VICTORY SQUARE:
A CASE STUDY IN MUNICIPAL PLANNING
FOR INNER-CITY REVITALIZATION

by

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This case study provides an analysis and evaluation of a contemporary inner-city revitalization initiative, the subject case being the Victory Square planning process and subsequent draft Concept Plan released in June, 1995.

The subject case is analyzed in terms of the impact of inner city "revitalization" initiatives on the low-income residents who live within districts targeted for revitalization, the fundamental question being: "Who benefits (or suffers) from revitalization efforts?"

Evaluation of the subject case begins with the normative proposition that direct benefits from revitalization should accrue to the existing residents of affected low-income communities. The central research question involves identification of the key elements or characteristics of planning process and policy necessary to achieve the normatively defined outcome. These elements are employed as criteria against which the subject case is analyzed and evaluated.

The thesis reviews the evolution of urban renewal/revitalization strategies in the post-war period, and parallel shifts in inner-city demographics as Vancouver continues its transition to a post-industrial economy. Gentrification trends, land use policies, and the senior government retreat from housing, are discussed in terms of their negative consequences for low-income inner-city residents.
Evaluation criteria are derived through a literature review in the areas of community development, community economic development, and housing policy. Key criteria include community empowerment, and the necessity for a proactive low-cost housing policy. While elements of the subject case exhibited a "top down" approach, the Victory Square process included several progressive approaches for facilitating resident input, and the plan itself contains a proactive housing retention/replacement strategy which relies only partially on scarce senior government allocations.
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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the Victory Square Draft Concept Plan (City of Vancouver, 1995) and the preceding public consultation process, as a case study in planning for the revitalization of inner-city areas which contain populations of greatest disadvantage.

Inner city "renewal" or "revitalization" projects typically attempt to address a constellation of key issues including economic health, housing and social issues, and the condition of the built environment. Often what drives such projects is concern about disinvestment and deterioration in, or near, the central areas of larger cities, and a real or perceived increase in social problems associated with these deteriorating areas.

"Top-down" revitalization initiatives (e.g. re-investment strategies) do not guarantee that existing residents will directly benefit from such initiatives. Given the attendant risks of displacement, community fragmentation, and other negative impacts, policy makers need to determine the extent to which a set of policies is likely to improve (or worsen) the situation of the poor and disadvantaged who call inner city districts their home. This is particularly urgent in the context of rapidly gentrifying metropolitan core areas where re-investment is likely to occur as a result of larger socio-economic
changes, and where direct interference in the market, such as development moratoria, will likely continue to be politically unpalatable. Moreover, responses of last resort, such as moratoria, should not be necessary: the revitalization process should not be set in motion without a prior commitment to mitigate its impacts on low income communities, an appropriate package of development controls and incentives, and a credible housing retention/creation strategy.

Conversely, continued disinvestment and decay over the short term is also likely to be politically unacceptable, particularly in areas immediately adjacent to the Central Business District, which by virtue of their location have the highest public profile. Moreover, continued disinvestment over the long-term must ultimately result in piecemeal loss of existing housing stock through closures, demolitions, fire, and general neglect.

Whether or not revitalization will meet the needs of the existing residents will depend on a number of factors, including the extent to which the project recognizes and fosters local community, encourages and enables meaningful community input and participation, addresses physical needs such as housing, and provides a basis for skills training, job opportunities, and locally-based economic development.
2. DEFINITION AND LOCATIONAL CONTEXT

The broadest definition of "inner city" is those areas surrounding the central business district (CBD) encompassing residential neighbourhoods. In the widest sense, this includes the extent of urban development prior to 1940, and in Vancouver conforms roughly to the municipal boundaries of the central city. This definition is useful for monitoring broad socio-economic shifts, as it is possible to compare relative property values and household income levels of inner and outer neighbourhoods over time.

A more meaningful definition is to focus on the oldest surviving neighbourhoods close to the CBD. In Vancouver, this would include areas such as Kitsilano, Fairview, Mount Pleasant, Strathcona, and Grandview Woodlands (Fig. 1). These areas, which for much of this century have provided a valuable stock of affordable housing, have seen an ongoing erosion of stock in response to strong market pressures.

The narrowest definition of "inner city" (and the sense employed in this paper) corresponds to the "zone of discard" posited by Ford (1994, 65) and more commonly known as "skid row". Zones of discard are typically commercial areas, usually historic downtown districts, and (in some cases) industrial areas, which have become obsolete. They are immediately adjacent to the contemporary CBD, and in case of commercial areas contain a significant number of single-room occupancy (SRO) hotels, which were once true hotels and which have become, effectively, shelter of
Figure 1: City of Vancouver Local Areas
Figure 2: Downtown Context - Subareas and Major Projects

1. Triangle West
2. Victory Square
3. South East Shore of False Creek
4. Central Waterfront Port Lands
5. North False Creek
6. Coal Harbour
7. Downtown South
8. East False Creek
9. Granville Slopes
10. West End
11. Gastown
12. Downtown Eastside
13. Chinatown
14. Yaletown
last resort for the most disadvantaged. In Vancouver, this area is called the "Downtown Eastside" (Fig. 2). Victory Square is a transitional area located on the edge of the Downtown Eastside and the CBD. For the purposes of this thesis I will treat it as part of the zone of discard, as it shares commonalities with the larger Downtown Eastside.

To distinguish between the broader and narrower senses of "inner city", I will refer to the broader geographical areas, ie. older residential neighbourhoods, as "inner city neighbourhoods", reserving the more specific term "inner city district" for the Downtown Eastside, Victory Square, and similar areas in other cities.

3. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This thesis presents a broad overview of the issues facing inner city districts, suggests key elements for municipal response in the 1990s, and examines a contemporary local example (Victory Square). While the focus is Vancouver and the Canadian urban context, observations relating to inner city revitalization in Vancouver may be relevant to issues in other cities, particularly in North America.
The Victory Square case study has two parts:

1) An examination of the public consultation process, and
2) A review of the strategies and policies contained in the draft Plan.

Each part has important limitations. With regard to the first, Chapter 4 contains empirical material based on personal observations of the author, who was a staff participant in the public consultation process. As these observations were not systematically recorded or compiled at the time the described events took place, there is no published material with which to substantiate or otherwise verify the observations noted within. The observations touch upon issues such as the relationship between the form of consultation, and participation rates of low-income residents. Such a detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this study.

The second limitation of the case study relates to the present status of the Victory Square policy document. The Plan is a public draft and may undergo revisions before it is formally adopted by City Council. Assuming the draft policies are implemented, any evaluation of the "success" of the Plan must be speculative pending a reasonable time horizon for realization of policy objectives. However, it is legitimate to examine overall philosophy, strategy and components of the draft document to compare practice with theory, to identify innovative and promising strategies, and to further our understanding of planning for inner cities.
4. METHOD

The central chapters of this paper are a case study of planning for the Victory Square area, a process which was initiated by the City of Vancouver in April 1993, and which has produced a draft document entitled, "Victory Square Concept Plan" released for public review in June 1995.

The case study is provided by an analysis of the draft Victory Square Concept Plan, and by a description of the public consultation process which led up to the Plan; this description includes the personal observations of the author, who as an "entry-level" staff member found himself cast in the role of area planner at the centre of a multidepartmental process involving ten City departments. The author participated in most of the forty-five public meetings, focus groups, and workshops conducted as a part of the process, as well as frequent interdepartmental staff meetings conducted over a 2-1/2 year period.

The author also participated actively in the development and revision of draft policy at the line-staff level, which involved input from, as well as extensive negotiation and compromise with, a range of other staff from the participating departments. Finally, the author was a contributor to, and chief editor for, the draft Plan itself. Thus, this thesis is an attempt to "step back" from a collective process in which the author was closely involved, in order to draw objective conclusions. To accomplish this, the process and resulting draft policies (Chapter 4) are evaluated according to criteria abstracted by way of literature review in Chapter 2.
The framework for analysis is provided by a literature review which provides an overview of the socio-economic changes affecting inner city areas, a brief history of senior and municipal government intervention, and current thinking on inner city revitalization strategies. The point of departure for discussion is the normative proposition that, if revitalization is to occur, then low-income communities (i.e. existing residents) should benefit directly. At the very least, the situation of existing residents should not be made worse.

5. ORGANIZATION

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides introductory material. Chapter 2 provides a brief historical overview of inner city districts, shifts in policy responses, and recent socio-economic changes impacting, or potentially impacting, inner cities. Chapter 2 also summarizes current thinking on inner-city strategies based on a review of recent literature, and sets out evaluation criteria for two areas of discussion: 1) Consultation Process; and 2) Inner City Policies and Programs.

Chapter 3 begins the case study portion of the paper. It includes a brief history of the Victory Square area, defines the planning area geographically, and provides a descriptive overview of both the planning process and the main strategies in the draft plan.
Chapter 4 analyzes key elements of the Victory Square initiative in the context of the evaluation criteria outlined in Chapter 2; Chapter 5 summarizes conclusions to be drawn from the case study, including discussion of planning and policy implications for future inner city initiatives, as well as for implementation of the Victory Square Plan itself.
CHAPTER 2 - OVERVIEW AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

1. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

a. Post-War Changes in Inner-City Neighbourhoods

In most North American cities, the post-war mass production of low-density suburban housing outside the existing built up areas produced a relative decline in property values in the older neighbourhoods, for which there was no longer a market. The new suburban neighbourhoods, with large houses and private yards, were well-suited to raising children in the context of prevailing family values. In addition, in the era of mass consumption, a large home was particularly suitable for the accumulation of durable goods (Filion and Bunting, 1990, 77). Public investment in freeway infrastructure enhanced accessibility, and out-migration of more affluent blue-collar households paralleled the decentralization of industry to suburban locations (Filion and Bunting, 1990, 77-78). By the 1960s, many inner city neighbourhoods exhibited clear signs of "down-filtering" and decline, with portions of the housing stock shifting from owner-occupancy to rental tenancy, accompanied by a gradual decline in housing stock as rental returns did not justify any investment beyond basic maintenance. However, the continued existence of this stock provided a valuable resource in the form of affordable housing (Filion and Bunting, 1990, 77 - 79; Ley, 1981, 139).

The process of decline was not as pronounced in Vancouver, or in other Canadian cities, as in the U.S. A number of explanatory factors have been identified, including a) the oversupply of suburban housing was not as pronounced in Canada as in the U.S., and freeway access to it was not as extensive here; b) racial tensions were of a much lesser magnitude in Canada, and c) in the 1950s and 60s Canada welcomed large numbers of
working class European immigrants who purchased older homes in inner neighbourhoods and invested in their upgrade and modernization (Filion and Bunting, 1990, 77).

Similar processes were at work in downtown areas. The Central Business District (CBD) of most North American cities had seen little or no major commercial development since the 1920s, the Great Depression and war years intervening. The economic recovery of the 1950s and 60s sustained a building boom of unprecedented magnitude and created a massive increase in commercial floorspace. Where the new development did not physically replace the existing stock, it left behind a stock of aging and obsolescent buildings for which there was no market. These "zones of discard" (Ford, 1994, 65) included an array of modest hotels which had formerly catered to tourists, travelling business people, and itinerant resource workers. As these areas declined, the hotels became housing of last resort to those who could not afford or secure shelter elsewhere, and the "blighted" districts became known as "skid row". Nevertheless, those areas had become residential communities of sorts, and their single room occupancy (SRO) hotels had become an indispensable stock of long-term housing for the most disadvantaged (Hulchanski, 1991, 3 - 4; Ford, 1994, 71 - 73).

b. Public Policy Responses

Canadian public policy tended to follow examples set elsewhere, particularly the U.S., even though widespread blight and partial abandonment was far less typical in Canadian inner cities (Ley, 1981, 125). Large tracts of older housing in inner city neighbourhoods were identified as "transitional" and designated for more intensive land-uses, in particular, the construction of a ring of high-rise housing around a rapidly redeveloping office core. Public
policy facilitated the transformation by permissive zoning and, in many cities, by transportation and other infrastructure improvements (Filion and Bunting, 1990, 87).

Vancouver's most fully-realized example is the West End, an old inner neighbourhood which shares the downtown peninsula with the CBD (Fig. 1). Within two decades, this neighbourhood of single-family homes (many converted to rooming houses), had become a district of high-rise apartments. This process had also begun in Kitsilano, where some high-rise buildings were constructed prior to downzoning in 1974 (Ley, 1981, 133).

In zones of discard, public policy took a different direction, as these neighbourhoods were unattractive for private development. These areas were slated for slum clearance and the construction of large public housing projects (Filion and Bunting, 1990, 88). In Vancouver, the experience with comprehensive urban renewal schemes of this nature has been limited. However, a 1958 slum clearance plan for Strathcona (Fig. 1), an old inner-city neighbourhood adjacent to the Downtown Eastside, was partially implemented (Atkin, 1994, 74). Two housing projects within the renewal area, MacLean Park and Raymur Park, were completed during the 1960s, and fifteen blocks of the neighbourhood had been acquired and cleared by 1967 (Kluckner, 1984, 130; Atkin, 1994, 76). In that year, the City announced plans for an elevated, eight-lane expressway which would have cut a block-wide swath through the neighbourhood.

In Vancouver, as in other cities, intense mobilization against both private and public versions of urban renewal profoundly modified federal and municipal policies in the late 1960s and
early 1970s. This period saw the formation of anti-urban renewal coalitions, both city-wide and within affected neighbourhoods. At the neighbourhood level, this included resident owners, business operators, and tenants, joined by outside groups concerned with wider issues such as heritage preservation and the impact of renewal initiatives on local residents (Filion and Bunting, 1990, 88).

In Strathcona, renewal projects had been commenced despite opposition from the community, and despite City surveys indicating that only 17 percent of residents were dissatisfied with their existing housing (Atkin, 1994, 75). The new housing proved unpopular and had high turnover rates. In addition, displaced residents complained that people from outside the neighbourhood were being accepted for public housing in preference to locals (Atkin, 1994, 79). Freeway plans galvanized local and city-wide opposition and culminated in cancellation of both the freeway and the balance of the renewal project.

Local dissatisfaction with renewal policies led to major policy changes at the federal level. In 1969, the Federal Government froze further funding for the Strathcona project pending review, and subject to a full participation process (Atkin, 1994, 83). At the same time, a federal task force unveiled a new approach to urban renewal which emphasized retention rather than redevelopment of the built environment of older neighbourhoods, and which laid the groundwork for neighbourhood and housing improvement programs (Filion and Bunting, 1990, 88).
At the municipal level, anti-renewal coalitions were successful in electing progressive administrations in most Canadian cities. The new administrations were committed to citizen empowerment, neighbourhood preservation, and a much more guarded approach to development. Many of these followed through with initiatives to limit development, including the enactment of protective zoning by-laws designed to preserve older neighbourhoods. In Vancouver, this shift in attitude was marked by the election of The Electors Action Movement (TEAM) to City Council in 1972 (Filion and Bunting, 1990, 88).

Ley characterizes TEAM as the political embodiment of the "new middle class" of young, educated, middle and upper income professionals whose ascendance to power mirrored structural and demographic changes inherent in a post-industrial economy (1980, 238, 248). TEAM's philosophy, centred on notions of the "livable city", "people before property" and "quality of life" reflected the values of this new "class", and translated into a planning vision in which "participation, aesthetics, pollution control, more parks, neighbourhood preservation, and mixed land use were to be major elements" (Ley, 1980, 250).

TEAM initiated a process for local area planning, central to which was a philosophy of citizen participation in the planning process. Among the first Vancouver neighbourhoods to be chosen for local area planning was Kitsilano (Fig. 1). Kitsilano is a good example of the shift in policy toward inner-city neighbourhoods. In the early 1960s, the area consisted predominantly of aging single-family residences, the oldest being over fifty years old. Property values had fallen relative to other city neighbourhoods, and there had been a shift from owner-occupied to rental tenancy. Portions of the area had been identified by the City as conversion areas for high-rise residential development. By 1972, neighbourhood opposition to redevelopment crystallized in the form of a broad-based coalition which,
between 1972 and 1975, became one of the city's most effective community organizations. The group was able to generate significant local support, as a majority of owners and tenants was opposed to the City's version of change (Ley, 1981, 141). As Ley puts it, "Change was a negation of their image of Kitsilano" (1981, 141).

The group urged resistance to redevelopment pressures and advocated a policy of neighbourhood preservation with local control of development. As the construction of high-rise apartments were perceived as the main threat to the neighbourhood, the group demanded a moratorium on high-rise residential development. In 1974, they were ultimately successful in precluding additional high-rise development, by way of area "downzoning" (Ley, 1981, 141).

Ironically, while downzoning prevented a particular form of physical transformation (i.e., high-rises), it was not successful in preventing radical physical and demographic change. There are a number of interrelated reasons for this:

1) Continued strength of the CBD and broad changes in socio-economic structure have tended to reverse trends witnessed in the 1950s and 60s. These changes are associated with the shift from a "mass-consumption" economy to a "post-industrial" economy (Filion and Bunting, 1990, 79). This shift is reflected in the emergence of a new class of white-collar professionals and managers who value the range of amenities offered in or near the metropolitan core (Ley, 1981, 129; Filion and Bunting, 1990, 79).
2) TEAM's liberal, "livable city" ideology promoted an unintended elitism; its efforts to enhance general amenity and aesthetic appeal helped accelerate housing demand in the central neighbourhoods, while at the same time its development policies (e.g. downzoning) contributed to limit housing supply (Ley, 1980, 255). The rapidly increased land values favoured privileged income groups at the expense of those with lesser market power. From this, Ley concludes that a "livable city" ideology will not produce equitable results, except in the unlikely or infrequent case of prolonged economic prosperity, proactive public intervention, and constraints on private interests. This is because, "in free market conditions an urban strategy favouring a high level of consumption with style will only serve to attract the wealthy and penalize social groups with limited market power" (Ley, 1980, 257).

3) In the context of strong market demand, downzoning by itself could regulate the form and scale of development, but could not ultimately prevent socio-economic transformation in the form of gentrification, which was manifested by the construction of low-rise condominiums, the conversion and stratification of existing housing, and the gradual upfiltering of owner-occupied housing. Moreover, by ruling out redevelopment and attendant land speculation, downzoning had the unintended effect of making older housing more attractive for middle- and upper-income groups; under protected conditions, purchasing an older inner-city home and investing large sums in improvements begins to make sense (Filion and Bunting, 1990, 76). More recently, successive waves of gentrification have highlighted the role of "marginal" gentrifiers who, priced out of neighbourhoods in advanced stages of socio-economic change, and with a strong aversion to suburban lifestyles, "pioneer" older housing in less favoured
inner-city areas, often investing their own "sweat equity" in renovations (Mills, 1989, 9, 14; Ley, 1992, 240, 250-1). Alternatively, in cities such as Vancouver, where gentrification has involved a significant amount of redevelopment (as opposed to renovation), new housing follows a "post-modern" architectural aesthetic (Mills, 1989, 127-28; Ley, 1992, 238); for example "heritage-style" loft infill developments in Gastown.

4) "Progressive" senior government programs for neighbourhood and housing improvement (such as The Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP) and the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP)) may also have had unintended results in some neighbourhoods. In the context of decline, one can safely assume that improvements will benefit low-income residents. When the content shifts to market demand, improvement programs, even when they are designed for incumbent residents, run the risk of attracting wealthier newcomers (Filion and Bunting, 1990, 80, 88).

5) Local area planning was largely ineffective in arresting the redevelopment cycle and the attrition of affordable housing, because there was little real decentralization of decision making. For example in Kitsilano, repeated requests by the local planning committee for a moratorium on housing demolition, and on development permits for condominiums, were rejected by Council (Ley, 1981, 142).
c. The Post-Industrial City and Implications for Low-Income Neighbourhoods

The concept of "post-industrialism" is particularly applicable to the study of change in inner areas of larger Canadian cities because of the renewed enthusiasm of middle- and upper-income households for inner city living and the related processes of redevelopment and gentrification. The post-industrial period has been characterized as a shift from goods production to a service economy, an emphasis on information, and a predominance of white-collar professional occupations (Bell, 1973, 14-33; Filion and Bunting, 1990, 79). By 1971, seventy percent of the Vancouver work force was engaged in white-collar occupations (Ley, 1981, 128). During the 1970s, CBD office capacity doubled, further concentrating white-collar job growth downtown, and creating increased demand for housing close to the CBD (Ley, 1981, 128-9).

The classical profile of the post-industrial professional and managerial household is as follows: the household has significant purchasing power and discretionary income. The household is smaller (or childless) with two incomes. Small household size means large suburban lots are unnecessary; double-wage earners mean relative affluence but little free time to spend on home maintenance and long commuter trips. This translates into demand by affluent professional households for housing in inner-city neighbourhoods. The preference for inner-city locations is reinforced by consumption patterns which indicate increased concern with leisure and quality of life, and a shift in preference from mass-produced to "individual and diversified" consumption (Filion and Bunting, 1990, 79). These preferences are more readily satisfied by convenient access to the CBD and the diversity of goods, services and amenities available within a dense urban environment (Ley 1981, 129;
Filion and Bunting, 1990, 80). In Vancouver, inner-city locations enhance lifestyle objectives by providing access to major parks, beaches, marinas, mountain and ocean views, and other valued amenities (Ley, 1981, 128-9). A central location also ensures that households with high levels of education, and a taste for cultural and related forms of activity, have access to the full range of cultural amenities available in and near the CBD. In terms of housing consumption, this translates into preference for the older style "character" or "heritage" housing found in inner neighbourhoods (Ley, 1992, 238); as Filion and Bunting note, "purchase of an older style house can carry even greater status than that of a new home" (Filion and Bunting, 1990, 80).

Recent research (Mills, 1989; Ley, 1992) has revised the classical profile of the "new middle class" household, and the nature of gentrification has been revisited. Gentrification is now seen as a more complex and "chaotic" process than hitherto conceived (Ley, 1992, 246), as are the profiles of the "gentrifiers" themselves. Significantly, it is no longer accurate to describe all gentrifying households as disproportionately affluent, as a significant segment of this group is "marginal", either in absolute terms (e.g. first-time buyers with limited disposable income) or in relative terms (e.g. more affluent households priced out of neighbourhoods in advanced stages of gentrification) (Mills, 1989, 87-8, 118; Ley, 1992, 240, 250).

Mills locates the gentrification process as the spatial manifestation of shifts in class and gender relations in post-industrial and "post patriarchal" society, and in lifestyle choices which reflect distinctly "post-modern" aesthetics and definitions of self-identity (1989, 88-128). Thus, inner-city migration can be interpreted as the product of strategies for satisfying
real needs in coping with problems and opportunities in a post-industrial economy, and for reworking gender relations in the context of post-patriarchal values and aspirations. Finally, it can also be interpreted as a rejection of the modernist conception of living exemplified by the nuclear family and the homogenous, post-war single-detached, suburban housing tract (Mills, 1989, 125; Ley, 1992, 251).

Mills identifies a range of factors which could influence household locational strategy in favour of inner-city opportunities (or away from suburban areas) including the delay of childbearing, need for two income earners to finance home purchase, changing patterns of female employment, underemployment of young, educated people, and difficulties presented by conventional suburban environments for unconventional households such as gay or single-parent households (1989, 117).

In terms of locational preference, recent gentrification trends demonstrate a marked shift from clusters of high-amenity neighbourhoods adjacent to high-status districts and the CBD, to lower-amenity, lower-status districts further from the CBD (Ley, 1992, 239-245). More conventional amenities (e.g. access to waterfront) are supplanted in some neighbourhoods by lifestyle attributes, such as a counter-cultural, gay or artistic ambience, but historical architectural ambience remains a preferred attribute (Ley, 1992, 238). This means that older housing stock in inner areas remains vulnerable to the gentrification process. Ley observes that, "by the 1980s, much of the inner city... functions as a potential housing market for well-qualified employees in the quaternary sector" (1992, 246).
According to Ley, the impact of the socio-economic restructuring process and its effect on housing patterns has been a serious loss of low-cost housing within a zone which has traditionally accommodated low-income households. He also comments that the displacement of affordable housing has invariably been the result of the revitalization process in Vancouver, as it has been in other cities (Ley, 1981, 139).

In Vancouver, renewed interest in inner neighbourhoods has been followed by strong market demand for housing in the downtown peninsula itself (Fig. 2). This has been encouraged by Council policy, which since the 1970s has sought to increase the residential population in or near the downtown core. The Central Area Plan (City of Vancouver, 1991) reaffirms and strengthens this policy as part of an overall land-use strategy for the downtown. Prior to the Central Area Plan (C.A.P.), downtown zoning attempted unsuccessfully to encourage the provision of residential units within office developments through a bonusing system. Under the new plan, this system is replaced by a policy which contemplates the conversion of significant portions of existing office/commercial- and industrial-zoned areas into high-amenity downtown residential neighbourhoods. This would happen in two ways: (1) through the physical transformation of existing areas such as Downtown South, and (2) through the creation of completely new neighbourhoods as part of major rezonings such as False Creek North (Concord Pacific Place) and Coal Harbour (Fig. 2). A variation of the former is contemplated for "heritage" and "heritage character" areas which, in the context of "preservation" and "revitalization", could provide further opportunities for housing near the CBD (City of Vancouver, 1991, 8).
The intent of the C.A.P. housing policy is to redress the existing imbalance between jobs and residents in the Central Area, to reduce the fiscal and environmental costs of commuting downtown, and to further the C.A.P. goal of an "alive downtown" (City of Vancouver, 1991, 7). The C.A.P. estimates that the new housing areas thus created will provide a zoned residential capacity in the downtown peninsula of close to 20,000 units for 30,000 residents, with 12,000 additional residents living downtown by 2006. This compares with a total downtown peninsula population of 45,000 in 1991 (City of Vancouver, 1991, 18).

Current figures estimate an ultimate total build-out of approximately 22,000 high-density residential units in Downtown South, North False Creek, East False Creek, Coal Harbour, and International Village (City of Vancouver, 1995b, 2). In historic areas adjacent to the CBD, such as Gastown and Yaletown (Fig. 2), "urban pioneers" are the target market for "New York-style" loft condominiums, with exposed brick interiors and high ceilings, built in converted heritage buildings or in new infill construction with compatible design. In Gastown alone, which has 1,302 SRO units and is adjacent to the Downtown Eastside, a total of 211 loft-style units (13 projects) have been built or are under construction, and another 192 units (3 projects) have been approved or are pending (Hlavach, personal communication). Gastown, formerly part of the zone of discard, has undergone successive stages of revitalization since the late 1960s, beginning with its "rediscovery" by the sixties counter culture, its transformation into an "old town" tourist district, and most recently, its emergence as a "funky" residential district.
d. Implications for Low-Income Communities in the Zone of Discard

The success of residential development in Gastown (and in the wider downtown) has raised concerns that this development will spill over into the remaining areas of the Downtown Eastside. In terms of spatial reconfiguration (Hutton, 1994, 221), one can speculate that zones of discard could disappear entirely as they are reassimilated into the downtown. Ford suggests that, as skid row revitalization becomes the norm, "the classic skid row may be a thing of the past - a temporary aberration in the evolution of the North American city" (Ford, 1994, 83).

This raises serious questions about the continued existence of SRO hotels and the low-cost housing stock they provide, as well as the future of the communities centred around that stock. Other high-demand cities, such as San Francisco, experienced a significant loss of SRO units, as owners converted residential hotels to offices, apartments, condominiums and tourist hotels. Between 1976 and 1981, that city lost 6,085 units, almost 20 percent of its SRO stock. Between 1970 and 1978, Portland, Oregon lost 2,400 downtown housing units, most of them SROs, and between 1960 and 1981, Seattle, Washington lost 16,000 housing units, including about half of its downtown SROs (Ford, 1994, 73, 79).

David Hulchanski estimates that between 1978 and 1988, Vancouver lost approximately 3,000 units (about 25 percent) of its total SRO stock (1989, 7). Preliminary Housing and Properties Department figures indicate that the actual loss may be closer to 2,000 units (or 21%) over the same period. This discrepancy is likely due to definitional asymmetries. For example, it seems that the 1978 SRO base figure included some social housing units.
(Raynor, personal communication). In 1991, the total SRO stock in the downtown core was 7,577 units. In 1994, there were 7,397 units, a loss of 180 units over three years. However, the total low-income housing stock in the downtown core increased by 2.8 percent due to new non-market housing projects (City of Vancouver, 1995, 16). Assuming SRO units continue to be lost at the 1991-94 rate, sixty non-market housing units per year would need to be provided in the downtown. Based on the revised 1978-88 rate of loss (21% over 10 years), 155 units would have to come on stream per year. Given senior government's "well-established retreat from direct funding of social housing programs" (Hutton, 1994, 231), there is some question as to whether the City will continue to be able to match SRO losses with gains in social housing units.

The C.A.P. estimates that 17 percent of existing units in Vancouver's Central Area could ultimately be lost to redevelopment over the long term (City of Vancouver, 1991, 22). The authors do not specify whether "redevelopment" includes conversions, i.e. existing buildings renovated for tourist hotels or market housing. However, based on the updated 1991 base figure noted above (7,577 units), a 17 percent loss is equivalent to approximately 1,300 units. Under the goal entitled "a Central Area for all People" the C.A.P. proposes a proactive low-cost housing strategy which is not necessarily dependent on senior government subsidies. The strategy includes programs for stock protection and creation, and makes reference to work commenced in Downtown South, including the inaugural implementation of Development Cost Levies (DCLs) to fund non-market housing. It must be noted, however, that the City, by deliberately fostering massive residential development in the downtown peninsula, has contributed significantly to the present threat to low-income housing by redirecting the revitalization process toward the inner city.
2. EVALUATION CRITERIA

a. Definition

Revitalization is the economic and physical improvement of an urban area or significant portion thereof. This occurs either as a process caused by socio-economic shifts and market forces, or as activity initiated by a public agency, or both.

As a process, the revitalization of inner city neighbourhoods has been associated with the process of gentrification. Although the two are not synonymous (revitalization can, in theory, occur without gentrification), gentrification is the displacement of low income residents by higher income households through conversion or replacement of existing stock (Hulchanski, 1989, 17). Gentrification occurs whenever households with superior purchasing power begin to outbid existing households in a low-income neighbourhood.

According to Ley, gentrification has in fact occurred in Vancouver neighbourhoods over the past couple of decades, because City administrations have either lacked the will, legislative authority, and/or resources to address the issue (1989, 143). Observing the process in Kitsilano, he concludes that the process of revitalization has caused "...serious erosion of low-cost housing opportunities in a zone which has traditionally provided shelter for poorer households. In Vancouver as elsewhere the displacement of affordable housing is the inevitable consequence of the revitalization process" (1989, 139).
b. Revitalization As Purposeful Activity

One implication which can be drawn from Ley's comments regarding displacement, is that governments have a responsibility to address the impacts of the revitalization process on existing communities. I would argue that to the extent the revitalization process is initiated or encouraged as matter of municipal policy, this responsibility is correspondingly greater.

Colin Ward, referring to London's Docklands' development, makes the following comments:

"But if the 'inner city' we're worried about is not a place but a lack of income, our assessment of every project successively known as 'inner city' renewal, redevelopment, regeneration or revitalization, is bound to be based not on buildings and their rental value, not on office blocks, penthouse apartments, shopping malls, aquaria or theme parks, but on how this particular initiative has benefitted those poor people with low incomes and small expectations who lived there before the revitalizers took over ... Self-congratulatory messages about entrepreneurial successes and the proliferation of shiny downtown office buildings obscure the reality that many people do not benefit from all this success, and many are deeply and permanently harmed" (Ward, 1988, 263).

Similarly, David Donnison observes that revitalization achievements "have rarely benefited the most excluded people, the long-term unemployed, the people who have the greatest difficulty in gaining their share of the advantages and opportunities which a growing urban economy should offer" (1993, 295).
This paper begins with the assertion that low-income residents should benefit directly from inner city revitalization efforts. The problem is that, despite good intentions, revitalization projects initiated by senior or municipal governments often fail to achieve this goal. A number of reasons for this have been suggested:

1) Development-oriented revitalization schemes assumed that benefits would "trickle down" to low-income residents, when often poverty and economic polarization worsened (McConnell, 1993, 290-291). Moreover, targeting particular geographic areas did not guarantee that benefits would flow to local people, particularly the disadvantaged (Fordham, 1993, 301). Although it may have been possible to argue that disadvantaged residents at least enjoyed certain indirect benefits (eg. "beautified" streets, renewed infrastructure, and improved public amenities), even these benefits were illusory if revitalization resulted in higher rents and/or transition to other land uses. In the absence of a proactive housing policy, revitalization often meant that existing residents were displaced (Ley, 1981, 139).

2) "Top down" revitalization programs lacked understanding of the complex social ecology of inner city neighbourhoods, producing solutions which were physically and socially inappropriate. The most extreme examples were slum-clearance housing projects of the 50s and 60s, which by removing the familiar built fabric of the neighbourhood, disrupted the complex web of interrelationships upon which community stability depended (Wadhams, 1993, 324; Penn, 1993, 316).
3) Benefits were often not sustainable in the long term. Governments have invested large sums on initiatives which failed to produce a self-sustaining revitalization, because control did not devolve to local people. "Bottom up" initiatives in which local people directly participate in the development and management of programs will be more likely to succeed, will produce results which accrue directly to local people, and will more likely be sustainable over the long term (Gerecke, 1991, 19; Fordham, 1993, 303-304).

4) Programs targeted for low-income residents have often been mono-dimensional ie - focused on only one aspect of community need - eg. housing. Alternatively, policies developed in one department or level of government were developed in isolation from policies generated in another department or in another level of government. Opportunities for mutual learning were lost, and policies sometimes worked against each other because the problems were interdependent and mutually reinforcing (Armstrong, 1993, 357; Fordham, 1993, 301).

c. Elements of Planning for Inner-City Revitalization

i. Criteria for Consultation Process

If initiatives in which local people directly participate in the development and management of programs will be more likely to proceed, will produce results which accrue directly to local people, and will more likely be sustainable over the long-term, then the criteria for evaluation of public consultation should measure the degree to which local participation is
encouraged. This section outlines evaluation criteria for public consultation and involvement. These criteria will form the framework for analysis in Chapter 4 relating to process issues. Section (ii), which follows, outlines evaluation criteria for policies and programs.

1) Recognizing Community

Carefully define and understand the community (or communities) to be included. This involves consultation directly with local people, and this may be a prerequisite for reaching particularly disaffected or hard-to-reach groups (Fordham, 1993, 304). It is important to understand the geographical area, or areas, to which various groups identify, as this will determine where planning area boundaries are drawn (McArthur, 1993, 309).

Inappropriate boundaries undermine community identification with the planning process and therefore participation. Understanding geographical identification may also highlight differences in perception of the "community" between one or more ethnic or stakeholder group (McArthur, 1993, 311). For example, businesses may identify themselves as part of the downtown, while SRO residents identify their community as part of the "skid row". These differences may highlight profound differences in ideology and outlook for the area.

According to McArthur, organizing surveys of local households may be a valuable means to improve understanding of the community. In addition, local people can be recruited to carry out the survey, and receive training and remuneration for their efforts. Finally, community participation in the survey work can provide the foundation for a broader process which is inclusive and over which the community has a degree of ownership (McArthur, 1993, 312).
2) Seeking Community Involvement

Involve local stakeholders in identifying issues, needs, and potential solutions (Armstrong, 1993, 356). This should be accomplished in the context of neighbourhood democracy, in open and public meetings held in local venues (Krüger, 1993, 347). Where community organizations are fragmented, it may be necessary to create a democratic umbrella organization with membership open to all groups, and which can be the main conduit for communication between the planning authority and the community (McArthur, 1993, 312; Donnison, 1993, 296).

3) Enabling Meaningful Participation

Enable residents to participate meaningfully and effectively in discussions regarding the future of their neighbourhood (Armstrong, 1993, 356). Meaningful participation must be fair, open, and conducted on the basis of equality, which implies that positive discrimination in favour of disadvantaged groups may be necessary (Beazley, 1994, 40). In terms of practice, this means that community groups and low-income residents need to have made available to them at least the same resources as other participants in the process. They need to be able to understand and to make informed decisions on complex, and often technical matters, need the confidence to participate effectively in public forums, and need to be able to produce newsletters, position papers, and other documents. This may require access to independent advice, training, and office support staff (McArthur, 1993, 310; Donnison, 1993, 296).
4) Empowerment

Empower communities to gain recognized status within the key decision-making and political mechanisms (Armstrong, 1993, 356). Empowerment implies that participants have real influence over the outcome of planning processes. The test of empowerment is "efficacy": i.e., are expressed community needs and concerns reflected in the content of policy documents and decision-making? (Beazley, 1994, 43-44). Empowerment is particularly relevant to community economic development, where local people need to have the opportunity to take initiative and "ownership" of community projects. This topic is developed in greater detail in Section 2 - Economic Development (partnerships).

ii. Inner-City Policies and Programs

The remainder of this chapter outlines evaluation criteria for municipal revitalization policies and programs. These criteria will form the framework for analysis in Chapter 4 relating to policy issues.

1) Multidimensional Approach

A number of inter-related issues face inner city areas, among them poverty and the associated issues of chronic unemployment, skills, education and jobs, the issues of housing quality and affordability, community development, crime and safety, health and social issues
such as mental illness, and alcohol and drug abuse, and condition of the physical environment, including buildings and public spaces.

Observers have stressed that, in order to address these issues successfully, broadly-based, "multidimensional" approaches which tackle the entire range of inner city problems in an integrated and coordinated fashion will be needed (Wadhams, 1993, 332). As Fordham notes, these problems are interdependent and mutually reinforcing, and therefore cannot be solved in isolation from one another (1993, 301). From an administrative point of view, this also entails complex "multi-professional" and "multi-agency" initiatives which cut across traditional departmental lines (Armstrong, 1993, 357; Donnison, 1993, 296). Hulchanski, commenting on the gentrification of older housing stock, notes that "the issue is not simply a housing one, but overlaps with other policy and program areas, such as social welfare and health. Vancouver could help lead the way with innovative proposals for intergovernmental co-operation, as well as public/private partnerships" (1989, 13).

Some of the reasons for advocating this kind of approach include the following:

a) Initiatives which focus on particular symptoms, such as physical decay, may produce outcomes which fail to improve the socio-economic conditions of existing low-income residents, even though they may achieve their stated objective - for instance, encouragement of new construction. The benefits to existing residents are, at best, indirect, unless benefits are specifically targeted to them as would be the case if development rights were tied to the provision or improvement of low-income housing. In the absence of effective parallel policies in areas such as housing, the results of
symptom-oriented planning can produce unintended disbenefits to existing residents in the form of loss of affordable units due to redevelopment or gentrification. Other disbenefits include radical socio-economic changes brought about whenever revitalization encourages in-migration of new residents with significantly higher incomes than the existing population. Where new residents are better educated, and better connected politically (as they tend to be) their needs are more likely to be met, often at the expense of the existing community. A coordinated approach is more likely to identify potential negative impacts of this nature (eg. through the participation of social service agencies). Where negative impacts are identified, participating departments can either re-evaluate the policy or adopt measures to ensure that equal or greater weight is given to the needs of low-income residents.

b) Initiatives led by one department may work at cross-purposes with work already underway within another department. For example, physical planning geared to encouraging re-investment through development or rehabilitation may inadvertently erode efforts of housing administrators to obtain affordable sites for social housing (Fordham, 1993, 301).

c) Mono-dimensional programs represent foregone opportunities to benefit from the collective knowledge of a range of disciplines with specialized expertise. Each brings specialized knowledge about the community, a unique perspective, and potentially valuable insights into the community. Each may also have unique contacts with groups
and individuals within the community who may be instrumental to encouraging local participation and who may provide access to the most disadvantaged and hard-to-reach in the community (Armstrong, 1993, 357).

2) Economic Development

In the conduct of economic development in inner city areas, three themes predominate: community development; employment; and the concept of "partnership". They do not necessarily entail alternative approaches to economic initiatives, but rather are complementary approaches that can be part of a coordinated revitalization strategy.

a. Community Economic Development As A Framework

The general objective of community economic development is to take some measure of control of the local economy back from the market and the state (Boothroyd and Davis, 1993, 230). In the context of inner cities, an approach founded in community economic development principles entails making planning processes more participatory, working to eliminate marginalization or exploitation of particular people in the community, creating institutions to favour those most in need, and promoting social justice (Boothroyd and Davis, 1993, 236). A community development approach can provide the following benefits in the context of inner city revitalization:
1) Actively involving the community will produce better quality decisions, and programs more closely tied to local need will result (Fordham, 1993, 303; Boothroyd and Davis, 1993, 236).

2) As participants in the revitalization effort, communities will take greater responsibility for care and maintenance of their neighbourhood than if revitalization was imposed with minimal local involvement (McArthur, 1993, 308).

3) Public initiatives are temporary and can only be expected to "pump - prime" a long-term process of revitalization; Active community involvement is therefore essential for the long-term sustainability of revitalization programs (Fordham, 1993, 304; Wadhams, 1993, 331).

4) Small, community based initiatives are indispensable for developing local skills and work experience, expertise in project implementation and management, and community confidence to attempt more ambitious programs. Initial success may also be used to lever public funds for continued or expanded operation (Wadhams, 1993, 331).

b. Partnerships and Empowerment

A number of observers have suggested multi-agency "partnerships" with community representation as a method of sharing management and control of initiatives with significant public funding. Precedents have ranged in form from "partnership committees" composed of departmental staff, community groups and residents, to "community development
corporations" in which community representatives participate in decision making (McArthur, 1993, 307; McConnell, 1993, 289; Boothroyd and Davis, 1993, 236). McArthur characterizes partnerships as a situation where community representatives have a seat on the various organizational structures which manage and deliver regeneration initiatives. For example, in Scotland, multi-agency partnership committees for an area meet regularly to develop and over-see the implementation of a comprehensive regeneration strategy, usually over a 10 year period (McArthur, 1993, 307). In Bradford, England, "Neighbourhood Forums" were established to discuss revitalization issues. The forums are open, public meetings initially led by Council officials but devolving to community leadership. Results are forwarded to "Area Panels", which cover larger geographic areas. The mandate of the Panels is to feed back the priorities of the local communities, in the context of a broader area overview to the strategic and policy-making mechanisms of the municipal government (Penn, 1993, 319). In Canada, "co-management" arrangements have provided a method for senior government to share control over natural resources. Other co-management structures include the operation of federally subsidized co-op housing (Boothroyd and Davis, 1993, 234).

These kinds of partnerships are rooted in a community development framework. All community members must be empowered to participate in relevant planning and decision-making processes (Boothroyd and Davis, 1993, 236). Active local participation and control in the implementation and delivery of programs and initiatives is a key ingredient for sustained success. For inner-city revitalization initiatives, empowerment may involve the following elements:
i) Ensuring that real people have a voice and power within the decision-making process and within the relevant political structures. Decisions should be made in an open and public process - as much as possible in local venues (Krüger, 1993, 347). Decision-making procedures should be adjusted to recognize local participants may not be familiar or comfortable with professional or bureaucratic systems. For instance, the pace of decision-making may need to be slowed down, despite political pressure to deliver a "product" within a certain time frame (McArthur, 1993, 313).

ii) Making public funds and other resources available, to provide the support and expertise required to effectively input into the decision-making process (discussed in (i)(3) above). In addition, community groups should be given appropriate education, training and experience which will give them the skills and confidence to implement and manage programs (McArthur, 1993, 310, 313). Long-term reliance on the state erodes self-management and leaves communities vulnerable to outside decisions, including the curtailment of funding (Boothroyd and Davis, 1993, 233).

iii) Avoiding financial dependency on public funds. By nature, public initiatives have finite lifespans and should only be relied upon as short-term means to initiate long-term revitalization processes (Fordham, 1993, 304; Wadhams, 1993, 331). Therefore, wherever possible, local management and control of local projects should be encouraged and fostered. This allows local people to gain a sense of "ownership" of initiatives, strengthens a shared sense of community, and improves the likelihood of long-term sustainability (Wadhams, 1993, 331; Armstrong, 1993, 358).
3) Housing

In the context of encroaching gentrification in central Vancouver (and other Canadian cities), the continued existence of low-cost housing is probably the single most important issue facing inner-city areas. Therefore, the key question might well be how to protect inner-city communities from the impending revitalization process, rather than how to revitalize inner city areas per se.

In a report prepared for the Vancouver City Planning Department, David Hulchanski recommends that the City adopt a proactive role in housing issues, fostering initiatives "which involve public, private and community-based organizations in addressing needs through regulation, rehabilitation, and the supply of new stock" (1989, 11). The advantage of this approach, is that it "allows a broad based community effort, initiated by City Hall, to seek out positive responses to a potentially very serious social problem" (Hulchanski, 1989, 12).

Community-based organizations can be a particularly effective vehicle for implementing housing programs. The experience of DERA provides a very successful example: using a range of senior government programs including federal subsidies under the former Section 56.1 of the National Housing Act, and senior government unit allocations through B.C. Housing, DERA had created over 500 units of low cost non-market housing in the Downtown Eastside, worth in excess of $35 million, between 1983 and 1989, with construction to begin on a $9.8 million, 82 unit seniors project. Two are coops, which are tenant-managed; the balance are managed by DERA staff (Gerecke, 1991, 15-16).
As DERA is a community-based, democratically structured organization, its housing efforts have been accompanied by parallel efforts to build community and provide for the needs of local residents (Gerecke, 1991, 13). In addition, housing can be an important catalyst for the development of further local economic initiatives, as it gives the community control over real assets (ie. the housing stock) as opposed to other community economic development programs which may be relatively peripheral - "housing, with its local focus and capacity to create a substantial asset base which can quickly be managed by local people, provides a key catalyst to neighbourhood action" (Wadhams, 1993, 333).

Policy #1 of the report recommends, as a starting point, that the City develop regulations and programs to maintain and improve the existing central area low rent stock, despite strong market pressures for redevelopment and gentrification. The alternative, short of displacement and homelessness, is gradual relocation of approximately 9,000 low-income households (1989 figures). As Hulchanski points out, this is not a desirable option, as neighbourhoods such as the Downtown Eastside "have a distinct 'sense of community' with important social networks that cannot be easily reproduced or replaced by government programs. Policy #1 would seek to keep these neighbourhoods as neighbourhoods with at least the same number of low rent housing options as presently exist, minimizing or even preventing involuntary displacement from the area" (Hulchanski, 1989, 12).

Hulchanski also recommends keeping a close watch on development trends and pressures as they affect particular sub-areas within the downtown, and that policies and programs target these areas on a priority basis (1989, 8). Victory Square is mentioned specifically as an area...
which, with its high proportion of both heritage buildings and SROs, could benefit from a "historic area" rezoning to help protect this stock (Hulchanski, 1989, 18).

Policy #1 has three important corollaries:

1) A target number of units to be retained must be set;

2) A detailed gain/loss monitoring process, and a replacement strategy must be established; and

3) Redevelopment and change should be encouraged, not prohibited, as long as net loss of units is prevented. Assuming this precondition, demolition or conversion of undesirable SRO stock may be contemplated (Hulchanski, 1989, 12).

Hulchanski identifies three key program categories to meet inner city low-cost housing needs:

1) Protecting the tenants;

2) Protecting the stock; and

3) Rehabilitating and/or adding new stock (1989, 14).

The report outlines a range of policy and program options under each category, as well as financing and organizational initiatives which could facilitate implementation. Detailed discussion of each of these policy options is outside the scope of this paper. However, the above categories will provide the framework for organization and analysis of policies contained in the draft Victory Square concept plan.
d. Summary of Evaluation Criteria

Overall Criteria:

- Direct benefits from inner city revitalization accrue to existing low income residents
- Benefits are sustainable in the long-term

Public Consultation Process:

- "Bottom-up" community involvement
  - Recognizing community
  - Seeking community involvement
  - Enabling meaningful participation
  - Empowerment

Policies and Programs:

- Multidimensional approach
- Economic development
  - Community economic development framework
  - Partnerships which foster community empowerment
- Housing
  - Non-displacement of existing communities
  - Proactive housing policy - prevent net loss of units
  - Monitoring program
- Devolution of projects to community-based organizations

- Specific program categories:
  - Protecting the tenants
  - Protecting the stock
  - Rehabilitating and/or adding new stock
CHAPTER 3 - CASE STUDY - VICTORY SQUARE

1. GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

The Victory Square area is a small council-defined area, the boundaries of which will define a new sub-district for zoning purposes. It covers a four block long (eight square block) stretch of Hastings and Pender streets, between Richards Street and Carrall Street (Fig. 3). Also within the boundaries is a continuous row of heritage warehouse buildings in the 500 block of Beatty Street. The area centres around Victory Square Park and Cenotaph, and the former Woodward’s Department Store building.

"Victory Square" is a planning "fiction" in the sense that it does not by itself correspond to any recognized community identification. Businesses operators in the blocks west of Cambie Street identify with counterparts represented by the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association (BIA). Low-income residents in SRO hotels, particularly those east of Cambie Street, see themselves as living in the much larger area known as the Downtown Eastside, which includes the city-defined zoning districts of the Downtown Eastside Oppenheimer District (DEOD), Gastown, and parts of the Downtown. Federal data (1986) for the "Downtown North" census tract, which encompasses Gastown, Victory Square, and part of the Downtown Eastside, indicated this tract, and its immediate neighbours, as having as the lowest income levels in the city (Hulchanski, 1989, 6).
Figure 3: Victory Square Planning Area
2. HISTORY

By the turn of the century, Hastings Street between Main and Granville Streets, was Vancouver's downtown commercial and shopping thoroughfare. City Hall and the Public Library were located at Main and Hastings, Woodward's Department Store was at Hastings and Abbott (after 1902) and the Provincial Courthouse was at the present site of Victory Square Park. Hastings and adjacent streets had Vancouver's most prestigious office blocks and its first "skyscrapers". These alternated with hotels built to accommodate business travellers, tourists, and itinerant resource workers (City of Vancouver, 1995, 5).

As the commercial and administrative centre of the city shifted west and south, Hastings Street began a gradual decline. In 1912, a new courthouse, at Georgia and Howe Streets (now the Vancouver Art Gallery) replaced the original structure in Victory Square. In the 1910s and 20s, Granville Street became the city's second major retail and entertainment street, in competition with Hastings. City Hall moved from a temporary location on Hastings street to its present location in 1936, and the public library moved to Burrard and Robson in 1957. By the 1920s, major retailers such as Birks and the Hudson’s Bay Company had located up the hill at Granville and Georgia. However, Hastings remained competitive well into the post war period. Until the 1950s, CBD office capacity remained concentrated largely in the Hastings-Pender corridor west of Burrard Street. Two of the major department stores were located on Hastings, as Woodward's had been joined in the early part of the century by Spencer's (later Eaton's) Department Store. However, significant new office capacity, located further west on Burrard Street and along Georgia and Pender west of Burrard, effectively shifted the CBD away from Victory Square, leaving
behind an obsolescent stock of commercial buildings (City of Vancouver, 1995, 5). As early as the 1940s, the Downtown Eastside had attracted a large concentration of resource workers, many injured or handicapped. Many found accommodation in the area’s hotels, which had begun to take on the character of rooming houses, as they became obsolete and substandard for business travellers and the tourist market. By the 1960s, they had been joined by a transient population of middle aged and elderly men (some with alcohol related problems), Native Indians, and transient youth (Gerecke, 1991, 12).

By the late 60s, the Main and Hastings area was known as "skid row", as the area’s affordable single room occupancy hotels and rooming houses continued to attract a disadvantaged population. However, Hastings Street west of Carrall played an interesting transitional role in the post-war period. While the area’s hotels became home to an increasingly disenfranchised segment of the population, this part of Hastings continued to function viably as a major downtown shopping street into the 1970s. However, in 1970, Eaton’s closed its Hastings Street department store to anchor the new Pacific Centre mall at Granville and Georgia Streets (City of Vancouver, 1995, 5). This left Woodward’s, eight blocks to the north and east, as the only major department store on Hastings street.

This began a fairly rapid decline of Hastings as a retail/shopping street. The Harbour Centre redevelopment of the former Eaton’s site, anchored by a new Sears Department Store, failed to arrest this trend and Sears closed its store ten years later. Other retailers closed, or moved to other locations downtown. The rapid decline of the area is reflected in pedestrian traffic between 1981 and 1991: Pedestrian counts on West Hastings Street within Victory Square dropped by sixty percent (City of Vancouver, 1995, 5).
Finally, in January 1993, Woodward's closed its downtown store. The store had been rumoured to be operating at a loss for several years and its demise had been anticipated. However, it was the imminent collapse of the entire Woodward's chain that forced its actual closure. In the months that followed, many other businesses closed as well. Worst hit was the 100 block of West Hastings across from Woodward's, which was literally vacant by February of 1993.

Vacant and boarded-up storefronts have accentuated the "skid row" image of Victory Square. Community groups such as the Downtown Eastside Resident's Association (DERA), have worked to shed the Downtown Eastside's "skid row" stigma and forge a positive sense of community and identity. Among the community's accomplishments include DERA's construction of over 500 units of housing (Gerecke, 1991, 15), creation of an inner-city community centre (Carnegie - City owned), and (opening soon) a community bank.

However, the community has found it difficult to shed the "skid row" stigma: The area continues to be a zone of extreme poverty and deprivation. Ninety percent of people in the area are unemployed or unemployable and collecting welfare, and seventy percent of residents continue to live in substandard housing (Butt, 1993, 1). Prostitution, and de-institutionalized persons on the street with obvious behavioral problems, are other visible elements of life in this part of town, and there has been considerable comment in the press about illicit drug transactions and drug use conducted openly (Gold, 1995).
The Victory Square area was not developed as a residential neighbourhood, and as such is atypical in the Vancouver context. Physically, it exhibits a built form typical of early twentieth century downtown retail/commercial areas. Its streets are defined by masonry commercial buildings, averaging two to four stories in height, with no setbacks. These buildings are mutually abutting, creating a continuous "streetwall" with retail uses at grade and offices on upper floors. Because the built form is commercial, the density is considerably greater than the norm for inner city residential neighbourhoods of the period, which follow the "garden city" ideal of single family houses set within planted areas. The hard-edged masonry construction without setbacks accentuates the dense, urban character of the area, which is further accentuated by the fact that two high-volume traffic arterials - Hastings and Pender Streets - traverse it.

The transitional character of the area is a function of its geographical position within the downtown, situated as it is immediately east of the present CBD and on the western edge of the Downtown Eastside. This can be illustrated by differences in character on the eastern and western sides of Cambie Street, which divides the area in two equal parts. As one progresses east of Cambie, the area takes more of a "skid row" character; this area contains the former Woodward's department store, and was hardest hit commercially by its closure in 1993. East of Cambie, the retail vacancy rate is close to 42 percent, with portions of the street predominantly vacant and boarded up (City of Vancouver, 1995, 5).
The portion west of Cambie street has a more commercial character, bordering as it does, the old financial district. This area is economically healthier, with a retail vacancy rate of thirteen percent (City of Vancouver, 1995, 5). Somewhat of an anomaly is the 500 block of Beatty Street, which has much in common with the Yaletown warehouse historic area, and which contains one of the city's first loft condominium conversions (1982) and the site of a current loft conversion project.

The Victory Square area contains a scattering of 16 turn-of-the-century hotel buildings which, paralleling the area's commercial decline, have become long-term low-cost housing for people without other housing choices. The presence of these hotels, and the people who live in them, give this historically commercial area its present status as a residential community.

4. NATURE OF THE COMMUNITY

Just over 1,000 people live in the Victory Square area (City of Vancouver, 1995, 5). This includes over 200 people living in non-market housing, about 100 each in Pendera (a DERA social housing project) and Central City Lodge (a special needs residential facility for elderly persons with chronic physical or mental health problems). There is also a 31-unit condominium building on Beatty Street (City of Vancouver, 1995, 16).

The population also includes an "invisible" population of artists and others who have begun to convert vacant upper floors into combination studios and living spaces. In most cases, the conversions are done without a building or occupancy permit, and do not meet life-safety
standards under the City's Building By-law. In September 1993, there were an estimated seventy-five make-shift live/work studios in the area (Butt, 1993, 25). Several City inspections (which could have resulted in eviction), and reaction from the artist community, produced a temporary moratorium on enforcement pending implementation of By-law amendments to be recommended in the draft Concept Plan.

Vacant storefronts and upper floor offices have also provided opportunities for arts and design related uses and specialty businesses. Attracted by low rents, large spaces, and a "gritty" ambience, a number of artist-run galleries, bookstores, and "alternative" clothing and furniture stores have located in the area. A recent University of British Columbia thesis identified a significant concentration of design firms in the area (Brail, 1994).

The largest segment of the population are the 750 or so persons living in SRO hotels, comprising seventy percent of the area's residents (City of Vancouver, 1995, 16). The average SRO resident is over the age of 45, single, male, poor, and has lived in the area for eight years (City of Vancouver, 1995, 18). Most residents are unemployed, with an average income well below the poverty line at $633 per month, of which an average of $353 per month is allocated to rent (Butt, 1993, 2). The health status of the average resident is four times worse than the national average (Butt, 1993, 4). Those persons who are at greatest risk have multiple problems including physical ailments, mental or emotional problems, and histories of alcohol and/or drug abuse.

The SRO hotels in which the majority of the Victory Square population lives form about ten percent of the larger stock of downtown SRO hotels, hotels which are concentrated primarily
in the Downtown Eastside (City of Vancouver, 1995, 16). The living units are small, single rooms, usually 10' x 12' or less. Tenants usually share bathroom facilities (ie. down the hall). Most rooms contain a bed, dresser, sink, and usually a hotplate. There is a wide variation among SROs in terms of maintenance, management and security, amenities, and livability (Butt, 1993, 12).

In 1993, the City commissioned a survey of residents conducted in conjunction with the Victory Square planning process. The majority of residents interviewed stated they were dissatisfied with their current accommodation, and when asked what "decent" housing would look like, described a clean, secure, self-contained bachelor suite with private bath and kitchen (Butt, 1993, 13). Most indicated a preference to remain living downtown (Butt, 1993, 14).

However, despite the poor living conditions, the existing stock of SRO units is, for many, the only alternative to sleeping in a shelter or on the street (City of Vancouver, 1995, 18). In the context of a strong market and dynamic CBD, SRO units are at risk to redevelopment and conversion to other uses (or to upscale variants of the same use) such as condominiums and tourist hotels. A recent precedent occurred during the lead-up to Expo 86, where conversions to tourist uses resulted in over 1,000 evictions in fifteen Downtown Eastside hotels (Gerecke, 1991, 16). More recently, conversions to tourist hotels and "backpacker hostels" may indicate the emergence of a long-term trend in the area. In Victory Square alone, two of sixteen hotels are believed to have fully or partially converted to backpacker
use, and owners of a Gastown hotel bordering on the area have recently decided to convert to a bed and breakfast operation for tourists (Sarti, 1995, B4).

Also important to residents are the amenities and the range of health and social services which provide for their needs. Most Victory Square residents use amenities and services located outside the planning area but within the larger Downtown Eastside community (Butt, 1993, 11). These include Carnegie Community Centre (two blocks east), which Gerecke terms the "living room of the neighbourhood" (1991, 13), and Crab Park (at the foot of Main Street). The Downtown Eastside bars are the most frequently used amenity (Butt, 1993, 11). Victory Square Park is often described as the outdoor "living room" for the community, as well as its symbolic centre (Gerecke, 1991, 12).

The coffee shop of the former Woodward's department store used to be a favourite gathering place for older residents. The closure of the store and its food floor, and the subsequent closure of other shops nearby, has meant a lack of neighbourhood shops and services. In particular, residents now lack a store within walking distance that sells low-cost groceries. Further, vacant storefronts and fewer "eyes on the street" have contributed to concerns for personal safety on the part of residents and visitors alike.

5. VICTORY SQUARE PLANNING PROGRAM

The balance of this chapter forms a descriptive outline of key features of the Victory Square planning initiative. It is comprised of three sub-sections, as follows:

- Genesis of the program,
Public participation, and
- Draft policies.

a. **Genesis of the Victory Square Planning Program**

i. **Policy Context**

In August 1986, City Council identified two areas of historic importance in the vicinity of Victory Square (Parker, 1986). The first, the "Hastings Pender Conservation Area" extends from Abbott Street as far west as Howe Street, and includes a high concentration of buildings of historical significance. (The portion east of Richards Street corresponds closely to that of the present Victory Square planning area). The second, the "Beatty Street Character Area," includes character buildings along the east side of the 500 block Beatty.

In his December 1989 mid-term report, (then) Mayor Gordon Campbell announced the City’s intention to prepare a plan for the Victory Square area which would "preserve and protect the Victory Square neighbourhood as an important heritage asset. We should strive to preserve the existing housing for area residents, who deserve a sense of stability" (City of Vancouver, 1989, 7-8).

In March, 1990, the Planning Department responded by proposing an Interim Policy for the area, which was adopted by City Council (City of Vancouver, 1991b). The Interim Policy, which is still in effect as of September 1995, covers a four block portion of Hastings and Pender Streets corresponding to the current planning area boundaries and has the effect of
modifying the existing zoning (Fig. 3). The existing zoning is a comprehensive development district governed by the terms of the Downtown District Official Development Plan (ODP). The Victory Square area is located within a sub-district of the Downtown District ODP which specifies a maximum building density of 5.0 floor space ratio (FSR) and a maximum building height of 150 feet. Residential floor space is limited to 3.0 FSR, which favours office development, consistent with other areas in the downtown peninsula which fall within the geographical area designated "CBD".

Because the existing zoning is discretionary, Council may exercise its discretion by way of policy. While not binding, an adopted policy is a statement of Council’s intention to regulate development in a certain manner. The Interim Policy for Victory Square specifies that, in most cases, the maximum permitted density within the area would be 3.0 FSR with a maximum height of 70 feet, in order to ensure that pending adoption of a formal plan, new development would be in keeping with the scale of the existing heritage buildings. The policy also contemplates possible exceptions for non-market housing projects (City of Vancouver, 1990, 1990b).

On December 5, 1991, City Council adopted the Central Area Plan (C.A.P.) (City of Vancouver, 1991). A central policy in the C.A.P. Land Use Strategy is to reduce the size of the defined CBD in order (among other things) to accommodate more housing downtown. A secondary objective of this reduction is to protect adjacent heritage and character areas, which are at risk under "Triple A" office zoning. Thus, the defined CBD "skirts" the Victory Square area, as it does other heritage and heritage character areas, thereby recognizing the emerging policy directions for the area indicated in the Interim Policy.
Among other specific policy directions for Victory Square, the C.A.P. suggests "choice-of-use" zoning (which favours residential in preference to office development) to help retain existing buildings. In addition, the C.A.P. references low-cost housing policies and programs developed in Downtown South for possible application in Victory Square, and proposes a low-cost housing strategy for the Central Area.

Finally, "CityPlan", an overall city-wide visioning process, was ongoing concurrently with Victory Square (City of Vancouver, 1995c). CityPlan references the C.A.P. and reiterates the need to address social issues downtown, which "means balancing [downtown] prosperity and growth with its impacts on close-by neighbourhoods that are home to low-income people... Social needs include basic housing needs, livable neighbourhoods, accessible social services, health programs and jobs" (City of Vancouver, 1995b, 39). Downtown South and Victory Square are specifically referenced as initiatives to maintain low-cost housing and provide neighbourhood services.

ii. Initiation of Policy Development

The Victory Square interim policy had been adopted in 1990 without a formal public consultation process, the intent being to conduct a full process when preparation of an area plan and new zoning was underway. This step was taken in March 1993, when Council approved an administrative report which directed Planning staff to undertake a public consultation process toward preparation of a concept plan for Victory Square, and approved a set of "preliminary objectives" for the area (City of Vancouver, 1993, 8-9). These
preliminary objectives also preceded formal public input. The objectives, as simplified for the public process, were as follows:

- Development to occur primarily in existing buildings or in new buildings which reflect the scale and character of the area;
- Foster a wide choice of land uses appropriate to the existing building stock and compatible with adjacent areas;
- Foster housing options, including low income and specialty housing, in existing buildings and new structures;
- Revitalization of business activity;
- Address social and community needs; and
- Create a public realm that complements architectural character and enhances preferred uses.

It is interesting to note that the March 1993 administrative report is the first time that "commercial revitalization" is stated as an explicit objective for the Victory Square area. However, since the Mayor's 1989 mid-term report, events had overtaken initial policy directions, with the closure of Woodward's and many other businesses within the three year intervening period. In 1993, it was no longer politically possible to ignore the immediate short-term economic condition of the area. This posed a difficult challenge: In the context of medium and long-term revitalization (and gentrification) trends, how to facilitate or accelerate economic recovery in the short term without compromising the existing low income community, as well as other area assets such as heritage buildings and the low rise scale and character of the streetscapes which frame them.
Planning staff, in consultation with ten other departments, including Housing, Social Planning, and Economic Development, commenced a nine-month public process which generated community visions for the area, and a range of differing approaches and objectives, many of which were in conflict. The product, distributed for public review in draft form in June 1995, is an attempt to reconcile conflicting objectives with each other and with Council's preliminary objectives (City of Vancouver, 1995).

b. Public Consultation Process

The first round of public consultation was undertaken between April and December of 1993. (The second round, public review of the draft concept plan, begins in September, 1995.) The "public" included stakeholders and interested parties from within the community, from adjacent areas, and city wide. The primary focus, however, was interested groups within the community. This paper uses the term "community" in both a narrow and a broader sense: the narrower meaning refers to the low income residents, while the broader meaning refers to all persons or groups with an interest in the area - property owners, businesses, and employees, organizations and agencies, educational institutions, and others.

The full range of participating City departments were as follows: Planning, Social Planning, Health, Housing and Properties, Permits and Licences, Cultural Affairs, Engineering, Police, Parks, and the Economic Development office. An interdepartmental staff team, led by Planning, was established to coordinate city efforts.
Figure 4: Victory Square Public Consultation Process (Phase 1*)

- **Working Group** Meetings
  - April - Aug. '93
  - up to 25 stakeholders attending
  - open house
  - Visioning Session

- **Task Group** Meetings
  - May - Sept. '93
  - (approx. 25 mts. total)
  - Housing
  - Health & Social Issues
  - Safety & Security
  - Arts & Culture
  - Streets and Public Spaces
  - Renovation Incentives

- **Public Workshops** (OCT. - DEC. '93)
  - #1 Oct. '93
    - Task Groups Report Back
    - 60 participants
  - #2 Nov. '93
    - Outstanding Issues (Small Groups)
    - 45 participants
  - #3 Dec. '93
    - "Implications Workbook" (Matrix)
    - (Small Groups)
    - 35 participants

- **Kitchen Table Meetings**
  - June - Aug '93
  - (7 meetings)
  - 15 participants or less, each meeting

- **Residents Survey**
  - Aug. - Sept. '93
  - Representative sample surveyed
  - (281 interviews)

- Non-mainstream process designed for the "hard-to-reach".
The consultation process unfolded in a range of forums and venues. The main components of the process included mainstream forums such as a stakeholders committee, focus groups, an "open house", and stakeholder workshops. The process also included a process for the "hard-to-reach", including a series of "kitchen-table" meetings and a survey of area residents.

i) **Stakeholders Committee**

Prior to formal commencement of planning, City staff initiated informal contacts with groups and individuals likely to be interested in the area, ultimately identifying twenty-five to thirty individuals who were thought to be representative of the various community and city-wide interests. Community stakeholders included area residents (SRO tenants, social housing residents, condominium owners), health and social service agencies operating in the Downtown Eastside, Downtown Eastside resident organizations, resident artists and arts groups, commercial property owners and business operators (merchants) and major institutions in the area, such as SFU Harbour Centre, VCC City Centre, and BC Hydro. The adjacent areas of downtown, Gastown, Chinatown and Strathcona were represented by the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Society (DVBIA), the Gastown Business Improvement Society (GBIS), the Chinatown Merchants' Association, and the Downtown Eastside Strathcona Coalition. City-wide interests included heritage advocates, and veterans organizations, who had a specific concern about the integrity of the Cenotaph (War Memorial) monument.
The stakeholders committee (termed the "Working Group") was convened after formal commencement of the public consultation process. It was chaired by the Planning Department lead staff member, and consisted of the staff representatives from each of the participating departments, with community representatives drawn from groups identified above. The Working Group was not intended to be "open" in the sense of a public meeting. The intent was to keep the group small enough to make quick progress (the initial time frame for report back to Council was six months) while ensuring that all interests were represented in discussions. As such, attendance at Working Group meetings was by City invitation, mostly on the basis of prior informal contacts in the community. In practice, no one who attended a meeting was turned away; however, as the process evolved the Working Group lost importance, as most of the community input came to be channelled directly to public workshops through concurrently running focus groups which generated policy recommendations in specific areas (see below).

ii) Focus Groups

Focus groups (termed "Task Groups") were convened shortly after the Working Group. Originally formed as sub-committees of the Working Group, their mandate was to report back as recommendations crystallized. Debate and conflict resolution would occur in the Working Group as Task Groups reported back. Instead, the Working Group became redundant, as the main focus of work occurred at Task Group level.
The groups were organized around six key issue-areas identified by City staff. The issue-areas were:

- Renovation Incentives
- Housing
- Health and Social Issues
- Streets and Public Spaces
- Safety and Security
- Arts and Culture

Two issue-areas originally identified - "Land Use and Built Form" and "Commercial Revitalization" were not discussed in Task Groups; the former due to lack of attendance and the latter because renovation incentives and safety and security were seen by participants as prior conditions. The "Housing" and "Health and Social Issues" groups elected to meet jointly.

Participation on the Task Groups was open, although one group did limit total number of participants to forty, and joining a group in mid-process was discouraged. The groups met monthly or bi-weekly between May and September of 1993. A city staff member from the relevant department chaired meetings and facilitated discussion in all cases. Staff guided participants through a focused process that began with issue-identification through to a set of conclusions or policy recommendations. Recommendations from all groups were compiled in a working document for the first of a series of public workshops held in the fall of 1993 (City of Vancouver, 1993c).
Because of inherent conflicts between Task Groups and their recommendations, the workshops became a necessary forum in which to attempt to reconcile divergent viewpoints.

iii) Public Workshops

By the Fall of 1993, well over 100 individuals had participated in various aspects of the public process, including the Working Group, the Task Groups, the open house, and other forums. The workshops were intended to bring together all those who had participated to date and who would have had some prior grounding in the Victory Square process and its issues.

The most contentious issues, predictably, revolved around change - how much, how fast, in whose interest? Although most people could agree that safety was an issue, that the back lanes should be cleaned up, and that vacant storefronts were not desirable, issues such as the extent and scale of development, and permitted land uses, remained highly contentious. For example, low income residents and advocates anticipated displacement, favoured restrictive zoning which would discourage speculative redevelopment of SRO hotels, and also favoured the construction of social housing in the area to replace SROs over time. Property owners, on the other hand, saw reductions in development rights as a form of expropriation, and were joined by some business operators who saw extensive redevelopment as the only viable strategy for revitalization. Many also discounted the vulnerability of SRO hotels and feared that social housing policies would turn the area into a form of social housing ghetto with attendant social ills.
The workshops attracted between 35 and 60 participants including City staff. All three workshops were organized and led by City staff with the assistance of an outside facilitator. The initial workshop was an opportunity for each Task Group to report its findings. The remaining workshops were organized primarily as small group sessions, breaking the larger group into small discussions facilitated by City staff, focusing on policy implications, and alternatives for conflict resolution. Materials used in the workshops are attached as Appendix A.

iv) Process for the "hard-to-reach"

Early feedback for advocates in the low-income community indicated that the City's "mainstream" forms of public participation were not reaching the majority of the area's residents - low-income people, on income assistance, living in SRO hotels and rooming houses. Specific issues are discussed in Chapter 4.

In response, community leaders were consulted to help design processes which were more inclusive of low-income residents and their concerns. Two initiatives emerged from these discussions:

1. A series of "kitchen table" meetings
2. A resident survey
1) "Kitchen Table" meetings

These were a series of informal meetings held in several SRO hotels in the Victory Square area. Access and introduction was through a community advocate who was familiar with the hotels and was well-known to residents. This individual also attended the meetings and helped to facilitate discussion.

A similar meeting was held in Pendera, a 114 unit DERA social housing building. In this case, DERA provided access and introduction, and a DERA staff person helped facilitate discussion. As a significant proportion of Pendera's population are elderly, Cantonese-speaking residents, DERA provided a translator, who received remuneration from the City.

In the SRO hotels, meetings took place in semi-private areas such as common rooms and wider portions of hallways. Residents were notified in advance. While termed "meetings", these were really opportunities for six to eight hotel residents to sit and chat casually with a City staff person in the presence of someone with whom they felt comfortable. Discussions included positive and negative aspects of life in an SRO and in the Downtown Eastside, personal needs and problems, and concerns about possible changes in the neighbourhood.

The staff person took notes and these were compiled as a record of the discussions, distributed at the various stakeholder meetings and workshops, and formed part of the material which contributed to the draft Concept Plan.
2) Resident Survey

As part of the Victory Square process, the City commissioned a social sciences consultant to design and implement a survey of residents living within the planning area (Butt, 1993). In addition to SRO residents, the survey includes people in condominiums and market rental apartments, social housing and special needs facility residents, and artists living in studio spaces. Interview were conducted in the late summer and fall of 1993.

Organization and content of the survey was a collaborative product of the consultant and City staff; however, the consultant approached a wide range of community groups regarding implementation. As part of the consultancy, a small, six person team was trained to conduct the actual interviews. A majority of team members were low-income residents of the Downtown Eastside, and were paid for their work.

A total of 281 interviews were completed (out of a total long-term population of 922). The survey categorized respondents by housing type, providing demographic profiles in the categories of age, gender, education, length of residency, average income, rent/income ratio, service use, health status, and housing concerns, including preferred housing type and location. A section of the survey also asked subjective questions in the following areas: issues of land development and housing, and social change; personal safety; access to shopping and services, and use of health services.
The survey report, *Residents of Victory Square*, (Butt, 1993) was published and distributed widely to participants in the process and interested members of the public. Copies were also forwarded to City councillors.

c. Policies and Programs - The Draft Victory Square Concept Plan

The previous sections of this chapter describe elements of the public consultation process. The balance of this chapter is a descriptive overview of the key policies and strategies contained in the draft Victory Square Concept Plan (City of Vancouver, 1995). The Victory Square Concept Plan (the Plan) consists of five main policy areas dealing, respectively, with built form, social policies, economic strategies, cultural policy, and the public realm. Key policy chapters relate to zoning and development rights (chapter 4), low-cost housing (chapter 5), heritage (chapter 2), and the reuse of existing building stock (chapter 3).

The overall intent of the plan is stated on page 6 of the draft document as follows:

"The intent of this Plan is to balance three major objectives: revitalization; protection of the existing low-income population; and preservation of the area's historic scale, character, and stock of heritage buildings" (p. 6).

The basic strategy of the plan is to foster private sector investment in the area, in a form compatible with the scale and character of the area's built form, and in a manner which minimizes impacts on the existing low-income population and the low-cost housing on which that population depends.
Revitalization would be accomplished in two ways:

Strategy 1: By creating a local resident base capable of supporting locally-serving (neighbourhood) businesses; and

Strategy 2: By attracting a new regional or city-wide market (p. 22).

The first strategy would be accomplished by adjusting the Zoning and Building By-laws to encourage a moderate amount of residential development similar to projects currently being built in the Gastown area, which involve the construction of "loft" style condominium residences in new infill structures or in conversions of existing heritage or "character" buildings. The Plan estimates that this form of development could provide housing for up to 2,500 new residents with a sufficient disposable income to support neighbourhood shops and services (p. 18). In addition, the development activity would represent new investment in the area, would begin to improve the area's image and appearance, and would send positive signals, dispelling some of the negative stigma, and improving public and investor confidence in the area.

The second strategy would be accomplished by finding a new role, purpose, and market niche for the area, building on existing strengths and assets. Strengths and assets identified in the Plan include (a) a central location close to the CBD, transit facilities, and the adjacent historic areas of Gastown and Chinatown; (b) an intact (if neglected) stock of heritage and "character" buildings, and a historic ambience which gives the area a distinctive character; (c) close proximity to two (and soon three) major downtown post-secondary institutions with
a commitment to the area; (d) the emergence of specialty shops and services; and (e) the emergence of an artistic and cultural community in the area (p. 22).

The zoning is intended to encourage sensitive infill and reuse of existing buildings, thereby preserving the heritage fabric and unique character of the neighbourhood. To enhance this character, the City would work in partnership with businesses, residents, property owners and other groups on initiatives such as public realm clean-up and beautification, facilitating new businesses and other uses, working with merchants on business promotion, improving safety and security, and encouraging a greater role for educational institutions.

The Plan envisions the area’s future as an arts, cultural, and educational district. Assuming this future unfolds as envisioned, the proposed regional or city-wide market would likely be faculty, staff, and students of educational institutions, as well as people attracted to the area’s galleries, specialty shops, performance venues, and associated businesses such as cafes and restaurants.

Protection of the existing low-income community would be accomplished by implementation of a housing strategy, and policies to address social impacts, including a proposed process to reconcile the competing needs and interests of existing and new residents. The Plan’s housing policy is prefaced by three "fundamental guiding principles" as follows:

- No net loss of low-income housing units;
- Minimum one-for-one replacement of SRO units; and
- Continued low income artists use of existing studios (p. 7).
The housing strategy consists of zoning amendments and a range of other policies to discourage the demolition and redevelopment of SRO hotels and rooming houses; mechanisms to discourage or prohibit the conversion of low-income units to other uses (or categories of use) such as tourist hotels, "backpacker hostels", and condominiums; as well as public investment and private incentives for the provision of new, non-market replacement housing and the upgrade of existing SRO units (pp. 16-17).

The main strategy to prevent physical loss of SRO hotels is a recommended "downzoning" from the current 5.0 FSR at a permitted height of 150 feet, which is essentially a CBD office zoning. The revised zoning would provide for development rights at a scale similar to that contemplated in the Interim Policy; it would allow 3.0 FSR at a height of 50' with the exception of new market residential development, which would be entitled to an additional 0.5 FSR at 65' on sites which are not existing heritage or SRO buildings (p. 15).

This zoning is intended to remove the incentive to demolish SRO hotels and heritage buildings (11 of 16 hotels are both) the majority of which are 3.0 FSR or less (p. 14). The proposed zoning would also offer incentives such as density "bonuses" and transfers (and corresponding height relaxations) for retention of heritage, and the retention and/or replacement of low-cost housing stock (pp. 11, 15, 17).

Finally, proposed amendments to the Building By-law, when combined with the zoning and incentives package, are intended to shift the focus of investment from predominantly demolition and redevelopment, to predominantly renovation and reuse (pp. 10, 12, 14). This policy would be reinforced by removal of the present 3.0 FSR limit on the residential
component of floor space within a development, which would allow the entire floor space in an existing building to be converted to residential use (pp. 15, 17), subject to the ground-floor retail requirement on Hastings Street, which would be broadened in scope to permit "storefront" uses which provide pedestrian interest (p. 13).

It is interesting to note that while this particular zoning change is designed to discourage physical removal (i.e. demolition) by encouraging reuse, it could also have the effect of making SRO hotels more attractive for conversion to condominium developments. However, the balance of the housing strategy consists of a range of policies and programs to prevent displacement. This includes a short- and medium-term strategy to discourage SRO conversions, and a longer-term strategy to build replacement low-cost housing for area's low-income residents.

Policies to retain existing SRO stock include (p. 17):

- increasing fees for demolition of SROs, and making the fee applicable to conversions;
- denying applications to stratify SRO hotels, unless low-cost replacement units are provided in the area;
- adjusting the zoning by-law definitions to distinguish between SRO hotels and tourist hotels, so that conversion would involve a change of use and therefore require a development permit; and
• amending the zoning to require one-for-one replacement of SRO units as a precondition to approval of demolition or conversion (this may require an amendment to the Vancouver Charter).

Policies to provide new low-cost housing include (p. 17):

• City purchase of land within the planning area for leasing to non-profit societies for non-market, provincially-funded housing (two sites purchased since planning process commenced). The Plan includes a parallel recommendation that the City increase allocation of resources for purchase of SRO hotels which could be managed by non-profit societies.

• Implementing Development Cost Levies (DCLs) on new construction in the Victory Square area, to be earmarked for development of non-market housing. (Implementation would be delayed for up to five years to facilitate "pioneer" developments).

• Considering the possibility of payment-in-lieu of (part of) the non-market housing requirement from major projects in the downtown.

• Monitoring SRO stock within the planning area, reporting to Council on additional funding or programs, if necessary, to maintain one-for-one replacement.
CHAPTER 4 - ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to review the Victory Square process and draft Plan as a contemporary municipal approach to inner city revitalization, within the framework of evaluation criteria summarized in chapter 2.

This chapter explores several general themes:

- The extent to which the Victory Square initiative (the subject case) reflects or furthers current theory;
- Aspects of the subject case open to theoretical criticism;
- Aspects of the subject case which are "progressive" from a theoretical perspective; and
- What can be learned from the subject case, and implications for theory.

This chapter has two main sections: 1) a review of the public consultation process, and 2) a review of the draft policies and programs.

2. PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESS

This section is an analysis of public consultation process, using the framework of evaluation criteria outlined in Chapter 2.
a. Recognizing Community

i. Issues Raised By Interim Policy and Preliminary Objectives

The theoretical literature suggests that communities should be involved from the outset in revitalization initiatives, and that the geographical scope and overall objectives of the planning process need to be generated in consultation with local people in a "bottom up" fashion. The 1990 Interim Policy, which was conceived and adopted without formal public consultation, was initiated and generated from within the City administration.

Similarly, the preliminary objectives for Victory Square were adopted by Council prior to the commencement of the formal public consultation process. Theory predicts that top down policies run the risk of eroding community support and participation, and to some extent the prediction is borne out by experience in the present case.

These early policy pronouncements created significant suspicion and distrust from a wide range of interests in the community. At least one group explicitly complained that the "preliminary objectives" were, in reality, general planning goals that should have been part of the public consultation process. By adopting these "goals" Council had in fact imposed its own vision for the area's future, and left only the details to be worked out in public consultation.

This had negative impacts on public participation, as some groups adopted a cynical distrust of the process at the outset: What was the point of spending time in public meetings when
Council had already decided what it wanted to do? The business community was particularly critical on this point; it already felt "abandoned" by the City (eg. poor street maintenance, etc.) and some were convinced of a "hidden agenda" to confirm the area as low-rent "slum" exclusively for SRO residents. Ironically, a number of advocates for the low-income community suspected the anticipated Plan to be a further attempt to fragment and erode the low-income neighbourhood by transforming the fringes to "upscale" areas. This fear was based on the experience in Gastown, which during the late 1960s and 70s had been transformed from "skid row" to "old town", and which more recently had been undergoing further transformation with the development of "loft" condominiums.

This level of distrust and suspicion deepened polarization in public discussions and made it difficult, if not impossible to reach consensus on key issues such as development rights and housing. While consensus may have been difficult in any event, in this socio-economically and ideologically divided district, the issue of predetermined objectives highlighted the difficulties that can arise when public consultation is not part of the process from the outset. Without consensus, it was necessary for planners and others to abstract policies from public input which, as much as possible, addressed the needs of stakeholders while minimizing trade-offs. The challenge will now be to encourage community groups to be active participants in the Plan's implementation, as well as with each other. This will be crucial, as the success of the Plan's future initiatives will depend upon willing cooperation of different interest groups, for instance property owners and SRO residents.

On the other hand, the subject case has interesting implications for theory: when City Council adopted preliminary objectives, it was setting "ground rules" for policy development.
It is at least arguable that this step sent a legitimate political message that a certain balance of public objectives must be achieved, regardless of the views of particular interests in the local community, and apart from any inequalities in political power which could be exerted by one group over another. In the case of Victory Square, this had the effect of entrenching the preservation of low-cost housing as a valid policy objective. This empowered the existing low-income community by giving their demands a legitimacy which they otherwise might not have had.

The foregoing suggests that, as important as the need for early public consultation, is the need to determine the point at which public discussion should begin. The example given suggests that it may be unrealistic to insist that all matters be open to debate in the planning context. Instead, it may be important, particularly in the context of inner city initiatives and otherwise disempowered residents, to set a well-articulated political agenda before the formal consultation process begins.

ii) Issues Raised by Planning Area Boundaries

The planning area, and area boundaries, was a major issue at the outset of the process, and remains unresolved as the draft plan goes to public review. The experience in Victory Square provides an example of the concept of "communities of identification" discussed in Chapter 2. The Victory Square planning area does not correspond to existing communities of identification in the downtown; instead, the planning area was intended to define a new zoning boundary for the purpose of zoning amendments, and as such skirts the pre-existing boundaries of adjacent zones, such as Gastown, Chinatown, and the DEOD. The defined
area does have a physical rationale: it corresponds to several blocks of the downtown with similar characteristics such as age of buildings, heritage value, architectural style, and scale of development.

The problem with the boundary for revitalization efforts, is that it cuts across at least two communities of identification. Firstly, surviving businesses, located primarily in the western portion of the area, identified with neighbouring businesses further west within the defined CBD and the boundaries of the Downtown Vancouver BIA. Other businesses had connections with counterparts in Gastown, immediately north of the planning area. Secondly, SRO hotel residents identified themselves as living in the western edge of the larger Downtown Eastside community centred at Main and Hastings, and used services located in that area. Community groups such as DERA also saw Victory Square as being part of that larger community.

Because the City-drawn boundaries created both overlap and fragmentation, different interest groups formed different theories of City Hall intent, generally couched in terms of distrust. Businesses west of Cambie Street felt they were being unfairly associated with the blocks east of Cambie, which were seen as having become a "skid row" area. This helped to fuel the speculation, already noted above, that the real intention of the Plan was to confirm the entire area as a skid row housing precinct.

Community groups active in the Downtown Eastside had a different interpretation: In discussions with City staff, they told of continuing frustration in their efforts to convince Council to approve a planning process for the entire area. Because the planning boundaries
neither included the larger Downtown Eastside, nor respected what was considered to be its western edge, the City's creation of the Victory Square planning area was seen as a deliberate refusal to recognize the Downtown Eastside community as such, and its historic requests for planning attention. In addition, the Victory Square process was seen as confirmation of suspicions, discussed above, that the City's agenda was to incrementally eliminate their low-income community.

Finally, as long as the planning area does not define a recognized community, there is unlikely to be significant community support or involvement in implementation of initiatives, unless the Plan is seen as relevant to the wider community. A number of steps need to be taken in this regard, some of which the City has begun to implement:

1) A wider vision for the future of the Downtown Eastside needs to be articulated;

2) A process for articulating that vision needs to be undertaken; and,

3) Planning and policy-making for the wider area needs to begin.

The first steps for such a process have recently been taken. In July 1995, Council approved terms of reference for a housing study and a development impacts study, both of which will focus on the Downtown Eastside and other areas in the eastern portion of downtown, including Strathcona, Chinatown, Gastown and Victory Square. In this context, the Victory Square Plan itself may have greater relevance if seen, not as an isolated set of policies for a small area, but as a prototype, parts of which may provide solutions for the wider community.
b. **Seeking Community Involvement and Enabling Meaningful Participation**

i. **Mainstream Process**

The elements of the consultation process are described in Chapter 3, and included a stakeholders committee, focus groups, an open house and public workshops. These processes are "mainstream" in the sense that similar forums are used in other City planning programs, with varying degrees of effectiveness. In terms of meaningful participation and empowerment, the mainstream processes presented significant barriers to effective participation on the part of low-income residents.

1) **Time and location of meetings**

Many of the older SRO residents were uncomfortable going out after dark, as they feared for their personal safety. Initial meetings had been held in the evening at Simon Fraser University's Harbour Centre campus, just outside the western edge of the planning area. This meant that some elderly residents would have to walk 4 or 5 blocks after dark to and from the meeting. However, the psychological distance was apparently much greater: Walking in a westerly direction from "Abbott Mansions" Hotel to Harbour Centre, one leaves the low-income neighbourhood and finds oneself on the edge of the Central Business District. In addition, the Harbour Centre campus houses the university's business programs and has a distinctly "corporate" feel. As a result, few residents participated at this location.
Most meetings were moved from Harbour Centre to Vancouver Community College (VCC) City Centre, which is located in the centre of the planning area immediately north of Victory Square park. The problem of evening meetings was not resolved, as many of the stakeholders worked during the day, and business operators working alone were unable to leave their stores unattended to attend daytime meetings. However, as VCC was geographically more accessible, and has a more modest, less intimidating atmosphere, an increase in resident attendance was observed. A third possible location, Carnegie Community Centre (at Main and Hastings) was rejected as a venue for general discussions because of its location and symbolic role as the "living room" of the Downtown Eastside. It was felt that the psychological distance of this location from the downtown would deter participation of businesses and property owners in the Victory Square area.

2) Form of process

In the initial stages of the public process, a significant amount of discussion centred on proportional representation in the Working Group, and also around the issues of time, location, and venue discussed above. Even with the changes in time and venue, resident attendance was low, and those who did attend contributed disproportionately little to discussions. Literature discussing meaningful participation (Chapter 2) predicts that participation on the part of local residents may not be effective for a variety of reasons, including lack of skills and information as well as lack of familiarity with, and intimidation by, mainstream processes.
Because of low resident participation, resident interests were being articulated primarily by representatives of agencies, and by other organized groups in the Downtown Eastside, many of which were capable of doing so more or less effectively; however, without direct resident input, community demands were open to the criticism that they reflected the ideological or self-interested bias of the organizations themselves. In addition, it was often the same handful of residents coming to most meetings. This prompted discussions on how to encourage input from a broad cross-section of SRO residents, and resulted in a process for the hard-to-reach (discussed in (ii) below). However, certain forms of mainstream process also had some success in generating resident participation that was more broadly-based. One of these was the focus-group format.

Focus Groups

As noted in the previous chapter, the focus groups (Task Groups) grew out of the necessity for discussing key subject areas concurrently in smaller groups. In fact, the Task Groups evolved into something quite different: Each group was chaired (or co-chaired) by a planner or community liaison person from one of the participating City departments. Because the Victory Square process was a multi-departmental effort, it was possible to match departments with Task Groups having topic areas falling within that department’s mandate. More importantly, departmental mandates influenced the direction and agenda of the Task Groups to which they had been assigned, and became a vehicle for furthering the interests of the stakeholders who fell within their mandate.
A good example is provided by the "Housing" and the "Health and Social Issues" Task Group. The City's Housing Department saw the low-cost housing issue as clearly within their mandate, and Social Planning saw housing as the most important social issue in the process. Ultimately, staff from the Housing and Social Planning Departments led discussion in a combined "Housing, Health and Social Issues" Task Group. This group was very effective in generating a strong set of policy recommendations, particularly in the area of housing policy. This included the objective that there be no net loss of low-income housing as a consequence of the revitalization process - a recommendation that became a guiding principle of the draft Plan.

This Task Group may have been successful for a variety of reasons:

1. It had a narrow focus on issues which were of direct relevance to the low-income community.

2. The group was well-attended by local residents. This may have been partly due to the central location and non-threatening venue of meetings (VCC City Centre). Resident participation was further encouraged by incentives such as the provision of complimentary food.

3. With a sufficient proportion of those in attendance being local residents, low-income participants may have felt less intimidated, having a sense of "ownership" over the group and the results it generated.
4. Residents felt that they were contributing to a product which could have a real impact when it was completed.

5. City staff played a key advocacy role in the group, as they did for other stakeholders in other groups. This may not have occurred in a single-department process; planners would likely have been cast in a more neutral role as mediators rather than advocates. The multi-departmental approach allowed a well-articulated set of agendas to be developed prior to the process of concession or compromise. This approach resulted in significant community empowerment, in the form of a vehicle which articulated local needs.

What did not happen in this phase is any significant devolution of control within the Task Groups. City staff led discussions for the duration of the groups and to some extent controlled the agenda, although it is impossible to speculate on the content of the recommendations had leadership devolved to community organizations. What is interesting, however, is that there was no criticism in this regard from community groups. Given the tight timeline (4 months) for this phase, it may be that the Housing and Social Planners were seen as the best equipped and/or best situated to advance the deliberations of the group. More importantly, it is not clear that any community organization was in the position to claim a leadership role in the Victory Square process. Moreover, to do so would likely have legitimizied a process which, for the reasons noted above, lacked community support.
Small Groups

As discussed in the previous chapter, a series of workshops, attended by 40-60 people, was convened in the Fall of 1993. The large group was divided into small groups having facilitators, with the intent of resolving contentious issues and fostering mutual understanding. A matrix listing policy options and their implications was produced for small group discussion (Appendix A). The role of the facilitator was to draw out discussions from all participants, while working through policy implications in the matrix. Each small group was mixed according to interest group, generating intense but constructive discussion which was recorded. The matrix was designed to be tabulated as a questionnaire which could be submitted at the end of a session or forwarded later. The questionnaire included a field for interest-group affiliation, e.g. property owner, resident, etc. Responses indicated that a fairly balanced and representative cross-section of stakeholders completed the exercise, although some participants found the complexity of the matrices overwhelming.

The use of facilitators in a structured, small group situation appears to have been a proactive and effective way to encourage one-on-one discourse among people who may not feel comfortable in a larger, more formal situation. Moreover, the questionnaire may have elicited written responses from participants who felt uncomfortable expressing their viewpoint directly to the group.

Copies of the matrices, with tabulated responses, were printed and distributed to participants, and formed part of the material to which City staff referred in efforts to craft strategies which would reconcile conflicting objectives. In the fall of 1995, the draft plan will be the
subject of a public review process before going to City Council for final approval. This process should be treated as an opportunity to continue to adjust public participation processes to be more appropriate for inner-city communities.

ii) Process for the Hard-To-Reach

As described in Chapter 3, the participation process for the hard-to-reach included kitchen-table meetings and a resident survey. The kitchen-table meetings and survey of residents were the most effective way of including and empowering residents of SRO hotels and others who would not normally attend mainstream City processes.

The Victory Square process is not the first time the City has conducted surveys of hotel residents. These surveys are representative samples of the local population, conducted in the privacy of a respondent’s room or apartment, by interviewers who are trained to work through questions in a non-threatening manner. In the Victory Square survey, the majority of interviewers were Downtown Eastside residents who, because of their "insider" knowledge of the community, "brought with them a number of social skills that increased the response rate. They knew how to approach a person for an interview and how best to ask some of the more serious questions" (Butt, 1993, 7).

More importantly, hiring and training local residents indicates a small but important commitment to provide direct tangible benefits to the low income community in the form of remuneration, work experience, job skills and improved confidence, and is an example of a
community economic development approach to an initiative which might otherwise have been implemented by outside professionals with benefits flowing out of the community.

Finally, the kitchen-table format is probably the most innovative inner-city process undertaken by the City. It represents a recognition that the concerns of low income residents are valid, and that appropriate new ways must be found to ensure their voice is heard by policy-makers. It also affirms a closer working relationship between the City and community groups, including consultation on process issues and joint facilitation of meetings. It can also involve the limited use of public funds, such as the payment of a translator, or in-kind donations; for example, allowing the use of City facilities to produce photocopy reproductions of meeting notices.

c. Summary

Aspects of the Victory Square public participation process exhibited "top-down" characteristics, producing difficulties which are predicted by the theoretical literature. In particular, the failure to match geography with community identification, and Council's adoption of overall objectives prior to formal public input, had predictable results in terms of lack of community commitment to the process, and provide an example of community disempowerment. However, the entrenchment of a low-income housing objective prior to public discussion empowered the existing community in a different way, by legitimizing community demands for a "no net loss" policy. This has implications for theory, in terms of the appropriateness of setting prior objectives.
Public participation occurred in both "mainstream" and "non-mainstream" formats. Many of the City's mainstream processes are not designed to enable meaningful participation from low-income people, particularly the hardest to reach, such as residents of SRO hotels. However, in the course of the Victory Square process, the format of participation was modified, or evolved, to increase the weight or effectiveness of participation from the resident community. The multi-departmental nature of the process was particularly beneficial in this regard, as it allowed departments to employ a focus group format to act as advocates for the various stakeholder groups - a dynamic which favoured the low-income community because it tended to level the "playing field", i.e. low-income people had a strong advocate within City Hall.

Finally, City staff worked with community leaders to devise innovative strategies to reach people who would not normally attend public meetings. This included meetings with residents, in the SRO hotels, and a survey of residents carried out, in part, by local residents. The survey, in addition to articulating resident needs and concerns, conferred direct benefits to the local community in the form of skills training, remuneration, and work experience.
3. DRAFT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

The remainder of this chapter is an analysis of the Victory Square draft policies, using the evaluation criteria outlined in Chapter 2.

The Victory Square Concept Plan is an attempt to reconcile a challenging combination of policy objectives, including revitalization, and the retention of low-cost housing. The process is complicated by divergences in short and long term goals: The area's present economic decline needs immediate attention, but the security of the low-income community, in the context of strong long-term residential development pressures, may be a much greater concern.

a. Economic Development

The revitalization strategy relies on moderate residential development and creation of a new market "niche" for the area. To the extent the strategy relies on development, it exhibits a traditional "top down" approach to revitalization, based on encouraging re-investment and an influx of purchasing power from outside the neighbourhood. Grass-roots community economic development strategies are not spelled out in this Plan, although it does set the groundwork for implementation of City-community partnerships involving businesses, educational institutions, residents and others. In addition to facilitating local business improvement, these partnerships are intended to create opportunities for work experience, skills development, and job creation tailored to local low-income residents (City of Vancouver, 1995, 19, 23). If these programs are implemented, some direct benefits may
accrue to the local community as a result of revitalization efforts. Because the partnerships would continue to be multi-departmental and multi-agency in nature, they may stand a good chance of addressing needs in a comprehensive and effective manner. To the extent that these partnerships require start-up funding, financial commitments from various levels of government will be required.

b. Form and Scale of Development

The emphasis on reuse of existing stock rather than demolition, and or moderately-scaled infill development, means that physical change would be incremental, and would minimize disruption of social networks in the low-income community. The area’s history and character would be retained, and pressure to demolish SRO hotels would be reduced.

In some respects, this model of revitalization resembles the "careful urban renewal" approach taken in the Berlin district of Kreutzberg in the 1980s, where intervention in the district’s urban form was minimal, concentrating primarily on the renovation of living spaces for area residents (Krüger, 1993, 345).

Unlike Kreutzberg, Victory Square is, or soon will be, attractive for market residential development; this was not initially a concern in Kreutzberg because the area was geographically marginal. With the removal of the Berlin Wall, the area is now central and is experiencing rising land prices and concern for the survival of programs for the existing population (Krüger, 1993, 353). As noted in Chapter 2 (p. 15), downzoning an area in the
context of high demand protects the physical stock but does not prevent (and sometimes encourages) upfiltering and conversion.

c. Housing

The Victory Square Plan contains most of the elements of an effective municipal low-income housing strategy, as identified by Hulchanski (Chapter 2). The strategy is proactive: it addresses the preservation of low-cost housing through regulation, and through programs for the rehabilitation and management of units, and the supply of new stock. It also includes a commitment to monitoring stock and to one-for-one replacement, and focuses its efforts on a small area which may be particularly susceptible to market pressures, rather than dealing with the entire central area at once. The problem with focusing on a very small area is the lack of community identification experienced in the Victory Square process.

However, the housing strategy could be compromised by the revitalization strategy, which could produce the kind of market demand capable of threatening existing stock. To the extent the revitalization strategy relies on encouraging market residential developments, such as loft condominiums, a demand for conversion of SRO hotels could ultimately be created. This possibility is reinforced by zoning changes which would allow the entire upper-floor space in existing buildings to be renovated for market residential use.

On the other hand, based on trends discussed in Chapter 2, the revitalization process may be inevitable in the long-term, and stronger restraints on development than those proposed in the Victory Square plan may not be politically acceptable. In addition, discouraging
development entirely limits opportunities to augment low-income units through funding mechanisms such as density bonuses and DCLs. Therefore, it may be preferable to foster a moderate and controlled pace of development, which would allow time to implement an effective housing policy, and which could provide benefits in the form of private funding sources for new low-cost units.

d. Housing: Program Categories

i) Protecting the Tenants

Tenant protection measures are not limited to specific geographical areas like Victory Square, and the City has overall tenant protection programs which are outside the scope of this thesis. However, the Victory Square Plan does contemplate recommendations to the Provincial Government for expansion of rent supplements for people with special needs. Although this policy would have broad geographical application, a high proportion of current SRO residents in Victory Square and the Downtown Eastside would be prime beneficiaries. The recommendation is weak, as it depends on Provincial approval for funding.

The most significant tenant protection measure is a recommended policy that new (or upgraded) housing under City control would give first priority to existing residents (i.e. SRO tenants) within the planning area. This differs from non-market housing built under Provincial programs, where potential residents are drawn from City-wide waiting lists. Under the Provincial system, non-profit housing societies screen applicants according to a range of factors which in many cases do not include local area needs. If "replacement" housing
followed this model in Victory Square, potentially none of those units would have gone to the existing local residents. Under the Victory Square policy, the City (or non-profit managing societies) will no longer be able to screen for the most "desirable" tenants as before, and housing for some of the hardest to house will have to be provided, including people with drug abuse problems and individuals with difficult mental and behavioural patterns.

ii) Protecting the Stock

The housing strategy provides a range of policies which do not rely entirely on limitations to the scale of development. This includes incentives, such as density bonuses for retention, and density transfers, as well as a range of regulatory measures such as conversion fees and increased demolition fees, denials of stratification requests, and a requirement to replace units on a one-for-one basis as a precondition for demolition or conversion. These policies go beyond protection of physical units (preservation of physical stock does not prevent gentrification), and attempt to maintain existing rental levels and tenure types, so that the physical stock continues to house the existing population.

iii) Rehabilitating and/or adding new stock

In addition to requiring one-for-one replacement, the Plan proposes a proactive replacement strategy based on "no net loss" of low-cost units. This includes the implementation of DCLs, consideration of payment-in-lieu from major projects, and City purchase of land for non-market housing within the area. As regards the latter, the City has purchased two sites in
the Victory Square area to date. The disadvantage of the land acquisition program is its dependency on Provincial non-market housing allocations to build the actual housing units.

The Plan also contemplates increased City funding for purchase of SROs. While the acquisition of sites is a function of decisions made within the City’s Housing and Properties department, the program is community-based in its devolution of management to non-profit societies. As this plan is implemented, the management of new projects or rehabilitated hotels should, as far as possible, be delegated to Downtown groups, and be targeted to area residents rather than people from outside the community.

The Plan’s commitment to one-for-one replacement goes beyond the range of recommendations developed to date. This means that if stock is actually lost at a rate greater than the rate at which the City can replace it, the Plan requires staff to report to Council on further measures to protect or provide units. This commitment may provide some assurance that the objectives of the Plan will be achieved, because it recognizes the inherent uncertainties in predicting development pressures, the availability of public funding, and other variables. Whether further initiatives are implemented, however, will depend in part on the political commitment of the Council of the day.

e. Summary

Evaluation of the draft policies and programs focuses on three substantive aspects of the Plan: economic development, scale of development, and housing policy.
Elements of the economic revitalization strategy which are most fully developed relate to business revitalization and development policy. A significant element in the revitalization strategy is a development policy encouraging moderate residential development in existing renovated buildings and in some new low-rise projects. To this extent, the strategy is "top down", and relies on investment from outside the community, as well as the purchasing power of higher income newcomers. In addition, the strategy risks increasing the potential pressure for conversion of SRO hotels to other uses, despite a zoning which promises to discourage physical demolition.

However, the Plan does call for the implementation of a partnership structure (as yet unspecified) to involve the community, businesses, and senior and municipal governments in a range of locally-based initiatives. This may provide an opportunity to pursue projects which incorporate community development principles toward local empowerment and a sustainable neighbourhood economic benefits.

Perhaps the strongest element of the Plan is its low-cost housing policy, which goes beyond restrictions on scale and density to outline a proactive strategy of stock retention and augmentation. While elements of the strategy, such as City land purchase, remain reliant on senior government housing allocations, other elements, such as City funding and a range of development controls and incentives, offer some promise that the existing community may be secured.
CHAPTER 5 - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This thesis provides an analysis and evaluation of a contemporary inner-city revitalization initiative, using the Victory Square planning process, and subsequent draft Concept Plan, as a case study.

Victory Square is a small, Council-defined planning area in downtown Vancouver. It borders on the Central Business District and the Downtown Eastside, a low-income inner-city district. The closure of the district’s last major retail anchor (followed by other businesses) left in its wake vacant storefronts, derelict heritage buildings, and a sizeable residential community living mainly in single room occupancy hotels and rooming houses. The municipal government responded by initiating a public consultation process for the purpose of drafting a plan for commercial revitalization, heritage preservation and protection of the low-income community.

Urban renewal or revitalization has undergone many changes in the post-war period. In Vancouver, neighbourhood clearance and redevelopment has given way to public consultation, local area plans, and neighbourhood preservation. However, revitalization has consistently benefited higher-income groups at the expense of existing residents of lesser means. This is due partly to post-industrial demographic changes and their spatial consequences in the inner-city, partly to municipal land use policies, and partly to a lack of political commitment to address the impacts of revitalization on existing residents. The case study develops a framework for evaluation which begins with the normative proposition that low-income residents should benefit directly from revitalization efforts. The literature review
provides the theoretical basis for the evaluation criteria employed herein, which focus on community development principles, "bottom up" local economic initiatives, and a proactive housing policy. The Victory Square public consultation process is evaluated according to principles of community identification, meaningful participation, and empowerment; the economic development strategy is assessed by the extent to which local management and control of local initiatives will be encouraged and assisted; and the housing strategy is evaluated according to the threefold criteria of tenant protection, preservation of existing units, and creation of replacement low-cost housing.

The draft Victory Square Plan, and its attendant public consultation process, illustrates that elements of top-down planning remain attractive to planners and policy-makers in the 1990s, as evidenced by pre-determined objectives and considerable reliance on external investment in the form of condominium construction and renovation to house new residents with purchasing power. Some of the predicted consequences of top-down planning were borne out by experience in Victory Square: the distrust generated by the adoption of "preliminary objectives," the low level of community identification with imposed planning boundaries which reflect existing zoning boundaries rather than community geography, and the heated controversy surrounding the proposed conversion of the former Woodward's department store for condominiums. On the other hand, the Victory Square process displays new approaches to public consultation which reflect more inclusive and democratic models of planning, particularly evident in the focus groups and "kitchen table" meetings, which involve attempts to give low-income residents a more effective voice in the policy-making process.
As theory suggests, the geographic definition of a community, for planning purposes, is not always straightforward, as a single area may contain areas of overlap claimed by more than one community of interest. To some extents, these interests may be delineated by pre-existing zoning districts such as Gastown, located immediately north of Victory Square. For example, Gastown is "claimed" by at least two communities of interest with widely divergent views for the future of the area—the Gastown merchants, property owners, and new middle class residents, versus low-income residents and their advocates in the larger Downtown Eastside community. Thus, the challenge in the Downtown Eastside will be to develop a vision for the wider community which recognizes the divergence of communities within it. A promising first step has been the creation of an interdepartmental group to coordinate initiatives for the "easterly downtown" communities, including an area-wide development impacts study, an area-wide housing plan, and a revised land-use plan in Gastown. The divergence of interests in the Victory Square area, and the presence of a highly vulnerable community, has interesting implications for public consultation and empowerment. Theory reviewed in this thesis suggests that, in most cases, communities should be involved from the outset in a public process of goal-definition, setting of objectives, etc., with planners ensuring effective participation on the part of disadvantaged and disempowered segments of society. In the subject case, preliminary goals and objectives were articulated by City Council prior to formal public consultation. Ironically, this "top-down" Council action empowered the low-income community by legitimizing demands for effective housing (and other) strategies, by committing Council to action, and by setting a political message that a particular balance of objectives must be achieved, despite divergent interests and inequalities in political power. This has important implications for planning processes where power and influence are
unevenly distributed, because it suggests that prescribing appropriate boundaries to the scope of public discussions may help to ensure that the interests of all groups are on the table.

The Victory Square public consultation process explores innovative ways to empower hard-to-reach low-income residents, as well as modifications to mainstream processes to enhance community participation. Participation in mainstream processes decreases as a function of both physical and psychological distance from meeting venue. This is particularly true for many SRO residents for whom the downtown, corporate environment is intimidating and overwhelming. Beyond location and venue, the structure of mainstream planning processes can be modified to strengthen the voice of disadvantaged communities. In Victory Square, an interdepartmental staff team augmented the City’s planning department for the purpose of conducting public discussion and formulating policy. In addition to bringing a wide range of expertise and perspective to interrelated issues which require coordinated efforts, the interdepartmental approach provided opportunities to empower low-income residents. The best example was the focus group ("task group") exercise, which allowed departmental staff to advocate for one or another interest in the course of public discussion in a particular subject area. For example, the "Housing, Health and Social Issues" task group was particularly instrumental in providing a platform for issues of concern to the existing resident community.

Two methods for obtaining input from the "hard-to-reach" (i.e. residents of SRO hotels who do not normally attend meetings in mainstream public consultation processes) are worthy of note. One is the resident survey and the other is the "kitchen table" meeting. The resident survey goes beyond traditional data collection as a powerful instrument for articulating the
interests and issues of disadvantaged communities. It has been employed by DERA in the Downtown Eastside, and by the City in planning for Downtown South, as well as in Victory Square. In Victory Square, City Staff and community advocates agreed on a devolution of control in which local residents were trained in interview techniques and conducted the survey work for which they were paid. Thus, data collection, rather than being simply a technical exercise, becomes a way to give low-income residents a voice, and at the same time to empower residents to participate directly in community development, earn income, and gain skills, work experience, and confidence. This could provide a model for the direct involvement of local residents in other initiatives which might otherwise be carried out by City staff or outside consultants.

The "kitchen table" meetings provided a forum for direct communication between residents of SRO hotels and City Staff, unmediated by service providers, advocates and community groups. Rather than attempting to adjust the location, venue, and context of mainstream public consultation, the kitchen table meetings brought the consultation process to where people live and feel comfortable, in a casual, non-threatening form of discussion. Proactive outreach such as this indicates how far the notion of public consultation has evolved; the requirement for inclusion and empowerment is satisfied not by simply providing opportunities for participation and sending out invitations, but by actively pursuing the input of those who would not otherwise be heard.

The Victory Square public consultation process was followed by recommendations contained in the draft Victory Square Concept Plan, released in June, 1995. Two key elements in the Plan are an economic revitalization strategy and a strategy to protect the existing low-income
community. A major component of the economic development strategy is a policy to accommodate loft-condominiums in renovated heritage buildings and in new infill structures. While the proposed scale and extent of development is moderate, the strategy exhibits a continuing reliance on top-down, land-development-based policies aimed at securing investment from outside the community in the form of development capital, and the spending power of residents with disposable income. In addition, a policy favouring market residential development carries with it a risk of gentrification, displacement of the existing population, and homelessness.

Similarly, The Plan’s business development policies advocate the cultivation of a new regional or city-wide market for the area which, by definition, relies on attracting purchasing power from outside the community. While a revitalized business community and vibrant street life will benefit this area generally, the question remains whether these new businesses will serve or benefit the low-income population, who cannot afford the goods and services offered by businesses catering to middle class residents and shoppers.

If the existing low-income community is to reap direct economic benefits from revitalization, the City will need to aggressively pursue a wide range of community economic development (C.E.D.) initiatives in Victory Square and in the wider Downtown Eastside community. While the Plan includes C.E.D. as a "social" rather than economic strategy, its stated commitment to partnership with the community may create an opportunity to strengthen the existing low-income community, provided the City (and other levels of government) are prepared to devolve a significant level of control and management to local people.
In the final analysis, however, the future of the existing community rests not on economic
development initiatives, but on the extent to which low-cost housing can be secured.

In the context of revitalization, much of the community development literature proposes
C.E.D. approaches for communities whose traditional resource or industrial base has
collapsed, and for which C.E.D. may be essentially a strategy of last resort (for example, see
Boothroyd and Davis, 1993). By contrast, the Vancouver metropolitan region is economically
dynamic, with one of the highest population growth rates in North America, and a strong
downtown core in terms both of commercial activity and residential population. Structural
economic changes, household diversity, and changing consumer preferences, along with high
in-migration of affluent households, have resulted in dramatic and well-documented socio-
economic change in high amenity central neighbourhoods, such as Kitsilano. However, by
the early 1990s, continuing evidence of social change indicated that all central
neighbourhoods were potential candidates for gentrification. In the downtown, these trends
have been paralleled by the rezoning and redevelopment of major tracts of industrial and
marginal commercial land which will accommodate an additional 30,000 residents in the
downtown peninsula. This renewed interest in the downtown has led to speculation that
traditional zones of discard (such as "skid row" districts) may not exist as such much longer.
Signs of this prediction are already visible, as historic districts such as Yaletown and
Gastown undergo the transition to upscale loft development.

In this context, the current state of economic decline in Victory Square is likely to be a
temporary phenomenon, as processes at work in adjoining areas such as Gastown spread
geographically to other similar areas. One policy response to protect the existing community
would be to prohibit new market developments altogether. However, this solution is unlikely
to be feasible politically, and in any event should be seen only as a last resort. An alternative approach, outlined in the Victory Square Plan, is to allow a slow, controlled process of revitalization which contemplates a moderate amount of development, tempered by a credible and effective housing strategy which addresses the risk of gentrification through protection of low-income tenants, the preservation of existing SRO stock, and the creation of new low-cost replacement housing. Through a combination of development charges, penalties, and incentives, market-oriented developments can provide leverage to help build replacement units targeted to existing residents. It is essential that the City commit to a one-for-one replacement goal and a monitoring process to ensure that this goal is being attained. The Plan will likely be approved in February 1996, with area rezoning completed by the summer of that year. The following year, and for each successive year, the City will monitor the total stock of low-cost housing in the planning area. This will include a report on the total number of SRO units lost since the reference year (1995), and the number of new low-cost housing units created. The goal is to balance units lost with units gained over the long term. In anticipation of potential future SRO losses, the City has purchased two sites within the planning area to accommodate future subsidized, non-market housing developments, and has the intention of purchasing additional sites as needed and as they become available. However, as senior government funding to construct the units will likely be limited or non-existent, other, creative ways of funding these units will be required, some of which are suggested in Chapter 5 of the Plan. Ultimately, if the monitoring trend indicates that the goal of one-for-one replacement is not being realized, staff will report back to Council on additional measures to redress the balance. These should include additional funds from public and private sources, and, if necessary, further restrictions on market-oriented developments do not contribute significantly to the low-cost-housing stock.
This thesis concludes that while aspects of the Victory Square program share the "top down" characteristics of its predecessors, a conscious and innovative effort was made to include the disadvantaged people who comprise the majority of residents in the community. While these steps were small, they demonstrated a willingness to redress imbalances of power and influence among participants in the process. Finally, housing policies contained in the Plan indicate a commitment to a proactive strategy of housing retention and replacement which recognizes the frailty of low-cost housing stock in the context of a rapidly gentrifying central area.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
<th>Revitalization Implications</th>
<th>Heritage Implications</th>
<th>Low Income Housing Implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRATEGIES</td>
<td>- reduces parking problems for destination shoppers  - could work with commercial parking - enhances upgrading of heritage buildings  - encourages tenants to become owners and developers of heritage buildings  - makes heritage buildings more economically viable  - encourages reuse and upgrading</td>
<td>- loss of low income housing, eg. SRO's and live/work studios  - some residents may face homelessness  - loss of low income housing, if seismic relaxations make it feasible to change SRO’s and other buildings to market housing and artists housing</td>
<td>- low income people might have to move or may face homelessness  - loss of low income housing, if seismic relaxations make it feasible to change SRO’s and other buildings to market housing and artists housing</td>
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<td>Low-Income Housing (LHC)</td>
<td>Heritage (HR)</td>
<td>Government (G)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRATEGIES</td>
<td>IMPLEMENTATION</td>
<td>IMPACTS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- **For Low-Income Housing**
  - Provides decent secure housing
  - Funding is limited
  - Development is needed

- **Heritage**
  - Provides decent secure housing
  - Funding is limited
  - Development is needed

- **Government**
  - Provides decent secure housing
  - Funding is limited
  - Development is needed

- **For Market Housing**
  - Provides decent secure housing
  - Funding is limited
  - Development is needed

- **Heritage (HR) + Government (G)**
  - Provides decent secure housing
  - Funding is limited
  - Development is needed

- **Low-Income Housing (LHC) + Heritage (HR)**
  - Provides decent secure housing
  - Funding is limited
  - Development is needed

- **Low-Income Housing (LHC) + Government (G)**
  - Provides decent secure housing
  - Funding is limited
  - Development is needed

- **Heritage (HR) + Government (G)**
  - Provides decent secure housing
  - Funding is limited
  - Development is needed

- **Low-Income Housing (LHC) + Heritage (HR) + Government (G)**
  - Provides decent secure housing
  - Funding is limited
  - Development is needed
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
<th>Heritage Implications</th>
<th>Low Income Housing Implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• will reuse buildings and add to residential population</td>
<td>+ encourages upgrading of heritage buildings</td>
<td>+ provides decent secure housing for low income people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- if renovation for other uses is discouraged, area may not revitalize</td>
<td>+ provides another economic use for old vacant upper floors</td>
<td>- provincial social housing funding is limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ encourages retention of SRO buildings</td>
<td>+ encourages retention of heritage listed SRO buildings</td>
<td>+ encourages retention of SRO buildings, live/work studios until replacement can occur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- decreasing the density rights will further discourage redevelopment, and</td>
<td>+ encourages retention of heritage buildings because of cost</td>
<td>• a limited number of SRO units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- will not create a local economy that will further provide another economic use</td>
<td>+ encourages upgrading of heritage buildings</td>
<td>- additional funds could help development and maximize available funding for heritage renovations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- does not improve the population with disposable income</td>
<td>+ encourages upgrading of heritage buildings</td>
<td>+ encourages retention of heritage listed SRO buildings</td>
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<td>- will not create a local economy that will further provide another economic use</td>
<td>+ encourages upgrading of heritage buildings</td>
<td>- additional funds could help development and maximize available funding for heritage renovations</td>
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<td>- will decrease the density rights</td>
<td>+ encourages upgrading of heritage buildings</td>
<td>- additional funds could help development and maximize available funding for heritage renovations</td>
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<tr>
<td>- additional fund levies (del) for new construction</td>
<td>+ encourages upgrading of heritage buildings</td>
<td>- additional funds could help development and maximize available funding for heritage renovations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**3.4** Encourage social housing in existing buildings by seeking additional City and Provincial funding for heritage renovations.

**3.5** In addition to 1. and 2. on page 1, encourage artist housing in existing buildings by fostering better understanding and increased use of existing By-law relaxations for artist live/work studios.

**3.6** Encourage retention of low income housing (for SRO residents and artists) by keeping area density low.

**4.** Charge development cost levies (del) for new construction.

**112**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Conservation</th>
<th>Revitalization Strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Income Housing</td>
<td>Impacts and Challenges</td>
<td>+ Encourage Heritage Retention</td>
<td>+ Improve area image, build upon heritage strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage</td>
<td>Impacts and Challenges</td>
<td>+ Could reduce property values</td>
<td>+ Encourage restoration of heritage buildings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-use</td>
<td>Impacts and Challenges</td>
<td>+ Reduce density (5,500)</td>
<td>+ Loos of low income housing</td>
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<td>Small No.</td>
<td>Impacts and Challenges</td>
<td>+ Keep density (5,500)</td>
<td>+ Loss of low income housing</td>
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<tr>
<td>55-95% of</td>
<td>Impacts and Challenges</td>
<td>+ Keep density (5,500)</td>
<td>+ Buildings for lower compliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>95% or more</td>
<td>Impacts and Challenges</td>
<td>+ Keep density (5,500)</td>
<td>+ Buildings for lower compliance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- discourages redevelopment
- reduces loss of low income housing
- would be a condition
- leasing of stores and upper
- commercial buildings
- would preserve a unique
- Province contributes $10,900 towards the land cost, and the City contributes $4,420 per apartment. For the construction of 55 social housing apartments, estimates range between $35 million and $40 million, and the Province to invest $10,945,000.

**Favour: Do it!

Tour Opinion**
Don't Fav, r Favour

6.2 Establish a lower base FSR and provide FSR bonuses for:

- specified uses (e.g., market and non-market housing, or cultural uses);
- the retention of heritage buildings;
- and the retention or replacement of SRO hotels and other low cost housing (e.g., rooming houses, artist studios).

- The maximum FSR that can be built on a site is 5.0.
- In cases where bonuses generate potential site densities exceeding 5 FSR, the City will assist in transferring densities off-site.
- As a condition of any bonus, any heritage building must be retained, and any low cost housing must be retained or replaced on-site or site.

6.3 Establish lower base FSR, with existing bonus for social housing, heritage retention and cultural uses.

**Strategies**

+ Where owners are able to assemble land, bonus provides the density required for redevelopment to be economically feasible.
+ Some new buildings may encourage renovations of larger heritage buildings.
+ Cultural venues would provide City-wide destination attractions and attract positive night-time activities.
+ Unless a viable density transfer mechanism is put in place, few SRO owners will use the system to upgrade their buildings.
+ Sustains property values and therefore the equity for those owners who want to finance renovations.
+ Decreasing the allowable density discourages development, may reduce property values and may prevent upgrading (as banks may be less willing to finance when the density is reduced).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Area through new development supports heritage scale and character</th>
<th>Existing buildings may not provide sufficient heritage character in the area</th>
<th>5.6. Keep heritage comparable to</th>
<th>5.6. Keep heritage comparable to</th>
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<td>Community amenities</td>
<td>Inundated waterfront and forested wetlands provide oppotunities to trails off homes and longer are accessible and enjoyable</td>
<td>Inundated waterfront and forested wetlands provide oppotunities to trails off homes and longer are accessible and enjoyable</td>
<td>Buildings at block ends (90' x 150')</td>
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