Urban revitalization and healthy public spaces, a critical discourse analysis

by

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BSc, McGill University, 2006

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

(Population and Public Health)

The University of British Columbia
(Vancouver)

April 2011

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Abstract

In the past decade, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES) has been the target of the Vancouver Agreement and the DTES Revitalization Program – two programs aiming to revitalize the neighbourhood and create a healthy community. Planning interventions in public spaces have a unique position in this environment. Public spaces should be accessible to all; however, in the process of revitalization, low-income or otherwise marginalized residents are frequently excluded.

The purpose of my thesis was to critically assess the way revitalization efforts in the DTES envision healthy public spaces and contribute to (in)equitable conditions in the area. I have done this by describing how the language used in urban revitalization planning compares to the dialogue of low-income residents in representing public spaces in the DTES.

The use of language (i.e., discourse) contributes to understandings of places and their inhabitants. Features such as grammar and sentence structure reveal what issues are highlighted or suppressed, what assumptions are made, and how actions are justified. I used critical discourse analysis to analyze two sets of texts: 1) planning documents from the Vancouver Agreement and DTES Revitalization Program and 2) 6 interviews and 1 focus group with local residents on healthy and unhealthy places in their neighbourhood.

My results show that while the planning texts present revitalization outcomes as uniformly positive (e.g., economic revitalization, participation, and visibility of public spaces), resident interviews highlight aspects that serve to marginalize individuals (e.g., displacing homeless people) or eliminate activities that currently fulfill everyday needs (e.g., buying goods from street vendors). The planning texts combine the goals of community health and increased economic activity in the DTES; however, interviewees separate these goals and identify ways they are incompatible. In this way, the planning texts do not acknowledge inequality, and low-income residents do not recognize revitalization's purported benefits.

Community health and local planning are connected, but the goal of improving health may not be compatible with some planning imperatives. This highlights the need to exercise caution in integrating health and planning efforts and ensure that community improvements are equitable, prioritizing people who need them most.
Preface

The research conducted as the basis for this thesis received ethical approval from the University of British Columbia’s Behavioural Research Ethics Board. The number of the Certificate of Approval was H10-00188.
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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisory committee, Jim Frankish, Jeannie Shoveller, and Jeff Masuda, who have supported me through this thesis journey, provided invaluable input at all of the important junctures, and given great advice to guide my thinking and analysis. As well, I would like to give a thank you to Peter Cramer, who introduced me to discourse analysis and gave me confidence in my abilities to use it. I'm also grateful to my friends and classmates with whom I've discussed my research, giving me an important outlet to think and talk about it. Special thanks to Joyce Rock who supported my introduction to the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood and opened many local doors for me.

I would also like to acknowledge the funding I have received in support of my Masters studies from the UBC University Graduate Fellowship, the Pacific Century Graduate Scholarship, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I also received invaluable funding and training from the UBC Bridge Program, the Population Health Intervention Research Network, and the CoPEH-Canada Ecohealth Training Program.
Introduction

The Vancouver Agreement and the Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program are two programs that have taken place in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) neighbourhood of Vancouver, British Columbia from the year 2000 to 2010. These initiatives aim to make the DTES a healthier neighbourhood through interventions in housing, health services, economic development, and public realm improvements. Corresponding urban planning actions include increasing law enforcement, promoting mixed land use, improving parks and streetscapes, and supporting arts programs. These actions are consistent with recommendations for healthy urban planning such as making neighbourhoods safer and more walkable and increasing access to green space or nutritious foods. However, in a context where cities focus on attracting residents and increasing economic growth, these efforts have the potential to exclude specific individuals or groups. When local priorities shift from basic services provision for existing residents to making an area appealing to new residents, it can become more difficult for low-income residents to find healthful opportunities. In this thesis I examine the planning of revitalization in the DTES and how it relates to low-income residents’ experiences of health in the neighbourhood. I do so to determine what interests are prioritized in efforts to make the neighbourhood healthier and to question whether and how urban revitalization can be a means of equitable health promotion.

Health and Place in the Downtown Eastside

The DTES in Vancouver is an inner city neighbourhood where there are high levels of HIV/AIDS, addiction, and mental illness. A disproportionate burden of social factors contribute to and exacerbate these health conditions, such as poverty and inadequate housing (Benoit, Carroll, & Chaudhry, 2003; Dobson, 2004). Over the past
thirty years, many businesses have left the area, leaving behind empty lots and vacant storefronts, several of which have been replaced by numerous community organizations. Landlords have largely let housing deteriorate and property owners have left land vacant. This poor housing stock and cheap land coupled with gentrification pressures and planned densification of the downtown area has played a role in creating inequitable conditions, with marked social polarization between the DTES and the areas surrounding it to the east, south, and west (Blomley, 2004; Dobson, 2004).

Though gentrification, poverty, and poor health are not limited to the DTES, the concentration of these issues in the neighbourhood has led to several neighbourhood-specific programs and planning efforts that aim to revitalize the neighbourhood and make it a healthy place. However, DTES residents have contested some urban planning efforts, and community groups emphasize existing strengths of the neighbourhood. Many residents feel a sense of acceptance in the area, support community organizing for social justice, and appreciate local non-profit organizations that provide valuable community connections and services (Pedersen & Swanson, 2010). This raises the question of how different groups define what a healthy neighbourhood is and what implications these differing ideas might have for the health of people who live there.

**Public Space, Health, and Revitalization in the DTES**

As the most visible and accessible part of a neighbourhood, public and shared spaces have an impact on the way both residents and non-residents experience a neighbourhood. Public space can be defined as places that are accessible to everyone as well as spaces that are the for the benefit of everyone, such as parks and streets (Parkinson, 2009). Public space plays several social roles in cities, including offering spaces for recreation and enjoyment, providing amenities, contributing to community
development, serving as a location for political struggle and control, increasing economic competitiveness of a city, providing a home for the homeless, and creating a visible reputation of a neighbourhood (Loomis, 2004). Public space plays a unique role in revitalization. Since public spaces should be accessible to all, their equitable provision is paramount. However, in areas undergoing revitalization, low-income or otherwise marginalized residents are sometimes excluded through regulation and contestation of what constitutes acceptable uses of public space (Atkinson, 2003; Lees, 2003; Schaller & Modan, 2005).

With increased urbanization and the prominent role that policies outside the health sector have in shaping population health, municipal planning has become an important determinant of health (Collins & Hayes, 2010). Despite the considerable power of provincial and national governments over determinants of health such as housing and income distribution (e.g., through tax and housing policy), city governments still have a significant health equity impact. Municipal governments can distribute benefits or cause harm through actions such as redevelopment and open space planning (Fainstein, 2009). A neighbourhood’s physical features, environment, services, culture, and reputation all help to shape the health of residents (Bernard, et al., 2007; Macintyre, Ellaway, & Cummins, 2002). In addition, the way people feel about, identify with, and behave in their neighbourhoods impacts further upon their health (Bolam, Murphy, & Gleson, 2006).

Public space in the DTES is particularly salient for several reasons. Public space serves as a ‘living room’ for the high number of homeless and underhoused people in the neighbourhood (Loomis, 2004). The number of homeless people living in DTES streets has increased dramatically in recent years (with the number of street homeless rising from 600 to 1200 people between 2003 and 2005) (City of Vancouver, 2005; Pedersen & Swanson, 2009). For those who are housed, common accommodations
consist of small rooms with no kitchens and shared bathrooms (Loomis, 2004; Pedersen & Swanson, 2009). This makes the street an important location for socializing among residents. There are also some illicit street activities in the neighbourhood including unlicensed street vending, drug trade, and sex work. This street scene has been identified as one impediment to gentrification in the DTES (Ley & Dobson, 2008). While this may protect local residents from the threat of displacement, the exploitation and violence associated with sex work and drug dealing decreases safety for all residents.

Still, pressures of gentrification and regulation of activities in the neighbourhood have only been increasing in the DTES in the past several years. Condominium development has begun on a few sites in the DTES, particularly in the northwestern Gastown area (see map in Figure 1), and private security guards are increasingly common (Bennett, 2008; Ley & Dobson, 2008). The mixed-use Woodward’s development has brought condominiums, low-income housing, a university campus, non-profit office space, retail chain stores and a public atrium to the neighbourhood. Concerns about regulation intensified with the 2003 selection of Vancouver as the site for the 2010 Winter Olympics. Residents worried that street level activity would be regulated in an effort to improve the appearance of the DTES to tourists and media.

Over the same time period, local planning initiatives including the Vancouver Agreement (running from 2000-2010) and the DTES Revitalization Program (ongoing since about 1998) were introduced. These initiatives are guided by the philosophy of “revitalization without displacement” (Community Services Group, 2008; Downtown Eastside Revitalization,” 2009; Ley & Dobson, 2008). However, with Vancouver's real estate values the highest in Canada, the municipal government actively promoting

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1 An example of this regulation was the protest against the provincial government’s Assistance to Shelter Act, which was enacted just prior to the February 2010 Olympics and allowed police officers to forcibly take homeless people to shelters in extreme weather. DTES community advocates were largely critical of the law and called it the “Olympic Kidnapping Act.” A protest was held against the law, despite the police department’s assurance that officers would not use force as granted by the Act.
greater density downtown, and condominiums and bridal boutiques opening in the DTES, gentrification is palpable in the neighbourhood (City of Vancouver, 2010; Ley & Dobson, 2008).

The tension between current uses of public space in the DTES and the pressures that may be placed upon it by gentrification and regulation calls into question whose interests are being served in planning and policy interventions in public spaces in the neighbourhood (Ley & Dobson, 2008). Public health and urban planning use the language of creating ‘healthy’, ‘vibrant’, and ‘sustainable’ communities, but efforts to create these types of communities cannot be undertaken in isolation from the broader planning context where economic competitiveness is a primary objective and creating neighbourhoods attractive to educated and creative people is a common tactic (Fainstein, 2009; Peck, 2005). While ‘healthy’, ‘vibrant’, and ‘sustainable’ have optimistic meanings, the relationship between this use of language and material conditions must be examined.

The Vancouver Agreement and the DTES Revitalization Program aim to “restore” the area to a “healthy, safe and liveable neighbourhood for all” (Community Services Group, 2008; Downtown Eastside Revitalization,” 2009). In spite of this stated goal, DTES residents have substantial concerns that revitalization is not in their interest and places them at risk of displacement (if not physically, then emotionally and financially as the community hubs and public spaces they depend on diminish or change) (Pedersen & Swanson, 2010). The stated goals of making the DTES healthy and safe are consistent with residents’ desires, yet planning is met with skepticism by community groups (Pedersen & Swanson, 2010). For this reason, I closely examine the language used in revitalization planning to determine what vision it presents for DTES public spaces and the people within them, and how this links to the experiences of current residents. Revitalization presents an opportunity for change in the DTES, but an
important question is whether this opportunity can be used to improve health and reduce inequity in the DTES. While efforts to improve quality of life in cities are important, it is worthwhile to take a critical look at how these efforts are constructed, how they position different groups, and how they contribute to (in)equitable conditions in urban settings.

In the following study, I examine representations of DTES public spaces through the language used in city planning and in residents’ accounts of healthy and unhealthy places in the neighbourhood. I do so to expose the connections and gaps between revitalization plans and the everyday experiences of low-income residents and to determine what interests are promoted in revitalization planning. In my study, the definition of public space includes areas and/or events that are accessible to all, including parks, streets, sidewalks, alleyways, squares and storefronts as well as free festivals and public art. The representations I study are those that come from discourse, which is defined as instances or acts of spoken or written communication (i.e. language in use) (Johnstone, 2008). Using the method of critical discourse analysis to analyze secondary data (consisting of DTES city planning documents and interviews with neighbourhood residents), this study addresses the following research goals:

**Research Goals**

- To describe how public spaces are represented in city planning documents.
- To interpret how this representation of public spaces positions residents of the DTES.
- To examine the perspectives expressed by a group of DTES residents on what constitutes a healthy or unhealthy neighbourhood and scrutinize the extent to which residents conform to or resist official (i.e. city planning) notions of revitalization in public spaces.


**Literature Review**

In the following section, I review critical research on urban revitalization coming predominantly from the fields of geography and planning. There is a dialectical relationship between the language and materiality of revitalization, thus I focus on the ways that discourse portrays places. I call this discursive construction. I first briefly outline the role discourse plays in constructing urban space. Next, I review literature on the language used to describe urban revitalization efforts (i.e. revitalization discourse). I review the ways that revitalization discourse impacts upon public spaces and shapes the reputation of neighbourhoods. I then outline the critiques that have been made of revitalization discourse. I further examine how the discourse of place is linked to representations of people, and the impacts this has upon people’s health. Finally, I describe research on representations of the DTES and its residents.

**Discursive Construction of Urban Space**

Language and representation play a powerful role in constructing space and identity. Researchers of this topic generally draw on a few main theorists, notably Foucault and Lefebvre. After Foucault, discourse is viewed as not neutral, but as a practice that actively constitutes objects and places (Kerkin, 2004). Discursive characterizations of places and the way they fit into the social and economic world can be a powerful way of reflecting specific interests, yet place representations are not static and can shift over time (Martin, 2000; Mele, 2000; Whitzman & Slater, 2006).

Lefebvre views discursive representations of space as one component of the way we understand places, along with the physical spaces themselves and the actions that occur within these spaces (Schaller & Modan, 2005; Wilson, Wouters, & Grammenos, 2004). Representations of space may involve imagined landscapes evoked by specific terms (e.g., ghetto or city), or may be linked to constructions of the identities and
(un)acceptable behaviours of people found within these spaces (Schaller & Modan, 2005; Wilson & Grammenos, 2005). Dominant understandings of places can be contested through active resistance or the creation of an alternate order within existing structures (Castro & Lindbladh, 2004; Farrar, 2008; Martin, 2000; Neal & Walters, 2007; Robinson, 2000).

Discourse about neighbourhoods and their revitalization comes from a variety of sources including policy, city planning documents, maps, media reports, real estate promotional materials, research interviews, speeches, and conversations. While discourse about neighbourhoods can both construct representations of places and serve specific interests or ideologies, it also describes real, material conditions and behaviours (Kerkin, 2004). So, in studying discourse about places the aim is not to discover truth or actual conditions, but rather to describe discourse’s use and effects (Lees & Demeritt, 1998).

**Discursive Construction of Revitalization**

The ways that we think and talk about spaces and places are constructive in that they set out what types of places are possible to create and what social positions are possible for individuals within these places (Farrar, 2008). Mele (2000) provides a useful description of the ways in which discourse influences neighbourhood change, from promoting to hindering policy action in cities:

Characterizations classify and essentialize place, presenting it in symbolic forms legible to the visitor, the potential resident, the curious voyeur, or, in short, the interested public. Widely circulated images, rhetoric, and symbols together do not exist simply as descriptions but

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2 Tunstall et al. (2004) provide a useful distinction between space and place: “A ‘space’ describes *where* a location is while a ‘place’ describes *what* a location is. Place is to space as history is to time and home is to house…just as places are argued to create the nature of people and their health…so too places are the creations of people” (p. 6–7). For the purposes of my thesis, I am interested in both space and place. While Tunstall et al. argue that places are the creation of people; I argue that space too is socially constructed through the ways in which we define boundaries around locations. Most of my emphasis will be on place, however, as my interest is mainly in representations of characteristics of the DTES and its residents and not simply its borders.
also as ready explanations of existing social, economic, and political conditions and the potential for radical changes in them. Prevailing images, rhetoric, and symbols culturally define the parameters of the desirable and undesirable, the feasible and impossible, and the legitimate and illegitimate as they pertain to a locale's present circumstances and future possibilities. (Mele, 2000)

Many researchers have examined discourse describing urban planning initiatives to revitalize an area. These initiatives fall under related names including revitalization, regeneration, renewal, renaissance, redevelopment, and gentrification. The term gentrification tends to be negatively associated with the displacement of low-income residents from a neighbourhood. While the other terms are often positioned as bringing positive changes to a place, programs that fall under these names have also been shown to displace and exclude people, which I will elaborate on below.

**Revitalization and Public Space**

From the late 20th century on, approaches to urban planning in the West have focused on efforts to attract people back into cities from suburbs (especially in the US and UK), compete for capital in a globalized economy, and follow an environmental imperative for sustainable cities (Colomb, 2007; Lees & Demeritt, 1998). As cities became concerned with their density, attractiveness and marketability to residents, they have increasingly sought to eliminate undesirable aspects of their public spaces and promote desirable ones.

Many contemporary revitalization initiatives follow the principles of New Urbanism, Smart Growth, or Urban Villages where cities are promoted as walkable and liveable, sometimes in reaction to the ‘other’ of suburban sprawl (Franklin & Tait, 2002). Neighbourhoods are designed for security and community interaction with mixed land-uses, a range of housing options, jobs, amenities, shops, and green spaces (Gonzalez & Lejano, 2009). In efforts to become more attractive, cities have displaced social problems by limiting access to and controlling behaviours in public spaces,
resulting in increased privatization and domestication of public space (Atkinson, 2003; Colomb, 2007; Farrar, 2008).

In a review of literature on the Urban Renaissance agenda in the UK, Colomb (2007) identifies two discursive themes that involve public space. First, is that of new urbanity, whereby a lifestyle of community socialization and interaction is celebrated. Second is the relationship between urban design, civility, and citizenship whereby a well-designed public realm will help create social cohesion and ‘civilized’ behaviour, while discouraging deviant or ‘antisocial’ actions. Colomb identifies three main problems with these themes. First, they ignore the inherent risk of gentrification that lies in making neighbourhoods attractive to middle class residents. Second, they serve to control or sanitize public space, removing groups perceived as a threat to or unable to participate in the vision of urban space that they promote. They present public spaces as undisputed locations where all can come together, which may not actually be the case. Actions such as electronic surveillance and built forms that discourage particular behaviours (e.g., skateboarding or sleeping on benches) exclude or displace deviant groups. Third, the themes also allow for an expanded crime and disorder agenda aimed at eliminating ‘disorderly’ behaviour. These problems make it difficult to reconcile Urban Renaissance’s two goals of attracting middle class residents and tackling urban deprivation (Colomb, 2007).

**Representations of Neighbourhoods Targeted for Revitalization**

In order for revitalization to be accepted, target areas are constructed in planning and media documentation as problematic, deficient, sick, or blighted (Lees & Demeritt, 1998). This includes neighbourhoods represented as dangerous, deteriorating, not meeting their potential, or labeled as ‘mean streets’, ghettos, or ‘dead zones’ (Barnes, Waitt, Gill, & Gibson, 2006; Gonzalez & Lejano, 2009; Lees & Demeritt,
1998; Wilson & Grammenos, 2005). In other cases, neighbourhoods are described as helpless, ‘under siege’, and in need of assistance (Barnes, et al., 2006; Martin, 2000). Another way neighbourhoods are depicted as deficient is through the ‘deviance’ or ‘flaws’ of its residents: youth who hang out on the street, sex workers, drug dealers, immigrants, ethnic groups, and social housing tenants are characterized as signs of threatening or unstable neighbourhoods (Barnes, et al., 2006; Kerkin, 2004; Lees, 2003; Martin, 2000; McIntyre & McKee, 2008; Mele, 2000; Wilson & Grammenos, 2005; Wilson, et al., 2004).

Through negative descriptions of neighbourhoods and their residents, revitalization actions are positioned as necessary and become difficult to build opposition against (Kerkin, 2004; Mele, 2000; Wilson & Grammenos, 2005). Nonetheless, opposition to revitalization exists, and neighbourhood residents and activists employ discursive strategies in an attempt to contest it. One such strategy is the construction of villains or threats to the neighbourhood (e.g., real estate developers, intruding gentrifiers, ‘outsiders’ or ‘uptowners’) who are characterized as being solely interested in profits and/or their own benefit (Mele, 2000; Wilson, et al., 2004). Another strategy is to contest the deficient representation of a neighbourhood by highlighting its strengths (e.g., as having a strong ethnic community or an active citizenry), normalizing activities in the neighbourhood that are often depicted as deviant (e.g., describing sex workers as mothers and neighbours), contesting stereotypes, emphasizing the racist and classist effects of revitalization that are largely ignored in dominant discourse (e.g., displacement of existing residents and businesses), and linking social problems in the neighbourhood to broader contexts or structures (Gonzalez & Lejano, 2009; Kerkin, 2004; Martin, 2000; Wilson & Grammenos, 2005; Wilson, et al., 2004).
Whether promoting or opposing revitalization, what is common to the above representations is that they are often imagined or uncritical. These imagined representations occur when rationales for revitalization are accepted without question, when specific social or material aspects of neighbourhoods are ignored or downplayed, and/or when places are idealized (e.g., as areas with strong communities and active citizens) (Colomb, 2007; Gonzalez & Lejano, 2009; Mele, 2000; Wilson & Grammenos, 2005; Wilson, et al., 2004).

**Critiques of Revitalization Discourse**

While envisioning public spaces is part of urban planning, problems arise when these visions are not used as a point of discussion, but become naturalized and unquestioned (Lees & Demeritt, 1998). Much discourse on revitalization is uncritical; where its positive aspects are promoted at the expense of unpacking the range of effects it may have on different members of a neighbourhood. Colomb (2007) notes that Urban Renaissance policy documents rarely mention any adverse effects of gentrification and promote social mixing while simultaneously excluding some groups from the mix. In Vancouver, past planning documents have aimed to foster co-existence of “the conventional and unconventional”, but in doing so deny the possibility of conflict, contributing to an unrealistic “urban romanticism” (Lees & Demeritt, 1998, p. 348).

Several key terms used in revitalization discourse are ambiguous or have multiple interpretations. Terms such as social mix, diversity, urban village, sustainability, and creativity are often positioned as positive, masking the contradictions or complications that they contain (Barnes, et al., 2006; Franklin & Tait, 2002; Lees, 2003; McIntyre & McKee, 2008; Rose, 2004). For example, Barnes et al. (2006) show the tensions between a City Council’s view of the creativity as a means to
attract new middle class residents and cultural service planners’ idea of art as a mode of community development among current residents. While revitalization promotes visions of communitarian goods such as quality of life, safety, sustainability, and creativity, it often links these to economic development, thereby excluding specific groups that do not contribute to consumption such as artists, non-profit organizations, youth, and people with low-incomes (Catungal, Leslie, & Hii, 2009; Lees, 2003; Lees & Demeritt, 1998; Mason, 2003; McIntyre & McKee, 2008).

Revitalization and Exclusion in Public Space

Revitalization initiatives promote “liveable” neighbourhoods with safe streets and opportunities for community interaction and thus play a role in the construction of public space and its inhabitants. Often, urban planning presents neighbourhoods primarily as sites for consumerism and economic growth. This renders those who do not consume as out of place (Lees, 2003). Residents too may emphasize consuming goods and services as the main function of public space. Social activities such as talking on the street or running into friends are presented as inappropriate or conflated with suspicious activities (Schaller & Modan, 2005). Similarly, a concern for safety can result in exclusionary practices such as youth curfews, CCTV surveillance, private security, and policing of beggars (Atkinson, 2003; Catungal, et al., 2009). This exclusion creates a problem in the idea of public space. Though public spaces are purported to be accessible to everyone, excluding specific groups has the effect of creating many different ‘publics’ with differential access to these spaces (Atkinson, 2003).

Revitalization discourse often serves to regulate or exclude vulnerable groups (e.g., youth, people with low-incomes, the homeless, immigrants, women, drug users, and sex trade workers). The image created by revitalization plans may reflect white or
middle-class interests, alienating minority or poor populations (Gonzalez & Lejano, 2009; Wilson & Grammenos, 2005; Wilson, et al., 2004). Similarly, the area borders used by city planners or business improvement associations do not necessarily correspond to the ways that low-income residents use public spaces and define their own neighbourhoods, which in essence excludes the realities of their daily lives from the planning process (Schaller & Modan, 2005).

Defining boundaries and describing specific locations are inclusive or exclusive practices, defining who or what belongs in a place. Particular streets may be associated with sex work, drugs, specific racial or social groups, or as sites of danger, preventing people from moving freely within an area (Catungal, et al., 2009; Fast, Shoveller, Shannon, & Kerr, 2010; Kerkin, 2004; Martin, 2000; Schaller & Modan, 2005). Conversely, some areas may be defined in contrast to undesirable or unsafe places to make them more attractive or secure. For example, new residents may rename or redraw the spatial boundaries of their adopted neighbourhood to set themselves apart from the existing neighbourhood (Rose, 2004). Similarly, developers, business associations, or governments may emphasize a neighbourhood’s favourable distinctiveness from an adjacent area, from the suburbs, or from another country (e.g., Canadian versus American cities) (Catungal, et al., 2009; Lees & Demeritt, 1998; Rose, 2004). Exaggerating difference and creating categories or boundaries between things (e.g., inside/outside), allows for order and separation between one area and another (Farrar, 2008).

**Social Positioning, Marginalization and Health**

Social positioning occurs within texts when they present particular kinds of people. This creates identities that people can accept or resist in daily life (Burr, 2003). In the case of revitalization, not only is place constructed through discourse, but the
people occupying these places are also constructed by linking conditions in a
eighbourhood to the people living within it. Representations of areas as ‘problematic’
have been criticized for neglecting the broader causes of social problems and ignoring
factors such as the self-segregation of wealthier people or the stigmatization of poorer
areas. Negative representations have the effect of linking social problems to specific
places and their inhabitants, creating problematic people (Castro & Lindbladh, 2004;
Mele, 2000). The transference of representation between places and people can be
seen in a variety of settings. It flows between people and places. Wilson and
Grammenos (2005) describe the way negative descriptions of African American youth
(e.g., as threatening) are used to denigrate the neighbourhood where they live as well.
Alternately, when a neighbourhood is characterized in a negative way within discourse,
the everyday activities of residents also are represented as being subversive (Mele,
2000). For example, while residents may describe their use of public space as ‘meeting
friends or hanging out’, others may view this behaviour as ‘idle’ and/or ‘suspicious’,
particularly if it is enacted by less advantaged residents (Schaller & Modan, 2005).

Individuals and groups use spatial discourse to develop distinct or resistant
identities. For example, street-frequenting youth mitigate negative representations of
their own behaviours by distancing themselves from areas they describe as risky (Fast,
et al., 2010; Robinson, 2000). Similarly, people develop strategies to help them cope
with living in a disadvantaged or stigmatized area. One strategy is creating subtle
spatial categories (e.g., this end and that end, this side and that side). Another is
blaming problems on new people moving into an area (Popay, et al., 2003). In an
analysis of youth’s discourse about living in an urban poverty zone in Sweden, other
strategies were identified as either defensive or offensive (Castro & Lindbladh, 2004).
The defensive strategies included emphasizing one’s sense of belonging in the area or
normalizing the problems in the zone as universal. Offensive strategies were
glorification of problematic aspects of the area (e.g., toughness) and dissociation from the area (e.g. by not talking to neighbours).

These responses to place representations have an impact on health. People negotiate around normative ideas of what is ‘proper’ or acceptable in a place. When they feel dissonance between what is ‘proper’ and what they actually experience in their own lives, they may respond by distancing themselves from their neighbours. This in turn increases isolation with potentially ill health effects (Popay, et al., 2003).

Furthermore, a combination of both geographic and social marginalization can have compounding effects. Exclusion may be internalized as an individual shortcoming, or the possibility of overcoming marginalization can seem impossible (Castro & Lindbladh, 2004; Fast, et al., 2010). Even when local policies purport to address problems in urban areas, they may end up further marginalizing neighbourhoods or create a division between residents who accept community improvement discourse and those who do not (Atkinson, 2003; Bradford, 2005; Gonzalez & Lejano, 2009; Larsen & Manderson, 2009).

**Discourse and the Downtown Eastside**

Neighbourhood representations, social marginalization, and health inequity intersect in discourse about the DTES. Much research has been conducted in the DTES, particularly focused in the medical and health field with respect to drug use and HIV/AIDS. However, there is also some research discussing representations of the neighbourhood in the media and in popular discourse. Several researchers have found that the DTES is negatively represented as a site of illness, drug use, immorality, deviance, disorder, and as separate from the rest of Vancouver (Dobson, 2004; England, 2004; Fast, et al., 2010; Masuda & Crabtree, 2010; Robertson, 2007; Sommers & Blomley, 2002; Woolford, 2001).
There are several sources of these representations including newspaper reportage, popular discourse, and academic research. Woolford (2001) examines media portrayals of the DTES as a tainted space, both isolated from and threatening to the rest of Vancouver. Others examine the racialized aspects of the neighbourhood, exploring the visibility, invisibility, and stereotypes of aboriginal women in representations put forth by police and by the women themselves (England, 2004; Robertson, 2007). Masuda and Crabtree (2010) characterize biomedical literature as representing the neighbourhood as a site of disease and intervention.

The emphasis on problems in the neighbourhood motivates intervention and regulation (Masuda & Crabtree, 2010). At the same time, problems are constructed as so complex that they seem unsolvable (Dobson, 2004; Masuda & Crabtree, 2010; Woolford, 2001). Negative representations of the area weave their way into the identities, perceptions, and actions of local residents (Robertson, 2007). However, previous research has found that in the everyday experiences of local residents, there are many ways in which dominant descriptions of the DTES are challenged and alternate ways of seeing the neighbourhood emerge. For example, in spite of the popular image of the neighbourhood as unhealthy, low-income residents experience the DTES as a therapeutic place providing acceptance and community (Masuda & Crabtree, 2010). In other cases, residents disclaim the DTES’ exclusive association with violence and drug use, remarking on a sense of happiness and home in the DTES. They reject the idea of segregation of the neighbourhood from the rest of Vancouver and its broader economic and social systems (Masuda & Crabtree, 2010; Robertson, 2006, 2007). Thus the experience of DTES residents has the potential to provide new insight in understanding revitalization efforts.

There are various ways that development and revitalization in the DTES has been portrayed in policy and popular discourse. Some authors describe a
representation of the DTES as ‘urban wilderness’ being pioneered by middle class migrants (Dobson, 2004; Ley & Dobson, 2008; Sommers & Blomley, 2002). Others describe revitalization efforts in the DTES as community-driven, with a philosophy of neighbourhood self-improvement (Mason, 2003). Mason (2003) notes that regeneration in the DTES is driven by a desire to attract capital, but feels that the City of Vancouver at least acknowledges that social inclusion has economic benefits. Similarly, Bradford (2005) argues that the revitalization effort of the Vancouver Agreement focuses on improving population health as the basis for economic and community revitalization. However, no research thus far uses the narratives of low-income DTES residents to provide new insight into revitalization planning.

**Discourse of a Healthy Place**

While the effects of countless aspects of place on health are well studied in the health literature, discussion of the relationship between health and the discursive aspects of place are limited to relatively few papers (e.g., Bolam, et al., 2006; Castro & Lindbladh, 2004; Fast, et al., 2010; Popay, et al., 2003). Urban planning and geography have a well-developed critical literature on revitalization discourse and its role in shaping public spaces and positioning and excluding residents within those spaces. The literature shows that urban revitalization programs aim to make public spaces more attractive to new residents, but in doing so, can also displace social problems or result in inequitable impacts on residents. Revitalization discourse has been criticized for its lack of acknowledgement of conflict and inequality and its use of ambiguous terms. Additionally, revitalization discourse plays a role in the social positioning of different groups, constructing boundaries of what and who belongs or does not belong in public spaces. This often results in marginalizing residents and their everyday activities, which impacts negatively on people’s sense of health.
My research brings distinct advances to critical research on revitalization and health. First, I use a micro-level, text-oriented analysis to expose specific ways the techniques of discourse depict revitalization and its outcomes. Second, much of the existing research examines either the effects of discourse or the experiences of residents, but not both. Thus I use a relatively novel analytical tactic, employing resident interviews as a way to provide additional insight into revitalization efforts as they relate to residents' everyday lives (other studies that have taken a similar approach include Barnes, et al., 2006; Kerkin, 2004; Lees, 2003). Finally, I connect urban revitalization to ideas of what makes a neighbourhood a healthy place, raising important issues for the practice of healthy urban planning and equitable health promotion.

In this thesis, I analyze Vancouver's revitalization planning documents and interviews with DTES residents. I compare how these two sets of texts construct public spaces in the DTES, how they position residents of the neighbourhood, and how they relate to residents’ descriptions of the DTES as a healthy or unhealthy place. Urban planning has a potentially powerful impact on population health (Collins & Hayes, 2010); urban planning discourse, too, has an integral role in shaping this impact that should not be discounted.
Methods

Methodological Theory – Critical Discourse Analysis

From the above review, it is clear that discourse has implications for neighbourhood change, and residents' identity formation, health, and wellbeing. Critical discourse analysis is a powerful method of revealing many of these implications. In this section, I describe the methodological theory behind critical discourse analysis and its use in revealing belief systems, assumptions, power structures, and social groupings embedded in language use.

The theoretical underpinning of this methodology is social constructionism. Social constructionist theory holds that knowledge is not absolute, but created between individuals (Burr, 2003). Thus social constructionism is critical of taken-for-granted knowledge and emphasizes the historical and cultural specificity of knowledge. In social constructionist theory, groups in society develop shared meanings and societal norms; how people construct these meanings depends on their location or position in society (Taylor, 2000). Together, a set of meanings, statements, and symbols produces a particular picture or representation (Burr, 2003). Such representations are partially produced through discourse.

Discourse is a term that has numerous and diverse definitions (Cheek, 2004). In this work, I define discourse as instances or acts of communicating by spoken or written language (Johnstone, 2008). This definition is distinct from that of discourses as ordered or patterned ways of thinking. Thus, while discourse can contribute to and be shaped by patterns of thought, I do not take up this definition. Instead, I suggest that discourse analysis views language as serving multiple functions or creating different types of meaning beyond solely conveying information. Texts (which are any instance of language in use) simultaneously represent aspects of the world, enact
social relations, and make judgments or commitments (Fairclough, 2003). In this way, language can be used to create beauty, strengthen interpersonal rapport, assert or resist control, or communicate particular morals (Johnstone, 2008).

As opposed to other forms of discourse analysis that focus on communication (i.e. linguistic discourse analysis) or discourse’s role in culture and social interaction (i.e. psychosocial discourse analysis), critical discourse analysis (CDA) is overtly concerned with social action, ideology, and power relations (Given, 2009; Smith, 2007). The theoretical origins of CDA come from theorists who focus on the ways that cultural dimensions of society produce and maintain power and class relations. Some key figures include Antonio Gramsci (who argued that beliefs are normalized through the practices of ordinary life) and Michel Foucault (who described ways that power is established through systems of knowledge) (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Where CDA diverges from these theorists is in focusing specifically on texts and their linguistic features. In this way, it uses methods of critical linguistics and connects them to theories of social construction of power and beliefs (Fairclough, 2003). It is this socially focused text-oriented analysis that I draw upon in this thesis.

From a social constructionist perspective, discourse has implications for social change because language both constitutes and is constituted by society and culture (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Language is used to create versions of the truth that have a normalizing effect on people. Thus when new discourse is adopted, it allows for the repositioning of individuals and groups (Franklin & Tait, 2002, p. 254). CDA recognizes that one cannot reduce everything to discourse, but emphasizes that language is an ever-present, influential part of social life and so worthy of analysis and research (Fairclough, 2003).

The ways in which language is implicated in social processes and beliefs can be revealed through CDA. For example, CDA can be used to: expose assumptions
(Marston, 2004); show how problems are defined and what issues and views are privileged or suppressed (Eakin, Robertson, Poland, Coburn, & Edwards, 1996); show how the people involved in interventions are positioned (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997); and highlight organizational inequities and contested dynamics of power (Jacobs, 2006). Discourse is tied up in power because it creates frames and order through which to think about reality. These frames allow for specific viewpoints while excluding others and determine who has authority to speak and who does not (Cheek, 2004). While there are always many possible discursive frames, power relations cause some frames to be given greater authority than others (Cheek, 2004).

CDA involves the close reading of particular text(s), but also examines their meaning in context. Thus, the CDA method, as developed by Norman Fairclough, considers three dimensions of discourse from the micro to macro level: the details of the text itself (including word choice, grammar, and style), the level of discourse practice (concerning the way the text is produced, what genre constraints it has, and who its audience is), and the level of social practice (which is the historical, political, institutional, economic, and cultural context within which the text is produced) (Fairclough, 1992; Smith, 2007). CDA is an inductive method, where categories and meanings are interpreted from within a text, not imposed upon it (Hardy, Harley, & Phillips, 2004). In the following section, I expand upon some specific techniques of CDA.

CDA is a method of challenging common thinking around a topic (Cheek, 2004). Thus, when faced with problems in the DTES that are often conceived of as wicked or intractable (Bradford, 2005; Woolford, 2001), the CDA approach may reveal new insights or openings into action in the neighbourhood. Since discourse is a social practice, it plays a role in shaping ideas of what 'healthy' public spaces look like and what actions seem possible in a place.
Using CDA Methods and Techniques

Using the method of CDA, my research interrogates the relationship between discourse and society in the context of interventions in public spaces in the DTES. Through secondary analysis of texts (planning documents and interviews with DTES residents), I examined the way that city planning texts and interview transcripts co-represent beliefs, assumptions, power relations, and social groupings. Some of the constructs I sought within my study texts are: What are the characteristics of desirable public spaces? Who is included or excluded? How are problems defined or measured? How are outcomes or successes defined and measured? These questions guided my interpretation of revitalization planning, its motivations, and its concern for equity. I detail my text selection process and specific analytic techniques below.

Data Selection

Policy and Planning Documents

My data consisted of city documents from the two revitalization programs in the DTES: The Vancouver Agreement and the DTES Revitalization Program. Within these programs, the policy and planning documents I analyzed were those that are specifically directed at public spaces in the DTES and that describe interventions (proposed or actual) promoting health, sustainability, and revitalization in the neighbourhood. While there are other programs and departments within the City of Vancouver that are engaged in the DTES, these two programs were selected because they are explicitly focused on revitalization. Additionally, they fall within a time of change (see below), their stated goals are creating a healthy, safe, and sustainable community, and they present a vision of what this healthy setting entails. The municipal government is the institution with overt power over public space through functions such as zoning, permits, bylaws, and policing – functions that are integral in
the activities of both the DTES Revitalization Program and the Vancouver Agreement. Therefore, the language used in local planning documents is influential. It serves as a background and rationale for actions taken in the neighbourhood. Planning texts serve as the official face of planning interventions, and may dictate how individuals in a neighbourhood are positioned and regulated, and how individuals respond to interventions (Turner, 2001).

Sharp and Richardson (2001) suggest that identifying a time of change in society is a useful way to focus discourse analytic research. I selected the time frame of 2000 – 2009 because during this time, Vancouver's Olympic bid was accepted and the redevelopment of the Woodward's site started (Ley & Dobson, 2008). With an expected influx of tourists (which was not actually significant during the Olympics) and higher-income residents into the neighbourhood, the question of regulation in public space in the DTES emerged as an important issue during this time.

The DTES Revitalization and Vancouver Agreement web pages both include summary documents that outline the programs that have taken place under the two programs (Community Services Group, 2008; Vancouver Agreement, 2009). From these summaries, I compiled a list of the projects that act on public spaces in the neighbourhood. For my purposes, I define public spaces as areas or events that are accessible to all, including parks, streets, sidewalks, alleyways, squares and storefronts as well as free festivals and public art. This does not include privately owned or indoor spaces. After composing this initial list, I consulted with two City of Vancouver planners and hand searched documents at the Vancouver Agreement office – this resulted in my adding a few more initiatives that were not listed in the summary documents.
The list of projects that I compiled is as follows:

*Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program*
- Great Beginnings: Old Streets, New Pride
- Project Civil City
- Victory Square Policy Plan
- SWEEP street cleaning initiative
- Woodward's Redevelopment – public space provision

*Vancouver Agreement*
- Business Plan for a “Dumpster Free Alley”
- Integrated Health & Enforcement DTES Strategy
- Powell Street Open Windows Design Project

*DTES Revitalization Program / Vancouver Agreement combination*
- The Carrall Street Greenway
- DTES Public Realm Program Plan
- Hastings Street Renaissance

Through my discussion with a City of Vancouver planner on the DTES team, I learned of the process of documentation these projects go through in City government in order to be approved. Policy reports are the first document presented by planners to City Council to introduce new projects. If policy reports are approved, they are typically followed by an Administrative Report that asks Councillors to approve funding for the project. Sometimes, further progress reports and updates are written and presented to City Council. I determined that policy reports would be the most appropriate type of document for me to analyze for my objectives. Policy reports contain sections on what a proposed project entails, background information as to why the project has been proposed and objectives of the project. The discourse of policy reports has the potential to reveal how places and people are represented and what is desirable in DTES public space.

In order to find policy reports, I used the search function of the City of Vancouver webpage. Where these reports were not available via the Internet, I contacted planners associated with specific projects directly to help me to access the
documents. For some projects, no policy reports had been made; in these cases, I obtained either proposals that had been published outside of city council (e.g., by the Mayor or by a consulting firm) or administrative reports that contained a summary or background on the project I was looking at. For example, the DTES Public Realm Program Plan was written by consultants and delivered to city council, but was never formally adopted as policy (although some of the actions it recommended were carried out). In this instance, I obtained a copy of the document from a DTES planner.

In addition to the documents from the City of Vancouver, I also obtained documents from the Vancouver Agreement office on each of its initiatives. I found these documents through hand searches of files at the Vancouver Agreement Office. These documents were either reports by private consulting firms or documents used internally by Vancouver Agreement participants to guide their programs. While the Vancouver Agreement projects do not follow the same progression of documentation as those of the City of Vancouver, I selected documents on each initiative that contained similar information to a policy report including the background, objectives, and summary of the projects. A detailed list of the policy documents I analyzed is provided in Appendix A and excerpts of each document are in Appendix B.

**Interview and Focus Group Data**

The interview and focus group data I analyzed were originally collected for the purposes of the Healthy Inner City Environments (HICE) project, which was carried out in the DTES in 2007-2009. The HICE project used Photovoice, which is a participatory action research method where community members take photographs and subsequently discuss them to communicate their knowledge and experience (Wang & Burris, 1994). In HICE, Photovoice was used to elicit DTES community members’ views on health in their neighbourhood environment. Participants were given disposable cameras and asked by the researchers to take photographs of places in the DTES that
have either positive or negative influences on health. The photos were developed, and researchers interviewed participants individually about their photographs. They then held a focus group with all participants to discuss the main themes researchers found in the interviews. The interviews were semi-structured and included questions about the places participants had photographed, such as:

- How do these places impact upon your health and the health of the community?
- What do you do in these places?
- Who is accepted and safe in these places (or not accepted or unsafe)?
- What places are more healthy than others and why?
- Why do the conditions in these places exist?
- What changes do you want (if any) for these places, and what actions are needed to bring about these changes?
- How will broader events in the neighbourhood and the city (e.g., the development of Woodward’s, the Olympics, the continued drug trade), impact upon these places?

While some of the places participants photographed and discussed were indoors and private, many were public spaces in the neighbourhood. In this way, these interviews provided an opportunity to gather insight into public spaces as they are actually used and talked about by DTES residents. Thus, they serve as a means to compare the visions and representations of the planning documents to the experience of residents.

For my analysis, I obtained data from the HICE project, consisting of transcripts of six individual interviews and one focus group (with participants' names replaced by numbers to ensure anonymity). In my analysis, I did not include the photographs from HICE as a data source; these photos were used as a means to access community perspectives and not intended as stand-alone data. While visual discourse analysis is
used in some cases (e.g., England, 2004), this method is outside of my skill set and beyond the scope of my thesis.

The HICE project had 7 participants, all adults (18 yrs+) who live or spend over half of their time in the DTES. The sampling in the HICE project was purposive, where participants were selected based on recommendation of local community organizations (including the DTES Neighbourhood House, the MAKA project, and Pivot Legal Society) with an effort to select people who are normally excluded from research. Though small, the sample has variation in demographics (e.g., gender, employment, family, ethnicity) and represents some, though not all, of the perspectives and experiences of people living in the DTES population (e.g., survival sex work, mental or physical illness).

Data Analysis

As described above, the method I used to analyze the policy documents and interviews was critical discourse analysis (CDA). In the analysis of my study texts, I followed the framework for CDA outlined by Fairclough (1992, 2003). This method has three dimensions of analysis: analysis of the social practice of which the discourse is a part, analysis of discourse practices (how the text is produced and consumed), and analysis of the text itself. In this thesis, I focus on textual analysis; however, I also briefly discuss the social and discourse practices. The specific techniques and concepts of textual analysis I drew upon come from (Fairclough, 1992, 2003), as well as Johnstone (2008) and are described below.
Techniques of Textual Analysis

Cohesion

Cohesion is the way in which elements of discourse (e.g., words, phrases, and clauses) are related or tied together (Eggins, 2004; Johnstone, 2008). Cohesion may be demonstrated by reference, whereby a participant or object in the text is introduced and then referred to throughout the text. It also includes the way that words and sequences show a consistent focus of the text and the way that different parts of a text are related using conjunctions. For example, the Project Civil City proposal introduces the term ‘disorder’ in relation to the urban environment, and this term reappears throughout as a focus of the text.

Grammatical Representation of Actions, Actors, and Events

In order to elucidate the ways in which different actors and events in a text are represented, one can examine who or what are agents in the text, whether an active or passive voice is used, and whether and how nominalizations are used (Johnstone, 2008 p. 54-56). Nominalization is the use of the noun form of a word that can also be used as a verb; its effect is to represent something as an event instead of as an action. For example, the Victory Square Policy Plan uses the nominalizations “decline” and “deterioration” that describe the area’s history in terms of static events and not active processes. Space and time can be represented in different ways in terms of words used to describe location and duration, different tenses employed, and representing objects as local and specific or global and universal.
**Modality**

Modality is the relationship between the author/speaker and representations. That is, it is the way in which authors commit themselves in terms of truth, knowledge, or necessity (Fairclough, 2003). Truth and knowledge status can be represented through words that describe the level of evidence backing up a statement. Such words may include “definitely”, “clearly”, “possibly” or the present tense of the verb “to be” (Johnstone, 2008 p. 56). If words in a text indicate certainty, then debate may be discouraged. Necessity may be shown through the use of verbs such as “must” or “should” as opposed to “may” or “could”.

**Wording**

The wording of texts represents choices that speakers or authors have made in creating these texts. An analysis of wording involves considering word choice and what other words could have been used to create the same meaning. Conversely, it also involves the ways in which a single word can have different or ambiguous meanings (Fairclough, 1992 p. 190-2). One such word might be revitalization, which can be construed as a positive event in a community, or alternately as a synonym for gentrification.

**Creation of Categories**

Categorization is the way in which groupings or categories are created in a text. Under the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, the categories used in language influence categories of perception (Johnstone, 2008 p. 37). For example, when housing types are delineated as either low-income or market, then other types of housing, such as co-ops, may not be readily perceived as housing options.
**Guiding Concepts in Discourse Analysis**

*Identity*

Identities and characteristics of people are not fixed, but are produced through relationships and culture. Identity is revealed in and shaped by texts and linguistic interactions (Johnstone, 2008). For example, identities that come through in speech may not conform with that expected of a person with a certain sex or culture, as might be the case when a non-black person uses African American English (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005).

*Indexicality*

Indexicality is the way in which words, phrases, or other features of discourse contribute not just to literal meaning, but also or instead refer to particular categories or identities (Johnstone, 2008). For example, a DTES resident interviewee stating that she has lived in the neighbourhood all her life is not only a literal explanation of where she has spent her time, but also indexes her authenticity as a resident and her expert knowledge of the area.

*Foregrounding and Backgrounding*

The way in which a text is constructed serves to make particular aspects more prominent, or foregrounded, and others less prominent, or backgrounded. For example, a passive voice backgrounds agency, while the frequent reference to a specific participant would foreground that participant. Activities, objects, actors, times, relationships, institutions and places can be included and given prominence or excluded and suppressed in texts. This affects the ways that events are represented.
**Legitimation**

Legitimation is the acknowledgement of explanations and justifications for how things are and how things are done. Legitimation can be carried out in different ways in texts including referencing authority, rationality (utility in achieving an end), moral evaluation, or through narrative (Fairclough, 2003). For example, citing the Vancouver Police Department’s experience that street disorder increases when there is more litter in public areas uses the authority of the police as a reason to increase street cleaning.

**Assumptions and Intertextuality**

Assumptions are that which is taken for granted in a text; they can be assumptions about what exists or what is desirable or undesirable. Intertextuality is the way in which prior texts are incorporated into the current text. Both assumptions and intertextuality have to do with how social difference and identities are treated. Intertextuality opens up difference by bringing in other voices, while assumptions assume commonalities and so suppress difference (Fairclough, 2003). An example of intertextuality would be the inclusion of varying opinions from community consultations in a policy report. By contrast, assuming that a community supports a policy neglects the heterogeneity of that community.

**Process of Analysis**

For each text, I identified instances that described characteristics of DTES public spaces, the people in these spaces, and the problems in and desired outcomes for these spaces. I analyzed these instances using the techniques of textual analysis described above, and then related what I found to the concepts in discourse analysis (also described above). This allowed me to interpret how the texts constructed different identities and meanings, highlighted and suppressed different issues, and
made explanations, justifications or assumptions. For example, in some texts the word ‘disorder’ was used to characterize DTES public spaces. I examined how this term was referred to in the texts, how it was grammatically related to other parts of the text, and how it was defined. This allowed me to determine what people or activities it was related to and how approaches to reduce it were justified.

**Strengths and Limitations**

By limiting what texts I analyzed, my project is necessarily partial and only constitutes a small portion of the texts that contribute to the notion of the healthy public spaces in the DTES. Representations of the DTES and its public spaces in both the official planning documents and the resident interviews do not stand alone, but are influenced by prior discourse and discourse from other sources such as the news media. Further, the set of texts that I analyzed is not exhaustive – there are internal and unpublished planning documents that I was not able to access for this project, as well as other documents on these initiatives that I did not analyze. Thus my formal analysis was limited to a small set of texts from two programs, and I have made an assumption that these texts are a fair sample representing the local planning perspective on revitalization. Despite their small number, these texts remain significant because as city planning documents, they have material consequences on actions the City takes in the DTES and represent part of the City’s planning strategy in the neighbourhood.

Similarly, I do not assume that the interview and focus group data I analyzed is representative of the views of all residents in the DTES, but does provide information from residents with a variety of backgrounds. The residents’ discourse was produced in a setting where interviewees may have wished to convey specific messages to researchers, whom they may perceive as being in a more powerful position to advocate
for a cause. Additionally, participants may not have said things in a focus group that they would say in private conversation. However, in doing discourse analysis, I am not concerned with objective truth of the interviews or with the intention of interviewees. Rather, I examine how language is used in these conversations and the effects it creates.

While discourse analysis may lead to interesting, informative insights, there are inherent limitations to this methodology. The scope of my project only allowed for analysis of a relatively small set of documents, so any claims that I make are modest. Discourse analysis is not a positivistic science, but rather an interpretative practice. Thus, I do not claim that my findings are facts, but I endeavour to make the process of my interpretations clear.

A further limitation is my secondary analysis of interview and focus group data. Secondary analysis presents challenges in the fit of the data to the research questions and in considering the history and context of the data collection (Rew, Konikak-Griffin, Lewis, Miles, & O'Sullivan, 2000). My current contact with the researchers that collected the HICE data as well as the interviewees allowed me to contextualize the interviews and focus group. Further, while using secondary data limited the depth of information on interviewees' experiences in DTES public space specifically, it also reduced my influence on the discourse that I analyzed (Szabo & Strang, 1997).

**Reflexive Practice**

Reflexivity in my research entails not only an examination of the biases or limitations in my work, but also consideration of my position in the production of knowledge and the assumptions and ethics that guide me in the research process (Reed & Mitchell, 2003). To be reflexive, not only did I perform my research following the methods described above, but I also questioned my research project, my methods,
and my personal and academic selves and how these play a role in not only the research I do, but also how and why I do it. In this section, I try to shed some light on the way that I think and how this contributed to my research.

**Why Discourse Analysis?**

A point of departure for writing about my reflexivity is my methodology. Critical discourse analysis is by name critical and is also reflective. It purposefully goes beneath the surface of the spoken or written word to look at not just what is said, but how it is said (and in turn, what this tells us about how we think or act). Here I expand on my above discussion of the method and describe how I think about discourse analysis.

I first learned about discourse analysis at an introductory workshop on the method. The researcher giving the workshop began by explaining that she has multiple selves that she presents depending on where she is and whom she is with. She also questioned the way things are divided up or classified in our society. This resonated with me; there are a lot of labels I could put on myself, but I considered whether or not these labels make sense. In research articles authors often demonstrate reflexivity by listing a series of things about themselves (their age, sex, nationality, class) as a way to communicate their background and presumably allow the reader to see the researcher represented within his or her project (Fraser & Weninger, 2008). I could do the same thing – I’m a white, heterosexual, twenty-seven year old woman, Jewish, grew up in Toronto in an upper middle class family. But I bristle at this description of myself because it doesn’t say much about who I am. I don’t easily place myself into straightforward definitions of any of the categories I’ve just described – a woman (who doesn’t shave her legs); a Jew (who rejects religion but
enjoys holiday meals with her family and friends); and a privileged person (who feels uncomfortable with her privilege).

In my initial (and subsequently transformed) research proposal, I talked about using DTES residents' views to create categories or parameters for policy analysis. But what kind of parameters would I create? Would these be as restrictive as the ones I use to describe myself on paper? Would they be any more meaningful than those currently used in policy analysis? When I learned of discourse analysis, it made sense for me. Instead of creating categories and meanings, I could critically interrogate those already in use and examine what current political descriptions of the DTES show about how people think about the neighbourhood and its so-called revitalization.

**What's My Role?**

I'm a researcher and a student, but during my studies I have also lived in Vancouver, coordinated a community-based research project in the DTES, and volunteered at the DTES Neighbourhood House (spending upwards of thirty hours per week in the DTES from August 2009 to September 2010). As such, I'm implicated in the texts that I studied (although most of them were created before I moved to this city). This is part of the reason for selecting my topic of research in the first place. As a citizen of the city, I am equipped to act on my research findings at a personal and civic level by critically assessing policy changes in Vancouver and voicing my support or dissent.

Foremost, however, this is my thesis research. I am constrained in this text by my role as a student and by the conventions of the academic thesis. The words I put on these pages are what I leave as a record of my research experience, and I am self-conscious about the words I've chosen to describe my project. One of my main concerns is that my representations lack the nuance that I wish to convey or that I
further contribute to the labels put on DTES residents and Vancouver city government. I analyzed two sets of texts from two different sources, and although my research objective is to compare and contrast these texts, I wish to avoid creating divisions between policy and resident groupings where these do not exist. As I mentioned above, the DTES is a site of activism and conflict. In this context, it's easy to pit groups against each other: low versus high income, landlords versus tenants, tourists versus residents, government versus citizens. But this is unrealistic because everything works in systems with multiple connections and contradictions, just as the policy and popular discourse I analyze are related and draw upon one another.

In my work below, I strive to avoid these binaries. Rather, I regard my work as an examination of patterns of thinking and talking. Fraser and Weninger (2008) note that urban researchers should endeavour to “generate multiple accounts of cities in order to illustrate the diversity of orientations...people have toward these spaces” and resist the idea that a city has a single, unified trajectory (p. 2). In this way, my research shows a part of the story of the DTES, its heterogeneity, and its possibilities.
Results

Context of the Vancouver Agreement and the DTES Revitalization Program

In the late 1990s, new planning initiatives in the DTES were formed in response to crime, drug use, poor living conditions, and health problems in the neighbourhood. The local health authority’s designation of the DTES as the centre of an HIV crisis in 1997 was a particular catalyst for initiatives in the area (Mason, 2007); this contributed to placing problems in the DTES in the domain of public health, which may have allowed for greater intervention in the area than would social problems alone. Still, the focus of the new initiatives was a multi-sector approach to the neighbourhood, including different city departments (e.g., police, engineering, the health authority, and the Park Board). The initiatives included the short-term Program of Strategic Actions for the Downtown Eastside and the longer term, broader focused Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program and Vancouver Agreement (Franks, 1999; Plant, 2008).

The Vancouver Agreement and the Revitalization Program are examples of place-based policies, whereby a specific neighbourhood is targeted for multi-sectoral, collaborative interventions that engage residents and respond to location-specific challenges (Bradford, 2005). The Vancouver Agreement and the DTES Revitalization Program include a variety of actions on housing, health and social services, employment, community development, and the public realm. While these all play a role in the character of the neighbourhood, it is those initiatives that target public space that affect the qualities of streets, alleys, parks, vacant lots, and the people that inhabit them, creating shared points of reference and neighbourhood identity (Bradford, 2005).

Both the Vancouver Agreement and the DTES Revitalization Program comprise a suite of programs that target the DTES with the goal of creating a “healthy”, “safe” and
“sustainable” community (Community Services Group, 2008; Vancouver Agreement, 2010). These programs include physical public realm developments such as a local greenway and park renovations, harm reduction services including a supervised injection site, development of local employment opportunities, and housing and homelessness planning, among others. Both the programs involve cooperation among different municipal departments and agencies. The Vancouver Agreement also involves partnership with the provincial and federal governments. The Vancouver Agreement has alternately been described as placing population health at the centre of economic and community regeneration and as being driven by global market competition (Bradford, 2005; Mason, 2003).

The Vancouver Agreement has four priority actions: revitalizing the Hastings corridor, dismantling the open drug scene, creating contributory Single Room Occupancy hotels (SROs) (a common housing type in the area), and making the community safer and healthier for the most vulnerable. The DTES Revitalization Program works under a philosophy of “Revitalization without Displacement.” Its vision involves: increasing the number of moderate income residents and businesses while maintaining the same number of low-income residents; ensuring access to health and social services; providing safety for all; opening of new businesses and retail stores; providing public facilities (e.g., parks, libraries); retaining the identities of sub-areas within the DTES; and fostering diversity with reduced conflict within the area (Community Services Group, 2008). While developed as two separate programs, practically, the DTES Revitalization Program and Vancouver Agreement have been functioning as one. Though the Vancouver Agreement terminated in 2010, it is partially carried on through the Revitalization Program (Gerwing, 2009, personal communication).
Production and Consumption of Planning Texts

The eleven planning documents I analyzed all outline plans or programs for the DTES as follows. For each text, I have created an acronym (in bold below) that I use to refer to the texts in the sections that follow:

- The Carrall Street Greenway Policy Report (CSG) outlines the design and strategy for a new recreational path and street design.
- The Victory Square Policy Plan (VS) details a concept plan for future development in the Victory Square sub-area of the DTES.
- The DTES Public Realm Program Plan (PRPP) recommends a variety of arts programs and events for DTES public realm spaces.
- The Powell Street Open Windows Design Project (PSOW) contains design ideas for storefronts and public spaces on Powell Street.
- The Hastings Renaissance Program Administrative Report (HR) provides an update on the program's work to tenant vacant storefronts on Hastings St.
- The Great Beginnings: Old Streets, New Pride Project Framework (GB) outlines a project to create welcoming physical and social environments in the DTES as a celebration of British Columbia's 150th anniversary.
- The Woodward’s Site Policy Report (WW) recommends rezoning the Woodward’s site as a mixed-use redevelopment and obtaining public space on the site.
- The Project SWEEP (Solid Waste Engineering Enforcement Program) Final Report (SWEEP) details a project of intensive garbage collection services in an area of the DTES.
- The Project Civil City proposal (PCC) introduces an initiative to reduce public disorder in Vancouver.
• The Business Plan for the Dumpster-Free Alley Pilot Project (DFA) outlines a plan for eliminating the use of dumpsters in Gastown alleys.
• The Integrated Health & Enforcement DTES Strategy (IHE) describes the Vancouver Agreement initiatives to reduce drug use and crime in the DTES.

The documents had different ways of being produced and different intended audiences. Five of the documents were produced by city staff in the planning department (CSG, HR, WW, VS) and engineering services (SWEEP) and were presented to city council for approval. These five texts were either reports of interventions that had been completed with requests to expand and/or continue them (HR, SWEEP) or plans for upcoming projects (WW, VS, CSG). Another document was a project proposal brought forth by the mayor for city council’s approval (PCC), while a further document was a project framework to guide city staff working on a program (GB). Three documents were reports of Vancouver Agreement funded projects performed by consultants: one was prepared for the city council and park board (PRPP), while the other two were prepared for the Strathcona and Gastown Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) (PSOW and DFA respectively). The eleventh text was a briefing note on the Vancouver Agreement’s health and enforcement strategy (IHE). All the eleven documents were policy texts including background on existing policy and social contexts, visions or objectives, and proposed actions for meeting those objectives.

In analyzing the texts, I found it useful to group them into two broad categories based on the actions they proposed. The first grouping – ‘reactive texts’ – respond to a specific identified problem. These are SWEEP and DFA, which respond to street cleanliness and litter, PCC, which responds to public disorder, and IHE, which responds to poor health and crime in the DTES. The second group includes ‘proactive texts’, which introduce new programs or actions to make neighbourhood improvements that
are in turn anticipated to address problems in the DTES. The second group includes CSG, PRPP, HR, GB, WW, VS, and PSOW.

**Textual Analysis of Planning Documents**

In textual analysis of documents from the Vancouver Agreement and the DTES Revitalization program, I examined how the texts represent the DTES neighbourhood, its problems, solutions to these problems, and the people these involved. Further, I sought representations of public spaces in the DTES, what is appropriate or desirable and inappropriate or undesirable in these spaces, and who is included or excluded in these representations.

**Geography of the DTES – Where are its public spaces?**

In almost all of the planning documents, the DTES is represented as being comprised of distinct sub-areas (see Figure 1 below for map of official planning sub-areas used by the Vancouver planning department). The naming of these sub-areas is not always consistent between planning texts and corresponds to varying degrees to the sub-areas in the official planning map. In the Public Realm Program Plan, the DTES is said to include Victory Square, Gastown, Chinatown, Strathcona, the Main and Hastings corridor and Japantown/Oppenheimer (PRPP). In the Integrated Health & Enforcement Strategy, five areas are named: Gastown, Chinatown, Victory Square, Strathcona, and “an area commonly referred to as the Downtown Eastside” (IHE p.1). In some cases, only one sub-area is referred to; the Business Plan for a Dumpster Free Alley only includes Gastown, while in the Victory Square Policy Plan, the boundaries of Victory Square are explicitly defined and correspond to the planning department’s boundaries. In the Powell Street Open Windows Design Project, only Strathcona is mentioned and its boundaries are not defined. However, since this document was
prepared for the Strathcona BIA, it might be assumed that it uses the BIA’s boundaries. The BIA definition of Strathcona includes the planning sub-areas of DTES-Oppenheimer, Industrial, Hastings Corridor, and Strathcona. This is a markedly different definition than that used by the planning department, in which Powell Street lies outside of Strathcona.

Figure 1 – DTES Map. *City of Vancouver Planning Department, 2010.*

This map represents the boundaries of the DTES and its sub-areas as defined by the City of Vancouver planning department.

In some cases, the separation of the sub-areas areas is emphasized. For example, the Carrall Street Greenway proposal aims to rebuild links between “what have become [the] discrete DTES neighbourhoods” of Gastown, the DTES, and Chinatown (CSG p.5, emphasis added³). Hastings Renaissance notes that Hastings Street “serves a critical role in connecting the diverse neighbourhoods that comprise the Downtown Eastside” (p. 3).

³ Emphasis is always added unless noted otherwise
In other documents, the DTES and these sub-areas are contrasted with other parts of Vancouver. For example, the Victory Square Policy Plan contrasts the housing options of the Victory Square area with the high-rise condominium markets in the Downtown South, False Creek North, and Coal Harbour areas of Vancouver, while SWEEP compares the cleanliness of other neighbourhoods of Vancouver to the relative lack of cleanliness in the DTES. Great Beginnings also highlights separation between DTES and the rest of the city in its aim to create “opportunities for exchanges between the DTES and the rest of Vancouver” (GB p.3).

**Uniqueness and History of the DTES – Why revitalize public spaces here?**

The DTES is foregrounded as unique or distinct from other neighbourhoods in Vancouver. In some cases, the distinctiveness of the neighbourhood is evaluated as a positive resource. For example, the Victory Square plan notes that revitalization of the area “should be based on the unique characteristics” of the area (VS p. 2). The Great Beginnings project aims to “celebrate the unique contributions” that Gastown, Chinatown, Japantown, and Strathcona “have made to building Vancouver and the province” (GB p.2). Other texts present the DTES’ distinctiveness neutrally. The Woodward’s text describes the non-profit space in the development as addressing “unique needs in the community” and highlights aspects of the project that are tailored to the uniqueness of the DTES, noting that the “scale of open space goes well beyond what would normally be expected”, that “an unusually spacious area is essential”, and that “in this neighbourhood [the DTES], a private mall will not do” (WW p.9).

In other cases, the DTES’ distinctiveness is evaluated negatively and the neighbourhood is set up as a site of concentration of problems that are a concern of the whole city. The Public Realm Program Plan states that the DTES has “a history of
being treated as a ‘dumping’ ground for the larger city’s social problems” (PRPP p.1). Other texts also locate problems in the DTES, but do not implicate other city areas in creating these problems. For example, two texts introduce the problems of littered garbage, addiction, and crime as citywide, but then narrow their focus onto the DTES by listing statistics about the neighbourhood:

Approximately 15 percent of the City’s street cleaning budget is focused on issues in the DTES, an area which represents only two percent of the city’s total area. (SWEEP p. 2)

There are an estimated 8,000 injection drug users in the City of Vancouver. An estimated 4,700 people who inject drugs reside among 10 city blocks within the Downtown Eastside (IHE p. 1)

Similarly, Project Civil City’s main objective is to address the problem of public disorder in Vancouver. While this is presented as a citywide problem, the root causes identified in the text are homelessness, drug addiction, and mental illness, all circumstances frequently associated with the DTES. In this way, the DTES is indexed as a neighbourhood with concentrated levels of public disorder.

All of the proactive planning documents discuss some aspect of the DTES’ history. This is referred to in terms of the DTES having been the birthplace or first urban area of Vancouver (PRPP, HR, GB), the former commercial centre of Vancouver (VS, PRPP, WW), as having been linked to industry in the area and the region (e.g., Hastings Mill and resource workers are noted in PSOW), as historically home to First Nations people (PRPP, PSOW), as an area of Japanese-Canadian and other immigrant settlement (PPRP, PSOW), and as an area with unique heritage buildings and streets (VS, CSG).

The idea that a return to past conditions in the DTES is desirable comes up in all of the proactive planning documents. It is indicated through the use of a variety of words and assumptions about what is desirable. For example, several words are used
that have the prefix “re”, meaning again or back to a previous state or refer to bringing back previous conditions:

The primary objective of planning efforts in Victory Square have been to develop a strategy for revitalization that will bring back investment...

(VS)

As the community continues to rediscover and celebrate its history, this link [to the working waterfront] should be reinforced...

(PSOW)

...within these suggestions lies a roadmap toward the restoration of public order and civility in our community (PCC)

Other programs explicitly state their aims to “restore the original public appeal” of the neighbourhood and to “celebrate the history, heritage and culture of Vancouver’s first urban areas” of Gastown, Chinatown, Japantown, and Strathcona (GB, HR). While it is not entirely clear what exactly these past conditions are, it is implied that they include greater investment in the neighbourhood, order, civility, public appeal, and a link to history.

The texts of the reactive programs do not discuss positive past conditions in the DTES to the same degree or at all. Rather they cite negative conditions such as the deterioration of safety (PCC) and an ongoing garbage problem (DFA). The words “deterioration” and “ongoing” indicate that these are processes, but do not indicate a particular timeframe within which they have developed. The SWEEP proposal and IHE do not mention processes at all, but rather state levels of litter (SWEEP) and illness and crime (IHE) as current facts.

**Representations of DTES Public Spaces**

The texts present the DTES as a geographically distinct, unique neighbourhood. They indicate both overtly and implicitly that conditions in the neighbourhood have declined and should be changed for the better. In the following section, I examine how conditions and changes are represented in public spaces in the DTES. Through the
activities, events, physical characteristics, and people included and excluded in the planning texts, a representation develops of public spaces in the DTES.

Undesirable Activities in Public Spaces

The texts represent undesirable activities in public spaces either explicitly as problems to be addressed, or implicitly in opposition to desirable activities. The group of reactive texts foregrounds problems in DTES public spaces, including litter in alleyways and on streets (DFA, SWEEP), public disorder (PCC, SWEEP), and public drug use and crime (IHE). Public disorder is not explicitly defined in these texts. It is by nature an evaluative term, since what is considered disorderly may differ from person to person. There are, however, a number of terms in the texts that are classified as types of public disorder, giving an indication of what is assumed to be disorderly in the planning texts. These terms include “public nuisances”, “open drug use, aggressive panhandling and noise infractions”, “annoyance”, “open drug market”, “litter”, “dumpster diving”, “crime”, and “violence”. Terms set in contrast to disorder include “public order”, “community safety”, “civility”, “clean”, “sense of personal safety”, “civic pride”, “personal responsibility”, “sense of security” and “civil behaviour”. In this way, these texts portray undesirable activities as upsetting “order” in public spaces in the DTES.

The proactive planning documents are less overt in naming problems in public spaces in the DTES, but rather imply that they exist by describing improvements that are needed in the neighbourhood. The Powell Street Open Windows text recommends making building facades more attractive while “still providing security and appropriate response to area realities” (PSOW p. 6). “Area realities” are not characterized, but the statement implies that special attention to security of storefronts is required in the DTES (presumably because of problems relating to theft and vandalism). Similarly, the
Victory Square Policy Plan calls for the use of crime prevention principles in designing open spaces and streets. The Hastings Renaissance text aims to create “momentum for positive, legitimate street-level activity” (HR p. 4). Here, the implication is that what currently exists on Hastings Street is not positive and not legitimate.

The proactive texts also use the word ‘decline’ to describe the overall negative condition of the neighbourhood (VS, PRPP, PSOW, HR). The word ‘decline’ is nominalized (i.e. used as a noun instead of as a verb). This serves to represent decline as an agentless process, backgrounding the participants or actions involved in such decline. For example, the Powell Street Open Windows text includes “postwar decline” as one item in a list of historical events in the neighbourhood. The Public Realm Program Plan provides more detail on decline, specifying it as meaning economic decline and including some reasons for the process:

...the DTES has been in economic decline since the closure of the interurban rail and ferry transportation system in the community. This decline was further aggravated by the closure of the historic Woodward’s building. Public open spaces in the area have shared in the general neighbourhood decline. (PRPP p. 1)

Still, this description of decline excludes any agents responsible for the closure of the rail, ferry, or Woodward's building or details of how public spaces have declined.

Other texts do not specifically use the word decline, but also describe negative processes in the DTES including “run-down”, “deterioration”, and “perception that conditions are continuing to worsen” (GB, PCC, DFA). The outcomes of decline are frequently identified as visible aspects of the neighbourhood, including an increased vacancy rate (HR), store closures (VS, PSOW), and a “visible lack of prosperity” (VS). In all of these cases, economic decline in terms of the decrease in businesses in the neighbourhood is equated with worsening conditions and safety in public spaces.
Desirable Activities in Public Spaces

Activities that are promoted in public spaces are represented in the texts through the objectives that the different programs aim to achieve. These activities are more prominent in the proactive texts (since the reactive texts tend more towards mentioning unwanted activities). Several of the texts aim to bring “vibrancy” or “vitality” to public spaces and streets in the DTES (PSOW, VS, PRPP, IHE, HR). Others envision public spaces that are “liveable” and “welcoming” (GB, DFA). What constitutes a vibrant or vital public realm is ambiguous, but is indicated through the types of activities and uses for public space proposed in the documents.

The texts outline specific desirable activities for public spaces. These include recreational cycling and rollerblading (CSG), street vending (CSG), arts programs and events (GB, PRPP), cultural celebrations (GB), and a place to sit and talk with friends (PSOW). The Woodward’s plan envisions a public space that is “useful for the activities and events that contribute to a healthy community culture” and that serves as a “crossroads” where the “wide diversity of people who live and work nearby” can meet one another (WW p. 10). Street-level activity, particularly commercial activity, also is prioritized in a few texts (VS, PSOW, HR, CSG). For example, Hastings Street is presented as “an important commercial high street, drawing both local and regional customers to the area” (HR p. 3). The “quality of life of the shopping area” on Powell Street and “active ground floor uses” on Carrall Street are also highlighted (PSOW p.2, CSG p.1). A couple of texts create categories of how public space can be used. The Carrall Street Greenway design divides the street into a “heritage zone” and a “park zone”. The Public Realm Program Plan specifies two main functions for public space in the DTES, the first as a public image of the neighbourhood and the second as a place for people to meet and socialize.
Many of these activities position public spaces as sites of active participation within formal structures such as festivals, performances and programming (CSG, PRPP, GB, WW) or in consumption practices of street vending, sidewalk cafes, or retail storefronts (VS, HR, PSOW, CSG). The participation of DTES community members in these activities is also promoted. Employment of local residents, and particularly of local artists, is cited as a positive outcome of several of the programs (CSG, PSOW, VS, DFA, PRPP), as is involving residents in community projects (GB, PSOW, PRPP, CSG), and building community capacity (PSOW, VS, PRPP). This participation is so highly prioritized in the Great Beginnings project that one of its strategies is to work with other city agencies to address “basic daily service needs for the DTES homeless population to enable them to participate” (GB p.2). The focus on participation in formalized programs and activities serves to background public spaces as places to simply hang out. However, some texts do mention public spaces as places to gather, meet friends, and meet other people (WW, PSOW). Two texts note that public spaces can be intimate or quiet settings for residents to enjoy (PRPP, CSG). Thus public spaces are largely represented as places of participation in programmed activities or social interaction, but do include unstructured activity as well.

A second aspect of public space positioned as desirable in the texts is the idea of visibility and transparency. This is evident in the prioritization of improving the attractiveness and appearance of DTES streetscapes and alleyways in a number of programs (CSG, VS, PSOW, HR, GB, DFA). For example, Great Beginnings is said to bring benefits that are “direct, immediate, and visible” (GB p.1). The Public Realm Program Plan describes public spaces of the DTES as sites where “creative urban renewal will take place most visibly in the DTES and the City’s public imagination” (PRPP p.2).

Visibility is also presented as a positive feature in terms of being able to see what is going on in public space. This is represented in ways to make currently concealed
spaces visible. For example, increasing transparency of retail storefront windows is promoted as a way of providing “casual surveillance” or “eyes on the street” (PSOW p.19). Similarly, placing tenants in ground floor storefronts is seen as a way to increase “transparency at the edges, where the public realm of the street and the less public, often private realm of property and buildings meet” (HR p.4). Areas of concealment are thus presented as a negative attribute of public space. One text states this explicitly, noting that recessed doorways are a “major problem area for merchants and building managers, since they provide areas of concealment, especially at night” (PSOW p.18).

The planning texts also promote visibility in areas that might typically be thought of as more secluded, such as alleyways. For example, one item listed as a success of the SWEEP project was the improved sightlines for police in alleys when excess garbage was removed (SWEEP p.6). Other texts introduce activities that are not normally associated with alleys. These include using alleys “in a more European way by allowing commercial operations such as cafes” (PCC p.11) and creating “functionality of alleyways for pedestrian, commercial and/or recreational activities” (DFA p.i).

Overall, the texts present a set of activities that are desirable in public spaces in the DTES and represent these activities as being participatory and visible to passers-by.

**Legitimation of Interventions in Public Spaces**

The planning texts demonstrate methods of legitimation that explain the reasoning for implementing proposed interventions. The two main methods of legitimation used in the texts are (1) rationality in relation to programmatic goals combined with (2) moral evaluation. That is, they describe actions as being useful means of achieving particular goals, but also highlight health, safety, and liveability as worthwhile moral pursuits.
The texts combine the moral and rational types of legitimation by describing interventions as useful in providing and improving the appearance of public spaces, but also in improving quality of life. SWEEP and Dumpster-Free Alley both state that the presence of litter, debris, and dumpsters is associated with increased violence, crime, noise, disorder, reduced liveability, and poor health; therefore, they posit that getting rid of dumpsters and litter is not only an effective way to improve the appearance of public spaces, but also a way to reduce other undesirable social conditions. Other texts also state that improved public spaces will lead to better health and safety. For example, the Great Beginnings text states that in creating attractive streets and public spaces, the project will result in an “enhanced quality of life” (GB p.2). Similarly the Woodward's text presents the “provision of a major public gathering place” as “useful for the activities and events that contribute to a healthy community culture” (WW p. 10).

A second way the two types of legitimation are combined is by describing the moral goal of health and safety outcomes as a rational step in the progression towards an additional goal: increased economic activity in the neighbourhood. For example, although the Integrated Health and Enforcement Strategy notes that its primary goals are to dismantle the open drug scene and improve health and safety in the neighbourhood, it also frames these goals as a way to increase economic activity:

It is only through improving the health of the residents, addressing public nuisance associated with open drug use and increasing public safety, that legitimate businesses will return to and thrive in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (IHE p. 2)

Similarly, the Victory Square Policy Plan describes increased street level activity as leading to an increased sense of safety and security, which will in turn increase business and housing markets.

The utility of interventions in achieving increased economic activity is stated in several of the texts, and in some cases is linked to benefits for local residents such as
providing services or employment opportunities. The Powell Street Open Windows project positions itself as one step in a process that may lead to job creation:

…it is possible to think that job creation for local residents will be among the many possible long-term outcomes of this and other ongoing initiatives. (PSOW p.2)

The Hastings Renaissance justifies filling vacant storefronts with arts-based businesses both for economic and community interests:

Generally, an improved streetscape sparks interest in the area, thereby attracting new businesses and more clients to the area to conduct business activities. (HR p. 4)

This strategy is intended to secure affordable space for small-scale enterprises that contribute to a suite of local-serving goods and services for the neighbourhood. (HR p.4)

The Public Realm Program Plan lists seven benefits of the program, including “a lively, unique and interesting public realm”, “improved health and social outcomes”, “increased employment and economic development opportunities”, and “community capacity building” (PRPP p.3). The legitimation in the planning texts foregrounds public space interventions as both providing benefits for local residents such as improved health and employment possibilities as well as meeting economic development goals of attracting investment and businesses to the DTES.

Overall, the planning documents represent desirable public space as orderly, clean, crime-free, drug-free, with businesses occupying storefronts, and art and cultural events and programs happening in parks and on the street. The rationale for the interventions described in the planning texts combines moral evaluation, whereby health, safety, and liveability are worthwhile goals, with rationality, where improving street conditions are a means of attracting investment and business to the neighbourhood.
‘Peopling’ Public Spaces

The representations of desirable and undesirable public spaces paint a picture of people and groups who are present or absent in these spaces. By examining what participants are involved in desirable and undesirable activities, it is possible to gain an understanding of groups or individuals who are included or excluded in the planning texts’ construction of DTES spaces.

A couple of texts highlight people who use public space for walking and recreation. One objective of the Dumpster-Free Alley project is “to enhance the attractiveness and functionality of alleyways for pedestrian, commercial and/or recreational activities” (DFA p.i). Similarly, the design proposed for Carrall Street “primarily revolves around reallocating space from vehicles to pedestrians and recreational users (such as joggers, in-line skaters and cyclists)” (CSG p.7). Other texts discuss those people who are involved in commercial activity, such as “local and regional customers” (HR p.3). Another group of people represented are the local residents participating in the arts projects, festivals, and programs proposed for public spaces. For example, the Public Realm Program Plan aims to draw upon “local creative resources…and in the process engage…local residents and marginalized people” (PRPP p.1). The Powell Street Open Windows project aims to “strengthen the general community by involving them” in the design of Powell Street (PSOW p.6).

Users of public spaces are often presented as one group, and when they are presented as multiple groups, the differences between them tend to be suppressed. Public spaces are sometimes described as being for all people or a whole community. For example, the Woodward's text notes that the public space must be “available to all citizens” and that “public access must be secured for all people” (WW p.10). Similarly, the Victory Square plan envisions “Victory Square Park continuing] to be an important public space serving the entire community” (VS p.5). When diversity and different
groups within this community are represented, they are constructed as a positive feature. For example, the Woodward's building’s “W” sign is envisioned in the Victory Square Policy Plan as “a symbol of hope and ‘welcoming’ to the diversity of people who live, work and visit the Downtown Eastside” (VS p.4). Similarly, Woodward’s is represented as offering “a ‘crossroads' and meeting place for the wide diversity of people who live and work nearby” (WW p.10). The Great Beginnings text acknowledges the different “people, cultures and histories” that shaped “Vancouver's first urban areas” and proposes activities and street festivals “built on diversity, inclusion and cultural exchange”, but does not name any peoples or cultures specifically (GB p.1).

The Carrall Street Greenway includes public spaces and parks that serve “a very diverse population” and aims to “connect” the communities on its route (CSG p.4). In representing the DTES community either as a unified whole or a celebrated diverse mix, the texts suppress difference or conflict and promote interaction among groups in the community. Thus public spaces are intended for the equal use and enjoyment of a variety of users in the DTES.

The equivalency among different groups sometimes extends beyond DTES residents to also include people from outside the neighbourhood – including visitors and all city residents. For example, public spaces in the DTES are stated as being the places where “creative urban renewal will take place most visibly in the DTES and the City’s public imagination” (PRPP p.3). Great Beginnings aims to facilitate “arts and cultural activities, celebrations and street festivals for residents and visitors alike” and to “create safe and inviting places where residents and visitors can live, work, shop and socialize” (GB p.1). The Dumpster-Free Alley project aims to create “a healthier and friendlier environment that can be enjoyed by residents, businesses and visitors to the area” (DFA p.i). These sentences represent residents, visitors, and businesses in an equivalent relationship by including them in a single list and using
the word ‘alike’. The groups are thus portrayed as equivalent to one another in terms of their use and benefit of public spaces. In this way, improvements are situated as not just for DTES residents, but also for visitors, businesses, and all citizens of Vancouver.

That the benefits (or costs) of these public space interventions may be distributed unevenly among the diverse groups in the DTES and the rest of the city is generally backgrounded in the texts; however, it is implied in a few instances. The Victory Square Policy Plan notes that there will be “trade-offs” between the competing interests of public amenities, revitalization, heritage conservation, and the provision of low income housing, but seeks to “balance these competing interests” with other policy measures including “reinforcing programmes that have strong community support” (VS p.3). Similarly, the Hastings Renaissance text advocates small-scale renovations over large redevelopments as a way “to distribute the benefits of revitalization more widely” (HR p.5). Most explicitly, the Public Realm Program Plan aims to use its programs to “engage those local residents and marginalized people with the least power to resist or benefit from large scale development” (PRPP p.1). In these cases, community engagement, programs, and small-scale interventions are constructed as ways to mitigate the negative impacts of revitalization on local low-income residents.

The texts do not explicitly exclude any groups or people from public spaces; however, associating specific people with undesirable activities implies that these people will be excluded from public spaces. For example, the Dumpster-Free Alley text identifies “the prevalence of dumpster diving” as a “unique local issue”, and proposes a dumpster-free waste management and recycling system. By getting rid of dumpsters, the initiative would also eliminate dumpster diving, thereby discounting the practices of dumpster diving or binning for empty bottles and cans. Similarly, the Powell Street Open Windows project advocates that stores use retractable awnings as a “way
around” the “fear of attracting unwelcome, particularly at night” (sic, PSOW p.20). It also states that “[i]n challenged areas like Powell Street” recessed doorways are a “major problem area for merchants and building managers, since they provide areas of concealment, especially at night” (PSOW p.18). While what is unwelcome and what is being concealed is not said, the details of being concealed and covered by an awning at night indexes the use of these spaces by homeless people, particularly in the DTES where there is a large homeless population. In this way, the public spaces constructed in the Powell Street text exclude homeless people.

Another activity that is excluded in public spaces is that of drug dealing and drug use. In some cases this exclusion is explicit. The Public Realm Program Plan emphasizes that “[Revitalization] without Displacement’ does not mean that all existing behaviours will remain – especially in the public sphere. This is particularly true of drug dealing and use” (PRPP p.1). Similarly, the Integrated Health and Enforcement Strategy aims to “dismantle the open drug scene” (IHE p.2) and one of Project Civil City’s main goals is to “eliminate the open drug market on Vancouver's streets” by at least half (PCC p.4).

While the Public Realm Program Plan does not link any specific people to drug dealing and use, the other two texts do. The Integrated Health and Enforcement Strategy lists statistics about drug use in youth, people accessing health services, and Aboriginals. It also links the sex trade and drug trade as part of an “intricate network” (IHE p.1). Thus, by aiming to “dismantle” the open drug scene, those associated with drug use in the text (sex workers, Aboriginals, youth, and people who access health services) are forced out of public spaces. The Project Civil City text also produces an exclusionary representation. It links the problem of public disorder to behaviours of “chronic offenders who are suffering from drug addiction”, “our most vulnerable citizens”, “severely mentally ill people living on Vancouver's streets”, the “homeless
population”, and “panhandlers”. Again, by aiming to eliminate disorder, these groups are marginalized and their access to public spaces becomes limited. While no groups or individuals are explicitly excluded, some groups can only gain entry to public spaces by changing their behaviours. However, changing these behaviours may not be possible when conventional employment or housing are unavailable to sex workers or the homeless or when addiction causes dependence on drugs. This may force people into more secluded and riskier locations. The planning texts do not acknowledge the potential for such displacement (although other programs within the DTES Revitalization Program and Vancouver Agreement focus on housing and addiction treatment).

The textual representation of DTES public spaces includes and excludes different groups of people. Those who participate in desirable activities are highlighted, while those who are associated with unwanted activities have reduced access to public spaces. Still, the texts largely situate public spaces and the programs located within these spaces as being for the “entire” community or as being places where diverse groups can interact. While some texts do mention inequalities in the DTES, they also present public spaces as providing opportunities for existing or low-income residents to participate in community events and art projects or find employment. These opportunities are presented as mitigating the negative impacts that larger scale redevelopment can have on low-income groups.

**Textual Analysis of Resident Interviews**

**Low-Income Residents’ Public Spaces**

The discourse of planning texts presents the DTES as being a distinct part of Vancouver made up of different sub-areas. Its history is highlighted, as is a desire to return to previous conditions. Desired changes in its public spaces are reducing crime,
drugs, and disorder, as well as increasing vibrancy, public activity, participation, and visibility. By examining 6 interviews and 1 focus group with low-income residents and their accounts of what they consider to be healthy and unhealthy in the DTES, I compared their construction of public spaces to that of the planning texts.

As described above, the interviews and focus group were conducted for the purposes of a previous study called Healthy Inner City Environments (HICE), which aimed to increase understanding of neighbourhood level determinants of health. In the HICE study, the participants took photographs of places in the DTES that either positively or negatively impact their own and their neighbourhood’s health. The interviews and focus group involved participants discussing their photos with researchers. The transcripts of these discussions are the basis of my analysis.

The interviews were not specifically about public spaces or revitalization, but the participants discussed many public spaces in their neighbourhood. The discussion of these spaces did not directly respond to the programs described in the planning texts. However, they included talk about activities and people in the spaces targeted by the programs as well as discussion about the effects of revitalization efforts in the area. In order to incorporate the interview texts into my analysis of planning texts, I analyzed interviewees’ descriptions of DTES public spaces and revitalization and identified ways in which they corresponded to or diverged from representations in the planning texts. In the sections that follow, I examine the interviews’ representations of the geography of DTES public spaces and the uniqueness of the area. I examine how the interviews portray the revitalization planning outcomes of economic development, community participation, and visibility, as well as the characterization of diversity and difference in the area. Finally, I present an alternate order in the DTES depicted in the interviews, one that works despite the planning texts’ designation of ‘disorder.’
Geography of DTES Public Spaces

A few interviewees discussed spatial aspects of the DTES. Some of the representations were consistent with city planning boundaries, particularly of the DTES as a whole and of the sub-area of Strathcona. However, many of the locations described by residents were on a smaller scale than those described in the planning texts. Differentiations were drawn between people who live near the Woodward’s building, people who hang out in Oppenheimer Park, people who live further east along Hastings Street, and a particular city block for sex workers. For example, one interviewee shows concern that drug dealing will be displaced from the Woodward’s area once the development is complete and will move further east to Oppenheimer Park:

I’ve got a feeling they are going to chase everybody from down there up this area, so that will probably be full of a lot more drug dealing and stuff, because all the dealing that’s down by Woodward’s now is going to be pushed away. (003)

In this way, activities and changes in DTES public space are expressed by residents as being experienced on a smaller scale than that represented in planning documents.

Distinctiveness of the DTES

In terms of the DTES’ uniqueness and position within the city of Vancouver as a whole, several interviewees related that bad conditions in the DTES are in fact not unique, but citywide. They emphasized that drug use exists everywhere in the city, but is more visible in the DTES. Another interviewee noted that “everywhere in the city...you're going to get people that are respectful and disrespectful, and I think that’s been around since the beginning of time and always going to be around” (001). By positioning problems on a larger scale, residents resist the representation of the DTES as a distinctively problematic space.
Further, some residents turn around the negative portrayals of the DTES relative to other neighbourhoods in the city. Interviewees noted numerous sources of social support in the community, particularly through non-profit organizations, and the ability to be in public spaces with people that they know; things that they said were not available in other areas. Another interviewee responded to the claim that the DTES is fenced off and unwelcoming, contrasting it with one of Vancouver’s wealthiest areas:

…look at Shaughnessy, or any other neighbourhood, it’s all fenced off. You want to talk about not a very welcoming community, walk off Granville; they are all hedged and fenced off (001)

In this way, negative representations of the DTES as a distinct area or an area with a concentration of problems are resisted in the interview texts.

**Improving Public Spaces in the DTES**

The planning texts construct public realm improvements and increased economic investment in the DTES as positive features that are linked to benefits for neighbourhood residents. Conversely, interviewees often construct these changes in the neighbourhood as detrimental to their wellbeing. Revitalization in planning texts is constructed as a positive process and the DTES Revitalization Program’s philosophy of “Revitalization without Displacement” is cited (VS, PRPP). A focus group participant takes this phrase and reworks it, purposefully removing herself from the city’s policy. However, she replaces the word “revitalization” with “development”, perhaps indicating that the two processes are synonymous: “You could use their words back at them: ‘development without displacement, but I’m not participating.’”

Interviewees foreground profit-seeking as a reason for poor living conditions in the DTES, in contrast to planning texts that see investment as a positive outcome of improving public space. Interviewees suggest that money is used to pay off city inspectors, used by developers to influence political parties, and even describe ‘money’
as “the root of all evil” because of its links to the drug trade (CM003). Bringing investment into the neighbourhood is not expected to benefit low-income residents, but to displace them:

People who are originally contained to the neighbourhood, now they're trying to get us out of the neighbourhood. And now there's money, they've decided we have to find another place to be contained. They just haven't found out where yet. (008)

In this way, interviewees reject the planning texts’ rationale for intervention in the neighbourhood as a way to provide economic opportunities and social benefits to residents. Rather, interviewees point out negative consequences of economically motivated revitalization.

Community Participation

The representation of public spaces as sites of interaction with friends and places for community participation that are found in the planning documents are also included in the interview texts. Similar to the planning texts, these activities are evaluated positively. For example, one interviewee described the positive feelings she derived from a mural that many community members created together:

…it was 200 hundred people were involved in painting this mural in the community and planting the garden...200 people from this community all got together and painted the mural, the woman did, the actual artist drew a sketch of what she wanted and that was the main things, certain parts of this mural were already chosen and approved and then other people came in and drew that, drew the guitar, the beads, we had little kids doing the box underneath, so in total 200 people participated and I thought it was a pretty cool thing. (001)

However, another interviewee resists the use of community development as a justification for intervention in the neighbourhood while discussing a photograph of Aboriginal men getting together in a DTES park:

…the positive aspects of this neighbourhood are shots like the guys in Oppenheimer Park, you know, there's quite a few good shots of people getting together in groups...it says we are a community, we do get
together. We don’t need, you know, we have a community, we don’t want to be displaced…leave us alone (002)

Similarly, another interview text picks up on the idea of disorder in the DTES (represented in the words ‘chaotic’ and ‘circus like’), but notes that it is not necessarily detrimental to people finding a sense of community and belonging in the neighbourhood:

I kind of like to emphasize that for a lot of people, that [the DTES] is their community, it’s very important to have a sense of belonging, and that is why a lot of people are there even though it's chaotic and circus like (009)

Thus, while community participation is important to the interviewees, they do not view structured programs that impose participation as necessary for promoting community development, and sometimes present them as detrimental. Instead they describe ways that a sense of community emerges in everyday life.

(In)visibility

Another point of comparison between the planning texts and the residents’ representations is that of visibility and invisibility of activities in public space. While making public spaces attractive and visible is promoted in the planning texts, several of the interviewees described ways that DTES residents are made to be invisible in this process. This invisibility is constructed as an effort by decision-makers, police, or landlords to hide DTES residents who do not contribute to the desirable appearance of public space:

I’m not unhappy about enforcement or cleaning up the streets, but it has to be recognized that a lot of those people [involved with drugs] are there to stay; addressing the fact that they might be visible is not dealing with the situation. (009)

Everybody else, who lives on that block, is allowed to have a Cordova street entrance, except the people that live in this building. These people are only allowed in and out of Blood Alley, because nobody wants to see them. (008)
...the police are very active in terms of making sure people don’t use the park after 10 pm at night, very lopsided priorities in terms of making low-income people kind of invisible, with the idea of trying to create this postcard for the tourists to look at. (002)

In this way, interviewees are very aware of the visibility of public spaces in their neighbourhood and they portray it as being used against marginalized residents of the area.

_Diversity and Inequality in the DTES_

The planning texts introduce diversity in the DTES as a positive feature and do not distinguish between different groups such as business owners, residents, and visitors. By contrast, the interview texts foreground power and status imbalances among these groups. For example, one interviewee contrasted the status of businesses to that of herself and the other tenants of the non-profit run hotel where she lives, complaining that they are not informed when the street is going to be closed off for special events: “the business association never sends us flyers...and yet I'm sure all the businesses got one” (008). In this way, tenants of her hotel are set in a contrastive relationship with businesses, where businesses are granted a more important status than low-income tenants.

The categories of people introduced in the resident interviews include many groupings of people that are not mentioned in the planning documents very much or at all. These include women, ‘working girls’ (i.e. sex workers), single mothers, children, families, security guards, police, ‘yuppies’, ‘NIMBYs’, ‘upscale people’ (i.e. people of higher social class), seniors, ‘druggies’, and tourists. Unlike in the planning texts, these diverse groups are not represented as benefiting equally from DTES public spaces. Interviewees describe the need for safe spaces for women in the neighbourhood, the way that the exclusion of sex workers leads them to work in more dangerous
conditions, and a park in the DTES that is safe for “old rounders” but not for tourists. Another interviewee describes her concern about how the movement of middle class people into the neighbourhood will change street activity so that she will no longer be able to buy goods from the informal street vendors at the bottle depot on Hastings Street where currently, “you can buy anything you want”:

I think they will start moving stuff around. I bet you this bottle depot will be moved somewhere else. Because they get the middle class, the lower income people mixing together and a lot of middle class people are not going to allow for this kind of stuff, they get, I'm paying rent so I deserve this and that, you know...(003)

Thus, instead of portraying different groups as equally using and benefiting from public spaces in the DTES, interviewees describe how spaces are experienced differently by different groups, with higher income groups having more influence on public space. This notion of diversity is distinct from the conflict-free version put forth in the planning texts.

Another prominent aspect of the interview and focus group texts is the foregrounding of inequality between low-income DTES residents and others, particularly political decision makers. This is often constructed in the texts by creating a division between decision-makers, represented as “them” or “they”, and DTES residents:

That’s the government, they want their money, they want to put their hands in our pocket. (003)

They want to make it welcoming, for business investment, and for people to spend money here, coming from the outside. So it’s the whole idea of calming, quelling enforcement, containment. (009)

In these constructions “they” are presented as agents acting on DTES residents, positioning political decision-makers as holding power over DTES residents.

The way that interviewees present their ideas also serves to foreground unequal power relations. The modality of the planning texts indicates that their authors are strongly committed to the statements they make, using verbs such as “are” and “will
be” to describe conditions. They also make claims about the thoughts of others (e.g., the Dumpster-Free Alley text states that “businesses, property owners, and tenants express great frustration with the issue [of garbage]” DFA p.i). Conversely, the interviewees tend to speak only for themselves, often qualifying their statements with “in my opinion”, “as far as I know” or “I think.” One interviewee discussing how to address drugs in the DTES says, “that’s not my affair...I’m not a politician” (009). In this way, interviewees do not speak on behalf of others, while the planning texts do. While this may not be surprising given the genre difference between the two types of texts, it does show that planning texts take on authority. They are written in such a way that speaks for the needs or desires of others (e.g., DTES residents), neglecting the heterogeneity of people and opinions in the area.

Alternate Order in Public Spaces

The planning documents identify disorder as a problem in the DTES and present a desirable vision of public spaces that is orderly, includes people in participatory, structured activities, and involves interaction among diverse groups. The interview texts address many uses and users of public spaces, some that correspond to those in the planning texts and others that differ. Both sets of texts represent specific activities or conditions as undesirable, including homelessness, littering, and particularly open drug use. However, the interviewees do not reject these activities outright, but negotiate the ways in which these function in the DTES.

In terms of drugs, some interviewees make distinctions between marijuana (as an acceptable drug) and crack (as a ‘bad’ drug). Others describe ways that open drug use is regulated without external enforcement:

If you say you've got kids coming, they will put their crack pipes down, they won't smoke in front of the kids...there still is some compassion there for people (003)
Another interviewee describes a family that has been able to push drug dealing out of their local park and claim it as a small area that is drug-free. He evaluates this action positively, noting that kids:

  don't want to be in an environment where there's police around, they want to be in an environment where there’s freedom and where they are carefree. If you see cops and pushers and stuff around, you don't have the carefree mentality, I don't think. (004)

Alternate representations of public space also arise in terms of homelessness. Some interviewees describe homelessness as a choice that some people make or as a condition that is ever-present. More than one interviewee discussed a recent tent city that had been set up in a local park and remarked that it was driven by a need in the neighbourhood for people to have places to sleep. When sleeping outside is not causing problems for someone else or when housing is not available, it is described as a reasonable, and even admirable action. One interviewee described a woman who had built a home on a cement slab in an alley:

  ...she had built it up to two tents and clotheslines and it was like, it was quite magnificent you know, and I was like good for you...you know everybody can't have the home that they want or something. It’s just wasted property, a cement slab, waiting for a house to be built on you know? It's got the foundation already, it just needs to have something put up and it’s just a waste of property. (008)

In this case the interviewee provides a positive representation of someone who has created a new use of “wasted property.”

The interviewees create a similarly positive representation of informal street vending and binning. Street vending is technically prohibited, and interviewees stated that vendors are occasionally ticketed by police. Yet interviewees remarked on the usefulness of the activity as a way to buy the things they need and a means of recycling abandoned goods; they also noted the unfair treatment of vendors in the DTES who are ticketed while yard sales in other areas are allowed. One interviewee described a vendor's wares as “a bunch of stuff laid out really neatly and colourfully
for sale, and so there should be designated areas where they are allowed to do these things, there's no reason why we can't" (009).

Binning is another activity represented as causing disorder in the planning texts (PCC, DFA, SWEEP). In the interview texts, binners are represented as providing a worthwhile recycling service, one that is not recognized in other areas of the city. One interviewee described observing the way a binner was treated in the Kitsilano neighbourhood:

...there was a man picking empties out of the garbage can and this big loud somewhat overweight real-estate agent was standing with his friends and started mocking this man...this would not happen in the DTES, I mean, binning for empties is a viable form of income...(002)

This depiction represents the alternative acceptance of activities in the DTES. It also creates a character of the real estate agent who is described as threatening an activity that is accepted and appreciated in the DTES, embodying concerns about gentrification in the neighbourhood.

There is also a sense of empathy that interviewees express toward individuals typically excluded in public spaces. This is communicated by saying that they used to be members of excluded groups, such as sex workers or drug users (001, 008), that they have friends or family-members who are members of those groups (003), or that they see these groups' uses of space as reasonable and acceptable (008, 002).

Finally, interview texts also provide a counter point to the planning texts' encouragement of interaction among diverse groups within public spaces. Rather, the interviewees describe lots of separate uses by different groups. One interviewee describes the way that these diverse groups work together, but do not interact, all in one park in the DTES:

...here we have space for little children, we have space for the older people playing chess and drinking beer and there's space in the back of people doing and selling drugs. Somehow everybody is cohabitating; they've got their little niche and everybody is able to self-express. Here's a little girl playing ball in a place that's carefree in an environment where
she feels safe. Here’s a bunch of guys having a couple beers while playing chess, and meanwhile [drug] business is going on, so everybody is kind of revolving around everybody, but they still have their own zone and everybody is comfortable where they are...(004)

In this way, interviewees provide a representation of public spaces where people create their own safe places, not by displacing people or making practices invisible, but by developing boundaries at a small scale (e.g., around a certain bench or end of the park) or by creating local norms of how people treat each other or behave (e.g., hiding needles in front of children).
Discussion

Summary

Using interviews with local residents to explore the representations of public spaces in DTES revitalization planning, my analysis reveals several gaps between the vision of public spaces in planning and the actual experience of these spaces in the lives of residents. The planning documents present the DTES as a specific geographic locality made up of distinct sub-areas. While the interviewees readily identify the DTES as a distinct location, their descriptions of sub-areas within it are more fluid and on a smaller scale than that presented in the planning documents. Further, while both sets of texts present the DTES as a unique location, the planning documents construct this uniqueness as arising from both its historic role in Vancouver’s development and its current social problems. DTES resident interviewees recognize the social problems in the neighbourhood, but note that these are not restricted to the DTES and foreground instead positive community support as unique to the area.

While interviewees share planning concerns about drug trade and homelessness in DTES public spaces, they present a functional order of spaces in the DTES in opposition to the disorder presented in planning. Some activities that are represented as undesirable in the planning texts are conversely seen as useful in the interviews (e.g., binning and street vending). While the planning texts propose public realm interventions that will reduce these activities, the interview texts provide accounts of ways the activities are accommodated. Since the interview texts specifically identify different groups and power imbalances in DTES public spaces, they highlight the planning texts’ suppression of conflict and power relations. Interviewees are more explicit in identifying the inequalities among users of public space, and present ways
that diverse yet separate groups use spaces simultaneously. This marks a contrast from planning texts that celebrate diversity uncritically.

City texts position economic revitalization, community participation, and visibility of public spaces as positive outcomes of public space revitalization, but interviews highlight the way these outcomes may marginalize and harm particular groups and individuals in the DTES. The planning texts combine the goals of community health, safety, and liveability with those of increased economic activity in the DTES. In the interviews, residents explicitly separate these two goals, and in fact present them in opposition to each other. They identify ways that increased investment may displace or marginalize low-income groups and reduce opportunities for their activity in the neighbourhood.

Who is Revitalization For?

The gaps between planning discourse and that of low-income residents indicate that although revitalization is designed to make the DTES a healthier place, its benefits are not necessarily directed to current residents. My results highlight features of the planning texts that shift the power over and benefits of public space revitalization away from low-income DTES residents. First, the planning texts situate the interests of the DTES as being of importance not just to DTES residents, but to all of Vancouver. This is achieved in a number of ways. The DTES’ history is foregrounded in planning texts as significant and relevant to all of Vancouver and BC. This emphasis on the heritage of the neighbourhood broadens historical ownership of the DTES beyond current residents to the entire city and province. Current problems in the DTES are also represented not necessarily as problems of the entire city, but as the responsibility of the entire city (and the responsibility of the provincial and federal government as well, in terms of their contributions to the Vancouver Agreement).
The drawing and redrawing of boundaries in the DTES and the renaming of sub-areas creates ambiguity in what areas are being addressed in planning and who has influence over these areas. The overlapping and vague boundaries of the DTES, Oppenheimer, Japantown, and Strathcona allow planning initiatives to concern different sets of residents. This problem of defining boundaries has recently been demonstrated in a city planning action to separate the zoning and planning processes of Chinatown from the rest of the DTES. This separation is allowing for the development of condominium towers in the Chinatown sub-area, while supporting a resident-driven planning process for the rest of the DTES. DTES community groups have protested this action, emphasizing that Chinatown is a part of the DTES, that Chinatown is home to many low-income residents, and that the effects of the condominium developments will not be limited to Chinatown, but will impact all of the DTES (DTES Neighbourhood Council, 2011). This example shows that changing boundaries can take away residents' influence and ownership over their neighbourhood.

The planning texts gloss over or de-emphasize power imbalances, such as the relatively lower influence wielded DTES residents compared to other actors. The texts portray residents' interests as equivalent to those of other groups such as workers, visitors, property owners, and businesses. Specific groups are excluded from visions presented in planning texts (e.g., drug users, sex workers, homeless, non-participators). In this way, DTES residents - who would appear to have a moral, if not legal right to prominence in the planning process - are portrayed as just one of many groups with concern for the neighbourhood. Changing the scale of interest in the DTES (as belonging to all of Vancouver or to different subsets of residents) may be used as a way to justify goals for the neighbourhood that do not correspond to the needs of current residents.
Similarly, the purported benefits of public space improvements in the area are not consistent with the experiences of low-income residents. The planning texts integrate the goals of increased health, safety and quality of life with economic development goals. Low-income resident interviewees reject this integration by relating stories of not benefiting from economic development. They also describe the ways interventions in public spaces exclude certain individuals and do not improve more pressing needs such as housing and income. Rather, the interventions render low-income residents invisible or push undesirable activities into hiding and into other areas.

Many of the health and safety goals of planning are shared by interviewees, such as reducing drug use, eliminating open drug trade, and creating community programs. However, couching these goals in terms of economic development or for the benefit of those living outside of the DTES may be detrimental to gaining support and participation of DTES residents. It may also create conditions that residents feel are worse for their health, including increased presence of police and the displacement of daily life activities such as the informal Hastings Street market. Thus, while planning programs may aim to bring goods, resources, and opportunities to the neighbourhood, when they do not benefit or are perceived not to benefit current residents, they may engender feelings of exclusion, resentment, and displacement, even in public spaces.

**Connection to Broader Revitalization Strategies**

My results indicate that revitalization planning discourse in the DTES contains several characteristics that have been identified in previous research. DTES revitalization planning’s promotion of community interaction and participation, employment opportunities, and more commercial business is consistent with New Urbanism and Urban Renaissance efforts (Colomb, 2007; Gonzalez & Lejano, 2009).
Similarly, the effect of displacing social problems and excluding specific residents that has been found in other discourse on revitalization is present in DTES revitalization discourse. Thus, despite its explicit philosophy of “revitalization without displacement”, DTES revitalization raises the same problems that Colomb (2007) identifies in Urban Renaissance efforts: that the risk of displacement of low-income residents is ignored and that public spaces are controlled.

Previous literature has demonstrated that the construction of boundaries can include or exclude specific groups or exaggerate differences between areas (Catungal, et al., 2009; Rose, 2004). My results demonstrate that changing boundaries can also serve to disempower or dispossess residents of their neighbourhood. Similar effects have been observed the San Francisco neighbourhood of SoMa that was divided into planning sub-areas. This division made it difficult for residents to create a coherent vision for the entire area and masked the cumulative impact of development projects (Corburn, 2009).

My results also show ways that DTES revitalization discourse ties into other popular urban economic development strategies including efforts to attract the ‘creative class’ by prioritizing the tolerance and diversity of neighbourhoods (Peck, 2005). By celebrating diversity, DTES revitalization texts connect to the creative class rhetoric. However, the discourse of low-income DTES residents shows that the definition of diversity used in planning texts glosses over power imbalances and does not include particular groups as part of this diversity (e.g., drug users or sex workers). The failure to acknowledge social relations has previously been identified in planning efforts that use technical solutions to improve health (e.g., designing streets for increased walking or social interaction) (Corburn, 2009). Such efforts neglect the role difference or conflict may have in mediating their impacts.
Criticisms of revitalization highlight the incompatibility between goals of reducing inequality and attracting investment (Colomb, 2007; Peck, 2005). The Vancouver Agreement and DTES Revitalization Program do not completely ignore inequalities, but in attempting to address social and health objectives within an urban revitalization framework, they face the same contradictions seen in other revitalization efforts. While a full exploration of the relationship of DTES revitalization to broader frameworks for revitalization is beyond the scope of my thesis, this would be an interesting avenue for future research.

**Justice in Revitalization Planning**

The results of my analysis provide an opportunity to examine different ways of thinking about the right way to intervene and improve wellbeing in neighbourhoods. Much urban planning practice (and public health practice as well) is concerned with specific goals, such as creating jobs or reducing disease. Within this narrow focus, there is rarely consideration of broader questions such as whether actions promote justice or equity (Fainstein, 2010). Nonetheless, it is possible to identify different philosophies of justice that contribute to discourse on revitalization in the DTES.

Sandel (2009) presents three main ideas around which philosophies of justice revolve: maximizing welfare, respecting freedom, and promoting virtue. Different conceptions of justice arise when welfare, freedom, or virtue are variably prioritized. By positioning the goals of revitalization in the DTES as being the concern of all Vancouver residents (e.g., improving civility, reducing disorder, celebrating shared history), planning discourse is consistent with utilitarianism, which aims to create the greatest welfare for the greatest number of people. Actions in the DTES are regarded as a means to achieve economic growth, and unequal distribution of revitalization’s benefits is considered only fleetingly. Thus the planning texts prioritize overall
prosperity. However, a focus on prosperity in general does not say anything of rewards for marginalized groups.

The discourse of low-income DTES residents speaks to competing philosophies of justice that place less emphasis on overall welfare, and more emphasis on freedom and fairness. In highlighting the detrimental effects revitalization may have on disadvantaged groups, the resident interviews espouse a perspective of distributive justice. This view of justice, argued by John Rawls, holds that it is not fair for people with higher incomes to have disproportionately more opportunities or influence in a neighbourhood. Social and economic inequalities are permissible only if they work to the advantage of the least well off in society (Sandel, 2009). From this perspective, revitalization efforts that further marginalize low-income groups would be unjust.

In addition, the resident interviews emphasize the idea of freedom. Planning that results in displacement, containment, or regulation of residents may infringe upon their freedom. In DTES residents’ discourse, selling goods or sleeping on the street are not a problem as long as they do not harm anyone. Disallowing these activities may deny people’s autonomy. However, it is not always possible to determine whether or not an activity is harmful. While the DTES residents interviewed do not see a problem in street vending or binning, the revitalization planning texts present these activities as disrupting order. Such differences in opinion of the same activity bring up the idea of virtue: what attitudes and qualities are needed in a good society (Sandel, 2009). My results suggest varying judgments of what makes a good society. Virtuous public spaces might be clean and free of ‘disorderly’ behaviours such as using drugs or sleeping on the street. Or virtue in public spaces may entail acceptance of all people, allowing for a variety of activities, including ‘disorderly’ ones.

The question of what is the ‘right’ thing to do does not have a straightforward answer. Whether or not actions will promote health in an area depends upon what
health in a neighbourhood means. Is it a neighbourhood that contributes to the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people? Is it somewhere that aims to benefit the least well off? Does it promote individual freedom or prioritize communal obligations? I have briefly illustrated how differing philosophies of justice contribute to discourse on revitalization in DTES public spaces. An in depth exploration would more fully reveal the influence of these philosophies.

**Reconciling Planning and Population Health**

My research highlights the challenges and potential for integrating the fields of urban planning and population health into healthy urban planning. There are several ways these two fields may work together to promote health such as creating spaces for recreation or improving access to services. But in encouraging coordination, it is possible to overlook the distinct perspectives of the two fields. Contemporary planning is largely focused on economic growth. This advances the idea that increasing overall welfare will create just outcomes for society. Researchers and planners have done much work to create more distributive justice in planning, but this has largely been undertaken in terms of planning processes and not necessarily planning outcomes (Fainstein, 2010).

Population health is similarly concerned with improving overall health, but puts a salient focus on reducing inequalities. This entails paying particular attention to groups who may face adverse effects amidst overall improvements in health (Frohlich & Potvin, 2008). It also requires that interventions aim to improve living conditions (as opposed to changing individual behaviours) and reduce inequitable distribution of resources (McLaren, McIntyre, & Kirkpatrick, 2010). In this way, population health works from a philosophy of distributive justice. It aims to reduce inequalities in health outcomes and puts more emphasis on equity than does planning.
Researchers have called for greater integration between urban planning and public health actions (Corburn, 2009; Northridge, Sclar, & Biswas, 2003). But how can population health's focus on inequalities be better incorporated into planning? Corburn (2009) identifies a number of ways that the politics of planning must be changed in order to address the social determinants of health. These include focusing on prevention of ill health, incorporating many types of knowledge, and considering the interrelationships between physical, social, and political aspects of a place. What I would add to this is ensuring a shared vision. Population health aims to improve the wellbeing of people, particularly those most disadvantaged, and planning aims to increase the prosperity of places. Integrating these two fields means determining what improvements to places will improve living conditions for all people without contributing to increased inequality. This entails more than picking out individual actions that are beneficial to the aims of both fields like installing a bicycle lane or creating a community art program. Rather, it is important to consider the broader vision these actions work towards and ask whether they promote equity.

The World Health Organization Commission on Social Determinants of Health has named neighbourhoods as a key influence on people's health (Commission on Social Determinants of Health, 2008). The commission's recommendations include not only urban planning and design actions such as encouraging walking and access to nutritious food, but also advocate for change in the relationships and power structures that govern urban settings. Economic growth alone is not sufficient to improve urban health. Urban governance that gives poorer residents a greater share in decision making and aligns interventions with a community’s expressed needs is a way to enable people to take greater control over their health (Knowledge Network on Urban Settings, 2008). Conversely, the revitalization discourse I have analyzed places high priority on economic development and does little to redistribute power. Thus its
potential to create meaningful change in health equity is limited.

**Future Directions**

My research points to a number of directions for research, urban planning, population health practice, and neighbourhood groups. Urban population health researchers can study the impacts of urban planning on different population groups. This will highlight the existence of inequity and help to come up with actions that are effective in reducing inequalities. Urban planners may be able to adapt the research approach I have taken to develop tools for future planning in urban public spaces. One such tool might include interviews that ask residents how they use public spaces, where they feel welcome or unwelcome in their neighbourhood, what they appreciate in public spaces and what they would like to see changed. A deliberate effort to hold such interviews with low-income or otherwise marginalized residents would be essential in advancing equitable planning for public spaces.

Population health and urban planning practitioners must recognize where they can work together and where their goals diverge. Shared goals must involve not only short-term actions, but also a long-term vision for a neighbourhood and its residents. In order to reduce inequalities, goals of a healthy community may need to be decoupled from goals of economic development. In planning for DTES public spaces, this might involve changing by-laws to allow for informal street vending, providing parks and sidewalk benches independent of contributions from developers or businesses, actively promoting services for residents instead of visitors (e.g., grocery stores, doctor’s offices), or supporting community programs in their own right (not as a means to mitigate the impacts of development). At the same time, healthy community goals may be better promoted within economically motivated actions (e.g., by requiring businesses to provide public washrooms or telephones).
Finally, all groups interested in improving a local community’s health must engage in a frank discussion of what people consider to be a good course of action for a neighbourhood. Ignoring differences in power and interests may be a means of avoiding conflict; however, explicitly acknowledging the different values people place on welfare, freedom, and fairness is a more realistic approach. It may open windows for new debate on what a health in a neighbourhood means and how to achieve it.
References


City of Vancouver (2010). *Historic Area Height Review: Conclusions and Recommendations.*


approach to discourse helps reveal the spatial re-ordering of street sex work. 
*Australian Geographer, 35*(2), 185-192.


## Appendix A - Details on Planning Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Name</th>
<th>Document Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>DTES Revitalization Program</td>
<td>Great Beginnings: Old Streets, New Pride</td>
<td>July 28, 2008</td>
<td>This three page document provides a framework for the Great Beginnings project including its background, goal, objectives, strategies, approach, project principles, staff working principles, and project themes. The project is a city initiative supported by $10 million over 3 years from the provincial government.</td>
<td>Great Beginnings encompasses several programs including a greening project in Blood Alley, mural projects, an annual festival, DTES neighbourhood maps, and new façades, awnings.</td>
<td><a href="http://vancouver.ca/greatbeginnings/n/a">http://vancouver.ca/greatbeginnings/n/a</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Civil City</td>
<td>Project Civil City</td>
<td>November 2006</td>
<td>This 30 page document is a proposal from then Mayor Sam Sullivan to implement the Project Civil City program to reduce disorder in Vancouver. The document includes an introduction, a list of ideas for initiatives, a section on the root causes of disorder, and the findings from public consultation on disorder.</td>
<td>Project Civil City was adopted by city council in December 2006 and a project commissioner was hired on four goals: eliminating homelessness, eliminating the open drug market, eliminating aggressive panhandling, and increasing public satisfaction with the City's handling of public nuisance complaints. The program was in place for a couple of years and phased out when a new Mayor was elected in 2008.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.samsullivan.ca/pdf/project-civil-city.pdf">http://www.samsullivan.ca/pdf/project-civil-city.pdf</a></td>
<td><a href="http://vancouver.ca/commission/files/DTES/pdf/ProjectCivilCityPlan-R1.pdf">http://vancouver.ca/commission/files/DTES/pdf/ProjectCivilCityPlan-R1.pdf</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Victory Square Policy Plan</td>
<td>Victory Square Policy Plan</td>
<td>July 19, 2005</td>
<td>A 58 page document created by Central Area Planning. It was developed by city staff working with community stakeholders.</td>
<td>The plan includes provisions for urban design, land use, building height, density, heritage policies, health and social services, public realm, and economic revitalization.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td><a href="http://vancouver.ca/commission/files/DTES/pdf/VictorySquarePolicyPlan-R1.pdf">http://vancouver.ca/commission/files/DTES/pdf/VictorySquarePolicyPlan-R1.pdf</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Project SWEEP (Solid Waste Engineering Enforcement Program)</td>
<td>November 29, 2006</td>
<td>This 9 page report from engineering services was included as an appendix in an administrative report on Street Cleaning Initiatives. It reports on a pilot project that involved intensive street and alleyway cleaning and garbage collection on a few blocks in the DTES. It recommends to continue parts of the project and discontinue others.</td>
<td>The program involved extra garbage collection services, on-call garbage collection for large items, and a partnership with a social enterprise in the DTES for residents to work cleaning sidewalks, alleys, and public spaces. The extra collection was not continued but the social enterprise is ongoing.</td>
<td><a href="http://vancouver.ca/cityclerk/cclerk/20061214">http://vancouver.ca/cityclerk/cclerk/20061214</a></td>
<td><a href="http://vancouver.ca/cityclerk/documents/csb22.pdf">http://vancouver.ca/cityclerk/documents/csb22.pdf</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>SWEEP street cleaning initiative Final Report</td>
<td>CD-1 Zoning and Amenity Bonus: Woodward's Site</td>
<td>February 17, 2006</td>
<td>This 18 page documents outlines recommendations for rezoning of the Woodward's site to allow for a mixed-use development including condo towers, public spaces, and space for non-profit offices, institutional use, and retail stores.</td>
<td>The Woodward's site was bought by the City of Vancouver in 2003. A developer was chosen to complete the redevelopment, which opened in 2009.</td>
<td><a href="http://vancouver.ca/cityclerk/cclerk/20061228">http://vancouver.ca/cityclerk/cclerk/20061228</a></td>
<td><a href="http://vancouver.ca/woodwards/documents/p22.pdf">http://vancouver.ca/woodwards/documents/p22.pdf</a></td>
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<td>DTES Revitalization/Vancouver Agreement Combination</td>
<td>Policy Report: Urban Structure - Carrall Street Greenway  Concept Design</td>
<td>April 12, 2005</td>
<td>This 13 page policy report is addressed to the City of Vancouver Committee on Planning and Environment. It describes the concept design for the Carrall Street Greenway project, which would renovate Carrall Street and create a widened sidewalk as well as bicycle lanes. It includes information on the surrounding area and reports on community consultations on the project. Its authors are two city planners, and the report comes from planning and engineering services in consultation with the manager of parks and recreation.</td>
<td>The Carrall Street Greenway construction began in 2010 and</td>
<td><a href="http://vancouver.ca/eng2/str">http://vancouver.ca/eng2/str</a> streets/greensways</td>
<td><a href="http://vancouver.ca/city/carral/cyclerc/ccc/index.htm/20050428/pf4.pdf">http://vancouver.ca/city/carral/cyclerc/ccc/index.htm/20050428/pf4.pdf</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>DTES Public Realm Program Plan</td>
<td>DTES Public Realm Program Plan</td>
<td>July 2006</td>
<td>This 70 page report provides a plan for a program of community-based activities, community art, festivals, and events in 11 parks and open spaces in the DTES. It was prepared by consultants based on a community consultation process and was presented to the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation and the City of Vancouver.</td>
<td>The public realm program plan was not implemented, but some of its recommendations were incorporated into the Great Beginnings project.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<td>Hastings Street Renaissance Program</td>
<td>Hastings Street Renaissance Program an Update and Funding Request</td>
<td>November 3, 2009</td>
<td>This 12 page administrative report describes the Hastings Renaissance program and requests funding to continue the program. The document describes the program, which provides façade improvement grants to non-profit organizations that are tenants or future tenants of storefronts on Hastings St.</td>
<td>The program was developed in order to fill vacant storefronts and improve the look of the streetscape. It started with a pilot project and has since continued.</td>
<td><a href="http://vancouver.ca/cyclerc/ccc/index.htm/20081117/documents">http://vancouver.ca/cyclerc/ccc/index.htm/20081117/documents</a></td>
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<td>Vancouver Agreement</td>
<td>Business Plan for a &quot;Dumpster Free Alley&quot;</td>
<td>October 14, 2005</td>
<td>This 29 page report is a business plan prepared by consultants (Ference Weicker &amp; Company) for the Gastown BIA. It includes an executive summary, description of dumpster-free waste management, and a pilot project for a dumpster-free system in Gastown. The business plan was completed, but there is no indication in Vancouver Agreement reports that the project was carried out.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<td>Integrated Health &amp; Enforcement DTES Strategy</td>
<td>Briefing Note Integrated Health &amp; Enforcement Strategy</td>
<td>September 27, 2004</td>
<td>This 6 page briefing note provides background on health and safety in the DTES, introduces projects to work on dismantling the open drug scene. It also recommends funding for the projects. The supervised injection site project was extended and is ongoing today.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Powell Street Open Windows Design Project</td>
<td>Powell Street Open Windows Design Project A tool kit of design ideas for the Strathcona BIA</td>
<td>January 18, 2006</td>
<td>This 27 page report was prepared by an urban consultant under a project managed by the City of Vancouver planning division. It includes a description of Powell Street and a number of recommendations for sidewalk enhancements, street furniture, security measures for storefronts, and designs for facades. The project was completed in order to provide ideas for the Strathcona BIA and local business owners to improve the design of streetscapes and facades on Powell Street</td>
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Appendix B – Excerpts from Planning Documents

Project Civil City:

This initiative is designed to restore the public’s sense of personal safety, promote civic pride and encourage personal responsibility through incremental change.

GOALS

1. Eliminate homelessness, with at least a 50% reduction by 2010.
2. Eliminate the open drug market on Vancouver’s streets, with at least a 50% reduction by 2010.
3. Eliminate the incidence of aggressive panhandling with at least a 50% reduction by 2010.
4. Increase the level of public satisfaction with the City’s approach to public nuisance and annoyance complaints by 50% by 2010.

In undertaking this initiative, Mayor Sullivan and Councillor Capri consulted with key stakeholder groups, talked with concerned citizens and looked at research from community and business organizations in order to gain a better understanding of the problem and determine short-term and long-term solutions.

Throughout Vancouver, citizens believe that our City, Provincial and Federal governments must adopt a new approach in order to push beyond “band aid” solutions, and toward lasting and permanent change. This initiative is designed to restore the public’s sense of personal safety, promote civic pride and encourage personal responsibility through incremental change. The primary focus of Project Civil City is to ensure that Vancouver remains one of the best cities in the world to live, work, visit, play and invest.

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

The development of this proposal involved a number of steps including:

1. Mayor Sullivan and Councillor Kim Capri hosted a series of roundtable discussions with a broad range of local businesses, citizens and community stakeholders from May to November 2006. More than 75 community leaders participated in the dialogue.
2. A non-scientific web-based survey was posted at www.mayorsamsullivancity.ca to gather feedback from citizens.
3. The Mayor consulted with local service providers, the police, the local health authority as well as representatives from senior levels of government.

This document provides a general overview of some of the specific issues and challenges that were identified, and sets out possible steps and actions for City Council to consider moving forward. The findings set out in this report are based on analysis of the feedback received through the stakeholder and citizen consultation process.
Great Beginnings:

Great Beginnings: Old Streets, New Pride

Project Framework - DRAFT

July 28, 2008

Background

"Great Beginnings" is an initiative developed by the City of Vancouver to celebrate British Columbia’s 150th Anniversary. The Province is supporting this initiative by $10 million over three years to celebrate the history, heritage and culture of Vancouver’s first urban areas including the neighbourhoods of Gastown, Chinatown, Jap and Strathcona. The provincial investment will be used to attract other investors over the next three years, with the aim of creating a genuine legacy of improved p social, and economic conditions, as well as seeding future opportunities.

Vancouver’s founding neighbourhoods were, and are, lively and dynamic social spaces. The initiative aims to restore their original public appeal by creating attractive welcoming physical environments through improvements to streets, buildings and public spaces. It will also establish a foundation for improvements to the social environment through facilitating arts and cultural activities, celebrations and street festivals for residents and visitors alike.

This Project Framework includes a program goal, objectives, approach and an initial list of potential projects that will complement on-going City and community init and create new opportunities in these historic urban areas over the next three years.

The benefits of the initiative will be direct, immediate, and visible. Project activities will focus on practical and tangible actions that build community capacity through enhanced employment opportunities for local residents, artists, tradespeople and others. The project seeks to foster community cohesion and participation and inte between residents, businesses, and visitors to this area of the City.

This initiative is being launched concurrently with other social support enhancements recently introduced by the provincial government, including the development of social housing units and improvements to mental health and addiction services throughout Vancouver. The Great Beginnings Project will also be coordinated with act being undertaken through the City of Vancouver’s Inner-city Inclusivity Commitments for the 2010 Winter Games, Project Civil City, and the Vancouver Agreement.

A. Goal

To enhance the community pride, liveability and public appeal of Vancouver’s first urban areas through improvements to the physical, social, and economic envir

B. Objectives

1. To revitalise the founding neighbourhoods of Vancouver by restoring the unique historic nature of their streets, buildings, and public spaces.
2. To celebrate the people, cultures, and histories that shaped the great beginnings of our city and province, and created the vibrant and diverse communities of
3. To create safe and inviting places where residents and visitors can live, work, shop and socialize in this vibrant urban area.
Victory Square Policy Plan:

Executive Summary

The Victory Square area - Hastings and Pender Streets bounded by Richards and Carrall and up
Beatty Street from Pender to Dunsmuir - was part of Vancouver’s main downtown commercial
district for the first half of the 20th century. The city’s major department stores and numerous retail
shops, banks, commercial services and restaurants were all once located in the area. Victory
Square was also home to many resource industry workers who lived in residential hotels and
rooming houses in the off season.

As Vancouver grew, the focus of both commercial and retail activity shifted south towards
Georgia Street and westward to Granville and Burrard Streets. By the late 1980’s, the decline in
the area was evidenced by an increasing number of store closures and which culminated in the
closing of the Woodward’s building in January of 1993. The result was a further loss of business
activity, increasing storefront vacancies, deterioration of older buildings and a visible lack of
prosperity.

In response to concerns raised by residents, property owners and downtown business people, in
1993 City Council instructed staff to work with community stakeholders to prepare a Concept
Plan for the area. A draft plan was completed in 1997 and referred to public discussion in
conjunction with five other policy reports. This current version of the Concept Plan is updated to
reflect changes that have taken place since the first draft was produced.

The primary objective of planning efforts in Victory Square have been to develop a strategy for
revitalization that will bring back investment without displacing low-income residents or
compromising the heritage value of the area. Creating this strategy has required extensive
discussions with the community and the development industry, detailed analyses of the existing
physical and social environments, as well as the integration of proposed policies with other city-
wide initiatives.

Based on the analysis and input received, it was concluded that Victory Square can not
compete with Downtown South, Coal Harbour or False Creek North for the same high-rise
condominium market. Victory Square must build its own distinct “niche” if it is to be successful. At
the core of the strategy is the realization that the future revitalization of the economic, physical
and social environments should be based on the unique characteristics of the Victory Square
area, including:

- the predominantly low- to mid-rise buildings;
- the large number of heritage and character buildings;
- well-known attractions such as Victory Square Park and Woodward’s;
- the diversity of land uses;
- the long standing low-income community;
- the strategic location between the downtown business district and the historic
  precinct; and,
- the emerging arts, culture and educational activities.

This realization resulted in the development of a Concept Plan based on four key planning
principles:

- retention of the area’s heritage buildings, scale and character;
- improvement of existing low-income housing;
- revitalization without displacing low-income residents; and
SUMMARY

There are increasing demands being placed on street cleaning services provided by the City and the services provided under a grant to Save Our Living Environment (SOLE). Many of these demands are a result of poor social conditions in specific areas of the city such as the Downtown Eastside (DTES). These conditions necessitate a disproportionate amount of street cleaning resources be allocated to a specific and concentrated area of the City.

Over the last year staff have implemented a number of progressive actions to improve the level of cleanliness of Vancouver’s streets and lanes. These initiatives include, but are not limited to:

- The formation of the Clean Streets Task Force - a cross departmental team of staff that focus on finding creative solutions to lane cleanliness issues.
- The implementation of project SWEEP (Solid Waste Engineering Enforcement Program), a pilot lane cleaning, education and enforcement project focussing on the DTES, for the primary purpose of determining what resources are required to maintain the most problematic lanes in the City to a high standard sanitary condition comparable to other lanes.
- Improving our regulatory approach with commercial containers located on City street right-of-way (primarily lanes), including testing new enforcement tactics (e.g. impounding non-permitted bins) and more stringently enforcing the requirements set out in the Solid Waste By-law and commercial Garbage Container License agreement.
- Amending the Solid Waste By-law to enable the City Engineer to cancel or transfer commercial container permits on notice, for the implementation of an alternative waste collection system over the traditional use of high volume containers (dumpsters).
- Assisting Vancouver Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) with investigating and analysing options for the improved management of commercial waste, including alternative collection systems similar to what has been implemented in Pioneer Square in Seattle, and in downtown Kelowna.

To continue maintaining a high standard of service and to realize further improvements with street cleanliness, this report proposes that for 2007:

- SOLE be provided with a grant, similar to the last eight years, to fund micro-level street cleaning services in the DTES that supplement services provided by the City.
- Staff seek expressions of interest from qualified social enterprises for additional, supplemental street cleaning services, with funds allocated from the 2007 Street Cleaning Operations operating budget.
- Staff develop a strategic plan, with the assistance of a consultant, covering street cleaning operations, and education and enforcement opportunities, and that two work program elements of that plan include scoping out the costs, benefits and resources required to implement a city-wide anti-litter campaign and a bulky waste collection program.
- Staff continue to provide assistance to the Vancouver business community and liaise with private sector waste hauling companies and non-profit social enterprises, such as United We Can, for the purpose of developing alternative commercial waste collection opportunities in the City.
• the creation of a diversely mixed-use project including a significant component of non-profit space to address unique needs in the community; and

• the provision of a major public gathering place, both indoors and outdoors, available to all citizens and useful for the activities and events that contribute to a healthy community culture.

The amenity qualities and provisions are essential because the Woodward’s development is expected to provide a coherent, complete, attractive and useful neighbourhood centre for the surrounding communities of the Downtown Eastside, Gastown, Chinatown and Victory Square. This neighbourhood centre is sorely needed to meet currently unfulfilled day-to-day service needs and also to offer a “crossroads” and meeting place for the wide diversity of people who live and work nearby. This neighbourhood centre will then be a key component in the civic program for revitalization of this part of the city.

An unusually diverse and rich mixture of uses is essential. This includes commercial services (especially food and household provisions). It also includes social and community services, most of which are of a non-profit nature. It includes both market and non-market housing and the university campus and government offices that will energize the place and provide jobs and learning opportunities. Such a mix goes far beyond the expectations and economic capacity of a typical project and it consumes space normally reserved for profitable uses. For example, many retail uses would normally be seen as marginally viable in this area, especially those which occupy a larger floor area. Also, the proportion of non-profit uses is significantly greater than typical. Moreover, the wide array of uses focused on this one limited site, to make the neighbourhood centre work, necessitates building forms and arrangements that are less than optimal from a structural, circulation, access and marketability perspective. Nonetheless, the intensive mix of uses, including many community uses, must be facilitated or the neighbourhood centre simply will not come together.

Parallel to the mix of uses, the neighbourhood centre needs ample provisions for community gathering, events and activities arranged so as to facilitate people meeting one another. In this neighbourhood, a private mall will not do. Public access must be secured for all people and a capacity for programming must be in place. Also, because of the intensity of surrounding development and the modest amount of other public gathering places nearby, an unusually spacious area is essential, including both open and enclosed areas.

The proposed public open spaces on the site described earlier, including outdoor plaza and green space, public atrium, forecourt and mews, have a combined area of about 3 251 m² (35,000 sq. ft.), representing about a third of the site area. Given the size of the site, this scale of public space goes well beyond what would normally be expected of a private development as do the encumbrances necessary to guarantee public access and use to the plaza and green space and atrium which will be secured as public amenity space. The construction, delivery and maintenance of this space is clearly challenging to the economics of the project and exacerbates the problems of mixed-use outlined above.

5. Amenity Bonus: To facilitate the extraordinary mix of uses in this project and secure the public amenity spaces to manifest the neighbourhood centre will require an amenity bonus. The normal economics of the project cannot carry such obligations as they go well beyond what is necessary for the viable scheme that would have occurred without this array of public demands.
Carrall Street Greenway:

There are many public spaces and parks along Carrall Street serving a very diverse population.  
- Crab Park north of the rail tracks is mainly used by local residents. It can be accessed through the Main Street Overpass.
- In Gastown, Maple Tree Square is a major destination with the statue of Gassy Jack, and Blood Alley Square is a place where the local community organizes events.
- Pigeon Park is valued by many area residents as a local park and as an intimate, outdoor neighbourhood ‘living room.’
- Sun Yat-Sen Courtyard at the Chinese Cultural Centre is a key gathering place for Chinatown where the annual Chinatown Arts and Cultural Festival take place.
- Andy Livingstone Park is frequented by both local residents and visitors.
- A waterfront park (the future extension of Creekside Park) will be built on the east side of Carrall Street, south of Pacific Boulevard, once Concord Pacific proceeds with land development west of Carrall Street.

Carrall Street as a Greenway

The Vancouver Greenways Plan, approved by Council in 1995, includes the implementation of routes in the downtown forming part of the City Greenway network. Greenways are multi-use routes that provide greater priority to pedestrians and cyclists while providing opportunities for community development and enhanced green spaces. The plan identified a greenway from False Creek to Burrard Inlet between Cambie and Main Streets.

In 2002, Council adopted the Downtown Transportation Plan (DTP), which includes various goals and objectives, many of which focus on increased liveability in the downtown, the promotion of walking and cycling, and the creation of streetscapes conducive to pedestrians. The DTP specifically identifies Carrall Street as the preferred north-south greenway connection across the “neck” of the downtown peninsula, linking a series of parks, plazas and historic sites from Gastown, Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside and Chinatown (Figure 1).
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Situated on Vancouver’s downtown peninsula, the Downtown Eastside (DTES) encompasses the neighbourhoods of Victory Square, Gastown, Chinatown, the Main and Hastings corridor, Strathcona and Japantown/Oppenheimer. The DTES is a mixed income community of families and singles, seniors, housing, businesses, community and social agencies and industry. The DTES has 16,000 residents, one third of which are of Asian heritage. The DTES is also home to 70% of Vancouver’s First Nation’s community.

Once the commercial heart of Vancouver, the DTES has been in economic decline since the closure of the interurban rail and ferry transportation system in the community. This decline was further aggravated by the closure of the historic Woodward’s building. Public open spaces in the area have shared in the general neighbourhood decline.

Its inner city location also presents the DTES with its own set of social problems – including pressures from street level sex trade, drug wars, addiction, sexual predators, crime, gentrification, land speculation, health crises, stereotyping, stigmatization and poverty. With the dubious distinction of Canada’s lowest income postal code and its history of being treated as a “dumping ground” for the larger city’s social problems, the DTES community is concerned about its future. These problems are aggravated by external and internal dissent over solutions.

Despite these challenges, DTES residents are rich in achievements against adversity. Its residents value their diversity and heritage. The DTES is also a community which has a long history of fighting for social justice and for the future of the neighbourhood. Out of years of struggle against injustice, demolition and incompatible new construction have emerged distinctive DTES neighbourhoods and engaged civic minded residents with a sense of identity and pride rarely found in other communities.

2. The DTES is in transition. Public and private sector investment in the redevelopment of the Woodward’s Building and a civic incentive program intended to retain and upgrade the heritage building stock have sparked a resurgence of investment interest.

3. Current civic policy, as expressed in the “Downtown Eastside Economic Revitalization Plan” and funding mechanisms such as the “Vancouver Agreement” (VA) views this transition as a way to extend a revitalization plan without displacement of the low-income community. “Revitalization without Displacement” means that new DTES residents can live and invest in the area in a way that works with existing residents and with intent to improve conditions for all. This approach emphasizes the importance of working with new comers and trying to re focus private and public investment in ways that benefit the low income population. The opportunities to help plan and perform in the public space relates to the VA’s health, employment and public safety objectives.

This said, “without Displacement” does not mean that all existing behaviours will remain especially in the public sphere. This is particularly true of drug dealing and use.

This policy framework articulates a vision of a community which renews itself by drawing upon local creative resources. This, it is recognized, is the best way to create a unique and vital urban experience, and in the process engage those local residents and marginalized people with the least power to resist or benefit from large scale development.
SUMMARY

The Hastings Street Renaissance Program was developed as a pilot strategy to address the vacant storefront and deteriorating building stock issues in tangible, visible, and timely ways. This program intends to improve the streetscape, daylight existing businesses and help to establish new businesses, effectively re-use existing (and otherwise deteriorating) building stock, and secure affordable spaces to foster community-based economic development.

The Program provides a façade improvement grant to a non-profit organisation that will be the future tenant for the vacant storefront or that will be the project manager who liaises with future tenants. With $300,000 from the Great Beginnings Program, the City has provided up to a maximum of $50,000 per façade to cover façade renovation costs for six buildings in the first phase of the Program. Tenants of the buildings were able to use the City’s investment in façade upgrades as leverage to negotiate more favourable terms in their lease agreements with property owners.

To date, the direct benefits of this Program are six storefronts with upgraded facades and new retail tenants. The majority of those support arts-based businesses: theatres, studios, or galleries, capitalizing on the momentum built by the local DTES arts and culture community over the years. These projects served a need that is pressing in the community for affordable spaces for artists to operate theatres, production studios, and storefront galleries. The program also has potential for direct benefits over the medium-term. Together, these storefronts will start to make a positive impact on the overall streetscape by bringing more retail activity to the area and by improving the facades of buildings that had formerly appeared derelict.

To date, the Program has delivered tangible and timely results along a five-block stretch of Hastings Street, with a highly visible outcome and a positive impact on the DTES more broadly. Momentum is now building with the Program’s initial success. There are several new opportunities to upgrade façades and secure tenancies in other vacant storefronts. There is growing interest to extend this Program both along Hastings Street and in Chinatown, especially among social enterprises and small-scale local servicing businesses.

Staff recommend a Phase II Hastings Street Renaissance Program to activate six additional storefronts along Hastings Street that, it is anticipated, will deliver a more comprehensive suite of goods and services for local residents and that will complement the draw of regional customers to this area for locally produced arts and cultural products. This program will be among other major City capital initiatives in the area aimed at bringing vitality back to Hastings Street, including social housing projects (the Lux Housing project, Pennsylvania Hotel), the Woodward’s development and Carrall Street Greenway. Staff also recommend launching a similar program for Chinatown. The Chinatown Active Storefront Program will focus on recruitment of new businesses, especially businesses that are more dependant on the unique character and identity of the area.

BACKGROUND

The Great Beginnings Program is an initiative developed by the City of Vancouver to celebrate British Columbia’s 150th anniversary in 2008. The provincial government is supporting this initiative by investing $10 million over three years, from 2008 to 2010, to celebrate the history, heritage, and culture of Vancouver’s first urban areas, including the neighbourhoods of Gastown, Chinatown, Japantown, and Strathcona.
Business Plan for a “Dumpster Free Alley”:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BENEFITS OF A DUMPSTER FREE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Gastown area and the Gastown Business Improvement Association (BIA) has long been faced with a significant garbage problem within its alleyways. On a daily basis, the alleys have overflowing dumpsters with garbage strewn beside the dumpsters and in the lanes. Businesses, property owners and tenants express great frustration with the issue and, despite the best efforts of the City of Vancouver, the Gastown BIA, United We Can, private operators, and others in the area, the perception is that conditions are continuing to worsen.

The Gastown Business Improvement Association is proposing to undertake a Pilot Project to develop and assess a new waste management program. Under this new program, dumpsters would be eliminated from alleys and replaced with a dumpster-free management system. The system would market and sell garbage and recycling bags to local property owners and tenants, regularly pick up the filled bags and cardboard on a scheduled basis complemented by an on-call service, and transport the materials to disposal areas or services for recyclable materials (e.g. cans, bottles, plastics, paper and cardboard). The key objectives of moving to a dumpster-free system are:

- To enhance the attractiveness and functionality of alleyways for pedestrian, commercial and/or recreational activities;
- To reduce the crime, noise, disorder and health risks associated with dumpsters and garbage;
- To enhance the overall livability of the Gastown area;
- To create jobs and opportunities for inner city residents, and
- To promote an effective waste management and recycling system to the benefit of the community.

The vision of the project is to restore the lanes to a functioning, clean pedestrian environment, creating a healthier and friendlier environment that can be enjoyed by residents, businesses and visitors to the area.

PURPOSE OF THE PILOT PROJECT

Dumpster-free systems have been successfully introduced in other communities, most notably Seattle and San Francisco. While Gastown can and will build on the experience of these other communities, unique local issues such as the prevalence of dumpster diving and the impact of the drug trade mean that we cannot simply reproduce a model that has been developed elsewhere. We will need to develop a made in Vancouver solution.

The purpose of the Pilot Project will be to develop and refine a dumpster-free model that is appropriate for Vancouver and then assess its feasibility, effectiveness and financial viability. The Pilot will also provide a basis for demonstrating how such a system works and the resulting benefits that can be enjoyed by property owners and tenants. If the Pilot Project is successful, it is anticipated that the model will be rolled-out to other areas within Gastown as well as to other neighbourhoods in Vancouver.

This document outlines the business plan that will govern the development and implementation of the Pilot Project including its possible transition to an ongoing service. During the course of preparing the business plan, we interviewed representatives from other jurisdictions that have implemented similar programs, conducted a field trip to Seattle, Victoria and Granville Island to view existing systems, conducted interviews with a sample of 60 owners and tenants from the proposed Pilot area, and
INTEGRATED HEALTH & ENFORCEMENT DTES STRATEGY 2003
1. Vancouver Supervised Injection Site Scientific Research Pilot Project
2. Enhanced DTES Policing Strategy
3. Expanded Addiction Treatment to Support the Supervised Injection Site Scientific Research Pilot Project

BACKGROUND: HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE DTES

- The Greater Vancouver Downtown Eastside (DTES) community consists of five smaller areas, including Gastown, Chinatown, Victory Square, Strathcona and an area commonly referred to as the Downtown Eastside. According to the 2001 census data, there are approximately 16,000 individuals living in the DTES, of whom 61% are male and 39% are female.
- The City of Vancouver population is approximately 580,000 with a wide range of addiction issues, e.g. tobacco and alcohol abuse and dependence as well illicit drug abuse and dependence. In 2002, 8,200 people accessed treatment services in Vancouver.
- There are an estimated 8,000 injection drug users in the City of Vancouver. An estimated 4,700 people who inject drugs reside among 10 city blocks within the Downtown Eastside.
- There is an infrastructure of illegitimate businesses that promote and perpetuate a dangerous cycle of drugs and crime in the DTES. The businesses include poorly operated licenses businesses, convenience stores, pawnshops and restaurants. Current data reveals that there are as many forty-seven (47) problem pawn shops and second hand stores; more than a dozen (12) problem hotels; numerous number of convenience stores. As many as 20% of the individuals accessing health services report being the victim of a violent crime in the past year. The cycle of illegitimate businesses, illegal drug trade, sex trade, violent crime and property in the DTES continues to cost the city and its residents enormous economic and personal costs.
- Further to the cycle of illegal business and violence, there is an intricate network of trafficking, gang turf wars, bad debts and sex trade operating in the DTES. Property crime continues to be an issue in the community. Police refer to the “four-percenters,” a reference to the widespread belief that four or five per cent of the population is responsible for anywhere from half to 80 per cent of all property crimes. The DTES is the centre of this activity.
- The majority of individuals in the DTES who access existing services reported being unemployed (72%); having less than a Grade 12 education (58%); and being a regular drug user (86%).
- The Aboriginal population is over represented in service utilization as well as demographics in comparison to the rest of Vancouver. 9% of the population is the DTES is Aboriginal compared to 2% in the rest of Vancouver (Census, 1996). 49% of the individuals visiting the Health Contact Centre are Aboriginal. Aboriginal injection drug-users are becoming HIV-positive at twice the rate of non-Aboriginal injectors.
- Given the high rates of disease and mortality in the DTES, increased interventions are required. 1 There is a 19% HIV incidence rate among injection drug users. 2 A 90% Hepatitis C prevalence among injection drug users. The mortality rate in DTES is 2 times provincial standard. (2001). Drug-related deaths in DTES are 13 times provincial rate. (2001) and HIV-related deaths in DTES are 38 times provincial rate. (2001)
- For youth, we know that within 2 years of injecting, 25% are co-infected with HIV and HCV.

Powell Street Open Windows Design Project:

3. STUDY OBJECTIVES

The Terms of Reference for the Open Windows Design Project sets out the following as the goals and objectives for this project:

- Stimulate interest from property owners to improve their facades and protect their property, through the use of art or artistic components.
- Develop creative options for improving the street level facades by making them more attractive and welcoming, while still providing security and appropriate response to area realities.
- Support the local art community.
- Strengthen the general community by involving them in the design process.
- Stimulate discussion and options for area façade improvements and street beautification.
- Link the art community with the business community.
- Support the ongoing activities of the BIA to strengthen and protect their members, and support the revitalization of Strathcona.

The public realm is a fundamentally important aspect of this process, and ideas to strengthen it are also part of this report.

Ideas arising from the design charrette were shown to the community at a three-week long open house, thanks to the owners of 368 Powell Street. Additional public input was gathered at the open house as well. The open house served to forge links with other groups working in the community.