ON THE WRONG TRACK? PERSPECTIVES ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING
AND TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT IN METRO VANCOUVER

by

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Executive Summary

Although Vancouverism is associated with sustainability and progressive urban design, the region’s growth has been accompanied by a movement of industry and employment out of the urban core, a skyrocketing cost of living, and the displacement of many low and moderate income households. Poverty is no longer primarily an inner-city phenomenon, as the rapid suburban development and resulting dispersion of low-income residents in Metro Vancouver since 1970 suggest that affordability and security of tenure are increasingly regional problems.

A local political culture that recognizes the needs of the poor has existed in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside for many years. Thus, the neighbourhood has benefited from considerable investment in social housing and innovative health care initiatives. However, many of the region’s emerging low- and moderate-income areas have not had the same history of sympathetic city councils and strong community organizations that have been present in Vancouver’s inner city.

At best, the varied adoption of policies to reduce poverty and secure affordable housing has caused an unequal distribution of housing and services throughout Metro Vancouver. This has resulted in highly concentrated pockets of lower-cost housing, social services, and low-income people scattered throughout the region, with higher occurrences along rapid transit lines. However, the emerging model of building transit-oriented, complete, and compact communities that catalyzes redevelopment stands to further displace low-income neighbourhoods.

While the Downtown Eastside continues to be home to many low-income people, low-income neighbourhood throughout the region are increasingly vulnerable. The problems caused by regionally disparate approaches to community building are compounded as low-income people move out of the visible and heavily serviced urban core and into outlying suburban neighbourhoods that are underserved and, in some cases, at risk of displacement through transit-oriented redevelopment.
# Table of Contents

Executive Summary .................................................................................................................. ii

List of Tables .......................................................................................................................... iv

List of Figures ........................................................................................................................ v

List of Abbreviations .............................................................................................................. vi

Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................. vii

Chapter 1: Introduction ............................................................................................................ 1

1.1: Research Questions ....................................................................................................... 3

Chapter 2: Literature Review ................................................................................................... 4

2.1: Measuring Low Income ................................................................................................ 4
2.2: Metro Vancouver ........................................................................................................... 5
2.3: Transit Oriented Development and its Impacts .............................................................. 8

Chapter 3: Methodology ......................................................................................................... 10

3.1: Quantitative Analysis .................................................................................................... 10
3.2: Qualitative Analysis .................................................................................................... 12

Chapter 4: Findings ................................................................................................................. 13

4.1: Downtown Eastside ....................................................................................................... 13
4.2: City of Burnaby ............................................................................................................ 18
4.3: City of Richmond .......................................................................................................... 22
4.4: City of Surrey ............................................................................................................... 26
4.5: Tri-Cities ....................................................................................................................... 30

Chapter 5: Beyond the Downtown Eastside ........................................................................ 33

Regional Implications ............................................................................................................ 33
Recommendations .................................................................................................................. 35
Further Research .................................................................................................................... 36

Chapter 6: Conclusion ............................................................................................................ 37

Appendix A: Maps .................................................................................................................. 38

Appendix B: Interview Guide ................................................................................................ 43

Works Cited ............................................................................................................................ 44
List of Tables

Table 1: Population Change (Total and under LICO), 1991 and 2006 ................. 33
List of Figures

Figure 1: Metro Vancouver Low Income Status, Tax Filers Below LIM, 2012 ....5

Figure 2: Income Polarization, Metro Vancouver, 1976-2011 ..................... 7

Figure 3: Downtown Eastside (detail), Incidence of LICO-BT, 1991 ............. 15

Figure 4: Downtown Eastside (detail), Incidence of LICO-BT, 2006 .......... 15

Figure 5: Change in LICO Incidence, 1991-2006 ...................................... 17

Figure 6: Burnaby (detail), Incidence of LICO-BT, 2006 ......................... 19

Figure 7: Richmond (detail), Incidence of LICO-BT, 2006 ....................... 23

Figure 8: Terra Nova Single-Family Housing ........................................ 24

Figure 9: Surrey (detail), Incidence of LICO-BT, 2006 ........................ 27

Figure 10: Tri-Cities (detail), Incidence of LICO-BT, 2006 .................... 31
# List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DERA</td>
<td>Downtown Eastside Residents' Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DTES</td>
<td>Downtown Eastside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LICO</td>
<td>Low-Income Cut Off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIM(-AT)</td>
<td>Low-Income Measure (- After Tax)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBM</td>
<td>Market Basket Measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS</td>
<td>National Household Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCP</td>
<td>Official Community Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRO</td>
<td>Single Room Occupancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOD</td>
<td>Transit Oriented Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"Vancouverism" is an internationally known term that describes a new kind of city living. Vancouverism combines deep respect for nature with enthusiasm for busy, engaging, active streets and dynamic urban life. Vancouverism means tall slim towers for density, widely separated by low-rise buildings, for light, air, and views. It means many parks, walkable streets, and public spaces, combined with an emphasis on sustainable forms of transit. (City of Vancouver, 2017)

Although Vancouverism is associated with sustainability and progressive urban design, the region’s growth has been accompanied by a restructuring of the economy that has prompted the movement of industry and employment out of the urban core, a skyrocketing cost of living, and the resulting displacement of many low and moderate income households (Hutton, 2010; Ley; 2012; Peck, 2014). This issue has been showcased in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. However, this is no longer primarily an inner-city phenomenon as rapid suburban development and a resulting dispersion of pockets of low-income residents in Metro Vancouver since 1970 suggest that affordability and security of tenure are increasingly regional problems (Smith, 2012).

A local political culture that has recognized the needs of the poor has existed in the Downtown Eastside for many years. The neighbourhood has consequently benefited from considerable investment in social housing and innovative health care initiatives, including securing over 6,500 social housing units and supporting Canada’s first sanctioned supervised injection site (CBC News, 2011; City of Vancouver, 2014, p. 99). However, many of the region’s emerging low- and moderate-income areas have not had the same history of sympathetic city councils and strong community organizations that have been present in Vancouver’s inner city.

At best, the varied adoption of policies to reduce poverty and secure affordable housing has caused an unequal distribution of housing and services in Metro
Vancouver's low-income neighbourhoods. This has resulted in highly concentrated pockets of lower-cost housing, social services, and low-income people scattered throughout Metro Vancouver. While the Downtown Eastside continues to be home to many low-income people, the problem that these disparate approaches to community building have had throughout Metro Vancouver are compounded as low-income people move out of the visible and heavily serviced urban core and into outlying suburban neighborhoods.

Further, the emerging practice of zoning for transit-oriented, complete, compact communities funded by redevelopment stands to further dislocate and marginalize low-income neighbourhoods. The implications of this, discussed in this report, are well captured in the following quote:

Forget what you think you know about poverty in the Lower Mainland - it's no longer about the gritty images of the Downtown Eastside. Increasingly, the poor of Metro Vancouver are [...] scattered outside the urban core, making them all the harder to see, much less help. (Paperny, 2011)
1.1: Research Questions

This research is guided by the following questions:

R1) Regional Restructuring Trends: Where are the poor in the Vancouver metropolitan region?

R2) Policies and Programs: What planning approaches are being used to mitigate (or exacerbate) the spatial dislocation of low- and moderate-income households in these communities?

R3) Policies and Programs: How can we support the development of a regional consensus to protect existing (or develop replacement) low-income housing in neighbourhoods facing redevelopment pressures?
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1: Measuring Low Income

In research and planning, different quantitative variables are used to measure low income. Most commonly, measures of Low Income Cut Off (LICO), Low Income Measure (LIM), Market Basket Measure (MBM), average income and median income are used. As each measure uses different calculations, each is subject to different sources of error. As such, low income trends across reports and over time must be approached critically.

Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) “approximates the income levels at which families spend 20 percent [...] more than the average family on basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter” (City of Vancouver, 2014, p. 8). There are “separate cut-offs for seven sizes of family – from unattached individuals to families of seven or more persons – and for five community sizes – from rural areas to urban areas with a population of more than 500,000” (Statistics Canada, 2015). LICO was collected up to and including 2006 census, but was not collected or reported in the 2011 National Household Survey.

In the Low Income Measure (LIM), “the low income line is set at half of the population’s median income, [and is] adjusted for family size” (City of Vancouver, 2014, p. 8). It is more commonly used for international comparisons of income than LICO or MBM (Statistics Canada, 2015). Low income measure after tax is used in the analysis of low-income neighbourhoods in the 2011 National Household Survey (Statistics Canada, 2011b).

Market Basket Measure (MBM) compares family income to the cost of a basket of essential goods and services (City of Vancouver, 2014).
A Low-income Neighbourhood is defined as “a census tract where 30% or more of its residents have low income” (Statistics Canada, 2013, p. 10).

2.2: Metro Vancouver

As of 2012, Metro Vancouver CMA had the second-highest percentage (18%) of tax filers below the low-income measure in Canada (City of Vancouver, 2014). Within Metro Vancouver, the highest proportions of low income residents were identified in Richmond, Burnaby and Vancouver, while the lowest proportion of low income residents were found in Anmore and Belcarra.

![Figure 1: Metro Vancouver Low Income Status, Tax Filers Below LIM, 2012](source)

*Figure 1: Metro Vancouver Low Income Status, Tax Filers Below LIM, 2012 (Source: City of Vancouver, 2014, p. 9)*

In the Vancouver CMA, the proportion of people in low income in 2010 based on after-tax low income measure (LIM) was 17.6 per cent (Statistics Canada, 2011c). By comparison, in the City of Vancouver, the prevalence of low income in 2010 was 38.6 per cent (City of Vancouver, 2014). The prevalence of low income in 2010 based on after-tax low income measures (LIM) in the City of Burnaby was 21.0 per cent (Statistics Canada, 2011a).
By contrast, Metro Vancouver used median household income as a key measure in the development of the Regional Growth Strategy. Metro Vancouver defined low income households as those with annual incomes of less than 50% of the median household income for the region. Households with low to moderate incomes are households with incomes between 50% and 80% of regional median household income (Metro Vancouver, 2009). Note that median household income is not scaled for household size.

In 2006, the median household income for Metro Vancouver was $55,231. Therefore, a household which met Metro Vancouver’s definition of low income had an annual income of less than $27,600, or less than half the regional median. Similarly, a household which fit the definition of low to moderate income was a household with an annual income of between $27,600 and $44,200 (ibid.).

Using Metro Vancouver’s measure of median household income, 132,910 or 52.5% of households in the City of Vancouver fell within the Metro Vancouver definition of low and moderate income in 2006 (City of Vancouver, 2006).

Of note, most of the growth in the metropolitan region since the 1970s has taken place in suburban areas. Metro Vancouver’s “population more than doubled from 1971 to 2011, but this growth was almost entirely driven by the suburbs proper,” with 90% of all net metropolitan population growth and 93% of regional job growth in the suburbs (Peck, 2014). This growth, which has largely taken place in areas underserved by transit, has been coupled with a shrinking middle class and increasing regional economic polarization (ibid., 2014; Ley, 2012). Since the 1970s, there has been a consistent decline in the proportion of people earning $50,000-$100,000 per year (in 2011 dollars) (City of Vancouver, 2014). In 1976, 38 per cent of Metro Vancouverites fell into this middle-income category. However, by 2011, this number had been reduced to 29 per cent (ibid., 2014).
Research conducted by the Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership compared the spatial distribution of average individual incomes between 1970 and 2005 by census tract. In 1970, **7% of the region is shown as having incomes 29%-80% lower than the Canadian average of $5,033**. These 14 census tracts are largely clustered in Vancouver’s eastside and former industrial lands along False Creek, downtown New Westminster, Steveston, in the Colony Farm and Riverview area bordering Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam, and the census tracts encompassing First Nations communities along the Fraser River (University of Toronto Cities Centre, NDa).

By 2005, the Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership showed **121 census tracts or 29% of the region as having low (60-80%) or very low (40-60%) average individual incomes relative to the Vancouver CMA average of $36,123. Census tracts showing very low incomes are clustered in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside and Grandview-Woodlands neighbourhoods, Burnaby’s Metrotown, and downtown Richmond. Low-income census tracts are distributed throughout the central portion of the region in large sections of East Vancouver, Burnaby, New
Westminster, Surrey, Richmond, and more isolated or one-off census tracts in downtown Langley, Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam, and Capilano in North Vancouver (University of Toronto Cities Centre, NDb).

2.3: Transit Oriented Development and its Impacts

Transit-oriented development (TOD) “is a type of community development that includes a mixture of housing, office, retail and/or other amenities integrated into a walkable neighborhood and located within a half-mile of quality public transportation” (Reconnecting America, 2017). Much like Vancouverism, this form of development is often associated with mixed-use tower-and-podium-style architecture, active and engaging streets, and alternative transportation design that prioritizes walking and transit.

Research has shown that the development of rapid transit infrastructure can increases the value of adjacent land (see: Al-Mosaind’s (1993) case of Portland, OR; Armstrong Jr.’s (1994) analysis of Boston, MA; Au's (2007) case of the Millennium Skytrain Line in Metro Vancouver; Ferguson’s (1988) analysis of the Expo Skytrain Line in Vancouver; and Rybeck’s (1981) case of Washington, DC). The ability to finance transit infrastructure through redevelopment and densification along rapid transit corridors through density bonusing and value capture has also been well documented (Shinbein, 1995; Batt, 2001). This method is not currently applied in Metro Vancouver.

However, increasing land values associated with transit oriented development prompts redevelopment, which some have argued are synonymous with gentrification and displacement as lower-density neighbourhoods are redeveloped and existing residents required to move (Chapple, 2009; Jones, 2015). This trend is only exacerbated as redevelopment is used to fund transit infrastructure, rather than secure or replace affordable housing (O’Brien, 2014; TransLink, 2008). In the absence of strong affordable housing and more redistributive value capture
policies, TOD risks exacerbating displacement through what Walks (2009) has described as an economic restructuring of cities with a “reliance on market solutions to public policy problems, privileging the actions of the wealthy and the ‘talented’, the privatization of state assets and functions, and an attack on welfare state provision” (p. 346).
Chapter 3: Methodology

This study uses a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative analysis using Census Canada household income and demographic information with qualitative media analysis and expert interviews, to develop a more robust understanding of the research questions:

- Where are the poor in the Vancouver metropolitan region?
- What planning approaches are being used to mitigate (or exacerbate) the spatial dislocation of low- and moderate-income households in these communities?
- How can we support the development of a regional consensus to protect existing (or develop replacement) low-income housing in neighbourhoods facing redevelopment pressures?

This approach attempts to mitigate the limitations that using just quantitative analysis (i.e. statistical and demographic analysis), or qualitative analysis (i.e. media research or expert interviews) present. One or the other methodology does not supply all the information required to better understand the changes taking place in Metro Vancouver’s neighbourhoods.

3.1: Quantitative Analysis

For the purposes of this project, a spatial analysis of Low Income Cut Off is used to compare changes to instances of low income by census tract between 1991 and 2006. Low Income Cut Off was chosen as it was gathered during each census up to and including 2006. As outlined in section 2.1 of this report, it also provides a more context-specific understanding of lived experience of low-income as LICO is benchmarked relative to household spending as compared to median or average measures of household income.

Results will be discussed in section 4 of this report.
3.1.1: Quantitative Data Limitations

There are some considerable limitations to recent census and National Household Survey (NHS) data. The data collected in the 1996 census does not parallel that collected in the 2011 NHS, making the comparison of certain variables challenging or impossible. For example, up to and including the 2006 census, instances of low-income were measured using LICO, whereas in the 2011 NHS, this measure was replaced with the Low-Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT). LIM and LICO are not directly comparable. As such, for the purposes of this study, 1991 and 2006 spatial data are compared.

Attempting to understand neighbourhood-level trends presents challenges of scale. Census data is typically gathered and analysed at the level of the census tract, which is not always congruent with neighbourhood boundaries used in municipal planning, or in the common or social understanding of neighbourhood geographies. Analysing data at the level of the dissemination area, a spatial unit smaller than the census tract, can allow for more place-specific analysis, but low response rates can skew data trends or render results unavailable.

The way in which income is reported also presents challenges to understanding neighbourhood-level trends. For example, an increase in households with undeclared income, or a reduction in household incomes due to life changes such as retirement, appear as decreasing household incomes over time, but may not represent high levels of overall vulnerability.

In response to the limitations outlined above, this study attempts to triangulate quantitative data with quantitative feedback to provide a more robust understanding of neighbourhood trends.
3.2: Qualitative Analysis

In 2014 and 2015, eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with government planners, politicians, and leaders of local non-profit organizations. Additionally, one stakeholder workshop with ten participants was conducted to share initial findings and explore the research questions more deeply.

Interviewees were also identified using online research and snowball sampling method, in which other stakeholders identified them as experts in their field or in a topic related to these research questions (see Interview Guide in Appendix B, p. 43).

3.2.1: Qualitative Data Limitations

Just as there are limitations to census and statistical data collection, there are limitations to qualitative analysis such as subject and researcher bias, sampling method, and limited sample size due to the depth and time required to conduct and analyze interviews. In this case, in-depth interviews with planning professionals, politicians, and advocates have been used as a complement to the quantitative spatial analysis using census income and demographic information to help triangulate and further understand statistical information.
4: Findings

4.1: Downtown Eastside

Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (DTES) is Metro Vancouver’s historically low-income urban core, and is known as a community with high levels of poverty and vulnerability. The Downtown Eastside has been named “Canada’s poorest postal code,” “Vancouver’s gulag,” and a “festering sore in the heart of Vancouver,” showing that the neighbourhood is perceived regionally and nation-wide as being impoverished and vulnerable (Hopper, 2014; McMartin, 2015; Saltman, 2016; Skelton, 2010).

The community has also been the seat of some of the most critical social, housing and health policy innovations in Canada’s history. In the 1970s, a group of community advocates, who came to be known as the Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA), led the social movements that would prompt major investments in community infrastructure, affordable housing, and cutting edge health care policy initiatives for people with addictions and chronic diseases (Campbell, 2009; Boyd, 2009). DERA was just the first of many teams of city builders, including elected officials, advocates, and community organizations, that have helped create the political and social climate that recognizes and seeks to address the needs of the poor in the DTES today (see Griffin, 2016; Reimer, 2014; Sinoski, 2015).

Critically, these innovations have also included policies to preserve existing and develop new affordable housing in the DTES, such as the Single-Room Accommodation By-law, which reduces “tenant displacement and the loss of this housing stock by regulating its alteration, conversion, and demolition” (City of

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1 This moniker is variable-dependent. Per the 2011 census LIM measures, the DTES was in the top ten poorest postal codes in Canada, behind numerous other urban and First Nations reserve communities. However, the DTES does have the lowest median income in Canada (Skelton, 2010).
Vancouver, 2017). The by-law states that conditions of redevelopment include replacing the units being redeveloped; offering right of first refusal on tenancy in the new unit to previous tenants; and providing support with relocation expenses (City of Vancouver, 2015). There are similar provisions in the City’s Rental Housing Strategy, which states that housing redevelopment applications must “[provide] for the replacement of, or contribution to the replacement of, such rental housing units, on or off site, or the provision of another form of affordable housing” (City of Vancouver, 2007, p. 4).

Like other neighbourhoods around Metro Vancouver, the Downtown Eastside is now subject to extreme development pressure. Since DERA’s founding, the number of single-room occupancy (SRO) units has been steadily decreasing while the number of building permits issued in the community for market housing has been steadily increasing (Pivot Legal Society, 2006).

This study analyses the change in LICO between 1991 and 2006 by census tract to understand the changing spatial distribution of low income communities over time. Maps 1 and 2 in Appendix A (p. 38 and p. 39) show the proportion and total population under LICO in 1991 (Iwamoto, 2016 using Statistics Canada, 1991; ibid. 2006). These maps show a high concentration of instances of low income in the inner city, most notably in the Downtown Eastside, with +50% of the population or 9,000 people under LICO in 1991 (see Figure 3 on p. 15).
By comparison, in 2006, the incidence of LICO in some of the census tracts in the DTES was still +50%, but in others, it had decreased. See Figure 4 below.

Figure 3: Downtown Eastside (detail), Incidence of LICO-BT, 1991
(see Iwamoto, 2016 in Appendix A, p. 38 for full map)

Figure 4: Downtown Eastside (detail), Incidence of LICO-BT, 2006
(see Iwamoto, 2016 in Appendix A, p. 40 for full map)
While the DTES had the highest concentration of people under LICO in 1991, low-income communities existed also existed in the outer suburbs, with higher concentrations of people under LICO along the newly-constructed Expo Skytrain line.

In 1991, approximately 272,000 people or 17.4% of the Metro Vancouver region were below LICO (Statistics Canada, 1991). By 2006, about 434,000 people or 20.8% of Metro Vancouver were under LICO (ibid., 2006). This represents an average 3% increase of people under LICO regionally between 1991 and 2006.

However, the changes in LICO varied significantly between census tracts. Some census tracts, most notably those that make up Vancouver’s DTES, experienced a decrease in the proportion of people under LICO. In other cases, such as along rapid transit corridors, the proportion of people under LICO increased. The map excerpt below shows the change in incidence of LICO between 1991 and 2006. Areas shaded purple represent a decrease in the percentage of the population under LICO, while the areas shaded red represent an increase in the percentage of the population under LICO. See Figure 5 below.
In fact, the Globe and Mail noted that “the Downtown Eastside is among the areas in the city whose wealth has grown the most between 1970 and 2005, though that change has been driven by pockets of prosperity rather than an overall jump in the standard of living” (Paperny, 2011). Given the steadily increasing rates of redevelopment and static provincial social assistance or disability rates, it can be assumed that these changes are due to gentrification or redevelopment as low-income individuals move out and higher-income individuals move into the neighbourhood.

Figure 5: Change in LICO Incidence, 1991-2006 (see Iwamoto, 2016 in Appendix A, p. 42)

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2 Individuals on income assistance receive $610 per month or $7,320 per year, while people on disability receive $958 per month or $11,496 per year in support (Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, 2017).
4.2: City of Burnaby

4.2.1: Demographic Snapshot

The City of Burnaby is the third-largest municipality in Metro Vancouver. As of 2011, its population was 223,218 or 9.6% of Metro Vancouver’s population (Metro Vancouver, ND). Burnaby’s population grew 29% between 1991 and 2006, compared to the regional population growth of 33% (Statistics Canada, 1991; ibid., 2006). Burnaby’s population under LICO rose from 18.5% (28,735) in 1991 to 25.5% (51,038) in 2006, 4% higher than the average regional increase of 3% in the same timeframe, making it the municipality with the third-highest proportion and overall number of people under LICO in Metro Vancouver (ibid., 1991; ibid., 2006).

4.2.2: Where and who are the poor?

Experts reported high instances of vulnerability in the neighbourhoods of Metrotown (Maywood), Edmonds (Highgate Village), and Lougheed Town Centre (Burquitlam) (personal correspondence with Respondents B and C, 2014). This was corroborated in census data, showing high incidences of people under LICO in Metrotown (42.5% under LICO-BT in 2006) and Edmonds (29.9% under LICO-BT), and has been analysed in previous studies on this subject (Jones, 2015; Ley, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2006). This is highlighted in the map excerpt on the next page.
In Burnaby, families, children, lone-parent families, and refugees are identified as experiencing higher rates of low-income, poverty, or vulnerability. Ley and Lynch (2012) and Jones (2015) have also identified high concentrations of refugees in these neighbourhoods, emphasizing that these neighbourhoods are key landing sites for newcomers and refugees (Jones, 2015; Todd, 2010).

The 2015 BC Child Poverty Report Card notes clusters of children below the low-income measure along Kingsway, in Metrotown and Edmonds neighbourhoods (First Call BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, 2015, p. 36). At 24.4%, the child poverty rates in the Burnaby-New Westminster riding are notably higher than the national average of 19% (Verenca, 2015).
4.2.3: Policy and Politics

Experts interviewed in this study stated that prior to 1993, Burnaby prided itself on its robust non-market housing stock, considering itself a leader in the field (personal correspondence with Respondents B and C, 2014). However, there was a political shift in Burnaby’s approach to non-market housing investment after the federal government cut back housing funding programs in 1993. As responsibilities were effectively downloaded from the federal to provincial and municipal levels of government, the City of Burnaby’s approach shifted from the development of new housing towards one of advocacy for reinvestment from senior levels of government. Thus, much of Burnaby’s non-market housing stock was built before 1993 (City of Burnaby, 2016, p. 57). Only more recently, in the current time of severe housing affordability constraints and increasing political pressure, has the City of Burnaby begun to reemphasize the provision of affordable rental and other non-market housing options while continuing to leverage senior levels of government to fulfil their housing financial and regulatory mandates (Deutsch, 2016; Fuller-Evans, 2015; Verenca, 2017a; Verenca, 2017b).

This shift is partly in recognition of the reality that Metro Vancouver municipalities must face the challenges of housing affordability head-on. However, it is also likely in response to mounting pressure from community members and housing advocates to respond to redevelopment that is displacing communities. Local advocacy groups such as ACORN Burnaby have rallied in response to the rapid redevelopment and resultant loss of affordable housing units in Burnaby, particularly in the Metrotown area (ACORN Canada, 2016; Zeidler, 2016).

Jones (2015) has conducted notable research on this phenomenon, and the zoning tools that have enabled it. In 2011, the City of Burnaby passed a zoning amendment, known as ‘s’ zoning, to their 1997 Community Benefit Bonus policy that has enabled the rapid redevelopment of many aging, purpose-built rental buildings (City of Burnaby, 2010). Thus, town centres with high concentrations of
RM3, RM4, and RM5 zoning such as Metrotown and Edmonds Town Centres have been under significant development pressure as existing medium-density rental units have been redeveloped into high density condominium towers. While this trend generates Community Benefit Bonus funding, demolishing units without replacing them with similarly affordable units also causes displacement and homelessness (Zeidler, 2016). The problems of this are evident in the Community Benefit Bonus Policy and housing fund’s application: as of 2016, neither appear to have supported the replacement or addition of any affordable housing units in the Metrotown area (City of Burnaby, 2016, p. 73).

This phenomenon is especially problematic when considering the regional settlement patterns of newcomers and refugees. As noted in other studies, the high number of affordable purpose-built rental units in Metrotown and Edmonds have caused these areas to be the first place of landing for many newcomers (Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia, 2014; Jones, 2015; Ley, 2012; Todd, 2010). Approximately 6,300 rental units, or 56% of Burnaby’s rental housing stock, are in the Metrotown area (Metro Vancouver, 2012; Seccia, 2015). However, between 2011 and 2015, “18 demolition permits involving 365 purpose-built rental units were issued; 309 of these rental units were in Metrotown” (City of Burnaby, 2016, p. 39). This trend stands to significantly impact integration and service provision for community members reliant on the availability of affordable rental housing.

However, in contrast to the relative slowness to adopt practices to secure existing and build new affordable housing over the past twenty years, interviewees reported a robust long-standing practice of City-facilitated round-table discussion and collaboration among service providers in the municipality (personal communication with Respondents B and C, 2014). This has fostered a service environment that promotes dialogue and streamlined service, and has helped minimize feelings of exclusion or competition among service providers (ibid., 2014).
4.3: City of Richmond

4.3.1: Demographic Snapshot

The City of Richmond is the fourth-largest municipality in Metro Vancouver. As of 2011, its population was 190,473 or 8.2% of Metro Vancouver’s population (Metro Vancouver, ND). Richmond’s population grew 38.4% between 1991 and 2006, compared to the regional population growth of 33% (Statistics Canada, 1991; ibid., 2006). Richmond’s population under LICO grew most rapidly in Metro Vancouver between 1991 and 2006, from 15.2% (18,980) to 26.1% (45,208) (ibid., 1991; ibid., 2006). This 10.9% increase made Richmond the municipality with the second-highest proportion and third-highest overall number of people under LICO in Metro Vancouver in 2006.

4.3.2: Where and who are the poor?

Experts reported high instances of low-income in the neighbourhoods of Terra Nova, as well as homeless encampments along the south bank of the Fraser River, north of Bridgeport Road (personal correspondence with Respondent C, 2014). This was corroborated in census data, showing an above-average incidence of people under LICO in Terra Nova (35.3% or 14.5% above the regional average under LICO-BT in 2006) (Statistics Canada., 2006). The high proportion of people under LICO in Terra Nova is highlighted in Figure 7 below. However, the incidences of low income related to the homeless encampments on the banks of the Fraser River are less evident, obscured perhaps by survey non-response by transient people, or the relatively large size of the census tract.
Determining the demographic breakdown of low-income people in Richmond is challenging for the same reason, as in some areas, the statistics are not representative of true community needs (personal correspondence with Respondent C, 2014). This is most evident in the Terra Nova neighbourhood, where property values and design elements in the newer subdivision are a far cry from the form and cost of most housing available to low-income people. Homes like the single-family home in Figure 8, as illustrated in the Richmond Official Community Plan’s (OCP) Terra Nova Sub-Area Plan, had an average assessed values of over $2 million in 2016 (BC Assessment, 2017).
4.3.3: Policy and Politics

The way in which income reporting can skew demographic analysis presents significant planning and political challenges. In Richmond, the existence of low-income people and instances of vulnerability in areas such as Terra Nova has been disputed by local politicians, lending support to the argument that data-driven planning is not possible in this context (personal correspondence with Respondent C, 2014; Todd, 2015). This is particularly problematic in the Richmond City Centre area, where high concentrations of people under LICO living in condominiums and rental apartments are evident (Statistics Canada, 2006; Todd, 2015). The Richmond OCP identifies transit-oriented development opportunities around the Canada Line route (City of Richmond, 2009). However, as Figure 7 on p. 23 shows,
it is hard to differentiate between low income people at risk of displacement and residents with low Canadian income but sizable real estate assets without a supplemental analysis of housing type and tenure.

The City of Richmond does have several policies in place to protect existing and develop new affordable housing. It has a sizable housing reserve fund, which supported the development of 1,160 subsidized and low end market rental housing units between 2007 and 2014 (City of Richmond, 2015, p. 4; Metro Vancouver, 2012). As this still fell short of the targeted number of units set out by the City of Richmond and Metro Vancouver, the City of Richmond reassessed the affordable housing contribution rates to better leverage development for affordable housing delivery (City of Richmond, 2015). It is also one of a limited number of municipalities in Metro Vancouver with inclusionary zoning policies, replacement policies for loss of rental stock, and a series of publically-available reference guides to rezoning and development (Metro Vancouver, 2012; personal correspondence with Respondent C, 2014; City of Richmond, 2015; ibid., 2016).
4.4: City of Surrey

4.4.1: Demographic Snapshot

The City of Surrey is the second-largest municipality in Metro Vancouver. As of 2011, its population was 468,251 or 20.2% of Metro Vancouver’s population (Metro Vancouver, ND). Surrey’s population grew 38.4% between 1991 and 2006, compared to the regional population growth of 33%, making it the fastest-growing municipality in Metro Vancouver and one of the fastest growing municipalities in Canada (City of Surrey, 2017; Statistics Canada, 1991; ibid., 2006). The proportion of people under LICO remained relatively stable, increasingly only 2.3% from 15.7% (37,920) to 18% (70,450), resulting in a below-average proportion but second-highest total number of people under LICO in Metro Vancouver (ibid., 1991; ibid., 2006).

4.4.2: Where and who are the poor?

Experts reported high instances of low-income people in the neighbourhoods of Surrey City Centre (Whalley), Guilford Town Centre, and Newton (personal correspondence with Respondents A and D, 2014). This was corroborated in the 2006 census, which showed an above-average incidence of people under LICO in these areas (Surrey Guilford: 37.7%, Surrey Newton: 24.7%, Surrey City Centre: 27.1%) (City of Surrey, 2009; Statistics Canada, 2006). This is illustrated in Figure 9 on the next page.
Lone-parent families, children, Aboriginal people, refugees, and immigrants are overrepresented in these communities. Between 2010 and 2013, 28% of government-assisted refugees to British Columbia settled in Surrey, with most of these settling in Johnson Heights (Guilford), Whalley, and Newton (Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia, 2014, p. 17; Todd, 2010; Surrey Local Immigration Partnership, 2015, p. 2).

By comparison, Surrey’s homeless population, who totaled 403 in the 2014 regional homeless count, are frequently portrayed in the media despite making up a small proportion of Surrey’s low-income community (CBC News, 2009; Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, 2014, p. 42; Saltman, 2016).
4.4.3: Policy and Politics

Surrey received 37% of the regional share of growth between 2006 and 2011 (Metro Vancouver, ND). This rapid growth has created significant pressures on services and amenities, as lags in funding from higher levels of government have created constraints in core services such as schools and public transportation (personal correspondence with Respondent D, 2014). Issues such as school overcrowding are exacerbated as the school district, already the largest in the province, is set to receive 1,000 new students this year, including approximately 300 refugee students (CBC News, 2016a; CBC News, 2016b; CBC News, 2017).

Further, experts stated that the City of Surrey has lacked the flexibility to leverage land lift through redevelopment for community amenity funding in town centres, particularly along the Skytrain line, due to the speed of redevelopment, the perception within the development community that the market south of the Fraser River “hasn’t caught up yet,” and the relatively higher restrictions on negotiating community amenities as compared to the City of Vancouver’s ability under the Vancouver Charter3 (personal correspondence with Respondents A and D, 2014). However, the framework for redevelopment is in place. Surrey’s “City Centre vision for a transit-oriented downtown” stands to significantly alter the form, and with it the affordability, of the neighbourhood with one of the highest concentrations of low-income residents in the municipality (City of Surrey, 2017).

Meanwhile, the community outcry for social amenities such as schools, libraries, community centres and public transit is at odds with the discontent some are feeling towards the city’s most vulnerable members. In contrast to strong community advocacy for increased services for homeless and vulnerable people in Vancouver, some residents and businesses have demonstrated frustration with

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3 This limitation is not unique to the City of Surrey. It applies to all municipalities in British Columbia that are subject to the Local Government Act, whereas the Vancouver Charter grants the City of Vancouver more flexibility in some governance areas (Queen’s Printer, 2017; ibid., 2015).
homelessness encampments on 135A Street, known in Surrey as “the strip.” In response to the possibility of increasing support services in the area, the Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Association was quoted: “We don’t want to produce and reproduce the Downtown Eastside here” (Saltman, 2016).
4.5: Tri-Cities

4.5.1: Demographic Snapshot

The Tri-Cities area is made up of three municipalities and two villages: Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Anmore, and Belcarra. For this study, the Tri-Cities area is regarded as a single study area as, despite having individual municipal governments, the area is cohesive in many ways. The municipalities are linked by two branches of rapid transit (the Millennium and Evergreen Skytrain lines). It is also served by one school district (School District 43), a single chamber of commerce, and the sub-regional Tri-Cities Homelessness and Housing Task Group.

As of 2011, the population of the Tri-Cities area was 218,509, with 58% living in the City of Coquitlam (Metro Vancouver, ND). While population growth between 1991 and 2006 varied between the three major municipalities (Port Moody: 57%; Coquitlam: 34%; Port Coquitlam: 44%), each outpaced Metro Vancouver’s average regional growth of 33% (Statistics Canada, 1991; ibid., 2006). The proportion of people under LICO remained relatively stable between 1991 and 2006 (Port Moody: 0% change; Coquitlam: 6.2% increase; Port Coquitlam: 2.3% increase), representing 34,803 people or 17.4% in 2006 (ibid., 1991; ibid., 2006).

4.4.2: Where and who are the poor?

In the Tri-Cities area, low-income people are identified as living in Burquitlam, Austin Heights, and in encampments, such as in the wooded areas along the Fraser and Pitt Rivers (personal correspondence with Respondent F, 2014).

This is reflected in the spatial analysis of census data shown on the following page, which identifies above-average instances of LICO in Burquitlam and Austin Heights. However, much like the homeless encampments in Richmond along the
Fraser River, the instances of low-income in this part of the Tri-Cities area are obscured by limited data collection, relative census tract size, or both.

People identified as being at risk of housing vulnerability are low-income single people, people with specialized housing needs, such as seniors and people with disabilities, and low-income people at risk due to rising rents (personal correspondence with Respondent F, 2014; Statistics Canada, 1991; ibid., 2006).
4.4.3: Policy and Politics

While the Tri-Cities does have a sub-regional task force addressing housing and homelessness, individual municipalities have varied approaches to providing affordable housing and services for low-income people. The municipalities also have different capacities to undertake social planning work (personal correspondence with Respondent F, 2014).

This is especially challenging in the wake of the development of the Evergreen Skytrain Line. As outlined in the research on the effects of transportation infrastructure development on adjacent land values, the real estate impacts of the Evergreen Line were felt well before the line was completed (Gold, 2014; MacDonald, 2016), which prompted increased interest in the housing markets in the areas surrounding Evergreen Line stations.

Further, Respondents A, D and F acknowledged that, in all municipalities, the cost of adjacent land has been a key factor in transit infrastructure planning. In many cases, lower-value or aging housing located on these parcels of land has been redeveloped to accommodate transit development (2014). For example, an estimated 700 to 1000 rental units in Burquitlam, which accounts for 24% of Coquitlam’s designated rental housing stock, are expected to be redeveloped by 2023 as a result of the construction of the Evergreen Line (Sinoski, 2016).

While municipalities in the Tri-Cities area do have a variety of strategies and actions in place to address housing affordability, including density bonus provisions, these policies are only as affective as their application. This came under scrutiny in the Tri-Cities as 700 rental units on city-owned land that had been designated for affordable housing in Burquitlam were developed, with only 30% of the land value assigned to Coquitlam’s affordable housing reserve fund (McKenna, 2015).
5: Beyond the Downtown Eastside

5.1: Regional Implications

Between 1991 and 2006, the number of people under LICO in Metro Vancouver increased notably. However, this increase has not been distributed uniformly throughout the region. As identified in the case study analysis and outlined in Table 1 below, low-income people are dispersing out of the urban core and into communities with limited social services, precarious rental housing, and further away from city centre employment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>Population under LICO</td>
<td>Total Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vancouver CMA</strong></td>
<td>1,564,975</td>
<td>272,060 (17.4%)</td>
<td>2,083,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DTES</strong></td>
<td>15,020</td>
<td>9,715 (64.7%)</td>
<td>16,215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surrey</strong></td>
<td>241,755</td>
<td>37,920 (15.7%)</td>
<td>391,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Burnaby</strong></td>
<td>154,985</td>
<td>28,735 (18.5%)</td>
<td>200,090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Richmond</strong></td>
<td>125,225</td>
<td>18,980 (15.2%)</td>
<td>173,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tri-Cities</strong></td>
<td>140,750</td>
<td>18,760 (13%)</td>
<td>200,170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Population Change (Total and under LICO), 1991 and 2006 (Statistics Canada, 1991; ibid., 2006)*

This trend is especially problematic when considering the highly differentiated municipal approaches to the provision of social service and affordable housing among Metro Vancouver municipalities. This variability highlights the uniqueness of the City of Vancouver’s history of high profile progressive actions that have helped to create and maintain a significant stock of affordable housing, social services, and community amenities in the Downtown Eastside.
The current Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy Goal 1 is to:

[concentrate growth] in compact communities with access to a range of housing choices, and close to employment, amenities and services. Compact transit-oriented development patterns help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pollution, and support both the efficient use of land and an efficient transportation network.” (Metro Vancouver, 2015)

This parallels TransLink’s Transportation 2040 plan, which prioritizes efficient, compact transportation networks. The plan also notes TransLink’s reliance on the Regional Growth Strategy’s land use regulation and “a broad-based [transit] funding system that includes […] revenues derived from real estate” to implement the regional transportation plan (TransLink, 2008, p. 38).

However, funding transit infrastructure through real estate development is putting some low-income communities at risk, as properties are rezoned to capture increased land value created by the rapid transit infrastructure (O’Brien, 2014). This contradicts pro-poor or income-inclusive community planning as this funding model exacerbates displacement, and leaves fewer resources available for new or replacement affordable housing units.

There appears to be no consensus on how to manage this phenomenon in Metro Vancouver, or how to utilise mechanisms to mandate alternative forms of value capture that do not give preference to transit development over affordable housing. This shows significant need for clear policy discussions to minimize displacement or loss of low-income housing stock resulting from transit oriented development.
5.2: Recommendations

Several recommendations emerge from this study, including:

- Support the development of regional or provincial mechanisms to mandate or incentivize affordable housing, such as one-to-one replacement policies, to protect the existing housing stock or to ensure it is replaced by secure housing for low income residents;

- Do not fund transit expansion through anticipated increases in land values in areas near routes and surrounding stations. Rather, adopt alternate transit funding mechanisms in conjunction with policies that support the provision and maintenance of affordable housing near rapid transit;

- Develop regional or provincial value capture mechanisms to redistribute value created through transit oriented development over the long term (not just at the point of redevelopment), to be reinvested in affordable housing;

- Develop a provincial poverty reduction plan that includes targets for low-income and affordable housing preservation.
5.3: Further Research

Several areas of further research can build on this study, including:

- Demographic and income research at the dissemination area level for finer-grained understanding of localized instances of low-income populations that may be subject to displacement;

- Spatial analysis of low-income trends using different census variables, including LIM, LICO, MBM and median income to better understand strengths and limitations of different measurement tools;

- Analysis of community dislocation or movement trends, using data gained through interviews, local media, focus groups, or social service information such as the transfer of income assistance files between regional Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation offices;

- Analysis of communities with development potential (i.e. zoned for higher densities) compared with municipal development data, visual, and/or archival and satellite photography to determine buildings, blocks or units at highest risk of redevelopment;

- Feasibility study to implement best practices and opportunities related to alternative land ownership and/or governance models; transit funding; and affordable housing funding models based on value capture, land rent, and redevelopment related to transportation infrastructure development in Metro Vancouver.
6.0: Conclusion

The political and social climate in the 1970s in the Downtown Eastside enabled the creation of a policy framework that has resulted in major investments in housing and services for low-income people in the urban core. However, the number of low-income people in Metro Vancouver has increased as industry and affordable housing has decentralized, dispersing low-income communities throughout the region. This presents challenges as these communities often have fewer social services, more precarious rental housing, and highly differentiated municipal approaches to service and housing provision than the City of Vancouver.

The vulnerability of outlying low-income communities is exacerbated by Vancouverism’s principles of creating complete, compact communities close to rapid transit, as this urban form and emerging funding models trigger redevelopment in nearby neighbourhoods. The case studies contained herein show that this trend is most notable in Burnaby Metrotown, Burnaby Edmonds, Burquitlam, Surrey City Centre, and Richmond City Centre. These neighbourhoods all have high proportions of people under the low-income cut off living in rental housing, and are either already being or will likely soon be targeted for higher densities due to their proximity to rapid transit.

There appears to be no consensus on how to manage this phenomenon in Metro Vancouver, or how to mandate alternatives that do not support transit development at the cost of affordable housing. This shows a significant need for clear policy discussions on how to minimize the loss of lower-cost housing units and resulting displacement of communities associated with transit oriented development.
Appendix A: Maps

Incidence of LICO - 1991 - Metro Vancouver

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Beyond the Downtown Eastside:  
A Regional Perspective on Affordability, Displacement, and Social Justice

Interview Guide

This interview will last approximately 30 to 60 minutes, and will seek to understand your thoughts on policies affecting the low-income community in the Metro Vancouver region. As we discussed while reviewing the consent form, you may end the interview at any time, and you are under no obligation to answer any question if you would prefer not to.

I. Locating the Low-Income Community
   1. Where do low-income people reside in your municipality?
      a. PROBE: Do you think they are clustered or dispersed?
      b. PROBE: How do you define low-income?
   2. Why do you think a low-income area has developed there?
   3. What needs does the location serve for its population?

II. Demographics
   4. What do you understand to be the demographic characteristics of households in this area?
   5. What share of the population do new immigrants represent?
   6. What additional barriers do the low-income residents face?

III. Poverty Mitigation
   7. What services are currently available to low-income people living in these neighborhoods?
   8. What specific policies best address the needs of diverse groups of new immigrants, including refugees?
   9. How successful has the municipality been in supporting low-income residents?
  10. Have any policies harmed the community?
  11. How might future policies affect the stability of low-income residents in this area?

IV. Governance
   12. How involved are non-profit and civic organizations in poverty alleviation – resisting or responding to pressures.
   13. Are there some good case examples?
   14. How has the history of councils and planning departments affected the low-income community?
   15. How is transit impacting the low-income community?
      a. PROBE: Has the municipality done anything to mitigate rising real estate values or displacement due to transit oriented development?
   16. Are there other structural challenges to supporting the low-income community?

Thank you!
Works Cited


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