we can’t afford to do it any other way.

Gordon Harris RPP, FCIP is President and CEO of SFU Community Trust in Burnaby, BC.
SUMMARY
For decades, social housing – that is, public, non-profit and co-operative housing – has provided good quality housing to Canadian households. As housing intentionally outside the market, it provides shelter rather than an investment opportunity. However, as long-term funding and operating agreements expire, housing providers are less able to meet the demand from low-income households as they must operate more like private landlords. Canadian housing policy, including the National Housing Strategy, must do more to enable housing providers to offer stable and flexible shelter to low-income households, and to protect social housing as a resource into the future.

RÉSUMÉ
Depuis des décennies, le logement social, c’est-à-dire le logement public, sans but lucratif et coopératif, a su fournir des logements de qualité aux ménages canadiens. Comme formule de logement qui, intentionnellement, échappe au marché, le logement social est plus une question d’abri que de possibilité d’investissement. Par contre, comme le financement à long terme et les ententes d’exploitation viennent à échéance, les fournisseurs de logement deviennent moins aptes de répondre à la demande des ménages à faible revenu, car ils doivent se comporter comme les propriétaires du secteur privé. Les politiques canadiennes en matière de logement, comme la Stratégie nationale sur le logement, doivent faire plus pour que les fournisseurs de logement puissent offrir des formules stables et souples adaptées aux ménages à faible revenu et protéger le logement social comme ressource pour l’avenir.

SOCIAL HOUSING IN A TIME OF CHANGE
Protecting an essential resource

By Sarah Cooper

Social housing has long been an integral part of Canada’s housing system. For decades, through long-term funding and operating agreements with the Government of Canada and provincial/territorial governments, more than 600,000 units of public, non-profit and co-operative housing have provided a steady supply of good quality low-cost housing. The housing is often owned and managed by local community-based organizations, who offer supports that keep hard-to-house households, and households that cannot access housing through the free market, sheltered over the long term.

Today, however, these funding and operating agreements are expiring; by 2040 all will have expired (Figure 1). Without government subsidies, housing providers must find new ways to deliver low-cost housing. They must find ways to increase revenues, usually by increasing rents, and must shift their approach away from the provision of shelter, to housing as a multi-million dollar business. This is the endpoint of a long, slow trend in low-cost housing policy in Canada that started in the 1980s: a move away from housing as a social good, with a focus on shelter ensured through long-term deep subsidies, and towards housing as a commodity and a business. In short, it’s a trend that puts low-cost social housing at risk.
WHAT IS SOCIAL HOUSING?
In Canada, social housing includes public, non-profit and co-operative housing. Public housing is owned and operated by provincial and municipal governments or arms-length corporations, while non-profit housing is owned and operated by non-profit organizations. Co-operatives are owned and managed collectively by the resident-owner members.

Public housing emerged after World War II. Originally intended for the working poor, it gradually began to house very low-income households. In 1973, the federal government introduced the non-profit and co-operative housing programs. Funding for these programs came from the federal and provincial governments, but the housing projects were developed, built, and managed by local groups: unions, faith-based groups, and service organizations. The funding began with subsidies for construction and often also included ongoing operating and rent subsidies. Most important were the rent-geared-to-income subsidies that enabled very low-income tenants to pay rents set at 25-30% of their household income.

agreements essentially limited the housing’s interaction with the market. They also required rents that low-income households could afford, enabled additional supports and flexibility, and developed the housing through a community-oriented approach. The subsidies and operating agreements enabled the housing providers to focus on providing shelter, rather than worrying about the financial bottom line.

SOCIAL HOUSING TODAY
After the federal government’s abrupt 1993 halt to funding for new social housing construction and new long-term subsidies, it continued to fund existing long-term subsidies through the funding and operating agreements. However, in the early 2000s, these agreements began to expire.

Once an agreement expires, non-profit and co-operative housing providers are no longer bound by it. While public housing remains the responsibility of the province or territory (though many provinces are selling or transferring their public housing to non-profit organizations), non-profit and co-operative housing providers must develop new operating policies and procedures to ensure their own stability over the long term.

Without subsidies, housing providers must rely on tenant rents, which are often very low. To survive post-agreement, housing providers often must increase rents, reduce supports to hard-to-house households, and develop new financing arrangements. Because rents for rent-geared-to-income units are often lower than the cost of providing the unit, the loss of long-term, deep subsidies risks the tenant’s capacity to stay, and may risk the organization’s capacity to maintain the unit. With only 15-30% rent-geared-to-income units, a housing project may be able to charge higher rents in some units to subsidize a few low-cost units; in contrast, housing projects where 100% of the units are rent-geared-to-income are simply not viable without ongoing subsidies.

EMERGING POSSIBILITIES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS
In this context, the 2017 National Housing Strategy offers both hope and cause for concern. It is a broad policy document that is intended to address a wide range of housing challenges across the country, from homelessness to home ownership to rental housing to ‘community’ (the new term for social) housing. With a promise of $40 billion over 10 years, the National Housing Strategy is a significant commitment that has potential to sustain low-cost housing.

However, the future success of the Strategy is somewhat uncertain. In order to support social housing, it must ensure long-
term subsidies, including rent-geared-to-income subsidies. Its funding should focus on access to housing, rather than simply affordability; this would enable housing providers to offer the additional supports and flexibility that many households require in order to remain housed.

For several decades, Canada’s social housing programs provided an internationally-recognized model for low-cost housing. Today, the ratio of housing price to household income in Canada is the highest in the world. Even in cities that historically have been more affordable, rents and house prices are escalating beyond what many households can afford. This situation points to an uncertain future for moderate- and low-cost housing in Canada, and social housing in particular. Given the pending expiry of operating agreements, which have been an essential foundation of the country’s social housing programs, Canada’s reputation for good-quality, low-cost housing is at risk. The model requires long-term funding commitments to preserve and increase the supply of social housing, especially for deep rent subsidies and for housing and supports for homeless people.

There are sparks of hope. Non-profit and co-operative housing providers continue, with deep commitment, to offer good quality low-cost housing. The National Housing Strategy is a good first step towards addressing demand for low-cost housing; while there is more to do, it provides funding and points national policy towards low-cost housing. At a local level, municipalities can plan for and support social and low-cost housing. The National Housing Strategy encourages municipalities to donate municipal lands, streamline and fast-track approval processes, and waive or offer rebates for development charges and taxes for low-cost housing development. Municipal planners can also develop housing action plans, address NIMBY concerns, and create land-use plans and policies that support the development of low-cost and social housing.

Canada’s history of social housing shows that good quality, low-cost housing is possible. The National Housing Strategy provides a framework for the future, but as funding and operating agreements end, a long-term commitment to funding for low-cost housing is essential. Without this, Canada risks a significant erosion of its low-cost, non-market housing. We can adapt the social housing programs of the past to ensure shelter for all for decades into the future.

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WINNING COMMUNITY ACCEPTANCE OF SOCIAL HOUSING

By Shad Mayne and Patricia Maloney

SUMMARY
In June 2019, BC Housing’s Research Centre published a toolkit for non-market housing providers on how to achieve community acceptance of social housing developments. The authors were engaged by BC Housing to consult with a diverse range of stakeholders from across the province on the topic of neighbourhood opposition to social housing development. The authors conducted a series of interviews with five key stakeholder groups: municipal planners, social housing operators, BC Housing development managers, and both advocacy organization and neighbourhood opposition representatives. These interviews provided insight into social housing delivery and opposition in British Columbia. This article summarizes key findings from these interviews related to improving outcomes of social housing delivery by achieving greater community acceptance.

RÉSUMÉ
En juin 2019, le centre de recherche de BC Housing a retenu les services des auteurs pour l’aider à créer un ensemble d’outils à l’intention des fournisseurs de logements hors marché sur les moyens de rallier les collectivités aux projets de logements sociaux. Les auteurs ont ainsi consulté un éventail diversifié d’intervenants de toute la province au sujet de l’opposition des quartiers à la construction de logements sociaux. Une série d’entrevues encadrées a été menée auprès de cinq groupes d’intervenants clés : urbanistes municipaux, exploitants de logements sociaux, administrateurs de projets de logement de BC Housing, organismes de pression et représentants des opposants dans les quartiers. Les principales conclusions de ce travail jettent un regard sur la prestation de logements sociaux et sur la résistance envers de tels projets en Colombie-Britannique et peuvent contribuer à les faire mieux accepter par les collectivités.

The approach from BC Housing in 2018 to develop an updated toolkit on gaining community acceptance of social housing, came at an intriguing point in time. The issue of affordable housing had been a pivotal campaign issue in the recent BC municipal elections, including major policy changes proposed by several municipalities. BC Housing had recently announced provincial investment of $291 million to build rapid response modular housing. The Federal government had also just announced its first ever National Housing Strategy.

The motivation for these efforts by all orders of government is well founded. A recent study funded by BC Housing concluded that every dollar invested in supportive housing generates approximately three to five dollars in social and economic value. Other benefits include reduced strain on emergency services and the justice system, a need for fewer temporary shelters, and a reduction of social assistance disbursements, which all translate to cost savings for taxpayers. In addition, there is significant economic benefit related to the planning, design, and construction of social housing.

Despite this, community opposition to social housing remains as evident as ever. Social media has provided a new platform to those seeking reinforcement for negative opinions. Many local newspapers feature
provocative quotes from the most outspoken and divisive of residents. Traditional forms of civic engagement, such as public hearings, have turned into protest grounds rather than places for respectful discourse or consensus-building. The stakes are perceived by both sides of the debate to be higher than ever. Homeowners in urban areas have witnessed their property values skyrocket in recent years, while individuals with modest or no incomes are unable to secure appropriate housing.

The work to develop the toolkit included the essential step of listening to and understanding all perspectives, from as balanced and objective a point-of-view as possible. Not only were dozens of social housing proponents, developers, BC Housing representatives, municipal planners, and non-profit organizations interviewed, but local residents who had been vocally opposed to social housing developments in their neighbourhoods were also consulted. The findings of these interviews are useful to planners championing the development of social housing, whether in the private sector or government. These lessons are outlined below.

PERSONAL STORIES RESONATE BETTER THAN FACTS
For more than 30 years, cognitive and behavioral scientists have been studying the “backfire effect” – the phenomenon in which people become more entrenched in false beliefs when confronted with evidence that contradicts their views. Studies show that attempts to refute false information often lead people to hold more firmly to their misperceptions. Statistically-based messaging does not resonate with the public to the same extent as balanced communication strategies that include personal stories. Use this to support your position. For the same reason that opposition uses personal, anecdotal evidence to oppose social housing, balance hard facts with personal stories that will resonate with residents.

PROVIDE TIMELY INFORMATION
Usually the majority of opposition to a proposed development is not inherently opposed to the idea of social housing, but rather the fear of the unknown.
It is important to maintain a balanced and objective approach in dealing with community opposition to social housing.

Unfortunately, neighbours will often first hear about a social housing development secondhand through local media or other neighbours. This means that you, as the proponent, are initiating engagement with neighbours who already harbor mistrust and are likely misinformed. That is why it is crucial that the developer meet directly with neighbours early and often, before the project is designed, applications are submitted, or media is contacted. Once communication has been initiated, maintain a consistent, reliable, and timely point of contact. It is important to control the flow of information by getting information out to residents before opposition has an opportunity to organize.

**DON’T EXPECT EVERYONE TO CARE ABOUT THE CAUSE**

Proponents of social housing believe strongly in the righteousness of the cause; however, neighbourhood residents are mainly concerned with the impacts to them personally. For example, if a local road is going to be temporarily closed during construction, demonstrate how you will accommodate residents and businesses. If security concerns are raised, demonstrate how security will be adequately managed on site. Ensure that identified issues are addressed and mitigated as much as is reasonably possible. These actions can go a long way in reversing resident opposition and also demonstrating to decision makers your willingness to work with residents.

**FOCUS ON THE USE, NOT THE USER**

Be clear with residents what is on the table for negotiation and what topics will not be entertained. Ultimately, discrimination of who is using the housing is not permitted in Canada. Have the courage to shut down any input or points of view that do not respect this basic right. Many housing opponents are sophisticated enough to know this and will express discrimination using seemingly legitimate concerns. Your job as a proponent is to address the public’s legitimate concerns and mitigate those impacts as much as possible.

**RESPECT NEIGHBOURHOOD CONTEXT**

As planners, we cannot focus solely on the need for social housing at the expense of good planning. The public interest is not served by supporting poorly designed development that doesn’t provide a quality living environment for both neighbors and occupants.

As land values in urban areas across Canada continue to rise, it is becoming increasingly cost prohibitive for social housing providers to secure ideal sites that are in close proximity to transit, social services, and amenities. Often social housing providers receive donated land, are sold underutilized city-owned land, or purchase relatively inexpensive private land. These sites may not be suitable for multi-family residential uses, becoming a serious dilemma for local governments.

There is an inherent pressure to permit, or even incentivize added density for social housing that is inappropriate in the eyes of the community. Social housing faces significant financial challenges; however, respecting the existing and planned future character of a neighbourhood is important. If planners are to tell the public that the basis for approving a development must be on the appropriateness of the use rather than the user, then they must also take this consideration to heart.

**FINAL WORDS**

In summary, it is important to maintain a balanced and objective approach in dealing with community opposition to social housing. Understand what types of messaging will resonate with residents, how to best communicate with them, and the neighbourhood context in which the development is a part. Understand that on both sides of the issue, there is a need to remain focused on the use of the development. Steer conversation away from the perceived negative attributes of the future residents. On the other hand, be careful not to defend inappropriate development based on the cause. After all, the ultimate aim is to provide social housing that will benefit all those involved, both neighbours and residents.

To read the full BC Housing Toolkit, visit https://www.bchousing.org/research-centre/library/community-acceptance.

**ENDNOTES**

SUMMARY:
With a focus on supportive housing and its Rapid Response to Homelessness program, BC Housing CEO Shayne Ramsay and Chief Research Officer Karen Hemmingson discuss the necessity of creating solid partnerships in order to deliver the provincial agency’s programs. This includes working with the federal government to leverage funding from its National Housing Strategy as well as developing relationships with local governments and non-profit housing providers. They also touch on the research tools in which BC Housing has invested to support strategic priorities and how other groups intent on building supportive housing sites can use these.

ADDRESSING THE HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

BC takes effective action

By Shayne Ramsay and Karen Hemmingson

SUMMARY:
Shayne Ramsay, directeur général de BC Housing, et Karen Hemmingson, principale de recherche, mettent l’accent sur le logement avec services de soutien et son programme de riposte rapide à l’itinérance et discute de la nécessité de créer de solides partenariats afin d’exécuter les programmes de l’organisme provincial. Cela comporte de collaborer avec le gouvernement fédéral afin d’obtenir des fonds dans le cadre de sa Stratégie nationale sur le logement et d’établir des relations avec les administrations locales et les pourvoyeurs de logement à but non lucratif. Ils abordent également les outils de recherche dans lesquels BC Housing a investi pour soutenir ses priorités stratégiques et la façon dont d’autres groupes qui ont l’intention de construire des sites de logements supervisés peuvent les utiliser.

RÉSUMÉ

The overall health of a community improves when governments, businesses, communities, and individuals work together to ensure everyone has secure housing and the services they need. This is especially true of the homelessness crisis that so many Canadians are facing. The British Columbia government’s commitment of more than $7 billion over 10 years to the development of a wide range of new housing has enabled its provincial housing agency to leverage significant funds from the federal government’s National Housing Strategy. BC Housing also works closely with local governments and community groups to build safe, affordable homes across British Columbia, based on a community’s needs.

BC Housing relies on community-based groups and professionals in the sector to deliver on its mission to make a positive difference in people’s lives and communities through safe, affordable, and quality housing. Transformative, community-enriching work happens when we work together to address housing needs. Such strategies are vital when it comes to creating supportive housing for our most vulnerable citizens.

BC Housing has been working with community partners for many years, and local governments are often key players in its projects. Municipalities have donated land...
or provided long-term leases at a nominal cost. They often expedite rezoning and the municipal approval process and make equity contributions such as contributing grants or waiving development cost charges. When required, local governments have amended their official community plans in order to accommodate supportive housing sites and in some cases have exempted the non-profit operator from property taxes.

**BC’s Rapid Response to Homelessness Program**

The provincial Rapid Response to Homelessness (RRH) program is an important example of this kind of teamwork. The BC government initiated the RRH program in 2017 to provide an immediate response to the growing issue of homelessness in communities. RRH is investing $291 million in 2,000 supportive modular homes for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, with an additional $170 million over three years to ensure the people living in these homes have access to 24/7 support. The design and construction of these housing developments use modular technologies to accelerate the timeline, from design to occupancy. Over 2,000 RRH homes will be complete by the end of 2019.

BC Housing works with municipal governments and community groups in the RRH program to allocate homes across the province based on local needs and demands. Local governments are instrumental in identifying suitable housing sites by considering the proximity to vital community services and accessibility to transit, among other community-building factors. Modular housing developments are purchased from manufacturers and installed on underutilized or vacant land, often provided by local governments, but sometimes offered by private market developers.

Experienced non-profit housing societies are the cornerstone of BC Housing’s work and for RRH they bring their wealth of knowledge in operating the housing and supporting residents. Because housing providers are embedded in their communities, they are in the best position to understand and respond to the needs of residents who are transitioning from unhoused to stable home environments. Supportive housing is also assisted by provincial health authorities that provide residents with the health care they need to begin moving forward with their lives.

Services provided to residents may include connection to mental health services, chronic illness and addictions supports, medication management, food programs, and connection to cultural supports, social inclusion, life skills education, and other supports that create a sense of community. These supports are a necessary component to helping individuals stabilize their lives and maintain successful tenancies. BC Housing and non-profit partners also engage with community advisory councils to respond to community concerns such as safety, noise, and property management issues.

The most significant and tangible benefits of supportive housing are experienced by the residents. These include housing stability, increases in personal well-being, healthier living conditions, the ability to participate in employment, reduced substance use, and increased safety and social connections. To assess the outcomes for residents from the RRH program, BC Housing’s Research Centre is conducting resident surveys and interviews with non-profit housing providers at all the sites. Results are now available for seven sites and are extremely positive, including 84% of respondents reporting an increase in their overall well-being. This supportive housing model has also had strong success in maintaining residencies, with 94% of residents remaining housed six months after they moved in.

**The RRH Program in Action**

Reiderman Residence was the first supportive housing project funded under the RRH program. The 77-unit, two-building site opened in March 2018 in Vancouver’s Marpole neighbourhood. Each self-contained studio apartment is 250 square feet and includes a three-piece bathroom, two-burner stovetop and a counter-height fridge. There is an amenity space for larger resident community meals and gatherings.

Most Reiderman residents are seniors and people living with disabilities; 64% were homeless immediately prior to moving into their unit and 36% lived in housing that did not meet their support needs. Ninety per cent of the first residents to move into Reiderman remained housed.
there six months later. In a survey, 88% of residents reported improvements in their overall well-being; 52% reported improvements in their living skills; 83% said their sense of personal safety had improved; and 95% felt they had positive interactions with neighbours.

**STRENGTHENING AND LEVERAGING INVESTMENTS**

At BC Housing, research plays an integral role in supporting strategic priorities and carrying out its mission. The agency commissioned a series of studies to examine the social return on investment (SROI) created by affordable and supportive housing developments. SROI analysis combines quantitative, qualitative, and participatory research techniques to demonstrate the value of outcomes from different stakeholder perspectives. The result is a SROI ratio that shows in monetary terms the financial benefit of social investments. The research conservatively concluded that, for every dollar invested in dedicated-site supportive housing, an estimated $4 to $5 in social and economic value is created.

Despite the significant and ongoing success of many supportive housing sites, some people still object to this type of housing being in their communities, fearing that it will decrease property values or increase criminal activity. In actuality, there is a wide range of benefits to having a variety of different stakeholder groups in the community. BC Housing recently commissioned a third-party consultant to examine the market impacts of the introduction of non-market housing, as reported in Exploring Impacts of Non-Market Housing on Surrounding Property Values – BC Case Studies. For most of the case study sites, median residential sale prices and assessed values in the areas immediately surrounding the BC Housing sites mirrored or surpassed trends for the surrounding municipality. This suggests non-market housing does not have an impact on surrounding property values. In all instances, macroeconomic shifts and local economic factors were far more impactful and aligned more closely to any valuation changes over time.

Supportive housing also provides social and economic benefits to the community, including increased revenue from permits and taxes, increased local spending and employment, decreased use of emergency and social services, and reduced homelessness, resulting in more inclusive communities. BC Housing’s Community Acceptance case studies series and Community Acceptance toolkit provide examples of how different communities have come together to welcome supportive housing to their neighbourhood.

These case studies profile the non-profit housing providers and their experience in gaining and sustaining community support for supportive housing projects. These and other resources are available online from BC Housing’s Research Centre (www.bchousing.org/research-centre) and are valuable tools for groups and municipalities looking to develop safe and affordable housing.

**CASE STUDIES**

**SROI Series, Summary Report: Overview of Social and Economic Value of Supportive and Affordable Housing in BC**

[https://www.bchousing.org/research-centre/library/tools-for-developing-social-housing/bk-sroi-series-summary&sortType=sortByDate#_blank](https://www.bchousing.org/research-centre/library/tools-for-developing-social-housing/bk-sroi-series-summary&sortType=sortByDate#_blank)

BC Housing commissioned three studies to examine the social and economic value created by affordable and supportive housing in B.C. All three studies follow the social return on investment (SROI) methodology. SROI analysis combines quantitative, qualitative, and participatory research techniques to determine the value of outcomes from different stakeholder perspectives. This overview highlights key findings from the reports and demonstrates the social and economic value created by investing in supportive and affordable housing.

**Property Values Case Study Series: Overview Report**

[https://www.bchousing.org/research-centre/library/community-acceptance/property-values-case-study-series&sortType=sortByDate](https://www.bchousing.org/research-centre/library/community-acceptance/property-values-case-study-series&sortType=sortByDate)

This report summarizes the key findings of 13 case studies to draw conclusions about the impacts of non-market housing on surrounding property values. Those engaged in the development process can use this research to answer questions from neighbours about property value impacts.

**Supportive Housing Case Study Series: Overview**


This report summarizes the case studies in the Community Acceptance Series documenting the experiences of supportive housing sites that gained neighbourhood acceptance. The purpose of this research is to help future sites better address neighbourhood concerns at the initial stages of a project. Sharing lessons learned also helps identify strategies to improve relationships with neighbours of existing social housing sites.

Case studies in this series include: 5616 Fraser Street, Vancouver; Timber Grove, Surrey; Christine Lamb Residence, Abbotsford; Camas Gardens, Victoria and Cardington Apartments, Kelowna.

**Shayne Ramsay** has been the CEO of BC Housing since 2000. He is also chair of Housing Partnership Canada. Ramsay has a graduate degree in urban planning from the University of Toronto.

**Karen Hemmingson** is BC Housing’s Chief Research Officer. She served on the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association’s executive for five years. Hemmingson holds a master’s degree in urban planning from UBC.
EQUITABLE TRANSIT-ORIENTED COMMUNITIES

A necessary pivot

By Raymond Kan, James Stiver, and Lilian Chau

SUMMARY
Metro Vancouver is renowned globally for its intentional efforts to integrate land use and transportation. Public policy and a hyperactive housing market have created conditions that are supportive of predominantly high-rise condominium buildings in transit hubs. These conditions – high land value and high construction costs – are driving the loss of existing rental housing, and precluding the development of new affordable rental housing. Consequently, lower income households are increasingly excluded from affordable housing choices in transit-rich neighbourhoods. Building equitable transit-oriented communities will require new and ongoing intentional efforts to align missions and foster cooperation between the public, private, and non-profit sectors.

RÉSUMÉ
La région métropolitaine de Vancouver est reconnue mondialement pour ses efforts délibérés visant à intégrer l’aménagement du territoire et les transports. Les politiques publiques et l’hyperactivité du marché du logement ont créé des conditions propices à la construction d’immeubles d’habitation en copropriété de grande hauteur dans les centres de transport en commun. Ces conditions – valeur élevée des terrains et coûts de construction élevés – entraînent la perte de logements locatifs existants et entravent la construction de nouveaux logements locatifs abordables. Par conséquent, un nombre croissant de ménages à faible revenu se retrouvent exclus des solutions de logement abordable dans les quartiers où le transport en commun est très répandu. L’établissement de collectivités équitables axées sur le transport en commun exigera des efforts délibérés, novateurs et permanents afin de concilier les missions et la coopération entre les secteurs public, privé et sans but lucratif.

INTRODUCTION
Metro Vancouver is a geographically-constrained region bounded by mountains, ocean, and the Canada-United States border, and restricted by a provincial agricultural land reserve. On the surface, these constraints may be seen as impediments to city building. In reality, through a multi-decade commitment to core regional growth management principles of protecting agricultural and natural areas, encouraging growth in transit hubs, and investing in a robust public transit system and other infrastructure, the region has achieved a transit-oriented, polycentric settlement structure. However, the pursuit of the highest densities in these transit hubs has resulted in severely inequitable consequences.

A VISION OF A TRANSIT-ORIENTED REGION
Emerging from the temperate rainforest of the Coast Salish peoples on the west coast of Canada is the country’s third-most populous metropolitan area. Metro Vancouver is home to 2.5 million people today and is projected to grow to 3.4 million by 2040. Perhaps owing to its close proximity to picturesque natural areas and environmental traditions, the region established, over 40 years ago, a regional growth management vision, “Cities in a Sea of Green,” which has remained durable in shaping growth to this day.
The current regional growth strategy, adopted in 2011, has further evolved the growth concept to include an urban containment boundary, 26 Urban Centres, and 16 Frequent Transit Development Areas. These policy growth areas are intended to accommodate medium-to-high density and mixed-use walkable neighbourhoods, integrated with frequent bus services or rail rapid transit. This pattern of settlement also supports the efficient use of other hard infrastructure (water, sewage, solid waste management), and protects the region’s food-producing lands and sensitive natural areas.

The region is evolving according to plan. Nearly all of the growth between 2011 and 2018 has occurred within the Urban Containment Boundary (98%), and the majority of the growth has occurred in defined growth areas. Today, approximately
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LA QUESTION DU LOGEMENT

throughout the region is increasingly being lost to redevelopment, thereby leading to the displacement of many lower income households. One of the Urban Centres that has experienced a large number of apartment unit demolitions is Metrotown in Burnaby; between 2011 and 2019, close to 700 purpose-built rental units were demolished. Region-wide, the number of apartment demolitions is on the upswing. Over 800 apartment units were demolished in Metro Vancouver in each of 2017 and 2018 – the highest levels in the last 15 years. As a corollary, the region’s homelessness population grew by 30% between 2014 and 2017.8

Renters who may aspire to move into these transit-rich neighbourhoods spend upwards of two-thirds of their pre-tax income on housing and transportation – the two largest household expenditures.6

Established regional and local land-use and transportation policies have traditionally encouraged the highest development densities near transit, without much consideration to protecting opportunities for rental tenure and affordability. The market in turn has delivered primarily high-rise concrete condominium towers. New affordable rental housing is simply not financially competitive because the achievable rental income can neither pay for the high cost of concrete construction nor land that is valued at the ‘highest and best use’ (i.e., the ubiquitous market condominium apartment). The consequences of this perfect storm are significant and regional in scale. Older rental stock in transit-rich neighbourhoods throughout the region is increasingly being lost to redevelopment, thereby leading to the displacement of many lower income households. One of the Urban Centres that has experienced a large number of apartment unit demolitions is Metrotown in Burnaby; between 2011 and 2019, close to 700 purpose-built rental units were demolished. Region-wide, the number of apartment demolitions is on the upswing. Over 800 apartment units were demolished in Metro Vancouver in each of 2017 and 2018 – the highest levels in the last 15 years. As a corollary, the region’s homelessness population grew by 30% between 2014 and 2017.8

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one-half of all dwelling units and 60% of jobs are in these growth areas. From a transportation perspective, nearly one out of four trips are made on transit, by walking, or by cycling – a remarkable achievement by Canadian and American standards.

BLIND SPOTS

While many factors are at play,4 local and regional public policies, coupled with a hyperactive housing market and stagnant household incomes have created a perfect storm of unaffordability. In the current context, rental housing that is affordable to lower income households5 is simply not financially viable to develop in transit-oriented locations. In Metro Vancouver, where over a third of households are renters, more than 40% are spending in excess of 30% of their income on rent and utilities. Lower income households spend upwards of two-thirds of their pre-tax income on housing and transportation – the two largest household expenditures.6

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one-half of all dwelling units and 60% of jobs are in these growth areas. From a transportation perspective, nearly one out of four trips are made on transit, by walking, or by cycling – a remarkable achievement by Canadian and American standards.
Looking ahead, the region has embarked on a multibillion-dollar expansion of the transit system, with new rail rapid transit and rapid bus corridors. These new transit investments will create the conditions for urban development changes. Affordable rental housing will not be created, however, in these transit-oriented neighbourhoods without intentional efforts.

**THE TRANSIT-ORIENTED AFFORDABLE HOUSING STUDY**

Recognizing that transit-oriented locations provide a crucial opportunity to address the shortage of affordable rental housing in the region, the Metro Vancouver Regional District (MVRD) initiated the Transit-Oriented Affordable Housing (TOAH) Study in 2016. MVRD convened a diverse group of agency partners for the conduct of the study: CMHC, BC Housing, BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (which oversees housing and TransLink, the region’s transportation authority), BC Non-Profit Housing Association, TransLink, the Urban Development Institute, and Vancity Credit Union.

One of the key findings of Phase 1, completed in 2017, was that a greater proportion of renters take transit for the journey to work as compared to owners. At the highest income group ($75,000+), 23% of renters took transit v. 14% of owners; at the lowest income group (less than $30,000), 32% of renters took transit v. 16% of owners. These patterns are consistent at the corridor level (whether bus or rapid transit), at the regional level, and among the six big metro areas in the country.

Transit-oriented affordable housing provides a clear value proposition – it creates the space for lower income renters to have affordable housing choices and access to economic opportunities, and it fosters a more robust transit ridership base.

Another key finding showed that over the next 10 years, the region is estimated to undersupply rental housing that is affordable to households earning less than $50,000 on the order of 24,000 units.

Phase 2 of the TOAH Study, completed in 2019, explored specific tools and approaches to reduce barriers and improve the financial viability of affordable rental housing projects in transit-oriented locations, including:

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**OWNERS – 2011**

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Renter/Owner transit use 2011. Source: Metro Vancouver Regional District.
A regional revolving loan fund (transit-oriented affordable housing funds have been established with success in Seattle, San Francisco, Denver, and Los Angeles)

• Density bonusing with inclusionary housing requirements

• Strategic land acquisition and deployment

• Residential rental tenure zoning (a new tool for municipalities introduced by the Province of British Columbia in 2018 that is still being explored for appropriate use)

• Setting early and clear expectations (i.e., targets) for affordable rental housing in transit corridor, neighbourhood, and station area plans to allow the land market, private developers and community housing sector to respond appropriately, curtail speculation, and to create the development capacity for affordable rental housing

The TOAH study confirmed that local governments have many of the tools necessary to effectively create the conditions for transit-oriented affordable rental housing to succeed. The Province of BC and the Federal Government have stepped up with financial resources and legislative support. But harnessing the effectiveness of these tools and resources to address the affordable rental housing crisis requires an intentional effort to continuously improve the alignment of missions (the ‘how’ to achieve the vision) within and between the public, private, and non-profit sectors. The region is falling short on this alignment.

A PROBLEM BIGGER THAN ANY ONE ENTITY CAN SOLVE

The affordable rental housing crisis cannot be solved by any one entity or sector alone. The vast majority of new affordable rental housing will have to be delivered by a combination of the private market using available tools and incentives provided by the public sector, and by the non-profit community housing sector in partnership with the public and/or private sectors. The Federal Government and Province of British Columbia have introduced investments into affordable rental housing through the National Housing Strategy and provincial housing programs, respectively, in the form of low-interest financing and capital grant dollars. The following examples illustrate the power of aligning missions and cooperating between the public, private, and community housing sectors.

Seattle Region, USA

In 2011, the United States Congress authorized $250 million USD to fund the Sustainable Communities Initiative, which provided grants to communities across the United States to foster cross-sectoral and cross-jurisdictional planning, and to address social equity in land-use and transportation planning. Puget Sound Regional Council, the Seattle region’s regional planning agency, received a three-year grant (2011-2013) to convene a consortium of stakeholders as part of the Growing Transit Communities project. Part of the project involved studying 74 planned transit station areas in the region to identify context-sensitive strategies to ensure new development is equitable. The outcome was a toolkit of 24 strategies, eight of which focused on affordable housing provision. Through this multi-year dialogue-based process, a shared definition of equitable transit communities emerged, and the respective roles that each partner could play were identified. The proof of the mission alignment was seen only a few years later.

In 2016, Seattle area residents voted to approve a $54 billion funding measure to fund public transit expansion. One of the requirements in the measure was for Sound Transit, the agency responsible for constructing and operating the light rail transit system, express bus services, and commuter rail, to adopt within 18 months of passage an equitable transit-oriented development policy. The Sound Transit Board met this deadline and adopted a policy in 2018 that articulated its role in supporting transit-oriented affordable housing through its surplus lands.

Under Sound Transit’s ‘80/80/80′ policy, the agency commits to providing 80% of its surplus lands from rapid transit construction to pre-qualified affordable rental housing developers, and 80% of the housing units built must be affordable to households earning less than 80% of the area median income. The state government provided Sound Transit with the ability to discount their lands rather than being constrained to disposing them at the implied ‘highest and best use’ market value. About 1,300 affordable rental housing units are under construction or have been built on Sound Transit lands to date.

Highline Project in Metrotown

Regional City Centre, Burnaby, BC

The Metrotown Regional City Centre is home to 30,000 residents and is served by two rapid transit (SkyTrain) stations and 10 major bus routes. The Highline project is located a one-minute walk away from a SkyTrain station and comprises a 48-storey condominium tower and a 14-storey affordable rental apartment building. The affordable rental housing building will have 125 units with a mix of low end of market and non-market rental units targeting seniors and families.

The project is a partnership between BC Housing, the City of Burnaby, New Vista Society, and Third Properties. BC Housing provided a $17 million grant; the City of Burnaby purchased the site for the non-market building for $5.6 million and leased it to BC Housing and New Vista Society for 60 years, and provided a $1.4 million grant towards the project to offset servicing and permit fees; and, Third Properties is constructing both the market and non-market buildings. The project will be completed in 2021.

Hannelore Project in Oakridge

Municipal Town Centre, Vancouver, BC

Another example of effective partnership and collaboration is the Hannelore Project located on the site of the Oakridge Lutheran Church and across the street from a SkyTrain station in Vancouver. The project is being developed by Catalyst Community Development Society, a non-profit developer that works with other non-profit entities to unlock the value of their real estate assets for reinvestment into the community, and Oakridge Lutheran Church. By the end of 2019, the joint venture partnership will develop, own, and operate a new mixed-use six-storey, LEED gold-certified building and community hub, with a new church and community space, 46 affordable rental housing units, and commercial space. The housing units will be affordable to households with incomes of $30,000 to $80,000 with no more than 30% of their income directed to rent.

This innovative project brought together a church congregation looking to use its land (worth $14 million) for the benefit of the broader community, and a non-profit real estate developer with the expertise and ability to bring in $1.5 million of private capital from mission-driven investors. Vancity
has committed $7 billion in province-wide expansion program and the Province of BC in the midst of a $7 billion 10-year transit walking distance to transit. The region is under public or non-profit ownership within corridors, over 50 rapid transit stations with more needs to be done to address the supply for purpose-built market rental housing in the number of development applications recently, the region has seen an uptick in be met with resistance in some quarters. entrenched, and change will undoubtedly communities. Policies and practices are thinking about equitable transit-oriented government, to embrace affordable rental transit agency, with encouragement from state Sound Transit in Seattle is demonstrating the table and motivated to deliver community projects represent different models. The common denominator is having the public, private, and community housing sectors at the table and motivated to deliver community benefits in the form of the needed housing. Sound Transit in Seattle is demonstrating that it is possible for a single-purpose public transit agency, with encouragement from state government, to embrace affordable rental housing as part of its mandate and mission. It is still early days in Metro Vancouver’s thinking about equitable transit-oriented communities. Policies and practices are entrenched, and change will undoubtedly be met with resistance in some quarters. Recently, the region has seen an uptick in the number of development applications for purpose-built market rental housing in transit-oriented locations; however, much more needs to be done to address the supply gap in the non-market housing segment. The region does benefit from an abundance of opportunities. The region boasts nearly 80 km of rail rapid transit corridors, over 50 rapid transit stations with more coming, and 8,000 parcels of land under public or non-profit ownership within walking distance to transit. The region is in the midst of a $7 billion 10-year transit expansion program and the Province of BC has committed $7 billion in province-wide housing initiatives. The regional growth framework of urban centres and corridors is shaping these investments. The foundation in Metro Vancouver is solid for public, private, and non-profit actors to make the pivot now and build equitable cities in a sea of green. SUMMARY Metro Vancouver is renowned globally for its intentional efforts to integrate land use and transportation. Public policy and a hyperactive housing market have created conditions that are supportive of predominantly high-rise condominium buildings in transit hubs. These conditions – high land value and high construction costs – are driving the loss of existing rental housing, and precluding the development of new affordable rental housing. Consequently, lower income households are increasingly excluded from affordable housing choices in transit-rich neighbourhoods. Building equitable transit-oriented communities will require new and ongoing intentional efforts to align missions and foster cooperation between the public, private, and non-profit sectors. END NOTES 1 Greater Vancouver Regional District. 1975. The livable region 1976/1986: Proposals to manage the growth of Greater Vancouver. Vancouver: Greater Vancouver Regional District. [accessed September 18, 2019] 2 Greater Vancouver Regional District. Greater Vancouver Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw, Number 1136, 2010. [accessed September 18, 2019]. 3 Metro Vancouver Regional District. Metro 2040 Dashboard. Metro Vancouver Regional District. [accessed September 18, 2019]. 4 Government policies and market dynamics have contributed to our current affordable housing crisis: private investment in purpose-built rental became less attracting starting in the 1970s when Federal tax treatment of rental property was revised; mortgage interest rates have fallen to historic lows, thus increasing purchasing power; housing demand accelerated in response to population and economic growth, foreign investments, and baby boomers transferring wealth to the next generation; and municipal approval processes have become more complex, adding to the time and cost of development and of delivering new supply. 5 Defined in the Transit-Oriented Affordable Housing Study as less than 80% of the regional median pre-tax household income or equivalent to $60,000. An affordable rent for a household earning $60,000 per year is approximately $1,500 per month (using the CMHC benchmark of spending no more than 30% of pre-tax income on housing and utilities). The median household pre-tax income of a renter is $49,000 in 2015. 6 Greater Vancouver Regional District. [2015]. The Metro Vancouver housing and transportation cost burden study: A new way of looking at affordability. Vancouver: Greater Vancouver Regional District. [accessed September 18, 2019] 7 Kevin Gawley, “Burnaby passes bold rental-only zoning plan to protect, create housing.” Burnaby Now, May 28, 2019. https://www.burnabynow.com/real-estate/update-burnaby-passes-bold-rental-only-zoning-plan-to-protect-create-housing-1.23832898 [accessed October 28, 2019]
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9. Transit-oriented locations generally refer to areas within 400 metres of a frequent bus corridor or 800 metres of a rail rapid transit station. Greater distances can be contemplated (e.g., 1,600 metres) to capture development opportunities.

10. The Metro Vancouver Regional District is a federation of one Treaty First Nation, 21 municipalities, and one unincorporated area. The Regional District is responsible for regional utilities (water, sewer, solid waste), regional parks, air quality and climate change policy, and regional planning.


12. TransLink is the Metro Vancouver region’s transportation authority. TransLink plans, funds, and operates a network of public transit services and provides support for major roads and regional cycling infrastructure.

13. Juan Sebastian Arias, Samantha Beckerman, Joni Hirsch, Sara Draper Zivet, Genise Choy, Dov Kadin, Colleen Kredell, Amy Martin, Joseph Poirier, Kristine Williams and James Yelen. HUD’s sustainable communities initiative: The effects and impacts of regional planning grants on planning and equity in the Bay Area, the Puget Sound region, and the Twin Cities. (Berkeley: University of California, 2016)


16. Vancity Credit Union is Canada’s largest financial co-operative, and has an Impact Real Estate program. Vancity’s Pre-Development Loan Fund provides the community housing sector with grants and low-interest impact loans to support projects through the development process and into construction.

17. Beginning in 2019, Metro Vancouver and TransLink will be updating their respective long-range strategic plans. The update to Metro Vancouver’s regional growth strategy is anticipated to be completed in 2021; TransLink’s new regional transportation strategy is anticipated to be completed in 2020.
GEO-STATISTICAL APPROACHES TO REALIZING AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND COMPLETE COMMUNITIES

By Archana Vyas and Indro Bhattacharyya

SUMMARY
This article discusses geo-statistical approaches to understand housing need and address service needs, offering lessons for planners establishing municipal strategies to use publicly owned surplus lands. The work described in this article was led by the authors, to understand where housing need was greatest, and where opportunities for co-location of community services should be considered. This work shaped the Region of Peel’s Housing Master Plan, a long-term capital infrastructure plan to guide the Region’s new affordable housing developments, including shelters and supportive housing.

BACKGROUND
In Ontario, housing service managers are responsible by the Housing Services Act, 2011, for the funding and administration of social housing services, including maintaining housing and homelessness plans that estimate housing demand and identify supply targets. Service managers are generally upper and single-tier municipalities, or service boards, designated in legislation. Ontario is unique as it is the only province in Canada to have delegated this responsibility to the municipal level.

On April 5, 2018, Peel Regional Council approved a renewed 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan (PHHP). The plan aims to achieve two long-term outcomes: a) to make affordable housing available to all Peel residents and b) prevent homelessness in Peel. The Housing Master Plan is one of the implementation strategies for the PHHP that leverages the Region of Peel’s surplus lands and selected Peel Housing Corporation sites suitable for redevelopment to create new affordable housing.

The Housing Master Plan is informed by a geographic assessment of need. Principal component analysis and cluster mapping allow for the determination of geographical housing vulnerabilities and potential need for co-located community services.
CHALLENGE
Around 137,000 Peel households, representing over three in 10, spent more than 30% of their income on shelter in 2016. Over 13,000 households are on the waitlist for affordable housing. On average, the Region houses over 900 households per year, providing rent supplements to households that rent privately, or rent-gearied-to-income units in buildings either owned by the Region or other non-profit providers, including the Region’s non-profit provider, the Peel Housing Corporation. Yet, about 2,000 new applicants are added to the waitlist annually. Demand for affordable housing clearly outpaces the supply.

Research unequivocally demonstrates that precarious housing conditions can have negative social, societal, and economic outcomes that can persist across generations. Impacts can be experienced disproportionately by newcomers, are often racialized, and often involves lone-parent families. Peel is projected to have approximately 7,500 new housing units annually; at least 2,000 of those will need to be targeted towards low- and middle-income households to address current and future demand for affordable housing.

THE APPROACH
As part of its approach to addressing affordable housing needs, Peel Region assessed its lands for residential development opportunities. The Region first identified where affordable housing need was greatest. Secondly, it identified key sites for potential co-location of community services, such as a child care, addressing the need for a complete community support network to improve long term socio-economic outcomes, a connection is supported by literature. Research determined that a multi-stage approach utilizing a principal component analysis followed by cluster analysis would be appropriate. Such approaches have been used to identify and delineate urban structure.

Mapping Affordable Housing Need
Jurisdictions generally used geo-referenced surveys such as the national census to understand community needs, including housing, or leveraged qualitative data from surveys of existing residents to understand affordable housing need. Several of these approaches used the common definition of affordable housing: households spending more than 30% of income for shelter. While broadly accepted as a reliable measure in the housing sector – and included in Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s core housing need definition – there is some concern related to this definition. David Hulchanski notes that it “takes a descriptive statistical statement (a ratio) and dresses it up as an interpretative measure of housing need (or lack of need) based on a subjective assertion of what constitutes ‘affordable’ housing expenditure.” The Region thus sought a more precise approach in order to best use limited public resources.

Leveraging more than 30 recent publications, the Region used geo-statistical approaches to realizing affordable housing and complete communities

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Thematic Area</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Indicator Weight</th>
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<td>Residents</td>
<td>Major repairs needed</td>
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<td>Residents</td>
<td>Dwelling suitability (Not suitable)</td>
<td>Statistics Canada</td>
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<td>Residents</td>
<td>Lone parent families</td>
<td>Statistics Canada</td>
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<td>Households spending 30% or more of income on shelter</td>
<td>Statistics Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>Population moved within the past year</td>
<td>Statistics Canada</td>
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<td>residents</td>
<td>Fair or poor self-rated health (Aged 12+)</td>
<td>Canadian Community Health Survey</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>residents</td>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>Statistics Canada</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Statistics Canada</td>
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<td>Average credit score</td>
<td>Transunion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Centralized waitlist count</td>
<td>Region of Peel</td>
<td>0.116</td>
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</table>

Figure 1. Thematic areas for understanding affordable housing need

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residents</th>
<th>Structures</th>
<th>Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Condition</td>
<td>Proximity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Consumption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Principal component analysis variable and weightings
identified, drawing upon data available from Statistics Canada, the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation, Teranet, the Region of Peel Neighbourhood Information Tool, Environics, and various Municipal open data resources, they were reduced to 12 variables and weighted into an index through the application of principal components analysis. Principal components analysis is a statistical technique that can identify variables that most explain variation within a sample.

These are mapped in Figure 3, where areas in darker red are populations experiencing higher level vulnerabilities related to affordable housing. This mapping assists the potential prioritization of development sites based on need. These results were brought to Regional Council in May of 2019.

Mapping Community Services Co-Location Opportunities

The Region had to determine community needs that may warrant the co-location of community services at potential development sites. Cluster analysis was utilized to identify candidate sites for co-location opportunities.

Research consistently shows that ensuring comprehensive availability of wrap-around community services that support residents to overcome structural barriers and preserve positive social networks and relationships, matters most to improve the social and economic mobility of households, regardless of location of residence. This contrasts with an argument by some for the de-concentration of poverty to achieve better household and community outcomes. It is perhaps stated best by Edward Goetz that the idea of “deconcentrating poverty is a smokescreen.” Further, recognizing that the Region of Peel supports a variety of community service providers, a broad, representative set of variables related to need were identified through discussion with staff and a review of relevant literature. Thirteen relevant variables from Statistics Canada data were identified for use in the cluster analysis, identified in Figure 4.

Cluster analysis is a multivariate statistical approach where highly similar subjects are identified by dividing a collection of subjects into groupings or clusters, such that those within a cluster are highly similar and subjects in different clusters are dissimilar. This approach can uncover patterns of data and be utilized to understand spatial structure.

Unlike the principal component analysis, the cluster analysis was undertaken at the dissemination area (DA) geography. DAs are small, relatively stable geographic units of 400 to 700 persons utilized by Statistics Canada in reporting Census data. The model was optimized to five clusters, for which a regional base index of 100 was established. Through this approach, it was determined that 108 DAs identified in ‘Cluster 5’, appeared to be most appropriate for community services co-location consideration as part of a housing development. For instance, DAs in Cluster 5, have low index values for the variable “Median income after tax,” while “Household income below $50,000” has high index value of 228, this suggests greater than regional rate of low-income incidence. The returned values are illustrated in Figure 5.

The output is mapped in Figure 6 in which Cluster 5 is mapped in yellow, and the multi-colour polygons indicate walking distances from potential development sites, mapped in circular icons. This mapping illustrates that for certain buildings, there are people that may use Regional services that live within walking distance of the building.

LIMITATIONS

In undertaking the principal components and cluster analysis, it is important to recognize their limitations. These analyses are driven largely through the 2016 Census, and related data. Recognizing that development may take years to unfold, it will be important to undertake such an analysis as close as possible to the design and development stage of a project using the most recently available data. These

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 65 years and over</td>
<td>%Prevalence of low income based on the Low Income Measure (LIM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter</td>
<td>No certificate, diploma, or degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total lone parent families</td>
<td>Period of immigration, i.e., Recent immigrants who immigrated between 2011 and 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average value of dwellings</td>
<td>Post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median after tax income of households in 2015$</td>
<td>Immigrant 45 years and over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenant households in subsidized housing</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income below $50,000 (2015$)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Cluster analysis variables
These results, while methodologically sound, merely provide a snapshot.

**CONCLUSION**

Reflecting on the Region of Peel’s experience, geo-statistical approaches that leverage broadly available data can provide a valuable means for planners to frame recommendations in the development of municipal strategies to use publicly owned land to address affordable housing need. These methods provide a rich, reliable, reproducible approach for planners to consider when faced with the need to understand their community’s vulnerabilities and opportunities.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The authors would like to acknowledge the significant contributions of Kevin Wong, MBA, and Anitha Muraleedharan, MSc, MS, without whose expertise the data analysis could not have succeeded.

**Archana Vyas** RPP, MCIP, MUP has over 15 years of experience in research, planning policy, and strategy development. Key projects include developing a Regional Housing Strategy, the Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan, and recently, the Housing Master Plan. Archana can be reached at archana.yyas@peelregion.ca.

**Indro Bhattacharyya** RPP, MCIP, MSC, currently focuses on affordable housing at the Region of Peel. An occasional instructor in planning and development at Ryerson University, he has collaborated on original research presented at the Urban Affairs Association and Canadian Institute of Planners. Indro Bhattacharyya can be reached at indro.bhattacharyya@peelregion.ca.
references


SUMMARY
Building affordable, livable, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable cities is no easy task. Working with municipal, provincial, and non-government partners, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) is supporting the development of open-source urban land-use and housing market simulation tools supported with timely, reliable data to provide urban decision-makers and the citizens they serve with reliable insights on the impact of key policy and investment choices. The UrbanSim microsimulation modelling platform, developed by Dr. Paul Waddell a Professor of Urban Planning at the University of California – Berkeley, has a global user community and serves as the foundation for regionally governed decision-support tools for more rapid, well-informed decisions on land use, infrastructure, and housing.

RÉSUMÉ
Construire des villes abordables, habitables, économiquement viables et écologiquement durables n’est pas une tâche facile. En collaboration avec des partenaires municipaux, provinciaux et du secteur privé, la SCHL apporte son soutien à l’élaboration d’outils en source ouverte de simulation de l’utilisation des terres urbaines et du marché immobilier. Couplés à des données opportunes et fiables, ces outils fournissent aux décideurs urbains et aux citoyens qu’ils servent un aperçu de l’impact des principaux choix politiques et d’investissement. La plateforme de modélisation en microsimulation UrbanSim, mise au point par Paul Waddell, professeur d’urbanisme à l’Université de Californie à Berkeley, abrite une collectivité mondiale d’utilisateurs et sert de base aux outils régionaux de soutien décisionnel visant à accélérer ainsi les décisions, mieux fondées, sur une utilisation des terres et des infrastructures ainsi que sur les logements.

The challenge of shaping the growth of urban regions to function as affordable, livable, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable centres is extremely complex. The long-term consequences of key policy and infrastructure choices are intricate and rarely obvious, and are driven by the choices of firms, households, and developers operating in urban land and building markets. The cost of creating models to simulate those market-driven choices and bringing market insights to inform policy choices is typically beyond the budget of urban regions, whether they operate as individual municipalities that the region coordinates with an umbrella structure, or they operate a single municipal governments.

Further, key urban policy choices are rarely the exclusive control of municipalities, dependent as they often are on funding agreements with senior governments for major transportation infrastructure and affordable housing investments. This article describes a path forward to use data-driven urban land-use modelling to provide planners and citizens with clearer insight into the choices that shape cities and affect the cost of housing, and to facilitate more efficient coordination on decisions across levels of government on major infrastructure project funding and transit-oriented development.

By Keith Stewart and Bert Pereboom

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Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) is working with provincial, municipal, and non-government partners, to build and refine urban land-use models to provide urban decision-makers, and the citizens they serve, with improved access to urban market simulation tools based on timely, reliable data. The models seek to simulate the location choices that households, firms, and developers make based on land-use choices, infrastructure investments, and the relative values and prices of locations across an urban region. The dialogue, data, and simulation tools created from this work will contribute to more affordable housing markets, a more stable financial system, and more economically viable, environmentally sustainable urban regions across Canada.

THE CHALLENGE
Sustaining an affordable housing market is one of the biggest challenges facing Canadian cities today. Housing prices have increased for over a decade in many urban areas, most drastically in the large economic regions anchored by Vancouver and Toronto, with prices rising by 48% and 40% respectively between 2010 and 2016.\(^1\) Even with recent price moderation, home prices remain at unaffordable multiples of median household incomes. Rental markets in these areas offer little relief: CMHC’s Rental Market Survey estimated 2018 vacancy rates in purpose-built rental stock in Vancouver and Toronto at near 1%, well below (though included in) the national average of 2.4% and the 3.0% generally considered an indicator of adequate rental supply.\(^2\)

Governments at all levels have a stake in and recognize their role in tackling these challenges. A renewed commitment to solutions involving both supply and demand policies across the housing spectrum are evident in Canada’s National Housing Strategy in 2017,\(^3\) British Columbia’s Homes for BC in 2018,\(^4\) and Ontario’s More Homes, More Choice in 2019.\(^5\) In addition to CMHC’s role in delivering the National Housing Strategy, in 2018 the organization committed to an even more ambitious goal: By 2030, everyone in Canada has a home that they can afford and that meets their needs.

In addition to CMHC’s role in delivering the National Housing Strategy, in 2018 the organization committed to an even more ambitious goal: By 2030, everyone in Canada has a home that they can afford and that meets their needs.

This is a tall order, and its achievement will depend on creating conditions in which market – not just non-market or supported – housing is financially accessible and meets the needs of each community. For this to happen, decision-makers and stakeholders need to better understand how local housing markets are shaped by public and private decisions and the policy changes needed to generate market housing at affordable prices.

Local housing markets are shaped through intricate interactions between multiple factors, such as current housing conditions, economic and employment growth, and demographic change, land-use policies, transportation investment, and the cost and availability of credit. Understanding how all those influences interact is a daunting challenge, too complicated to understand without the use of data-driven models. While there are many types of models available, models that simulate choices of households, firms and developers in the future based on choices made in the past can lead to more effective policies and investments that address the challenges of affordable housing, efficient transportation, greenhouse gas reduction, and social equity. Such models and the insights they produce need to be data-driven, but also intuitive, speaking to a wide variety of invested audiences to help bridge the information gap among decision-makers.

Building an urban land-use simulation model from scratch would take a great deal of time and effort, so we identified and explored existing models. After considering several options, the UrbanSim open-source, land-use modelling platform developed by Dr. Paul Waddell, a professor of City and Regional Planning at the University of California-Berkeley and supporting scholars, was selected. The modelling platform has been developed over 20 years, supported largely by grants from the US

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND NIMBYISM IN CANADIAN MIXED-INCOME HOUSING PROJECTS
Mixed-income housing is often seen as a means to increase social inclusion for vulnerable groups, and to increase community acceptance of affordable housing projects. Research has shown that developers of affordable housing and supportive housing still face NIMBYism. The main consequences are:

- Delays in planning process and project approval, notably when requesting zoning changes
- Loss of funding related to permitting or official approval of delays
- Increased costs to developers and the development project
- Unanticipated changes (for example, density, relocation of the project)

Research Overview: Pursuing the implementation of the National Housing Strategy, CMHC commissioned Goss Gilroy Inc., in 2018, to conduct research to better understand what leads to successful social inclusion in Canadian mixed-income housing projects and how NIMBYism is overcome. Findings from this research will help municipalities, housing providers and policy makers to develop strategies to overcome NIMBYism and foster social inclusion in affordable housing projects.
National Science Foundation, and over the last two years by CMHC. Today, UrbanSim models have been, or are being, built in metropolitan regions around the world, including San Francisco, Chicago, and Boston, Paris, Zurich, and Johannesburg, supported by a cloud platform that allows many users to generate model scenarios quickly at low cost.

UrbanSim simulation models are driven by an extensive set of detailed regional data assembled by those interested in developing the land-use model for a ‘labour watershed’ that is typically considered a metropolitan region. The data, particularly parcel-level land-use and their associated market values, can be expensive to develop and maintain, given the annual cost of securing this data from public and private agencies, and it is this data assembly and maintenance that has made it challenging for individual municipalities and more senior governments to develop these data-intensive land-use models.

BUILDING URBANSIM PLATFORMS FOR CANADIAN CENTRES
In the fall of 2017, CMHC initiated discussions with Metro Vancouver, Translink and BC Assessment to build UrbanSim Vancouver, the first Canadian UrbanSim platform. The Government of Canada through Statistics Canada and CMHC contributed data on household characteristics, the location of industry and jobs, and rental markets. The Government of British Columbia made data available from BC Assessment, including assessed land values for residential and non-residential parcels. Translink provided transportation connection data from their regional travel models. More than 20 local municipalities in the Greater Vancouver area supplied detailed zoning regulations. Assembling this comprehensive data set would not have been possible without the dedication and effort of staff at these organizations.

UrbanSim Inc. was employed to tackle the daunting task of converting non-standardized municipal zoning designations into a standardized representation of the building development allowed by the zoning designation of each parcel within the Vancouver region. The model was calibrated to reflect region-specific development factors and timelines, and to provide the cloud computing platform to take IT challenges out of the platform development process.

URBANSIM: ONE PLATFORM WITH TWO APPLICATIONS
The UrbanSim platform offers two distinct but related applications for housing advocates and urban planners and decision-makers: the micro-planning oriented Penciler, and the macro-planning oriented UrbanCanvas.

Penciler
Penciler is a site-specific tool that quickly analyzes the financial viability of market, non-market, or mixed rental housing projects. Users select pre-loaded parcels, define a mix of unit types, and Penciler generates a general massing model of the structure that maximizes the number of units, given the site’s existing zoning that is loaded into Penciler [Figure 1]. Users can experiment by tweaking a host of zoning parameters such as Floor Area Ratio (FAR), setbacks and coverage ratios, among others that shape the built form.

Users can also enter financial parameters on acquisition costs, rents, and operating expenses to determine the financial viability of the building. Multiple questions can be analyzed instantaneously, for example: “does seeking a variance for a setback requirement or a reduction in parking significantly alter the number of affordable housing units that can be provided?” and “at what cost per unit?”

CMHC is in the early stages of exploring integration on UrbanSim into National Housing Strategy programs with the goal of maximizing the impact of affordable housing investments.

UrbanCanvas
UrbanCanvas, on the other hand, models entire regions based on interactions between households, employers, mobility
patterns, anticipated development, and government policy. This is done through a microsimulation of the market for housing. Household agents (statistical representations of households) make choices about where to live, based on considerations like incomes and budget, and access to transit and local amenities (Figures 2 and 3). Employer choices on where jobs are located, and where developers choose to create residential and non-residential buildings are also modeled. Results are tracked within the system and aggregated to meaningful geographies, such as municipalities within the region. Results are tabulated for both standard housing-related variables, such as neighbourhood population growth, as well as deeper socio-economic ones, including changes to the income distribution of a neighbourhood. As such, UrbanCanvas helps to visualize social inclusion and to directly support community decision-makers in developing inclusionary policies and programs that are likely to have the desired outcomes. (See inset box on social inclusion.)

UrbanCanvas gives users many avenues to simulate policy changes, including land-use designations, density, addition of major employment centres, and new transit development. For example, the platform can be used not only to estimate demand for additional housing units and job space due to changes in mobility resulting from transit investments, but also to provide insight into what types of households and employers are likely to be most affected by changing mobility patterns.
CMHC is also working with UrbanSim to expand the capacity of UrbanCanvas to model impacts of housing finance conditions (interest rates, mortgage insurance parameters, regulatory stress tests, home buyer supports) on local markets. This truly brings together local and national policies into one platform so their interactions can be more fully understood.

THE ROAD AHEAD
Housing availability and affordability are deeply rooted in the complex policy choices and infrastructure investments that municipalities and more senior governments regularly make. Financial stability depends in no small part on keeping housing markets in balance at relatively stable prices, and the Bank of Canada has cited elevated house prices and mortgage lending as a key source of financial system risk for most of the current decade. High and rising rental and house prices in Canada’s growing urban regions are not necessarily inevitable. To solve one of the more critical challenges facing growing urban areas, a better understanding of the complex systems that drive housing prices and what will be necessary to moderate their growth is needed.

CMHC’s intent is that these collaboratively-built urban data platforms and the Penciler and UrbanCanvas open-source modelling tools become widely adopted to facilitate improved interaction and support evidence-based insights in land-use and housing policy. Each of those platforms would be locally governed by key municipal, provincial, and federal users who would rely on the data and model outputs to inform the key policy and investment decisions that shape the livability, viability, and sustainability of economic regions across Canada. Funding announced in the 2019 Federal Budget enables the facilitation of support to other major urban centres. CMHC aspires to develop and support platforms for at least the 12 largest urban regions of Canada over the next five years. Work is currently underway with partners to build an UrbanSim platform for Ontario’s Greater Golden Horseshoe Region, and work will also start on other regions as interest emerges.

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Bert Pereboom is Senior Manager of Housing Market Policy at CMHC. His work focuses on supporting collaborative solutions to housing market challenges across governments and market participants, including work with the Canada/BC Expert Panel on future housing supply and affordability. He lives in Ottawa’s Old Ottawa South Neighbourhood.

ENDNOTES
5 https://www.ontario.ca/page/more-homes-more-choice-ontarios-housing-supply-action-plan
WHAT IS MEASURED DEFINES THE CRISIS

Using community-based housing metrics to create culturally appropriate housing in Nishnawbe Aski Nation

By Shelagh McCartney and Michael McKay

SUMMARY
To address the ongoing housing crisis in their territory, Nishnawbe Aski Nation is creating a housing strategy based on community values and priorities. A cornerstone of this strategy is the creation of self-determined local indicators, which retreat from standardized metrics, and strictly physical understandings of home. Instead, metrics are focused on the diverse lived experiences of community members and the intersections of housing with mental, physical, spiritual and emotional well-being. By creating this deeper, more contextual understanding of housing priorities each of the 49 member First Nations of Nishnawbe Aski Nation will be able to better plan for the future.

RÉSUMÉ
Pour résoudre la crise permanente du logement qui sévit sur son territoire, la Nation Nishnawbe Aski Nation élabore une stratégie de logement qui repose sur les valeurs et les priorités communautaires. Une des pierres angulaires de cette stratégie est la création d’indicateurs locaux autodéterminés qui s’éloignent des facteurs normalisés et des concepts purement physiques de ce qu’est une habitation. En guise de remplacement, on propose des facteurs basés sur l’expérience vécue des membres de la collectivité et des lieux de convergence du logement et du bien-être mental, physique, spirituel et émotionnel. En dégageant cette compréhension plus profonde et plus contextuelle des priorités de logement, chacun des 49 membres de la Première Nation pourra envisager un avenir meilleur.

Canada’s first National Housing Strategy, released in 2018, identified Indigenous housing as a priority issue, and Indigenous people as a priority vulnerable group. The chapter of the National Housing Strategy focused on Indigenous people, “Nothing About Us, Without Us”, confirmed that a distinctions-based National First Nations Housing Strategy would be developed “to ensure the future of housing and infrastructure reform is envisioned from a First Nations perspective.” The self-determination goal of this additional strategy, still incomplete, would be to “support First Nations care, control, and management of housing and infrastructure and address the needs of First Nations people living both on and off reserve,” fitting within the strategy’s target of removing 530,000 people from housing need.

Months later, in June 2018, the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Chiefs-in-Assembly declared a collective housing crisis and mandated the creation of a modern NAN Housing Strategy (the Strategy). The Strategy’s objective, outlined in the resolution, is to “define housing need in NAN First Nations based on community values and priorities, and to advocate for unique community-based solutions.” This mandate came as a direct result of ongoing federal-level housing program failures which have “not met immediate need, have not addressed
future need, and have not promoted or created wellness in NAN communities. Both strategies have two critical underlying questions. What is housing need? How can this need be addressed?

CONTEXT
NAN is a Political Territorial Organization with 49 member First Nations in Northern Ontario. NAN’s territory covers more than 210,000 square miles (Figure 1) and the majority of NAN members live in First Nations that are only accessible by air or by winter roads. Using Canada’s standard metrics of suitability and adequacy, the outcomes for NAN’s on-reserve members are more than four and seven times worse than Canadian averages respectively. Subject to higher rates of crowding and need for repairs, distinct inequities have existed for decades, with little improvement.

The call for a NAN-specific housing strategy, rooted in community values and goals, represents a turn towards grassroots housing solutions. The creation of the NAN Housing Strategy, jointly undertaken by NAN and Together Design Lab at Ryerson University, looks to place the experiences and knowledge of NAN community members at the centre of the Strategy. Recognition is given to NAN’s unique context, and the climates, geographies, and cultures across the region and within individual First Nations, which shape both housing needs and goals.

FOCUS ON METRICS
The Strategy’s approach to housing need breaks from the current standard measurement of housing, known as “Core Housing Need.” Since its inception in 1981, Core Housing Need has been used as a benchmark of minimally acceptable housing across Canada. Developed jointly with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, the metric was designed to represent the modern urban concerns of housing in North America, while creating a framework for cross-jurisdictional comparisons to identify targets for housing interventions.

Core Housing Need defines those Canadian populations most in need, creating a public policy objective while being a measurement tool for the efficacy of intervention. However, government defined metrics can delimit the potential for transformative change.

With policy rooted in Core Housing Need, interventions are targeting a goal that is not decided by First Nation communities, but by an urban standard. The need being addressed is not the need referred to in the NAN Chiefs-in-Assembly declaration of housing emergency, but instead one defined by the Canadian government.

The Strategy is creating a new set of regional and local metrics to ensure that community values and priorities are clearly understood and can be integrated into the creation of future housing policies, programs and initiatives. Need will be redefined through the lived experiences of community members, ensuring that interventions target their priorities. Once created, NAN and community-specific metrics can guide a planning process of collecting baseline data, identifying community goals, and creating actions plans. The usefulness of need metrics in this scenario are derived not from their usefulness in national or international comparison, but in their relevance to occupants and assertion of self-determination in the community planning process.

CREATING METRICS
Beginning in January 2019, members of NAN’s Housing and Infrastructure Department and Together Design Lab began meeting with representatives of NAN communities at regional NAN events, including NAN Health Summit, NAN Youth Gathering, and the NAN Environment, Climate Change & Housing Symposium. Sessions focused on understanding the professional perspectives of community representatives on existing housing issues, identifying populations facing greater housing need and their visions for the future of housing in their community, and examples of solutions to housing challenges which may already exist in communities. In June and July 2019, the Strategy team visited six communities to host similar workshops, learning directly from the experiences of community members in remote and drive-in communities of: Brunswick House, Fort Severn, Kasabonika Lake, Mattagami, Marten Falls and Cat Lake First Nations.

In advance of workshops, and in preparation for the co-creation process, an outline of guidelines for metric creation was developed by the Strategy team. The primary objective of the guidelines was to encourage workshop participants to focus on specificity to gather detailed and distinct information across different gender and age groups, without imposing disciplinary or technical understandings of home. These guidelines were the following:
What is measured defines the crisis

1. Housing should be measured at the individual level where possible.
2. Housing is more than a physical structure, so it should be evaluated on more than its physical components.
3. Housing metrics should reflect local understandings and priorities in housing.
4. Different people may have different housing priorities; where possible all should be accounted for.

TOWARDS METRICS:
CURRENT PROJECT LEARNINGS

Understandings of housing have not been limited to physical or technical measures. More than 250 community members have participated to date and have described critical elements of the housing crisis as well-being, community growth, housing design, access to services, and environmental conditions. These elements are not experienced or discussed as discrete issues, but instead as part of an interconnected systems that must be addressed holistically.

Metrics are being developed within each of the above-mentioned themes. While some metrics are rooted in concerns shared across communities, others arise from specific situations. Metrics being created can be organized into three domains: physical characteristics, occupant satisfaction, and lived experience. Physical characteristics often rely on technical standards measuring the safety, quality, and durability of homes. Occupant satisfaction measures the ability of the home to meet the needs of each occupant, measuring whether spaces in and around the home are appropriately designed to satisfy the lifestyle requirements of individuals. Lived experience measures the social, emotional, and spiritual outcomes of occupants as a result of housing systems and broader community infrastructure. Measures include more appropriate understandings of access to services, housing’s role in forced mobility and a more comprehensive look at housing cost and insecurity.

The profile of housing being created by community-based metrics speaks to a more integrated and holistic understanding of home. Ending NAN’s housing crisis, as defined by NAN members, will require solutions which address the physical conditions of a home as well as community infrastructure, access to services, climate change, and more. Housing programs must be designed to meet the specific needs of each community to address the well-being of each community’s members.

CONCLUSION

While core housing need has had a static and universal definition for nearly four decades in Canada, it is inappropriate in the context of First Nations housing policy. While programs may be tailored to the distinctions of First Nations, without control over goals, housing solutions remain rooted in colonial frameworks. Creating meaningful transformation in housing systems requires a shift in scale from the universal to the local. The creation of new metrics alone is insufficient to create change in the lived environment of occupants. The effectiveness of new metrics relies on their operationalization in public policy. Creating change in the lived experience of NAN members relies on this more holistic understanding of home being the foundation of housing policy and First Nations self-determination throughout the housing system. While the metrics that will be developed are specific to the NAN territory, many of the project learnings can be applied to the development of tailored housing solutions for marginalized communities more broadly including the following:

1. Universal metrics do not capture the experiences of those most marginalized in housing systems including Indigenous peoples. Co-creating specific metrics rooted in the values, goals, and aspirations of a target population will ensure that programs are linked to the target population while providing a deeper understanding of existing barriers.
2. Non-standard and qualitative metrics can provide a more nuanced and complex understanding of housing need and will provide context for discussions of housing need.
3. The development of metrics alone is insufficient. The co-creation of metrics must be followed by a process of program development which allows the target community to have power in building the pathway towards success.
4. Co-development processes must be operationalized long-term. One-off metric development or strategies further disempower and marginalize communities by tokenizing their participation and not supporting long-term change.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ENDNOTES

1 Canada. Employment and Social Development Canada, “Canada’s National Housing Strategy: A Place to Call Home” (June 5, 2018).
2 Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada, "Canada’s National Housing Strategy.
3 Chiefs-in-Assembly Resolution 18/18 (June 5, 2018)
4 Chiefs-in-Assembly Resolution 18/18.
TEACHING HOUSING POLICY TO PLANNERS

Past, present, and future

By Carolyn Whitzman

SUMMARY
This article begins by discussing the centrality of housing policy to the creation of a planning education system in Canada after World War Two, before describing the decline in housing policy-related skills and knowledge over the past three decades. It concludes with the question of how this capacity gap might be addressed.

RÉSUMÉ
Cet article traite d’abord du rôle central de la politique du logement dans la création d’un système de formation urbanistique au Canada après la Seconde Guerre mondiale. On y fait ensuite ressortir le déclin des compétences et connaissances relatives à cette politique depuis les trois dernières décennies, en concluant par la question de savoir comment combler ce déficit de capacités.

INTRODUCTION
The international impetus for the profession of urban planning – as well as the allied profession of public health – lies in the horrific housing conditions of industrializing cities during the 19th century. So why, in the face of increasing housing disparities with increasingly horrific health and environmental outcomes in the 21st century, has teaching on housing policy, and capacity-building in associated fields of land economics and spatial analysis, virtually disappeared from Canadian planning education?

PAST
Thomas Adams, the key figure behind the development of the Canadian Housing and Town Planning Act of 1909 and the Town Planning Institute of Canada in 1919, was trained within the UK Garden City movement and designed veterans’ housing in Ottawa’s Lindenlea. Similarly, Humphrey Carver, the key figure behind the revival of urban planning after World War Two, was inspired by the Garden City movement to focus on affordable housing supply. Two linked urban challenges animated the federal government to release the ambitious Curtis Report on housing and community planning in 1944: the need for 600,000 to one million new homes to accommodate returning soldiers, and the desire to provide employment for
them through a vastly scaled-up housing infrastructure provision program. The post-war Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) focused on three linked priorities: land assembly for housing, training planners, and educating the public.

After funding a 1948 McGill summer school, the CMHC co-funded professorships for the first five planning programs in Canada. The establishment of a common core curriculum, where the provision of adequate and affordable housing within existing cities and new suburbs was central to the goals of the planning profession, was the condition for generous grants to universities and individual researchers. Over the next three decades, the CMHC added graduate and eventually, postdoctoral fellowships, which created a new generation of Canadian housing researchers. Between 1955 and 1963, the CMHC awarded $5 million in research contracts, equivalent to $18 million in today’s dollars.¹

From the first, the norm for a planning degree was two years of graduate study, with the first year devoted to a common core, and the second year encompassing a choice of specialization as well as opportunities for professional internship and/or independent research; this format has remained constant. Despite affordable housing being seen as the rationale for establishment of urban planning degrees, housing policy as such was not a core course. A suite of relatively consistent first-year core courses emerged, comprising essential knowledge – planning and urban history as well as skills, including quantitative, spatial, and policy analysis methods – with teaching approaches based in studios and internships. Housing was one of several common second-year specializations, along with transport, rural/regional, resource/economic development, social service, and international development planning. Core teaching emphasized transferrable knowledge and skills for any specialization and for eventual employment in government, private, or social service organizations. For instance, a grounding in urban economics was considered essential to assemble land for housing and to address speculation. An understanding of demographics and spatial analysis underlay the necessity to plan for future household needs and to ensure housing was well located in relation to employment, services, and transportation. Being able to critically analyze past decisions in the light of both expected and unexpected outcomes, as well as creative problem-solving, were essential for direct provision of public goods such as housing.

While most US writers on planning education in the decades after World War Two emphasized the importance of urban economics, even suggesting it should comprise 10 to 25% of the curriculum, Canadian institutions tended to downplay this knowledge. Friedmann’s² review of 19 US planning schools and the University of British Columbia (UBC) found that
13 of 20 schools included a core economics course. In contrast, in 2014, only eight of 15 Canadian accredited planning degrees had required courses in economics, with these types of courses comprising only 2% of the core curricula. To some extent, this reflected the slow development of Canada’s welfare state; in contrast to post-war UK, US, and Australia, housing was predominantly left to the market, and so planning education perhaps felt it didn’t need to engage in the specifics of real estate development.

From approximately 1965-1980, the institutional capacity built up by the CMHC amongst municipal and provincial housing planners, along with joint funding and federal mortgage guarantees, resulted in about 10% of housing production coming from the non-profit sector. Public sector planners engaged in land banking, set numeric goals based on housing need calculations and demographic projections, and directly developed social housing. But even at this high point, a report prepared for the CMHC sub-titled Programs in Search of a Policy bemoaned the fact that “at no level of government has there been even mid-term planning for the number, type, distribution, quality etc. of the units produced,” let alone a “national attempt to devise new techniques for dealing with housing price inflation.”

PRESENT

By the 1990s, John Friedmann argued that neoliberalism was triumphant, with declining belief in the effectiveness of interventionalist state planning, an increasing reliance on market solutions, and the rise of civil society (particularly its most privileged members) as actors in planning processes. In an era characterized by government remote steering instead of direct provision, a core curriculum grounding in policy and program analysis, spatial and quantitative analysis, microeconomics, negotiation, and communication skills as well as history and theory was increasingly important to obtaining public good impacts through indirect government ‘steering.’ But as is the case with economics, the skill of spatial analytics, so vital to the siting of affordable housing near jobs and services, has been neglected by Canadian schools, with only 0.4% of the core curriculum in Canadian accredited courses devoted to spatial analysis.

Since 2013, accreditation of planning degrees has been contingent on a common core, which includes six “functional competencies” (knowledge) and four “enabling competencies” (skills). A focus on urban and planning history and theory remains (now termed “human settlements” and “history and principles of planning”). “Government and law” includes political and institutional frameworks and planning law (although not, at least explicitly, international human rights law). “Issues in Planning and Policy-Making” includes public finance and economics, along with sustainability and equity considerations. “Processes of Planning and Policy-Making” includes goal-setting and information-gathering and analysis, certainly vital for housing policy development; while “Plan and Policy Implementation” covers regulatory and fiscal/financial tools, as well as monitoring and evaluation, again, vital for housing policy. When it comes to “enabling competencies,” gathering and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data” is included within “critical and creative thinking,” although spatial analysis is not specifically addressed.

At least in terms of basics, the core should be able to prepare students for a specialization in housing. The question is whether that specialization is taught. A scan of Canadian universities in 2010-11, conducted for the CMHC, found 116 ‘housing-related’ courses being taught in universities, a heartening number – at least at first glance. But there were only three programs with a housing development focus: one undergraduate program in Real Estate and Housing at Guelph University, a continuing education course at University of Calgary on Real Estate Development, and a Diploma in Urban Land Economics and Real Estate at UBC (all three offered within faculties of commerce/business). Many of the courses included in the scan focused on architectural design or were generic undergraduate urban studies or geography courses. Eight planning schools – Dalhousie, Laval, McGill, Queen’s, UBC, Toronto, Ryerson, and York – had a critical mass of three to four undergraduate or graduate housing policy and development courses that could constitute a specialization.

However, in 2019, no websites of 19 currently CIP-accredited courses mention having a housing specialization, although Queen’s and Toronto both have “real estate” specializations and Ryerson does mention “housing affordability” as one of eight areas of research specialization. Previous standard specializations such as rural and regional development, social service planning, and transport planning remain, along with more recent imperatives such as environmental sustainability and Indigenous planning. Into this breach, there is some post-professional training offered by the Canadian branch of the UK-based Chartered Institute of Housing, but their offerings focus on service and asset management for social housing providers, rather than policy development for planners.

Why is there such a gap of housing teaching and training? Buzzelli and Crenna point to the mutually reinforcing elements of research, teaching, and community engagement in universities. Simply put, academics like to teach in their areas of research, and they engage in research that has the capacity to influence policy shift. Three decades of federal disinvestment and disinterest in affordable housing policy have led to diminished research funding for graduate students or scholars, not only from the CMHC but from non-profit and public housing providers and industry associations. The generation of housing researchers funded by CMHC fellowships are nearing retirement age. Research on increasing homelessness and core housing need may have felt like screaming into the void. A search of the keyword “housing” in the database suggests that only four of 1,851 current Canada Research Chairs – all Tier 2 or “emerging” rather than Tier 1 “established” scholars – specialize in any aspect of housing policy or governance, two with a national focus and two with an international focus.

This absence of housing policy education becomes a vicious cycle. Without an understanding of land economics, costed out alternatives, and knowledge of international best practice, how can transformative housing policy occur? The ‘brain drain’ from academe and practice becomes mutually reinforcing. In 2015, a senior Ontario housing official said as part of an interview on housing partnerships: Each service manager [of 47 municipal jurisdictions] has their own 10-year housing and homelessness strategy which they file with us [since 2011], and that is a good start. But there is...
limited cross-jurisdictional discussion, and no overarching provincial housing and homelessness plan... I would easily conclude that we are not the resident experts any more. We don’t know how to expertly guide this ship.\textsuperscript{11}

**FUTURE**

Aalbers,\textsuperscript{12} perhaps optimistically, argues that the global neoliberal era from the early 1980s, the "Great Excess... characterized by rising inequality and debt," was called into question by the Global Financial Crisis a decade ago. The choice between "austerity urbanism" and "a de-commodified housing alternative" is more urgent than ever, he concludes.\textsuperscript{13} The "Great Excess and the Global Housing Crisis." International Journal of Housing Policy 15, no. 1(2015): 45.

Exposing Canadian course offerings in 2010-11,\textsuperscript{14} some of which appear to no longer be offered, suggests that inclusion in the core of spatial analysis, research design for policy development, and urban economics would be a necessary prerequisite to a suite of four to six housing specialization courses. The courses might be drawn from architecture, real estate development/commerce, public policy, economics, and geography; planning is by its nature syncretic. Specialization courses might include: Housing History and Theory (Dalhousie, McGill); Housing Policy (Queen’s, Toronto, Montreal, York, Waterloo, UBC); Sustainable Housing Design (McGill, Ryerson); Housing, Community, and Economic Development/ Revitalisation (MIT, York, Winnipeg, UBC); Affordable Housing and Homelessness/ Affordable Housing Development (Calgary, Toronto); Housing and Human Services (Queen’s); Gestion et Amenagement [Real Estate Management and Investment/Finance] (Laval, MIT, Guelph, Waterloo, Calgary, UBC); Housing Economics (York, Waterloo, UBC); Real Estate Planning and Development (Queen’s, Winnipeg); Negotiating Development Agreements (MIT); Redeveloping Housing (Ryerson); Human Rights at Home and Abroad (MIT); as well as housing studios and internships.

As recognized in this special issue, housing for all Canadians is once again poised to be at the centre of community planning. Developing the capacity to enable good housing policy is going to require university-based research, teaching, and engagement with the multiple partners necessary to provide this essential right and need.

**ENDNOTES**

14. CaCHE [UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Excellence], About Us, 2019. https://housingevidence.ac.uk/
15. Buzzelli and Crenna.
Jeanne Mary Wolfe (1934-2009)

Order of Canada (2009); Prix Jean-Claude La Haye, OUQ (2004); CIP President’s Award CIP (2007), FCIP (1988); Professor Emerita, McGill University (2000-9)

By David Brown

Jeanne M. Wolfe was a “pragmatic-idealist” who wanted to change the world for the better by working audaciously toward social and environmental goals. Born in England in 1934, she had vivid memories of being sent to the countryside to live with relatives during the Second World War, where she developed a strong attachment to what she simply called “the land”—the name she would later give to her large country property with minimal services in Canada.

After graduating from the University of London in 1956, Jeanne immigrated to Canada where she completed a M.Sc. in Geography at the University of Western Ontario in 1959. This was followed by an M.A. in Community Planning at McGill University in 1961, under the tutelage of Harold Spence-Sales, who, along with John Bland, had established the first interdisciplinary planning program in Canada in 1947.

In 1964, Jeanne went to work with the planning department of the City of Montreal, a city that was undergoing an urban renaissance stimulated by introduction of the Metro and major building projects such as Place Ville Marie. The City’s work on regional growth patterns, with the objective of seeking a better balance between growth centres, public infrastructure, and services, was presented at Expo ’67 in the form of a film titled Montréal Horizon 2000. Jeanne treasured the opportunity to work on so many innovative projects during her five years with the City.

In 1980, Jeanne moved on to SATRA, a regional planning agency created by the Quebec Government, where she worked as a Senior Planner, then Director of Planning, coordinating land-use and transportation plans. The three years she spent on this project were challenging, but also a major learning experience in dealing with controversial issues as a planner. In addition, she met a number of other young colleagues who would go on to make their mark on the profession of urban planning in Quebec and became lifelong friends.

In 1973, Jeanne was recruited to teach at McGill’s School of Urban Planning, an autonomous academic unit that re-established the School under the leadership of David Farley. The challenge and freedom of building a new curriculum to train professional planners, engaging with the community, and undertaking research projects of her own choosing was appealing and she dove into the work. The excitement of being on the edge of new ventures and ideas never left her over her 36 years at McGill, where she moved up the ranks from Assistant Professor to Director of the School from 1988 to 1999. Even as a Professor Emerita, after retiring from paid employment at McGill, she was in her office on a regular basis, meeting with students, teaching during the Barbados Field Study Semester, as well as writing provocative academic and newspaper articles.

A voracious reader with a passion for history, Jeanne developed the “History and Theory of Planning” course that served as the mainstay of the planning program for decades. She also taught one or more studios each year, a practice that offered the students a chance to learn planning by engaging with the community, as well as directing Supervised Research Projects. Her dedication to planning education coupled with her breadth and depth of knowledge, vivid presentations, keen interest in the planning profession, and forceful personality is well remembered by virtually all her students, many of whom still enjoy recalling their favourite Jeanne Wolfe stories when they get together.

Throughout her career at McGill, Jeanne maintained an enviable research record, evident in the quantity, quality, and impact of her work. The topics she pursued ranged from inner city housing, co-operative housing, socio-economic issues in remote resource towns, municipal planning, planning in developing countries, planning theory, and history, as well as utopian settlement across Canada, with funding from FCAC, FCAR, Canada Council, OPDO, SSHRC, UNESCO, and CIDA. While the topics varied greatly, she invariably wanted to know “Who benefits?” and “Who pays?” with a sharp eye for social-injustice.

In 1985, Jeanne became deeply involved in researching and teaching urban issues in developing countries. She led an “action-research” initiative that used a ‘learning-by-doing’ approach to develop a plan for Belize City, conduct original research, and provide an outstanding educational opportunity for professionals, students, government officials, and the general population. Later her focus shifted to Trinidad, where she helped establish a post-graduate program at the University of the West Indies. As a founding member of Villes et développement, a Montreal-based international research program in Canada in 1947.
group designated by CIDA as a Centre of Excellence – and funded for some 15 years – Jeanne had a significant impact on planning research and education throughout Central America and the Caribbean. Later, she worked on Urban Agriculture in several African countries, and represented CIP on a task force to assist with development of the planning profession in China.

Elected to the College of Fellows in 1988, Jeanne authored a long list of professional and research publications, technical and commission reports, articles, book reviews, newspaper articles, book chapters and books before her retirement and promotion to Emerita Professor in 2000. Many of these were classic works that helped to further innovative research and planning practice in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, and internationally.

Always active in community, academic, and professional planning associations, Jeanne assumed many leadership roles over the years, including Chair of the National Board of Examiners of CIP, President of the Association of Canadian University Planning Programs, member of the editorial boards of Plan Canada and Environments, member of the Parizeau Commission on the future of municipalities in Quebec, and member of numerous community groups such as Centraide, Musée des Beaux-Art de Montréal, Société d’habitation et de développement de Montréal, and the environmental group known as STOP. Many of these community activities led to real change on the ground, as was the case with her involvement in the establishment of one of Canada’s earliest large-scale co-operative housing programs in Milton Park, Montreal.

Throughout her career, Jeanne Wolfe was well known as a social and environmental activist, whose sharp wit, extensive knowledge, and direct conversational style (in both official languages) left a lasting impression. Her commitment to planning and her conviction that virtually everyone had a role to play in improving the quality of life of communities was inspiring. Through her activism, writing, and participation on countless academic, professional, community, and government advisory bodies, she made a major contribution to planning on local, provincial, national, and international levels, and earned a place as one of Canada’s leading planners.

David Brown MOUQ, FCIP was a colleague at McGill and close friend of Jeanne’s. He succeeded Jeanne as Director of the School of Urban Planning in 1999, a position he retained until 2010.

Jeanne Mary Wolfe
(1934-2009)

Ordre du Canada (2009); Prix Jean-Claude La Haye, OUQ (2004); Prix du président de l’ICU (2007), FICU (1988); Professeure émérite, Université McGill (2000-9)

Par David Brown
controversées dans son rôle d’urbaniste. Ce fut d’ailleurs une occasion pour elle d’y rencontrer plusieurs autres jeunes collègues qui marqueront de leur empreinte la profession urbanistique au Québec et avec lesquels elle se liera d’amitié à vie.

En 1973, elle fut recrutée pour enseigner à l’École d’urbanisme de McGill, une unité universitaire autonome sous l’égide de David Farley. Le défi et la liberté d’élaborer un nouveau programme d’études pour former des urbanistes professionnels, de nouer le dialogue avec la communauté et d’entreprendre des projets de recherche de son choix constituaient un attrait stimulant qui la poussa à s’y plonger. Son enthousiasme d’être à l’affût de nouvelles entreprises et de nouvelles idées ne la quitta jamais au cours de ses 36 années à McGill, où elle y gravit les échelons, de professeure adjointe à directrice de l’École de 1988 à 1999. Professeure émérite, même après avoir pris sa retraite d’un emploi rémunéré à McGill, elle se rendait régulièrement à son bureau pour y rencontrer des étudiants. Elle continuait d’enseigner dans le cadre d’un mandat de McGill à l’étranger, à la Barbade, et rédigea aussi de nombreux articles de journaux et universitaires provocants.


Élué au collège des Fellows en 1988, elle a signé une longue liste de publications professionnelles et de recherches, de rapports techniques et de commissions, d’articles divers et de journaux, de critiques de livres, de chapitres de livres et de livres avant sa retraite et sa nomination en qualité de professeur émérite en 2000. Plusieurs de ces ouvrages furent de grands classiques qui contribuèrent à l’avancement de la recherche et des pratiques urbanistiques novatrices à Montréal, au Québec, au Canada et à l’étranger.

En demeurant toujours active au sein d’associations communautaires, universitaires et professionnelles dans le domaine de l’urbanisme, Jeanne Wolfe a assumé plusieurs rôles de leadership au fil des ans, dont celui de présidente du comité national d’examen de l’ICU, présidente de l’Association universitaire canadienne des programmes en urbanisme et aménagement, membre des comités de rédaction de Plan Canada et d’Environnements, membre de la Commission Parizeau sur l’avenir des municipalités du Québec et membre de nombreux groupes communautaires tels que Centraide, le Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal, la Société d’habitation et de développement de Montréal et le groupe environnemental STOP. Bon nombre de ces activités communautaires ont mené à des changements concrets sur le terrain, comme ce fut le cas dans le cadre de sa participation à l’établissement de l’un des premiers programmes de coopératives d’habitation à grande échelle du Canada, soit le parc Milton à Montréal.

Tout au long de sa carrière, Jeanne Wolfe fut reconnue comme une militante sociale et environnementale dont l’esprit acéré, les vastes connaissances et le franc-parler [dans les deux langues officielles] lui ont valu un grand rayonnement. Son engagement envers l’urbanisme et sa conviction que tout un chacun, ou presque, doit jouer un rôle dans l’amélioration de la qualité de vie des collectivités se sont révélés mobilisateurs. Par son engagement, ses écrits et sa participation à d’innumérables organismes consultatifs universitaires, professionnels, communautaires et gouvernementaux, elle a su apporter une contribution majeure à la planification aux niveaux local, provincial, national et international et s’imposer comme l’une des plus grandes urbanistes du Canada.

City of Mirrors

Reviewed by Anne Stevenson

“...but it worked in Vancouver!” is a phrase that rarely helps advance progressive planning initiatives elsewhere in Canada. Viewed as a singular product of outstanding natural beauty, temperate climate, and tree-hugging citizens, planners are usually quick to discount Vancouver as a case study for their own cities to learn from. The narrative of Vancouver’s exceptionalism is often perpetuated by commentators from Lotus Land itself, and so it was particularly refreshing to come across a more balanced telling of the city’s evolution in Larry Beasley’s Vancouverism.

In an account of his years at the helm of Vancouver’s planning department, Beasley offers a comprehensive overview of the processes and people that helped shape the Vancouver of today. The book is structured around six organizing principles: neighbourhood planning, transportation choices, mixed use, urban design, environmental responsibility, and public and private collaboration. While the concepts themselves will be familiar to planners, Beasley provides an engaging and detailed account of how these elements combined to form the Vancouverism approach to city-building.

The successful implementation of these six core principles in Vancouver may make some planners despair at their own cities’ sluggish progress. Fortunately, Beasley provides two important antidotes to this despondency. The first, admittedly small comfort to those in other cities, is a detailed explanation of the genuinely unique conditions that allowed these principles to flourish in Vancouver. Unwavering developer demand that put planners in an enviable negotiating position, a Provincial Charter granting the city unique powers, and a non-geographically based city council were all requisite for Vancouver’s success. This provides a helpful reminder that sheer planning will alone cannot transform a city, and that legislative tools, political support, economic conditions, and positive relationships with the development community are all essential ingredients to successful city building.

The second antidote is Beasley’s honest recounting of his own regrets and the unintended consequences of Vancouver’s proactive city-building approach. By sharing the often difficult journey that was taken in Vancouver, Beasley offers lessons and insights upon which planners from across Canada can constructively reflect.

For example, Vancouver’s discretionary zoning system is praised for delivering a range of high value building amenities, such as “well-furnished and lushly landscaped” [p. 246] private courtyards. While undoubtedly beautiful, these features have also arguably limited housing options for middle income residents who may have willingly traded-off these amenities for a lower purchase price and fewer ongoing condo fees. While Beasley rightly
asserts that “a city should [never] trade off its essential quality or character just to make things cheaper,” (p.295) Vancouverism raises the difficult question of when the perfect can become the enemy of the good. As planners from across Canada work to strike a balance between urban quality, housing choice, and affordability, Vancouver’s experience can serve as both an inspiration and a caution.

Despite noting that “[t]he city of the future must be livable and sustainable everywhere,” (p. 299) Beasley acknowledges that Vancouverism “left most of the lower-density neighbourhoods alone” (p. 80). Many municipalities have taken this same path of least resistance, likely in part because “[a]s long as we do not allow intensive development to intrude into stable, nicely scaled communities, the public has tended to be on our side” (p. 335). Knowing that even Vancouver has struggled to tackle the challenge of transforming existing low density areas in the face of strong community resistance underscores the importance of our profession to develop and share approaches to securing the social license to transform these areas into more sustainable urban spaces.

Beasley calls for planners to “involve not just the centre but also the margins” (p. 385). In our planning processes, yet Vancouverism also serves to highlight some of the barriers we face in achieving inclusion and empowerment through our work. As a predominantly privileged profession, we can struggle to accommodate all sectors of society without falling into saviour narratives. In Beasley’s heartfelt acknowledgement of the ongoing atrocity of Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, he speaks of “rescuing these people… who are aimlessly and helplessly on the streets” (p.379-380). This perspective, common in our profession, can obscure the ways in which systemic barriers and policy choices made by planners actively contribute to housing insecurity, and misses the opportunity to build on the overwhelming resilience and enterprise of individuals whose lives look different from our own.

Beasley similarly speaks to the lack of progress on relationships with the many Indigenous communities on whose traditional territory Vancouver is located, but comes to the uncomfortable conclusion that such relationships are now feasible only because “these groups have found a positive way to position their interests in land and development” (p. 371). This sentiment underscores the imperative for our profession to better acknowledge our own colonial biases and to learn how we can more positively approach peoples with different values towards the land and its stewardship.

While full of valuable practical advice that many practitioners will find useful, the greatest contribution of Beasley’s work is to serve as a mirror that allows us to critically reflect on our profession. In sharing both an exceptional vision for the city, as well as the blind spots common to our practice, Vancouverism helps us see the planning profession more clearly.

Anne Stevenson has practiced planning and urban design in Canada, the UK, and West Africa over the past 15 years. She’s currently working on affordable housing initiatives in her hometown of Edmonton.

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