

**THE CONTINUUM OF SHELTER UNCERTAINTY:
A CASE STUDY OF VANCOUVER PLANNING RESPONSES TO HOMELESSNESS**

by

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ABSTRACT

One of the major obstacles to dealing with homelessness has been the difficulty in defining the term. In the mid-1980s, the United Nations proposed a definition of homelessness which acknowledges a range of housing related needs. However, in practice the public sector generally uses a narrower meaning of the term, considering only those who are dependent on emergency shelters and those absolutely without shelter, to be "homeless".

No common definition of homelessness has gained wide acceptance in Canada. Conceptual gaps are created, as the problem of homelessness is defined differently by various sectors and levels of government. The absence of formal recognition of this complex social problem has not served to diminish its impact.

An alternative concept of homelessness relates to the continuum of shelter uncertainty among the poverty population. Certain markings of vulnerability to homelessness have been identified to determine which groups are "at risk" of experiencing homelessness.

This thesis contends that the broader concept of homeless may be utilized at the municipal level, to better characterise the local nature of the problem and inform responses to local housing need.

A case study is presented to explore how the term "homelessness" is operationalized by the City of Vancouver. The opportunities and constraints of municipal housing planning and policy in addressing homelessness are analyzed.

Service providers and government representatives were surveyed to evaluate the effectiveness

of the City of Vancouver's responses to the homeless. While the limitations on municipal action were acknowledged, respondents generally support an expanded role for the City as a more proactive facilitator and advocate.

The study finds that the range and diversity of acute housing need in the Vancouver case, supports the rationale for broadening the meaning of homelessness and including at risk groups in local planning for the homeless.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
 1. THE SOCIAL PROBLEM OF HOMELESSNESS	 1
1.1 Overview of the Social and Economic Context	1
1.2 Emergence of a Problem: from Definition to Policy	3
1.3 Why Examine the Risk of Homelessness at the Local Level?	4
1.4 Research Methods and Scope of Study	5
 2. DEFINING HOMELESSNESS	 8
2.1 Social Perceptions and Stereotypes	8
2.2 Causes of Homelessness	9
2.3 Problems of Enumerating the Homeless	10
2.4 Definitions of Homelessness	11
2.4.1 The United Nations' Definition	12
2.4.2 A Canadian Perspective	13
2.5 The Continuum of Shelter Uncertainty	13
2.6 Identifying the At-Risk Homeless Population	15
2.6.1 Housing of Last Resort	15
2.6.2 Rent-to-Income Cost Burdens	16
2.6.3 Over-Crowding	16
2.7 Summary	17
 3. THE EVOLVING ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES	 18
3.1 Development of Canadian Housing Policy	18
3.1.1 Early Policy Development	18
3.1.2 Canadian Legislative Framework	19
3.2 Recent Evolution of Social Housing Policy	20
3.3 Who is Responsible for Housing the Homeless?	21
3.4 Federal Responses to Homelessness	22
3.5 Municipal Approaches to Homelessness	25
3.5.1 Determining Municipal Authority	25
3.5.2 Typology of Approaches	26

3.5.3	Examples of Municipal Strategies	27
3.6	Summary	30
4.	PLANNING RESPONSES TO HOMELESSNESS IN VANCOUVER	32
4.1	Introduction to Case Study of Vancouver	32
4.2	Vancouver Planning in Face of Shelter Uncertainty	37
4.2.1	The History of Social Housing	37
4.2.2	Present Status of City Planning	38
4.2.3	Other Significant Players	42
4.3	An Overview of the At Risk Homeless Population	49
4.3.1	Profiles of SRO and Rooming House Residents	49
4.3.2	Special "At Risk" Populations	51
4.4	Analysis of Vancouver's Approaches to Homelessness	58
4.4.1	Evaluation of the City's Initiatives	58
4.4.2	Limitations on Municipal Action	65
4.4.3	Establishing Partnerships	67
4.4.4	Regional Issues	68
4.5	Summary of Case Study	70
5.	IMPLICATIONS FOR MUNICIPAL POLICY AND PLANNING	71
5.1	Recommendations for the Vancouver Case	71
5.2	A Broader Definition of Homelessness	74
5.3	Municipal Approaches to Homelessness and the Role of Planning	75
5.4	Areas of Further Research	78
5.5	Conclusion	79
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	80
	<u>Print Sources</u>	80
	<u>Persons and Organizations Consulted</u>	88
	APPENDIX A	92

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Proportion of Vancouver Rental Housing Available to Those on GAIN	34
Table 2	Vancouver Emergency Shelters and Related Services	47

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Maps of Vancouver Case Study Area	36
Figure 2	Vancouver Urban Core Shelterless Survey (1989-1990)	41
Figure 3	Total Annual Vancouver Social Housing Completions (1985-1993)	44
Figure 4	Total Vancouver Downtown Core SRO Hotel and Rooming House Stock (1978-1994)	59

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1. THE SOCIAL PROBLEM OF HOMELESSNESS

1.1 Overview of the Social and Economic Context of Homelessness

In recent decades, the complex interplay of the technological revolution, the integration of capital markets and the process of economic restructuring has been reshaping the global socio-economic landscape (Davis and Hutton, 1991). These forces have world-wide implications for social and political structures, and continue to influence the economic geography of North American cities. Through the process of de-industrialization, information-oriented and service sector industries have supplanted the economic importance of the manufacturing sectors in most developed and in many newly-industrialized nations (Castells, 1985; Davis and Hutton, 1991).

The revitalization of some high-amenity central business districts (CBDs) has accompanied this economic shift, in order to meet the needs of an increasingly polarized workforce. The gentrification of neighbourhoods adjacent to such CBDs has stimulated the rapid depletion of low-income housing stock and the displacement of many "Skid Row" residents.

Some U.S. analysts have argued that the rental housing crisis in cities is over-stated or does not exist (Weicher, Villani and Roistacher, 1981), and they discount the notion of an escalating homeless problem. Others argue that the existing homeless problem is not directly attributable to a crisis in affordable housing (Beirne, 1989).

Some conservative analysis downplays evidence of a housing emergency and maintains that public sector intervention in the private housing market is a needless interference in free enterprise (Salins, 1987). This theory suggests that the decreasing availability of low-cost housing and rising rents have directly resulted from increases in the quality and size of housing (Salins, 1987).

However, recent research indicates that overall, poor and minority households have not benefited proportionally from improvements to the housing stock (Ringheim, 1990). In addition, the

incidence of housing problems (cost burdens, overcrowding and inadequacies) grew faster than the rate of new household formation (Ringheim, 1990).

Many analysts agree that there is a causal link between the economic restructuring of cities and the increasing numbers of new homeless (Hopper, Susser and Conover, 1985; Blau, 1992). Most of the factors recognized to contribute to homelessness have occurred repeatedly during the post-World War II era. However these factors did not result in the levels of homelessness which are evident in North America today (Hopper and Hamberg, 1984).

This suggests a significant qualitative change in the nature of poverty and/or in the conditions surrounding it. "Reverse filtering" (or gentrification), a relatively new phenomenon in North America, has been presented as a key precipitating factor in the rise of urban homelessness in the 1970s and 1980s (Hopper and Hamberg, 1984; Hopper, Susser and Conover, 1985; Stone, 1992).

"Reverse-filtering" contravenes the process by which housing units are usually supplied (or "filtered down") to lower-income households. The polarization of income divisions, and the escalation of land values and housing charges have stimulated this reverse trend, "filtering-up" low-income housing back to middle and upper-income households (Zarembka, 1990). This process pervasively leads to a net loss of low-income housing units, particularly SROs (Lincoln, 1980; Hopper and Hamberg, 1984), and contributes to increasing numbers of "at risk" and literally homeless.

Empirical research has identified the systemic nature of homelessness in an aggregate housing ratio (McChesney, 1992). This ratio is the number of households living under the poverty line over the number of affordable low-income housing units available. Homelessness inevitably results when the number of poor households exceeds the number of low-income units available in the housing stock. In an acute low-income housing shortage, when the number of households who can pay more

for their housing is exhausted, and when the number who can "double-up" with friends and family is exhausted, the remainder have no housing options and will become homeless.

From this perspective, to be effective in dealing with homelessness, solutions to alleviate this social problem must include strategies to decrease the number of poor households competing for affordable housing and/or increase the number of low-income units available to them (McChesney, 1992).

1.2 Emergence of a Problem: from Definition to Policy-Making

A social problem is a configuration of events or situations which must be identified and singled out for attention by the general public. Prior to this public identification, the political debate over social problems usually confines itself to whether or not there is a problem society ought to address (Blumer, 1971). Only as it acquires broad social legitimacy will a social problem become the focus of policy or coordinated action (Hulchanski, 1987).

The process of problem definition is largely political, since it entails value decisions (Innes, 1990). Public sector priorities affect the process of identifying the social problem itself and therefore influence the options developed to solve that problem (Burch and Michaels, 1991). Planning involves anticipation of social problems and formation of responses to manage or solve such problems, within the constraints of political and economic frameworks.

The evolution of the North American definition of homelessness has been characterised by society's ambivalent responses to the homeless and those at risk of homelessness (Hoch, 1987). During the 1980s, however, homelessness emerged as a growing social problem in North American cities, and as a political issue.

Determining the meaning of homelessness has proved problematic because it is not a precise

condition. Subsequently, a wide range of definitions and meanings have evolved for the term "homeless". Narrow problem definition has generally been used as a policy instrument to minimize government responsibility for the homeless.

This thesis supports the premise that "homelessness means more than the simple absence of shelter" (Daly, 1988pl). It focuses on the continuum of shelter uncertainty, which ranges from the obviously domiciled to the obviously homeless. The thesis contends that the definition of homeless may be broadened at the municipal level, to better characterise the local nature of the problem. The "at risk" homeless population needs to be identified locally, if municipal housing policy is to address or attempt to ameliorate the problem of urban homelessness.

To the extent that the continuum of shelter uncertainty and the population "at risk" of homelessness go unrecognized, gaps may remain in housing planning and policy.

1.3 Why Examine the Risk of Homelessness at the Local Level?

Evidence of public poverty is generally considered detrimental to a city's business interests, particularly homelessness in the central business district (CBD). Municipal inattention to this social problem runs contrary to economic development strategies. When homelessness proliferates, municipal governments appear incompetent (Blau, 1992).

Among the many factors which contribute to the extent of homelessness in a city, two principal factors are the availability and affordability of rental housing for the lowest income population. The specifics of housing problems tend to vary from region to region, and city to city. Locally-developed programs often provide the most appropriate solutions to homelessness (Daly, 1988pl). Local governments are generally well positioned to identify and develop multi-faceted programs which include non-housing services, such as health and education (Carter and McAfee,

1990).

With regard to homelessness, preventative action is an important element to the base of solutions. It may cost less in economic and social terms to intercede before homelessness occurs, than to attempt to stem the flow once the cycle of homelessness begins. A variety of projects and services, including emergency, transitional and permanent housing are required to address the complex problems associated with homelessness (Daly, 1988p1).

This complexity requires an integrated approach to solution-making and collaboration between public, private and third sector players, and the consumers of services themselves. Without this collaboration, cities become problem managers by default. Increasingly then municipalities have attempted to harness the myriad of players and move them toward locally defined solutions. The most effective solutions to provide affordable housing are supported by partnerships between different levels of government, as well as the private and "non-profit" third sectors (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 1991; Hulchanski, Eberle, Olds and Stewart, 1991; Carter and McAfee, 1990). Cities must assume an active role in establishing these local programs and supporting joint public-private projects (Daly, 1988p1).

Planning links theoretical knowledge with practical action (Friedmann, 1987). If cities maintain a knowledge base on the local "at risk" homeless population, they are better positioned to lobby senior governments about the distinct parameters of the social problem and of program funding requirements.

1.4 Research Methods and Scope of Study

A confluence of social, political and economic factors are attributed with causing the growth of homelessness in North America (Hopper and Hamberg, 1984; Oberlander and Fallick, 1988;

Piliavin, Sosin and Westerfelt, 1988; Burt and Cohen, 1989; Jahiel, 1992). The combinations of these causes (discussed further in Chapter 2) include problems related to family structure, health, work and income levels, and housing affordability.

This thesis focuses its investigation on the systemic causes of homelessness. This assumption does not challenge the fact that some personal attributes or behaviours may precipitate an individual's homeless episode or prolong its duration. Research clearly indicates that homelessness cannot be attributed to a single factor; the causes include structural factors, personal factors and public policy (Burt, 1992). However, given the scope of this study, the influence of structural factors is emphasized.

This thesis begins with a review of literature related to homelessness, Canadian housing policy and social theory. In the recent Canadian context, responsibility for housing program delivery has been devolving from the federal government to the lower levels of government. A case study of the City of Vancouver's approaches to planning for the homeless is presented in order to examine municipal planning for the homeless and those "at risk" of homelessness. This study particularly investigates how the term "homelessness" is operationalized by the City of Vancouver planning process and analyzes how municipal planning for those at risk of homelessness can be made more effective.

A wide variety of agents play important roles in delivering housing and providing services to the homeless and those at risk of homelessness. A total of 21 third sector service providers and representatives, from all levels of government, were surveyed as to the effectiveness of the City of Vancouver's action toward the homeless and those at risk of homelessness. (Questionnaire in Appendix A; Respondents listed in Bibliography).

In keeping with analytic generalization (Yin, 1989), the value of analyzing this case study

lies in its ability to identify, from its broad results, other cases to which generalizations apply. The recommendations and general implications of the case study are discussed in the concluding chapter.

2. DEFINING HOMELESSNESS

2.1 Social Perceptions and Stereotypes

The existence of homeless people is not a new phenomenon in North America, since great numbers were shelterless and transient during the Great Depression of the 1930s (Oberlander and Fallick, 1992; Rose, 1980). However, political recognition of this social problem has dramatically increased in the last decade.

In North America, the general public tends to accept the concept of homeless as meaning those who are literally without a roof over their heads and those sleeping in shelters. Throughout the early 1980s, this idea was promoted by the media which focused reporting on the "new" urban homeless; alarming human interest stories of elderly women and formerly-middle class families who were newcomers to the privations of the street.

This editorial slant separated the new homeless (who were portrayed as unfortunate victims of circumstances) from the historically stigmatized "derelicts on Skid Row" (whose plight may elicit compassion but mostly blame) (Hoch and Slayton, 1989).

In Western culture, a long-held distinction prevails between the "deserving poor", those deemed unable to work or improve their status (usually the elderly, women with children and the disabled) and 'the undeserving poor' (usually single men, who "should be working" to improve their status).

The neo-conservative viewpoint of individual responsibility for homelessness is epitomized by former U.S. President Ronald Reagan's statement that many people are, "Well, we might say, homeless by choice..." (Wright, 1989). This perspective is rooted in the Puritan ethic that worldly success and salvation are earned by classical virtues: temperance, industry, thrift and individual moralism (Burch and Michaels, 1991). However, attributing homelessness entirely to personal

characteristics is an oversimplification of the problem (Burt, 1992).

In general, those who choose to live in objectively inadequate housing (makeshift dwellings, public shelters or outside) are not considered to be homeless. The determinant is whether or not there are alternatives available to the individual. Those who lack the options or resources to be adequately housed are generally accepted as homeless (Wright, 1989).

Research contradicts the common stereotype that homelessness is caused only by personal failings combined with alcoholism and mental illness. Studies confirm that fewer than 40% of the total homeless population abuses alcohol to excess, the majority does not (Wright, 1989). Estimates of the number of severe psychiatrically-disabled in homeless populations range from 10-33 % (Wright, 1989; Burt, 1990). While mental illness and substance abuse are clearly significant problems among the homeless population, they are not the definitive causal factors to homelessness.

2.2 Causes of Homelessness

Studies identify a confluence of social, economic, political and physical factors which can contribute to or trigger homelessness (Hopper and Hamberg, 1984; Oberlander and Fallick, 1988; Piliavin, Sosin and Westerfelt, 1988; Burt and Cohen, 1989; Jahiel, 1992). These studies contend that the main stage-setting and precipitating factors to homelessness include:

- * Poverty
- * Lack of affordable housing
- * Displacement by gentrification and urban revitalization
- * Unemployment, underemployment and unemployability
- * The breakdown of the traditional family structure
- * Inadequacies and inequities in the provision of social welfare and income supports
- * Lack of diversified community support systems for the deinstitutionalized psychiatrically-disabled
- * Personal attributes or health problems
- * Discrimination

Many of these stage-setting and precipitating factors have occurred at various times during the post-World War II era, however they did not result in the levels of homelessness which are evident in North America today (Hopper and Hamberg, 1984). Gentrification, however, is a relatively new phenomenon. In the trend of "reverse filtering", those individuals and families least able to compete for an affordable housing unit are increasingly "beaten out" of acquiring this scarce resource by those with higher incomes (Buckner, 1991).

While the research on causes of homelessness differs in emphasis, there appears to be general agreement that the growing gap between incomes of those living in poverty and the supply of affordable housing effects a causal link to homelessness.

The wide range of causes of homelessness contradicts the stereotype that there is a homogenous group choosing a transient lifestyle. In fact, the heterogeneity of the homeless population is one of the many obstacles to estimating its size.

2.3 Problems of Enumerating the Homeless

In order to consider the ramifications of a social problem policy makers usually first attempt to estimate its dimensions. Enumeration of the homeless is hampered by the lack of a broadly accepted definition of the term. Counting homeless people can be a highly politicized process.

In the 1980s, published estimates of the U.S. national homeless population ranged from 250,000 and 3 million persons. The lower Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) official estimate was criticized for methodological shortcomings which tended to minimize the problem of homelessness. Meanwhile, homeless advocates at the Center for Creative Nonviolence were criticized for circulating inflated figures of homelessness, without providing a scientific basis

for their estimates (Ringheim, 1990).

More balanced estimates have emerged which have gained more general credibility. The best available estimates suggest that there are between 15-25 homeless people for every 10,000 people living in the U.S., with greater concentrations in certain urban centres (Burt, 1992; Burt and Cohen, 1989).

Canada has never completed a national census which included homeless persons. The 1991 Canada Census effort ran into significant logistical problems, so estimates were considered unreliable. Consequently, Statistics Canada can not release information regarding the extent of homelessness in Canada (Giles, p.d., 1994).

Questions regarding criterion arise with any discussion of enumeration: Who should be counted as homeless and why? Consideration of degrees of homelessness (shelterless or otherwise) and distinction of causes determines the order of magnitude of any homeless count. Therefore, defining the term "homeless" is a critical step in estimating the dimensions of this social problem.

2.4 Definitions of Homelessness

There are a range of definitions for the term homeless, depending on one's world-view or political leaning. On one end of the spectrum, political will requires a very narrow definition of the term. Throughout the 1980s, policy-makers in the U.S. steadfastly defended the use of a strict definition to limit the responsibility of government regarding the homeless. A 1984 HUD study specified:

" 'Homelessness' refers to people in the 'streets' who, in seeking shelter, have no alternative but to obtain it from a private or public agency. Homeless people are distinguished from those who have permanent shelter even though that shelter may be physically inadequate. They are also distinguished from those living in overcrowded conditions."

Here the question of the 'legitimate' definition of homelessness hinges on what it will require of the

public sector. During the Reagan and Bush Administrations, the United States' definition reflected the neo-conservative approach, minimizing government responsibility by limiting the number of people considered to be in need of shelter (Hulchanski, 1987). This place-based definition objectively focuses on an individual's place of residence on a given night or nights, and makes a sharp distinction between homeless people and other very poor people (Jahiel, 1992).

On the other end of the definitional spectrum is the meaning adopted by the United Nations (U.N.), which considerably broadens the concept of homelessness.

2.4.1 The United Nations' Definition

The United Nations designated 1987 as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (IYSH). The U.N.'s action is widely acknowledged as the catalyst for raising the profile of the basic human need for adequate shelter around the world (Charette, 1991). The U.N. developed a definition of homeless which extends the term's meaning far beyond the parameters of shelter. According to the U.N., the homeless include:

- "(1) People who have no home and who live either outdoors or in emergency shelters or hostels and,
- (2) People whose homes do not meet basic U.N. standards."

The U.N. standards include adequate protection from the elements, access to safe water and sanitation, affordable prices, secure tenure and personal safety as well as accessibility to employment, education and health care (Fallis and Murray, 1990).

This definition encompasses a much larger range of socio-economic needs than the stricter definition of homelessness. It builds on the broader concept of housing-related needs, exploring the full human meaning of home.

2.4.2 A Canadian Perspective

In addressing a Canadian definition of homelessness, Oberlander and Fallick identify the relativity of homelessness, and suggest that it is important to bear in mind the diverse causes of this social problem. They define homelessness as:

"the absence of a continuing or permanent home over which individuals and families have personal control and which provides the essential needs of shelter, privacy and security, at an affordable cost, together with ready access to social, economic and cultural public services."

Similar to the United Nations' definition, Oberlander and Fallick consider more than the shelter component of housing.

However, no definition of homelessness has been widely accepted in Canada. Each sector creates its own definition of homelessness, bounded by its self-determined parameters. Such definitions are helpful in framing the extent of public (and private) sector involvement. However, practical usage of the terms demonstrates that while the extremes may be identified, gaps may be created by this process of problem definition.

2.5 The Continuum of Shelter Uncertainty

Individuals experience a wide spectrum of uncertainty in shelter security. Illustrations of this range include situations where persons are:

- * Temporarily "doubling-up" with family or friends;
- * Squatting in abandoned buildings, at campsites or living in automobiles;
- * Residing in institutions, such as hospitals or prisons without homes to go to upon discharge;
- * Living in abusive or violent homes;
- * Living in a Single Room Occupant (SRO) residential hotels for only three weeks of each month;
- * Experiencing acute housing affordability problems or the threat of eviction.

The ambiguity of shelter security demonstrates the difficulty in defining "regular and customary

access to a conventional dwelling unit" and supports the notion that homelessness is not a uniform condition (Wright, 1989).

Sorting poor people without any place to sleep into a separate group tends to suggest that the shelterless-homeless make up some kind of social type and that some characteristics distinguish them from other members of the poor. However, research of SRO residents suggests otherwise. Those coping with daily shelter uncertainty were found to differ little from those across the threshold of minimal shelter security (Hoch and Slayton, 1989).

As mentioned earlier, the homeless population is a heterogeneous mixture of people; some experience only short-term housing or shelter problems, and others experience chronic, long-term difficulties. Defining a transitory or situational component adds to the complexity in identifying and enumerating the homeless.

Despite these difficulties, it is possible to distinguish among sub-populations of the homeless (Rossi, 1987). The "literally homeless" are persons who clearly do not have customary access to a conventional dwelling and who would be homeless by any conceivable definition of the term, and the "precariously (or marginally) housed" are persons with tenuous or very temporary claims to a conventional dwelling of more or less marginal adequacy.

Acknowledging the linkage between increasing poverty and the continuum of shelter uncertainty is critical. (Rossi, 1987; Wright, 1989). Innumerable degrees of housing adequacy and housing stability are to be found along the continuum. It is not possible to categorize placement along the continuum since there are no definite, natural breakpoints on it. However, it is possible to delineate three sub-groups who make up the continuum; (1) the poverty population as a whole, (2) the subset of the poverty population that is marginally housed, and (3) the subset of the poverty population that is literally homeless (Wright, 1989). These groups are closely inter-linked and

individuals may frequently move among the sub-groups.

2.6 Identifying the At-Risk Homeless Population

Shelter uncertainty has always been a hardship for those below the poverty line. In the past two decades, however, the scope and intensity of shelter uncertainty have dramatically increased. These changes have been attributed to the destruction of single-room accommodations and, the increasing incidence of poverty among the working-class (Hoch and Slayton, 1989).

2.6.1 Housing of Last Resort

Single room occupancy hotels and rooming houses are at the lowest end of the private housing market. These provide the housing of "last resort" (sometimes, of choice) for a wide range of people, from the elderly and young working adults, to the deinstitutionalized and the unemployed (Hopper and Hamberg, 1989).

This housing stock has been particularly susceptible to elimination by urban renewal and gentrification in many North American cities (Lincoln, 1980). From 1970-1982, 1,116,000 SRO units were lost in the United States, nearly half the entire stock (Hopper and Hamberg, 1984). Many Canadian cities (Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver) experienced similar permanent losses of SROs throughout the 1970s and early 1980s (Ley, 1991).

When displacement occurs due to the destruction of this stock, many residents have no alternative housing affordable to them. For example, from 1976 to 1979 Ottawa lost 40% of its rooming houses. The non-availability of alternative affordable rental stock was reflected in the quadrupling of housing authority waiting lists that followed in 1980-1984 (Ley, 1991).

2.6.2 Rent-to-Income Cost Burdens

The greater the burden of economic hardship, the greater the shelter uncertainty. The majority of the "marginally housed" are renters, the homeless rarely come directly from homeownership to homelessness (Ringheim, 1990). Renters who are vulnerable to being shut out of the housing market, due to low incomes and high rent burdens, have been identified as one sector of the population at risk of homelessness.

In both the U.S. and Canada, the rule of thumb ceiling on housing affordability is accommodation which does not exceed 30% of monthly income. Those who are highly cost-burdened, low-income renters and involuntarily must pay more than 45% of their monthly income to rent have been identified as "at risk" of homelessness. This population has been further divided into the "very vulnerable", who pay in excess of 60% of their income to rent; and the "severely vulnerable", who have less than \$50 per person remaining in residual monthly income after paying rent (Ringheim, 1990).

2.6.3 Over-Crowding

Overcrowding is recognized as another marking of vulnerability to homelessness. Surveys of the homeless have found that a majority of the shelterless have been evicted, either by a landlord or by a primary tenant with whom they had "doubled-up" (Ringheim, 1990). According to some analysts, those who are "doubled-up" due to the unavailability of affordable housing should be included as "at risk" since they are only one step away from homelessness (Zarembka, 1990). The potential of eviction, which threatens their continued access to a dwelling, and a lack of personal control marks many of those "doubled-up" as "at risk" of homelessness.

2.7 Summary

One of the major obstacles to dealing with homelessness has been the difficulty in defining the term. The United Nations promotes a definition which acknowledges a range of housing related needs. However, in practice, the public sector generally uses a more narrowly defined meaning of the term, such that only those dependent on emergency shelters and those absolutely without shelter are considered to be homeless.

The concept of homelessness takes on a variety of meanings and understandings, particularly as one moves from one culture to another. Some definitions focus on the state of homelessness and others on defining adequate shelter (Glasser, 1994).

Most researchers in North America agree that a confluence of factors may cause homelessness, but that poverty is a common denominator in all cases. There is a continuum of shelter uncertainty among the poverty population. While many move in and out of homelessness, certain markings of vulnerability to homelessness have been identified to determine which groups are "at risk" of experiencing homelessness.

Risk is related to such factors as high rent-to-income ratios, incidence of overcrowding and certain housing types (SROs). Additional markings of vulnerability may be identified at the local level for particular cohorts at risk of homelessness.

The absence of formal recognition of this complex social problem has not served to diminish its impact. A broad meaning of "homelessness", one which relates to local experience of it, could encourage more proactive planning and create preventative policies responsive to those at risk of homelessness.

3. THE EVOLVING ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES

3.1 Development of Canadian Housing Policy

3.1.1 Early Policy Development

In the first few decades of the twentieth century, social thinkers viewed poverty as a product of personal failure or flawed character rather than as problems of social and economic environments (Bacher and Hulchanski, 1987). This view framed public response to poverty; namely the absence of public responsibility taken for the poor. Housing was traditionally the domain of free enterprise. The 'pure' market was responsible for meeting housing demand (CMHC, 1987).

After the Depression of 1913-1915, some reform in social welfare policy was directed at "saving" the poor by strictly regulating their lives. Reform activity primarily meant the destruction of the low-cost housing stock in urban centres, with some harsh racist overtones in this "slum clearance" (Bacher and Hulchanski, 1987).

In 1918, a new demand was placed on federal policy-making structures with the return of World War I soldiers who were considered deserving of special recognition (Oberlander and Fallick, 1992). The federal government initially became involved as an as hoc reaction to their housing needs. This action established public expectation and set the evolution of policy in motion.

Since housing construction was of low priority during wartime, the private market could not meet the pent up demand for affordable accommodation both during and after the War. The influence of these factors created a new environment and a potential sphere of involvement for the federal government.

According to historian A.E. Jones, the motive of ensuring social stability during the industrial unrest of 1918-1919 was the most compelling factor in the introduction of federal housing plans. With the return of peacetime activity, these problems subsided and the impetus for continuing federal

housing programs disappeared (Overlander and Fallick, 1992).

The political climate had also changed radically in 1921, as William Lyon Mackenzie King became Prime Minister, bringing an end to federal support of housing (Bacher and Hulchanski, 1987).

During the booming 1920s, free enterprise was again expected to provide equilibrium in the housing market. It was not until the Depression, under Prime Minister R.B. Bennet, that strident public pressure forced the federal government to reconsider involvement in the housing market. Housing legislation was then proposed as a means of generating employment to revitalize the depressed Canadian economy (Rose, 1980).

3.1.2 Canadian Legislative Framework

In Canada, the issue of legal jurisdiction is a critical determinant to the development of any policy. The legislative framework has helped define the federal government's course of action and formalized its social commitment in the domain of housing.

Constitutional responsibility for specific functions were determined by the 1867 British North America (BNA) Act. Responsibility for the provision of housing to individuals and families was first assigned to the provinces, by judicial interpretation of Section 92 of the BNA Act (Rose, 1980).

However, according to the Constitution, the Government of Canada can legislate in a national emergency "for the peace, order, and good government of all Canadians" (Rose, 1980). Initial government intervention was only extended to problems "arising from necessities created by the war conditions" (Overlander and Fallick, 1992). To work within its constitutional limitations the federal government advanced loans from the war appropriations fund and avoided the appearance of direct involvement in building houses (Overlander and Fallick, 1992). Ultimately, federal involvement in

housing was perceived to be "in the national interest" and deemed vital to a buoyant economy, so it prevailed over constitutional concerns and political apprehension.

As early as 1944, solutions to meet growing social housing needs were outlined in the remarkably far-sighted Curtis Report. But there was no strong national leadership so little attention was paid to low-income rental housing (until the 1960s) or to co-operative housing (until the 1970s) (Prince, 1989).

3.2 Recent Evolution of Social Housing Policy

The evolution of social housing has paralleled that of the Canadian welfare state as a whole and has been driven by the same underlying political forces, including federal-provincial rivalries (Banting, 1990).

The general objectives of the welfare state are to commit to maintaining a minimum standard of living by providing for basic needs, such as health, education and shelter. Provision of health and education services is usually geared toward a universal optimum level. However, since the principle of universality is not easily applied to housing, policy objectives tend toward setting a national minimum housing adequacy standard (Mishra, 1990).

In 1973, the federal government adopted amendments to the National Housing Act (NHA). It adopted the suggestion of the minister responsible for housing that "Good housing at reasonable cost is a social right of every citizen of this country.... [This] must be our objective, our obligation and our goal." (Hulchanski, 1988b). In the mid-1970s, the substantial "welfare consensus" supporting these principles began to breakdown.

The formal acknowledgement that all Canadians have the right to good housing at prices they can afford did not become an objective fact. While most Canadians are well-housed, the federal

government has been criticized by the United Nations for its failure to identify the extent of inadequate housing and homelessness in Canada (United Nations, 1993).

3.3 Who is Responsible for Housing the Homeless?

With identification of homelessness as a social problem, some critical questions arise: what ought to be done about it and by whom? The above history demonstrates how the rationale for sustained government involvement in the Canadian housing market has evolved over time, ebbing with the tides of political priorities in relation to social and economic forces. Social housing requires extensive capital investment and must compete for spending priority with other areas of social capital investment, such as medical and educational institutions and public roads (Rose, 1980).

Some argue that the historical pattern of government-sponsored relief has been that of long periods of restrictive criteria on who qualifies, broken by short periods of liberalization of benefits (Piven and Cloward, 1971). In times of economic stagnation, expectations of acceptable living standards for the poor are scaled down.

The principle of "less eligibility", established in the English Poor Law of 1834, was the foundation of the modern welfare system (Ringheim, 1990). In keeping with this principle, relief for the poor would not exceed the wages of the lowest paid labourer, so as not to encourage exploitation of benefits.

Current social policy reformation appears to be a hybrid of social thought, attempting to re-orient the principles of the 1970s Welfare Consensus, with the historical Social Darwinist demand for a social payoff (in the form of increased productivity, profit or social control).

Society may now be more tolerant of greater deprivation for the poor and less inclined to expect governments to alleviate poverty. For example, "Skid Row" was once viewed as degrading

urban blight. Yet while its soup kitchens and Single Room Occupancy residential hotels (SROs) have maintained their sometimes squalid conditions, they are now considered acceptable (Ringheim, 1990). In the context of this thesis, SROs are indeed recognized as valuable community resources, and are well worth saving. It is important to note, however, that where Skid Row SROs used to represent the bottom of the housing hierarchy, this rank has now been supplanted by homeless shelters (Ringheim, 1990).

Extensive public housing waiting lists suggest a "permanent emergency" in housing need. Perhaps these signal society's growing acceptance of poverty as an objective fact, so long as those experiencing it remain invisible. Historically (both in 1918-19 and following the Depression), it has been the "unruly", rather than the "deserving", poor that stirred significant public sector response to housing need.

3.4 Federal Responses to Homelessness

A continuum of housing need is recognized in Canada. However, the framework for establishing housing need is not officially related to the term "homelessness" nor does it make reference to populations "at risk" of homelessness.

The national housing agency, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), was created in the late 1940s. With regard to the continuum of shelter uncertainty, the CMHC has developed the official framework for identifying "Core Housing Need" in Canada. The CMHC has identified three norms to establish a minimum level of housing services. The indicators of the Core Housing Need Model are (CMHC, 1991):

- * The Suitability Norm - which is based on the National Occupancy Standard (NOS) to determine crowding;
- * The Adequacy Norm - which states that a dwelling unit must possess all basic plumbing

facilities and require only minor repairs, and

* The Affordability Norm - which states that a household should not be required to spend 30 per cent or more of its income to acquire shelter that is suitable and adequate.

In 1988, a total of 1,261,000 Canadian households were determined to be in core housing need, based on the above indicators (CMHC,1991). Relative to the majority of Canadian households some of those in "core housing need" also fit within the definition of "at risk" homeless.

However, there is no official federal definition of homelessness. While some efforts to quantify the problem have been attempted, the homeless are viewed "as somewhat of an enigma" by federal policymakers (Engeland, p.d., 1994). At the federal level, needs of "special groups" are largely defined and addressed by political motivations. For example, the CMHC's dedication of funds to emergency shelters for urban natives and victims of family violence was politically motivated and rationalized (Engeland, p.d., 1994).

Canada has never completed a national census which included homeless persons. The 1991 Canada Census did make efforts to collect data at soup kitchens and emergency shelters. However, the inclusion of persons without addresses in the Census was supposed to make total population counts more accurate; it was not intended to identify the extent of homelessness throughout Canada. Statistics Canada did not specifically attempt to count the number of homeless [shelterless] and so statistics will not be released (Giles, p.d., 1993).

The only available national figure of homelessness comes from the 1987 National Inquiry on Homelessness in Canada which was carried out by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD). This was intended as a "snapshot" survey of agencies providing services for those in need of temporary and emergency shelter. The survey indicated that at least 8,000 people slept in temporary and emergency shelters on the night of January 22, 1987 and that over 100,000 people needed shelter over the course of 1986. (The shelter bed count for British Columbia found 751

people using the shelters on January 22, 1987) (McLaughlin, 1991).

This is only a partial snapshot of the national homeless population as the survey was not able to estimate the number of individuals temporarily housed in hotels, where no shelter facilities were available; the number involuntarily forced to "doubled-up" with family and friends; those in institutions, and the number who "slept-out" (remained shelterless). It is important to note that adding these dimensions would be far more accurate in showing the actual size of the homeless population in Canada. Adding those at risk of becoming homeless to the enumeration would also drastically increase the total.

In Canada, homelessness has not yet become a compelling problem at the national level, as it has in the United States. The numbers of literally homeless in Canada are not high when compared to the U.S.; this is purportedly due to Canada's more extensive "safety net" of health and social services (Daly, 1988pl).

Addressing homelessness in Canada has therefore been a relatively low priority at the federal level. Funding low-income housing, targeted at those most in need, was considered adequate commitment to solve any problems that exist. The homeless are a "special population" who could access such housing. The emphasis on "special needs populations" tended to limit programs and funding to narrowly defined groups. It therefore reduced the scope of federal responsibility in finding solutions to homelessness.

In 1983, the federal government undertook a comprehensive evaluation of non-profit housing programs. This evaluation concluded that these programs were not the most cost-effective way to serve those households most in need (Pomeroy, 1989). Changes in social housing strategy, to redirect limited federal funds and reduce service duplication, led to new federal-provincial arrangements in cost-sharing and service delivery.

Critics of this devolution of housing authority object to the fact that provinces have been given much more responsibility for social housing, but insufficient resources to meet the needs (McLaughlin, 1987).

In the last decade, governments at the provincial and municipal level have become particularly aware of the social problem of homelessness, especially given the dramatic variations in certain regions (in Toronto, Vancouver, and the Atlantic provinces) (Daly, 1988pl). While municipalities are often well-placed to monitor the extent of housing need within their boundaries, they do not have direct authority over housing.

3.5 Municipal Approaches to Homelessness

3.5.1 Determining Municipal Authority

Municipalities are legally "creatures" of the provincial government, and the federal government has no constitutional right to negotiate directly with local governments (Rose, 1980). Traditionally, municipalities focused their response to housing need by lobbying and supporting the initiatives of senior governments, and by exercising land-use regulatory power (Carter and McAfee, 1990).

Municipalities usually lack sufficient revenue-generating capacity to meet housing need (Rose, 1980). Municipalities may be constrained in revenue-generation by an inability to vary property taxes, vis a vis neighbouring communities. If tax rates rise above average in one municipality, then its taxpayers would likely move to a lower tax-burdened municipality within that region. This supports the argument that fiscal responsibility for housing should remain with senior governments, due to the broader tax base under their authority (Carter and McAfee, 1990).

Another obstacle to municipal involvement and initiative may stem from historical urban-rural

rivalry. Provincial legislatures traditionally tend to be dominated by non-urban-oriented members, who perhaps give lower priority to what might be considered exclusively urban economic or social problems (Rose, 1980), such as homelessness.

Despite the limitations of the existing legislative framework and taxation structure, municipalities have become deeply involved in the provision of affordable housing. The political, legal and financial constraints on municipal planning for the homeless are explored further in the case study of Vancouver in Chapter 4.

3.5.2 Typology of Approaches to Low Income Housing

In 1964, amendments to the NHA revolutionized the approach to public participation in the provision of low-income housing, and encouraged local and provincial authorities to assume some responsibilities in this domain (Rose 1980). In the 1970s, the federal government redirected policies, such as the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) and Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP), so as to involve municipal governments in selecting which local areas/projects would receive funding (Ley, 1991).

Depending on the degree of housing need, development patterns and political climate, municipalities have assumed different roles in social housing. Models of these municipal roles include (Carter and McAfee, 1990):

- 1) Reactor Model: Provides a relatively inactive role for the municipality, which acts only as a support to senior government initiatives;
- 2) Facilitator Model: Establishes a more active role as the municipality may allocate funds, provide land or lobby on behalf of private non-profits;
- 3) Comprehensive Developer: Undertakes a more direct role through a municipal housing department, and assumes greater risk by adding housing project design, implementation and/or management to its role.

The non-profit (third) sector has played an integral role in the development and management of housing alternatives and homeless programs in many Canadian cities. Their invaluable contribution, to provide resources where gaps in service exist, has been supported and encouraged by many municipalities.

To solve the complex problem of homelessness, the various sectors must work together. Joint projects between private, public and non-profit sectors appear to establish the most successful solutions (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 1991; Hulchanski, Eberle, Olds and Stewart, 1991; Carter and McAfee, 1990). Municipalities play a strategic role in forging and developing these partnerships.

3.5.3 Examples of Municipal Strategies to Homelessness

The wide variety of local initiatives aimed at addressing urban homelessness suggests that no single approach can be universally applied. The variety of initiatives also adds credence to an emphasis on locally developed solutions.

In Montreal and Quebec, efforts to preserve the existing stock of rooming houses have included direct municipal subsidy programs to rehabilitate SRO's (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 1991). Other municipalities have targeted initiatives to address special needs groups. Examples are: Winnipeg's Opportunity Centre for new immigrants and refugees, Toronto's Gerstein Centre for the mentally-ill in crisis, and Peel's emergency shelter for wife assault victims and their children. These groups may require assistance finding permanent accommodation and in negotiating tenancy agreements. London, Toronto and Regina all provide municipal funding for case workers to co-ordinate such support services (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 1991).

One key element to successful implementation of programs is involvement by the homeless

themselves in developing solutions. The Homes First Society in Toronto is one such self-managed project, the temporary "StreetCity", was created in an old postal warehouse. It combined the efforts of the municipal government (which gave the site and grants), various provincial agencies and the homeless (who were involved at all stages of development and construction) (Daly 1988pl). Accordingly, services geared toward those "at risk" of homelessness must emphasize collaboration with those who are vulnerable and (where appropriate) provide information and advocacy.

Neighbouring home-owners often fear the potential "negative externalities" of social housing being placed in their area (Mishra, 1990). Municipalities are challenged to act as leading advocates for the necessities of affordable housing and the value of social mix, when dealing with NIMBY (Not-In-My-Backyard) sentiments (FCM, 1991).

In keeping with a combination of Reactor and Facilitator roles, some municipal initiatives restrict development that threatens low-income rental stock. Other initiatives prevent displacement of existing tenants or link zoning incentives to the provision of low-income rental stock. The theory behind linkage policies (development charges and commercial levies) is that those who benefit financially from real property development should help pay a "fair share" of the social cost associated with such development.

In 1980, San Francisco pioneered the implementation of an office development/housing linkage fee. The rationale of linking downtown commercial development to low-cost housing suggests that office development has indirect and direct effects which exacerbate housing affordability problems (Hulchanski, 1989pl).

Linkage programs are dependent on the market demand for commercial development located in the central city, especially vis a vis its region. Argument against the introduction of linkage fees is that they may discourage office development within a city. These programs have been adapted

by many North American cities in accordance with their economic, political and legal environments (Hulchanski, 1989pl).

One-to-one replacement initiatives are another recent innovation. Ontario's Rental Housing Protection Act is an example of legislation which allows municipalities greater authority to regulate the protection of low-income housing through demolition and conversion controls (Hulchanski, 1989pl). The success of these initiatives are dependent on continuous inventory of the low-income stock.

One-to-one replacement may require replacement of demolished units by the developer, as a condition of site redevelopment. Alternatively, approval for demolition and conversion of low-income units may only be given by a municipality if at least an equal number of units are being built within that year (Hulchanski, 1989pl). U.S. examples of one-for-one replacement provisions include: Seattle's Housing Preservation Ordinance and San Diego's Residential Hotel Preservation Regulations (Hulchanski, 1989pl).

Studies show that the rise of homelessness is directly correlated to the loss of rooming house units (Bairstow, 1986). For this stock, there is often a precarious balance between the cost of maintenance which meets fire and building codes, and preservation of units that are affordable to existing tenants. The maintenance and upgrading of very low-income housing stock has emerged as a critical municipal strategy to combat homelessness, especially in gentrifying or revitalized neighbourhoods.

The experience of San Francisco in preservation of its SRO stock demonstrates that an organized community can be vital in campaigning for anti-displacement protection, swaying political will and gaining wider support for local initiatives. In 1979, community opposition led to the moratorium on conversion of SRO hotels, which then were registered with the City and designated

as "permanent" residential units (Hartman, Keating and LeGates, 1982). Unfortunately, the political will behind this ordinance weakened and its protection of SROs was modified accordingly. However, San Francisco's City Hotel Tax was used to directly subsidize permanent low-rent SRO's along with state and federal funding (Hartman, Keating and LeGates, 1982).

Canadian municipalities lack much of the legislative power of their U.S. counterparts (Ley, 1991). In Washington D.C. and other U.S. cities, "just cause" eviction ordinances have been passed to protect tenant rights and security of tenure, and to encourage negotiation between tenants and landlords. In Canada, eviction issues are under provincial, rather than municipal, authority. However cities, like Winnipeg, have managed to use their maintenance and occupancy by-laws to opt not to enforce closure or eviction of residents if displacement would mean homelessness (Carter and McAfee, 1990).

3.6 Summary

Canadian government involvement in the provision of housing has paralleled the evolution of the welfare state, influenced by the same underlying political and economic forces. While federal recognition of housing need indicates levels of "core housing need", the homeless and those immediately at risk, have been largely ignored by policy-making.

In the last decade, the federal government has been down-loading responsibility for housing to the provinces. Implicit in federal withdrawal, is the passing of responsibility for the homeless to lower levels of government. A rare Canadian acknowledgement of the "at risk" homeless population came from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) in their 1991 National Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness. The FCM identified "at risk" homeless groups as those households, on waiting lists for social housing, in unaffordable and inadequate accommodation who are

vulnerable to crises, such as a rent increase or loss of income. However, this definition has not been broadly accepted or operationalized by Canadian municipalities.

Canadian municipalities are well-positioned to monitor local housing need, yet as entities of the province, they are limited in what independent actions they can undertake. Nevertheless, some societal trends are transmitted to inner cities by means of municipal planning decisions. Municipalities help orchestrate the patterns of development through zoning regulations and incentives which promote housing and neighbourhood improvement (Bunting and Fillion, 1988).

The most effective approaches to homelessness garner support both from the homeless themselves and from a range of public, private and third sector players. The appropriate parameters of success may be determined locally, by the scope of municipal initiatives. Implementing effective initiatives appears to depend on broad locally-based support (both political and community will) and cooperative participation by various levels of funding agents.

Regardless of the strategies adopted, common legislative, financial and social constraints exist for Canadian municipalities addressing the problems of low-income housing and homelessness (Carter and McAfee, 1990). It is therefore instructive to thoroughly examine the case of one city, Vancouver, to analyze the implications of municipal planning for the homeless and the "at risk" population(s).

4. PLANNING RESPONSES TO HOMELESSNESS IN VANCOUVER

This case study investigates how the term "homelessness" is operationalized by the City of Vancouver planning process. The study specifically examines how the marginally (or precariously) housed, and those who are literally homeless are dealt with in Vancouver. The case study also explores how municipal planning for those at risk of homelessness can be made more effective.

A wide variety of agents play important roles in delivering housing and providing services to the homeless and those at risk of homelessness in Vancouver. Therefore, a broad range of third sector service providers and representatives from all levels of government were surveyed to assess the effectiveness of the City of Vancouver's action toward the homeless and those at risk of homelessness.

4.1 Introduction to Case Study of Vancouver

In recent decades, the interplay of global forces, such as the technological revolution, economic restructuring and capital market integration, have stimulated changes to the City of Vancouver's workforce and economic geography (Hutton and Ley, 1987; Davis and Hutton, 1992; Kunin and Knauf, 1992; North and Hardwick, 1992). The gentrification of Vancouver's inner city neighbourhoods, changes in land use, erosion of the supply of rental housing stock and the displacement of tenants have all been documented (Ley, 1991; Ley, 1985; Ley 1981).

From 1989 to 1992, growth in the number of unemployed people led to a 52% increase in the number of people on Income Assistance in British Columbia, from 189,000 to 288,000 recipients (Goldberg, 1993). Amidst these increases, the Federal government capped its contributions to the Canada Assistance Plan, reducing federal transfer payments and forcing the Provincial government to provide all funding for Income Assistance exceeding the 5% cap (Goldberg, 1993).

In 1970s and early 1980s, federal government-assisted programs stimulated rental construction in Vancouver. These programs have all been discontinued, and there are now relatively few market rental units being built (City of Vancouver, 1992-1993a). The growing supply of condominiums does provide some additional rental housing in Vancouver. However, this stock is generally more expensive than purpose-built rental housing (City of Vancouver, 1992-1993a). Accordingly, competition for affordable low-income units has increased.

Rent Protection amendments to the Residential Tenancy Act, to be proclaimed in the Fall of 1994, may further discourage the building of purpose-built market rental accommodations. In the short term most agree that rent control is a benefit to existing tenants. However, the longer term effects of rent control on the supply of rental housing are much debated. Developers are more likely to by-pass a regulated market, continuing to focus new production on strata-title condominiums rather than on purpose-built rental projects (Ley, 1991).

In any case, it is not currently economic for private sector developers to supply new rental units. Rents would have to rise by 21 % in the Vancouver area, with no change in construction costs, in order to make any new construction profitable (Clayton Research Assoc. cited in BCCHO, 1992).

Thousands of low-income residents, particularly those in the lowest two income quintiles, are acutely affected by these conditions and by losses of low-income rental housing stock (Hulchanski, 1989). The Social Planning and Research Council of B.C. (SPARC) demonstrates that the current Guaranteed Available Income for Need (GAIN) shelter allowance rates are not sufficient to enable recipients to compete for a reasonable portion of the rental housing market. Table 1 shows that increases in the shelter portion of GAIN have not significantly increased the amount of rental stock affordable to income assistance recipients (Goldberg, 1993).

While problems of affordability and the risk of homelessness are not limited to particular

TABLE 1¹**Proportion of CMHC Surveyed Vancouver Rental Housing Available
to Those on GAIN Shelter Allowance**

<u>Type of Unit</u>	<u>Number of People</u>	<u>Maximum GAIN Shelter Allowance</u>	<u>October 1989</u>	<u>October 1992</u>
Bachelor	1	\$325	2.0%	4.4%
1 Bedroom	1	325	0.2%	0.7%
	2	520	23.9%	26.9%
2 Bedroom	2	520	1.8%	1.4%
	3	610	11.0%	10.7%
3 Bedroom	3	610	1.5%	0.5%
	4	650	7.0%	1.0%
	5	700	11.4%	15.3%
	6	730	11.4%	28.5%

catchment areas in Vancouver (Clayton Research Associates Ltd et al, 1990), this case study has a limited scope. The Central Business District (CBD) and Strathcona (which includes the Downtown Eastside) are examined since they are the two Vancouver residential areas most implicated by extreme shelter uncertainty (Map, Figure 1). Special needs cohorts from Vancouver's general population are also profiled to identify their risk of homelessness.

The following sections analyze and evaluate planning for the homeless and those at risk in Vancouver. The questions addressed include: Does the City have a formal or functional definition

¹ Source: Michael Goldberg, SPARC, 1993.

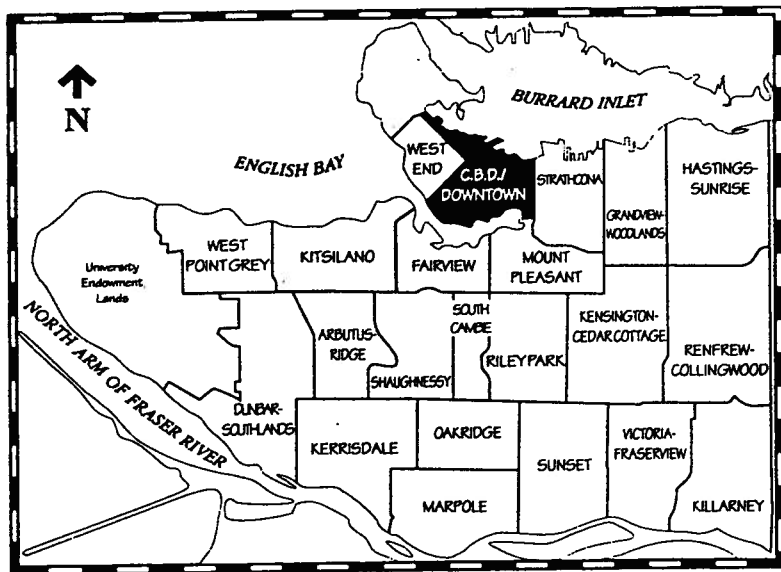
Note: Maximum Shelter Allowance and CMHC rent ranges were lower in 1989.

of "homelessness"? How has the City responded to identified needs?

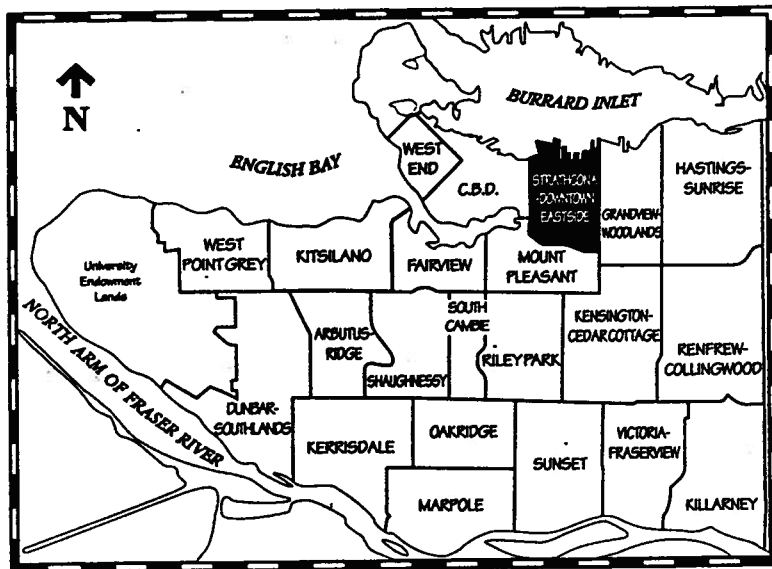
The range and diversity of acute housing need demonstrated in the Vancouver case supports the rationale for broadening the meaning of homelessness to include at risk groups. The implications of the City expanding its role and responsibilities are analyzed. Discussion of constraints on municipal action as well as regional considerations of planning for the homeless conclude the case study.

FIGURE 1²

**Maps of Vancouver Case Study Area:
Central Business District (CBD) and Strathcona Neighbourhoods**



The Central Business District (CBD)



**Strathcona-
Downtown
Eastside**

² Source: City of Vancouver

4.2 Vancouver Planning in Face of Shelter Uncertainty

4.2.1 The History of Social Housing

The City of Vancouver has undertaken a variety of measures aimed at the supply and maintenance of affordable housing in the downtown core and throughout the City.

In 1975, the City first experimented with the role of comprehensive developer by creating the Vancouver Municipal Non-Profit Housing Corporation, which was mandated to house families and low-income singles in the "skid row" areas. The Corporation was terminated since it was determined to be poorly structured and it was duplicating the role of existing non-profit groups (Carter and McAfee, 1990).

The Social Planning Department (SPD) and other existing departments subsequently became responsible to plan for "social" housing needs in the municipality. In 1978, Vancouver Council (the Council) adopted several recommendations from the SPD's Downtown Housing Implementation Committee, ostensibly to protect and maintain the inventory of affordable low-income housing. The Director of Permits and Licenses was authorized to exercise discretion in applying by-laws, in keeping with the goal of retaining affordable SRO stock. (These measures lacked effectiveness to protect this stock, as will be discussed later).

Since the 1970s, the City has played a facilitator role by leasing land to non-profit sponsors for 60 years at 75 % of market value. This "fair market" value was established by the Province (City of Vancouver, 1994). The City did not have to specifically budget for housing, rather it was foregoing revenues by providing land from its land bank (City of Vancouver, 1981).

In 1980, Vancouver's first Social Housing Policy was developed. The City has been involved in social housing by sharing construction costs, participating in the federal RRAP program and by enforcing building standards. The Planning Department recommended no major City intervention in

the housing market, though it recognized evidence of increasing need. Instead, the City emphasized the role of senior governments as the principal source of continued financial support. (City of Vancouver, 1979).

In 1988, Vancouver's core housing need was estimated at 20% of all households. The City set a precedent to require a 20% social housing inclusion in rezoned sites, particularly on properties where surplus value was achieved, such as the south shore of False Creek and subsequent mega-development projects (Gray, p.d., 1994).

The dual purpose of this "income-mix" zoning initiative is to assure the land supply for social housing while facilitating a more balanced community. However, under this initiative, actual allocation of units is dependent on senior government non-profit housing programs to cover the costs of development, construction and rent subsidization (Kraus, 1993).

The City also has exacted contributions for social housing by collecting Development Cost Levies for replacement housing in Downtown South (City of Vancouver, 1994). Litigation surrounding the legality of these linkage fees continues (Readman, p.d., 1994).

The Housing and Properties Department, created in 1990, has served as the primary planning body for municipal housing initiatives. Housing and Properties works closely with the Social Planning Department, provincial and other agencies.

While continuing its role in leasing land to non-profit sponsored housing developments, the City also occasionally "tops-up" funding for cash-strapped projects through grants from its (\$1 million) Affordable Housing Fund (Gray, p.d., 1994).

4.2.2 Present Status of City Planning for the Homeless

The City of Vancouver has not adopted a formal definition of homelessness. Nevertheless,

an informal definition functions as City policies and programs targeting the shelterless and those at risk of homelessness are implemented.

The City currently monitors the stock of low-income housing in the Downtown areas. This inventory and an Interim Policy for the Victory Square planning area are intended to encourage retention of existing buildings and to ensure that new construction is sympathetically scaled to existing structures (Vaisbord, p.d., 1994). Rezoning for any development in the Downtown Eastside is particularly geared toward additions to low-income residential stock. The area's maximum density allowance only grants a low floorspace ratio of 1.0 to new developments, unless 20% of their unit mix is comprised of social housing units (City of Vancouver, 1992b).

Nevertheless, the one-to-one replacement of low-income units lost due to redevelopment or gentrification is only policy and the Council's commitment to replacement units is not presently enforced under by-law (Raynor, p.d., 1994).

The City has been directly involved in providing for low-income housing by purchasing and renovating some SROs within the study area. (Once publically owned these are considered non-market housing) (Raynor, p.d., 1994). The City recognizes the need for SRO-type, low-income housing in neighbourhoods other than in the downtown core, since there are growing numbers for whom this area is not suitable. Housing and Properties may consider, but has not committed to, developing an SRO-type housing project elsewhere in the City (Gray, p.d., 1994). The City also grants municipal funds to a variety of non-profit housing related service providers, such as the Carnegie Centre and the Dugout.

Currently, municipal planning for social housing remains more reactive, than proactive. Due to limited staffing and funding, the City usually follows the Province's lead on initiatives. [An exception was specific lobbying by the Social Planning Department in 1993 for provincial funds

targeting homeless street youth programs] (Brooks, p.d., 1994). With the contraction of federal funds, the City appears resigned to reductions in the number of social housing completions. The expectation of adding 1,000 units per year is now considered "unrealistic" (City of Van., 1994).

The Department of Housing and Properties employs a housing relocater who is responsible for outreach and frontline contact with shelterless persons. The Housing Relocator provides referrals to municipal and provincial services and to other agencies.

As discussed in Chapter 2, there are many obstacles to correctly estimating the number of homeless in a given area. Vancouver's homeless population is no exception. The Urban Core Shelterless Survey of the Strathcona Mental Health Team is the only available estimate, and its sole focus was shelterlessness in the Downtown Eastside. Figure 2 chronicles a gradual increase in shelterless people counted between 1989 and 1990. Due to its limited scope, the Urban Core Survey boundaries excluded the West End and Mount Pleasant neighbourhoods, both known as popular "sleeping out" areas. The Survey Team therefore acknowledged that the figures underestimate the total number of shelterless in Vancouver (Buckley, 1990).

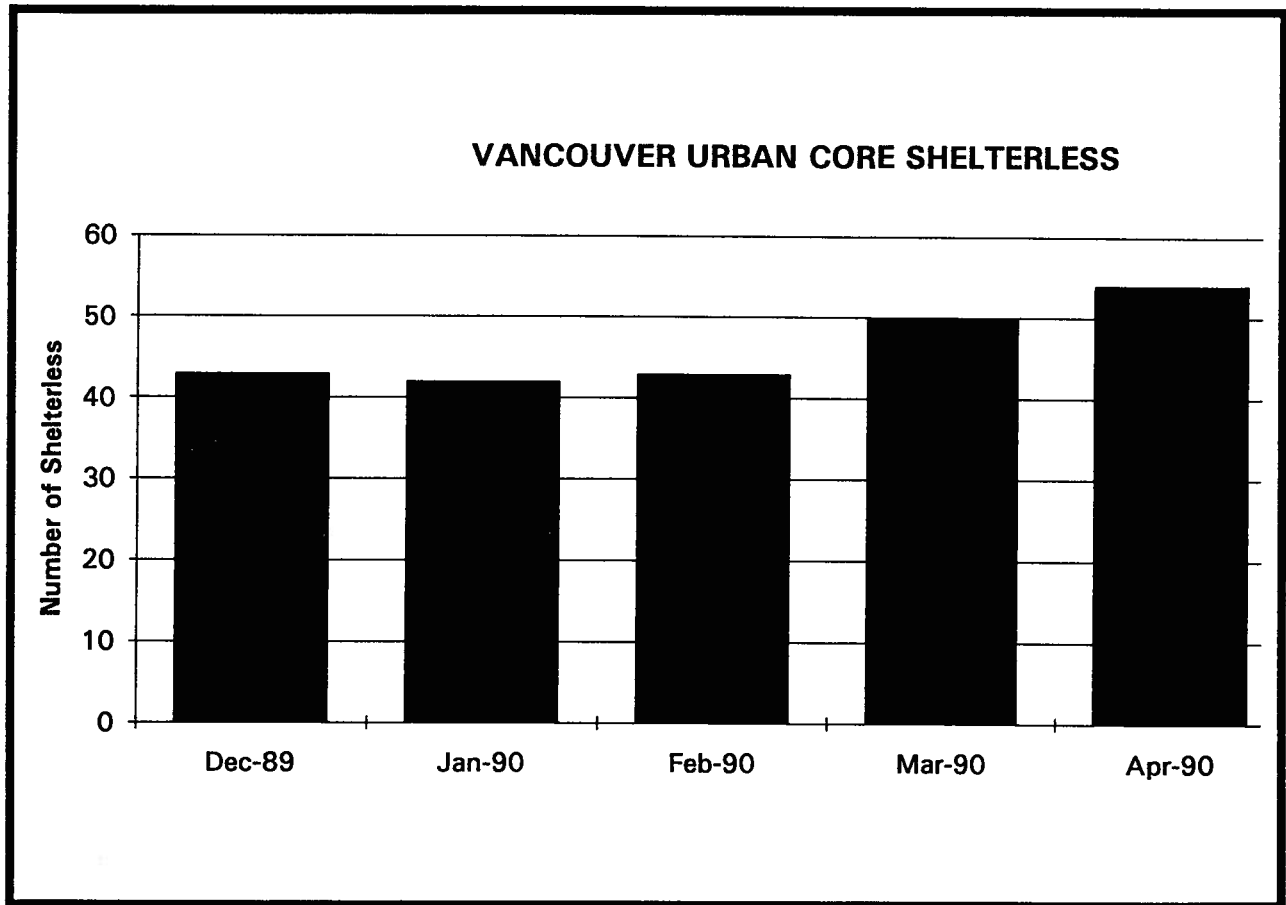
The Urban Core Shelterless Committee observed that between 1986 and 1990, shelter facilities reported a significant increase in demand for shelter beds. Prior to 1988, Vancouver's shelter facilities had never experienced being full to capacity nor having to turn people away. Emergency facilities such as Lookout and Triage also reported a disturbing increase in the average length of stay in emergency accommodation (Buckley, 1990).

According to a 1992 report, between 200 - 250 single adults sleep in shelters or hostels in Greater Vancouver (B.C. Commission on Housing Options, 1992).

Emergency shelter turnaway figures range from 116 to 159 a month, for all reporting shelters (Buckley, 1990; O'Shannacery, p.d., 1994). The turnaway survey did not track the final

FIGURE 2³

Vancouver Urban Core Shelterless Survey 1989 - 1990



³ Source: The Urban Core Shelterless Survey of the Strathcona Mental Health Team

destinations of those who had been turned away, so it is unclear how many were absolutely shelterless. Presently there is no means of estimating the number of shelterless in Vancouver who do not seek services at all.

Emergency shelters are generally considered to be a "bandaid" response, rather than a solution, to homelessness. Though reluctant to direct new money away from the root causes of homelessness, local service providers concede that given the number of shelter turnaways, Vancouver presently needs more emergency shelter facilities (Lookout Emergency Aid Society, 1994).

In 1993, special "at risk" populations were identified by the Ministry of Housing, Recreation and Consumer Affairs (MHRC). Some funding was made available for municipal programming for these targeted needs. While there is liaison between the City of Vancouver and the MHRC, these "at risk" groups were identified at the provincial level, without significant involvement of local service providers.

4.2.3 Other Significant Players Dealing with Homelessness

Provincial

Since 1986, the federal government has been devolving responsibility for housing by dramatically reducing program funding and emphasizing increased cost-sharing with lower levels of government (Daly, 1988pl; Hulchanski, 1989PL). Through a web of continuously-renegotiated funding arrangements, the B.C. Housing Management Commission (BCHMC) shares subsidization costs for social housing with the CMHC. BCHMC, a "quasi-Crown Corporation", is also mandated to determine (core) housing need and provide social housing for families, seniors and people with disabilities, who cannot afford suitable accommodation in the private market (BCHMC, undated).

In terms of construction of social housing, annual targets have consistently fallen short of

demonstrated need. Declines in social housing completions since 1986 are illustrated in Figure 3. Federal funding for new social housing was completely eliminated in 1993, however the Province has committed to maintain its portion of funding for new units in B.C.

BCHMC has no official working definition of homelessness. Placement in BCHMC social housing is based on criteria of need, using indicators similar to the CMHC's core housing need model. The major housing problems of people on the BCHMC waiting list are (McCririck, p.d., 1993):

- * Lack of affordability (the households are paying more than 30% of income on housing)
- * Inadequacy of present accommodation (over-crowding, poor conditions)

Over 6,000 households are currently on the official BCHMC waiting list for the Lower Mainland (McCririck, p.d., 1994). Waiting lists are sometimes referred to as an indicator of local housing need, however their usefulness as an accurate measure must be qualified.

Waiting lists may underestimate those in acute housing need by excluding ineligible (street) youths, new residents and refugees as well as those who are unaware of their eligibility to apply. Waiting lists may also overestimate need by double-counting applicants (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 1991).

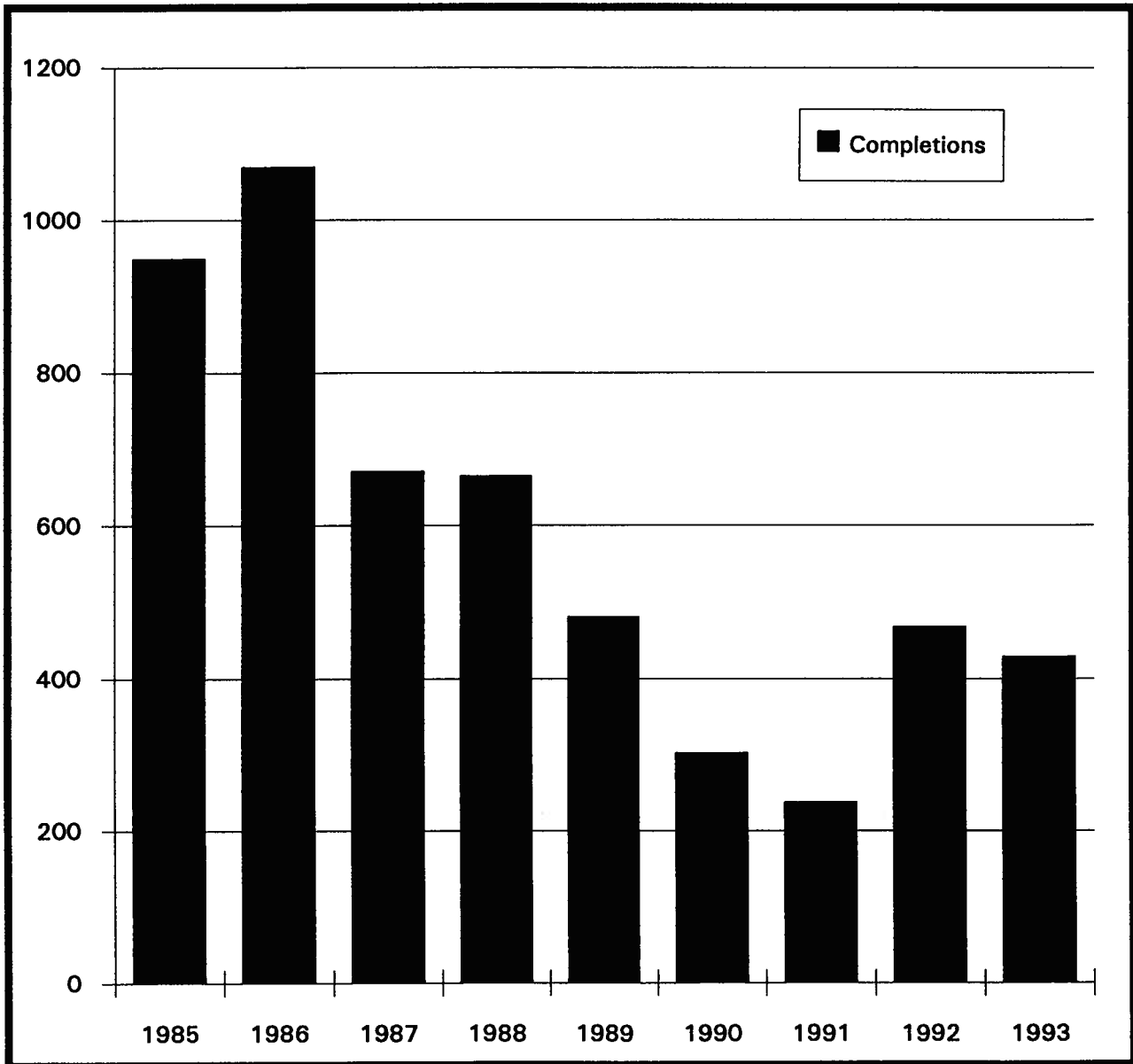
BCHMC contends that there are no [shelterless] homeless people on its waiting list (Westley, p.d., 1993). However, some of those 6,000 households are likely at risk of experiencing homelessness. To gain placement on the waiting list applicants must demonstrate their core housing need and, therefore, be marginally or precariously housed.

BCHMC provides the limited stock of social housing on an emergency needs basis and prioritizes individual placement on its waiting list. This process informally assesses risk of homelessness and identifies a range of shelter uncertainty, known only to BCHMC.

Funding for all emergency services, including homeless shelters and hostels, has historically

FIGURE 3⁴

Total Annual Vancouver Social Housing Completions
(1985 - 1993)



⁴ Source: CMHC

been separated from housing. Funding for shelters is allocated by the Ministry of Social Services. (A recent exception: transition houses for women are now funded by the Ministry of Women's Equality) (Ratcliff, p.d., 1994).

The Ministry of Housing, Recreation and Consumer Affairs (MHRC), the provincial ministry responsible for BCHMC, has never carried out a systematic census of the homeless population in British Columbia. However, following recommendations from the 1992 Provincial Commission on Housing Options, MHRC recognized certain populations to be "at risk" and funded some programs targeting the needs of the "near homeless".

According to the MHRC, the criteria is blurred in determining who make up the homeless population and who are at risk of homelessness. Some of the specific factors considered by MHRC include (Turner, p.d., 1993):

- * Shelterlessness and those in danger of becoming shelterless,
- * Physical inadequacy of a dwelling,
- * Affordability and Accessibility problems

MHRC also considers the issues of security of tenure, poverty and discrimination (against those with children or on income assistance) in establishing where individuals are on the continuum of shelter uncertainty. But the Ministry does not keep statistics on the number of households at risk of homelessness due to extreme affordability problems, such as high rent-to-income cost burdens.

In 1993, the MHRC announced new funding to house people "at risk of homelessness". The Vancouver projects were directed to serve special populations that had been identified (by MHRC) as a major concern: the mentally ill (particularly women), street youths and young single mothers with their children (MARH 1993-034). Prior to releasing 1994 funds, MHRC proposed a survey of residents in the Downtown Eastside, recognizing that a significant number of "at risk" people live in that catchment area. However, there is no formula for deciding which populations are most in

need of services and priorities among these groups keep changing (Turner, p.d., 1993).

Under its 1994/95 "Homeless At Risk Program" (HARP), MHRC has committed to adding 150 units of second-stage housing throughout British Columbia (B.C. Housing, 1994). Due to concern for regional equity issues, the program announcement stipulated that only about 60 of these units may be considered for the Lower Mainland (Woodward, p.d., 1994).

Submissions made by non-profits, responding to the Ministry's future Calls for Expressions of Interest, will be reviewed by MHRC to determine allocation of funding for these new units (Turner, p.d., 1994). According to MHRC, high quality proposals of the most demonstrated need, and with local government support and involvement will likely receive the funding (Chester; Ratcliff, p.d., 1994).

Third Sector

The non-profit sector is another active service provider to both the marginally housed and the literally homeless. Vancouver's emergency (homeless) shelters and hostels are predominantly managed by non-profits or church organizations. Table 2 outlines the emergency shelters available in Vancouver.

The Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA) is the most prominent third sector player in Vancouver. In 1973, this resident organization championed the renaming of the "Downtown Eastside", to signal its goal for locals to improve their own lives and reclaim their neighbourhood.

DERA maintains its pivotal roles of assisting with housing relocation and acting as advocate for all of those experiencing shelter uncertainty. The Association is particularly concerned with

TABLE 2⁵**Vancouver Emergency Shelters and Related Services**

<u>Name of Shelter</u>	<u>Service</u>	<u>Clients</u> <u>Age 19 and over</u>
The Lookout	Beds	Women and men
Triage	Beds	Women and men
Crosswalk	Emergency Sleeping (sofas and floor)	Women and men
Union Gospel Mission	Open only if other shelters are full	Women and men
Catholic Charities	Beds	Men only
Dunsmuir House	Beds	Men only
Harbour Light	Booked only through Emergency Services	

Through Emergency Services or Adolescent Services:

Fineday House	
Helping Spirit Lodge	Native
Homestead	
Kate Booth House	Women only
Powell Place Women's Shelter	Women only
Rape Relief and Shelter	Women only
The Safe House	Youth

⁵ Sources: Housing and Properties Department, City of Vancouver and Ministry of Social Services

maintaining affordable housing stock in the area, primarily comprised of SROs and rooming houses. DERA periodically chronicled the steady loss of SRO units to gentrification and other market forces, including the impact of EXPO 86 and neighbouring mega-project developments. Since 1990, however, funding constraints have impeded DERA's maintenance of statistics (Kellum, p.d., 1994).

The newly established Downtown Granville Tenants' Association, an offshoot of DERA, fulfils a similar role for residents of its catchment area, focusing more on the needs of area street youth.

4.3 An Overview of the At Risk Homeless Population

4.3.1 Profiles of SRO and Rooming House Residents

The discussion in Chapter Two reveals that the majority of the "marginally housed" are renters, as opposed to home-owners. Renters who are vulnerable to being shut out of the private housing market, due to low incomes and high rent burdens (greater than 45 % of income on shelter costs) are recognized to be at some risk of homelessness.

Housing affordability problems of this magnitude persist in Vancouver's CBD and Strathcona neighbourhoods, especially as area rents have risen faster than incomes in recent years (McCrick, 1985). Many residents, particularly singles, subsist on incomes well below the poverty line. Census track data reveals that low-income households make up 60 % of all private households in the catchment area (City of Vancouver, 1994dr).

These neighbourhoods have long been associated with homelessness and have traditionally been the source of affordable housing for those at the lowest end of the private housing market. Single Room Occupancy residential hotels and rooming houses (SROs) are officially grouped under the general category of lodging houses in the City's Standards of Maintenance By-law (No. 5462) (Hulchanski, 1989pl). The majority contain 100 sq.ft. single room units, where tenants usually share bathroom facilities and (occasionally) cooking facilities. Most rooms are furnished with a bed, a dresser and usually a sink (City of Vancouver, 1993c).

The relationship between lodging house rental rates and the maximum shelter allowance from GAIN is an important measure of affordability (McCrick, 1985). GAIN is the main income source for 45-69 % of SRO residents (Butt, 1991; Butt 1993). In Downtown South, the average SRO rent in 1993 was \$343 per month, about \$20 higher than GAIN shelter allowance for a single person (Butt, 1993). SRO tenants typically pay 60% or more of their income on shelter (City of Vancouver,

1993c), making them acutely vulnerable to even slight changes in market conditions.

The 1991 City of Vancouver Survey of SRO residents revealed that nearly 87% of residents had not recently made use of any other housing option. Within the six months prior to the study, 15% of residents had slept eight nights in an emergency shelter, and 11% had slept twenty-four nights on the street (Butt, 1991).

"Doubling-up" is another marking of vulnerability. The practice can lead to overcrowding and destabilization of an individual's shelter situation. Not all persons who double-up are immediately vulnerable to homelessness, they may only be vulnerable to displacement. However, doubling-up is often a last step before shelterlessness.

There are very few alternatives at the lowest end of the private housing market for individuals to cycle through. Aside from the emergency shelters, the alternatives include finding another "doubling up" arrangement, leaving Vancouver or being out on the street. To the extent individuals lack other affordable options, they are at risk of experiencing homelessness.

Recently, doubling-up is perceived to be on the rise, though its prevalence is difficult to estimate since no one gathers evidence of this phenomenon (Kellum, p.d., 1993).

Some unscrupulous SRO landlords benefit from the situation of more persons per room, for if more than \$15 is charged per night for a room it no longer comes under the Tenancy Act. These rooms are then covered under the Hotel and Innkeepers Act. Since "lodgers" have no security of tenure they can be evicted more easily (Tenants' Rights Action Coalition, nd).

Until 1989, SRO residents were considered to be "hotel guests", regardless of their length of occupancy. These residents had no tenant rights until DERA successfully lobbied the province for an amendment to the B.C. Residential Tenancy Act.

Illegal evictions are reported to be commonplace, despite the arguable protection of the

Tenancy Act (Hay and Reynolds, 1993; Tenants Rights Action Coalition, 1994). According to DERA, 2-3 illegal evictions are reported to them each week (Bayfield, p.d., 1994).

Some suggestion of increased overcrowding in the study area can be drawn from the 1984-1986 Lodging House Surveys. Shared and couple households increased from 7.6% in 1984 to 11.2% in 1986 with greater increases occurring in the market SROs, which generally have smaller one room units, than in non-market housing (City of Vancouver, 1987). Service providers contend that many women serially double-up with men in order to avoid shelterlessness (Graves, p.d., 1994). This practice reduces the apparent incidence of shelterlessness in women and masks the number of single women at risk of homelessness.

Given the precarious nature of tenure and access, the high rent-to-income burdens and lack of housing alternatives, most residents of market SROs and lodging houses should be considered "homeless" (Butt, 1993; DERA, 1993). Discrimination and other markings of vulnerability, illustrated in the following profiles, may further exacerbate the problem of risk.

4.3.2 Special "At Risk" Populations

Vancouver's downtown core is in many ways a valuable regional and provincial resource. The anonymity, tolerance of varied behaviours, and availability of social and health services attracts people from other parts of the city, region, and province (Bone; Gray; Piper; p.d., 1994). The Lookout Emergency Shelter reports that 30% of all clients are from outside Vancouver (Lookout Society, 1993).

Some populations who are considered to be at risk of homelessness are profiled below. It is instructive to profile these groups, to identify the range and diversity of acute housing need in Vancouver. This is not an exhaustive investigation of all such cohorts, but rather a starting point to

consider a broader local meaning for homelessness, one that includes those at risk of homelessness.

The Psychiatrically Disabled

In the 1970s, initiatives to discharge the psychiatrically disabled from long-term institutions was accepted as a commendable objective. However, the down-sizing of psychiatric institutions has not been accompanied by sufficient funding for scattered-site residential facilities and community-based care to adequately integrate many of these clients into the broader community. (GVRHD, 1992). "Hard to house" is often used as a euphemism to describe those who are dual-diagnosed with a psychiatric or mental disability, and a substance abuse problem.

A 1979 study of psychiatric clients in the Downtown Eastside concluded that the North Health Unit was regularly forced to overspend on Emergency Housing accommodation (costs paid in addition to clients' regular income support). Emergency Housing, then the only option available, was an extremely expensive stop-gap method to deal with housing crises. The additional cost of community workers' time was reportedly wasted, since worker time was spent with "hard to house" clients who ultimately could not be helped to find suitable housing (Beggs, 1979). This study was successfully used to indicate the cost-savings of building more adequate temporary housing shelters in Vancouver.

There are currently many hidden costs of dealing with the "hard to house", being born by municipal and non-profit services. While exact cost analysis is not available, the persistent lack of appropriate beds/housing units for psychiatric clients reportedly places increasing burdens on expensive police and hospital services (GVRHD, 1992).

The psychiatrically disabled are at risk of losing their housing if the services they need to remain in the community are not provided. Within the boundaries of the Strathcona Mental Health

Team alone there are about 1,000 mentally ill persons, and only half are receiving adequate services (Buckley, p.d., 1993).

The psychiatrically disabled generally live in poverty, cannot compete well for market housing and are often evicted from SROs due to their behaviour (Ramsey, p.d., 1994). Currently waiting lists for semi-independent (supported) living housing units are between 2-4 years long. Service providers generally agree that one of the most immediate needs for at risk groups in Vancouver is supported-living housing for the psychiatrically disabled (Ramsey; Graves; Buckley; O'Shannacery; p.d., 1994).

Street Youth

In 1993, public attention focused briefly on the increasing needs of street youth when the advocacy group, Street Skids in Distress (SKID), organized demonstrations of those living "outside". Subsequently a six-bed Vancouver "safe house" for week-long transition stays was funded by the MHRC. Vancouver's Social Planning Department coordinates planning for services through its Interministerial Committee for Street Youth (Brooks, p.d., 1994).

One of the difficulties in providing services to youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness is that the definition of "youth" differs for each provincial ministry. For Social Services in B.C., "youth" under 16 are not eligible for income assistance without a referral from a social worker (so as to discourage youth from moving out on their own). Those without employment income have few alternatives to provide for their housing, once they leave their parents' home.

A comparison of Vancouver and Toronto indicated younger ages and, higher rates of drug use and violent histories in Vancouver's street youth population (McCarthy and Hagan, 1992). In Ontario, youth can leave home at 16 years and have access to social services. However in B.C.,

parents remain financially obligated for their children until they reach age 19 (McCarthy, p.d., 1994).

Adolescent Street Services provides support to some 300 street youths in the Downtown South/Granville Mall area alone. Roughly one third of these youths are from each: Greater Vancouver, the rest of the Province and other parts of Canada. The numbers of street youth reportedly rise in the summer months, with increasing trends of younger and addicted youths. (Cooke, p.d., 1994).

There are usually three or four semi-organized group "squats" of 15-20 youths going on in abandoned buildings around the City at any one time. This cycle of collective living often continues when one individual secures a market rental accommodation. Others will double-up with them until an eviction takes place. (Cooke, p.d., 1994).

Young mothers, youth involved in sex-trade work and those with substance abuse problems are considered among the most at risk of experiencing shelterlessness (Cooke, p.d., 1994).

Persons with HIV/AIDS

In Vancouver, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) have become the leading causes of premature death in men (Hogg et al, 1994b). There are an estimated 600 HIV-infected women and more than 6,500 HIV-infected men in British Columbia, the majority of whom live in Vancouver or Victoria. Locally, the HIV epidemic among women is considered to be at a relatively early stage. Up to 50% of HIV-infected women may not know they are infected. By comparison, 75% of gay men in Vancouver have been tested for HIV. (BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, 1993-94).

A British Columbia study shows that following their HIV diagnosis, many individuals relocate

to Vancouver, where 75% of provincial AIDS care is provided at St. Paul's Hospital (B.C. Centre for Excellence, 1993).

Research indicates that persons are much less likely to be employed after HIV diagnosis than before. They are also more likely to be on some form of income assistance, such as a long-term disability pension or GAIN (Hogg et al, 1994a). The Persons With Aids Society (PWA) reports that a significant number of men with HIV/AIDS must involuntarily double-up in crowded, unsuitable accommodations in order to afford rents in the West End, and to be close to St. Paul's hospital care and related services (Bone, p.d., 1994). Of those who are ill and receiving the GAIN allowance, most can only afford an SRO unit. However, this is unsuitable accommodation for ill people who require an ensuite bathroom and cooking facilities to meet their physical needs (Rupps, p.d., 1994).

As with other low-income renters experiencing extreme affordability problems in Vancouver, those who are HIV-positive may be at risk of homelessness. In addition their housing status may be particularly precarious due to the sudden loss of employment income, discrimination and loss of personal support networks (Manson Willms, Hayes, Hulchanski, 1991).

Under-reporting of HIV infection and AIDS is a common problem throughout the developed world (Hogg, 1994). In Canada, little is known about HIV-infection rates in certain populations, including aboriginal peoples, ethnic minorities and street youth (B.C. Centre for Excellence, 1993). Service providers contend that many residents in the Downtown Eastside are likely to be undiagnosed/unreported HIV-positive, since testing carries such a stigma (Graves; Bone, p.d., 1994).

For those with HIV/AIDS, secure housing is an important health issue, and also a key to hospital utilization patterns (Goldstone et al, 1994). Higher socio-economic status has been shown to be associated with slower disease progression (Schechter et al, 1994). Further research is needed to estimate the number of persons at risk in Vancouver, and to evaluate the potential social and

health cost savings that stable housing for HIV-positive persons may provide.

Women with Violent Partners

It has been estimated that at least one in ten Canadian women is physically abused by her husband [male partner] (Delgaty, 1985). In general, little attention has been given to the needs of "the hidden homeless" - women and their children precariously housed in abusive situations (Daly 1988pl). By the United Nation's definition, these women and children can be described as homeless due to the lack of personal safety in their dwelling and their precarious tenure status.

The housing alternatives available to these women are particularly limited. The ministries of Social Services and of Women's Equality are currently responsible for B.C. transition houses, which provide temporary accommodation to women fleeing violence and their children.

A number of non-profit societies operate transition homes in the Greater Vancouver area. Women often prefer to leave their home municipality for reasons of safety and anonymity. Barriers to access of social services exist for some women. For example, placement in transition houses may be more difficult for those whose first language is not English, or for elderly women, whose abuse may have extended for longer periods of time.

While many of the transition houses keep statistics on the number of women turned away due to lack of available space, most were reluctant to share this information. In the past, these statistics have been perceived as tools of discrimination against women of colour and single mothers.

Emily Murphy House (North Vancouver) did report that from 1991-1993, between 440 and 510 women and children per year had to be turned away, due to lack of space. Referrals between transition houses are common. However, the cost of doing follow-up on referrals is not available, so it is not known how many went without service.

Since women usually leave their violent partner twelve times before "making the break", a women must be referred from a transition house to gain priority for the limited number of available suites. (Graves, p.d., 1994). According to a B.C./Yukon Society of Transition Houses report, the shortage of second stage housing (3-12 month secure placements) is a serious problem (Smith, 1992).

Summary

While the City of Vancouver has no formal definition of homelessness, the above review of the City's social housing initiatives indicates that an informal definition of homelessness has evolved, and continues to function. This informal definition guides the implementation of City policies and programs targeting the various groups experiencing shelter uncertainty.

The range and diversity of housing need in Vancouver demonstrates the broader meaning of acute shelter uncertainty. These profiles do not provide an exhaustive investigation of all at risk groups. Rather they serve as a starting point to consider a broader meaning for homelessness, one that includes those local groups who are at risk of homelessness.

In order to gauge the effectiveness of Vancouver's policy and programming for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness, third sector service providers and representatives from the different levels of government were surveyed. The results of that survey are discussed in the sections which follow.

4.4 Analysis of Vancouver's Approaches to Homelessness

Service providers and representatives from all levels of government were surveyed to evaluate the effectiveness of the City of Vancouver's responses to homelessness. The majority of survey respondents support a broadening of the definition of homelessness to include groups at risk of experiencing homelessness. Respondents encouraged the City to undertake the responsibility of improving its monitoring of the level of acute social housing need in Vancouver. They encouraged the City to use this information to strengthen its role as an advocate with the Provincial government regarding this need.

Most survey respondents also supported the continuation of the City's present involvement in the development of low-income housing in Vancouver. They acknowledged that the City is unlikely to undertake an expanded role as a comprehensive developer of new units, particularly given the current political climate at City Hall. However, survey respondents proposed some significant changes and additions to City initiatives.

4.4.1 Evaluation of the City's Initiatives

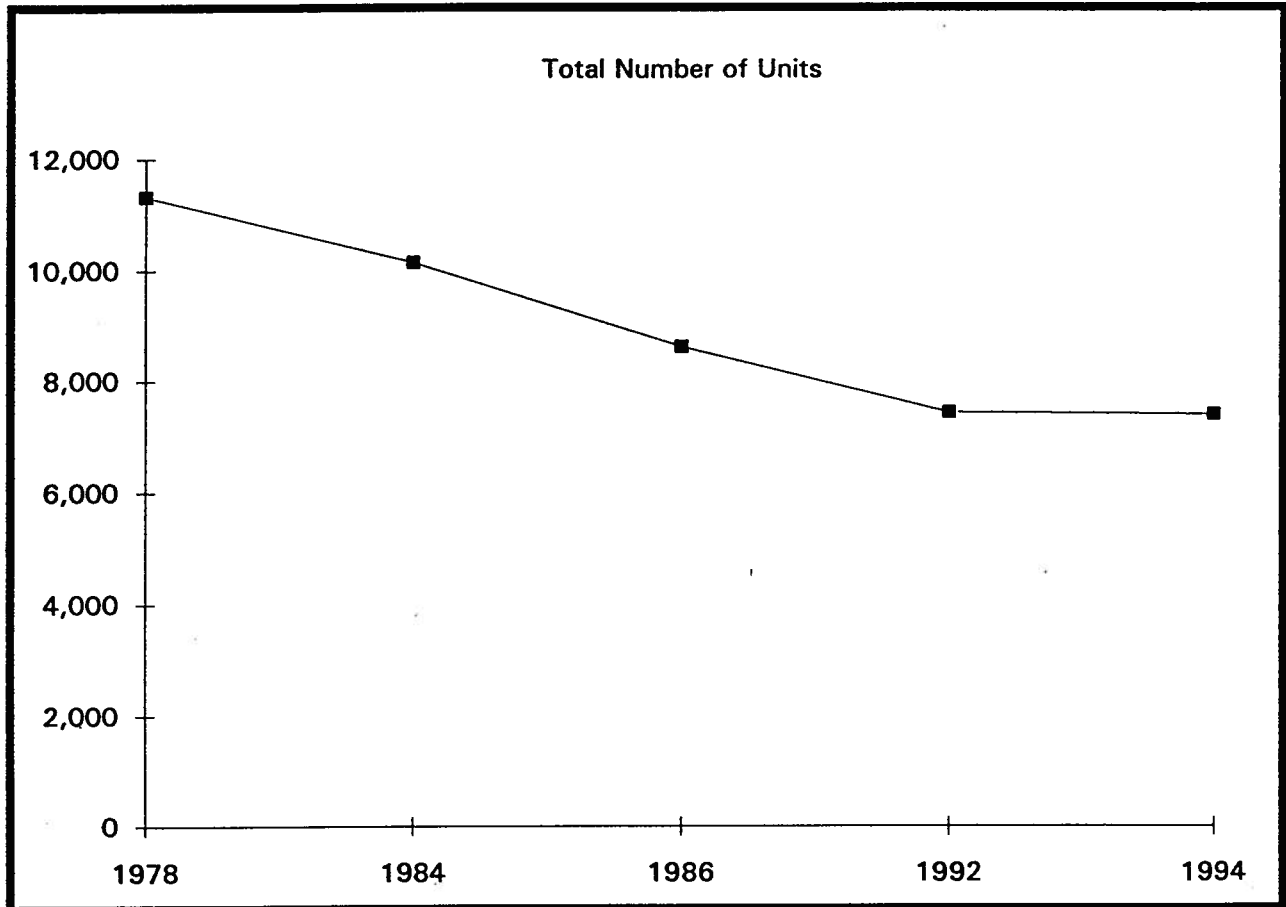
Protection of Low-income Housing Stock

Since SRO residential hotels and rooming houses have provided cities with some of the lowest-cost unsubsidized housing (Lincoln, 1980), they are valuable and worthy of protection.

In 1989, Vancouver City Council made a verbal commitment to maintain the existing stock of affordable low-income housing in the Downtown Eastside (Vaisbord, p.d., 1994). The City established some development restrictions in order to attempt to retain the existing stock. Unfortunately, some of these initiatives have been weak or ineffective as protection of low-income market housing. (The steady reduction of SRO and rooming house stock in Vancouver's Downtown Core is chronicled in Figure 4).

FIGURE 4⁶

**Total Vancouver Downtown Core SRO
Hotel and Rooming House Stock
(1978 - 1994)**



⁶ Source: City of Vancouver

For example, the City measure intended to control the number of demolitions requires that all redevelopment permits and approvals must be in place prior to a demolition (McAfee, p.d., 1994). This is a weak control since it does not stop demolitions from taking place, at best it only serves to slow them down.

In addition, there is no formal link between demolition and conversion controls, and the City's informal policy of one to one replacement of low-income housing units. Prior to EXPO 86, pressure on SROs was monitored by the City, yet there was no direct municipal intervention as SROs were converted into tourist hotels. Between 1984-1986, at least 15 hotels switched from being monthly residential accommodations to daily tourist rentals (McCrick, 1985), creating a net loss of SRO units in those years. As stated earlier, the one-to-one replacement policy is not currently enforced by by-law.

Redevelopment pressures in the study area continue, stimulated by projects such as the International Village and the proposed Central Waterfront Port Plan (Butt, 1993; McCullough, 1994). City representatives and others generally acknowledge that SRO residents should be considered homeless. Displacement is a constant threat, since residents do not possess security of tenure or continued, regular access to their dwellings, and they lack affordable housing alternatives.

To demonstrate its concern for existing low-income housing in the downtown core, the City periodically monitors this stock and provides a basic inventory of the area's market and non-market housing.

From the beginning of its inventory-taking, the City has been inconsistent in tracking trends in affordability. The surveys completed in 1986, 1987, and 1991 included resident surveys, and specifically tracked rent-to-income ratios of area residents. However, since resident surveys are expensive, the 1992-1994 surveys have exclusively focused on monitoring the stock (Raynor, p.d.,

1994). These changes in survey methods prevent the City from monitoring those at risk of experiencing homelessness due to extreme affordability problems, and make estimation of trends difficult.

Third sector advocates and City representatives agree that both maintenance of existing SRO stock and the building of new replacement self-contained units are required to meet the need of existing tenants. However, there appears to be disagreement over how much progress has been made in the Downtown Eastside. City surveys continue to report net increases in the low-income stock, through rehabilitation and construction of new non-market replacement units (City of Vancouver, 1993c; 1994a). Yet DERA contends that some units identified in the City's surveys as replacement units should not be included as such (Kellum, p.d., 1994). Some are re-opened units in SROs that may have been closed (due to poor maintenance or available only to tourists) prior to the base count for the City inventory. The survey results may overstate increases to the low-income stock or mask net losses of SRO units.

The City does acknowledge inventory difficulties and that the distinction between SRO rooms and tourist hotels is not always clear cut. Future City inventories intend to address these issues (City of Vancouver, 1994a). Meanwhile, all SRO rooms, even those in "mixed" tourist/residential hotels, are counted in the survey.

The issue of City enforcement of maintenance standards is another area of contention. Many SROs exist largely because liquor license regulations require a residential component for a pub license (Gray, p.d., 1994). Some contend that the City could be stricter in its monitoring and enforcement of the building maintenance standards. The City could threaten to withdraw pub licenses; levy fines for delinquency or legally complete required renovations on behalf of delinquent landlords and then charge the costs against the property tax rolls.

Unfortunately, such measures wield a double-edged sword and may serve to protect the existing stock, but not the existing tenants. Even marginal rent increases following rehabilitation of units can outprice existing tenants from their accommodation.

There are also an estimated 20,000-26,000 illegal secondary suites in Vancouver (Kraus, 1993), roundly acknowledged as a vital source of affordable rental units. An estimated one third of single family dwellings in RS-1 zoned areas contain such a suite, to serve as a revenue-producing "mortgage helper" (McAfee, p.d., 1994). Most of these suites do not conform to the City's building standard and maintenance codes, and much of the rental income likely goes unreported.

From 1986-1992 The City's Secondary Suite Program rezoned 47% of single family (RS-1) neighbourhoods, permitting them to contain a secondary suite. In the remaining RS-1 neighbourhoods, those with illegal suites must upgrade them to a standard "family suite" or phase out the suite after a maximum of ten years (Kraus, 1993). Evaluation of this program has not taken place. The long term effects on the availability of this rental stock are not yet known, however the City estimates that few affordable units have been taken off the market as a result of the program (Kraus, 1993).

The City was commended by survey respondents for its temporary moratorium on evictions from live-work studios in the Victory Square area. Even though many of these units are not conforming to building and maintenance codes, the City has decided not to enforce its by-laws. Despite this temporary protection, however, the risk of displacement of residents remains over the longer term.

Construction of New Stock

While a worthy objective, annual targets of permanent social housing have persistently fallen

short of demonstrated need. As illustrated in Figure 3 earlier, the number of Vancouver social housing unit completions has steadily declined, while the need for non-market housing has been constant with population growth (City of Vancouver, 1992a; McCririck, p.d., 1994).

Creating new housing that reaches the core needy with incomes in the lowest quintiles has always been a problem because of the deep subsidies required by such tenants (McAfee, p.d., 1994). Delivery of social housing to these groups is now even more difficult, due to inadequate funding commitments from the federal and provincial governments.

The City originally identified social housing as a regional issue and committed to providing its "fair share" within the context of the Regional District (City of Vancouver, 1981). The City contends that it has maintained the level of social housing at 9% of all Vancouver housing stock, and that an allocation of 400 new units per year is a reasonable goal to maintain this level (City of Vancouver, 1994). The City therefore implies its current level of commitment to be adequate and reasonable.

However, survey respondents suggested otherwise. Under the City's 20% income-mix (inclusionary) zoning initiative, actual allocation of units is dependent on funding commitments from senior governments. The land made available by developers can sit vacant when the funds for social housing are not made available by senior governments during the construction of the market units (Kraus, 1993). Concerns regarding stigma and the lack of social mixing between high-end market and subsidized tenants have also arisen (McCullough, 1994).

The City was criticized for its reluctance to explore alternative uses of the 20% social housing component exacted from new developments. Survey respondents proposed a more active social housing fund or land bank as a more flexible means to pool land and make it available to non-profit housing sponsors. This alternative could also provide a mechanism by which individual

citizens could bequeath donations of land for future social housing projects (Edgar; Walker; p.d., 1994).

City representatives maintain that the on-site development of social housing units is a high priority, to contribute to the City's social mix. In 1993, Council agreed that "pay-in-lieu" contributions could be extracted from developers, but this option would only be considered as a last resort, on a site by site basis. The City is concerned about the costs of surveying land to determine the commensurate contribution value and the legal complexities of exacting "pay-in-lieu" contributions. Also, the mega-project precedent of 20% cannot always be negotiated from lower valued developments (Gray, p.d., 1994).

Some survey respondents suggested that the City could be even more generous in its land-lease agreements with non-profit housing sponsors since land costs are such a heavy determinant of housing affordability. An alternative appraisal of "fair value" would be for the City to lease the land at 65-70 % of freehold market value rather than the current 75 % of market value. [The "fair value" may be contentious since there is not as developed a market for leases in Vancouver, compared to cities like London or Hong Kong] (Hazleden, p.d., 1994). In any case, this suggestion would require provincial approval to authorize such a change in lease "fair value" policy.

A survey respondent also suggested that the City could encourage the Province to purchase SROs outright. The rationale for this idea is that over the years the Province has already been "purchasing" Vancouver SROs, many times over, through GAIN shelter subsidies to individual tenants.

These alternative measures invite further investigation of the limitations, real or perceived, that prohibit municipal initiative.

4.4.2 Limitations on Municipal Action

Political Constraints

Survey respondents agreed that a lack of political will at all levels of government was one of the greatest obstacles to implementation of locally-devised solutions to acute housing need. The City of Vancouver maintains its argument that financial responsibility for social housing rests primarily with senior levels of government. In terms of its own capital development commitments, the City is currently focused on the its new Main Public Library (Gray, p.d., 1994).

The City has been reluctant to formally define the social problem of homelessness due to distrust of the media's reaction and of raising public expectations of a municipal response (Butt, p.d., 1994). Survey respondents noted that Vancouver's Council prefers to act on social issues which are framed so that City action will serve to manage or solve a problem. Council tends to place lower priority or attention on issues which would overwhelm municipal resources (McAfee, p.d., 1994).

Nevertheless, the City was praised by many respondents for its steadfast resistance to Not-In-My-Backyard (NIMBY) sentiment in the siting of Special Needs Residential Facilities (SNRF). This challenge to NIMBY exemplifies Council's ability to champion the social value of meeting local housing needs.

Financial Constraints

Traditionally there are four key service areas over which municipalities exercise financial responsibility: Police, Fire, Water and Sewers, and Street Repair. A municipality's ability to redirect funds and trim its budget is limited by these traditional responsibilities (McAfee; Robinson, p.d., 1994).

Municipalities are also required to maintain balanced budgets, so legally the City of

Vancouver cannot run a deficit. Municipal revenues are restricted to collection of property taxes, business licenses and fees, and fines.

Without taxpayer support, the City of Vancouver could not independently fund completion of social housing units. The City presently lacks the legislative authority to independently borrow the required millions for such projects. Capital borrowing is possible only if approved by a citywide referendum. In recent years, Vancouver voters have twice voted down referendums which would have authorized capital grants to fund social housing in the City (McAfee, p.d., 1994).

Legal Constraints

As a creature of the province, a municipality is inherently limited in its legal authority, so that it cannot act independent of provincial enabling legislation. These legal limits on municipal innovation include the budgetary framework described above. The legal framework also constrains the City's ability to explore alternative uses of the monies it exacts for social housing and to create more innovative funding arrangements with non-profits sponsors. [However, the District of Surrey has been less reticent than Vancouver to explore "pay-in-lieu" alternatives] (Kraus, 1993).

The Council is empowered by the Vancouver Charter to create by-laws which restrict real property development within City boundaries. Some survey respondents suggest that the City has not gone far enough to exercise the powers it has to zone land and regulate development in the City of Vancouver.

Within its existing authority, the City is able to be more involved in the regulation of real property development. However, given the present underlying political theme of "don't thwart development", Vancouver's Council is highly unlikely to support increased regulation (Butt; Piper; McAfee, p.d., 1994).

Some social housing advocates may insist on greater intervention by senior governments in the real estate market, to protect the lowest-income market stock (eg. provincial expropriation of SROs). However, the extensive legislative reform required to alter the structure of the real estate market lacks general political and community support.

Despite these political, financial and legal limitations, the City has the potential to play a more proactive role in planning for the homeless. Presently, the homeless and those at risk are not identified by the City, instead they are folded into descriptions of core need for social housing. The terms of reference have begun to change at the provincial level, however, with the introduction of the Homeless/At Risk Housing Program (HARP).

4.4.3 Establishing Partnerships

Currently the Provincial government encourages "partnerships" between funding agencies and other groups, so that financial responsibility for projects is shared between ministries. The government proposes that these partnerships can empower the community and be more inclusive to achieve multiple goals (B.C. Housing, 1994).

The process of developing non-market housing through partnerships creates new opportunities, yet has practical drawbacks as well. The varying boundaries of service providers (Health, Social Services, Housing) and of different municipalities combine to make social housing delivery a more complex, expensive exercise. For example, recently completed social housing projects have experienced difficulties since these new partnerships require complex land-lease and other agreements, resulting in increased project timelines and higher legal fees (Edgar, p.d., 1994). Coordination which fosters compatibility among the various "partner" agencies is essential to the success of these partnerships.

Along these lines, municipalities such as the City of Portland, Oregon have been successful in creating a network of involved agencies and community groups to address homelessness. Similar loosely based networks of service providers exist in Vancouver, such as the Urban Core Committee in the Downtown Eastside and the Lower Mainland Network for Affordable Housing. However these looser networks are not directly linked to municipal planning functions. The City could create a link between government and third sector groups through the Housing and Properties Department, similar to the Social Planning Department's effort, the Interministerial Committee on Street Youth.

4.4.4 Regional Issues

At the regional level, the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) has been far less involved in the development of social housing, compared to the Capital Regional District (CRD) in Victoria (Robinson, p.d., 1994). The CRD currently runs an active portfolio of social housing, however the Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation (GVHC) is curtailing its already limited efforts.

Vancouver Downtown Core housing stock can be viewed as an important regional and provincial resource, worthy of protection. Older housing stock generally rents for less and Vancouver has traditionally served as an ample source of such accommodation, particularly for seasonal resource sector workers from around the province. The concentration of social services and anonymous street culture located in the area, reinforces its convenience and attractiveness (Gray; Bone; Piper; p.d., 1994).

The effects of many social problems are exported to Vancouver from elsewhere in the province and from out-of-province (Chester; Morrissey; p.d., 1994). Psychiatrically disabled persons from Alberta have even reportedly been given one way bus tickets to Vancouver (Ramsey,

1994). As this in-migration continues, attention to the cumulative impact on Vancouver and on the region is advisable.

Social planning is not presently carried out by the GVRD. Nevertheless, the GVRD does have a Social Issues Committee which could examine the issue of homelessness in the region. Local responses by member municipalities to local issues regarding the risk of homelessness could be explored. For example, other GVRD member municipalities, besides Vancouver, may need to consider building or improving emergency shelters facilities. This orientation toward better development of local responses corresponds with the current provincial government emphasis on equity in provision of services and the "closer to home" theme of placing services.

Nevertheless, it is no simple matter to identify solutions which manage or stabilize the complex social problem of homelessness. Proximity of services may not alter the migration patterns of homeless persons. Service providers caution that the homeless and those at risk may not gravitate to where services are introduced, since they may prefer the anonymity and opportunity of B.C.'s biggest city.

The effectiveness of redistributing services must be monitored, so that resources are appropriately allocated. In this regard, the City's regular inventory of low-income stock could be expanded to monitor mobility trends of downtown core residents.

While the City does play a relatively influential role in the local housing market, Vancouver does not have a closed housing market. It is important to note that the affordability of Vancouver housing (or lack thereof) is also responsive to regional, provincial and national trends and policies, and these influences cannot be reversed solely by local effort.

4.5 Summary of Case Study

The political, financial and legal limitations on municipal involvement in social housing have been outlined. Given these budgetary and other constraints, it is important to maintain clarity over the areas of responsibility of different levels of government. Despite all the constraints, the City has the potential to play a significant role in planning for the homeless and those at risk.

Survey respondents generally agreed that more low-income housing options are needed outside the downtown core. The City has experience combatting NIMBY sentiments and may continue in this role to generate community support for social housing throughout Vancouver.

Many of the City's initiatives to preserve low-income housing stock are temporary or stop gap measures, which do not directly identify the extent of homelessness and risk of homelessness in Vancouver. Within the confines of existing municipal authority, planning for the homeless and those at risk can be made more effective.

Currently, the City restricts its direct involvement in new housing development, primarily by leasing City land to non-profit sponsors. Yet it could be more innovative and proactive by facilitating increased collaboration efforts and monitoring acute shelter uncertainty in the local community.

Advocacy has proven to be an effective tool to gain provincial support for locally identified housing need. For example, the introduction of the HARP program followed active municipal lobbying efforts. The City of Vancouver should improve monitoring to demonstrate the credible basis for increased social housing funding from senior governments.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR MUNICIPAL POLICY AND PLANNING

This chapter outlines specific recommendations which flow from the analysis of the Vancouver case. The discussion of broadening the concept of homelessness concludes with an assessment of the general implications for municipal policy and planning for the homeless.

5.1 Recommendations for the Vancouver Case

Identify and Monitor Homeless/At Risk

Most survey respondents acknowledged a continuum of shelter uncertainty. Respondents supported an expanded classification for "homeless" which includes the shelterless, those in emergency shelters or without secure residences, and those at risk of losing their housing. The lack of a common meaning for "at risk homeless" remains an obstacle to clearly identifying the range of its cohorts, and therefore, to estimating the size of Vancouver's total at risk population.

The new provincial Homeless/At Risk Housing Program (HARP) literally acknowledges the need for identifying at risk groups. This provincial recognition should be reflected in City of Vancouver initiatives, currently it is not.

The City should facilitate a collaborative public process to identify specific at risk groups and define the local meaning of homelessness. This process would include the homeless/at risk themselves and would facilitate greater understanding of the concept.

Meanwhile, over the near term, Vancouver residents of SRO hotels and rooming houses should be identified as homeless/at risk. City measures aimed at preserving this lowest-income stock should reflect the reality of this risk, and be amended to assure longer term protection from resident displacement by formalizing development requirements of one-to-one replacement of units.

The allocation of provincial housing funds is a political process and spending priority is

contingent on overall provincial budget negotiations as well as demonstration of housing needs (Chester, p.d., 1994). In order to rationalize the funding of more social housing units in Vancouver, more thorough monitoring of the local parameters of homelessness and risk of homelessness is required. The City is well-positioned to be informed about the local nature of acute housing need and to act as an advocate with the provincial government.

Under the 1994 HARP program, 150 new units of second stage housing per year will be added throughout British Columbia. (These funds may be renewed each year). Calls for Expressions of Interest, submitted by non-profits, will be reviewed by MHRC to determine allocation of the funding. Proposals with the most demonstrated need, and local government support and involvement will likely receive the funding (BC Housing, 1994).

The CMHC may also allocate one-time grants (without subsidies) to non-profit housing projects, funded from recent federal cost-savings surplus. A credible inventory of need is critical to legitimize any funding requests for these funds (Hazleden, p.d., 1994).

It is therefore timely and useful to break down the problem of risk of homelessness by identifying local at risk groups. By monitoring this problem more closely at the municipal level, the City can more adequately perform its role as an advocate.

Develop Collaborative Efforts and Expand Facilitator Role

The tasks of monitoring SRO demolitions and citywide evictions have periodically been undertaken by non-profits, such as DERA and TRAC. However, their limited funding restricts their ability to continue.

Joint monitoring efforts with non-profit partners working "in the field" would likely result in greater credibility and appropriate, accurate monitoring programs, given the discrepancies over

the accuracy of the City's inventory of low-income housing stock. The City could also gain a more accurate estimate of the number of shelterless by monitoring turnaways from emergency shelters with the assistance of the shelters themselves.

The City could initiate joint health-housing status assessments for particular at risk groups, in collaboration with partners such as the Ministry of Health or Social Services. These tasks would likely have minimal additional funding requirements, and could ultimately generate provincial cost-savings.

The City of Vancouver facilitates the establishment of partnerships as it leases land to non-profit housing sponsors. This facilitator role ought to be expanded to develop a network of all service providers dealing with the homeless and those at risk, through the Housing and Properties Department (including the City's Social Planning Department and provincial agents such as Social Services).

Through such a network, the City can further support non-profit housing sponsors by helping to develop their capacity to deliver housing and to gain access to HARP funding. This network would reinforce and capitalize on the beneficial existing linkages among third sector service providers, by connecting them to the municipal planning function.

Investigate the Experience of Other Cities

Vancouver could draw from the example of a San Francisco initiative, and prepare a 3-5 year Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS). The CHAS reflects all the likely available resources for social housing (including specific homeless/at risk groups) and estimates the additional resources required to meet housing need. The San Francisco CHAS has been commended by community groups, for boldly identifying housing need, even if no funding sources are available for

new housing. Specific deficiencies can then be addressed, and existing policies and programs revamped where necessary (Coalition for the Homeless S.F., 1991).

A Vancouver Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy could formally recognize the continuum of shelter uncertainty by identifying and profiling the homeless/at risk. This strategy may facilitate rational planning, and legitimize municipal demands for a guaranteed annual minimum of social housing units from senior governments. If it is based on the information collected through improved monitoring initiatives, this guaranteed minimum could be linked to growing local and regional housing affordability problems.

5.2 A Broader Definition of Homelessness

The range and diversity of acute housing need demonstrated in the Vancouver case, supports the rationale for broadening the meaning of homelessness to include at risk groups in local planning for the homeless. In order to initiate suitable measures which will improve the housing and health status of the homeless, municipalities should identify and monitor special populations for vulnerability to homelessness.

Specific populations to be considered homeless/at risk have been profiled. These local groups may include the number of people experiencing critical levels of affordability problems, those experiencing or threatened with eviction/violence and numbers living in overcrowded ("doubled-up") conditions or in the uncertainty of "illegal" dwellings.

In accordance with a broader definition of homelessness, the scope and type of housing programs and service delivery mechanisms may more accurately address local need. On the federal level, the Core Need Model might be adapted to reflect definitions which characterise "at risk" groups (eg. those involuntarily spending 45 % or more of their income on housing). This would

provide a more universally accepted meaning of homelessness in Canada; one which is broad enough to include the concept of risk, yet can be adapted to reflect the local/regional nature of the problem. For example in Vancouver, those living in SROs and those who are infected with HIV and persons with AIDS may logically be included, whereas in other regions of Canada, new immigrants, refugees or other groups may be more characteristically at risk.

Monitoring the dimensions of a more broadly-defined homeless problem would help public policy meet demand for services and plan more proactively. Municipal monitoring programs should be developed in collaboration with those at risk and service providers in the field to help form a clearer picture of local need. The collaborative process is critical to setting priorities and in developing appropriate programs for service consumers.

5.3 Municipal Approaches to Homelessness and the Role of Planning

A home is a place that serves many functions and establishes the basic relationships between resident(s) and their social environment (Jahiel, 1990). On a conceptual level, shelters and temporary dwelling arrangements cannot truly be considered homes. Program and policy focused on emergency solutions to homelessness effectively legitimize the social marginality of the homeless (Hoch, 1987). Rather than eradicating homelessness, such policies may perpetuate it by ignoring solutions which address root causes like the need for permanent affordable housing and income redistribution.

Similarly, the narrow definition of homelessness, which is confined to the emergency state of shelterlessness, contributes to this process of marginalizing the homeless, by avoiding the immediacy of their need for permanent housing solutions.

Income level is an equally important factor to housing affordability as is the actual housing

cost. If the gap between irreducible housing costs (those of housing of last resort) and the income level required to support such housing is to be lessened, ultimately income levels must be raised (City and County of San Francisco, 1991).

While housing and income assistance are not the direct responsibility of municipalities in Canada, local governments are well-situated to lobby senior governments, and coordinate private and third sector housing subsidization. Municipalities can provide direction in prioritizing local needs and act as advocates for increased senior government funding commitments.

Social housing requires extensive capital investment and must compete for spending priority with other areas of social capital investment. The rationale for sustained government involvement in the Canadian housing market has evolved over time, ebbing with the tides of political priorities in relation to social and economic forces. Cost-savings analysis is suggested to rationalize increased spending on social housing, since a host of social costs are associated with unstable housing and homelessness.

The wide range of municipal initiatives which address homelessness (outlined in Chapter 3), suggests that no single approach can be universally applied. The complex problem of homeless requires an integrated response from the public, private and third sectors with the homeless themselves, otherwise municipalities become problem managers by default. Solutions must be developed to suit local/regional development patterns and political climate, depending on the degree and type of housing need.

The role of the municipal planning must be grounded in a conceptualization of homelessness which recognizes the reality of a continuum shelter uncertainty. Prevention-oriented approaches to homelessness require an acknowledgement of risk of homelessness, to break the cycle. Planners must work within existing frameworks, to (re)educate the community and address the (oftentimes)

conflicting priorities of a longer term view of the public good (eg. for a healthy and housed socially-mixed city) and the immediate reality of costs and political will.

While municipalities are well placed to monitor homelessness, they do not control the resources or have jurisdictional authority to act independently. It is impossible for municipal governments to solve local housing need. However, municipalities can develop prevention-oriented approaches to homelessness. To be effective in addressing homelessness, research and policies must include all parties involved in its generation (Jahiel, 1992). Identification of local at risk groups is a critical step in this regard.

5.4 Areas of Further Research

A number of questions emerge from this re-conceptualization of the homeless/at risk problem and the discussion of municipal planning responses to it.

The conditions that are considered direct precursors to homelessness as well as the defining characteristics of the "at risk" homeless population, ought to be further examined. These issues include housing cost burdens and incidence of overcrowding. (Ringheim, 1990), particularly to develop methods of assessing "soft data", such as the incidence of and risks to "doubled-up" households.

Further exploration is also needed to identify partners in cost-shared research. For the Vancouver case, cost-sharing could involve a piggy-back study of local housing affordability with the CMHC, to monitor trends in extreme rent-to-income burdens or (as suggested earlier) joint monitoring programs developed with third sector partners.

The rationale for increased capital investment in social housing must be strengthened to compete for spending priority with other areas of social capital investment. Cost-savings analysis is indicated at the provincial level. For example: 1) Evaluation of health status, hospital utilization rates, and net impact of stable housing for those with HIV/AIDS and, 2) analysis of hospital and police service utilization rates by the psychiatrically disabled who are precariously-housed.

The regional implications of homelessness should also be examined to determine possible joint responses by neighbouring municipalities. Further study could address the "free rider" problems placed on the central city in a metropolitan unit, such as Vancouver vis a vis the provision of services for the homeless/at risk (or lack thereof) in the GVRD.

5.5 Conclusion

No definition of homelessness has been widely accepted in Canada. Each sector creates its own definition of homelessness, to identify its own areas of responsibility. Such definitions may have been helpful in framing the extent of public sector involvement. However, practical usage of the term "homeless" demonstrates that while the extremes may be identified, gaps remain in how the problem is defined.

The profiles of Vancouver's at risk homeless reveal the range and diversity of acute housing and housing related needs. The survey of service providers and government agents supports the rationale for broadening the meaning of homelessness to include at risk groups in local planning for the homeless.

Unless the pace and the nature of change in urban housing stock is better regulated or the supply of new low-rent housing is significantly increased, the only possible outcome is more people without shelter (Hulchanski, 1989p1). Failure to maintain adequate social housing supply ultimately leads to increased numbers of homeless (Hulchanski et al, 1987).

Analysts contend that estimations of a city's unmet housing need are a cost-effective tool in lobbying senior government for funds (Carter and McAfee, 1990). The role of municipalities can be broadened here to increase monitoring of local need and to improve their base for credible advocacy.

The greatest test of housing policy is its translation into the provision of adequate physical and social space for individuals and families who are most in need of accommodation (Rose, 1980). A fundamental step must be taken. The concept of homelessness must be broadened to include locally identified at risk groups, in order to develop planning and policy measures which reflect, and respond to, specific local needs.

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⁷ p.d. = personal discussion

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APPENDIX A

Municipal Responses to Homelessness Questionnaire

(My name is Tracey Gagan. I am a Master's student at UBC's School of Community and Regional Planning. I am currently doing a case study of Vancouver as part of the research for my thesis on Municipal Planning Responses to the Homeless and Those At Risk of Homelessness.

I would like to ask the following questions. Please feel free to comment on your experience of other cities and regions).

Date of Interview	_____
Interviewee's Name	_____
Title	_____
Department/Agency	_____
/Organization	_____

1. Do you foresee the City of Vancouver playing an expanded role in meeting housing need?
2. Is the City effective at dealing with homelessness? Should the City be more proactive?
3. What limits or obstacles to City involvement do you see?
4. Are there regional implications?
5. Can a municipality help prevent homelessness from occurring?
6. Would identifying specific "at risk" groups locally help address homelessness?
7. Other Comments or Ideas: