USING INTENSIFICATION AS A MEANS FOR DEVELOPING
MORE COMPLETE COMMUNITIES: A CITY OF VANCOUVER CASE STUDY

by

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

MASTER OF ARTS (PLANNING)

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(School of Community and Regional Planning)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

SEPTEMBER 1997

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Date  SEPT 5, 1997
In order to deal with the current unsustainable pattern of growth and development, the City of Vancouver is advocating intensification as a means for developing more complete communities. Promoting this strategy to the public may, however be problematic when there is little or no empirical evidence documenting the outcome or experience of intensification. To better understand the issues, challenges and opportunities associated with using intensification to create complete communities, the City of Vancouver’s experience with this strategy was analysed, across a range of planning initiatives within which intensification policies were deployed. Through the use of interviews and a case study comprising an analysis of several City policies and initiatives, the benefits, costs, and barriers of intensification were documented. In total 18 people were interviewed which included City Staff, councillors, developers, and members of planning organizations. This process revealed what the City has been able to achieve through intensification, the lessons they have learned and the direction this strategy must take in the near future in order to create more complete communities.

To date, the City has had the most success with intensification when it has been applied to existing multi-family neighbourhoods or to the redevelopment of industrial lands. As a result, the City has been able to create new neighbourhoods that have many of the characteristics of a complete community. However, when this same process is taken to existing single family neighbourhoods, it is met with opposition as a result of the public’s resistance to change and the conflicting views regarding intensified urban living.
Despite this failure, Vancouver’s experience has provided a number of valuable lessons regarding how intensification can be used to create more complete communities. For example, there are a number of conditions that must exist in order for intensification to be promoted, which relate to the planning, market, and political environment of an area. Once these conditions are in place then, strategies should be developed to ensure that intensification is designed to be responsive to a community’s needs. Finally, Vancouver’s experience with this strategy reveals that the best way to understand what a community needs and what tradeoffs they are willing to make in order to create more complete communities is through a political process that involves a consensus approach to planning and public discussion.

The findings of this thesis indicate that the success of future intensification initiatives lies in the City’s ability of making intensified urban living fashionable. To do this it will be imperative to establish a common understanding of its limits and benefits by learning from past experiences and by building on the successful intensification initiatives that have occurred. Once this is done, the City can then use the successful examples of intensification to educate the public about how it can be used to create complete communities.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to express sincere appreciation to Professors Tom Hutton and Alan Artibise for their assistance in the preparation of this thesis. In addition, special thanks to all the people interviewed for donating their time and expertise, because without their valuable input this thesis would not have been possible. Thanks also to M. Liberi and C. Jones for their fine editing and to M. Rossignoli for his continuous support.
1.0. INTRODUCTION

The way we define or envision communities determines what we get, and the way we build them largely determines the way we live.¹ Richard Register, founder of Urban Ecology

Over the past 40 years, low density sprawl has been the predominant pattern of growth outside the urban core in North American metropolitan areas. This situation has been criticized for its social, economic and environmental costs since many conditions deemed to be unsustainable in urban areas stem from this form of development. This has resulted in the pressing need to change and redirect current living and urban development patterns in order to create more sustainable urban communities. For this to occur, an urban form that meets the needs of the new environmental consciousness and deals comprehensively with social, economic, and mobility issues, needs to be actively encouraged. In an existing urban environment this translates into the need to manage growth, reduce sprawl, and create communities that are denser, more land efficient, and more “complete” in terms of mixed use communities with work, residences, shopping, and recreation within reasonable distances.

In the Vancouver area, the adoption of the Livable Region Strategic Plan and to some extent the City of Vancouver’s CityPlan, has resulted in a series of alternatives to the current unsustainable pattern of urban growth and development. One solution that is being advocated is to create more complete communities, which are compact settlements that contain employment, housing, recreation, and services within their own boundaries.² A key component of such a community

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² Cherie Enns, Complete Communities: Achieving a New Way of Living in the Lower Mainland (Vancouver: International Centre for Sustainable Cities, 1994), pg. 3.
would utilize the growth management tool of “intensification,” also known as “densification,” “reurbanization,” and “compaction.” Intensification has been recognized as a sustainable approach in which growth can be accommodated within an existing built environment. This technique usually results in creating more complete communities because it promotes proximity between uses, higher population and employment densities, reduces car dependencies, and fosters the efficient use of land and services.

1.1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

As the City of Vancouver continues to grow, it is becoming increasingly apparent that significant changes need to occur in the way urban developments are planned to accommodate future growth. Both the Livable Region Strategic Plan and CityPlan stress that growth must be accommodated within the existing built environment, in order to contribute to the creation of more complete communities. This means that each neighbourhood should accommodate a certain percentage of growth by utilizing intensification as a way of limiting urban sprawl. However, many problems arise from the use of such a strategy. When planners try to implement intensification they are often met with much public resistance because the implementation of such a strategy poses many tough questions to which the answers and solutions are still being dealt with on a conceptual basis. Currently, there is very little empirical evidence documenting the real cost, benefits and tradeoffs of intensification following the outcome of implementation.

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3 Intensification has been advocated by the Conservation Council of Ontario, the Ontario Environment Network, the City of Vancouver Task Force on Atmospheric Change, Friends of the Earth, Sim Van der Ryn and Peter Calthorpe, the Canadian Institute of Planners, the Canadian Urban Institute, the City of Toronto, the World Watch Institute, and the Ontario and BC Round Table on the Economy and Environment. Paehlke 1992, pg. 32
4 Editor, Intensification Report, Jan.-Feb., 1995, No. 6, pg. 1.
This prevents planners from developing effective strategies for presenting the benefits and costs of intensification to communities.

The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate urban intensification as a means for developing complete communities in the City of Vancouver. This study will explore the role intensification plays in creating complete communities by comparing how the theoretical benefits and tradeoffs of intensification compare to the actual implications, issues, and challenges associated with this technique. It will identify the successes and failures of intensification and the role planning policies play in contributing to these impacts, by virtue of a case study of Vancouver, comprising an analysis of several policies and planning initiatives. The goal of this thesis is to discover how the benefits of intensification can be realized in terms of creating more complete communities, in the case of a medium size, fast growing Canadian City.

1.2. OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of this study are:

- To define the concept of complete communities and the role intensification plays in the creation of such a community.
- To identify the different ways in which urban intensification has been used in the City of Vancouver.
- To identify the general issues, challenges and opportunities associated with the application of intensification in the City of Vancouver from a planning and development perspective.
• To determine from Vancouver’s intensification experience how the benefits of intensification can be realized in terms of creating complete communities.

1.3. SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Literature related to this subject rarely documents the issues and challenges related to the real experience of intensification and focuses instead on discussing the theoretical impacts of intensification. This thesis proposes to explore the broad application and experience of intensification in an urban context, utilizing the City of Vancouver as a case study. The current planning environment, and growth challenges facing the City of Vancouver makes it a relevant and instructive case study.

Therefore this report will concentrate on the success and failure of the City of Vancouver’s intensification initiatives from an implementation and policy perspective. This will be done to gain an overall understanding of the implications associated with using this technique to create more complete communities. By focusing on the City of Vancouver’s intensification experience this thesis will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. How has Vancouver used intensification and what has this achieved in the creation of more complete communities?

2. What can be learned from Vancouver’s experience with intensification?

3. What will be the future direction of using intensification to create more complete communities in the City of Vancouver?
1.4. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this thesis that best answers the research question involves both primary and secondary data collection. This consists of a) literature review, b) interviews and c) a case study.

a) Literature Review

The secondary research consists of a literature review. The literature review was used to gain a theoretical understanding of the concept of complete communities, the role of intensification and its overall impact in creating more complete communities. The information reviewed included both theoretical and case study literature on the subjects of complete communities, intensification, compact communities, densification and livability. The findings of the secondary research formed the basis on which the interview questions were developed and provided a theoretical structure on which to guide the case study.

b) Case Study

The primary research methodology is comprised of interviews and a case study. For the purposes of this thesis the City of Vancouver was used for the case study. The rationale in choosing the City of Vancouver lies in the availability of relevant information on the subject, access to resources, the city’s extensive use of intensification initiatives during the past 40 years, the unique growth challenges it faces, and its physical and geographic constraints which makes intensification an ideal choice for growth management. This case study was used in order to identify the real opportunities and challenges associated with intensification. To determine the
role intensification plays in creating complete communities, datum was collected on a number of
different projects and policy initiatives that represented the most common examples of
intensification that have occurred within the City. Only those policies and projects most
commonly identified in the interviews as promoting intensification were discussed in further
detail in the case study. It is important to note that that not all the policies and projects identified
in the interviews had corresponding documentation that could be used to justify the claims of the
interviewees; only those that could be further researched were used in this thesis.

c) Interviews

The interviews themselves were used to identify the impacts of intensification and what it can
realistically achieve in respect to the creation of more complete communities. This was done by
having interviewees address the following subject areas:

- How the actual benefits compare to the theoretical advantages of intensification.
- How intensification projects gain approval in respect to creating complete
  communities.
- The degree of success for selected intensification initiatives.

These interviews were conducted with a number of key professionals who were either affected or
involved with the implementation of this strategy. These included City planners, engineers,
housing officials, politicians, members of planning organizations, and a variety of developers
typically associated with the construction of intensification projects. Interview candidates were
selected based on their past or current involvement with intensification initiatives. When
interviewees were contacted they were given a list of the interview questions. Those who were
interested and comfortable in answering the questions usually agreed to participate or else provided a name of another possible candidate. Often other candidates were identified during interviews and were contacted at a later date. However, due to time constraints, not all individuals contacted were able to participate (See Appendix 1).

There are a number of limitations to the use of such a methodology which includes the following:

a) Examining multiple intensification policy initiatives limits the depth of the analysis;

b) Not all the policies reviewed were in a “complete” or even a mature stage and as a result the discussion may be somewhat preliminary or general (but no less valuable).

1.5. FORMAT OF THE REPORT

Chapter Two describes the concept of complete communities, its key design features and principles. It presents a general overview of the current factors that have contributed to the ongoing quest for a new and better living environment and outlines how the creation of complete communities can alleviate many of today’s urban problems.

Chapter Three discusses the ways in which complete communities can be created, concentrating mainly on the application of intensification. It focuses on how intensification can be achieved in an existing urban environment and the role it plays in the creation of more complete communities. It then concludes with a brief description of the theoretical advantages and disadvantages of intensification.
The City of Vancouver’s intensification experience provides the focus for the next two chapters. Much of the data presented here is based on the interview findings and the research gathered from corresponding documentation. Chapter Four focuses on the history of intensification in the City and the factors that have contributed to its implementation. It presents the current situation and challenge that make intensification a potentially effective strategy to use for the creation of more complete communities. It identifies the various policies that have been used and the different examples of intensification in the City. The purpose of Chapter Four is to provide the reader with a clear understanding how intensification is being used in the City of Vancouver and how this has contributed towards the creation of more complete communities.

Chapter Five looks at the impacts of the polices and projects discussed in the previous chapter and documents the challenges of using intensification to create more complete communities. It compares the theoretical benefits and tradeoffs of intensification with real world issues, challenges and problems most often encountered with this strategy by the City of Vancouver. The purpose of this chapter is to show some empirical experience of what intensification can achieve in the creation more complete communities.

The concluding chapter analyzes the City of Vancouver’s experience with intensification and provides some general comments on the future direction of this strategy. It presents the conditions that should exist in order for intensification to be successful and the strategies that could be used to create more complete communities.
2.0. THE COMPLETE COMMUNITIES CONCEPT

The way in which urban environments are designed and developed has become an issue of great concern in recent years. Dissatisfaction with conventional development, coupled with economic shifts, environmental degradation, changing demographic profiles, and evolving social values make the current form of urban development irrelevant to today's needs. The concept of complete communities is considered a viable alternative to current development methods. It builds on a range of neotraditional principles and provides a means of containing and distributing growth that moves in the direction of a more livable and sustainable environment. As a response to the public's concern over these current trends, the complete communities concept is currently being advocated in the Lower Mainland by the Greater Vancouver Regional District, as the vision and direction to aim future development.

The following section will discuss the concept of complete communities and provide a general overview of the current factors that have contributed to the need for a new form of development. It will describe the concept's key design features and principles, while outlining how the creation of complete communities can alleviate many of the current problems facing urban environments.

2.1. THE QUEST FOR NEW COMMUNITIES

Throughout the history of modern urbanization there has been an ongoing quest for a new and better forms of community and community living. Since the time of the ancient Greeks, when a

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5 See Section 2.1.1. for the definition of neotraditional planning principles.
policy was established that required the building of new cities when the older ones reached a certain size, forming new communities has been seen as one solution to the problems plaguing existing urban communities. This tradition continues to the present day and can be observed by reviewing some of the more prominent ideas that have been put forth in the recent past. During the latter part of the 1800s and the early part of this century, numerous proposals and ideas were put forward for the development of new communities. This came about in response to the overcrowding and poor health and unsanitary conditions that resulted from the mass migration of rural citizens into the cities during the industrial revolution. Many of the solutions at this time attempted to repopulate urban dwellers in the countryside by creating totally planned self-sufficient communities. The most famous and influential of these proposals have been: Ebenezer Howard’s 1890s Garden City which promoted the creation of self-governing satellite towns surrounded by a belt of agriculture; Frank Lloyd Wright’s 1930s Broadacre City which saw individuals living on one-acre farmlets, and Le Corbusier’s 1920s Radiant City which replaced central sections of old cites with high-rise towers surrounded by park space. Though few of these proposals have been actually built, the physical image of these cities remained a powerful one for many city dwellers and developers. As a result, their legacy has been woven into the urban fabric of the twentieth century built form, leading to the adoption of anti-urban principles and the creation of new communities of low density sprawl, such as the suburbs.

Due to the dilemma currently facing many urban regions in response to this urban form, some planners and architects are again proposing a new form of development. These new approaches

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7 Ibid., pg. 56.
9 Penny Gurstein, op. cit., pg. 56.
advocate a more traditional form of development, from the street car era, that incorporates the idea of more complete communities, where new growth is shaped into compact, tightly woven neighbourhoods with a mix of housing types, services, and jobs within close proximity. The goal of such a community is to promote a more efficient use of land, with denser urban developments which will encourage alternative transportation (walking, cycling and public transport) and diminish the necessity of encroachment into surrounding rural areas. Some of the most prominent new community proposals are being promoted by Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, with their Traditional Neighbourhood Developments (TNDs); Peter Calthorpe, with his Transit Oriented Developments (TODs) and Pedestrian Pockets; and Ian MacBurnie with his Metropolitan Purlieu. These new development forms have been referred to as the new urbanism, neotraditional planning, urban villages, and sustainable/complete communities.

2.1.1. New Community Proposals

a) Traditional Neighbourhood Developments (TNDs)

For the past decade, Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk have been laying out new communities according to neotraditional principles. These principles include flexible zoning and regulatory controls, decreased automobile dependence, compact higher density communities, increased mixed-use facilities and greater neighbourhood identity. Some of the key features incorporated into these communities include neighbourhoods no larger then 80 hectares, town centres, huddled houses, pedestrian friendly streets, architecture reflecting local design attributes,

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10 See Enns for a complete summary of these key design features and principles.
11 Robyn Wark, Complete Communities: Achieving A New Way of Living on Vancouver Island (Vancouver, BC: International Centre for Sustainable Cities, 1994), pg. 3.
12 Information for this section was taken from Enns 1994, and Krieger & Lennertz 1992.
and community focal points or landmarks. Their goal is to recreate what makes charming places charming.

b) Pedestrian Pockets or Transit Oriented Developments (TODs)\textsuperscript{13}

Pedestrian Pockets or Transit Oriented Developments, developed by Peter Calthorpe advocate many of the same planning objectives as the TND option. The TOD concept incorporates moderate and high density housing in mixed use communities for 5,000 people, with jobs, services and residences in close proximity. These communities are designed to be located at strategic points along a regional transit system and encompass an area no larger then 100 acres. The key difference between TODs and TNDs is that civic and retail uses are more decentralized in the TND.

c) The Metropolitan Purlieu\textsuperscript{14}

The Metropolitan Purlieu can be described as a synthesis of the above options, as well as of the garden city model. This concept is premised on pedestrian friendly, transit oriented planning that incorporates the concepts of conservation, affordability, flexibility, diversity and choice. It differs from the previous two examples in that it is a lower density concept. “The model consists of a series of clustered, pedestrian scaled communities that would encompass about 60 hectares. Each community would accommodate close to 2,800 dwelling units for some 7,000 residents and provide employment opportunities for some 3,000 to 4,000 people.”\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{13} Information for this section was taken from Enns 1994, Calthorpe 1993, and Calthorpe & Van der Ryn 1986.
\textsuperscript{14} Information for this section was taken from Enns 1994, and MacBurnie 1992
### TABLE 1
NEW COMMUNITIES VS. CONVENTIONAL COMMUNITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Community Characteristics</th>
<th>Conventional Community Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Higher density compact communities.</td>
<td>1. Low density suburban sprawl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Neighbourhoods limited in size with clear edges and a focused center.</td>
<td>2. Sprawled neighbourhoods with no or little defined edges or boundaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Diversity of housing types for a range of groups and incomes.</td>
<td>5. Neighbourhoods with little or no housing diversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Rectilinear street grid.</td>
<td>7. Curved streets/Loops/Cul-de-Sac.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Narrow streets and shallow setbacks.</td>
<td>8. Wide streets and deep setbacks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Semi-enclosed spaces (Village greens).</td>
<td>10. Open Spaces (Green Belts, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Communities designed for alternative forms of transport.</td>
<td>11. Communities designed for the car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Reduced parking standards with parking on streets/parking garages.</td>
<td>12. Off street surface parking in large lots.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**2.2. DEFINING COMPLETE COMMUNITIES**

Complete communities are compact settlements that contain a mix of housing types, with the necessary services and amenities within their own boundaries.\(^{16}\) Such a concept is not new. The idea of a higher density mixed-use community goes as far back in history as the ancient Greek agora, medieval market squares, and is evident in many nineteenth century European cities that often contained a mixture of commercial and residential in close proximity.\(^ {17}\) In a North American context such a community could be found in many older developments, created before

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\(^{16}\) Cherie Enns, *op. cit.*, pg. 5.

the mass availability of the private automobile. Nonetheless, the concept of complete communities catering to the needs of modern society, occurring in such a form is still fairly novel.\textsuperscript{18}

The concept of complete communities envisions neighbourhoods planned for a complete range of activities that include a mixture of housing types, workplaces, schools, shops and services, public offices, parks, walkways and recreational facilities. This type of development can be clustered rather than spread over the landscape, thereby reducing automobile travel and ensuring cost effectiveness in terms of public service delivery.\textsuperscript{19} Such a plan provides people with a broader diversity in the physical and social elements of community living, which allows them to have a wider range of choices and opportunities for how they want to live their lives.\textsuperscript{20} This results in a community that has a better balance in the distribution of jobs and housing, a wider choice of affordable housing types, a better distribution of public services, and more effective transportation service. The goal of the complete community concept is to provide diversity and opportunities close to home so that residents have a choice between satisfying needs locally or through travel regionally.\textsuperscript{21}

There is much elasticity in the concept of complete communities. It is a concept that can be applied to a regional district, municipality or neighbourhood. As such the concept of complete

\textsuperscript{18} Robyn Wark, \textit{op. cit.}, pg. 7.
\textsuperscript{19} Ginny Evans, \textit{Complete Communities: Achieving a New Way of Living in the Okanagan} (Vancouver: International Centre for Sustainable Cities, 1994), pg. 6.
\textsuperscript{20} Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), \textit{Livable Region Strategic Plan: Proposals} (Burnaby: GVRD Strategic Planning Department, 1994), pg. 7.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ibid.}, pg. 8.
Communities can be expressed as follows:

- A better balance between jobs and residences by providing greater choice, proximity and conveyance in daily lives. This would lead to more opportunities to work closer to home or live closer to work.
- A better distribution of services for education, health, care, culture and recreation.
- A greater mix of housing types and prices to accommodate a diversity of age groups and households sizes.
- Improved transportation services that serve local centres more conveniently. This requires better local transit and more opportunities to cycle or walk to activities, and
- The ability to accommodate population growth at higher densities.²²

Such a concept addresses issues of demography, development and design, and acknowledges that a neighbourhood is more than a built form, that it is a functional environment for lifestyle choices, social interactions, public involvement, and employment as well as for the meeting of daily needs.²³ Complete communities proposes a means of accommodating growth, and responds to the pressing need for affordable housing, while considering the social demand for safe, livable communities. However, it is important to note that although such a concept moves in the direction of a more sustainable environment it is not necessarily a sustainable community. The complete communities concept deals mainly with the physical component of urban sustainability and does not address issues of food production, waste or resource management. Nevertheless, the promotion of more complete communities does represent a competing vision of life in cities, where the benefits of a higher density mixed use neighbourhood more than offset

²² Cherie Enns, op. cit., pg. 20.
²³ Ginny Evans, op. cit., pg. 2.
the loss in private space associated with an increasingly unaffordable suburban/low density dream.24

2.3. WHY ARE COMPLETE COMMUNITIES NEEDED?

The physical design of cities is formed by planning policies and strategies that respond to the particular demographic, economic, social, ideological or technical conditions and needs of the time. When one of these factors change a number of problems arise, when several change, a new set of alternatives to the current development pattern is required.25 Over the last forty years household makeup has changed dramatically, the work place and work force have been transformed, and serious environmental concerns have surfaced. “But many communities are still being built as if families were large and had only one breadwinner, as if jobs were all downtown, as if land and energy were endless, and as if the construction of more roads would eliminate traffic congestion. In truth, the current form of development is no longer relevant to today’s needs because it is based on planning strategies and development standards designed for a society of forty years ago.”26 Therefore the need for more complete communities has arisen in reaction to the changing needs of current urban societies. These changes are in direct response to the detrimental environmental, economic and social consequences of sprawl associated with our current form of development, as well as changing demographic patterns and societal values.

24 Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), op. cit., pg. 24.
2.3.1. Current Development Patterns 27

“Our community’s physical form is the result of public policy and subsidies, outdated regulations, environmental forces, and technology.” 28 This becomes evident when studying the history of our current development pattern which was created in the 1950s, when a standard approach to building communities emerged across Canada. During this period, the automobile was accepted as the principal mode of travel, both energy and land were cheap and abundant, and the suburban single family home became the social ideal. It was a time when rising incomes and improved transportation made it possible for the middle class to leave the inner city and move into a quiet suburban paradise. With increased mobility, suburban locations for employment and shopping became more attractive which led to increased demands for more roads to service these low density developments. 29 These factors have had a compelling influence on the present urban form because they promoted a trend towards communities with lower population densities and the separation of activities, which in turn fostered the increased use of the automobile. In such circumstances, public transit is expensive and inefficient and is generally weak or altogether absent. The widespread adoption of this form of development, has promoted a decentralized urban form with large areas of single family housing, energy and resource consumption, traffic congestion, air pollution, longer commuting times to workplaces and homes, a lack of affordable housing and mixed land uses, receding open space, higher costs of living and taxes, and stressful social patterns. It has resulted in urban sprawl, which is considered not only ecologically

unconscionable but economically inefficient and socially inequitable. This could have been avoided if more high density, mixed use communities were developed with appropriate transit systems, in other words if more complete communities had been created. Instead, the ramifications of this land use pattern have caused considerable environmental, social and economic consequences.\textsuperscript{30}

a) **Environmental Impacts**

The extensive use of land for low density development has had a number of serious environmental impacts, some of them related to the conversion of land from rural to urban, others related to the kind of urban development that dominates. They include the loss of agricultural land, the destruction of natural areas and open space, and deteriorating water quality due to urban run off.\textsuperscript{31} Other environmental impacts deal with the lack of variety in density and land use which reduces accessibility to employment and services, increasing the reliance on motorized trips and making energy conservation more difficult. As a result, more cars on the roads lead to wider roads, lower air quality, increased pollution, and traffic congestion.

b) **Economic Impacts**

The economic costs associated with low density development relate mainly to the inefficient use of land, infrastructure and services. Since the cost of urban and public services are a function of density, the lower the density, the higher the cost for servicing these areas.\textsuperscript{32} This places a financial burden, on both governments and individuals because it raises the cost of living and


taxes. Urban sprawl also causes a decrease in available land supply which in turn, increases the cost of land and the price of housing. As a result, affordable and appropriate housing is growing ever more elusive and families have to move to cheaper but distant peripheral sites, consuming irreplaceable agricultural land and overloading the roads.

c) Social Impacts

The social consequences of sprawl deal primarily with the way in which this form of development has been designed. According to Van der Ryn and Calthorpe, "most of our current form of development has been designed with little time or thought given to the subtleties of place, shared amenities, a sense of community, permanence, long term costs, or sustainability. Instead the emphasis has been on speed (time is money), short run profits, standardized products, mobility and mass."33 Such a form of development has resulted in an unattractive, monotonous environment with a loss of community and neighbourhood, decreased accessibility to social services, employment, and a spreading sense of physical and social isolation. In addition, the dependency on the car has created a lifestyle that burdens working families and isolates elderly people and single households, leading to a growing sense of frustration and placelessness, and the destruction of human values and interaction. All these factors have contributed to the breakdown of the environment, economy, the community and the overall quality of urban living.34

The Greater Vancouver Regional District believes that complete communities can reduce or

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34 Robyn Wark, op. cit., pg. 2.
eliminate the consequences of sprawl by bringing urban benefits to low density areas. By creating more complete communities, these areas can have many of the advantages of urban living, such as good local transit service, pedestrian-scale retail districts, diverse social contacts and entertainment opportunities, and the convenience of having everything people need close to where they live. A compact community with a mix of uses can help draw activities and people together because shared spaces can create a sense of community.

2.3.2. Demographic Changes

The need to create more complete communities has also arisen because of the changes occurring in the composition and character of the population. In the last twenty years, there has been a growing trend towards, shrinking household sizes, the growth of non-traditional households, ethnic pluralism, and the aging of the population. In addition, it is also believed that household growth will continue to exceed population growth. These changes are reshaping the continuation of housing demand and as a result the single family neighbourhoods designed around a stereotypical household are no longer as prevalent as they once were. Instead the traditional family is being replaced by households of single occupants, single parents, the elderly, non family couples, and small double income families. Today's household structure is now comprised of approximately 30% single person households and unrelated individuals, 20% single parent families, and only 50% are married couples (with or without children).

35 GVRD, op. cit., pg. 2.
37 GVRD, Towards More Complete Communities for a Livable Region (Burnaby: GVRD Strategic Planning Department, 1995) and UDI Pacific Region, Sept. 1991, pg. 4.
Such a population and household mix represents a variety of needs and interests. For example, young families with children often cannot afford even resale single-detached houses, so they need affordable townhouses, duplexes, or small lot houses. Modern extended families increasingly need to house more than one adult generation in the household, as children stay home longer or frail elderly parents need looking after. These families need secondary suites or detached ‘granny flats’ to accommodate the family while maintaining privacy. Whereas ‘empty nesters’ would like to stay close to friends and family, but live in smaller homes that require less maintenance, such as townhouses or garden apartments.\(^\text{39}\)

This creates the need for a variety of housing types and lifestyle choices that moves beyond the present conventional form of single family low density development which is no longer relevant to a large segment of the population. Unfortunately, although society's needs have changed, many development practices have not since some communities are still built with the housing form, the road structure, and the physical style of the 1960s community.\(^\text{40}\) More complete communities are the contemporary development form that fits the current and future needs of the population. It is believed that without this form of development, households will continue to sacrifice travel time and urban amenities, to move to where cheaper housing in the style they prefer is available, thereby increasing sprawl.\(^\text{41}\)

2.3.3. Social Trends \(^\text{42}\)

Complete communities are also needed in order to accommodate society’s changing social values. The GVRD has identified a number of changing social trends that include the desire to: respect the natural environment, protect green and open spaces, increase affordable housing and

\(^{39}\) Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), op. cit., 1994, pg. 8.
\(^{40}\) Ibid., pg. 4.
\(^{41}\) Ibid., pg. 4-6.
\(^{42}\) Ibid., pg. 5.
accessibility to services, and reduce pollution and commuting by living and working within the same municipality. These values are in direct opposition to the way current development patterns allow people to live. For example, people still use cars to perform the activities of daily life because the urban form requires people to drive everywhere. Houses are still built on newly developed green and open spaces because there are few other opportunities to get new and affordable ground-oriented housing. Attempts to increase the diversity of local shopping opportunities is often resisted because poorly designed strip malls which define low density retailing do not blend easily into residential neighbourhoods. Finally, people resist any increases in density in order to create affordable housing because they distrust the urban planning and development system to deliver good quality housing in their neighbourhood. “The need for more complete communities reflects a desire for an urban form that will support these emerging values. If people are given a number of realistic options, then perhaps they will make better choices according to these values.”43

2.3.4. Summary of Factors

The need to create more complete communities is prompted in part by the detrimental consequences of sprawl, the recognition that household makeup has changed dramatically, and society’s social values have shifted. These factors have contributed to traffic congestion, declining transit ridership, increasing infrastructure costs, environmental deterioration, lack of diversity in housing, loss of open space and declining quality of life. The complete communities concept provides an alternative option to the dilemma facing urban areas today. A carefully

43 Ibid., pg. 4-6.
planned, high-density, mixed-use community results in lower economic and environmental costs, less consumption of natural resources, and a reduction in personal costs compared to lower density developments. In terms of total public and private costs to occupants, other taxpayers, and municipal governments, costs for high-density mixed-use developments are typically 44% less than for low-density sprawl community developments, and they generate 45% less air pollution.\textsuperscript{44}

2.4. **KEY PRINCIPLES AND DESIGN FEATURES**

Today’s concept of complete communities is based on a number of long-standing ideas on traditional town planning, that have been implemented, put aside, and now seem to be relevant again. These include Christopher Alexander’s pattern language for communities; Kevin Lynch’s ideas on a galaxy of settlements; Jane Jacobs’ notions on physical diversity and, more recently, Andres Duany’s neotraditional town planning principles; and Peter Calthorpe’s transit-oriented development design.\textsuperscript{45}

By adopting these ideas, the complete communities concept moves away from current development practices of segregated zoning, piecemeal development, car-oriented design and top-down planning, to a more neotraditional planning process that includes flexible zoning and regulatory controls and compact higher density communities.\textsuperscript{46} In doing so, it has taken on the idea that development patterns critically influence a significant number of human activities, by

\textsuperscript{44} Douglas Simms Stenhouse, \textit{op. cit.}, pg. 52; and Alan Altshuler, "Review of The Costs of Sprawl," \textit{Journal of the American Planning Institute of Planners} (Vol. 43, No. 2, 1977), pg. 207-209.

\textsuperscript{45} UDI Urban Development Institute Pacific Region, \textit{op. cit.}, pg. 79.

\textsuperscript{46} Ginny Evans, \textit{op. cit.}, pg. 13.
reason of the spacing of buildings, the location of activities, and the disposition of the lines of circulation.\textsuperscript{47} Since current development patterns have raised a number of social, economic and environmental concerns, complete communities provides an alternative form of design. Instead of a segregated low density urban form, it promotes a community with neighbourhoods of housing, parks and schools placed within walking distance of shops, civic services, jobs, and transit - a modern version of the traditional town.\textsuperscript{48}

**TABLE 2**

**CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COMPLETE COMMUNITIES CONCEPT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCEPT</th>
<th>CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMPLETE COMMUNITY CONCEPT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jane Jacob - Physical Diversity</td>
<td>• Stresses that physical diversity in the city has an important impact on both social and economic activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander's A Pattern Language</td>
<td>• Identified 253 elements or patterns of rooms, streets, and districts that seem to have definite links with a joyful experience of a place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynch's Galaxy of Settlements</td>
<td>• Presents a description of different settlement forms and patterns that can be found within them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duany's Neotraditional Planning</td>
<td>• Stresses the need for less segregated zoning ordinances and regulatory control and higher density compact residential communities with a mix of uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Calthorpe - TOD</td>
<td>• Introduces the concept of moderate and high density mixed use developments with complementing services located at strategic points along the regional transit system.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fowler pg. xii; Krieger. & Lennertz 1992: 13; and Hiss 1990: 15

Such a community is made up a number of neotraditional planning principles and components which include: \textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{47} UDI Urban Development Institute Pacific Region, \textit{op. cit.}, pg. 79.
\textsuperscript{48} Robyn Wark, \textit{op. cit.}, pg. 3
\textsuperscript{49} The information for this section was gathered from: Wark 1995; Enns 1994; GVRD 1995; Evans 1994, UDI 1993; Pachlke 1992; and Walter 1992.
a) Compact and mixed use neighbourhoods.

Compact and mixed use neighbourhoods attempt to incorporate a variety of land uses within a single region where residences are in proximity to commercial services, employment, and public transit corridors. This creates higher population and employment densities because it brings more people and services together which promotes an attractive, safer, livable, more energy efficient and sustainable environment. Such a community would have a defined edge and could achieve higher densities by reducing pavement widths, building setbacks from the road, and the amount of land used for parking facilities; and by a greater mix of uses and housing types, rather than the construction of high rises. This is a radical departure from past planning processes which tended to promote the segregation of land uses through exclusionary zoning.

b) Pedestrian friendly street patterns

Pedestrian friendly streets are achieved through the creation of attractive streetscapes by designing streets at more human scale, which are safe and interesting places along which to walk. This involves developing rear lanes, widening sidewalks, reducing road widths, improving landscaping, increasing the use of street furniture, reducing building setbacks so that they are closer to the street, and traffic calming. By returning the pedestrian to the street, the street becomes part of the social life of the community, and allows for increased social interaction, which in turn helps create a sense of place.

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50 Robyn Wark, *op. cit.*, pg. 6.
c) More convenience in everyday living

Mixed use developments that integrate employment lands, community services and recreation lands all within walking distance of residential areas, provide people with a more convenient opportunity of satisfying their everyday needs. This means that goods, services and opportunities needed for everyday living be close to home and be easily reached by travel modes other than the automobile. Therefore wherever people live there should be a nearby shopping and public services district where people can get what they need. This produces an adequate supply of customers to make neighbourhood activity centers commercially viable.

d) A balanced transportation system

A balanced transportation system is one that provides alternatives in which pedestrians, cyclists and transit riders are given the same emphasis as automobiles. The purpose of transportation should not be to move vehicles around as quickly as possible but to provide people with access to the goods, services and opportunities that satisfy their needs. Since choice of transportation mode varies directly with density and availability of transit options, the more compact an area the more likely people will opt for walking, cycling or public transit.  

Therefore the best way to maintain accessibility and reduce the amount of travel by automobile is to ensure that goods, services and opportunities are close to the neighbourhood of those who use them. “At the neighbourhood level this means that densities are high enough to make public transit, walking and cycling the predominant transportation modes and that well-planned pedestrian and bicycle circulation systems are provided between urban activity centres and their surrounding residential areas. For those things that can not be obtained

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locally then a convenient and efficient public transit system should be provided as an alternative.”

**e) The provision of open space and common public areas**

In order to compensate for the loss of private space because of higher density developments, provision for open and common public spaces must be provided that support interaction and community identity. This involves designing open spaces more functionally and integrating natural features such as creeks, hillsides and woods as well as greenways, tree planting and habitat protection into developments. This approach seeks to maximize open space within an urban area, by creating village greens, village squares, formally designed parks and small but intensively used recreation areas, while still efficiently using the land.

**f) A variety of housing types, dwelling unit size and tenure.**

A variety of housing types not only increases overall density and thus saves land, but also ensures a greater social mix within the community. By providing a mix of housing the needs of most household groups can be met. In addition, more housing choices makes it more likely that people could remain in their neighbourhoods despite changes in lifestyle or stages in family life. If housing options are provided everywhere then people could choose the form of housing they need closer to their regular travel destinations than current options allow and the need to use a car would be reduced.

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52 Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), *op. cit.*, 1994, pg. 4-6.
2.5. SUMMARY

The creation of complete communities is an ongoing, incremental process that actively seeks to coordinate a broad spectrum of development options while responding to the pressures that growth brings, within a specific regional and ecological context. Such a concept seeks to contribute to social and environmental well-being by moving away from development patterns that have produced urban sprawl and a degradation of the environment. As a result, there are many benefits to the creation of complete communities. By controlling growth through the development of compact settlement that use land more efficiently, complete communities: reduce the need for cars and energy consumption, preserve land at urban fringes, reduce air pollution, support transit, reduce tax revenues spent on infrastructure, minimize loss of farmland and wetlands, and increase the supply of affordable housing. Such a community maximizes the amount of green space and improves the quality of community and family life at all income levels, while facilitating social interaction through a more traditional form of design. In spite of all these advantages there are few communities which can be considered complete because most communities will not accept higher densities. Since higher densities influence the availability of services, amenities and transit, most low density communities can not provide the conveniences of a more complete community and as a result can not be considered complete.

54 Ginny Evans, op. cit., pg. 2.
55 Ibid., pg. 2.
3.0. CREATING COMPLETE COMMUNITIES: THE INTENSIFICATION APPROACH

The complete communities concept is a vision that guides future developments in a particular direction, using a number of strategies. Essentially two strategies have been identified for creating complete communities. The first method involves the construction of new neighbourhoods or towns, where road widths, setbacks, infrastructure and land use can be planned from scratch. The second method consists of retrofitting existing urban and suburban areas by incrementally adding to or altering the built environment to make them more complete. In both bases, the key to developing more complete communities lies in the ability to:

1. Provide a diversity of housing types.
2. Reduce automobile use by providing alternatives.
3. Provide more goods, services, and opportunities closer to where people live in order to make life easier.
4. Sell the concept to communities through effective consultation.

The process of intensification has been identified as a means in which existing urban areas can be transformed from incomplete to a complete communities. The following section will discuss the process of intensification, the role it plays in creating complete communities, and the theoretical advantages and disadvantages of using such a process.

56 Robyn Wark, op. cit., pg. 8.
57 Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), op. cit., pg. 7.
3.1. WHAT IS INTENSIFICATION?

Intensification is not a new process. It has been occurring in urban centers throughout Canada for many decades. Intensification is essentially a new term for an old process that was initiated in Europe, whereby communities incrementally add to or alter the built environment to accommodate new uses that reflect changing social and economic realities.\(^{58}\) According to Isin and Tomalty (1993:10), the idea of using such a process began in the 1950s when the fiscal costs of sprawl fueled the discussion on the need to increase residential densities. In the 1960s and the 1970s, the primary concern was the amount of agricultural land, wetlands and other environmentally sensitive areas that were being converted to residential and other urban uses. During the 1980s, intensification was seen as a potential policy response to cut backs in municipality services and the need for more affordable housing. Now in the 1990s, municipalities have begun to reexamine policy instruments that would encourage the densification, consolidation, containment, compaction or reurbanization of the built environment.

When the term intensification first entered the vocabulary of policy planning and development over a decade ago, it was used quite narrowly to describe a process of using existing residential stock more efficiently and to encourage the production of affordable housing.\(^{59}\) Since then, the intensification concept has evolved to encompass a much broader set of processes and actions that lead to the creation of complete communities. Intensification is now seen as a balanced and

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\(^{59}\) Editor, *Intensification Report*, (1994, No. 6), pg. 1
integrated approach that refers to the use of land and/or the existing building stock to increase the number of housing units or space devoted to other uses, at a density that is substantially higher (high enough to support public transit) than previously existed or designated for that kind of site or area.\textsuperscript{60} Usually this process involves a zoning change which allows for higher densities and mixed uses. If this zoning change does not occur, then an area is not considered to have undergone any intensification changes that could lead to a more complete community. However when the appropriate zoning changes are implemented then the process of intensification will result in a higher density mixed use community.\textsuperscript{61}

3.2. METHODS OF APPLICATION

Intensification can be achieved both locally, within a city’s boundary, and regionally, encompassing both the city and its surrounding suburbs. At local scale, a recent study by the Canadian Urban Institute identified five processes for achieving urban intensification, which include the following:\textsuperscript{62}

**Conversion:** is the transformation of all or a portion of an existing structure (through renovation and/or addition) for another use or to accommodate additional dwelling units usually within an already existing residential dwelling. The most common forms of conversions usually involve the alteration of non-residential structures to a residential use, or single family dwelling to a multiple family dwelling. The conversion of single family dwellings may be accomplished in the following three ways: by accommodating individuals or households with minor physical changes such as a rooming or boarding house; by changing the interior to include one or more self-contained units; and by adding either a vertical or horizontal addition.

\textsuperscript{60} Information taken from CUI 1991; Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton 1990; City of North York 1991.
\textsuperscript{61} Information taken from interviews with planners from the City of Vancouver.
\textsuperscript{62} Information for this section gathered from: CUI 1991; Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton 1990; City of North York 1991 and Metropolitan Toronto 1987.
Infill: refers to the development of vacant or underutilized sites within existing serviced areas, in order to create new residential units and/or space devoted to other uses, in a form which is physically integrated with the surrounding neighbourhood. It includes building on parcels of vacant land as well as building on lots which already contain housing or other uses. The potential for infill depends to a large extent on the lot size, siting of existing buildings and access to the lot. Infill developments can represent economic benefits to municipalities by increasing their tax base with limited increase in capital or operating costs. Infill also has the advantage of increasing the supply of units within communities while maintaining the existing scale of development. The most common residential forms of infill are granny suites or secondary suites that are usually added to an existing single family lot.

Redevelopment: is the replacement of an existing development (whose uses may be obsolete) in already built-up and serviced districts, with new development that will create new housing units and/or space devoted to other uses. Often the potential for redevelopment will occur along arterial roads, in underdeveloped areas, in obsolete or uneconomic commercial, industrial and institutional areas, and in underutilized or vacant schools, churches and other institutional buildings.

Adaptive Reuse: is the construction of new housing within sites that may be originally designated for non-residential uses, and which now can incorporate residential development, for example derelict industrial sites and abandoned railway lands.

Suburban Densification: increasing densities in new subdivisions through subdivision control. Usually this is brought about by revising municipal development standards and subdivision control practices to create: smaller lot sizes, reduced road width, more medium and high density units, and a mix of commercial and residential uses.

At the regional level, intensification can be achieved by:

- Discouraging the expansion of the urban envelope/boundary of a regional district
- Establishing minimum density targets for the urban region;
- Encouraging future development to concentrate around existing nodes and along transportation corridors;
- Encouraging mixed land uses;
- Striving for a greater match between housing and employment; and by
• Facilitating, in combination with the foregoing, an urban environment that can be serviced effectively by transit, walking and cycling. 63

In both approaches, the incremental nature of intensification is viewed as the least disruptive form of change because it can result in a scale of development which is more in keeping with the needs of the existing community. This helps promotes a balanced community which is self-contained and compact, and centered on a core area or sub-area, and which has higher population densities and a greater mix and integration of uses, which allows people to live, work, shop and play close to home. This is considered by some a sustainable development strategy.64

3.3. THE ROLE INTENSIFICATION PLAYS IN CREATING COMPLETE COMMUNITIES

Intensification is a strategy that can be used to create more complete communities. Through the process of densifying and redeveloping existing urban areas, intensification creates opportunities in which the components that make a complete community can be realized. It can be used to improve an existing urban area and make it more complete by increasing the diversity of available housing types; reducing automobile use by providing alternatives; and by bringing goods and services closer to people. In this way, intensification builds on the existing structure and conditions, allowing an area to incrementally evolve as changes and circumstances arise.

The processes that make up intensification provide subtle ways in which an area can become more complete. Through conversion and infill, an existing structure can be altered to accommodate additional dwelling units or any other needed use in a community with little physical impacts, while maintaining the scale and character of an area. The other methods allow new uses to be added to an area with the potential of creating mixed use developments. In all cases intensification results in a higher density mixed use community. Such a community assists in creating many of the other components and conditions that make up a complete community. For example, compact developments eliminate much of the real need for automobile travel, makes more efficient use of existing urban land and reduces the materials requirements for parking, roads and infrastructure. This leads to energy savings and reductions in air pollution, while potentially freeing up urban land currently used by the automobile for further development.65 Also, mixed-use developments can enhance mass transit by generating tens of thousands of relatively short trips and by spreading travel demand throughout the day, rather than at peak morning or evening rush hours.66 In addition, mixed land uses have the characteristic of requiring energy at different times of the day or seasons of the year, and as a result they generally command lower utility rates because these areas don’t have the same high peak demands of single-use areas.67 All in all, intensification promotes an urban form which is compact and contiguous, has higher population and employment densities, fosters the efficient use of land and infrastructure, brings goods and services closer to people, and creates certain efficiencies of mobility between uses, key components for a more complete community.68

66 Douglas Simms Stenhouse, op. cit., pg. 52.
67 Ibid., pg. 52.
However, increasing densities and mixed uses on their own will not lead to the creation of complete communities. Intensification must be used in conjunction with other policies that promote quality of life to ensure that all the factors that go into the creation of complete communities are realized. In addition, it is essential to have a community buy into the concept of intensification because without their support the benefits of this strategy will not result in the creation of more complete communities.

3.4. THE INTENSIFICATION DEBATE

There is much debate in the planning profession with the idea of using intensification as a planning strategy in order to create compact and higher density mixed use communities because there are many conflicting views on the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach.\(^6^9\)

Proponents of the concept submit that an intensified urban development may be able to improve many of the social, environmental, and economic ills of the contemporary city.\(^7^0\) A compact city with higher density is believed to be advantageous because it: creates a more diverse, livable, safer and healthier environment with greater housing opportunities; provides a more efficient use of land and services thereby reducing need for new services; conserves resources while reducing the need for the automobile; controls growth; and provides benefits to owners of underutilized properties.

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\(^{69}\) Robert Paehlke, *op. cit.*, pg. 32.

\(^{70}\) Isin, Englin and Tomalty, Ray, *Resettling Cities: Canadian Residential Intensification Initiatives* (Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1993), pg. 9-10
Opponents of intensification, however, claim that the concept goes against fundamental market forces that indicate strong consumer preferences for detached, single-family homes on large lots in low-density, suburban environment.\textsuperscript{71} "They further suggest that any form of government imposed intensification is an unjustifiable intrusion in the land market and a restriction on consumer choice. They contend that in the long run housing prices would be a better way to correct land use inefficiencies than additional layers of government regulation."\textsuperscript{72} Other arguments against intensification tend to be concerned with the pace and manner in which it is undertaken and how this will affect neighbourhood stability. Society fear that if intensification is not undertaken correctly then it will lead to increased traffic and parking problems, more crime, changes to quality of life in a neighbourhood, stress on existing services, loss of open space and privacy, drop in property values, and negative physical changes to neighbourhood character.\textsuperscript{73}

There is much debate over the concept of intensification in terms of why it should be used and what it can or can't achieve. Advocates have set forth very persuasive rationales for why cities should intensify development, but often have overlooked the constraints to implementation and the problems which may be generated by intensification itself. Opponents on the other hand rely more on deflating the positive claims of pro-intensification research and less on the positive aspects of low-density development.\textsuperscript{74} In both cases, Isin and Tomalty point out, that neither the consequences or benefits of intensification are universally agreed upon.

\textsuperscript{71} Information for this section is taken from Isin & Tomalty 1993, and Francombe 1992.
\textsuperscript{72} Isin & Tomalty, \textit{op. cit.}, pg. 9.
\textsuperscript{73} Information for this section is taken from: Isin & Tomalty 1993, Paehlke 1992, and Francombe 1992
\textsuperscript{74} Isin & Tomalty, \textit{op. cit.}, pg. 11.
3.5 SUMMARY

Although intensification began as a method in which residential densities could be increased, it has now evolved as a means in which complete communities can be created in existing urban areas. The creation of higher densities mixed use communities, provides many conditions in which the components of complete communities can be realized. However, there is much debate in regard to the advantages and disadvantages that result in the urban environment through the use of such a process.
4.0. INTENSIFICATION INITIATIVES: A VANCOUVER CASE STUDY

Intensification is not new to the City of Vancouver. It has been used throughout the City's history to deal with the issue of growth and society's changing needs. This section focuses on the history of intensification in the City of Vancouver and the factors that have contributed to its implementation. It identifies the various policies that have been used and describes the different examples of intensification found throughout the City. The goal of this chapter is to provide the reader with a clear understanding of how intensification has been promoted and implemented in the City of Vancouver and what this has achieved towards the creation of more complete communities.

4.1. CURRENT SITUATION AND CHALLENGE IN VANCOUVER

The City of Vancouver, a major municipality in terms of population, employment and economy, is located in the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), which is a region that is expected to grow by 1.3 million people and 700,000 jobs over the next thirty years.\(^{75}\) To help reduce the negative impacts of growth, the GVRD, an intermunicipal federation that performs a strategic/facilitation function among its 20 municipal members, has developed a regional plan called the Livable Region Strategic Plan. The plan indicates that each area should accommodate a certain percentage of growth. Although most of the region’s growth will take place outside of the City of Vancouver, the City is expected to accommodate an additional 160,000 people by the

\(^{75}\) City of Vancouver, Making Choices (Vancouver: City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1994), pg. 6.
year 2021.\textsuperscript{76} This is 60,000 more people than current zoning allows. In that period the City will need to add about 100,000 housing units, an increase of 50 percent over that available in 1991.\textsuperscript{77} While two-thirds of this housing will be taken care of in projects the City has already approved, the City must still develop new ways in which these housing and growth demands can be met.

Historically the City has used a number of different intensification initiatives to respond to the demands of growth. These initiatives have reflected the needs, beliefs and changing trends occurring within the City. The City of Vancouver is again facing a situation in which the use of intensification is being advocated by planning officials. In recent years a number of trends have emerged that are key to understanding the reasons behind the renewed interest in coping with growth through the use of intensification.

\subsection*{4.1.1. Geographic Trends}

Until recently, there has been little development in most residential Vancouver neighbourhoods outside the West End, with the major exceptions being the redevelopment of the south shore of False Creek, Fairview Slopes and Champlain Heights. This means that the physical form of most neighbourhoods has not changed since the time they were built. This lack of development can be contributed in part to the public outcry that resulted from the urban renewal and freeway plans of the 1960s which people felt were destroying the City. By limiting development, the City of Vancouver has failed to keep pace with the demands of growth, especially in the areas of housing options and transportation mode. To date, both the region and the City of Vancouver do

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., pg. 6  
\textsuperscript{77} City of Vancouver, op. cit., pg. 6
\end{footnotesize}
not have an appropriate transportation system to handle current or future traffic growth because of an inadequate transit mode. As a result the City has been forced to rely on the existing grid system of arterial streets while traffic volumes have continued to increase. This has encouraged drivers to seek alternative routes, most commonly along residential streets, which in turn has reduced the quality of those residential environments. Consequently, the City is now faced with the task of trying to use the existing city structure, to accommodate growth and alleviate traffic congestion. The City believes that through intensification they can provide people with choices, increase efficiency and create more compact and complete communities.

4.1.2. Housing Affordability

From 1991 to 1996, Vancouver was the fastest growing metropolitan area in Canada and since this period housing prices in the City have risen faster than inflation and faster than prices in the rest of the Greater Vancouver Regional District. As the City's population continues to grows, it is likely to result in an increased demand for the limited number of single-family homes in the City. This will force housing price to increase further, while making housing less affordable for many people. In addition, it is also believed that pressure to tear down houses that are smaller than new houses allowed by current zoning by-laws will grow. To date, builders tear down about 1,000 single family homes a year and replace them with bigger, more expensive homes which only adds to the affordability problem growing in the City.

The situation for renters is not much better. Although rents have not increased as quickly as

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78 Information in this section taken form the City of Vancouver, *Making Choices*, pg. 8
housing prices, pressure to redevelop older rental units tends to reduce the supply of affordable rental housing. In the past 10 years, the market has built very little rental housing. Since most lower income households rent their homes, they will be the ones most affected by these trends. In addition, many people such as seniors, or those with disabilities or fixed low income, cannot afford to live in traditional market housing. With increased government cutbacks for new subsidized housing, the City must look at other alternatives for providing diversity in housing types to accommodate a greater range of incomes.79

4.1.3. Neighbourhood Housing Variety

The City of Vancouver has a mix of lower, middle and upper income households that require a range of housing types. However, housing choice within individual Vancouver neighbourhoods is generally limited. Unlike the inner cities of Toronto and San Francisco which are much older and have developed multi-family zoned neighbourhoods close to the downtown employment core, Vancouver is unique for a major city because it resembles a single-family suburb.80 Approximately 70 percent of the City's urban land is zoned for low density single family housing. Since much of the City's higher density zones are located in the Central Area there are few alternatives to the single family home in areas outside the downtown core. Consequently, many City neighbourhoods do not provide different housing forms like rowhouses, garden apartments, or mews - housing that is suitable for young couples, families, and many people approaching retirement.

79 City of Vancouver, op. cit., pg. 8
80 From interviews with City planners.
In addition, much of the demand for new housing will come from people who already live in the City. Therefore, Vancouver would need about 22,000 additional housing units if these people want to stay in their neighbourhoods and move into other types of housing. Since many of the higher density zones are already fairly dense, with a range of 25-80 units/ acres, it is hard for the City to argue for more intensification in these areas when the City has a wide selection of low density neighbourhoods which have seen little or no changes in density. Therefore, with increased growth and an aging of the population, there is added pressure to intensify the City's single family districts to accommodate residents who may wish to remain in their neighbourhoods but may require alternative forms of housing.

The GVRD believes that where possible, this additional housing should remain in the form of ground oriented housing, but something other than the single family home. Research has revealed that people will live at higher densities if housing is ground oriented and provided in a form that people will want to live in and at a price they can afford. However, the current rigidity of the municipal zoning bylaws has resulted in a lack of alternatives to the single family home. If Vancouver is to accommodate growth and the changing needs of society, it will have to do a better job at providing alternative forms of ground oriented housing.

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81 City of Vancouver, City Plan Directions (City of Vancouver Planning Dept. 1995), pg. 13.
82 Information gathered from interviews with City planners.
83 City of Vancouver, op. cit., 1995, pg. 13
84 Information gathered from interviews with City planners.
4.1.4. Summary

Intensification is being promoted in the City of Vancouver as a means for accommodating growth. The unanswered question is whether it can accommodate the kind of growth pressures that the region is forecasting. Technically it can because it is a model that is known to work in cities like Vancouver that never really departed from the late 19th century city configuration. Such cities are made up of shops along the streets, and small lot developments with secondary suites, duplexes, and scattered apartment buildings which characterize the concept of complete communities while promoting opportunities for intensification. Although this model has always historically worked very well, the question is whether it can occur in such way that will be compatible with today’s community expectations.85

4.2. HISTORY OF INTENSIFICATION IN VANCOUVER

Intensification first began in the City of Vancouver in the 1950s with the redevelopment of the West End and continues to present day. However, different policies and different priorities have affected the outcome of these initiatives. This section describes some of the policies and land use changes which have promoted intensification in the city.

4.2.1. The 1950’s to the Late 1960’s

If one of the objectives of intensification is to provide additional housing in an existing urban

85 Information for this section was gathered from interviews with city staff.
area then one of the first examples of intensification can be said to have occurred following the end of World War II. At this time the City was experiencing a resurgence of urban growth, but due to the lack of housing construction during the war years returning servicemen faced a significant housing shortage. To meet this need the federal government extended the *War Measures Act* which promoted the practice of 'doubling up' to occur within the existing housing stock. “This Act overrode any local or provincial legislation restricting houses to single-family use and was not repealed until 1954. However, its legacy lives on with the provision of secondary suites in homes, a practice that still continues today.”

During the 1950s, the City experienced intensification in the form of urban renewal. This program sought to revitalize the blighted inner city areas through demolition and redevelopment. Strathcona was the first community selected for urban renewal. Despite public protest, a total of 57 acres were expropriated and redeveloped and approximately 3,330 people were displaced by 1963. Contrary to the planning ideals of the time, urban renewal did not maintain and stabilize communities; instead intact communities were disrupted and never recreated. The effects of this type of intensification changed the focus of planning in Vancouver to incorporate more community participation in the decision making process.

The next significant example of intensification occurred in the West End. From the 1950s to the mid 1970s this area became one of the most densely populated urban districts in Canada. Originally this area started out as a prestige single family neighbourhood, but with the development of new middle and upper class housing in other parts of the city (Shaughnessy and

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87 *Ibid.* pg. 4
West Point Grey), many of the large Victorian homes were converted to rooming houses and small apartments. Then as zoning changes were made in the late 1950s the West End underwent another transformation. From the 1960s onwards, this area became a high density apartment district with the addition of some 13,000 dwelling units (118% increase) between 1960 and 1970, and another 3,000 units (12.5% increase) between 1970 and 1981.\textsuperscript{88}

This process of redevelopment continues, and as a result the West End has become one of the most successful neighbourhoods in the City. What has happened is a process of relatively gradual change that has resulted in making the place completely different but comfortably different. It is comfortably different because it has evolved and the change that did occur did not destroy the existing patterns or the social and cultural infrastructures. The area still maintains the same residential patterns of street front shopping, parks, services and street use that existed before development took place. But now this area also has a variety of housing types, nearby shopping, a lack of car ownership because it is not needed, a high concentration of population so that many services can be provided, a cultural mix and different types of entertainment, interest and enrichment that do not exist in lower density areas. This did not happen because of what planners did, but because the area was allowed to change and evolve. Today planners look to the experience of the West End when considering intensification in other parts of the city. They try to understand what has happened here and what the elements are that make it work so that they can apply this knowledge to the change process in other situations and areas, like Downtown South.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{88} City of Vancouver, Changes in the Built Form of the Core (City of Vancouver Planning Dept. 1982), pg. 4.  
\textsuperscript{89} Information in this paragraph was gathered from interviews with City planners.
4.2.2. The 1970s to the Early 1980s

During the 1970s and 1980s the City started to actively promote intensification with policies aimed at minimizing commutes into the city and bringing housing closer to jobs. As a result, the 1970s brought many changes to the landscape of Vancouver. During this period most of the intensification took place in the inner city and along the City's shoreline with the reuse of industrial land and the redevelopment of older neighbourhoods. However the community dissatisfaction with the physical and social changes caused by earlier urban renewal efforts led to fundamental changes in the way intensification was undertaken during this period. Communities no longer quietly accepted imposed solutions and as a result intensification was undertaken in conjunction with community preservation, public participation and local area planning.\(^9^{0}\) As a result, areas around False Creek, namely, Grandview Woodland, Mount Pleasant, Fairview Slopes and especially, Kitsilano, experienced extensive local area planning to determine how intensification could be accomplished while still preserving neighbourhood character. By carefully crafting zoning these areas were intensified by replacing houses with low and mid rise apartments and condominiums, while still maintaining neighbourhood character. This process was then used in other areas where these rudimentary zoning mechanisms were expanded and refined. As a result, these areas and others like Kerrisdale can be considered the first communities where the idea of using intensification to create more compact and complete communities was first used. Although at the time the change was very traumatic, now these neighbourhoods are considered very successful, providing different income groups with a range

of housing and services that meet their day to day needs within reasonable walking and transit
distances.

During the same period, many of Vancouver's industrial lands were redeveloped into medium
density residential communities as industries either closed or relocated to cheaper suburban sites.
This resulted in the creation of new residential communities in False Creek South, Riverside, the
Fraser Lands, and Camplain Heights, and in the intensification of their surrounding
neighbourhoods, like Fairview Slopes, which gained higher densities in the form of new
townhouses. In almost each case the City built a planned community that combined a careful
mix of imaginative forms of compact housing, parks, commercial and community facilities.
Today these areas have a variety of housing types including cooperatives, senior citizens
housing, condominiums, low and medium density apartments, townhouses, and even floating
homes. The City had a fair amount of vision for how intensification could be used here,
demonstrating that a very high quality of urban design, along with a strong political and public
commitment to a broad social and income mix, can produce a very positive and viable
community.

4.2.3. The Late 1980s and Beyond

The 1980s and 1990s have continued the tradition of intensification in the city. Many of the

91 City of Vancouver, Quarterly Review (City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1980), pg. 7.
92 Information for this section was gathered from Bruce MacDonald, Vancouver: A Visual History (Vancouver,
BC: Talon Books, 1990), pg. 54-58.
93 City of Vancouver, op. cit., 1980, pg. 7.
policies aimed at reducing commuting traffic into the city and maintaining a job housing balance still remain. However, when the City reviewed existing housing capacity by area and compared this capacity to projected demand for housing to the year 2000, the findings overwhelmingly pointed to the fact that housing capacity had to be increased to cope with existing and projected demand. In order to deal with this demand the City of Vancouver has had to develop new strategies of dealing with growth through intensification. Consequently, new policies have emerged which encourage new housing opportunities throughout the City. These policies try to find alternative ways of increasing housing capacity and choice in existing neighbourhoods outside of the inner city, where new housing would have minimal disruption on those neighbourhoods. This has resulted in a number of different strategies which incorporate many of the principles that have been learned from other examples of intensification in the city. These strategies and policies will be described in further detail in the following section.

4.3. HOW IS IT BEING IMPLEMENTED?

The City of Vancouver has continued its tradition of creating policies that promote intensification. Many of these policies utilize the processes described by the Canadian Urban Institute for achieving urban intensification. They are often used in conjunction with other policies because this assists in creating more complete communities. Table 3 provides a summary of the intensification plans, policies, and initiatives which will be discussed in further detail in this section.

4.3.1. Intensification Plans

Currently two main governing policies are advocating the use of intensification as a way to manage growth and create complete communities. The first is a regional plan entitled the Livable Region Strategic Plan which presents intensification as a policy goal for the entire region. The other is the City of Vancouver’s CityPlan which emphasizes working with individual communities to determine which intensification strategy, if any, will be used to accommodate future growth.

4.3.1.1. Livable Region Strategic Plan

The City of Vancouver is part of the Greater Vancouver Regional District, which has coordinated a growth management strategy for the area entitled The Livable Region Strategic Plan. The plan is the culmination of a five-year process of consultation and analysis on regional land use and
transportation trends in response to the effects of rapid growth in the area. *The Livable Region Strategic Plan* works in conjunction with another regional plan, called *Transport 2021: A Long and Medium Range Transportation Plan for Greater Vancouver* and offers a way to accommodate growth while also preserving the environmental, economic, and social benefits of the region.\(^{95}\) The plan calls for the containment of urban sprawl by directing development to already urbanized areas and for higher density regional town centres and regional cities linked by high capacity transit service. The Plan is based on four fundamental and mutually reinforcing strategies that include:

- Creating a green zone to protect agricultural land and natural areas while setting the limits of urban development.
- Creating more complete communities throughout the region so opportunities exist for people to live close to work and services and to reduce the need for travel.
- Creating a more compact metropolitan region to accommodate much of the growth, in the existing urban areas in order to make better use of transit and community services.
- Creating more transportation choices to encourage transit use; reduce single-occupant car travel, and use transportation facilities to help shape regional growth.\(^ {96}\)

### 4.3.1.2. CityPlan

*CityPlan* is Vancouver's strategy for dealing with growth. It establishes a clear vision for the future of the City and provides broad directions for guiding decisions, programs, and spending for the next 30 years. The *CityPlan* vision for the City is one of neighbourhood centres that provide a variety of housing forms and where people can conveniently go to school, shop, and

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\(^{96}\) Isin & Tomalty, *op. cit.*, pg. 82
feel like part of a community. It is a city with a diverse economy, where jobs are close to where people live, where industrial activity provides a diversity of employment and serves the needs of businesses, and where the downtown is a hub for offices, entertainment and shopping. To achieve this vision, CityPlan has set out a number of actions and objectives to be undertaken by the City.

CityPlan Objectives

- Strengthen neighbourhood centres with shops, jobs, and services close to home and create safe and inviting public spaces for people to meet and socialize.
- Increase housing variety in neighbourhoods that have little variety now, to help meet the housing needs of residents of all ages.
- Enhance neighbourhood character and retain greenery and heritage.
- Target community services to people who need them most and involving people in the planning and delivery of services.
- Prevent crime and improve unsafe social and physical conditions.
- Provide more affordable housing.
- Broaden neighbourhood art and cultural activity and identity.
- Provide enough park space, and design public space for a variety of activities.
- Increase walking, biking, and transit within and between neighbourhoods.
- Help to improve air quality, improve and conserve water and reduce waste.
- Gradually reallocate resources to achieve CityPlan.

Source: City of Vancouver, Bringing CityPlan to Neighbourhoods. 1996, pg. 1.

CityPlan promotes intensification outside the downtown core. The purpose of CityPlan is to have people understand that change, through intensification, is necessary if the city is to accommodate growth. CityPlan tries to do this in a gradual way, working with communities to determine how intensification can be used to satisfy the needs of that community.

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97 City of Vancouver, City of Vancouver Transportation Plan (City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1996), pg. 2.
4.3.2.  Intensification Policies and Processes

4.3.2.1.  Housing Opportunities Strategy 98

The City of Vancouver developed the Housing Opportunities Strategy to respond to the increasing demand for housing and the associated loss of moderately priced housing in the city. This strategy is made up of four different intensification programs which provide ways in which the City can increase housing, while minimizing the public cost and impact of redevelopment on existing communities outside the inner city. They include:

1. **New Initiative Program**: the objective of this program is to increase housing capacity when opportunities arise.

2. **Residential Streets Program**: was designed to accommodate the construction of housing above shops in existing mixed use commercial/residential zones which are near public transit and services. As a result, the Commercial District schedules (C-1, and C-2) were amended in order to remove disincentives to building housing above shops. Previously, residential space was calculated at 2.5 times that of commercial space in floor space calculations. This initiative removed this constraint from the Zoning Schedule so that residential space is calculated at the same rate as commercial space.99

3. **New Communities Program**: was developed to identify opportunities to increase the supply of housing in the City by redeveloping surplus industrial lands as new residential communities. In 1989, the City identified underutilized industrial land available immediately for new uses in small isolated industrial areas where primary industry was diminishing and where accessibility for goods movement was limited. This practice has been recently halted because the City realized this land was needed for industry.

4. **Secondary Suites Program**: came about in 1989 when the City realized that 25,000 homes had illegal suites. In order to improve the quality of these suites so that they meet current safety regulations the zoning was changed to permit secondary suites in certain parts of the city, and family suites in all single family residential areas.

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4.3.2.2. Central Area Plan

This plan was adapted in 1991 and is one of the few strategic plans to be approved by Vancouver's City Council. The Central Area Plan provides a policy framework which guides and directs planning in the Central Area of the City and establishes where and how intensification will occur. It creates a vision for future growth and development and provides a set of land use policies that promote the consolidation of the CBD and uptown office district, reduces office zoned capacity outside the CBD in order to create higher density residential neighbourhoods, and improves the overall livability of the Central Area through mixed use communities. It’s goal is to create an area that accommodates economic growth, has a mix of activities, is a place to live and visit, is accessible and pedestrian friendly, and that protects the unique qualities of its natural and physical environment.  

4.3.2.3. Comprehensive Development Plans

Comprehensive Development Plans were developed for the larger intensification projects which deal with more complicated issues that can not be properly dealt with by the conventional rezoning process. This is a more cooperative process where both the City and the developers do the planning in three phases. In the first phase, a Policy Framework Statement/Broad sheet is developed which identifies city requirements and the needs of the public. This helps to determine what should go on the site and gives the developer some assurances of what they will have to provide in terms of public amenities. In the next phase the Official Development Plan is created. At this stage a more detailed scheme is developed that incorporates all the different requirements set out in the policy broad sheets. The final phase involves Sub Area Zonings and

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100 City of Vancouver, Central Area Plan (Vancouver: City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1991), pg. 3
it is at this point that the by-laws and design guidelines are created. Since these sub area zoning are so complex and the list of requirements is so extensive technical committees are formed where people from all departments meet on a regular basis. Not until this zoning is accepted can development occur.

4.3.2.4. Local Area Planning Programs

Local Area Planning Programs will be used to bring CityPlan to communities. It will try to determine how intensification can be used to satisfy the needs of individual communities by identifying where housing can be provided and how commercial and recreational activities can be integrated.

4.3.2.5. Clouds of Change and Urban Landscape Task Force

Both the Clouds of Change and the Urban Landscape Task Force reports move in the direction of intensification. They encourage the protection of air and water quality, the reduction of automobile travel, alternative modes of transport, and a greenways plan. They promote land use policies which focus on more compact development which are energy efficient in order to reduce atmospheric pollutants and improve the general environmental health of the city. Although these policies do not directly provide intensification initiatives, they have led to other policies that do.

4.3.3. Other Policies and Initiatives

On its own, intensification can not achieve all the theoretical benefits that are needed to create
complete communities. In order to make these intensification initiatives more successful, the City is using them in conjunction with other policies and programs. Combined, these policies move in the direction of more complete communities and provide some positive tradeoffs for those communities that do intensify. In this way, intensification achieves the best results with the least amount of impact. The following are a series of policies and processes that the City is using with its intensification policies to ensure that intensification will help create more complete communities.

4.3.3.1. Transportation Plan

Although BC Transit is responsible for transportation in the region, the City of Vancouver is developing a Transportation Plan to ensure that there will be alternative modes of transport for those areas that do intensify. Essentially, the Transportation Plan acts on the general directions contained in CityPlan and proposes measures to increase neighbourhood livability, expand bicycle facilities, improve public transit around neighbourhood centres, and sets parameters for future road capacity. It also outlines options for limiting car travel while ensuring access to work, shopping and recreation through a variety of transportation modes while encouraging the efficient movement of goods to support the economy of the City.101

4.3.3.2. Integrated Service Delivery (ISD)

Policy initiatives are most effective when they are integrated. To make intensification work in the city, every department must be doing it together, in a coordinated way so that policies do not conflict. Currently, 124 locally-based staff teams have been created with representatives from

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101 City of Vancouver, Transportation Plan: Choices Summary (Vancouver: Planning Dept., 1996), pg. 1.
each of the main city departments. Each team works with a neighbourhood and deals in an integrated fashion with community issues while seeking to resolve local concerns.\textsuperscript{102} Such an approach helps identify opportunities for intensification while ensuring that policies from different departments do not counteract one another.

\textbf{4.3.3.3. Income Mix Zoning}

There has been little initiative in the private sector to produce non market housing. To compensate for this lack of housing, the City has created a policy which stipulates that 20\% of the base density dwelling units to be built in large projects must be available for core-needy households (those which spend more than 30\% of gross income on housing). In addition, 50\% of these units are to be directed toward households with young children. The goal of this policy is to create housing for a mix of households and incomes on large scale private sector developments. To date this policy has not been very successful due to the lack of government funding in the area of low income housing.

\textbf{4.3.3.4. High-Density Housing Guidelines for Families with Children}

To encourage households with families to live in high density areas, guidelines were created to ensure that intensification projects are able to meet the needs of these households in a sensible and livable manner. The intent of these guidelines is to address the key issues of site, building and unit design which relate to residential livability for families with children.

\textsuperscript{102} City of Vancouver, \textit{CityPlan Directions for Vancouver} (Vancouver: Planning Dept., 1995), pg. 18-19.
4.3.3.5. **Safer City Program**

Since a component of the complete communities concept is to create safe and secure environments where people will want to live, the City of Vancouver is using their Safer City Program as part of its intensification initiative. The goal of this policy is to establish "eyes on the street" by promoting community based policing and crime prevention through environmental design.

4.3.3.6. **Vancouver Greenways Program**

This program looks for opportunities to create a city-wide network of pedestrian, bicycle and neighbourhood links. Greenways emphasize opportunities to move without cars by walking or biking, provide access to amenities, and ways of protecting the urban forest.

4.3.3.7. **Public Benefits Strategy**

As part of the intensification initiative a Public Benefits Strategy has been created to provide tradeoffs for those communities that will experience redevelopment. The purpose of the strategy is to determine the potential benefits and amenities needed to accommodate new residents based on city standards, a community facilities inventory and resident preferences. This is to ensure that priorities for new amenities reflect existing community needs and preferences as well as future demands.\(^{103}\)

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\(^{103}\) City of Vancouver, *Oakridge Langara Public Benefits Strategy* (Vancouver: Planning Dept., 1996), pg. 5.
4.3.3.8. DCLs and CACs

To ensure that intensification does not impose any financial burdens on residents living in areas where it might occur, the City has established several methods in which new developments pays its fair share of the costs of amenities needed for new residents. These include:

1. **Development Cost Levies (DCLs):** refer to funds required by the City of Vancouver to pay for capital projects such as replacement housing, daycare facilities, infrastructure (roads, sewage, water, drainage), and parks. The DCL by-laws establish the areas in which development cost levies are imposed on new development, and set out how they are to be calculated and paid.

2. **Community Amenity Contributions (CAC):** are required by the City of Vancouver for privately initiated, site specific residential rezonings. The purpose is to provide funds for the additional community amenities needed as a result of the increased population in a neighbourhood. To date, funds have been assigned for parks, social housing and community centres.

4.4. INTENSIFICATION PROJECTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

The are many examples of intensification development projects and initiatives within the City of Vancouver that have been directly influenced by the policies and plans described in the previous section. Table 4 provides a summary of the intensification projects that will be discussed in further detail in this section. On a city-wide basis these include: the redevelopment of industrial lands, underdeveloped areas and other vacant lands; infilling in residential areas; and the conversion of office buildings, single family residences and commercial space. In the Inner City, most of the intensification initiatives are due to the redevelopment of old industrial sites, the adaptive reuse of railway lands and the rezoning of already existing mixed use neighbourhoods to higher densities. As a result over 1,000 acres of Vancouver's downtown is being densified. It
is anticipated that by early next century, 20,000 additional residents will live in the Central Area and 60,000 more employees could work there.¹⁰⁴

### TABLE 4
VANCOUVER’S INTENSIFICATION PROJECTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INNER CITY PROJECTS</th>
<th>CITY - WIDE PROJECTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mega Projects</td>
<td>HD Rezonings</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. False Creek North</td>
<td>1. Downtown South</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Coal Harbour</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Information gathered through interviews with City Staff and Developers

#### 4.4.1. Inner City Intensification Projects

#### 4.4.1.1. Mega Project Redevelopments

The inner City of Vancouver is experiencing a number of large intensification initiatives often referred to as *Mega Projects*. Many of these projects involve the redevelopment or the adaptive reuse of former industrial lands. These developments are to be high density residential and mixed use communities offering a number of public amenities and services.

a) **False Creek North**

The intensification project on the North Shore of False Creek, known as Pacific Place involves the redevelopment of the 204 acre Expo site. It is the biggest development of its kind in North America and will be made up of a number of different neighbourhoods which, combined will

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house 8,500 residential units for 14,500 people. This development will contain, 1.7 million sq. ft. of office space, 650,000 sq. ft of retail and service space, 600,000 sq. ft. of hotel space, 42 acres of park land, a waterfront walkway, 3 marinas, 2 schools, a community centre, and 8 daycare facilities.

b). Coal Harbour

The adaptive reuse of Coal Harbour includes the 82 acre Marathon Lands and the 22 acre Bayshore site, both of which were once industrial railway lands. The Marathon site will house 2,000 residential units accommodating 3,500 people. The development will be comprised of 2.25 million sq. ft. of commercial space, a 400,000 sq. ft. hotel, 2 marinas, 16 acres of park and open space, a waterfront walkway, an elementary school, a community centre, 3 daycare facilities and an Arts Complex. The Bayshore site will have 980 residential units accommodating 1,800 people. The development will contain 39,300 sq. ft. of locally oriented retail, office and service space, 150,000 sq. ft of hotel space, 2.4 acres of park and waterfront walkways, a marina and daycare facility. Both developments offer the first downtown residential neighbourhood on the Burrard Inlet. Its location between Stanley Park, the West End and the Central Business District provides a unique and attractive opportunity for urban living.

c) South East Shore of False Creek

The south east shore of False Creek is a 50 acre industrial site which is to be redeveloped into a residential community. This community is to house approximately 4,250 people in 2,500 residential units and will contain a limited amount of commercial and industrial space. Since this
is city owned land the development will be the first neighbourhood in the City to be completely designed from sustainability and ecological principles.

4.4.1.2. Higher Density Rezoning

a) Downtown South

Downtown South, an area located in the City's Central Area has currently been rezoned to a higher density residential and mixed use community. In 1991 the area housed approximately 2,800 people in 2,700 units, had 19 single room occupancy hotels, and 48 heritage buildings. But over the next 25 years this area is expected to accommodate up to 11,000 people in 5,600 residential units. Currently, strategies are being developed to provide the community with a number of social and health services such as a community centre, job development support, and a mental health drop-in and outreach program. Development levies are to be used to fund amenities such as park land, replacement housing, daycare facilities and street trees.

4.4.2. City-Wide Intensification Projects

4.4.2.1. Conversions

a) Housing Above Shops

The residential streets program which removed residential disincentives in the C-1 and C-2 zones has resulted in the construction of many mixed use developments. These development are being referred to as Housing Above Shops and can be found along many of the major routes such as Kingsway & 15th, and 47th and Victoria Drive. Although areas like Kitsilano had this clause

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105 The information gathered for this section was taken from interviews
removed in the 1970s, much of this type of development has not been built until recently. To date, there is no data indicating the number of residential units created through this program.

b) Office Conversion to Residential Use

Currently there are three examples in the City where office buildings have been converted to residential use. These include 1010 Howe St. with 130 units, 1177 Hornby with 142 units and 970 Burrard St. with 243 units. Although they have added to the City's housing capacity, these conversions arose more as a heritage preservation initiative then an intensification initiative. In the case of heritage preservation the City is very flexible and open as to how the site can be used, giving those interested in heritage a fair return. For example, the developer for the Electra Building (970 Burrard) was given a package of incentives and density bonuses that permitted the amount of residential units to be increased while preserving the quality of the building. If this flexible attitude was applied to all intensification initiatives then perhaps much more could be accomplished.

c) Secondary Suites

The legalizing of secondary suites in the City is not really an intensification initiative. Although it now permits the use of secondary suites in 40% of the single family residential zones, many of these suites already existed, so the City did not really create any more units it just legalized them. However, it did theoretically add 20,000 potential units in the form of family suites that are permitted in all single family areas including those areas not zoned for secondary suites.
4.4.2.2. Redevelopments

a) Arbutus Lands

Both the Joyce & Vanness and the Arbutus Industrial Land developments are a result of the New Communities Program. Each is a large scale high density residential project that is being developed on former industrial lands. The Arbutus Industrial Lands was the first area targeted as a result of this policy. Originally the project was to incorporate a number of high rise buildings to provide more space for parks and other uses and to supply enough density to create a high street on Arbutus. This was opposed and the current development will now consist of low rise buildings with approximately 650 units. Since this area will have a significantly higher density than the surrounding community, great care is going into the design of streets, building form, and landscaping to create a separate precinct. This is a different procedure than is normally undertaken when an area is being intensified. Traditionally the City will try to blend a project into the existing neighbourhood unless it encompasses a fairly large area like the mega projects. Since this project was in the rezoning stage at the time this report was written, further changes may have occurred.

b) Joyce and Vanness

The Joyce and Vanness area which was previously an underutilized industrial site is being redeveloped into a high density residential community on 27 acres. The project will be developed over a 10 to 12 year period and will include a maximum of 2,800 housing units which will accommodate approximately 4,500 people. Of the residential units, 15% will be rental and 25% will be suitable for families with children. The development will also include 7.4 acres of public park land, an elementary school site, a 10,000 sq. ft. neighbourhood house, a 7,000 sq. ft.
day care centre, and a 8,000 sq. ft. gymnasium. In most cases a development of this sort would get a lot of negative reaction from the surrounding residents, but in this instance the proposal met with little or no opposition despite its size and inevitable impact on the neighbourhood. The main reason for this was that the community saw the development as an opportunity to improve the quality and economic vitality of their neighbourhood. Therefore, in exchange for a higher level of density then was originally permitted, the developer will now provide the community with those facilities and amenities that it had previously lacked. However, to provide this density the City had to rework the required city standards, breaking many city requirements to give the community the amenities it wanted. As a result, some of the amenities provided in the project are below the city standards required for this level of density. To date the project has been very successful with many local residents buying into the development, however time will tell if such an approach is successful in terms of quality of design and community livability.

c) Oakridge Langara

For many years, developers have been submitting rezoning proposals for large sites in the Oakridge Langara area which have the capacity for change of use or additional residential development. The uneasiness created by such a situation prompted the community to have a plan created for the area and in 1995 the Oakridge/Langara Policy Statement was approved. The Plan allows for approximately 3,500 new housing units and 5,800 new residents to be accommodated over a 20-30 year period. Since there has been very little change in the area since the early 1960s the plan concentrates new development on limited areas to prevent any disruption to the existing community. The City has gone to great lengths here to involve the public in the planning process in order to gain support for intensification and the change that is likely to occur. However,
despite these measures there are still a small group of residents who are adamantly opposed to change. This resistance makes change controversial even when the majority of the residents support the notion of intensification.

d) 8th & Sasamat

Currently there is a townhouse proposal for a vacant site located at 8th and Sasamat in West Point Grey. Although this site has always been vacant many residents are opposed to the development because of fears associated with its impact on the surrounding single family lots. Here people are concerned with the issue of precedence. They believe that if intensification is allowed then it will only be a matter of time before other areas in the community are also intensified. Residents fear that if intensification occurs then the area will experience decreased property values, increased traffic, and more noise due to increased activities. This a clear example of the problems associated with intensifying single family residential areas.

e) Skytrain Stations

In the spring of 1981, the Provincial Government announced the development of an Advanced Light Rapid Transit (ALRT) system for Greater Vancouver. Recognizing that rapid transit could have dramatic effects on the City's future, Vancouver's City Council assigned Planning Staff to enhance the ALRT's opportunities, while assisting in mitigating any negative impacts. This resulted in the City undertaking a number of Local Area Planning Programs for four Eastside ALRT Stations that included the Broadway, Joyce, Nanaimo and 29th Avenue Stations areas.\textsuperscript{106} Through this process community plans were created that provided redevelopment opportunities

\textsuperscript{106} City Of Vancouver, \textit{Broadway Station Area Plan} (Vancouver: City Planning Dept., 1987), pg. 1-3.
for sites within a 10 minute walk of these stations. Although this was not necessarily an intensification initiative it has encouraged the development of townhouses and low density apartments in many of these areas that otherwise would not have occurred.

4.4.1.3. Infill

a) Infill Housing

They are many examples in the City where infill housing has been allowed. Currently it is being promoted in West Mount Pleasant and allows for lots that once accommodated two dwelling units to now have four. This is a good example of how density can be increased in an existing residential area, especially if it has traditionally been a pattern of development.

b) Thin Houses

The construction of thin houses on narrow lots may be seen by some as an intensification strategy, but in fact it is the result of a historical accident resulting from less controlled subdivision procedures in the City's early years. Although a policy still exists that permits development on these sites it is a situation that is tolerated rather than encouraged because of the compatibility problems that arise when thin houses are built near houses on standard width lots. Currently 485 narrow lots (13.3 ft in width by 24 ft in length) exist in the City and they are subject to special regulations and design controls.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>TYPES OF INTENSIFICATION</th>
<th>INTENSIFICATION PROJECTS</th>
<th>CONTRIBUTIONS</th>
<th>INTENSIFICATION POLICIES SPECIFIC TO PROJECTS</th>
<th>OTHER POLICIES USED TO CREATE COMPLETE COMMUNITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inner City</td>
<td>Mega Project Redevelopments</td>
<td>a) False Creek North</td>
<td>• 8500 housing units for 14,500 people, incl. community facilities, parks, office, hotel and retail space.</td>
<td>• Central Area Plan</td>
<td>• Livable Region Strategic Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b) Coal Harbour</td>
<td>• 2,000 housing units for 3,500 people, incl. parks, community facilities, marinas, art complex, office, hotel and retail space.</td>
<td>• Comprehensive Development Plans</td>
<td>• CityPlan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c) South East False Creek</td>
<td>• 2,500 housing units for 4,250 people.</td>
<td>• Income Mix Zoning</td>
<td>• Urban Landscape Task Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Density Rezonings</td>
<td>a) Downtown South</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Expected to accommodate an additional 8,200 people in 2900 units in the next 25 years.</td>
<td>• Housing Guidelines</td>
<td>• Safer City Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Wide</td>
<td>Conversions</td>
<td>a) Housing Above Shops</td>
<td>• Rezoning changes allow housing above shops in C-1 and C-2 zones.</td>
<td>• Local Area Planning</td>
<td>• Income Mix Zoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b) Office Conversions</td>
<td>• Three office buildings have been converted to residential use resulting in a total of 515 new housing units.</td>
<td>• CityPlan</td>
<td>• Central Area Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c) Secondary Suites</td>
<td>• Secondary suites are now allowed in 40% of the single family residential zones.</td>
<td>• DCLs and CACS</td>
<td>• Housing Guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redevelopments</td>
<td>a) Arbutus lands</td>
<td></td>
<td>• An additional 650 low rise residential units in an existing SF zone.</td>
<td>• Residential Streets Program</td>
<td>• New Initiative Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b) Joyce &amp; Vanness</td>
<td>• 2,800 housing units for 4,500 people, including parks, and community facilities</td>
<td>• Secondary Suites Program</td>
<td>• Integrated Service Delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c) Oakridge Langara</td>
<td>• 3,500 new housing units for 5,800 people on limited areas.</td>
<td>• New Initiative Program</td>
<td>• Income Mix Zoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>d) 8th &amp; Sasamat</td>
<td>• Townhouse proposals in an existing SF zone.</td>
<td>• New Communities Program</td>
<td>• Local Area Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>e) Skytrain Stations</td>
<td>• New town house and low density apartment developments.</td>
<td>• Integrated Service Delivery</td>
<td>• DCLs and CACS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infill</td>
<td>a) Infill Housing</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Allows more than one dwelling on a residential lot.</td>
<td>• Public Benefits Strategy</td>
<td>• Income Mix Zoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b) Thin Houses</td>
<td>• Allows development on narrow lots.</td>
<td>• New Initiative Program</td>
<td>• Local Area Planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5. WHAT HAS INTENSIFICATION ACHIEVED

The City of Vancouver has achieved much in the area of intensification. To date, it has been able to cope with very high rates of population growth and fundamental demographic shifts to create a variety of housing choices in many city neighbourhoods that can accommodate a wide range of incomes and households. In the last thirty years, Vancouver has used intensification to change the dwelling characteristics in the City. Table 6 shows that since 1961 there has been a gradual increase in multi-family and higher density housing forms and a decrease in single detached households. Of the 200,000 homes currently found in the City: 34% are single family, 12% are duplexes, 3% are rowhouses, 34% are low rise apartments, and 17% are high rise apartments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DWELLING AND HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS IN VANCOUVER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>387,794</td>
<td>413,354</td>
<td>429,795</td>
<td>413,700</td>
<td>413,952</td>
<td>431,147</td>
<td>471,844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Detached</td>
<td>75,937</td>
<td>74,679</td>
<td>76,100</td>
<td>70,555</td>
<td>79,520</td>
<td>70,185</td>
<td>67,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi Detached</td>
<td>2,512</td>
<td>1,917</td>
<td>1,515</td>
<td>1,445</td>
<td>1,765</td>
<td>2,083</td>
<td>3,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Row House</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2,540</td>
<td>3,925</td>
<td>5,298</td>
<td>6,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartment Total</td>
<td>37,520</td>
<td>60,023</td>
<td>72,800</td>
<td>75,725</td>
<td>87,030</td>
<td>107,489</td>
<td>121,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detached Duplex</td>
<td>8,275</td>
<td>5,221</td>
<td>7,145</td>
<td>9,345</td>
<td>7,155</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>20,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apart. 5+ storeys</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>27,700</td>
<td>29,405</td>
<td>33,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apart 5-</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>52,175</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>67,830</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other single attached</td>
<td>2,330</td>
<td>3,808</td>
<td>4,205</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


107 Information based on interviews
108 City of Vancouver, CityPlan Directions (Vancouver: City Planning Dept., 1995), pg. 13
109 Please note that the same information on dwelling and household characteristic in Vancouver was not available for each census year due to the changes in way the census data were gathered.
In the City of Vancouver, intensification has been most successful when applied to the inner city, the redevelopment of industrial sites, and in communities that were originally duplex zones. It was through intensification that the West End became a high density residential community and areas like Kitsilano, Fairview Slopes, Grandview Woodland, False Creek and Kerrisdale were developed into medium density communities. These areas were originally duplex zones and through intensification have been converted to higher density multiple family districts. Since many of these intensified areas have been very well designed, they provide housing and transportation alternatives not available in other parts of the city or region. For this reason, people are choosing to live in these areas because they provide affordable housing in convenient locations which are in close proximity to transit service and jobs. If this choice were not available then people would be forced to move outside of the city where their lifestyles would be strained by distance and the burden of commuting. Instead people are choosing to live in smaller accommodations where choice is provided and forgo the commute which is why many of the current large scale intensification projects are doing so well.

Despite this success, the City is still unable to intensify existing single family residential neighbourhoods. The key reason, is that there is a great amount of public opposition to change, especially with respect to increasing density. As a result, these areas do not provide the housing and lifestyle choices found in those areas that have experienced some form of intensification. By observing Table 7, which shows the housing choices available to people throughout the City, it becomes apparent that the challenge the City faces is in determining how intensification can occur in the single family areas. Since the City has had success with intensification when it is used in conjunction with preserving neighbourhood character this may be where the future for
intensification lies. If neighbourhood character is taken as the primary interest of most residents and property owners in Vancouver then intensification may be achieved as a major objective if density can be increased without overwhelming impacts.

### TABLE 7

**OCCUPIED DWELLINGS IN VANCOUVER LOCAL AREAS 1991**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VANCOUVER LOCAL AREAS</th>
<th>SINGLE-DETACHED</th>
<th>APARTMENT 5+ STOREYS</th>
<th>MULTI-DWELLINGS</th>
<th>OTHERS</th>
<th>OWNED</th>
<th>RENTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metro Vancouver</td>
<td>344,150</td>
<td>58,990</td>
<td>199,665</td>
<td>6,630</td>
<td>350,185</td>
<td>259,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Vancouver</td>
<td>88,435</td>
<td>33,110</td>
<td>77,630</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>81,770</td>
<td>118,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arbutus Ridge</td>
<td>3,020</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1,370</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3,195</td>
<td>2,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3,950</td>
<td>1,575</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>5,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunbar-Southlands</td>
<td>6,560</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5,490</td>
<td>1,265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairview</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>2,960</td>
<td>11,070</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3,820</td>
<td>10,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandview-Woodland</td>
<td>3,610</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>8,560</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3,480</td>
<td>9,185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hastings-Sunrise</td>
<td>8,485</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>1,220</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6,110</td>
<td>3,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kensington-C. Cottage</td>
<td>10,440</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2,230</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7,225</td>
<td>5,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerrisdale</td>
<td>3,315</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>1,195</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3,125</td>
<td>1,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killarney</td>
<td>3,680</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>3,220</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4,010</td>
<td>2,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitsilano</td>
<td>4,415</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>13,645</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6,160</td>
<td>12,690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marpole</td>
<td>3,310</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>5,305</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3,095</td>
<td>5,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Pleasant</td>
<td>2,070</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>8,585</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2,260</td>
<td>9,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakridge</td>
<td>2,330</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>1,080</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2,345</td>
<td>1,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renfrew-Collingwood</td>
<td>9,635</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1,185</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6,945</td>
<td>3,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riley Park</td>
<td>5,315</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,910</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,890</td>
<td>3,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaughnessy</td>
<td>2,160</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,265</td>
<td>710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Cambie</td>
<td>1,565</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,275</td>
<td>1,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strathcona</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>1,850</td>
<td>3,385</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>5,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunset</td>
<td>7,645</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1,205</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5,255</td>
<td>3,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria-Fraserview</td>
<td>6,165</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4,850</td>
<td>2,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West End</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>19,545</td>
<td>6,555</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3,105</td>
<td>23,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Point Grey</td>
<td>3,565</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>1,090</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2,990</td>
<td>2,070</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City of Vancouver, Vancouver Local Areas

### 4.6. SUMMARY

Vancouver's successes and failures with different intensification initiatives has helped the City gain an understanding of how intensification can work and what it can achieve if properly implemented. Vancouver has had enough success in this area to know that higher densities works in the City and that if intensification is used properly it can help create the types of environments people will want to live in. They have learned that intensified urban living will be
successful if the needs of an area can be accommodated through intensification and if people can live in residential environments that are close to services and shops. The City’s experience with intensification shows that higher density communities can create an urban fabric that is a comfortable environment for the pedestrian and brings life and a sense of place back into the street.
5.0. EVALUATING THE IMPACTS OF INTENSIFICATION AS A Means FOR DEVELOPING MORE COMPLETE COMMUNITIES

The literature on intensification often discusses the benefits that can be achieved by applying this strategy. It indicates that it can help create more compact and complete communities that will lead to a better and more livable environment. Rarely are the applied experiences of intensification documented. Therefore the goal of this chapter is to provide the reader with some empirical evidence from Vancouver’s experience as to what can be achieved when using intensification to create more complete communities. This will be done by using the information gathered through interviews to compare the theoretical benefits and tradeoffs of intensification with the actual issues, challenges and problems most often encountered with this strategy.

5.1. THE INTENSIFICATION EXPERIENCE

Vancouver's experience with intensification will show that although there are many advantages to using this strategy there are just as many challenges and tradeoffs that must be dealt with in order to create more complete communities. For instance, not all the theoretical benefits of intensification can be achieved and the tradeoffs and barriers are much more complex and difficult to overcome then one would initially assume. Often these benefits can not be achieved through intensification alone. Instead, intensification policies must be used with other city policies and processes and only in this way will it help create more complete communities. This
section will identify Vancouver experience with intensification to date. It will discuss the known benefits, tradeoffs and barriers as experienced by developers, City planners and staff.

5.1.1. Benefits of Intensification

Some of the most successful examples of intensification in the City of Vancouver can be found in the West End, Kitsilano, Kerrisdale, and False Creek. It is here that many of the benefits of intensification have been realized. As a result, the experience of these communities provides the City with some lessons on what can or can not be achieved with respect to the social, economic and environmental benefits of intensification.

5.1.1.1. Social Benefits

One of the social benefits that intensification is found to provide is the opportunity to create choices and options that otherwise would not occur, especially in the area of housing, transportation, and quality of life. Intensification provides opportunities to create a variety of housing options within existing neighbourhoods that can accommodate a wider range of household and income groups. It enables communities to respond to changing needs and circumstances which allows people to change housing types as their needs alter without leaving their neighbourhoods. Although intensification provides opportunities to create more diverse forms of housing it does not necessarily create affordable housing. Intensification does not make housing less expensive, instead it creates alternatives to the single family home that are often smaller in size and as a result are cheaper to purchase. Often these units are smaller because more units have been placed on the same piece of land. This increase in housing options may not
be considered by some to be an absolute benefit because people who wish to live in the city must be prepared to live in smaller units. In some cases, people may be paying more on a square foot basis for these units then a house elsewhere because when an area experiences intensification it may become more desirable which drives housing prices up.

Since intensification creates higher densities and more compact communities, this proximity of uses allows for alternatives to be developed in transportation. This is another social benefit, because as densities increase it becomes realistic to walk to services and the services are there because the population densities are there to support them. The West End is a good example of how intensification can create a successful high density downtown neighbourhood. With more people living close to work and other cultural activities, there are more opportunities to provide and develop alternative forms of transportation. Currently 60% of the people living in the West End either walk or take transit to work and 70% of them work within the city.\textsuperscript{110}

Intensification can also improve the quality of life in an area. For example, the redevelopment of vacant lands helps improve the success of existing neighbourhoods and businesses by bringing more people into an area. This can be seen when looking at neighbourhoods like Downtown South which are currently being revitalized by the intensification projects occurring on False Creek and Coal Harbour. More people sustain more businesses, and this creates more activity. As a result, a larger tax base can be established to improve transit service and the local environment which creates a different quality of life than is currently found in most single family neighbourhoods. Intensification provides a different type of life because of the proximity

\textsuperscript{110} Information gathered from interviews with City Planners.
between uses and alternative choices available in housing and transportation. Only through higher densities can people come together to create a certain lifestyle that invites innovation and creates a feeling of a neighbourhood.

5.1.1.2. Social Benefits of High Density Developments

With the construction of new high density communities, like the mega projects in downtown Vancouver, intensification can be used to provide those amenities and services that will be needed by the new residents that may not have initially existed. This can occur in Vancouver because the Vancouver Charter gives the City much more flexibility in acquiring the provision of amenities than other municipalities. Since the City owns much of the existing infrastructure, they have much more autonomy in what they do with their public infrastructure and as a result developers can be made to contribute to the operating costs of services and amenities in exchange for the higher density. It is a situation that is working well in Vancouver because there is a high demand for downtown living and when densities are high, developers can afford to contribute more amenities and still make a profit, even with high land costs. This means that developers can provide a larger and higher quality amenity package than would be the case in a lower density project. The provision of these amenities provides an added benefit to both the City and the developers because they are contributing to the success of these projects and are helping to create more complete communities. When people know that they will be living in a complete community they are more willing to buy into the idea of high density living.
5.1.1.3. Economic Benefits

There are many examples of the economic benefits of intensification when this form of development is compared to the cost of sprawl. Currently 40% of the cost of development is for infrastructure, primarily that which is automobile related. “In other words, when a town or city is built, 40% of the initial costs go to pay for freeways, streets, sewers, stop lights, parking lots, driveways, garages, parking structures, and the land they cover. The other 60% is used for land acquisition and building. The actual building only costs the developer 30-40% of the total construction cost.” Since most of the infrastructure costs are currently subsidized by the government, any cut backs would result in having the residents of these low density areas paying for the true costs of this form of development. With increased taxes and the additional cost of commuting, society will no longer be able to afford to develop in this way. However, if people live and work in close proximity then savings can be realized in infrastructure costs, personal taxes, and in highway and transportation maintenance and operating costs. This creates a more efficient use of land and maximizes the use of the existing urban infrastructure which is more cost effective.

Intensified urban areas also create more efficiency in the delivery of services and resources especially in terms of heating, recycling, sewage and garbage collection and bringing a larger number of people and activities closer together increases the ready market for transit and promotes less car trips. Intensification makes the best use of the existing services and infrastructure which creates benefits in the area of public finance, where money no longer exists to finance urban sprawl and expansion. Also with more people in a compact area, it is easier to

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111 Information gathered from Calthorpe 1992, pg. 22 and interviews.
provide social services and to integrate the service delivery response, making the system more efficient and cost effective. More people in the area also fortifies the strength of business and makes them economically more successful because a population base will exist that will support local services. This would benefit the City in the form of taxation because the more successful these businesses are the higher the assessed land value will. However there has to be a sufficient amount of density to support the type of services and businesses most people find desirable.

An economic disadvantage to intensification is that higher density projects are usually more costly for developers to build, even on a per unit basis. They require more parks, more non-market housing, more zoning requirements, more expensive forms of infrastructure then low density developments and are often built on expensive urban land. In addition, large scale intensification projects like Coal Harbour and Concord Pacific will often take longer to develop and therefore developers must carry the costs for a longer period. As a result, higher density developments do not really provide developers with the best return on their investment when compared to the cost of lower density projects which require less infrastructure, time, amenities and can usually be built on less expensive land.112

5.1.1.4. Environmental Benefits

The environmental benefits of intensification relate to the efficient use of land and services which results in minimizing congestion and reducing dependencies on the car. This would mean less traffic, less pollution, less street construction and less resource consumption. With high density developments, especially high rises, less space is needed for development which creates

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112 From interviews with developers.
opportunities to avoid harming the natural environment and also provides more space that can be devoted to public open space. Usually this open space is an end product of a development, but contributes to making an intensified urban area more livable and therefore more desirable. This relates back to the social benefits because it creates a better quality of life. Intensification also has the added benefit of stopping the contamination of ground water by cleaning and greening contaminated industrial sites that are converted into new residential communities. However, if quality of environment conditions were not taken into account during the intensification process, then an area could potentially become less livable and more congested leading to increased deterioration of the existing environment.

A common misconception of intensification is that it can preserve farmland. Only when intensification is undertaken at a regional level can farmland and other natural resources be preserved. Local intensification on its own does not preserve farmland. Therefore, a region will not benefit from intensification unless every district in the region is using this strategy. If the City of Vancouver is intensifying but areas like Richmond are continuing with conventional development practices, then not much can be accomplished in the way of preservation. The only way to effectively preserve land is to create an over riding policy that controls all forms of growth within a region by preventing it from occurring outside the urban boundary or by establishing an Agricultural Land Resource.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{113} From interviews with City Planners.
TABLE 8
SUMMARY OF THE BENEFITS AND MYTHS OF INTENSIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUMMARY OF THE BENEFITS</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF THE MYTHS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Provides choices in the area of housing, transportation, and quality of life.</td>
<td>1. Does not provide affordable housing but does create housing options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If services, and jobs are in close proximity to residences then savings can be made in infrastructure costs, personal taxes, road maintenance, and operating costs.</td>
<td>2. Any social benefits gained are a result of how an area was intensified and not because it was intensified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. With increased densities a developer can provide all the amenities and services that those residents will need.</td>
<td>3. Local intensification does not preserve farmland. Farmland can only be preserved if intensification and other preventative measures are undertaken on a regional level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Creates a more efficient use of land and maximizes the use of existing urban resources and services.</td>
<td>4. Higher density projects do not necessarily provide developers with higher rates of return on their investments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Information gathered from interviews

5.1.2. Tradeoffs

For intensification to occur, all interested parties including the developer, the City, and the public must be willing to accept the tradeoffs and costs. They must be willing to make choices and accept the idea that there are different ways of doing things and living that may be just as satisfying as the old way. The following are some of the tradeoffs associated with intensification.

5.1.2.1. Costs are a Qualitative Issue

The Vancouver experience shows that the costs of intensification are really a qualitative issue. If intensification is undertaken properly then there will be benefits and if it is designed poorly then there will be losses. For example, the urban renewal schemes of the 1950s resulted in
displacement while the intensification efforts along False Creek resulted in a vibrant and
desirable high density area. Therefore the costs are associated with the details of how
intensification is undertaken and issues like safety and crowding are side effects of
intensification if it is done incorrectly.

The costs and tradeoffs also depend on the level of intensification. If there is to be a large
intensification initiative then there may be enough density to support increased transit services so
traffic may not be a problem even though one may see more cars parked on the road. The
tradeoffs are all based on the level of comparison between changing a single family area to multi-
family area and increasing the density in an already established high density area. In higher
density areas everything is excentuated but this does not mean that there will be more problems
just that the problems will be proportional to the population. The costs and tradeoffs of
intensification depend on people, since everyone is different they want different lifestyles and
different things. The tradeoffs depend on whether or not people prefer intensified urban living.
If intensification is done well and is of good quality then people will like it.

5.1.2.2. Different Life Style

Intensification creates a different form of urban experience and a different quality of life. It
creates different lifestyles which makes it an alternative and more intensive form of living. It is a
lifestyle in which people must learn to live within a different and more compact urban
environment in which there is less private space for more common space. For those people
moving from a low density neighborhood into a higher density neighbourhood this will be a
lifestyle change. As a result these people will have to adjust to the amount of activity and noise
that will surround them in a higher density neighbourhood. This is a tradeoff because a more dense environment creates more opportunities for intrusion in peoples day to day activities, so in order to be satisfied with this type of living people must become tolerant to what is going on around them.

Whether this type of life style is a benefit or a loss will depend on peoples values and how they choose to live their lives. It is a value judgment based on whether people prefer lower or higher density living. Some people will see intensification as making a place less livable in comparison to what exists and will perceive this as a loss in quality of life. For example, intensification may be seen as a destruction of single family areas, and more portables on school yards and more people using parks may be seen as an overall loss of open space in the neighbourhood. However, for those that do choose a more intensified form of living, they may feel that giving up a large ground oriented dwelling and some open space is a fair tradeoff for access to increased services and cultural amenities.

5.1.2.3. Different Types of Spaces

People must be willing to give up their own private space for common space. The problem with this is that as people become wealthier they desire more space. In higher density areas, people will favour larger units if they can afford the cost, which accounts for the popularity of penthouse units in high rise buildings. This is a fundamental issue when considering intensification because the desire for more space has the resulting consequence of decreasing densities, especially when an area becomes attractive. This means that although an area may be experiencing intensification, it may not see a substantial increase in the population level, just an increase in the
physical densities. For example, both Kitsilano and Kerrisdale experienced intensification by replacing boarding houses and three storey apartments with higher apartment buildings. Many of these high rise buildings had units that were larger in size than those that existed before intensification. "As a result, the area experienced a drop in the number of units as well as a drop in the population because people moved out of smaller units and into larger ones while still being able to remain in the same area. This creates a situation in which the neighbourhood can appear to get denser because there are more buildings but the amount of people living there may not actually be increasing."114 What is increasing is the amount of space they desire (one room vs. two rooms). The same situation occurred in the West End. Between 1950 and 1975 the population did not even double even though the housing stock increased, because the spaces that were being provided were larger. In both cases, the population density did not reflect the density of housing. The same can be said for the more recent intensification initiatives in the inner city, although the towers are very large they also have large units.

If intensification is to provide good quality accommodation at a style people want in the 1990s, then higher physical densities will be required because as the population continues to get wealthier their desire for space will increase, resulting in a demand for larger units. This scale of change is very traumatic because it is very difficult to go into an existing neighbourhood and convince residents to accept a higher level of density.

114 From interviews with City staff.
5.1.2.4. Complexity of Design

The complexity both developers and planners face in designing and managing the externalities of intensified urban developments in order to make them successful is another tradeoff to intensification. Designing a compact higher density development is very complex because there are many factors that have to be considered. Careful attention must be paid to all aspects of a development’s design, including both the interior and exterior space, to make the project livable. Since the livability of intensified urban environments can be greatly effected by lack of light and shadowing, special care must go into how these projects are designed and oriented. Issues like building form and unit layout may play a critical role in the livability and safety of a project because certain forms can either reduce or increase things like shadows. In addition, higher density compact developments (ie. townhouses & three storey walkups) are often more visible then lower density projects (ie. single family subdivisions) and as a result people are more critical of the final design so careful attention must be paid to this element to encourage people to live in these environments. Often the concern about compact higher density projects is really a concern about design. Most people will evaluate the success of intensification based on how it fits into the existing community. People will be more accepting of intensification projects if it is designed to fit into the neighbourhood properly. “Unfortunately, there is much ignorance in the design profession on how to create good, high quality, intensification projects. Until recently, most designers and professionals have not been confronted with the task of creating an environmentally good urban space that incorporates sustainability and complete community principles.”115 In order for the developer to sell a project like Collingwood Village or Concord Pacific, they must have a clear understanding of what design will or will not work. Often this

115 From interviews with developers.
knowledge will come from an extensive marketing and research campaign. This is a complicated process, and depending on peoples wants and desires, it is not always successful.

It is also important to ensure that the urban framework can handle more people in order to minimize costs. This means that it is essential to manage the externalities so that things like noise, crowding and waste do not become issues. If this is not done then the net effect will be a less livable environment. "The tradeoff is that planners and developers must learn how to create places where people will want to live, that combines a mix of uses and a sense of domestic tranquillity." They must understand and plan for the social costs and consequences of putting different uses and densities in a particular area by taking into account and managing unpleasant and bothersome issues like noises, shadows, smells, and garbage. Without creating a balance between design issues and the management of externalities then intensification may result in a series of negative impacts. This is the case in Downtown South, where residents are experiencing problems with noise resulting from the area's proximity to a variety of cultural and recreational establishments (e.g. clubs & bars).

5.1.2.5. Threat of Displacement

Intensification can lead to the displacement of lower income groups as was seen with the urban renewal effects in the Strathcona in the 1950s. Since intensification usually provides more housing for the medium income groups, lower income groups may find themselves at a disadvantage if intensification results in gentrification. Often these projects can make an area more desirable and as a consequence more expensive for lower income groups to live in.

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116 From interview with planners.
Therefore, policies need to be instituted and used in conjunction with intensification, to increase opportunities to provide either affordable housing or low income housing. There are a number of examples where this has been done in the City of Vancouver. In the Collingwood Village project the City increased the allowable density in exchange for housing that would sell below market rates. In Victory Square, a neighbourhood in Vancouver’s Central Area, the Mixed Income Housing policy was used to prevent the displacement of the existing lower income community. Without these policies, intensification on its own will not accommodate lower income groups by providing affordable housing.

5.1.2.6. Technical Tradeoffs

Although intensification can be used to provide opportunities for alternative forms of transportation, there are a number of tradeoffs that result. Currently, new street models that emphasize pedestrian movement over automobile movement, are being used in the larger intensification projects, like Concord Pacific. However, because the rest of the City is still struggling with the existing transportation infrastructure and system, this does not allow people to benefit from a more intensified form of living in the area of transportation alternatives. As a result, people living in intensified areas are still using their cars and will continue to do so until sufficient changes are made to the way the infrastructure system and transit operates. Until this occurs, the City will be under much pressure to deal with the overflow of traffic, and policies that limit parking in these areas will not be found to be a very effective deterrent to automobile travel.117

117 From interviews with members of planning organizations.
5.1.2.7. Provision of Amenities

The City attempts to compensate those communities that intensify by making up for any losses through the provision of additional amenities and services. Therefore, communities that allow intensification to occur can acquire a number of different amenities and services over and above what currently exists, to improve the quality of their neighbourhood. However, what is gained may be very different than what was once there. For instance, an area may acquire greenways, bikeways, closed streets, parkettes and access to the waterfront, all of which may not have existed before intensification occurred, as was the case in False Creek South. If intensification is to occur, then people must be willing to tradeoff what they once had for a different type of neighbourhood, with different characteristics and features.

5.1.2.8. The Cost of Not Intensifying

Another important tradeoff to consider is the cost of not intensifying. People will acknowledge the need for change because of demographics, affordability, housing pressures, and may prescribe to the popular ideas in planning circles but, nonetheless, they do not want to see a fundamental change in the character of their neighbourhood. For this reason, areas like Oakridge Langara and 8th and Sasamat are so opposed to intensification. Since it is hard to intensify without making changes, people resist intensification and as a result an area is unable to accommodate growth. Intensification can help to accommodate growth by offering different forms of housing to people who are willing to live in alternative dwelling units.
TABLE 9
SUMMARY OF THE TRADEOFFS

Summary of the Tradeoffs

1. The costs of intensification are associated with the details of how it is undertaken.
2. Intensification creates a different form of urban experience and quality of life which will either be perceived as a benefit or a loss depending on peoples values.
3. In order to accommodate peoples desire for space astonishingly high physical densities must be used.
4. If careful attention is not paid to the design and management of externalities then intensification may not lead to creation of more complete communities.
5. Intensification may displace lower incomes groups if it is not used in conjunction with other housing policies that promote affordable housing.
6. Until the City’s overall transportation infrastructure changes, people will continue to use the car even in areas experimenting with alternative transportation systems.
7. People must be willing to tradeoff what they once had for a different type of neighbourhood with different amenities and services then previously existed.
8. If communities do not intensify then the City will be unable to accommodate growth.

Source: Information gathered from interviews

5.1.3. Barriers to Intensification

Although the City of Vancouver has had some success with intensification, there are still many barriers that must be overcome for an area to really profit from intensification. Many of these barriers are caused from a number of different sources and combined they make intensification a difficult strategy to implement successfully. This in turn impedes the creation of more complete communities. The following are some of the most common barriers that the City of Vancouver has had to deal with when utilizing intensification as a policy goal.
5.1.3.1. Attitudes and Perceptions

Different people have different attitudes and perceptions with regard to intensified urban living that creates barriers for intensification. For instance, planners, developers, and the public all look at high density living differently and often these different views conflict with each other. Planners see high density living in terms of opportunities to provide choice, and create efficiencies and convenience in service delivery and everyday life. Their objective is to lessen the impacts of intensified urban living by providing those services and amenities that will be needed for a given level of density. Developers see higher density living differently. For them, density is a design issue because the density level will determine the form and orientation of the development in terms of high rises vs. low rise and narrow buildings vs. wider buildings. Both the density and the form of the development will determine the number and size of units and the construction method will have an overall impact on the feasibility of the project.

For the general public, higher density living is seen as a destruction of the low density, single family way of life. Since most people in Vancouver have lived in low density communities where there has been little change, the notion of living at higher densities becomes disconcerting. As a result, communities like Oakridge Langara and West Point Grey resist intensification if it means that changes will occur to the physical makeup of their area. People are not yet prepared to give up their way of life for a more intensified form of living because they have not accepted that there are any advantages to intensification. In effect, they do not see any benefits to intensification because they do not want the change. This public attitude is the greatest barrier to overcome if intensification is to be accepted.
5.1.3.2. Understanding an Area

Another barrier to intensification is failing to understand the issues, characteristics or patterns in a neighbourhood. It is important for the City to understand what is happening in an area, in order to discover how an area can be intensified. Often, there are some very valid land value issues, and market and cultural reasons why intensification is either not accepted or unsuccessful. For instance, if they go into a neighbourhood when many young families have just moved in, then this will not be the right time to start making changes because the demographics will not support intensification. In addition, it is also important to understand how density and mixed uses work on a community level because a sufficient number of people are needed to support a variety of uses; and a variety of uses are needed to serve a large number of people. Planners must become more familiar with this idea so that the benefits of intensification can used to create complete communities. Therefore, it is vital to make a very careful analysis of the neighbourhood and its patterns, and build on the events or pieces that are already there. If the patterns are studied first, then decisions can be made about the most appropriate form of intensification to use while remaining confident that it will blend into the existing community. If intensification is not planned to correspond with the political, the economic, the social, and the cultural realities of a neighbourhood then it will not lead to the creation of more complete communities.

5.1.3.3. Regulating Framework/Zoning

The framework for regulating planning developments can be a barrier to intensification. Specific plans, policies, official development plans, and zoning by-laws can be constraints to intensification. Currently, there are a number of parking and environmental policies which are barriers to intensification. For instance, parking policies often stipulate the number of parking
spaces that are needed per unit. These by-laws do not take into account the location or demographics of a particular area or that those people in higher density areas may not need as much parking space. Therefore, parking is being provided despite the fact that it may not be needed, which presents problems for developers because it is often difficult to meet parking regulations in intensification projects. In the case of environmental policies dealing with the clean up of contaminated sites, developers must go through a series of environmental hurdles to get a project approved. Usually, this is a an expensive and lengthy process which becomes a barrier to intensification. Consequently, there are many ideal locations for intensification in the City that are not being developed.

Zoning creates obstacles to intensification because it regulates density levels, land uses, and building forms in terms of height allowances, number of units and orientation. These issues become very critical in higher density developments in terms of making a project economically more feasible and livable. Often, when planning compact higher density developments it is easy to forget about the people who are going to live there while handling the concerns of the people in the existing and surrounding community. If zoning was more flexible with regard to height restrictions and unit caps more could be done with the design and form of a building to make a project more livable. For instance, height limits can dictate the shape of the project and the material used for construction since different heights require different construction methods. This has serious impacts on the economics of a project and it's quality of design and livability. If a

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118 From interviews with members of planning organizations.
119 Wood can only be used in buildings not exceeding 4 storeys. At higher levels either concrete or steel is used. However, in 5-12 storey buildings it becomes very costly and inefficient to built in concrete. The main reason for this is that low rise concrete buildings are often longer and narrower in form with a steeped back facade and as a result there is no common floor so it becomes very difficult to install elevators and very expensive to form.
height range was used instead of a height limit, then developers would have more flexibility in designing a project that could more adequately meet everyones needs.

If the same flexibility were applied to unit caps, then developers could design a project that was better able to move with the market and remain competitive. Currently, both Coal Harbour and the False Creek North projects have unit caps. This means that if smaller units are preferred over larger ones, a development would lose some of its buildable area if it converted the large units to smaller ones. If there was a limit to the buildable area as opposed to limiting the number of units that could be built, then developers could build the units they wanted and the size of the unit would not become an issue. But planners feel that more units may mean more people even though this may not necessarily be the case.\textsuperscript{120} If intensification is to be promoted and it is to create marketable developments, then it will be essential to review all zoning regulations. However, to make changes to the current zoning regulations means not only changing the entire system but also educating planners, politicians and communities about the problems it presents for intensification.

\textbf{5.1.3.4. City Standards}

City standards are not necessarily barriers to intensification but they do create problems to creating complete communities. The goal behind city standards is keep the level of amenities and services proportional to the population when an area is undergoing intensification or redevelopment. Usually these standards are designed to be predictable so that developers know what must be provided and communities will have some form of reassurance that a development

\textsuperscript{120}Five large units may house the same number of people as ten small units. Therefore more units may not mean that there will be more people.
will not cause any unforeseen problems. In certain circumstances, developers have problems meeting these standards so the City uses them to negotiate for others things that can be provided. But more often than not the provision of these standards do not reflect the needs of a particular community, making them irrelevant. As a result, planners find it frustrating to go into a community and apply these standards when they may in fact not be responsive to that community’s needs. In the Collingwood Village development, the City had to rework the standards to give the community the amenities they needed. If these standards are provided in an unresponsive way, then they could be a disbenefit to a community because funds would be collected for services that were not needed. Therefore, it is essential to not only collect funds for the provision of amenities, but also to provide the amenities that a community needs, instead of just providing or fulfilling a city requirement. “To provide those amenities and services that would lead to the creation a more complete community, a consensus approach to planning should be created. Although a consensus may not always be reached, it will assist in determining what is really needed in an area.”

5.1.3.5. Planning Process

There are different opinions relating to whether or not the planning process is a barrier to intensification. Developers argue that, with respect to rezonings, the planning process is too lengthy and places an additional financial strain on a project which makes it difficult for most developers to undertake such projects. However, planners and city staff will argue that a lengthy process is needed in order to create a development that will be more responsive to the people who will be living there. Since the City will have to maintain the project once it is completed,

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121 From interviews with city planners.
they feel that it is necessary to push developers into providing a quality product. They maintain that this process helps to get the public on side early so that they understand what is happening which creates less misunderstandings.

5.1.3.6. Economics

The economics of compact higher density developments can be both a barrier to intensification and to the creation of more complete communities. This means that the cost of land, market forces and the end selling price of a unit will determine what can be built on a particulate site and what amenities a developer can afford to provide. Therefore, it is important to understand the impact of these issues when planning for intensification. For example, the market may not allow either developers or the City to develop the types of intensification projects a community may want. Therefore, the changes the City may want to make through intensification may not be where the market leads. This occurred in the Oakridge Langara area where the high land values made it impossible to build the type of housing the City was encouraging. In addition, if the wrong kind of market is targeted through intensification, then this will not lead to more complete communities because it may not be accommodating a mix of incomes and households. For example, the wealthy may be moving back into the city but living in gated communities.

Another issues to be considered is land economics. If land values are too high, it becomes difficult to provide different housing forms and more difficult for developers to provide the amenities the City may require while still developing a project people can afford. Most City officials believe that higher density zonings result in higher land values, which gives the developer a higher return on their investment and will consequently demand more amenities. In
fact, these types of developments are often more expensive to build than conventional low density developments. Usually, they require the upgrading of existing infrastructure and services that were designed for lower densities. If an industrial site is to be redeveloped, the land must be cleaned and this is very expensive. If it is a large long term project, the profits are less then they would be in a smaller projects because developers must investment their money longer and provide more amenities. These amenities will often represent a large cost of the development and since they are continuously negotiated with the City, the developer is never able to properly determine the cost of the development. Therefore, an obstacle developers face is making the project proforma work while still making a profit and providing an affordable product. Often the only way to make an intensification project work is to either drive for a higher density or make less profit and if a municipality is uncooperative or too demanding, it may not be feasible for a developer to build.\textsuperscript{122}

\textbf{5.1.3.7. Development Cost Charges (DCC)}

Development Cost Charges present another barrier to intensification for both developers and planners. Since most DCCs are applied on a per unit basis, developers will often create less units or larger units to keep the costs down. This inadvertently affects the feasibility of developing intensification projects because, in order to keep the costs imposed by DCCs down, developers may not be able to create marketable units. However, if DCCs were charged on a square foot rather than a per unit basis then developers would have more flexibility in creating marketable projects. For planners, DCCs present other problems because even though the City is allowed to collect money from developers this money can only be used on certain things which may not

\textsuperscript{122} The information in this paragraph was gathered from interviews with City Developers.
reflect the needs of that community. It does not allow the City to develop land that they may already have, or improve or expand any existing communities. Although it allows the City to collect money from developers to purchase school sites, it will not allow the City to put the money into school buildings. There are many impediments and obstacles to the way DCCs can be used as they are geared toward suburban developments and do not reflect a city needs. This makes it more difficult for communities to benefit from intensification, in terms of creating more complete communities.

5.1.3.8. No Individual Benefits

For the individual, any direct social and economic benefits of intensification can not be immediately seen. The benefits that an area may experience, such as increased property values, proximity to services and improved transit, are usually realized at a later period. Since these benefits are beyond most peoples' experience it is hard for them to accept the idea of intensification. For example, the West End started experiencing intensification in the 1960s but it wasn't until other areas like False Creek South and Champlain Heights were intensified that people began to understand the benefits of these communities and the advantages that could be gained through intensification. In addition, how people view these benefits will depend on where they live. In East Vancouver, they may argue that higher density living could reduce commuter traffic, but this same issue would not be relevant in West Vancouver because there is no commuter traffic. Therefore, people see only the negative consequences of intensification and the positive impacts are not considered as they do not see how they will personally benefit. The only argument that people tend to relate to is in regard to housing options. They realize that as they age they may prefer an alternative form of housing to the single family home. However,
only the aging households in a single family neighbourhood will be found grappling with this problem which makes it very difficult to promote intensification in these areas.

5.1.3.9. Politics

Politics can also be a barrier to intensification. This will happen when the politicians are not politically ready to accept where an intensification policy will take the City or because they may have an exaggerated view of the level of public resistance. “Often it is a vocal minority who are preventing intensification from occurring because they do not want to see the neighbourhood they live in change and as a result they fight to prevent any change they feel will harm their investment. Depending on how forceful they are, politicians may give them what they want.”

5.1.3.10. Constraints in the Government system

Different municipal, regional and provincial policies on intensification are working against other, even when they have the same objective. This is occurring because the current government system is not set up, or in a position, to allow communities to intensify in a way that would not cause any negatives impacts. Therefore, communities that do intensify are not necessarily assured that they will gain any positive benefits. This is especially true in respect to transit and school services. For example, one of the benefits of intensification is to provide transportation alternatives and appropriate transit service to accommodate the growing population. However, BC Transit is not set up to increase services based on density levels. “Their mandate is to first service new communities and developments, usually in the suburbs, with peak hour transit service. Although they are encouraging municipalities to integrate land use with transit planning,

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123 From interviews with city planners.
they are still continuing to service areas that really do not support transit and therefore do not really deserve transit.” As a result, the City of Vancouver has not received an increase in the level of transit service and in some areas the level of transit service has even decreased despite the fact they are accommodating growth through intensification. The City is intensifying, but it is not being compensated with increased transit service, because BC Transit has not designed their service around density levels and as a result, car travel increases and traffic congestion on city streets continues to worsen.

The same situation is occurring with schools in the City. Although areas are intensifying and the school population is increasing, few schools are being built or expanded. Instead, resources are being spent on building new schools in suburban communities while existing schools in intensified areas must handle the increased demand for space with portables. “The argument that is used to justify this strategy is that the demand for space is the same in both areas, so the priority will go to those areas that do not have schools. Only when an existing school has been crowded for over three years will the provincial government provide funding for further construction or expansion.” Added to this problem is the change in school standards in regard to classroom size. In recent years, the classroom size has been reduced, so now schools can no longer house the same amount of students that they once did 10 years ago. Any increases in school population over the current standards means that more space is required even though that same population could have been housed before changes were made to the school standards.

124 From interview with members of planning organizations.  
125 From interviews with members of planning organizations.
If intensification is to contribute to the regional good and the good of future generations, then it will be essential to coordinate city and other government policies so that the benefits of intensification can be achieved in the communities that are intensifying. Since intensification is to provide saving on infrastructure then communities should be benefiting by the results rather than inconvenienced. Currently, there is little reward for intensifying existing areas, and all the funding that is being saved is not being used to improve these areas but is instead being used to subsidize suburban living.\textsuperscript{126} This provides little incentive for communities to intensify especially when there can be no guarantee that they will not be inconvenienced.

\begin{table}
\centering
\caption{Summary of the Barriers}
\begin{tabular}{l}
1. Conflicting attitudes and perceptions towards density can act against intensification. \\
2. Failure to understand the patterns and characteristics of an area will lead to an unsuccessful intensification initiative. \\
3. City plans, policies, and zoning by-laws must to designed to allow for more flexibility when dealing with intensification. \\
4. City standards must reflect the needs of a community if intensification is to provide any benefits back to the community. \\
5. Depending on ones interests the planning process may be considered a barrier. \\
6. If the economics of intensification projects are not properly understood then the benefits of high density living may be unachievable. \\
7. Since the benefits of intensification can not always be immediately perceived it is hard for people to accept the idea of high density living. \\
8. The way in which DCCs are applied and administered create barriers to intensification. \\
9. Political support is needed if intensification is to be used to create more complete communities. \\
10. The current government system is not set up or in a position to allow areas to intensify in a way that would not have result in any negative impacts.
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

Source: Information gathered from interviews

\textsuperscript{126} From interviews with city planners.
5.2. WHAT CAN BE LEARNED?

In order to create more complete communities, strategies should be developed to realize the benefits of intensification. The City of Vancouver's experience with intensification shows that there are a number of ways to achieve the benefits of intensification which can lead to more complete communities. Intensification, on its own, does not create complete communities, but when combined with other strategies and policies, a number of benefits can be realized. Based on the research findings the following are a list possible strategies that could be used to achieve the benefits of intensification in order to create more complete communities:

- Create good quality intensification projects by developing policies and guidelines to shape the quality of intensified urban spaces. Since people in compact higher density developments tend to spend most of their time in semi-public and public spaces, these areas become crucial to the success of an intensification project because they will effect the overall livability of an area. Therefore, policies must be designed to ensure that these areas are designed properly to achieve the maximum benefits of high density living. If a poor scheme is provided, people will not buy into, or value, the project.

- Take a comprehensive approach when planning for density, in which all the different issues and functions of an area are considered. Higher density living works when an intensification project is made to appeal to everyone and relates to the surrounding neighborhood. Therefore, it is essential to identify and understand all the issues concerning intensification so that a balance can be created between what exists and what can exist.
- Intensification should be used to accommodate a community’s wants and needs. This helps to create more complete communities and makes the idea of intensification more readily acceptable if people can identify the benefits. Therefore, common sense should be used in determining what an area needs in terms of the provision of city standards. Accommodating all the standard requirements may make it more difficult for developers to build intensification projects and may not really reflect a community’s needs.

- There must be a good transportation policy that creates ways for accommodating alternatives to the automobile, to ensure that intensification will not lead to added traffic congestion. This policy must allow for bike paths, walking areas, transit, and must deal with issues like parking and car storage.

- In order to create more complete communities, intensification should provide and respond to market, non-market and semi-market forces, and accommodate social diversity, by providing a choice of housing for a variety of different households. Therefore, policies should be created to promote housing for a variety of households, with design guidelines to ensure that these units meet the needs of different residents.

- Ensure that the services for intensification are provided. This involves establishing a commitment to support any intensification initiatives from other organizations and departments. To do this it will be essential to form partnerships with organizations like BC Transit, the Ministry of Education and other provincial agencies to provide the required services.
• Develop a rezoning process which provides timely service. The current time frame for rezonings are so long that some developers may not pursue projects that may involve rezoning.

• Develop flexible zoning that allows for diversity in housing types and areas of mixed use. Currently, the amount of zoned land to accommodate higher densities and mixed uses is insufficient. As a result, when any form of intensification is proposed a rezoning is required. Since rezonings are often lengthy processes that require a series of negotiations between parties, most developers are unwilling to undergo the process, and consequently, little intensification can occur.

• City officials and planners need to have a better understanding of the economic and market factors that effect higher density developments and mixed use communities. They need to take a more flexible and realistic approach to accommodating intensification and be more responsive to a developer’s concern. This is especially the case with respect to unit caps, long term projects, construction, environmental clean up and the development of commercial nodes. Any amendments that can be made to make the process more flexible helps to reduce costs which reduces the end selling price and increases the amount of amenities that can be provided.

• To achieve the benefits of intensification, planning for higher densities should be done through a community process so that a neighbourhood can understand the issues and decide how they want to accommodate intensification. In this way specific concerns can be dealt
with and solutions and tradeoffs can be established. In cases where there is a strong vocal minority, new and innovative processes and stronger political will may have to be considered.

- Establish a public benefits strategy as an award system for those areas that intensify. Such a strategy helps to identify what intensification can provide and creates a system in which funds can be collected to provide the amenities and services a community needs. This minimizes the negative effects of intensification because contributions and levies can be collected and used to improve a community.

- Create realistic policies where only what can be delivered is promised. This would entail coordinating local municipal policies, so that policies do not counteract each other, by working with other departments and integrating service delivery.

5.3. Summary

Perhaps the essential lesson from all this is that planners and policy makers should not have extravagant expectations of what intensification can accomplish, but instead, be ready to take small steps and win small battles. The key is to understand what benefits intensification can provide in the creation of more complete communities and what benefits they can realistically promise the public. However, in order for intensification to occur, the City must be prepared to intervene in the culture and attitude people have towards high density living. They must learn how to make higher density living “fashionable.” One way to do this it to show people an
example of a successful intensification project in their neighbourhood. When people can see
that intensification will not cause problems, then they can more readily accept change. However,
this is not easy to do because people will generally resist the first rezoning, but when it does
occur these examples can be used to encourage and facilitate other changes.
6.0. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The City of Vancouver is advocating intensification as a means for creating more complete communities, while dealing with the current unsustainable pattern of growth. The challenge associated with such a strategy is the ability to gain public acceptance when there is little or no empirical evidence documenting successful intensification initiatives. Through the use of interviews and a case study comprised of an analysis of some intensification policies and initiatives, this thesis has attempted to document the City of Vancouver’s experience with this strategy. The following is an analysis of the research findings documenting what the City has been able to achieve through intensification, the lessons they have learned, and the direction this strategy should take for future success.

6.1. Vancouver’s Achievements

To date, the City has achieved a number of benefits from using intensification to create more complete communities. A variety of mixed density neighbourhoods that provide the types of housing and services that lead to more complete communities can be found throughout the City of Vancouver. Success has mainly occurred when intensification was used to densify existing multi-family areas or in the redevelopment of industrial lands. When it was applied to existing single family neighbourhoods it was often met with much public opposition despite the many examples of successful higher density communities in the City. This failure to intensify is a
result, in part, of people's resistance to change and the conflicting views of what intensification can or can not accomplish.

6.2. Lessons Learned

Despite the failures the City has encountered with certain intensification initiatives, much can be learned from Vancouver's overall experience with this strategy. First, in order for intensification to occur, a number of conditions should exist which include:

1. Communities that are willing to accept higher densities.
2. Planners and politicians that are willing to approve intensification strategies.
3. Developers that are willing to take on the costs and risks.
4. Banks or other financial institutions that are willing to finance this type of development.
5. A knowledgeable design profession and an experienced labour force that know how to build good quality intensification projects.
6. A market willing to buy into the type of product intensification produces.
7. A government system that is set up to allow communities to benefit from intensification.
8. Partnerships between different organizations and groups to ensure that different intensification polices work with each other and do not conflict.

Secondly, Vancouver's experience with this strategy shows that intensification is not simply about increasing densities but also about how an area can benefit by being intensified in order to create more complete communities. Therefore, once the above conditions are in place a number of strategies should be developed so that intensification leads to the creation of more complete
communities. These strategies should be designed so that intensification is responsive to a community's needs and provides identifiable benefits. To do this, it is imperative to understand and analyse both the existing amenities and patterns of a neighbourhood in order to discover how intensification can be applied while still accommodating the needs of a community. This includes not only understanding the more traditional planning parameters like physical land use and transportation, but also the political, social, economic, and cultural realities of a place. When intensification is done sensitively it becomes easier to establish the tradeoffs and overcome the barriers that currently exist so that intensification can lead to the creation of more complete communities.

Finally, Vancouver's experience with this strategy shows that the best way to understand what a community needs and what tradeoffs they are willing to make for increased density is through a political process that involves a consensus approach to planning and public discussion. By having people involved in deciding what the tradeoffs to higher densities will be, it allows intensification to become more readily accepted because they can better understand what can happen in their area and how their community can benefit from the impacts of intensification. The goal of such an approach is to achieve a net benefit and even though a consensus may not always be reached, it still helps to establish what an area needs. Both public involvement and establishing tradeoffs are part of the right approach when using intensification to create complete communities. A top down approach will make intensification harder to accept and does little to balance the impacts if people are not prepared to accept it. Therefore, the process of trying to identify the issues, of understanding the patterns, of trading information and problem solving
with all the interested parties at the table will provide better plans and solutions and the end product will tend to work because it is a worked out solution.

6.3. Future Directions

The future of further intensification initiatives in Vancouver lies in the City’s ability to make intensified urban living fashionable. To do this it will be essential to establish some common understanding of its limits and benefits by learning from past experiences and by building on the successful intensification initiatives that have occurred in the City. Then the successful examples of intensification can be used to educate the public on the benefits of intensified urban living and to encourage other communities to accept this strategy. Once people realize that they can live with higher densities and that it is not necessarily disruptive to their current life style, they will be more willing to accept it as an alternative form of living.

If intensification is to be successful in the future it will be essential to make this strategy work in existing single family areas. The draw back is that incremental intensification (infill housing and multiple conversion of homes), a strategy commonly used in these areas, has been so successful in areas where it has been implemented that people can not distinguish it from the rest of the community. As a result, people have difficulty recognizing that intensification could work in their neighbourhoods. However, if the City is to accommodate growth it must continue to improve this strategy, and only by allowing change can options and choices be created. For this to occur, further indepth research will be needed to better understand how communities can benefit from intensification. This will be especially true in regard to those intensification mega
projects that are currently underway. With a more detailed analysis on a project by project basis a better understanding can be gained as to why certain initiatives are more successful then others in creating complete communities.

6.4. Summary

It is important to note that although these findings are specific to the City of Vancouver, especially in terms of how the City has applied intensification and what they have achieved, the underlying principles governing the success of these initiatives could be used by other urban areas. For example, although each City may intensify differently (i.e. conversions vs. infill vs. redevelopment), the success or failure of those initiatives will still be affected by the conditions in which they are applied, the process used to gain public acceptance, and the type of strategies that are used to ensure that intensification is designed to be responsive to a communities needs. By understanding the lessons learned from the City of Vancouver experience with intensification, others may be able to use similar strategies to ensure that intensification is used to create more complete communities.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


False Creek Development Impacts. Vancouver: City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1989.


Bringing CityPlan to Neighbourhoods. Vancouver: City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1996.


Kobayakawa, Martin S., Transit Planner, BC Transit, interview by author, June 20, 1996, Vancouver.


APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW DOCUMENTATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Contact with perspective interviewees was initially made by faxing an Interview Information Package. A follow-up telephone call was then made to each potential interviewee providing an opportunity to discuss the project and interview, and once the agreement to participate was granted, an interview was arranged.

The Interview Information Package contained the following:

1. An Introductory Letter describing the researcher and project (A sample introductory letter is provided on pg. 110)

2. A Consent to Participate form outlining interview expectations and describing how the information was to be used. This provided a forum for discussion of any concerns surrounding data collection or use. People who agreed to be interviewed signed and returned the form. For the purposes of this thesis and to conform to the wishes of those interviewed, comments made by individuals were not to be quoted or directly attributed to the interviewees. (A sample is provided on pg.111)

3. A list of the Interview Questions was provided to give a more detailed description of what the interview was to be and in what direction it was to go. This helped prepare the interviewee so that the interview was able to more along quickly (A sample is provided on pg. 112)

Interviews were of approximately an hour’s duration in most cases and were conducted during the months of May and June. Except for one interview conducted over the phone, all others were completed in person. The interviews were tape recorded and handwritten notes were taken to capture key elements of responses, and to identify the location of particular responses on the tape recording. A list of those people approached and interviewed is provided on pg. 113.

The Interview Questions were to allow interviewees to start with a general discussion of intensification. Subsequent questions were arranged to move from the general to the specific and from open-ended to closed. To insure that all the issues were completely covered there was a slight repetition in the questions. This gave the interviewees more then one opportunity to address a particular subject area that they may have failed or forgotten to do previously.

It is important to note that not all the questions could be addressed by each individual interviewee. Therefore interviewees were asked only those questions that they were best suited to answer. This means that the developers interviewed were not asked all the questions that were presented to the planners and vice versa. (See pg.112)
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I, ________________________________,

agree to participate in the research being carried out by Luisa Galli, a Graduate Student, with the School of Community and Regional Planning, University of British Columbia, on the benefits and tradeoffs of intensification.

I understand that interviews may be tape-recorded.

I understand that the contents of the interview as well as documents and other material provided are to form the research data, and that they may be used in the thesis.

I understand that comments made by me will not be quoted or directly attributed to me.

Signature ________________________________

Date ________________________________
EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

GENERAL ISSUES & CHALLENGES

1. What do you perceive are the benefits of intensification? (social, economic, environmental - affordable housing, preserves farmland, etc.)

2. What do you perceive are the costs/tradeoffs of intensification? What is a community gaining or losing?

3. What are the barriers to the implementation of intensification or intensification projects? (e.g. policies, jurisdictions, development standards)

METHODS AND APPLICATIONS:

4. What do you feel the city/region has or has not been able to achieve in terms of intensification? Why? (e.g. success and failure of projects)

5. What policies or programs/projects promote intensification? Why are they needed?

6. What have you learned in regard to the success and failures of different intensification initiatives?

7. How do you balance the consequences/impacts of intensification projects? Is there a right way and a wrong way to intensify?

SPECIFICS:

8. What policies or mechanisms need to be in place to maximize the benefits of intensification and minimize the negative effects?

9. How are projects approved and what zoning changes occur, if at all?

10. Are higher density compact projects more costly to develop than conventional forms of developments? (e.g. single family subdivision)

Developers were not asked question 5, 6, and 7. However in addition to the questions already listed they were also asked the following:

11. How do you do your analysis of the benefits and costs for intensified developments in terms of your proforma?
APPENDIX B
LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Larry Beasley
Associate Director, Central Area Planning
City of Vancouver Planning Department

Ann McAfee
Associate Director, City Plan
City of Vancouver Planning Department

Rob Booth
Special Project Assistant
Concord Pacific Development Corp.

Sophie Megalos
Municipal Liaison Officer
Urban Development Institute

Patrick Condon
Director, Department of Landscape Architecture
University of British Columbia

Sherry Plewes
Projects and Community Liaison Engineer
City Of Vancouver Engineering Dept.

Jill Davidson
Housing Department
City Of Vancouver

Ralph Perkins
Planner, Strategic Planning
Greater Vancouver Regional District

Jackie Forbes Roberts
Associate Director, Community Planning
City of Vancouver Planning Department

David Podmore
President and CEO
Greystone Properties Ltd.

Jeff Herold
Director, Planning and Development
Marathon Realty Company

Gordon Price
City Councillor
City Of Vancouver

Ronda Howard
Senior Planner, City Plan
City of Vancouver Planning Department

Ted Sebastian
Junior Planner
City of Vancouver Planning Department

Hugh Kellas
Admin. Policy Develop., Strategic Planning
Greater Vancouver Regional District

Ian Smith
Senior Planner, Central Area Planning
City of Vancouver Planning Department

Stanley Kwok
President
Stanley Kwok Consultants Inc.

Rob Whitlock
Planner, Land Use & Development
City of Vancouver Planning Department

J. Eric Martin
Vice President Development
Bosa Development Corp.
OTHERS CONTACTED BUT UNABLE TO PARTICIPATE

Michael Audain  
President  
Polygon

Chris Demarco  
Policy Planner  
City of Vancouver Planning Department

Trish French  
Senior Planner, Community Planning  
City Of Vancouver Planning Department

Michael Geller  
President  
Geller & Associates

Blair Kagkul  
Public Relations Officer  
Concord Pacific Development Corp.

Phil Mondor  
City Of Vancouver Planning Department

Paul Rosenau  
President  
Ekistics
APPENDIX C

VANCOUVER LOCAL AREAS

Figure 1 Local Area Boundaries

Figure 2 G.V.R.D. Boundary