

FROM "CONTESTED SPACE" TO "SHARED PLACE": OPTIONS FOR PUBLIC REALM  
ENHANCEMENT IN VANCOUVER'S DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE

by

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## ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this thesis is to examine the opportunities and constraints for transforming “contested” public space into “shared” place in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. This examination is informed by: a literature review of public space theory; a review of City of Vancouver policies pertaining to public space conditions in the Downtown Eastside; a case study of community-driven public realm initiatives in Pioneer Square in Seattle, Washington; personal experience both working in, and observing conditions in the Downtown Eastside, and a review of current initiatives in the area that are working towards improving the public realm in the area while building consensus between opposing community groups.

This research indicates that public spaces play an important role in the everyday lives of city dwellers, particularly for those who, due to homelessness and poverty, rely on public space for recreation and socialization, and in many cases, to live. However, as the central city is becoming an increasingly attractive place to live for middle and upper income households, conflicts can ensue over who has the “right” to use the public realm. What often occurs is the exclusion of the poor and marginalized segment of the population to “make way” for amenities that serve higher income residents and visitors.

Conditions in the Downtown Eastside have deteriorated, yet at the same time, development both within and around the area has created distrust and hostility between different community groups. However, recent initiatives are working to make improvements while building trust between different, often hostile community groups. Ideally, planning for the public realm should have a significant amount of community involvement and control. The case study of Pioneer Square indicates that this is possible, although a sufficient amount of trust and consensus is needed from the outset. While the Downtown Eastside possesses many attributes which provide opportunities for public realm improvements, planners from outside the community should play a significant role in any initiatives, due to the lack of consensus and tension between community interests.

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### 1 INTRODUCTION

The nature of the relationship between socio-economic, political and cultural forces and the social and physical form of the city has long been a topic of discussion for planning and design theorists and social scientists. This discussion often takes place in the context of the process of gentrification, and the effects that this process has on the most marginalized individuals in a particular geographic area (often the inner city); the loss of affordable housing is often the central issue in this debate. This is true particularly in the policy arena, whereby planners working in the public sector typically address these impacts in their housing policies.

What is often overlooked, however, is an examination of how public spaces are affected by these forces, and whether or not it is possible for “contested” space to become public space “shared” by a broad range of constituencies. Often, the public realm is the “living room” of the city’s poor, due to either homelessness or substandard housing (lack of amenities in the home), which may preclude spending time in the private realm of the home. Moreover, the influx of higher-income individuals and the changes to the structure and form of the particular neighbourhood (e.g. as seen in “beautification” strategies) that may coincide with their arrival, may have negative impacts on the access to public space by the poor, the homeless, and the mentally ill. This is not to say that the poor do not appreciate “beauty” in their surroundings, but may be uneasy about any exclusivity that could possibly arise from an attempt to improve the aesthetics of their community.

Central to this discussion is the notion of *who* is the “public”, and how this is defined in the conflict between different constituencies over the right to use the space, and activity occurring within that space. Often, this comes down to a question of legitimacy, in terms of the legitimacy of the users and the legitimacy of the activity occurring there. *Who* is defining legitimacy is another important element--is it the local policy makers, the private sector (e.g. the business community), higher-income property owners, or the low-income community?<sup>1</sup> This also elicits

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis does not make the assumption that the “low-income community” is a homogenous entity, whereby all



the question of by what processes these definitions of legitimacy have come to be established. It can be argued that perceptions of the “other” are shaped by social constructions, whether derived from a particular value system, everyday experiences viewed through the lens of this value system, or the media.

### 1.1 THE VANCOUVER CONTEXT

In the Vancouver context, these issues of space-related conflict, legitimacy, and contestation, are most acute in the Downtown Eastside. The Downtown Eastside is the “historic heart” of Vancouver, and was at one time a major commercial district in the city, attracting people from throughout Vancouver and the region. Older single adults, often seasonal workers in the resource sector, lived in residential units above ground-level retail, or in hotels. These residents were subsequently joined by poor immigrants and urban First Nations people. Over time, the Downtown Eastside has accommodated a substantial number of people with problems beyond poverty, including mental illness, addiction to drugs or alcohol, sexual or physical abuse, or a combination of these. The area also contains the highest number of liquor establishments and social services in Vancouver (City of Vancouver, July 17<sup>th</sup> 1998: 2). One point of view is that the “concentration” of social services in the Downtown Eastside is an indication of a high need for these services in the area, while another perspective is that these services are purposefully concentrated in the area by City policy makers in order to maintain the community as Vancouver’s “ghetto” for the poor and indigent.

While the Downtown Eastside has long been an area with a high concentration of individuals suffering from poverty and problems of addiction and mental illness, it has also benefited from a strong sense of community identity and pride, ownership and advocacy. Due to the poverty that

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individuals in the group share the same opinion on certain issues, or have the same experiences in their daily lives. On the contrary, like any community, there are varying points of view on the issues that the community is facing, with some individuals have much stronger feelings and opinions than others. The same can be said for higher-income individuals moving into these inner city neighbourhoods.

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is experienced by many in the area, the community has provided critical support systems and services for its residents. Residents “looked out” for one another, and visitors from outside the community generally felt safe on the street (ibid.). While these formal and informal support networks still exist to an extent, several factors have marked a change in the nature of the public spaces in the area, and have affected the quality of life for many of the area’s existing residents, new residents, and merchants:

- A younger, more aggressive crowd of people have “taken over” the streets;
- Heroin, the traditional street drug of choice, has been replaced by cocaine, which elicits much more hyperactive behaviour and requires more frequent “fixes” (which has an influence on the level of property crime);
- A street culture which supports the open use of drugs and other “anti-social” behaviours;
- The replacement of major retailers such as Woodward and Fields, which attracted shoppers from both within and outside the area, with 24-hour convenience stores, pawn shops and cafes which are suspected to support the drug trade, resulting in a loss of social diversity in the area (ibid.).

Many residents and merchants both within and outside the area see this situation in the Downtown Eastside as chronic, requiring immediate action on the part of policy-makers at the local, provincial, and federal levels. The problem is confounded by conflicts and strong oppositional positions within the community regarding the most appropriate form of action to take. Within the low-income community, many advocates claim that these problems stem from the larger, more systemic cycle of poverty that has claimed many of the area’s residents, and the absence of affordable housing and services directed at low-income people, particularly those with substance addiction and/or mental illness. Thus, an environment is created whereby people must engage in activities such as open substance abuse and prostitution, that are considered to be anti-social and destructive by the mainstream population. As many of the residents in the Downtown Eastside suffer from problems in addition to poverty, such as mental illness and substance abuse, and are thus the most marginalized people in the city, this community is deemed by them to be

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the only neighbourhood that they can truly call their own. New market housing and development pressures within and surrounding the area are generally viewed as a threat to their claim on the community.

Conversely, many property owners within the area, particularly Gastown, view the problem as stemming from too much affordable housing and low-income oriented services within the area. Their rationale is that the concentration of housing and services directed at low-income people only serves to compound the existing problems within the neighbourhood. According to this viewpoint, instead of centralizing poor people and their problems in the Downtown Eastside, and potentially attracting more, low-income housing and services should be spread out throughout the city and region. This opinion holds that encouraging more middle and higher income housing and services (retail, for example), is the key to revitalizing this area.

In addition, many of the area's merchants, most notably in Chinatown and Gastown, see policing and security as a primary issue. Merchants from both of these sub-areas have hired private security in recent years to "police" the streets and protect their businesses and customers from crime. The street-level conditions in the Downtown Eastside are seen as an anathema to business, as both Gastown and Chinatown are major tourist destinations in Vancouver. This perspective sees the solution to improving conditions in the public realm in increasing the number of police patrolling the area, and aggressively pursuing drug dealers and street-level crime.

From the perspective of public space usage, much of the conflict between the varying constituencies comes down to laying a claim on the neighbourhood, and establishing the legitimacy of those who use the public realm. Three fundamental questions are invoked in this regard: Who has the right to use the streets, parks, and sidewalks? What do they look like? What activities are they engaging in?

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Adding to the complexity of this problem in the Downtown Eastside, is that issues and problems are “framed” quite differently by different constituencies, and there is not one evident or agreed upon solution. Some observers have remarked that depending on how one sees the situation, there is truth to all of these varying points of view. From the standpoint of the planner, the crux of the matter is trying to locate some “common ground”, and from a policy perspective, attempting to determine what the most important issues are and pursuing an incrementalist solution, knowing that not everyone will be satisfied. Considering that over the past twenty years, the problems and issues in the Downtown Eastside community have been a source of debate and discussion, both from within the community and City Hall, some may view this as an elusive task.

### 1.2 PURPOSE

The main purpose of this thesis is to examine the opportunities and constraints for transforming contested space into shared public space generally, and within the Downtown Eastside specifically in order to present a model that can provide direction for interventions that are community-driven and supported. This is an important area for examination for several reasons.

**Lifestyle:** The central city is becoming more and more popular for housing middle and higher income individuals. This is driven by several factors: the proximity to the central business district, cultural amenities, the waterfront or other urban parks, and the cultural diversity and unique spatial/built form of the central city, appealing to many who prefer this to the homogeneity of the suburbs (Ley 1996).

**Economic:** Property owners and developers/land speculators may see much higher economic returns on property that caters to higher-income individuals (either in housing, retail, or office space). In tandem with the upgrading of buildings and their uses, often comes the upgrading or “beautification” of the public realm in order to maintain or increase property values. As mentioned in the introduction, this may render these public spaces inaccessible to lower-income

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and other marginalized individuals, resulting in conflict.

**Policy:** As part of a larger trend, both the City of Vancouver and the Greater Vancouver Regional District have put policies into place that encourage residential development in or near the core of the city and other regional centres. While intended to foster compact communities and minimize pressure on the region's farmland, these policies may result in the displacement of lower-income people who live in or near the city centre. The Downtown Eastside is feeling this pressure due to its proximity to the central business district, the waterfront, Chinatown and Gastown. Moreover, its stock of historic buildings has the potential to be converted to middle and higher-end condominiums or retail service uses (City of Vancouver, December 1991; Greater Vancouver Regional District, January 1996).

**Equity:** This is sprung from the notion that the poor and marginalized in any society should have equal access to quality public spaces, and the same right to share the amenities that those spaces offer as the majority of urban residents.

This is also an important issue to explore in terms of the role that planners working in the public sector play. In serving the public, planners must try to address the interests of many different constituencies simultaneously: the business community and property owners who are concerned with the economic health of the neighbourhood, as well as the social and environmental health of the neighbourhood in terms of resident tenure, aesthetically pleasing public spaces that are safe and clean; heritage advocates whose primary concern is the maintenance and preservation of the neighbourhood's historic buildings and streetscapes; the low-income community that may also be concerned with economic health of the area, as well as the environmental quality of the neighbourhood's public spaces, but may be more concerned with the provision of social services and affordable housing, and non-discriminatory access to public spaces.

Within these groups there is a lack of consensus about what the most pressing needs of the

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community are. For example, there are many different constituencies within the low-income population in the Downtown Eastside. Drug users may be primarily concerned with access to safe “fixing” sites and the decriminalization of drug use by addicts; women’s groups may be interested foremost in safe places for poor women and their children, and support services for women who are street-involved; the concerns of housing advocates lie primarily in maintaining or increasing the stock of affordable housing. This underscores the difficulty that planners face in the attempt to reach community consensus on the most pressing needs of the community and where limited financial resources should be concentrated.

Within the realm of the planner’s role, comes the question of what capacity they play. In a multi-constituency, and often hostile, situation like the Downtown Eastside, are planners destined to fill the role of facilitator or mediator, attempting to bring the varying interests to a consensus about what direction their community should be going in? Or is the potential there for planners to play a much more proactive role in the process?

This thesis acknowledges that the causes of the conflict over public space in the Downtown Eastside are rooted in larger systemic issues such as the cycle of poverty, drug addiction, and the lack of quality, affordable housing and detox services in the neighbourhood, and that these issues cannot be adequately addressed by the local government and community alone. Rather, this thesis is concerned with exploring small interventions that can be undertaken at the local level with the aim of facilitating public spaces that can be enjoyed by everyone in the community.

### 1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The central question in this thesis research is: What are the opportunities and constraints for transforming contested space in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside into shared public places? This question is informed principally by the case study of Pioneer Square in Seattle, Washington, and a local case study of Carrall Street and the CPR right-of-way in the Downtown Eastside.

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In addition, there are a number of important, yet largely contextual questions that will be addressed and discussed. These contextual questions range from the general nature of conflicts in urban public space to more specific questions pertaining to the variables that influence the conditions in the Downtown Eastside.

These questions are: What is contested space? How is the legitimacy of different user groups and activities typically defined in contested space? Who are the various constituencies involved in the conflict over public spaces in the Downtown Eastside? What has the City of Vancouver and the community done historically to address these issues in the Downtown Eastside? What socio-economic, cultural, and physical changes has the Downtown Eastside experienced that has exacerbated the problem of access to public space?

### 1.4 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The research framework for this thesis is informed by the notion of increasing pluralism due to the evolution of the inner city from a locale that was traditionally comprised of the marginalized and poor segment of urban society, into a much more socio-economically heterogeneous area, and the conflicts that can ensue due to this evolution. Included in this are the social dimensions to economic change both globally, nationally and locally that often result in the increased marginalization of the poor and working classes, and the increased competition for much coveted downtown space in rapidly growing cities.

Harvey's (1996) discussion of "social justice" underscores this issue. He contends that the difficulty in defining what exactly "social justice" is is reflected in ongoing arguments over "universal" versus "relative" truths (330). However, he maintains that while we cannot avoid "universality", "...[a]ll propositions for social action (or conceptions of social justice) must be critically evaluated in terms of the situatedness or positionality of the argument and the arguer..." (363). In terms of "social justice" in the city, the existence of "urban apartheid" in major cities worldwide (in terms of exclusionary spatial practices of the poor and marginalized by the

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“authorities” as well as higher-income property owner and community associations) have led Harvey to assert that “...[s]ocial justice within the urban form is proving, evidently, as elusive as ever, even for those who still have the temerity to be concerned about it...” (410).

A further reference point for this thesis is Harvey’s contention that “urbanists”, that is, planners, architects and urban designers must come to terms with how to plan for future urban spatial “layers” (Harvey refers to the city as a “palimpsest”) “...in ways that match future wants and needs without doing too much violence to all that has gone before...” (417). As the city is the locale of collective memories, political identities, and symbolic meanings for its residents, policy makers and designers must be sensitive in planning initiatives that incorporate and respect what is there to begin with. This can be a problem for planners as there is a “...tricky problem of creating a politics of heterogeneity and a domain of publicness that stretches across the diverse spatio-temporalities of contemporary urbanized living...” (426).

Therefore, a significant basis of this thesis, in terms of the role of planners, follows from Harvey’s opinion that “...[t]he transformation of socio-ecological relations in urban settings has to be a continuous process of socio-environmental change...this means a long urban-based revolution that should have the exploration and construction of alternative social processes and spatial forms as its long-term goal albeit through short-term and often place-based movements and actions...”(438). This notion recognizes the importance of both the “professional” and the “community”, working in tandem with one another, to enact positive initiatives in the public spaces of the Downtown Eastside.

### 1.4.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Given the nature of the problem and the objectives of this thesis, a multifaceted research methodology was utilized. This approach was taken for several reasons: to obtain a theoretical understanding of the broader problem of defining contested space, and the factors which contribute to its expression; to search for a model that may provide clues into resolving the



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conflict over contested space; and to examine opportunities and constraints for a community-supported, inclusive, public realm improvement project in the Downtown Eastside.

To begin, a literature review was carried out in order to satisfy the theoretical component of this thesis. Next, in determining what socio-economic, cultural and physical changes the Downtown Eastside is experiencing that have exacerbated the conflict over public space, and what initiatives the City and/or local community have undertaken historically to address this issue in the Downtown Eastside, an examination and analysis of past and present City of Vancouver policy documents and other literature was undertaken.

This is followed by an examination of a case study of Pioneer Square in Seattle, Washington that may provide some clues into the sharing of public space between constituencies in conflict. As a city, Seattle was chosen as a case study because it has several shared characteristics with Vancouver. For example, it is of similar size, similar history, and as a West Coast port city with relatively mild weather year-round, has attracted individuals and families desiring a certain “quality of life”, as well as a relatively substantial transient population.

Pioneer Square was chosen as a specific site to study in Seattle, because it shares several characteristics with Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. For example, it is an inner city area that is the oldest neighbourhood in Seattle; it has traditionally been the community for Seattle’s low-income population; it has suffered from problems of crime; public drug dealing and use; public intoxication; “anti-social” behaviour; and commercial disinvestment; and it is also experiencing the movement of higher-income individuals families and commercial uses that are attracted to the area’s historic character and buildings and central location. Yet, for all the similarities with the Downtown Eastside, Pioneer Square has undertaken initiatives to improve the conditions in its public realm while maintaining a diverse, and involved community. The rationale for this method of inquiry is the notion that instead of “reinventing the wheel”, there are often precedents to look to when seeking out solutions to local problems.

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As an examination of initiatives pertaining to Carrall Street and the CPR right-of-way in the Downtown Eastside will serve as a local case study, several methods will be employed in order to fully examine the opportunities and constraints for facilitating public spaces that serve all constituencies. First hand observation was carried out, in order to gain an understanding of the conditions in the public spaces of the Downtown Eastside, as well as to ascertain specific public spaces in the area that are both the focus of conflict and offer opportunities for sharing the space.

Working as both an intern and a part-time planning assistant with the City of Vancouver's Central Area Planning Division in the Summer and Fall of 1998 provided the City's perspective regarding the conditions in the Downtown Eastside, and the City's ideas for action. Much of this work involved attendance at meetings where community leaders, as well as members of the general public, had the opportunity to respond to the City's ideas, and engage in informal discussion about the problems in the area and possible solutions. Participating as an observer at these meetings provided insight into the dynamics between community groups and City staff, as well as the community's diverse opinions on what should be done in the area.

The decision not to carry out individual interviews was made for the following: first, during the community meetings and informal discussions, all of the salient issues regarding public space and the issues that are tangentially important to public space in the Downtown Eastside were discussed. Secondly, during these meetings, a broad range of views were consistently represented, including business owners, property owners, First Nations, poverty activists, service providers and drug users.

These meetings provided important insight into both the issues that the various community interests deemed to be most important, and the dynamics that take place between these various interests in both a public and semi-public environment. It should also be stated that particular initiatives regarding the Downtown Eastside that are discussed in this thesis are on-going in nature.

### 1.5 STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

This thesis is comprised of six chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 consists of a literature review that examines work by social science, design and planning theorists in order to provide a context for understanding the underlying variables contributing to contested space, as well as identifying general opportunities for facilitating the design or production of public spaces that are accessible to all.

Next, the Downtown Eastside case study is addressed through several means. Chapter 3 will provide a context, by analyzing past and present City of Vancouver policies. This will aid in determining how the issues in the Downtown Eastside area have been dealt with, and where gaps in the policy exist. Reviewing these documents will also provide insight into the socio-economic and physical changes the Downtown Eastside is experiencing that have contributed to conflict over the area's public spaces.

Chapter 4 will involve an examination of a case study of Seattle's Pioneer Square in order to seek out a model in the form of community or local government initiatives pertaining to the sharing of public space by a diverse group of users, that may be applicable to the Downtown Eastside. While a "perfect" model may not be found, the intent is to search out one or more variables in terms of physical character, socio-economic makeup, and/or inter-community conflict present in both the case study and the Downtown Eastside. The "clues" found in the case study will be utilized in the examination of the case study areas in the Downtown Eastside.

Chapter 5 is comprised of an examination of Carrall Street and the old CPR right-of-way within the Downtown Eastside. These sites were chosen as areas for a local case study because they are regarded as linkages between Gastown, Chinatown, and the Downtown Eastside, and they have been examined both in the past and currently as possible areas for public realm enhancement. The intent of this case study is to demonstrate the possibilities that Carrall Street and the right-of-way hold with regards to an inclusive, community-involved public realm enhancement project in the Downtown Eastside. This examination consists of the review and analysis of past and

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present ideas and initiatives regarding this street and right-of-way, and includes a discussion of the physical and socio-economic opportunities and constraints present that will either aid or hinder the ability for this space to be utilized by diverse constituencies.

The last chapter, Chapter 6, will contain a summary of key points from the preceding chapters. These key points will be utilized in reaching a conclusion regarding the ability of diverse constituencies to share public space, and the potential future role of Carrall Street and the CPR right-of-way in the Downtown Eastside. The implications for the roles of local government planners, community members, and the private sector will be outlined, and opportunities for future research will be addressed.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

*"Spatial relations are social relations."* Henri Lefebvre, 1979

### 2.1 PUBLIC SPACE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The spaces around us: our homes, streets, parks, places of work, and communities as a whole, are bound up with meaning above and beyond the physical structures that form that space (Wright 1997, Rotenberg 1993, McDonogh 1993). Indeed, space, and for the purpose of this thesis, public space, presents itself in several different forms: physical, social and symbolic. (Lehrer 1998).

Physical space is the most obvious type of public space, and as Lehrer asserts, probably the most romanticized. When one is asked to describe a particular space, the space is usually characterized in terms of what it looks like. That is, the type of buildings surrounding the space, the presence or absence of trees, landscaping and other natural features, treatment of hard surfaces, and street furniture. Social public space is space created by social practices and exchanges that occur within the physical space. Lehrer maintains that,

Social public space is the most interesting form of all three types, because it has the potential to transform and redefine ownership and can give new meanings to urban space. Social public space is in a constant redefinition through which the conflict between use value and exchange value are played out over real places (Lehrer 1998: 205).

Symbolic public space is formed by both the practices and exchanges of social public space, and the shared memory of the people who use the space routinely, or have experienced it at some point in their lives. As opposed to physical, or even social public space, symbolic space is more difficult to define as it is created by intangible sensations (e.g. comfort or fear) and/or the recollection of certain events (eg. a demonstration or protest, meeting an old friend) (Lehrer 1998: 205)

Generally speaking, the production and maintenance of physical public space lies in the realm of

the planner, architect, urban designer or engineer--the “experts”. Conversely, social and symbolic public space is shaped by the actors who navigate, interact in, and attribute meaning to the space through the workings of their everyday lives (although the “experts” may create the physical conditions to facilitate this). The interface between these two spheres have profound implications for how public space is produced, contested, and how the legitimacy of use and users of that space is established.

According to Wright, the production and organization of urban public space, the basis for conflict over this space, and how legitimacy of users and activities in this space is defined, is guided by what Castoriadis (1987) refers to as the *social imaginary significations* that are particular to a given society. Social imaginary significations are defined as the “...‘crystallization’ of concepts...that guide our understandings of race, class, gender, and natural phenomena...that work to normalize a particular vision and thereby justify particular social practices and discourage others...” (Wright 1997: 5). Wright asserts that in regard to urban public space, the production of this space is guided by the social imaginary significations and hence, visions, of city officials, planners, designers, the business community and supported by middle and upper-middle class voters and citizens.

The “dominant social imaginary” thus creates and embraces an image of “...what the ‘good’ city should look like, who and what is to be included and/or excluded...” (Wright 1997: 6). In other words, social imaginary significations influence aesthetic and behavioural standards of activities occurring in that space. Social imaginary significations are formed by attributing certain meanings and values to public space, and projecting these meanings and values onto the space. This occurs in the process of envisioning that space (e.g.. in the plans of the designer or planner), the development of the space, and in the everyday practices of how that space is used and regulated.

Furthermore, according to Grell, Sambale and Veith (1998: 210), urban public space plays a

significant role in the construction of identity, both of self and others. Related to the inclusion and exclusion of certain groups, they hold that everyday encounters in public space “...reinforce, rather than challenge stereotypes of marginalized groups...” (210). While their reference specifically to the stereotyping of marginalized groups is most likely a result of the fact that it is in the public realm where encounters with marginalized groups generally take place (as opposed to the workplace, for example), it is my opinion that this argument holds for all groups. It is, however, important to differentiate between the general categorization of particular groups, and the *negative* stereotyping of some of these groups.

To further the argument of Grell et al., Wright asserts that “...far from being separate from one’s identity, social-physical space is intimately bound up with the constitution of identities...” (1998: 4). Social-physical space is comprised of social spaces, “...the networks of achieved and ascribed status distinctions imposed by others...” (1998: 4), and the actual physical spaces through which one navigates and where these status distinctions are played out. Following this argument, Lehrer maintains that,

Public space *per se* is meaningless. It is always defined by practices, regulations, memory...public space is not only constituted by its physical appearance but it is mainly defined by social practices...(1998: 206)

The formation of identities by, and ascription of meanings to, urban public space leads to the argument that “...in cities, people force the spaces around them to take on meaning. No space is permitted to be neutral or homogenous...” (Krupe 1972 in Rotenberg 1993: xiii). Similarly, Wright asserts that

[e]ach individual actively engaged in everyday life gives form to urban and suburban spaces, generating an apparent ‘structure’ of everyday life, a minimal sense of cohesion, in which the very actions of oneself and others create that space is merely a container for

those actions (1997: 48).

This is played out in the dichotomy between abstract space and social space (Lefebvre 1979, Harvey 1973, Rotenberg 1993). Abstract space is articulated in the visions and plans of the “expert”--the city official, the architect, the planner, the engineer. Abstract space is fragmented and homogenous (Gottdeiner 1985) in that it is not grounded in the everyday realities of the actual users of the space, and ignores the intangible meanings that these users ascribe to the space. A typical example of abstract space is the production of zoning districts based on zones being assigned a singular land use. On plan, this zoning map may make logical sense to the rational land use planner; however, it ignores how people use these spaces on an everyday basis.<sup>2</sup>

This dichotomy can be viewed as simplistic if we consider that not all “experts” disregard everyday life of urban citizens in the envisioning and development of plans for public space. In fact, one could argue that many of these experts do make efforts to engage in the experiences and needs of people in their work, although they are frequently working within the constraints of established public participation processes that are often ineffective, and the rigidity of bureaucracy. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, social space (formed by activities and identity) is not a homogenous entity. Rather, one can say that in regard to urban public space, there exists a number of social spaces that take on a wide variety of meanings depending on the values and experiences (in turn, informed by variables such as gender, ethnicity and class) of the various users of physical space. The abstraction of space by experts plays an important role in the process of producing urban public spaces, however it is the real and potential conflict over physical space by opposing users of social space that is the primary area of interest and inquiry of this thesis.

### 2.2 CONTESTED SPACE

According to Schmid (1998), the role of public space in the examination of social conflict is of

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<sup>2</sup> This can be regarded as a conflict in postmodern urban society, whereby notions of “order” by the authorities



utmost importance. This is due to the fact that

...[i]t is here that the social, cultural and economic oppositions within the city come to light, it is here that social conflicts are fought and it is here that lines of access are opened and closed. In many cases, being shut out of public space also means being ostracized in public life (Schmid 1998: 189-190).

Although a precise definition of “contested space” has not been found during the research for this thesis, observers and theorists of the relationship between social relations and the physical form of urban public space often use this term. There appears to be a general agreement that the term “contested space”, in the context of the urban public realm, denotes spaces where conflict between different user groups has arisen due to opposing territorial claims made on that space. Opposing territorial claims are often rooted in the different values (or *social imaginaries*) of user groups which influence perceptions of how that space should be used (e.g. activities), and who has the right to use that space. This said, urban public space that is contested often comes to be so through physical, social and economic changes in the urban landscape that introduce new user groups into a space that was previously the “territory” of other user groups (Ley 1996; Zukin 1991; Wright 1997; Smith 1996).

Many observers maintain that the most significant contributing factors to the development of contested space are the processes of redevelopment and/or gentrification within and around areas that contain a significant number of poor and marginalized individuals and families, often in the central city (Ley 1996; Zukin 1991; DeFillipis 1997; Harvey 1989, 1996; Wright 1997; Schmid 1998; Lehrer 1998; Grell et al. 1998). Marginalized groups include groups that are disadvantaged either culturally, socially and/or economically: “...immigrants, ethnic minorities, the homeless, drug users, mentally disabled people as well as those that deliberately choose a different lifestyle such as squatters...” (Lehrer 1998: 202). The following section of this chapter

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diverge with increasing pluralism and diversity.

will deal more specifically with the role of the central, or inner city with regards to gentrification and redevelopment. This section is intended to consider the issues surrounding contested space more generally.

In his discussion surrounding the privatization and redevelopment of New York City's South Street Seaport from "...an accessible public space and museum to a privately controlled commercialized space..." (DeFillipis 1997: 413), James DeFillipis cites post World War II federal disinvestment from American cities as leading to the "urban growth machine" (Cox & Mair 1989, Logan & Molotch 1987 in DeFillipis 1997), referring to "...locally dependent, political and capitalist elites that drove the downtown office development of the 1980s..." often associated with increased divisions of labour in advanced industrial production systems (DeFillipis 1997: 413). Through this process, city governments have become much more dependent locally, due to increased capital mobility and the reduction of financial support from higher levels of government. The result is the shift of local governments from being administrators of services, to entrepreneurs competing for mobile capital (ibid.: 413).

DeFillipis states that

[t]he urban development advocated by these governing "growth machines" was not small in scale, nor would it take place in neighborhoods or communities (except when an area had been slated for gentrification) within cities. It would, instead, be large-scale downtown commercial and office real estate development (ibid.).

In the case of South Street Seaport, the land, which was located mere blocks away from Wall Street, was potentially too valuable to leave as underdeveloped public space, generating little or no revenue. It was thus sold to private interests and transformed into a privately controlled "festival marketplace" intended for tourists and higher-income locals (ibid.: 414).

In a more generalized discussion of the process of private redevelopment of previously public land, DeFillipis maintains that changes in the American economy beginning in the mid-1970s have led to an increased devaluation of labour (through the loss of industrial jobs) and consequently increased income inequalities, which has led to "...the explosion of the homeless population in New York in the last 20 years..."(ibid.: 414-415). Citing Harvey (1989), he charges that "...in order to mask these extreme economic cleavages, public spaces have been transformed into 'spectacles' for the affluent..." (ibid.: 415). In other words, the development of privately controlled "spectacle" spaces works to render the homeless and marginalized invisible through exclusionary practices.

According to DeFillipis, this process of exclusion not only screens the poor, homeless and marginalized from the eyes of the more well off; their very invisibility also gives the state the ability to ignore them, and constitutes a redefinition of *who* the public is. He argues that

...the transformation in American cities of public spaces like South Street Seaport, from relatively accessible to virtually inaccessible, has excluded them [urban working poor and homeless] from the material spaces of the public sphere and thereby created a substantial barrier to their possibility of representation in that sphere (ibid.: 415).

Thus, rendering "public" or quasi-public spaces inaccessible to certain segments of the population goes beyond physical exclusion, but also serves to make these groups invisible in society generally, and establishes new definitions of who is and who is not considered to be worthwhile members of the public.

Similar to DeFillipis, Zukin (1991) also cites market forces as key to the reordering of the urban landscape in terms of the transformation of public spaces into arenas for consumption through redevelopment. She asserts that currently, there is a blurring between the traditional spaces of private consumption (the home, the shopping mall) and the public realm. This blurring has resulted in new "liminal" spaces which "...institutionalize market culture in the landscape...[and

that] [t]oday, urban places respond to market pressures defined by private development projects and public pleasures restricted to private entry..." (Zukin 1991: 41). Indeed, the development of downtown shopping plazas and marketplaces are often encouraged as a means of "revitalization", in that they are "...believed to 'open' the downtown by creating a sense of place..." (ibid.: 51). The result is the replacement of places that were at one time arenas of public life (meeting, gathering, political rallies and demonstrations), where a certain level of acceptance and tolerance was paid to marginal populations, with places of private consumption.

Lehrer (1998), like Zukin and DeFillipis, also makes the claim that market forces (heavily influenced by the process of globalization), have had profound effects on access to public, or quasi-public spaces by the poor and marginalized. She maintains that "...under the impact of globalization and urban restructuring, public space becomes privatized in new forms, i.e. the borderline between public and private space is less and less readable..." (205). Likewise, in his examination of how dominant social imaginary significations influence the production of public or quasi-public spaces, Wright asserts that urban redevelopment projects more often than not result "...from using an *exclusive* redevelopment vision rather than an *inclusive* vision of city redevelopment as a strategy for recouping financial losses..." (Wright 1997: 9; original italics). What occurs is the creation of "refuse spaces" for the poor and marginalized, which are often located close to newly redeveloped "playgrounds for tourists" (ibid.: 10, 46). The result is the exclusion, or "locking out" of those who conflict visually and/or behaviourally with the dominant image of the "good" urban citizen.

This process generates, or exacerbates "...antagonisms that work to isolate individuals and groups on the basis of race, ethnicity, class, and gender..." (ibid.: 56). Furthermore, in relation to DeFillipis' argument that redevelopment schemes often render the homeless and marginalized invisible to the rest of society, Wright maintains that these redevelopment projects "...are often imagined as if there were no poor, no racial conflict, no gender issues to be dealt with, merely the domination of a visual aesthetic oriented toward 'family life' and commodity consumption..."

(ibid.: 76-77, Boyer 1990, 1995, 1983).

Harvey (1996) also discusses the exclusion of marginalized populations through what he calls “the fixing of spatiality” (230). This term refers to the physical creation of material spaces that reinforce “...negative or imposed social values...[which result in] the spatialized control of unwanted groups-the homeless, gypsies, ‘New Age’ travelers, the elderly...”(ibid.). Through this, Harvey examines the reaction/challenge to spatial segregation by marginalized populations; more specifically, attempts to assert control over the spaces imposed on them.

As an example, Harvey discusses the actions of the Parisian communards during their organizing the defense of revolutionary Paris in 1871. The communards tore down the “hated” Vêndome column as a reaction to the “...spatial organization of the city that had put so many segments of the population ‘in their place’ by the building of Hausmann’s boulevards and the expulsion of the working class from the central city...” (ibid.). Harvey continues by stating that because Hausmann’s vision of the “new” Paris was based on financially capitalistic and hierarchical values, the toppling of the Vêndome column was a symbolic assertion of the communards’ alternative vision of Paris as a city of nonhierarchical spaces (ibid.: 231). This single act, therefore, was indicative of a larger process on the part of the communards to assert their territorial claims on the city as a whole.

Similarly, Wright maintains that like most people, the poor and the marginalized

...attempt to reassert their ‘place’ in society, to establish some ‘homeplace’ in the midst of deprivation, humiliation and degradation. The contesting of what constitutes a legitimate ‘place’, both socially and physically, is often what social struggles are all about. The battle over defining the legitimate purpose of particular locales is conducted both socially...and spatially, in the regulation of poor bodies by developing land, buildings, and resources for particular uses but not other uses (1997: 5).

While the example Harvey uses to illustrate how poor and marginalized groups attempt to lay claims, or reassert their right to urban spaces is over one hundred years old, it can be argued that this case holds as much relevance in the present day as it did then. One only need look at the actions of squatter movements and the evidence of graffiti on particular buildings or property (either public or private) to see these as attempts to lay claims on territory (however insignificant these actions may appear) by disadvantaged populations. This said, contested spaces within the city can be either the intentional product of an urban redevelopment project, or can be the unintentional result of gradual shifts over time in the movement of different groups of users.

In his preface to Gary McDonogh's piece, "The Geography of Emptiness" (1993), Rotenberg discusses what he calls, "empty spaces" in the city as spaces that suggest conflict. According to Rotenberg, "...[e]mptiness...[goes] beyond the designation of open lands to denote those spaces that are undefined, or in which the definition is indistinct because of unresolved conflicts over meaning..." (xv). Based on McDonogh's research in Barcelona, Spain and Savannah, Georgia, four possible meanings for emptiness are put forward: "...the place of memory where a landmark once stood; the place of disuse by dogs, drug addicts and deviants; the boundary between the behaviorally acceptable and unacceptable; and the intentionally fallow ground of future land speculation and development..." (Rotenberg 1993: xv). McDonogh adds to these possible meanings by stating that "...emptiness may be denoted by epithets of vacancy, abandon, openness, or even failure-the last in cases of urbanist intervention. An empty space may be 'underused,' 'unfashionable,' 'forbidden,' 'voided,' or it may have been planned to preclude social activities..." (1993: 3). This said, McDonogh argues that "emptiness", in the context of empty urban space, is characterized less by its physical traits, than its use, social structure and constraints put upon it (ibid.: 4).

A particular "empty" space that McDonogh examines in his research is the Jardins d'Emili Vendrell in the Raval district of Barcelona, Spain. McDonogh describes the Jardins as a "...preexisting building with one-storey arched walls. Inside, concrete benches flank one interior

wall while a fountain flows against another; small trees shade the dirt floor..." (ibid.: 5). In his discussions with local residents, McDonogh was told that in the early 1980s, the garden had become a "haven for squatters", and that local merchants played a central role in having the gates to the garden be locked at night (Ajuntament 1983 in McDonogh: 5). After a few months, however, locking the gates to the garden proved to be ineffective, as local journalists characterized the garden as one "... that 'serves for everything except to walk in...'" (*Noticiero universal*, November 12, 1983 in McDonogh: 5). The garden had apparently become a haven for alcoholics and addicts, and local residents had come to feel both excluded from the space, and alarmed, as the garden was observed to be empty during the day with the locked gates "...emphasizing its jail-like appearance..."(5).

Interestingly, McDonogh interviewed the garden's neighbours about their perceptions of how the gardens are used, and found that while almost all of those interviewed emphasized the use of the space by drug addicts and others engaged in "anti-social" behaviours, and that they generally avoided the garden, almost all of them also pointed out that "noone goes there" (ibid.: 6,9). This contradiction: the place is taken over by drug addicts *and* is, at the same time, void of people, gives us insight into the tendency that many have to categorize, justify and/or de-legitimize the presence or absence of particular groups of people in a space.

McDonogh maintains that

...[t]his social conflict at the origin of emptiness captures ambivalence present in the definition of the word itself: 'void of certain specific contents.' This process of definition of correct or incorrect contents can derive from territorial struggles between groups of users from the imposition of cultural values upon a space. Older middle- and upper-class Barcelonans, for example, have repeated to me many times that 'noone goes to the Rambles'...What these friends and informants imply, more often, is that they do not go there, nor should I, because of those who, in fact, *do* go. Here, a cultural evaluation again is at face value erroneous: the Rambles remain active at almost all hours of the day and night. The statement means, then, that the tourists attracted there

are 'not like us,' or that drug dealers, petty thieves, and immigrants who circulate there have been reported in mass media and discourage (justify) the absence of other groups... (ibid.: 9-10; original italics).

Although residents and neighbours use the term "noone goes there", when describing the Jardins d'Emili Vendrell, they do admit (in a contradictory fashion), that the space is not necessarily devoid of human activity. It is, however, the *type* of human activity occurring there that influences the de-legitimization of their presence. McDonogh maintains that it is the *competition* over the (dis)use of the gardens that incites the middle-and upper-class Barcelonans to dismiss the addicts as legitimate users of the space (ibid.: 8). It is his argument that the language that we use ("empty", "noone goes there") gives significant insight into our perceptions, values, and the categorization of other groups.

While it may appear obvious that the use of illicit drugs is a reason in and of itself to cause the de-legitimization of the presence of addicts, it can also be argued that it is the *open* nature of this activity, and what it represents (lack of order, crime, lack of respect for self, un-hygienic), rather than a moral judgement about the use of drugs or alcohol that is the greatest cause for alarm. The drug addicts "...have specialized demands that compete with those of other residents. Although they dominate only marginal hours, their images nonetheless determine use for the whole neighborhood..." (ibid.: 8). The addicts, through their activities, create an intangible barrier to the use of the space by the larger community.

McDonogh's discussion of the neighbours' perceptions of the users of the Jardins D'Emili Vendrell in Barcelona takes establishing the legitimacy of the users of public space and their activities further by adding in the dimension of the larger community. Regarding the "production" of, and conflict over, public space, the question of legitimacy is often discussed in terms of how the "authorities" or "experts" (planners, designers, police, local politicians, real estate developers) define who is, and who is not to be included when envisioning a space. However, like DeFillipis, Wright also maintains that while the "experts" may establish the conditions for de-legitimizing particular groups through redevelopment or "revitalization"



projects, higher income residents contribute significantly to the process of inclusion or exclusion.

He states that

...[f]earing a decline in property values and crime, many otherwise progressive community groups often work to exclude shelters and group homes. The definition of who is and who is not acceptable to a given community, therefore, hinges upon the type of social imaginary operating within a given community, and this will be determined by the nature of social struggles occurring within the city. Conflicting social imaginaries can also generate conflicting definitions of acceptability, leading to clashing perceptions on a given social issue (Wright 1997: 56).

In a similar vein as DeFillipis, in his discussion regarding the rendering of the poor and marginalized “invisible” through exclusionary practices, Lehrer argues that this invisibility acts to desensitize the “average” urban citizen to the issues surrounding exclusion and segregation of those who do not “fit in” with the dominant norms of society, and that many of us, in our everyday lives, do not question the fact that many people have no problem accessing and navigating through a city’s public or quasi-public spaces, while at the same time, many people do. She challenges that there are, in fact, many “publics”:

...[i]t would be wrong to believe that there is actually a public space that belongs to a public which includes everybody. The question should be asked: who is that public? Are there different forms of public spaces? Which public uses which space? And further, who has the right, the means and the power to articulate him-/herself in the public realm? (1998: 205).

It has further been acknowledged that in the definition of legitimacy, it is a network of actors who work either in tandem with one another, or at the behest of one another in influencing public opinion about who should, and who should not be given access to particular areas of the city. One of the principle actors in this process is the media, who often emphasize particular images of those who do not “fit in”. Citing the example of the practices and policies of city officials and

police in Berlin in regards to squatters in the summer of 1996, Grell, Sambale and Veith (1998) claim that

...[i]n order to manufacture local consent at times of severe austerity, representatives of the local elites, media and security forces have united to pathologise and stigmatise 'deviant' behaviour, and alternative housing arrangements as criminal and a threat to the city's competitiveness. The leitmotif of the current growth strategy is 'capital capability' aimed at isolating all phenomena that could be irritating to the behavioural standards of middle class inhabitants, tourists and the business community. The strategy of social and ethnic cleansing is not only applied to inner city shopping areas but also to other spatial entities such as the traditional inner city migrant and working class housing districts (210).

This process of establishing legitimacy can be viewed as a mechanism for continually playing out a self-fulfilling "prophecy" of sorts. That is, the use of media images that focus in on the "deviant" behaviour of the homeless and marginalized (drug use/dealing; petty theft; public intoxication), while at the same time, ignoring, or framing as "bad", actions by these groups that attempt to assert their "right to place" in a particular space, serves to legitimize actions by the police and other authority figures that regulate, or in some cases oppress these groups. In addition, these media representations also serve to create distinctions between what can be called the "deserving" and the "undeserving" poor. Wright states that

...[w]hen we examine the issue of class in North American society, the particular social imaginary that informs the construction of identities is the imagined distinctions generated between the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving' poor. Key elements of a deep fantasy that operates to create a particular identity of what a 'good' American is, of what a 'good' person is...(1997: 45).

While Wright does not provide a description of the "deserving" and "undeserving" poor either visually or behaviourally, the underlying assumption is that the "deserving" poor are those whose primary disadvantage is financial poverty. These individuals may appear poor in a physical sense (in terms of clothing, for example), and may live in a depressed area of the city, but generally do not act out on the "deviant" behaviours particular to the "undeserving" poor, such as drug

addiction, prostitution, public intoxication, panhandling, mental illness and petty thievery. The “deserving” poor may take the form of older, alcoholic men who previously worked in blue collar occupations, or the mother on welfare trying to make ends meet. The “undeserving” poor may take the form of the “drunk” sleeping on the street, the “strung out” prostitute, the street criminal, or the paranoid schizophrenic who behaves erratically on the street. Thus, in the definition of who is “good” and who is “bad”, poverty is only one variable. Rather, it is often the presence of several “disadvantages”, and the behaviours and actions that accompany this that are important factors in deciding who is to be excluded and who is to be included.

This said, this thesis acknowledges the inherent reasons as to why we, as a society, tend to shun or avoid those who fit the profile of the “undeserving” poor. These behaviours represent the “ugly” side to humanity, one that most of us would like to pretend do not exist. It is understandable why most people would not want to take their children to the same place as someone who is openly injecting drugs or engaging in prostitution. However, the problem lies in attempts to shut these people out of the public realm, without providing adequate support services such as increasing the stock of quality low-income housing and drug and alcohol detox counselling.

### **2.3 THE INNER CITY AS LOCALE FOR CONTESTED SPACE**

While the discussion to this point has looked at contested space generally, it is important to note that it is often the central, or inner city that is the location of much conflict over public space.

Schmid (1998) notes that public space,

...in particular in city centres is fiercely contested [because] it represents an important resource both for the privileged as well as the underprivileged population: it is a place of luxury consumption and the representation of affluence and power for the former and a place of encounter, interaction, and social wealth for the latter. It is here, therefore, that the most intense struggles for control over public space occur (189-190).

In their discussion of the actions of anti-poverty and homeless groups in several German and Swiss cities fighting against the "...hegemonic policies of socio-spatial exclusion now prevalent in most inner cities..." (1998: 208), Grell et al. pose the question: why does the inner city matter? They answer this question with three reasons as to why the inner city, as a locale, is critical to understanding conflict over public space. They argue that the central city is important because

...[i]t became attractive for investment by banks, insurance, real estate and other companies who are increasingly interested in Central Business District-real estate (from Harvey 1987)...[i]t became important as a showcase for the myth of the 'clean' urban service society for local policies of competition ...[l]ast but not least, the inner city is the most important place for the growing population of marginalised people. They need the inner city as working site (prostitution, street vending, panhandling and so forth), as meeting place due to the lack of other opportunities, and as recreation area or living space (homeless persons). An important part of the social-service facilities some of these people rely on is located there (209).

The first two reasons touch on why the inner city is an important location for those who are in a position of power (i.e. business, real-estate developers, and city officials). However, the last reason is perhaps the most important in understanding the needs of the underprivileged for city space, and why some would argue that it is necessary that a city possess "marginal spaces" to accommodate those who are shut out of, or not welcome in the public spaces that are taken for granted by most in society. Thus, as Peter Marin, in a *Harpers* magazine article states:

We owe them, at least, a place to exist, a way to exist...A society needs its margins as much as it needs art and literature. It needs holes and gaps, *breathing spaces* let us say, in which men and women can escape and live, when necessary in ways otherwise denied them. Margins guarantee a society a flexibility, an elasticity and allow it to accommodate itself to the natures and needs of its members. When margins vanish, society becomes too rigid, too oppressive by far and therefore inimical to life...(1987: 49).

It is the opinion of this thesis that while arguments such as Marin's are important, in the sense that the city should provide spaces for all of its members-including so-called "marginal" spaces for those who are often excluded from arenas of public life-an emphasis should be placed on

encouraging the development of spaces in the inner city that include everyone, rather than creating separate, distinct spaces for the poor and homeless (“refuse spaces”), and separate, distinct spaces for those who are better off.

### 2.3.1 The Process of Gentrification

It is almost impossible to study conflict over public space without examining the impacts of gentrification, or “revitalization” on many inner city areas throughout North America and Western Europe. While discussions on gentrification have, understandably, focused on changes in the housing market in a particular area (generally inner city; poor/working class displaced by middle-and upper-middle income households), this process has undeniable effects on the public spaces (in terms of who is allowed access to these spaces) in the area that has become gentrified.

The term “gentrification” was originally coined by British sociologist, Ruth Glass in 1964, referring to the movement of the middle-and upper-middle class “gentry” into lower-class districts in London. Glass’s description and definition of gentrification is as follows:

...One by one, many of the working-class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes-upper and lower. Shabby, modest mews and cottages-two rooms up and down-have been taken over, when their leases have expired, and have become elegant, expensive residences. Larger Victorian houses, downgraded in an earlier or recent period-which were used as lodging houses or were otherwise in multiple occupation-have been upgraded once again...Once this process of gentrification starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced *and the whole social character of the district is changed* (Glass 1964: xviii; italics added).

The last phrase of this description has been emphasized in order to stress the fact that gentrification is not just about the rehabilitation of old apartments and houses in a particular city neighbourhood; what occurs is the transformation of the social, cultural and economic make-up of the area. Unlike the South Street Seaport example, which saw one redevelopment project transform a particular area in New York City quite radically, gentrification often involves the

variable of time. That is, it is generally a gradual process (depending on the market, faster in some areas than others), occurring property by property, which frequently has the *cumulative* effect of displacing the existing low-income residents (whether housed or not) and transforming the area.

As the term “gentrification” originated in London, it is generally deemed to refer more specifically to the English class system, while other terms such as “whitepainting” from Toronto, and “brownstoning” from New York, largely reflect how this process is manifested from city to city (Ley 1996: 33). Indeed, the term “revitalization” is often used interchangeably with “gentrification”, yet implicitly suggests a heightened superiority “...in the process of residential succession, and imparting a mantle of less vitality to previous land uses and users...” (ibid.: 34). Thus, Ley argues that the term “embourgeoisement” is the most appropriate term to use as “...class and status connotations are uppermost, without reference to the specifics of the housing stock...” (ibid.).

According to Ley (1996), for years, models had shown that inner city areas generally housed lower-income and marginal populations, and that “...conventional wisdom had it that as property aged it filtered down from wealthier to successively poorer households in these old, innermost districts...” (2). However, during the 1960s and 1970s, “...an unanticipated inversion was taking place in parts of the inner city housing market...”, and that this process was occurring not only in North America, but in Western European and Australian cities as well (ibid.). The impacts that this process of gentrification has had on the availability of low-income housing in these areas has been significant:

...[I]n central London, the breakup of the private rental market in favour of condominium tenure is estimated to have removed 45 per cent of the purpose-built rental stock between 1966 and 1981.<sup>3</sup> Less

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<sup>3</sup> Data from C. Hammett and B. Randolph (1986). Pp. 121-52.

firm figures for New York City suggest between 10,000 and 40,000 rental households were being displaced by gentrification *annually* at the end of the 1970s.<sup>4</sup> There are good grounds, then, for seeing gentrification as a major cause of the problems of housing affordability in large Canadian cities since 1970. Simply put, the inner city is losing its historic role as a major reservoir of private, low-cost housing (ibid.: 3).

Ley asserts that the events that have led up to the process of gentrification are, at least in a Canadian context, part of a larger shift in perceptions of the city, and being a citizen of the city. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, many urban reformers, whether newly elected officials at city hall or members of organized citizen groups, reacting to top-down urban renewal schemes (for example, the planning and building of freeways through residential neighbourhoods) and planning processes, began espousing a new image of the city: one that is livable, humanistic, participatory, where “public solutions” were favoured over private ones, and where “...design guidelines and generous park and landscaping policy would enhance the quality of the built environment...” (ibid.: 4). In fact, at this time, Ley contends that concurrent with the notion of the “livable” city, policies were being put in place to open up the public realm (the development of Granville Island, for example), following a more European, urbane approach to city living (ibid.: 4-7).

In and of itself, this process would appear to have a positive impact on the city (physically, aesthetically) and the urban experiences of its residents and visitors. However, what also occurred was what Ley refers to as the “embourgeoisement of the inner city”. That is, as a whole new appreciation for city living was being developed, so was the desire to live close to the center of the city. In the London context, Hall(1998) maintains that a critical precursor to inner city “embourgeoisement” was the rapid de-industrialization of central London over the past twenty-five years, whereby upwards of 800,000 jobs disappeared, thus creating vast areas of derelict space in the inner city (889). Ley puts forth several other reasons for the “embourgeoisement” of the inner city. First, he contends that “...the property industry had detected a new submarket in

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<sup>4</sup> Data from Marcuse (1986). 153-77.

the central city which it was enthusiastically exploiting..."(1996: 8). This generally took the form of condominium development as this solved a problem that developers had regarding decreasing profits in the rental sector. Second, contractors were enjoying a boom in renovations for middle-income homebuyers. Third, the coinciding of economic expansion, the growth of white collar jobs located in the central business district, and the maturation of the post-war baby boom cohort led to an increased demand for middle-class housing. Fourth, Ley puts forth the possibility that the 1973 oil shock may have induced people to move closer to the city centre to reduce commuting, and/or that the increased representation of women in professional careers, leading to a decline in the birth rate (and thus, the traditional nuclear family), negated the need for a single-family home in the suburbs (ibid.: 8-9).

Ley argues that it is no coincidence that the gentrification movement coincided historically with various counter-culture and urban social movements. He points out that in the 1960s, youth ghettos were concentrated in particular districts of the country's largest countries (i.e. Yorkville in Toronto and Kitsilano in Vancouver), both areas that experienced significant gentrification in the 1970s. Ley muses about the possibility that "...gentrification is an expression of a critical cultural politics, a rejection of the suburbs and their perceived cultural conformity in favour of the more cosmopolitan and permissive opportunities of the central city..."(ibid.: 9). If this is the case, then the middle-class movement to the central city is not simply the outcome of the previous, more economically-guided reasons, but also a result of the identity as an urban city dweller, conferred on new residents of the inner city (ibid.; Smith and LeFaivre 1984: 45). In fact, in a comparative study of middle-income inner city residents in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver, the reasons for living in an inner city neighbourhood are diverse, but reflect the possible reasons that Ley puts forth: proximity to work/close to downtown; neighbourhood character; proximity to shops, schools and services; architecture; non-traditional lifestyles; historic character; investment potential/expected capital gain; views; and social/cultural diversity (ibid.: 39-40).



Smith (1996) echoes Ley's assertion that larger socio-cultural forces have been at play in the origins of the gentrification process of the inner city. Citing Saunders (1984), he maintains that historical phases of consumption patterns have played a key role in the gentrification process: "...a 'market' phase dominated the nineteenth century, but was superceded by a 'socialized' mode of consumption, and ultimately in the 1970s by a 'privatized' mode of consumption..."(111). Although the argument that the 1970s saw an increase in privatization conflicts with Ley's claim that this period saw an increase (at least philosophically) in the provision of public spaces and other public "goods", the contention is that the subtext to this privatization is the fact that the

... 'urban reform ideology' of the new middle class, the 'present day counterparts of Veblen's leisure class', is fashioning a post-industrial city with a consumption landscape rather than a production landscape...[and that the] world of industrial capitalism is superceded by the ideology of consumption pluralism, and gentrification is a signifier of this historical transformation, inscribed in the modern landscape. An urban dream is coming to supercede the suburban dream of past decades... (Ley 1980 in Smith 1996: 111; Mills 1988; Warde 1991; Caulfield 1994).

This assumption ties in closely with DeFillipis, Wright and Zukin's arguments that many public spaces in North American and Western European central cities are being transformed into "spectacles for tourists" and lifestyle leisure spaces. The changing residential profile in inner cities goes beyond physical upgrades of existing housing, or the development of new housing for higher income individuals and families. As mentioned earlier, it sets in motion the social transformation of whole neighbourhoods, and the effects that this has on the nature of public spaces can be significant.

Perhaps one of the more well-known North American examples of how the gentrification process can affect access to public spaces is the case of Tompkins Square Park in New York City. According to Smith (1996), in the late 1980s, a number of homeless people, "...evictees from the private and public spaces of the official housing market, had begun to use the Park regularly as a

## Chapter 2

place to sleep...”, this park was not only a popular location for the homeless to sleep, but also for the organization of anti-gentrification and squatters movements at that time in New York City (5). On the evening of August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1988, a riot ensued in the park, with riot police on one side and “...a diverse mix of anti-gentrification protestors, punks, housing activists, park inhabitants, artists, Saturday night revelers and Lower East Side residents on the other...”(ibid.: 3). Smith contends that the riot was the result of a new City policy to impose a 1:00 am curfew on the park in order to remove the growing number of homeless sleeping there, drug users and dealers, and kids playing loud music late into the night. However, many activists saw the move as the City’s attempt to “...tame and domesticate the park to facilitate the already rampant gentrification in the Lower East Side...”(ibid.). While the police eventually retreated that evening, and the park once again became a gathering and sleeping spot for the area’s activists and homeless, over the course of several months, the City began to step up its actions once again:

...City-wide park curfews (abandoned after the riot) were gradually reinstated; new regulations governing the use of Tompkins Square Park were slowly implemented; several Lower East Side buildings occupied by squatters were demolished in May 1989, and in July a police raid destroyed tents, shanties and the belongings of park residents. By now there were on average some 300 evictees in the park on any given night, at least three-quarters men, the majority African-American, many white, some Latino, Native Americans, Caribbean. On December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1989, on the coldest day of the winter, the park’s entire homeless population was evicted from the park, their belongings and fifty shanties hauled away in a queue of Sanitation Department garbage trucks (ibid.: 5).

Tompkins Square Park was finally closed on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1991, with the eviction of between 200 and 300 park dwellers. In order to keep the Park closed off to the homeless, the City

...[erected] an eight-foot-high chain link fence...a posse of more than fifty uniformed and plainclothes police was delegated to guard the park permanently-its numbers augmented to several hundred in the first days and during demonstrations-and a \$2.3 million reconstruction was begun almost immediately. In fact, three park entrances were kept open and heavily guarded: two provided access to the playgrounds for children only (and accompanying adults); the other, opposite the Christadora

condominium, provided access to the dog run (6).

Being the site of the most militant struggle against gentrification in the United States (ibid.: 6; Mitchell 1995), Tompkins Square Park can be regarded as a symbol of how residential gentrification can have a “domino effect” on the spaces of a particular city neighbourhood as a whole, and the struggles of the homeless and marginalized to etch out city space to carry out their everyday lives.

This chapter indicates how changes in the socio-economic landscape of the inner city can have profound implications on the lives of the poor and marginalized. It also illustrates how conflicts arise between different income groups over who has the “right” to use the public spaces in these inner city areas where competing territorial claims are being made. How these issues are handled in the policy arena is of utmost importance with regards to the decisions that are made that affect the everyday lives of those who are involved in these conflicts. The next chapter examines how City of Vancouver policies and initiatives have addressed these issues in the Downtown Eastside, both in the past and present.

### 3 CITY OF VANCOUVER POLICIES AND INITIATIVES

#### 3.1 PURPOSE

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, public spaces are an important component to the everyday lives of urban residents, particularly those who depend on these spaces for recreation and socialization (often the poor and homeless). Public spaces are also where social conflicts within the city are most evident (in terms of exclusive practices by the authorities or other residents). It is therefore important that planning for public spaces (throughout the city, but particularly in the inner city), be recognized in public policy initiatives.

However, the subject of quality, accessible public spaces in the inner city context is often overlooked by both the “experts” (policy makers, City officials and real estate developers), and community groups alike.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, little exists in the way of policy initiatives solely addressing public spaces in the Downtown Eastside. The focus of discussion and policy initiatives in the Downtown Eastside often centers on issues of housing, crime and drug and alcohol addiction, as they are often considered the most pressing in terms of the basic necessities of life, such as shelter and security. They are macro issues that directly or indirectly influence the quality and accessibility of public spaces. However, the scale and complexity of these issues are such that they require substantial amounts of time and resources in order to be adequately addressed.

As public spaces are often the “living room” of impoverished communities, their quality and accessibility are vital. They can be indicators of the general health of the neighbourhood, and can be instrumental in improving the quality of life for residents. Thus, they deserve to be given adequate consideration in the policy arena, in terms of both process and product. That is, the process of community involvement in their planning, design and implementation; and the nature of the product that results.

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<sup>5</sup> One exception to this is the development of CRAB (“Create a Real Beach”) park to the north of Gastown, which came about largely through the lobbying of the Downtown Eastside community during the process of developing the Trade and Convention Centre.

This chapter will examine policy initiatives put forth by both the City of Vancouver and in the case of Gastown, the “community” regarding planning issues in the Downtown Eastside, with a particular focus on community process and public spaces. The intent is track policy changes over time on these issues, and to determine if policy initiatives are “lagging” behind or responding quickly to conditions in the community, in an attempt to provide both a broad and specific context to the issues facing the Downtown Eastside.

### 3.2 THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE AT A GLANCE

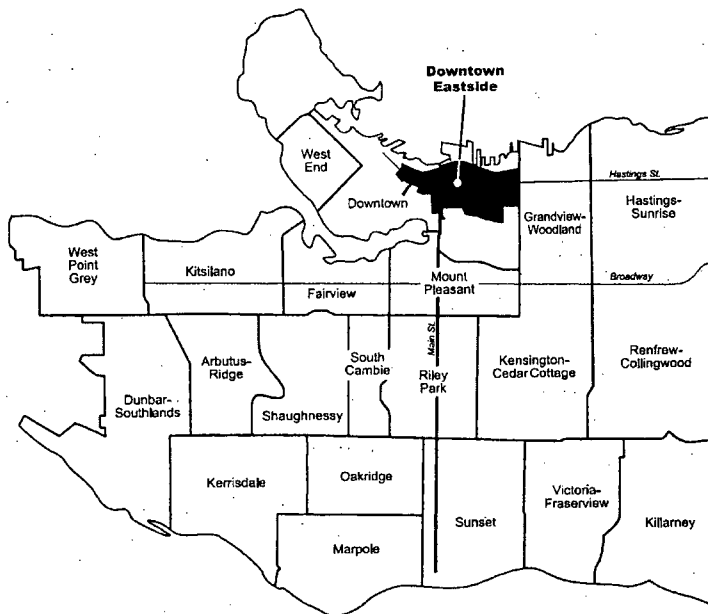
The official City of Vancouver planning boundaries of the Downtown Eastside are Richards Street to the west, Prior Street to the south, Clark Drive to the east and the waterfront the north. The sub-areas which comprise this broader area are Gastown, Chinatown, Victory Square, Oppenheimer, and Strathcona, Thorton Park and the Industrial Area. Although it is affected by the conditions in the other subareas, for the purposes of this thesis, Strathcona will not be examined as it is primarily a residential neighbourhood with a middle-class population segment that has been established for some time. Similarly, Thornton Park and the Industrial Area will not be examined as they both have very small residential populations.<sup>6</sup>

For contextual purposes, it is important to recognize how the Downtown Eastside “fits in” with the rest of Vancouver in terms of size, population, housing and incidence of crime. The Downtown Eastside is comprised of 205 hectares of land (1.8% of Vancouver’s land area), with 1996 data indicating a population of 16,275 people (3.2% of the population of Vancouver). The median annual income of the average Downtown Eastside household is \$10,410, compared to \$35,583 for the average Vancouver household. Thus, the incidence of low-income households in the Downtown Eastside is 68.8%. The area also contains 5,234 Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units, 78.8% of the city total (*Downtown Eastside Monitoring Report* 1999: 1). In addition, 21.6% of all police calls in the city in 1998 were made in the Downtown Eastside (59,548), and

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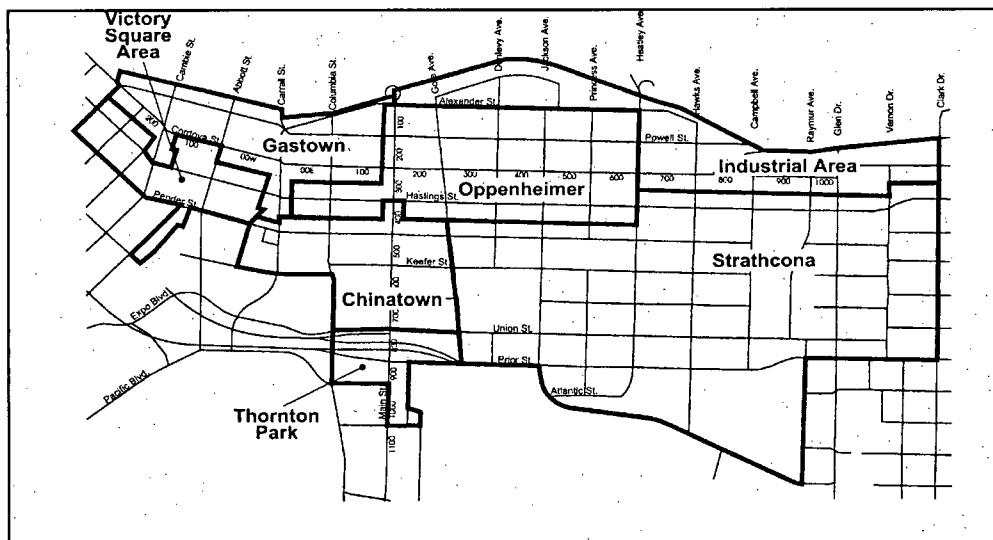
<sup>6</sup>City of Vancouver Planning Department, *Downtown Eastside Monitoring Report*, 1999: 6

**Figure 1: DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE AT A GLANCE**



Source: *Downtown Eastside Monitoring Report 1999*, p.1

**Figure 2: THE COMMUNITIES OF THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE**



Source: *Downtown Eastside Monitoring Report 1999*, p.5

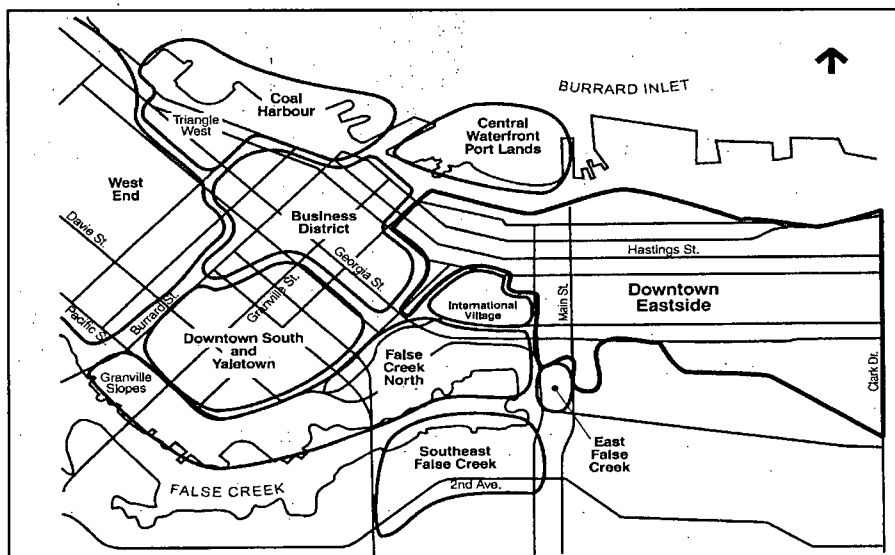
the 1998 Criminal Code Offence Rate per 1,000 population was 515 in the Downtown Eastside as compared to 166 for the rest of Vancouver (ibid.)

### 3.3 BACKGROUND

As mentioned earlier, the Downtown Eastside is the oldest community in Vancouver, and while it has always been a community marked by poverty, it has traditionally been quite stable, and maintained a healthy sense of community. The past few years, however, have marked a significant deterioration in the community in terms of disinvestment by major retailers and other legitimate businesses, increased intravenous drug use (particularly cocaine) and drug dealing, public intoxication and street level crime. Compounding these problems are significant, sometimes hostile, differences of opinion amongst various community interests in the area as to the means of addressing these problems.

In addition to the problems mentioned above that the community is experiencing, the area has also seen significant changes as it has become more and more attractive to individuals desiring more central and "urbane" residential options. This takes the form of both smaller-scale individual projects (for example, the Van Horne lofts with 146 market residential units at Carrall and Cordova Streets), and much larger projects such as International Village on Pender Street, a project with 1,260 planned market units (*Downtown Eastside Monitoring Report*, Spring 1998: 9), with 370 of these units already built or currently under construction (*Downtown Eastside Monitoring Report* 1999: 13). In addition, the new Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre at the Central Waterfront Portlands in Gastown is currently being planned. While this project is currently on hold, it will likely be developed in the near future, and includes 1,000 hotel rooms, shops, restaurants, and an expansion of the existing convention centre and cruiseship terminal (*Downtown Eastside Monitoring Report* 1999: 13).

Figure 3: MAJOR DEVELOPMENT NEAR THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE



Source: *Downtown Eastside Monitoring Report 1999*: p.13

While some in the community view these projects as positive developments in the revitalization of the Downtown Eastside; that is, attracting higher income individuals which will make the area much more attractive for business and other amenities (thus, diluting or eradicating the current problems), others in the area view this differently. Although the low-income community in the Downtown Eastside is by no means represented by a unified voice, there appears to be a consensus that these new and potential developments will result in the displacement of many of the area's low-income residents through increased land values, thus "taking away" the one community where residents feel a sense of belonging, ownership and pride. Although they want to see conditions improve in the community, it is the means of achieving this end that is often contested. To them, "revitalization" connotes "gentrification", and the impacts this will have on the area's less advantaged are deemed to be significant.

In addition, several outspoken representatives from various property owner and business organizations in the area have maintained in no uncertain terms that certain segments of the Downtown Eastside population (for example, drug users) are not, and should not, be considered as stakeholders in the consultation process or any initiatives for the area. This opinion has



offended many representatives (although not all) from various groups in the Downtown Eastside. They maintain that although some segments of the population do not conform to the moral standards of others, they are nonetheless members of the community who deserve to be heard; their presence in the consultation process is necessary in improving the conditions in the community.

### 3.3.1 Multiple Players

A number of very distinct sub-communities call the Downtown Eastside home. Generally speaking, these groups can be categorized as:

- Gastown homeowners
- Gastown business owners and merchants
- Chinatown business owners and merchants
- Older, single men (mostly) and women living in SROs
- Urban First Nations
- Younger street-involved people, attracted by the drug trade

Most of these groups have established their own structure and leadership (either informally, or formally in terms of associations and official organizations), yet there is little relationship across these groups. A sense of leadership of these different groups was derived through participant observation at several meetings between City staff and “community leaders”.<sup>7</sup> It was also noted that while different organizations in the community appeared to be well represented at these meetings, there was generally a lack of representation of individuals not connected to a group or organization, as well as First Nations people. The reason for this is not readily apparent, but can be interpreted as a lack of information at street level for those who are not involved in an organization.

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<sup>7</sup> “Community leaders” were chosen by City staff as individuals whose visible involvement in particular Downtown Eastside organizations gave them the “authority” to represent the various community interests in the area. It is not

As previously stated, this fragmentation of community interests has led to conflict. However, the City believes that "...[t]hese potential communities of interest provide opportunities for community mobilization and development that are largely untapped..." (*Building a Sustainable Future Together*, November 1998: 9). In addition, there are over 200 health, social, recreational, and educational services in the Downtown Eastside. Some of these agencies only serve the local population, and others serve the city as a whole. Other players are the City of Vancouver, the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board, the Vancouver Park Board, the Greater Vancouver Regional District, the Province of British Columbia and the Federal Government (*Building a Sustainable Future Together*, November 1998: 9-10).

While the focus of this thesis is on conflict over public spaces in the inner city generally, and how this conflict inhibits multi-stakeholder community involvement in the planning of quality public spaces for everyone (focussing specifically on the Downtown Eastside as a traditionally low-income community experiencing this conflict in the wake of real and potential redevelopment), it is important to acknowledge that there are many issues that are beyond the scope of this thesis that influence this conflict. Issues pertaining to housing, crime and policing, commercial disinvestment and revitalization, and problems surrounding drug and alcohol addiction significantly affect the physical state of public space, and the activities that are occurring within them. Indeed, all of these issues are inter-connected and cannot be adequately addressed in isolation. Each would require a thesis to themselves to be given sufficient justice. However, these issues will be touched upon in this chapter in order to provide a context for the specific focus on public spaces and the level of involvement and conflict in the community.

### 3.4 CENTRAL AREA PLAN (1991)

This planning document was approved by Vancouver City Council in December 1991.<sup>8</sup> Its intent is to provide policy direction for land-use and planning decisions in the central area (the

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known, however if the City utilizes a particular rationale for selecting particular individuals as "leaders".

<sup>8</sup> This is significant as the majority of planning documents are not approved and adopted by City Council.

downtown peninsula and several central areas that are outside the downtown peninsula). As the Downtown Eastside is situated in the central area, the policies in the document affect this community. Amongst the broad goals laid out in the plan for the central area are:

- "...[c]reate a central area that has a mix of activities, with quieter neighbourhoods where people live close to more active areas where people shop and play as well as work; and where the public streets are the primary scene of public life..."
- "...[e]nsure that the central area is a place to live and visit for all people; for all income and ethnic groups; accessible to the disabled; and for all ages, from children to seniors..."
- "...[s]trengthen the unique qualities and symbolism of the central area as a special place-its skylines, heritage resources, character areas, livable neighbourhoods, and active public spaces..." (*Central Area Plan* 1991: 3)

As residential redevelopment and socio-economic make-up are significant influences in the character of the neighbourhood's public spaces, it is important to touch on the plan's directives in terms of housing in the central area. Generally, the plan advocates for more housing in the central area, and notes that up to that time, there have been pressures for housing development, but no policies to guide decision-making. In addition, the document cites the Greater Vancouver Regional District's *Livable Region Strategic Plan* (1996) in acknowledging that more housing in the central area is important in meeting regional objectives of balancing housing and jobs (ibid.: 18).

Housing policies in the plan are:

- **Create Neighbourhoods** through encouraging areas of primarily housing.
- **Provide some Choice of Use** in some areas to allow for a mix of housing and office development; but favouring housing. Victory Square and Gastown are noted as this type of area.
- **Seek Housing Diversity**
- **Assist Low-Cost Housing**
- **Use Development Levies** to provide for community amenities (ibid: 21-22; original bold)

While the plan does advocate for increased housing development in the central area generally, and names Victory Square and Gastown as areas that should allow for a mix of development (favouring housing), it does maintain that the development of new housing and residential areas should not "...replace existing housing or otherwise directly disrupt existing neighbourhoods..."(ibid. 20).

While there is not one policy area in the plan directed at public spaces in the central area, the directions related to this fall under the section "Retail Policy". For example, under the policy "Ensure Retail Contributes to Public Streets", the document states:

...There may be a special opportunity to create a unique new public space in a strategic downtown location, reinforced by shops and restaurants. "Public space" must be defined carefully. Essentially, a public space should be as public as a sidewalk...(ibid.: 28)

However, the plan does not discuss the implications that new housing development may have on neighbourhoods generally, including the nature of, and access to public spaces in these areas. Similarly, there is no discussion regarding potential conflicts that may arise as new socio-economic groups move into an established area.

### **3.5 GASTOWN COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN (1979)**

This "community action" plan was produced by the Gastown Historic Area Coordinating Committee (GHACC), an umbrella group of Gastown organizations formed in 1976. The primary purpose of the plan was for continued discussion and work amongst various groups in the area. Another purpose was for the plan to be used as a "...reference point for the future involvement of outside organizations, both public and private..." (1979: 1).

The impetus for this plan was that members of the Gastown Historic Area Planning Committee (GHAPC) and GHACC noted that the redevelopment drive of the early 1970s was waning in Gastown. In order to reestablish Gastown on the map as an important community in

Vancouver's downtown, a planning committee was struck to address some of the area's most pressing development, design and planning issues, and recommend courses of action (ibid.: 2).

With regards to public space in Gastown, the plan asserts that "...[p]roviding multi-use outdoor space and providing physical continuity within the Gastown Historic Area are the two primary goals for continued redevelopment of the public domain..." (ibid.: 29). Because, as the plan acknowledged, practically all of the land in Gastown is developed, the streets and lanes constitute the entirety of the area's open space. The exception to this is the CPR right-of-way (ibid.: 29).

The plan differentiates between those streets which should emphasize pedestrian use, and those which should emphasize vehicular use. The streets identified for pedestrian use are Water Street (which turns in to Alexander Street) and Powell Street east to Columbia, and Carrall Street south to Hastings. These streets were selected because

...they form the direct pedestrian links from Gastown the waterfront, the Downtown, and Chinatown...they collectively provide a greatly improved street festival facility...they emphasize Maple Tree Square as a public public pedestrian focus, and...they correspond to the retail streets... (ibid.: 30)

Because the CPR right-of-way is acknowledged as the only "public space" in the area that isn't strictly a street or lane, it is given special consideration. On June 1, 1976, Vancouver City Council established a policy that "...the properties formed from this abandoned rail right-of-way should be reserved as public space...[however] no provision for implementing this policy was made..." (ibid.: 39). The plan recommended that the City secure the land, with the help of the CPR, and develop it as public open space with the Gastown Historical Society and abutting property owners (39-40). The plan cites the 1978 redevelopment of Pioneer Place (Pigeon Park), as a first step in the development of the right-of-way as public open space, and recommends particular guidelines in the potential design of this space (ibid.: 40).

The plan also advocates for certain “allowable” street activities, presumably on the streets designated for a pedestrian focus. These activities include street vending (the City should lease all vending locations in Gastown to the Gastown Historical Society, which would then have the authority to determine appropriate vending locations within the area); extension of retailing to street space (displaying goods on the street); sidewalk cafes (streamline regulations to allow greater flexibility for owners to operate outdoor cafes); festivals and street closures (responsibility for producing street festivals should be transferred to area merchants and property owners). The plan also suggested that during warm summer months, streets with a pedestrian focus should be closed off on Sundays. The main hindrance to this, according to the document, is the engineering costs involved. Thus, it recommended that the Gastown Historical Society be given authority to close the streets, and do the work that the Engineering Department usually does, with the City undertaking inspections and granting approvals (*ibid.*: 45).

Although the plan made very particular recommendations about public realm treatments in Gastown, it does not acknowledge the myriad of social issues that the area has, and continues to contend with, given some of its blurry boundaries with the Downtown Eastside/Oppenheimer District.

### **3.6 DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE/OPPENHEIMER POLICY PLAN (1981)**

To provide a context for the policy recommendations put forth, this document acknowledges that in 1975, Vancouver City Council “...approved initiation of a Neighbourhood Improvement Area (NIP) for the Downtown-Eastside/Oppenheimer area...” (1981: 1). Concurrently, Council had also changed the zoning in the area from primarily commercial and industrial designations, to a Comprehensive Development District (CD-1), which emphasized retaining existing residential uses and encouraging new residential development (*ibid.*).

The above actions were taken by Council in order to “...stabilize the area primarily for the area residents...” (*ibid.*). The plan asserts that “...[t]hese actions were the beginning of a longer

process to halt the decline of this area of the City and to improve and add to the many good aspects which exist..." (ibid.). The primary intention of this document was to be

...part of an incremental process that gradually reduces and resolves areas of conflict and provides direction for the future. It treats the area's social, physical, historical and economic issues as an interacting system, and it provides a context within which both public and private decisions can be made... (ibid.)

The plan does provide a social profile of the area's residents, and points out that "...although the people of the Downtown-Eastside present a 'skid road' stereotype to the world, in fact, they represent a diverse population..." (ibid.: 5). In addition, the length of residency at that time (on average of thirteen years) comprised a relatively stable community (ibid.: 6). That said, the document acknowledges that the "...area attracts transients because it offers inexpensive housing, a downtown location, pubs and a tolerance for eccentricity..." (ibid.). The Downtown Eastside also contains a substantial number of people with physical, emotional or psychiatric handicaps, with a "hard to house" population that comprised about 10% of the total. The plan states that those who are "hard to house" are individuals who have such characteristics as "...mental instability, psychiatric disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, and violence to self or others. Their often socially disruptive behaviour makes them unacceptable tenants of the average hotel or rooming house..." (ibid.: 7). At the time this policy document was written, the area was experiencing a decline in population by 44% from 1961 to 1976 and 21% from 1971 to 1976 (ibid.: 5). However, it also maintains that

...[t]here are indications that the Downtown-Eastside will continue to attract a low income, unattached population, that has difficulty fitting into society's norms and which seeks out inexpensive housing, appropriate social services, a downtown location and a tolerant social climate. The age, sex, and ethnic composition of the population may change, but it will continue to have these economic and social characteristics (ibid.: 7).

According to the plan, at that time there was no indication of potential (re)development in and around the Downtown-Eastside that may have an effect on the socio-economic profile of the area. In fact, the document maintains that

“...[t]he area image is poor, even though in recent years significant improvements have been made. Many of the potential ‘consumers’ of new units are people who already live in the area who are looking to move out of existing substandard accommodation. Most of these people are very low income and would find it impossible to pay market rents. People who do not now live in the area who could pay market rents have shown no interest to date in relocating to the area...it is readily apparent that a demand for market housing is not now very strong, if it exists at all. *However*, the Downtown-Eastside/Oppenheimer areas, as well as the surrounding communities, are improving and it is important to provide for, and in fact encourage, new residential development in this Downtown Community, consistent with Council’s overall Downtown policies... (21) (italics added)

As mentioned previously, in 1975, Vancouver City Council resolved to “revitalize” the Downtown-Eastside/Oppenheimer area by designating a portion of the area for the Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP) and the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP). This was a program cost-shared between the municipal, provincial, and federal governments, intended for upgrading and strengthening communities in need. In conjunction with the Oppenheimer Area Planning Committee (comprised of residential, industrial, retail and ethnic interests), the City prepared a Concept Plan and identified several planning issues which form the basis for the 1981 Policy Plan (ibid.: 8). Among these planning issues were:

- ...a need to rehabilitate existing [housing] units and develop new housing...”
- “...a continuing need to orient the services [social and recreational] to the specific needs of the various resident population sub-groups. Much of the leisure time of the residents is spent walking around the neighbourhood, which points to a need to improve open space amenities...”



- "...[t]here are a disproportionate number of institutions, social service agencies and public authority uses in this area, many of which do not relate at all or relate to a much larger geographic area. The neighbourhood contains a high proportion of liquor establishments, and partially related to this, a high street crime rate..."
- "...[t]he area's historical significance and heritage character and the many unique buildings and streetscapes have not been adequately recognized..." (ibid.: 9-10).

In turn, these issues inform particular goals of the plan:

- "...[r]etain existing and provide new affordable housing for the population of the Downtown-Eastside/Oppenheimer area..."
- "...[u]pgrade the quality of existing housing stock to City standards..."
- "...[i]mprove the viability of commercial activity by encouraging the upgrading of existing commercial uses and the development of new commercial uses which serve both local residents and the large and growing working population in the area..."
- "...[i]ncrease the amount of public open space and provide more outdoor recreation opportunities..."
- "...[i]ncrease the level of public safety for residents, workers and visitors to the area..."
- "...[c]urtail the availability of alcoholic beverages, in view of the intimate connection between alcohol and violence in this area..."
- "...[e]ncourage the provision of indoor recreation services..."
- "...[p]rohibit institutional uses and social service facilities which do not serve the immediate needs of the neighbourhood population..."
- "...[p]reserve and enhance the heritage character of the Downtown-Eastside/Oppenheimer area and recognize its historical significance in the evolution of Vancouver..."
- "...[e]nsure that Downtown-Eastside/Oppenheimer area residents, property owners, merchants, and workers are consulted on local planning and development matters and on the implementation of capital improvement projects..." (ibid.: 11-13).

With regards to public open space, the plan acknowledged that through Neighbourhood Improvement Program funds, the City upgraded some of the area's open space. For example, Oppenheimer Park received approximately \$130,000 worth of upgrades, two major tree planting projects were carried out, and Pigeon Park, at the corner of Hastings and Carrall Streets, was reinstalled (ibid.: 34). Many common recreational activities take place indoors; however, "...they are also frequently carried on outdoors by residents who seek a social and physical outlet from their small hotel/rooming house rooms..." (ibid.). It is the opinion of the document that "...open space and outdoor recreational needs should not be viewed in strictly an 'acres per thousand people' standard, but rather should recognize the social habits of all residents and users, and accentuate the humanistic qualities in the area..." (ibid.). Thus, the plan maintains that there did not appear to be a need to provide major new parks, but rather improve existing spaces and walkways, and provide linkages between the area's existing social and recreational facilities (ibid.: 35).

With respect to community involvement in the recommendations put forth in the plan, it was stated that all projects identified in the document should be carried out with local consultation. It was noted that area merchants and property owners will continue to meet with staff, and that the Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA) monitors the physical and social changes in the area and lobbies Council for improvements. In addition, it states that signs indicating development applications are placed on site and letters of notification are sent to nearby property owners (ibid.: 58).

### **3.7 DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE INTEGRATED SERVICES TEAM**

In 1996, the City of Vancouver created the Downtown Eastside Integrated Services Team (ITS). The mandate of the ITS is to provide coordination across City departments (such as Planning, Engineering, Permits and Licences and the Police Department) to work together to reduce the impacts of crime in the area and improve living conditions. Some of the initiatives that the ITS has worked on include: suspending or withdrawing business licences from problem businesses

(for example, 24 hour stores and pawn shops which support the drug trade), securing vacant buildings, and conditions in SRO hotels (*Downtown Eastside Monitoring Report*, 1999: 3).

### 3.8 DRAFT GASTOWN LAND USE PLAN (JULY 1998)

The draft *Gastown Land Use Plan* was included in a package of six reports put forth by City staff in the summer of 1998. Of these six reports, two of them, *Downtown Eastside-Building a Common Future* and *A Program of Strategic Actions for the Downtown Eastside* were intended to propose short-term measures to deal with the area's most pressing issues. The remaining four reports, *Background Paper on Drug Treatment Needs in Vancouver*; *Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside, Chinatown, Gastown and Strathcona*; *Victory Square Area Concept Plan*; and *Gastown Land Use Plan* proposed longer-term measures. The first two reports were put forth to Council in the fall of 1998 after public review and discussion; the remaining four are still awaiting public review.

As an overall objective, the draft *Gastown Land Use Plan* maintains that Gastown should "...remain as a mixed use area, with an increasing population base of mixed income residents, all within the context of a protected heritage area..."(1998: 6).

Among the goals for the area laid out in the report are:

- "The conservation of Gastown's turn of the century architectural character should be a primary goal."
- "Gastown should continue to be an area that is accessible to anyone. Shoppers, residents (new and old), tourists, businesses, services, and the general public should find interest, delight and enjoyment in Gastown."
- "Residential development should be encouraged in Gastown. There should be no restrictions on the amount of market housing. Special incentives or policies should be provided to facilitate moderate-income housing, both rental and owned. New community-oriented retail & commercial services should be provided for residents."
- "There should be a target of 2,200 low-income, secure, self-contained residential units. This should be achieved through phasing out and replacement of most of the

1,300 SRO units.” [indicated as a long-term strategy]

- “Any displacement of existing low-income residents should be minimized throughout the construction timing for replacement low-income housing in or near Gastown.”
- “Government and community services should primarily serve the needs of the local population. If there is a proposal for a service that would serve a larger area, there should be thorough community consultation, including a review of impacts and specific benefits for Gastown.”
- “The ongoing involvement of existing organizations and other Gastown interests, including local residents and business people, should be supported and solicited in the implementation of the Gastown Land Use Plan.”
- “City By-laws that affect the appearance of the public realm and the exterior of buildings in Gastown should be enforced promptly.”
- “Gastown uses should favour a pedestrian orientation. Create appropriate pedestrian connections, and other linkages, between Gastown and adjoining areas, especially to the waterfront.”
- “Safety and security should be improved in Gastown.” (ibid.: 6-7)

With regards to the provision of public spaces in the area, the plan states that

...[t]here are no specific plans to provide social, cultural and recreational amenities for the people living in Gastown. With the goal of encouraging market housing and upgrading SRO units, an increase in the residential population can be expected without the amenities that citizens have provided in other Vancouver neighbourhoods. There should be a report back on needs: e.g. capital expenditures for indoor recreation, community space to serve a diverse population...(ibid.: 10).

The exception to this is the plan’s goals regarding pedestrian orientation and connections.

### **3.9 DRAFT VICTORY SQUARE AREA CONCEPT PLAN (JULY 1998)**

The *Victory Square Area Concept Plan* process began in March, 1993 when Vancouver City Council instructed staff to consult with stakeholders in the community to prepare a Concept Plan

for Victory Square. The Victory Square area is comprised of Hastings and Pender Streets running east-west from Richards to Carrall Streets running north-south, and Beatty Street from Pender to Dunsmuir. It is considered to be located at a crossroads between the Central business district to the west and south, Gastown to the north, Chinatown and International Village to the southeast, and Oppenheimer to the east (*Victory Square Concept Plan* 1998: 7).

### 3.9.1 Process

With regards to the process of developing the *Victory Square Area Concept Plan*, a “Working Group” and a number of “Task Groups” were formed, consisting of area stakeholders including merchants, property owners, “other interested parties” and City staff. Over a period of six months, these groups worked to identify issues and objectives and recommended that specific policies be put forward in the areas of: renovation incentives; housing, health and social issues; streets and public space; safety and security; arts and culture. In addition to these groups, City staff participated in a process of reaching out to “hard to reach” residents who would otherwise not participate in the planning process, by way of informal meeting in hotels and rooming houses (ibid.: 4).

Public workshops were held in the fall of 1993, to provide the general public with an opportunity to discuss policy recommendations and their implications, as well as to investigate ways to resolve disagreements in the community. In the spring of the following year, City staff arranged for a walking tour of the neighbourhood, to provide area stakeholders with an opportunity to discuss their concerns with City Councillors. The following Spring (June 1995), the first draft *Victory Square Concept Plan* was released for public review and comment. Meetings with the general public, area residents and business groups were held throughout 1995 and 1996, and through this process, City staff were advised that further research and analysis was needed before the Plan could be put forward for Council review.

In the development of the *Victory Square Area Concept Plan*, the primary objective is to

“...develop a strategy for revitalization that would bring investment back into the area without displacing low-income housing and existing residents or compromising the heritage value of the area...” (ibid.: 1)

Six preliminary objectives of the plan are:

- “Encourage development to occur primarily in existing buildings or in new buildings which reflect the character and scale of the area...”
- “Foster a wide choice of land uses appropriate to the existing building stock and compatible with adjacent uses...”
- “Encourage revitalization of business activity...”
- “Foster housing options, including low-income and specialty housing, in existing buildings and new structures...”
- “Address social and community needs...”
- “Create a public realm that complements architectural character and enhances preferred uses...” (ibid.: 4)

The plan addresses a wide range of planning issues, and acknowledges the complex nature of the problems and opportunities that the area faces. This is particularly true of housing, whereby the plan stresses the importance of maintaining existing levels of low-income housing; providing live/work opportunities for low-income artists; and the development of market housing in the area (ibid.: 9,25). The plan also maintains that “[p]rojections based on policies in this Plan, available floor areas, and other factors, suggest that up to 1200 new residents could move into the area in a range of market housing options...” (ibid.: 31). These new residents are predicted to be largely “...young singles and couples without children who will want community facilities and amenities tailored to their needs...” (ibid.).

Anticipating this, the low-income community in the area is wary that these higher-income newcomers may view them as “undesirables”; and that while redevelopment of existing heritage

buildings will help in the preservation of Victory Square's architectural integrity, it may also put pressure on them to move out of the area, as land values increase. The plan acknowledges this fear and potential for (and existing) conflict, and states tolerance will be required from all residents, and that assistance in mediation and problem solving may be required (ibid.).

Safety and security are significant issues in Victory Square, particularly close to its eastern boundary. As in the rest of the Downtown Eastside area, street crime and a general climate of fear is fueled by a number of different variables: rise of intravenous cocaine drug use, the street culture which supports open drug use, the introduction of a "younger, meaner" crowd of people attracted by the drug trade, the relatively high number of individuals with psychiatric or behavioural problems in the area, and the closure of major retailers such as Woodward's (which attracted people to the area and provided "eyes on the street") (ibid.: 33).

As this has a direct impact on the nature of the area's public spaces, and who is using them, the plan put forth several policy recommendations regarding these issues including fleshing out ongoing community policing initiatives, addressing "problem premises" through the City's Integrated Services Team, and encourage new (re)developments to incorporate safety and security into their design (ibid.: 34-35).

In addition, Victory Square (particularly the eastern edge of the area) has also suffered from a lack of viable commercial activity, particularly after the closure of Woodward's. Similar to the rest of the Downtown Eastside area, it has had a difficult time attracting legitimate businesses and existing businesses have a difficult time attracting customers due to the street-level conditions, which create and perpetuate a climate of fear for visitors and residents in the area (ibid.: 36). However, Victory Square also has many assets which could be exploited positively to attract business: central location, well-served by transit, Skytrain and Seabus, and the many heritage buildings with small storefronts (ibid.).

Currently, the City assists business groups in organizing Business Improvement Areas and other associations. However, the plan makes several policy recommendations for improving the business climate in this area. For example, in order to foster a sustainable customer base and support small scale businesses that serve the area's low-income community, it suggests that the City work with the community to identify a regional "market niche" for the area; exploit the area's strengths in the arts, education and culture; enforce current regulations regarding storefront vacancies; work with the community to replace services that were lost after Woodward's closed (e.g. grocery and clothing retailing); initiate programs to increase safety and security; increase curbside parking; work with existing businesses to improve the area's image; hire a consultant to work with these businesses on a revitalization plan; provide employment opportunities for the area's low-income population; and encourage the development of the area's commercial work/live space (ibid.: 37-38).

Regarding issues of public space in the Victory Square area, the plan asserts that besides Victory Square Park (the only park within the boundaries of that planning area), streets and lanes are the community's most heavily used public spaces, and as such, they deserve special attention. Currently, many of the streets and lanes suffer from an accumulation of litter, graffiti on streetwalls, and vandalism of street "furniture" such as trees. The City presently has several by-laws in place that are intended to address these issues such as the Untidy Premises By-law, Standards of Maintenance By-law and the Graffiti By-law.

However, the plan suggests initiatives such as public-private partnerships to involve the community in improving the appearance of the area; retaining historical street and lane features; and consulting with the community on a developing a "low-cost streetscape plan"; research sources of funding and developing streetscape design guidelines; determining a community vision for Victory Square Park and investigate opportunities to improve the public realm adjacent to the Park; foster and encourage public events to occur in the Park; and "...[s]upport...efforts to have the CPR right-of-way developed as public open space from Gastown to Pender Street as an



extension of the pedestrian connection through International Village to the Keefer Steps..." (49, 50-53).

### **3.10 PROGRAM OF STRATEGIC ACTIONS FOR THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE (JULY 1998)**

This report, the second in the Reports for Public Discussion package, is intended to identify objectives to be carried out in the short-term to address some of the most pressing issues in the Downtown Eastside. These objectives are:

- reduce the incidence of drug addiction
- reduce drug-related crime
- improve conditions at street-level
- improve existing SROs and build replacement housing (*Program of Strategic Actions for the Downtown Eastside* 1998: 1)

This report, and the *Downtown Eastside Community Revitalization Program* (to be discussed in the following section) are the most salient to this thesis, as they recognize both the larger contextual issues that influence activities and conditions at street level, and the fractured, often hostile sentiments amongst the various groups in the community, yet recommend initiatives and interventions which can be of positive benefit to the community in the short-term. This report also recognizes that in many instances, cooperation and increased funding from the provincial and federal governments is needed to address the more complex issues of drug and alcohol addiction and the housing needs of low-income residents.

For background purposes, the report states that in the Fall of 1995, a Vancouver City Caucus was held with elected representatives from the City, the Province, and the Federal government in attendance. Agreement was made that actions regarding drug addiction, reduction in Federal government transfers, non-returnable warrants, liquor licenses, housing, and the downsizing of the Riverview Facility (a psychiatric hospital located in the Lower Mainland). It is pointed out that at the date this report was written, senior levels of government had yet to fulfill their responsibilities on the actions which are under their jurisdiction (ibid.: 6).

Given this, the report asserts that since that meeting, the City and Vancouver Police have initiated action on several of the issues that were discussed:

- “Allocating more Police to walk the beat;
- Supporting neighbourhood safety offices in the Downtown Eastside, Chinatown, Gastown and Strathcona;
- Forming the Downtown Eastside Integrated Services Team to deal with problem premises and poorly managed SRO hotels;
- Amending zoning to prevent new secondhand stores and pawnshops;
- Increasing resources for lane and street cleaning;
- Augmenting the street lighting in the area;
- Securing vacant buildings.” (ibid.: 7)

Given that many of the problems in the community cannot be addressed by the City alone (in terms of jurisdiction and/or resources), senior levels of government must be involved. However, the report states that “...[s]enior governments have yet to make this area a priority for coordinated action...” (ibid.). The report puts forth five areas which must be attended to: interventions regarding alcohol and drug addiction and the health problems caused by them (particularly HIV infection); drug and alcohol-related crime; conditions at the street level; poorly managed SRO hotels; lack of common vision (ibid.: 7-8). While addressing housing and substance abuse issues are fundamental in improving the quality of life for the area’s residents, and have a profound influence on the nature of public space, and the activities, for the purposes of this thesis, only the actions and recommendations pertaining to street-level conditions and community process will be examined.

### 3.10.1 Improving Conditions at Street Level

The following is a chronological listing of recent actions that the City has taken regarding this issue:

- **April 1996:** “...increas[ed] the City’s land cleaning resources and work[ed] with United We Can to involve street people in more detailed lane clean-up...”
- **July 1996:** Adopted a Downtown Liquor Licensing Policy “...to deal with the neighbourhood impacts of pubs and cabarets...”

- **October 1996:** “Participated in Provincial reviews to regulate and reduce the sale of high alcohol content beverages such as rice wine...”
- **January 1998:** “Improved security of vacant buildings in and near the Downtown Eastside by establishing interdepartmental policies...”
- **April 1998:** Approved “...Engineering measures to improve the physical appearance along Hastings Street between Gore and Cambie...”. These include: City lane clean-ups; power washing of sidewalks; repair sidewalks and tree bases; funding United We Can in hiring local low-income residents in detailed cleaning of debris in lanes and sidewalks; increasing number of litter receptacles; on-street graffiti removal; street lighting improvements.
- **April 1998:** Provided funding for programs which improve appearance of hoards: graffiti removal and Carnegie Center Association’s “Walls of Change” project, which hires artists from the community to paint murals on hoards.
- **April 1998:** Park Board agreement to plant and replace trees in area; landscape and clean up Oppenheimer and Andy Livingstone Parks (*Program of Strategic Actions for the Downtown Eastside*, Appendix A: 7-8).

Recommended actions on this issue that the City can undertake immediately are:

- The report recommends that a consultant be hired to “...initiate a Hastings Street Revitalization Program by January 1999 with an advisory group made up of representatives of local and downtown businesses, educational institutions, arts organizations, community groups and City staff...[and commit] funds...in attracting or developing at least one demonstration storefront business venture on Hastings Street to help draw other new businesses to the area...”. Suggested are needed services such as a “...moderately priced restaurant, a grocery store, or a laundromat, as well as training and employment for low-income residents... [and instruct] staff to report back...on a strategy and funding requirements for filling all the vacant storefronts on Hastings Street between Gore and Cambie...”.
- “Further improve the physical condition of the sidewalks, lanes, hoardings, street furniture and parks by: ...[m]onitoring conditions, with Engineering reporting back on the effectiveness of ongoing projects and resource needs...[give] *favourable consideration to supporting community-based projects which enhance the appearance of the public realm and contribute to community building such as...community clean-up events...the Carrall Street Connection between Maple Tree*

*Square and the Chinese Cultural Centre...projects which involve hiring local residents to provide special levels of clean-up, maintenance and building security...*

- *“Fund the Carnegie Centre to provide outdoor programs [\$110,000 per year] to help animate the streets and local parks, with an emphasis on Pigeon Park and in front of the community centre...” (ibid.: 8-9; italics added).*

### **3.10.2 Help Community People to Find Allies and Seek a Common Future**

This objective is intended to address the different priorities that the various groups in the community have. The report maintains that

“...[a] flexible community development program may help improve understanding and enable people to start to work together to address common problems. Without this, staff anticipate continued opposition and costly delays to most proposals for new development as well as needed services...” (ibid.: 12).

In terms of recent actions that the City has already undertaken on this issue, the report states that in March of 1998, the City

“...[h]elped facilitate discussions among different local interest groups through meetings about potential problem premises, the proposed Carrall Street Connector, a community-based Downtown Eastside Clean-up event, and informal sessions on how business can help deal with local issues...” (*Program of Strategic Actions*, Appendix A.: 13).

Further actions that the City can take immediately are

“...[f]unding consultant resources...to help resolve differences between different groups within the area and to identify issues and determine the resources which would be needed to help build on common community interests...” (ibid.).

### **3.10.3 Process and Public Response**

Over the course of the summer and fall of 1998, City staff held a series of meetings with the general public, as well as meetings with invited representatives from the various community

interests within the Downtown Eastside area in order to discuss the issues the community is facing, to try to find common ground on these issues, and to discuss the policy recommendations in the report before it went before City Council later that fall. The public meetings were generally very well attended, and given the contentious nature of the issues the community is experiencing, quite spirited at times.

The opinions were as varied as the interests of the groups involved. However, certain issues surfaced again and again. Most individuals agreed that the community is facing serious problems, that crime and open substance abuse are out of control, that streets and other public spaces are unsafe (or have the perception of being unsafe), that the legitimate businesses that do exist in the area are suffering, and that the City has neglected the area and action is needed immediately. However, strongly held differences of opinion lie in what actions should be taken to ameliorate these problems. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, an air of distrust of property owners and business people is held by many in the low-income community, who see these groups and the City intent on gentrifying the area and breaking up what many feel is a generally proud, although poor community.

Conversely, many property and business owners maintain that the area should not accept any more social housing or services primarily intended for the low-income population, as this would further "ghettoize" the community. In addition, many in these groups advocate for zero tolerance of drug dealing and public use of illicit drugs and alcohol. Furthermore, some individuals in the community did not see the merit in attempting to build trust and common ground. They feel that that any money recommended for this use would be better spent feeding and housing the poor.

On October 22<sup>nd</sup> and November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1998, this report went before Vancouver City Council (Standing Committee on Planning and Environment). Over those two days, 44 delegations spoke before Council and voiced their opinions on the report. These delegations included individual property owners, merchants and residents, and representatives from groups such as the

Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA), Carnegie Centre, Urban Youth Alliance, CRAB Society, United Native Nations, DEYAS (Downtown Eastside Youth Action Society), Chinatown Merchants Association, Tenant's Rights Action Coalition, Gastown Business Improvement Society, Gastown Community Safety Office, United We Can, Downtown Vancouver Association, Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU), and representatives from various religious organizations.

Following is a sample of some of the summarized points that were made before Council:

- "...\$150,000 recommended for Outdoor Street Programming, to be operated by the Carnegie Centre, would be better directed to the Food Bank..."
- "...concern with benefit of funding a consultant at \$60,000 to assist with carrying out an assessment, in consultation with community leaders, of how conflict resolution and mediation resources might best be used; high-priced facilitators will not work for the Downtown Eastside; there is a need to understand key differences in the community, which includes drug users, homeowners, and tenants..."
- "...the DTES [Downtown Eastside] requires restoration, not gentrification, beginning with a community process rather than the recommended 'top down' consultant process..."
- "...Outdoor Street Programming is a positive recommendation..."
- "...provide those in need in the Downtown Eastside with the basic necessities of life-food, shelter, Detox, and hope; act now..."
- "...market housing, that does not displace the present housing, needs to be encouraged to create a tax base..."
- "...30,000 Aboriginals currently reside in the area, the fertility rate is high, and many youth are falling through the cracks; the City's Aboriginal social planning position and Aboriginal Advisory Committee need to be reinstated..."
- "...if flow of individuals continue into the DTES the HIV rate will once again surge..."

- "... 'community having a lack of vision' is the most detrimental statement in the Administrative Report—there are very few communities as vibrant..."
- "...the Plan does not reflect the community, nor come from the community; change must come from those living and working in the area, with all levels of government included in the process..."
- "...social programs are needed to deal with social problems, as opposed to possible harassment of poor people through over-policing and zero-tolerance attitudes..."
- "...viability of the neighbouring areas is threatened; police manpower is needed on Hastings Street to provide a safe environment for the more reputable businesses to again locate in the area; police presence must be established in the area, with zero tolerance for illegal activities..."
- "...\$110,000 for street level programming, but it seems strange that the funds should go to Carnegie Centre when drug users are not even allowed into the building; other organizations should receive the funding, and drug users should be involved in the programming..."
- "...Gastown businesses support the additional policing initiative for the DTES area; do not support non-demolition of SROs, additional services to facilitate drug use in Gastown, or provision of more social housing in the area..."
- "...public washrooms open 24 hours a day are badly needed to maintain cleanliness in lanes and restore some dignity to the homeless..."
- "...constructive action is desperately needed; get on with it!..." (City of Vancouver Report to Council, Standing Committee on Planning and Environment, October 22 and November 5, 1998: 4-9)

The report was adopted by City Council with minor amendments.

This sample of statements made by the public City Council provides a representation of the differing opinions between the various interests in the Downtown Eastside. A further illustration of this lies in the example of the recommendation to provide funding to the Carnegie Centre for outdoor street programming. During the process of public consultation on the issues and recommendations in the report, this item was not particularly controversial. While there was

some dissent that this money could be better used towards providing food and shelter, much of the debate revolved around housing, illicit drug and alcohol use, and crime and safety issues.

However, what occurred during the implementation of this recommendation is an example of how fractured the community interests are in the Downtown Eastside. Carnegie Centre is officially run and funded by the City of Vancouver. However, the Carnegie Centre Association, a volunteer advisory board, has substantial input into the Centre's programs and activities. The City's intent for the funding of the outdoor street programming was that it be used for activities throughout the area, particularly along Hastings Street and Pigeon Park at the corner of Hastings and Carrall Streets, as a means of introducing activities and people into the area that would reduce the negative impacts of drug dealing and crime. However, the Carnegie Centre Association expected that they would manage the program, with the focus of programmed activities occurring in front of the Centre at the corner of Main and Hastings Streets (*The Vancouver Sun*, January 23, January 30 1999).

What ensued was what Ian Mulgrew of *The Vancouver Sun* described as a "...nasty battle that has stalled the first initiative in the strategy to improve the Downtown Eastside..." (*The Vancouver Sun*, January 23, 1999.). The advisory board felt that the City's mandate to spread programmed activities throughout Hastings Street and Pigeon Park was a move to placate business and property owner interests in Gastown and Chinatown. One board member stated that "... '[w]e are at the end of our rope...Staff are demoralized. Patrons are talking about it all the time. The longer we stall, the worse it gets. The street programming issue shows how little say the association has' ..." (*The Vancouver Sun*, January 30 1999). For its part, the City maintained that since the initiative is part of a larger plan for the area, it needs some level of control over how it is run, and that it should meet "...broader objectives, not just the needs of the Carnegie Centre..." (*The Vancouver Sun*, January 23 1999). Ted Droettboom, then the City's General Manager of Community Services, summed up both the position of the City on the matter and the difficulty in implementing initiatives in the area when he stated



... '[p]art of the reason everyone is nervous about this one is because it is almost representative of how difficult it is to get anything happening in the Downtown Eastside because of turf, ego and all sorts of things...[any initiative] gets associated with all sorts of suspicions of hidden agendas. That's representative of the level of paranoia extant in the community. I don't use paranoia pejoratively, but there is a real suspicion that virtually any initiative that anyone takes is backed up by six or seven hidden agendas. It's the furthest thing from our thoughts that there would be any connection between [street programming and the political support]...(ibid.)

Many, both in the community and at the City, feel sense of frustration that an initiative such as this one that involves a relatively small amount of money (\$150,000), and elicited very little controversy in the beginning, had evolved into such a highly contentious issue in the community.

Ian Mulgrew of *The Vancouver Sun* captures this frustration in the statement:

...If this level of antagonism erupts on something as simple as a summer street program, think of the acrimonious battles that will accompany the large, controversial components of the Downtown Eastside strategy...[i]f such destructive bitterness cannot be overcome, it won't be sad: it will be tragic... (ibid.).

In the Spring of 1999, an agreement was eventually reached with the Carnegie Centre Association to spread the outdoor street programming program and funds between Carnegie Centre, Pigeon Park, and Victory Square.

### **3.11 BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE TOGETHER: THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE REVITALIZATION PROGRAM (OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1998)**

This program was a proposal for a five-year project to address the fundamental issues and problems that the Downtown Eastside is experiencing. It is jointly sponsored by the Vancouver Coalition for Crime Prevention and Drug Treatment and the City of Vancouver, and involves an application to the Federal government's National Crime Prevention Centre for \$1.25 million per year for each of the program's five years. (*Building a Sustainable Future Together*, November 1998: 4,7). On February 25, 1999 the Federal government announced that it would provide the requested funding for this program (City of Vancouver, *City News*, May 1999: 3).

The program is informed by several key ideas: working together, building trust, concrete action, and systemic and informed perspectives (that is, the problems in the community are linked to larger issues in the City and Region) (*Building a Sustainable Future Together*: 4,5). The desired outcomes of this program are, broadly speaking, to create a “healthy” community; reduce the incidence of crime, drug use and overdoses; increase the sense of safety on the streets and other public spaces; increase job opportunities for locals; increase housing mix and quality; increase availability of drug and alcohol treatment services; and reduce the demand for these services (ibid.: 15-16). Thus, as opposed to the *Program of Strategic Actions*, which recognizes the broader issues yet makes recommendations for short-term actions, this project is intended to tackle the larger issues of poverty, crime and substance abuse.

Key components to this program are community mobilization, facilitation and mediation. The program recommends carrying out a process whereby the community identifies its key needs; conducting workshops in community-building; and providing facilitation and mediation services to help the sub-communities come together to find common ground, and joint action (ibid.: 22). The project will be evaluated on an ongoing basis against the initial directions to test for effectiveness.

### 3.12 CONCLUSION

Through reviewing these past and present policies and initiatives on the part of the City of Vancouver, it is apparent that there is a progression over time in the understanding and acknowledgement of the issues in the Downtown Eastside. It is also evident that the City is intent on protecting the low-income community in the area, but at the same time, has the objective of “revitalizing” the Downtown Eastside through means such as increasing the amount of market housing in the area, that some believe may conflict with the former.

While public spaces in the Downtown Eastside have been acknowledged throughout these policies, the notion that these public spaces play a substantial role in the everyday lives of

### Chapter 3

Downtown Eastside residents, and the recognition that the conditions in the public realm are a significant aspect to the overall health of the community has been acknowledged only recently (particularly in the *Program for Strategic Actions*). A significant aspect of the area's public realm that has been overlooked in the past is the issue of equity for a variety of user groups, and the conflicts that can arise when new residents move into the area. Again, there is an increased recognition of this issue in more recent policy documents.

In addition, the role of the community in planning for public space improvements has not been acknowledged in the past (except for standard public meeting exercises). The advent of initiatives such as the *Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program* is an attempt on the part of the City to establish a process whereby the community has increased input into new initiatives and policies that affect the community, including initiatives concerned with public space improvements.

Public response to initiatives such as the *Program for Strategic Actions* indicates that the community feels as if it has been "analyzed to death", and immediate action is required to stem the tide of the current conditions in the area. The City is now trying to act promptly by putting forth short-term initiatives that will act to improve the conditions at street-level and catalyze longer-term strategies for the larger, more systemic issues.

As a critical component in this process is the effective involvement of the community, the next chapter will examine the Neighborhood Planning Process in Seattle, Washington's Pioneer Square, and how this process has led to initiatives that have built consensus on many issues in the community, and many improvements of the conditions in the area.

## 4 CASE STUDY: PIONEER SQUARE

### 4.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to examine a model for community involvement in the planning of shared public space in the inner city; in this case, Pioneer Square in Seattle, Washington. It should be acknowledged that this is not a “perfect” model, simply for the reason that no two communities are exactly alike. However, the Pioneer Square community shares many of the same social, historical, spatial and economic characteristics as that of the Downtown Eastside, and therefore, may provide some clues for possible short-term initiatives<sup>9</sup>

### 4.2 BACKGROUND ON PIONEER SQUARE

Pioneer Square is located in downtown Seattle and is the city’s “birthplace”. It was once Seattle’s center of commerce, and many of the city’s premium hotels were located here. As Seattle’s downtown core expanded, conditions began to change in Pioneer Square (*Seattle Arts Commission Newsletter*, November 7, 1997: 1 on internet at [www.ci.seattle.wa.us/sac/newslett2.htm](http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/sac/newslett2.htm)). After the First World War, hotels began to cater primarily to transient, seasonal fishing and farm workers, and were often physically adapted to accommodate this clientele (small, single rooms without a private bathroom). The Pioneer Square area became known as Seattle’s “Skid Road” due to the fact that timber would be slid down the street to a mill on the waterfront (ibid.).<sup>10</sup>

By the end of the 1960s, Pioneer Square had become Seattle’s center of social service agencies, taverns, pool halls, burlesque theaters, pawn shops and second hand stores. While these conditions deterred most Seattle residents and visitors from entering the area, the community has

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<sup>9</sup> Throughout this chapter and the remainder of the thesis, the American English spelling of “neighborhood” will be used when discussing Neighborhood Planning in Seattle directly, and in quotes where this word is used. However, where neighbourhoods are discussed in a general sense (that is, not referring specifically to Seattle’s planning initiatives), the Canadian English spelling will be used.

<sup>10</sup> According to Ford (1994), Pioneer Square is considered to be the first “skid road” in North America.

housed a substantial number of very low-income individuals and increasingly, artists in search of cheap studio and living spaces (ibid.).

As Pioneer Square is the oldest neighbourhood in Seattle, it contains a significant number of architecturally significant buildings, many of which were built in the five year period following the Great Seattle Fire of 1889 (City of Seattle website: [www.ci.seattle.wa.us](http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us)). In the late 1960s, citizens mobilized against a plan to build a freeway through the neighbourhood. This community outcry led to the establishment of Pioneer Square as the United States' first National Historic District in 1970 (*Pioneer Square Neighborhood Plan* 1999: 4; on internet at: [www.pioneersquare.org](http://www.pioneersquare.org)). In 1974, the Pioneer Square Historic District Plan made recommendations for the area's public spaces, commercial development and housing in order to reestablish the area as a vibrant residential and commercial precinct. Through this, the City of Seattle invested millions of dollars for capital projects, which acted as a catalyst for private investment in the community's rehabilitation (ibid.).

Today, Pioneer Square is described as a place that is "full of contrasts", in that

...[i]t has half a dozen homeless shelters that mingle with some of Seattle's finest bookstores, clubs, restaurants and nationally recognized art and antique galleries. The poor, the drifters, the grifters and drunks are as much at home as the camera-toting tourists, artists, gallery patrons, apartment dwellers and condo owners...

(Mark Higgins, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, Saturday August 16<sup>th</sup> 1997: 2 on internet at [www.seattle-pi.com/pi/neighbors/pioneer/hood16b.html](http://www.seattle-pi.com/pi/neighbors/pioneer/hood16b.html)).

Presently, the population of Pioneer Square is approximately 1,800 people. The percentage of males living in the area is 69%, and 82% of the households in the area are rental accommodations (City of Seattle, Department of Neighborhoods on internet at [www.ci.seattle.wa.us/don/home.htm](http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/don/home.htm)). Approximately 51% of the population live below the poverty level (*Seattle Arts Commission Newsletter*: 2). The housing breakdown in the area is 12% "transitional housing in shelters and missions", 54% "low-income subsidized rentals", 5%

“low-middle income rentals”, 9% “middle-income rentals”, and 20% “high-income rentals and condominiums”. The Pioneer Square Neighborhood Plan states that the community of Pioneer Square endorses the City of Seattle’s target population mix at 1/3 low-income, 1/3 middle-income, and 1/3 high-income (*Pioneer Square Neighborhood Plan* 1999: 16; on internet at [www.pioneersquare.org/plan/page16/index.html](http://www.pioneersquare.org/plan/page16/index.html)).

The artist community has long been a fixture in the Pioneer Square community. Currently, there are approximately 300 artists living in the area, most of whom were attracted to the area’s inexpensive rents and turn-of-the-century brick buildings. However, “[n]ow that the neighborhood has turned the corner, and is on the verge of significant improvement, artists find themselves at risk...” (*Seattle Arts Commission Newsletter*: 2 ). As in many North American cities where artists have been “urban pioneers” in run-down areas of the city, they are often among the first to be negatively affected by gentrification and revitalization. It is no different in Seattle’s Pioneer Square, and the *Pioneer Square Neighborhood Plan* calls for implementing measures that will protect the existing supply of artist studios, and encourage the legalization of artist live/work spaces without causing “undue hardship” on the current artist residents (*Pioneer Square Neighborhood Plan* 1999: 16).

Pioneer Square has suffered from a negative image in the past, and to a certain degree, continues to grapple with the same problems that the Downtown Eastside struggles with: public intoxication, drug dealing and open drug use, and street crime. Many merchants in the area complain that the public perception of the neighbourhood as unsafe has kept many potential customers away (Alan P. Fryer, *Puget Sound Business Journal*, July 1, 1996: 1 on internet at [www.amcity.com/seattle.stories/1996/07/01/story7.html](http://www.amcity.com/seattle.stories/1996/07/01/story7.html)). However, in a 1997 survey by the Pioneer Square Community Council, many of the area residents blame much of the crime in the community on visitors, particularly those who come into the neighbourhood for weekend sports events (the Kingdome football stadium is located in the area). While initially attracted to the area

for the sports event, some of these visitors stay in the area afterwards to drink and buy drugs off the street (*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*:1).

Some initiatives that have been undertaken to handle these problems include: the Pioneer Square Community Council's summertime "lunch in the park", encouraging nearby office workers to use the three parks in the area during the day on their lunch breaks as a means to "take back the park"; Seattle City Council passed a law in 1997 ("Stay Out of the Park" ordinance) that allows police to "...eject people from Seattle parks for seven days to one year if they are caught violating city laws..." (ibid.: 1-2); and the Pioneer Square Safety Team (PSST), founded in the Spring of 1998 by the Pioneer Square Community Council and Business Improvement Association, with the aid of the Seattle Police Department and the Washington Liquor Control Board.

The PSST is comprised of members of various community groups in Pioneer Square who walk through the neighbourhood in teams and pick up litter, call police when they see illegal activity and greet people as they pass. They do not confront individuals who are engaged in illegal activities, rather, their presence is intended to make drug dealers uncomfortable. (Jack Broom, *Seattle Times*, June 20, 1998: 1 on internet at [www.seattletimes.com/news/local/html98.altpsst\\_062098.html](http://www.seattletimes.com/news/local/html98.altpsst_062098.html)).

It is evident, then, that Pioneer Square shares much in common with the Downtown Eastside in terms of its location in the inner city, its status as the oldest neighbourhood in the city, and thus historically significant, and also the traditional neighbourhood of Seattle's low income population. It is also clear that Pioneer Square shares many of the same problems in terms of crime, homelessness, poverty, open drug use, public intoxication and other "anti-social" behaviours. At the same time, most likely due to the area's central location and heritage architecture, Pioneer Square is also seeing a movement of higher income individuals and families into the community.

However, what seems to set these two neighbourhoods apart is that the Pioneer Square community appears to have managed to become a neighbourhood where consensus has been reached on various issues between different interests, and initiatives have taken place to create a place where different resident income groups, as well as tourists, can all share in the community equally.

### **4.3 NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING IN SEATTLE**

In 1987, Seattle City Council passed a resolution that established a Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program in order to "...create a partnership between the City and its neighborhoods in order to provide the neighborhoods with tools and resources for planning and development which reflect their needs and values..."(City of Seattle, Department of Neighborhoods). The spirit behind this initiative is the notion that "...neighborhoods know best what they need and can best pursue those goals..." (ibid.).

After this resolution was passed, thirteen districts in the City of Seattle were drawn up, and Neighborhood Service Centers ("Little City Halls") were established in each of these areas. The Department of Neighborhoods was established in 1990, which became the "umbrella department" for providing community-based services that were previously administered in separated offices: Neighborhood Service Centers, the P-Patch Program (community gardens) and the Neighborhood Matching Fund (ibid.). The overall mandate of the Department of Neighborhoods is to "...preserve and enhance Seattle's diverse neighborhoods; empower people to make positive contributions in their communities; bring government closer to all people, ensuring that it is responsive..." (ibid.).

#### **4.3.1 Neighborhood Service Centers**

Neighborhood Service Centers are located in each of Seattle's thirteen districts. Staffed by individuals from the Department of Neighborhoods, these centers provide services such as:

- "Facilitate communications between citizens and their government.



- Help community groups network.
- Assist with neighborhood improvement projects.
- Make referrals to local human services.
- Serve as staff to District Councils.”
- At some centers, individuals can pay their City utility bills, parking tickets or offer Magistrate Services to hear minor traffic offenses or other local by-law violations (ibid.).

### 4.3.2 Neighborhood District Councils

Each of the thirteen neighbourhood districts in Seattle has a Council that is staffed by the Department of Neighborhoods and organized with the authority of the Seattle City Council. Each of the District Councils is comprised of representatives from different neighbourhood organizations in the district. These organizations can include Neighborhood Community Councils and Associations, Neighborhood Chambers of Commerce and Business Associations, and other community-based non-profit organizations (ibid.). The purpose of the Neighborhood District Council is to

- “Provide a forum for community issues.
- Channel neighborhood budget requests to the City Council.
- Make recommendations on Neighborhood Matching Fund awards.” (ibid.)

### 4.3.3 Neighborhood Matching Fund

The Neighborhood Matching Fund, established in 1988, is a program which allocates over \$3 million per year to community groups and organizations in Seattle for “neighborhood-initiated improvement, organizing or planning projects...” (ibid.). In order to receive funds, a neighbourhood group does not necessarily have to be “incorporated”; it may be established simply for the purposes of initiating the specific project. Applications for funding are accepted for neighbourhood-based organizations of residents or businesses. The criteria for defining a “neighbourhood-based organization” are that they have “...a majority of its members residing, or operating businesses, in a commonly recognized neighborhood and whose purpose is to improve the quality of life in that area...”. In addition, the group or organization must “...have an open

membership [and] cannot discriminate in the admission of members...” (ibid.). To meet eligibility requirements, projects must:

- “Provide a public benefit.
- Result in a product that benefits a neighborhood.
- Involve neighborhood people in the identification, planning, and execution of the project.
- Be a neighborhood planning project, neighborhood improvement project, or a public school-neighborhood partnership pilot project.” (ibid.)

The funding that the City provides matches the “...community’s contribution of volunteer labor, materials, professional services, or cash...” (ibid.). To date, projects that have been funded through this program include playgrounds, community gardens, tree planting, community schools, “inter-generational history projects”, and neighbourhood planning efforts (ibid.).

### **4.4 NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING IN PIONEER SQUARE**

Since 1995, the Pioneer Square Historic District has been participating in the Neighborhood Planning Process. For the better part of this period, the Pioneer Square Planning Committee had spent much of its time “...initiating discussions and recording the outcomes concerning the quality, character and preservation of our fragile and irreplaceable neighborhood...” (*Pioneer Square Neighborhood Plan*: 3).

From 1995 to 1997, the first phase of the Neighborhood Planning Process in Pioneer Square, hours were spent by volunteers in the Pioneer Square community researching the 1991 Pioneer Square Plan and coordinating outreach events to involve neighbourhood stakeholders in the Neighborhood Planning Process (ibid.). During this period, “notable accomplishments” include the formation of the Pioneer Square Community Development Organization and the 1996 Pioneer Square Planning Survey. This survey was distributed throughout the community and the “hundreds of completed surveys” uncovered key community goals:

- “Preserve and protect historic character.
- Beautify and maintain streets, parks and alleys.

- Sustain a safe and sanitary environment for all.
- Promote and develop housing, the arts, small business and quality social services.” (ibid.: 3-4)

The second phase of the Neighborhood Planning Process in Pioneer Square began in July 1997, with the Planning Committee hiring a Plan Coordinator, and beginning the process of developing the 1998 *Neighborhood Plan* (ibid.: 4). The purpose of the 1998 Neighborhood Plan is to “...direct State, County and City investment, private development, and community initiatives for many years...” (ibid.: 3). The “Major Issue Areas” discussed in the Plan are:

- “Improve communication and collaboration.
- Improve the neighborhood’s public spaces.
- Improve the range of housing stock.
- Strengthen the economic base.
- Improve infrastructure: parking, transportation and utilities.” (ibid.)

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the Pioneer Square Neighborhood Planning process is the way in which various interests came together in order to address the community’s goals for neighbourhood improvement:

...The mantra for Pioneer Square planning activity is to embrace change while maintaining historic character and diverse identities. What sets Pioneer Square apart from the many planning efforts around the City is the emphasis on developing partnerships necessary for implementing the community’s good ideas...(ibid.).

At the beginning of 1997, the Pioneer Square Community Council, Business Improvement Area, Community Development Organization and Planning Committee (representing a diversity of interests in the community) began working together as “Merged Interests” (ibid.:19). “Merged Interests” also works cooperatively with the Pioneer Square Preservation Board on issues pertaining specifically to the area’s architectural heritage (City of Seattle, Department of Neighborhoods).

In the Fall of 1997, the Pioneer Square Partnership Summit (a series of five meetings) was held in order to clarify the vision for the community, identify means for achieving this vision, and forming relationships for action. These meetings were open to everyone in the community, and the response was healthy: "...several hundred residents, business people, local developers, city officials, and representatives of neighborhood organizations all came together to work cooperatively toward this end..." (ibid.: 4). The first four meetings involved discussing specific themes that the community felt were important for the neighbourhood, while the fifth meeting ("Meeting of the Minds") involved summarizing results of the previous meetings and discussing means of action (ibid.: 3-4).

### 4.4.1 Action Planning

The Pioneer Square Planning Committee utilizes what it calls "action planning" during the Neighborhood Planning process. The Committee defines "action planning" as

...defining the projects, programs and policies to achieve community goals, identifying stewards who will advocate the goals, and targeting partners who will implement them... This is an alternative process of planning in that it structures the process of realizing the plan concurrent with creating it. This process is collaborative and operational, and allows the neighborhood and City to participate in real time with the development forces shaping South Downtown... [It] is pro-active and opportunistic...(ibid. 3, 19).

Thus, the *Neighborhood Plan* is "achievement oriented". While it does lay out broader goals to provide direction on longer-term issues, the main purpose of action planning as it applies to the planning process in Pioneer Square is to identify key areas that must be addressed immediately, and in turn, identify tangible, "high-impact" initiatives or projects that can be implemented in the short term. In tandem with this is determining what resources are required to carry out the project, and who to approach to request these resources from.

### 4.4.2 Who's Planning?

Unlike most planning processes whereby City planning staff engage in consultation with the public on the various planning issues, yet are the primary generators of community plans, Neighborhood Planning in Pioneer Square is much more of a "bottom up" process. It is the residents themselves who are conducting surveys, coordinating meetings and drafting the plans.<sup>11</sup> City planning staff and consultants are involved in the process, yet often in an advisory manner offering technical advice or support. The City of Seattle provides the guidance and funding to neighbourhoods to hire their own planners. In the case of Pioneer Square, planning consultants were hired from within the community. During the Neighborhood Planning process, the City's role was intended to be neutral, and focused on responding to recommendations in the plan that the community generated itself<sup>12</sup>

Of course, some level of consensus and common ground is required on the part of the community for this type of planning process to be truly effective. The *Pioneer Square Neighborhood Plan* states that

...Our diversity is one of the attributes that we love most- we will not agree on every issue. Nevertheless, Pioneer Square must find common-ground issues and speak with a unified voice on these issues. We accomplish this by keeping the community informed, involved, and educated... We are helping the city to act in Pioneer Square's interest as never before, by presenting clear and well-developed solutions to our many challenges...(4)

One representative from the Pioneer Square Community Development Organization stated that common ground is often reached in the community largely due to significant development forces that will shape the community over the next 10 years. A new baseball stadium has recently opened up in the area, while a new football stadium and exhibition hall is slated to open next

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<sup>11</sup> Personal communication with City of Seattle's project manager for Pioneer Square Neighborhood Plan.

<sup>12</sup> Personal communication with City of Seattle's project manager for Pioneer Square Neighborhood Plan.

year. In addition, local developer, Samis Land Co. has been undertaking significant redevelopment of historic buildings in the community for residential purposes (Mark Higgins, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*: 2). The Community Development Organization's representative maintains that in order to mediate these developments, community organizations realize that they must work together or they may lose out on "leveraging opportunities". There are, however, differences of opinion between business owners who benefit directly from new developments and the sports stadiums in the area, and those who are directly impacted them. Similar to circumstances in the Downtown Eastside, some efforts have been made to provide conflict resolution in order to mitigate these differences of opinion<sup>13</sup>

This said, the process of the community identifying areas and issues where there is agreement, and capitalizing on this, aids the consensus building process in Pioneer Square. The community is taking a pragmatic approach by realizing that if certain development projects in and around the community are going to occur, the community should not lose out on the opportunity to gain somehow from these projects.

### 4.4.3 Fortson Square Improvement Project

Improving public spaces is a significant component in the draft *Pioneer Square Neighborhood Plan*. The plan maintains that the area's human diversity: tourists, artists, apartment and condominium dwellers, the City's disadvantaged population, coupled with the area's location and amenities: historic district, waterfront location, art galleries and shops, "thriving" entertainment district, and the site of new sports stadium developments "...make for a vibrant community and a street life that is exciting and ever-changing..." (8).

However, as mentioned earlier, many of the public spaces in Pioneer Square suffer from the same problems as those in the Downtown Eastside: drug dealing, "uncivil" behaviour such as public

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<sup>13</sup> Personal communication with City of Seattle's project manager for Pioneer Square Neighborhood Plan

intoxication, lack of maintenance and programming. The *Neighborhood Plan* addresses these issues and makes specific recommendations on five “critical areas” in the community. One of these critical areas is the 2<sup>nd</sup> and Yesler intersection, which includes Fortson Square. Fortson Square is a small triangular shaped park (much like Pigeon Park in the Downtown Eastside) at the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> and Yesler streets.

The plan states that

...[t]his area is a critical area because its regeneration is crucial to the neighborhood’s future. Fortson Square is currently the nexus for all that ails Pioneer Square: drug dealing, dysfunctional anti-social behavior, public drug usage, harassment, derelict property. This area is the entrance into Pioneer Square from the bus tunnel, and a key link to the central business district. Its decline must be stopped and its regeneration begun. Of the five critical areas, this one requires the most attention and resources from the City...(Ibid.: 11)

Recommendations made in the Plan with regards to Fortson Square include:

- “Implement incentives and advocate to property owners to **bring active uses to adjacent properties**. Specifically, attract more retail and service businesses such as a pharmacy, grocery, hardware store etc., to first-floor spaces; attract middle-income housing or commercial tenants on upper floors.”
- “**Limit specific over-represented commercial uses at this corner**, specifically street level businesses dependent on alcohol sales, until the problems with crime and uncivil behavior are resolved.”
- “Support the **Good Neighbor Agreement** between existing social service providers and Pioneer Square Community Council that defines responsibilities, standards and accountabilities to ensure clean public areas and civil public behavior.”
- “Encourage **police to focus their efforts** at this area by reducing tolerance for uncivil behavior and enforcing public behavior standards.”
- “Allocate resources to make this area a model success for **King County’s initiative** with convenience store and tavern operators to limit further alcohol sales to intoxicated chronic public inebriates.”

- “Transfer **responsibility** of Fortson Square from SEATRAN to the **Parks Department** to improve gardening and maintenance and allow the Stay Out of the Park Ordinance to be enforced.”
- “Fund the project to **redesign and rebuild Fortson Square**, which will improve healthy pedestrian use of the space and help catalyze redevelopment.”
- “Implement **pedestrian streetscape improvements** that help bus tunnel users find their way to the stadiums and Pioneer Square destinations, and enjoy the experience.”
- “Implement elements of the **pedestrian navigation system** to help visitors, tourists, trolley and bus riders, ferry users and event-goers find their destinations...[w]henver possible, streetscape design should facilitate visual connections to main destinations and transit links.”(ibid.) (original bold)

In the Fall of 1998, the Pioneer Square Community Development Organization received a Neighborhood Matching Fund award of \$97,975 for the Fortson Square Improvement Project. The project description is

...to create an aesthetically pleasing space that honors the historic character of Pioneer Square; address the public health and safety problems associated with loitering, public inebriation and drug use; and enhances the pedestrian linkage between key points in Pioneer Square...(City of Seattle, Department of Neighborhoods)

The proposed neighbourhood match for this project is \$164,620, which means that while the City will grant the neighbourhood \$97,975, it suggests that the community match this amount with \$164,620 in volunteer labour, money, donated professional services, materials or supplies (City of Seattle, Department of Neighborhoods). The funding for the project is “Semi-Annual”, which stipulates that the project must be completed in one year or less (ibid.).

The Fortson Square Improvement Project is just one example of initiatives intended to improve public spaces for all Pioneer Square locals, tourists and other Seattle residents.



### 4.4.4 Other Initiatives in Pioneer Square

Similarly, other projects that have gotten underway in the Pioneer Square neighbourhood include:

- “4<sup>th</sup> and Jackson Public Space Improvements”: Through a \$6.7 million state grant to the City of Seattle, with portions of the project funded and implemented by public and private partners, this project is intended to create a “...unified public space experience...[where] visitors and commuters are welcomed to the region’s best transportation hub...[and where] public life is active, safe and memorable...”
- “Extend Occidental Corridor from Jackson to King”: With a \$125,000 donation from the Seattle Mariners and \$425,000 from the City of Seattle, this project is intended to “...realize the community vision for Occidental Corridor [and] complete Pioneer Square’s one green street, expand the sidewalk, add street trees, repave sidewalks and pave the street in brick...” (*Pioneer Square Neighborhood Plan* 1998: 19).

These projects in Pioneer Square are the product of the community’s “Action Planning” process, ascertaining key areas that need improvement immediately, identifying partners and funding sources that can help achieve the goal of the project, and getting the project underway.

## 4.5 PIONEER SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AS A MODEL

As a model for community initiatives for planning quality, accessible public spaces in the inner city, Pioneer Square can offer some useful lessons for the Downtown Eastside. For example, Neighborhood Planning in Seattle places trust in the community that it knows best when it comes to finding solutions. From the beginning of the process, the City gave the community the control to direct the planning process how it deemed fit, which included providing the funds to hire their own planning consultant.

This control over the process has given the community the confidence to both put aside differences on many issues and come together to find solutions. In addition, action planning has provided a model for immediate action on short-term projects, which again, gives the community confidence in its ability to set goals and achieve them.

As stated at the beginning of the chapter, however, Pioneer Square cannot be considered a “perfect” model for the Downtown Eastside due to several factors. For example, there is not complete agreement between community groups-differences between various interests in Pioneer Square continue to exist. Also, there is no discussion in the plan about fundamentally addressing the area’s myriad of social problems (which is the only way for the short-term initiatives to be sustainable in the long-term).

Pioneer Square is an American example, which means that some things may not apply to Vancouver. For example, some of the funding for various projects in Pioneer Square comes from foundations or philanthropic agencies, which are in much more abundance in the United States. Also, it appears that conditions in Pioneer Square are not quite as acute as in the Downtown Eastside. For example, Pioneer Square contains some of Seattle’s finest stores and restaurants. This would most likely not be the case if Pioneer Square experiences the same physical conditions, poverty, crime, public drug and alcohol abuse and “anti-social” behaviour as the Downtown Eastside.

Finally, some may view Seattle initiatives such as the “Keep Out of the Park” ordinance as heavy-handed, potentially arbitrary, and discriminatory against the homeless. One can argue that initiatives such as this do not truly address the community’s fundamental problems, and are band-aid measures.

Nonetheless, there are elements of the planning process in Pioneer Square, that indicate that it is possible for different interests to come together in a potentially conflict-ridden environment, and enact positive change. In the following chapter, Carrall Street and the CPR right-of-way in the Downtown Eastside will be examined in terms of current projects and initiatives as well as the processes behind these proposals in order to assess the opportunities and constraints for a community-driven public realm improvement project here.

## **5 INITIATIVES IN THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE**

### **5.1 PURPOSE**

As discussed previously, the conditions in the Downtown Eastside generally have reached a point that many in the community find intolerable. This is played out on a number of different levels, with the nature of the area's public spaces being particularly unbearable to many. Time and again, the community has expressed both a need and a desire for action on the part of the City and senior levels of government to address the fundamental issues the community is facing, and to spearhead short-term initiatives to improve conditions in the present.

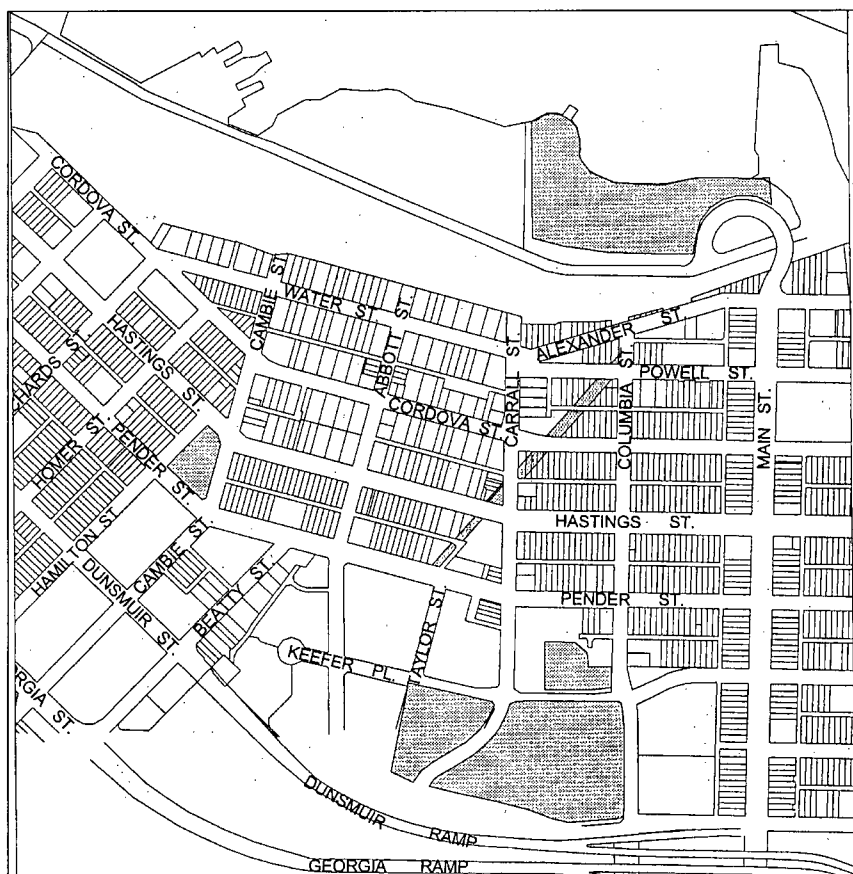
The purpose of this chapter is to examine the opportunities for a public realm improvement project in the Downtown Eastside, specifically along Carrall Street and the historic CPR right-of-way. The primary intent is to examine proposals and ideas for such a project that are currently being considered in terms of the potential for an inclusive, community-generated vision for the public spaces in the Downtown Eastside.

### **5.2 WHY CARRALL STREET AND THE CPR RIGHT-OF-WAY?**

Carrall Street and the CPR right-of-way are important sites for a public space improvement project for several reasons:

- Carrall Street is a significant "link" between the three communities of Gastown, Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside.
- Carrall Street already contains two of the area's existing public spaces: Maple Tree Square at the corner of Water and Carrall Streets and Pigeon Park at the corner of Hastings and Carrall Streets; the Chinese Cultural Centre is located roughly at Pender and Carrall Streets; Andy Livingstone Park is located at the south end of Carrall Street.
- Pigeon Park is a prominent gathering place in the area; it is also considered to be the nexus of many of the community's drug and behavioural problems.
- In 1976, Vancouver City Council policy established that the CPR right-of-way should be maintained as public space, yet this potential has yet to be realized.

Figure 4: MAP OF CARRALL STREET, RIGHT-OF WAY AND SURROUNDING STREETS



Source: City of Vancouver, Central Area Planning

- Physically, Carrall Street possesses a fine-grained streetscape, with a number of Vancouver's finest heritage buildings.
- Carrall Street is the location of several relatively new market condominium projects, namely Carrall Lofts and the Van Horne. The Van Horne project has incorporated the CPR right-of-way into its design, yet at present is closed off to the public; the City has the discretion of opening up the space to the public when street level conditions are deemed to be sufficiently improved. In addition, a major new development, International Village, is located on Pender Street between Carrall and Abbott Streets, and has included the Right-of-way in its design.

While a public realm revitalization project is by no means a panacea to the area's troubles, such a project has the potential to bring the community together for a cause with results that are beneficial for all stakeholders in the process. While the beneficiaries of this project should be first and foremost the individuals who are living in the community and are most affected by the current conditions, benefits will also carry over to tourists and potential visitors from other areas of Vancouver and the Lower Mainland who currently have difficulties navigating between the three communities, and often feel threatened walking the streets in the area.

A public realm revitalization project in this area can be multi-dimensional. On one level, physical improvements to the streetscape and existing public spaces, and programming are highly tangible, relatively small interventions that can lay the foundation for addressing the fundamental problems of crime, drug and alcohol abuse, and the provision of affordable, safe housing in the community. These fundamental issues must be addressed in order for a project of this type to be successful and sustainable.

As the objective of this thesis is to examine opportunities for shared public space in the inner city generally, and specifically in the Downtown Eastside in terms of both product and process, it is of fundamental importance that any project undertaken be championed and supported by the community itself. Ideally, various community interests should be involved from the outset, establishing what the needs are in the community, recommending ways in which these needs should be met, and being involved in the implementation of these ideas.

### 5.3 CURRENT CONDITIONS

Carrall Street runs from Water Street south to Keefer Place, ending at Andy Livingstone Park. Between Water and Cordova Streets, the atmosphere along Carrall is very much in keeping with the character of Gastown: intimate cafes, galleries and shops. Maple Tree Square, located on Carrall, where Powell, Alexander and Water Streets converge, as well as Gaoler's Mews (the City's first jail, the east entrance of which is off Carrall Street) are significant tourist attractions in Gastown.

Figure 5 CARRALL STREET LOOKING SOUTH



It is south of Cordova Street where there is a marked change in the atmosphere along Carrall Street. While there are two relatively new condominium developments (the Van Horne and Carrall Lofts) at the north and south east corners of Carrall and Cordova, the surroundings reflect many of the problems that the Downtown Eastside is experiencing: poverty, homelessness, drug



dealing use, public intoxication and “anti-social” behaviour. The physical conditions of this section of Carrall Street echo this, as many of the buildings are in a state of disrepair, garbage litters the streets and lanes, and the smells of garbage and urine permeate the air. Drug users and dealers, drinkers, and older Downtown Eastside residents resting their feet populate Pigeon Park, a small but socially significant open space in the area.

**Figure 6 THE VAN HORNE**



At the north side of Pender Street, where Carrall enters Chinatown, the atmosphere again changes. At the north east corner of Pender and Carrall is the Chinese Cultural Centre, with its large pagoda and within which Dr. Sun-Yat Sen gardens are located. As mentioned previously, Andy Livingstone Park is located at the terminus of Carrall Street, and the International Village development is sited between Carrall and Abbott Streets on Pender. This section of Carrall both reflects the Chinese history and influence in the area, as well as a sense of “newness”. There are

a relatively significant number of tourists attracted to this section of the area, largely due to the Chinese Cultural Centre and the gardens.

At the same time, some of Vancouver's most significant heritage buildings are located along Carrall Street. The interurban streetcar would pass under the BC Electric Building, located at the southwest corner of Carrall and Hastings, and now the home of the Downtown Eastside Resident's Association (DERA) and the PRIDE society. The ground level space in this building that faces Hastings Street is currently empty. The Merchant's Bank building is located beside Pigeon Park at the northwest corner of Carrall and Hastings and now houses Vancouver's Co-Op Radio station. The Portland Hotel (previously named the Pennsylvania Hotel, the Lone Star Hotel, and the Woods Hotel) is located on the northeast corner of Carrall and Hastings. In addition to these buildings, there are currently five Single Room Occupancy hotels located on Pender Street, and other buildings that reflect the area's history and age (*Downtown Eastside Monitoring Report*, 1999:14-15).

Although significant problems, both physical and social, afflict this area, it also contains the conditions for substantial opportunity. This is true in a physical sense, whereby as mentioned above, there are a number of significant heritage buildings facing the street. Carrall Street also has a fine-grained streetscape, which affords opportunities for many small enterprises. Pigeon Park currently possesses the physical conditions for a successful public space, as it already has quite a number of trees, benches, planters, and historical lighting. Vacant ground-level spaces, such as the ones in the BC Electric Building and the Merchant's Bank (located beside Pigeon Park) also offer opportunities for new and interesting uses, such as a community-based enterprise or artist space.

It has also been stated many times by community representatives that there is an enormous reserve of talent among the residents in the Downtown Eastside, particularly in the case of the arts. Often what is needed is a forum for people in the community to channel their energies and



talents. For example, the Carnegie Centre holds events showcasing Downtown Eastside singers, musicians and poets.

Thus, while there are considerable problems, socio-economically and physically that the community struggles with, the existing conditions in the area also offer significant opportunities for positive change.

### 5.4 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

The notion of restoring or revitalizing the public realm along Carrall Street and the CPR right-of-way is not new. In 1969, a group of professional designers and planners were commissioned by Vancouver City Council to propose beautification schemes for the public realm in the “entire old section of the city”. Three areas in particular were examined: Chinatown, the historic “Townsite” (Gastown), and Hastings Street between Cambie and Carrall Streets (*Maple Tree Square Phase 1*, 1969: 4). Carrall Street and/or the right-of-way are present in each of the areas studied.

For contextual purposes, the report states that

...[w]ithin the area are several population groups. With few exceptions they constitute the oldest continuous interests within the city boundaries. They are as diverse as the present physical and economic framework indicates and have special interests, attitudes and ambitions. This very diversity leads to the specific character and coincidentally to the final design solutions explored later in this report... (ibid.)

By and large, the basic premise of the schemes put forth in the report is to take advantage of the economic potential from the tourist industry, and to promote the downtown core as a response to both suburbanization and large-scale urban renewal. However, the study does acknowledge larger social goals, and recognizes the importance of the area as a historic area in and of itself,

with the low-income community being an important component of the area's history and character.

The report provides several arguments for justifying a revitalization the public realm in this area of the city: cultural heritage, aesthetics and design, variety and diversity, the distinctiveness of cities, and tourism potential (ibid.:16). It is further argued that revitalizing the area's public spaces is needed in order to make the area more palatable for private investment (in terms of businesses), and to inject new life into the downtown area generally for both residents and visitors. Importantly, the report also maintains that with improved public spaces in the area, "...the marginal and transient dwellers could begin to find some resolution to their social problems in context with the new activities..." (ibid.). While this last statement was not expanded upon in the report, it appears to be acknowledging the relationship between the environmental conditions wherein one lives out their life, and the quality of life itself.

Indeed, a relatively significant amount is stated in the report regarding the presence of the low-income and transient population in the area. This is surprising due to the fact that no other policy documents or reports from this time until recently, have truly acknowledged the marginalized population in the Downtown Eastside as legitimate members of their community. The authors maintain that

...[i]t is a disturbing consequence that, as a declining area regains a new vitality, the transient and marginal population, having found support in such an area, are displaced. This population, a very visible but small portion of our society, has not been understood and is largely unwanted. The old city is a living room providing low cost living, tolerance, companionship and anonymity...[p]rivate indoor and outdoor provisions should be available to this population still in contact with their 'known' world. The intention of this report would be to minimize the dislocation by developing accommodation and supportive services for their life patterns with some personal dignity... (ibid.: 28)

Recognizing that this study cannot solve the social problems in the area, the study maintains that "...resolutions of these social issues would require a careful study in partnership with the City's Department of Social Planning and Community Development..." (ibid.). These issues are thus acknowledged, yet not expanded upon in terms of solutions.

The study puts forth the general concept by stressing the interdependent nature of these three areas, historically, physically and socio-economically, and that within this, particular nodes within these areas are focussed on for revitalization. Shopping areas are punctuated by existing public spaces: Victory Square, Pioneer Square (Pigeon Park)<sup>14</sup> and Maple Tree Square; Carrall Street, which is "balanced" on Pigeon Park contains Maple Tree Square, the birth site of the City.

For the most part, the study does not present detailed recommendations pertaining to specific sites within the area. Rather, it presents notions and ideas for the potential of these areas in the Downtown Eastside area to become viable, lively and accessible public spaces. In a physical sense, the recommendations tend to focus generally on proposals for paving materials, plantings and street furniture, and the necessity for the City to purchase properties, particularly along the right-of-way (ibid.: 34).

Perhaps the most significant weakness in this report lies in the lack of recommendations regarding the process of implementing these improvements to the area's public spaces. As mentioned previously, this study is rather general in terms of its suggestions for physical improvements to the area. Furthermore, while it recognizes the legitimacy of the marginalized population in the community, and the needs of this group in terms of improved, accessible public spaces, it does not advocate for a process that includes the community (and the various interests within the community), in planning these spaces.

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<sup>14</sup> At the time this study was commissioned, the section of Hastings Street between Cambie and Main Streets was still a viable shopping area, with the presence of anchor retail outlets such as Woodward's, Fields and Army and

### 5.5 CURRENT IDEAS AND INITIATIVES

Over the past year, there has been a renewed interest in a public realm improvement initiative in the Downtown Eastside generally, and the Carrall Street corridor and CPR right-of-way specifically. This interest has largely been brought about as a response to the conditions in the area. As stated previously in the thesis, the City of Vancouver's *Program of Strategic Actions for the Downtown Eastside*, and the Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program have put forth recommendations directed at improving the public spaces in the area in terms of physical enhancement and activities, as well as suggest actions which will address issues that have a significant impact on the public spaces in the community, such as crime, drug addiction, and the provision of quality low-income housing.

#### 5.5.1 The Carrall Connector

In the spring of 1998, a group of community advocates from Gastown, the Downtown Eastside and Chinatown was formed to discuss opportunities for the physical and economic revitalization of Carrall Street and the Historic Streetcar Alignment (the CPR right-of-way). The project was intended to augment the *Program of Strategic Actions* and other City initiatives for the Downtown Eastside. Spearheaded by the Gastown Business Improvement Society, the objective of the project was

...about creating a vision focused on Carrall Street and the historic B.C. Electric Tramcar Right-of-way. It is about a vision defined by the three communities that comprise the Eastside of Vancouver's downtown. The communities of Chinatown, the Downtown Eastside, and Gastown. It is about a vision that would begin a process of rejuvenation, bringing work opportunities, business and decent housing back to the neighbourhood. Restoring a sense of pride and community involvement and reestablishing a commitment to a set of principles through which the issues and problems of today can be understood and addressed. And it is about a shared goal and a common effort to make life better for the residents,

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Navy, as well as a substantial number of small businesses.

the business owners, the property owners and those who visit the neighbourhood...

(Vision Statement, Carrall Street Connector, Spring 1998)

The vision for the Carrall Street Connector project is holistic in that it calls for improving the area in a variety of ways. That is, using the physical enhancement of the area to act as a catalyst for economic investment, thus improving employment opportunities for area residents, and enhance their quality of life. The improvement of public space along in this area figures prominently in the project.

The Vision Statement states that

...[c]oupled with real improvement of the physical outdoor space along Carrall Street, the Right-of-way could provide a vibrant public park that would serve the residents, visitors, and tourists alike, encouraging a strong pedestrian presence at the Gateway to Chinatown. And otherwise providing an interesting network of pathways and outdoor spaces that link International Village with Chinatown, the Downtown Eastside and Gastown...[t]hese outdoor spaces must be designed and constructed to serve the local residents as well as the surrounding communities. They should encourage highly interactive environments, with genuine local business opportunities and services for those people living in the community and in need. They must also encourage local pedestrian and tourist trade to access Chinatown and Gastown, restoring much needed commerce that lies at the heart of a healthy community...

A series of meetings with members of the community, City staff and Police representatives were held in March, April and May, 1998 in order to generate specific objectives and ideas for this potential project. At two of these meetings (March 13<sup>th</sup> and March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1998), ideas were generated by participants being presented with a number of specific topic headings. Participants then wrote ideas and suggestions under each topic, and could endorse someone else's idea by

placing a red dot beside it<sup>15</sup> Prior to this exercise, they were challenged to consider certain questions about the objectives of the project.

These questions were:

- What type of job opportunities might the project create?
- Could all the construction work be carried out by the Downtown Eastside Community Residents under a community administered program?
- Could area maintenance be transferred to a community organization?
- What type of businesses could the community run that would focus on the tourist resource?
- What actions could the joint communities take to assist in securing affordable clean accommodation in the Downtown Eastside?
- What is the right approach to eliminate/reduce/control drug trafficking?
- Should the communities provide social services to people who live/work outside the communities or should services be directed at the existing residents only?
- What types of facilities are desired for residents in the public open space?
- If SROs are to be upgraded, what type of accommodation should they be upgraded to?
- If the Carrall Street West sidewalk was widened, what type of street activity/business opportunity would the residents like to see on the street?
- How could shoplifting and vehicle break-ins be reduced?
- Should Carrall Street be changed to a two-way street? (From minutes of March 13<sup>th</sup>, 1998 meeting)

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<sup>15</sup> Results from these sessions can be found in Appendix A. More items were added for the March 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, and it appears that the attendance was larger for this meeting.

Opinions on certain issues did not vary widely between these two meetings. Ideas that garnered the most endorsement from participants were:

- Themes for street improvements.
- Improve lighting and signage along streets and lanes.
- Encourage local residents to generate money making self-supporting enterprises.
- Clean up existing SROs and hotels.
- Support an anti-conversion bylaw (added March 27<sup>th</sup>).
- Welcome market housing and protect existing housing for the poor.
- Have a common community position to City Hall.
- Spread new low-income housing throughout city and region (added March 27<sup>th</sup>).
- A Community Police Office with representation of all Downtown Eastside communities in Pigeon Park (endorsed at March 27<sup>th</sup> meeting).
- A hospital or clinic for AIDS patients.
- Attract legitimate business into community to create employment.
- Build on existing dollars that exist through the tourist industry.
- Increase number of police on the street.
- Detox and counselling services for local residents.
- Clamp down on businesses that are fronts for criminal activity.
- Stop gentrification (a fair number supported this).
- Street programming for Hastings Street (a fair number supported this).

There were some opinions or ideas that were surprisingly not endorsed at all, or only garnered one or two endorsements. For example, the opinions that “Pigeon Park is a public space”, and “ask for input from the community” were not endorsed at all. Similarly, “access for all to public spaces”, “accept responsibility for our community”, and “create partnerships to bring tourists and locals into the area who might not normally come” only received one or two endorsements over the course of these two meetings. It is surprising that these opinions did not receive any, or much endorsement because they appear to express or exemplify much of what the community has supported in terms of a vision for the area.

The most endorsed opinions and ideas were used to provide guidance towards a vision for the potential Carrall Street/right-of-way improvement project. At a subsequent meeting on April 24<sup>th</sup>, participants did a block-by-block “walk about” of Carrall Street, and noted the areas that

they felt were needed to be addressed the most, as well as ideas for possible improvement.<sup>16</sup> At a later meeting in May, project advocates and others brainstormed further about possible ideas.

Through meeting minutes and informal discussions with some of those involved, ideas emerged for what activities or uses could possibly occur in Pigeon Park, as well as possible physical alterations around the right-of-way. Some ideas for Pigeon Park include:

- A public art installment depicting the park's historic use as a railway.
- An open market selling crafts made by local residents.
- A small community garden.
- A flower market whereby local residents both sell flowers on the street and deliver flowers to offices in the central business district.

Another issue was the public purchase of buildings along the right-of-way in order to accommodate potential new uses. Currently, the City of Vancouver owns three parcels of land that make up the right-of-way:

- The small triangular space at the north side of Powell Street at the corner of Columbia Street.
- Pigeon Park, at the north side of Hastings Street and the corner of Carrall Street.
- The section on the north side of Pender Street. This is currently a parking lot, but will be developed into Native housing in the near future. The design for this housing project incorporates the Right-of-way into it as open space.

The section of the right-of-way at the north side of Cordova Street at the corner of Carrall Street is privately owned, and part of the Van Horne development. This portion of the right-of-way is currently closed off, however the City has a statutory right-of-way to this space, and the discretion to open it up to the general public when conditions at street level have improved. The City, therefore, has direct control of just under half of the properties that constitute the right-of-way.

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<sup>16</sup> See Appendix B



A significant issue regarding potential new uses and activities in Pigeon Park, the right-of-way, and surrounding spaces and buildings on Carrall Street has been the nature of possible new commercial activity. Differences of opinion in the community surface in this respect with regard to the target population of possible new commercial spaces. One view holds that any new commercial activity should be directed at the needs of the existing population in the area, especially low income, while at the same time generating employment for local residents. One issue in this regard is the deficiency of stores or cafes/restaurants selling healthy food at low prices, particularly after the closure of Woodward's, as well as the lack of other services such as laundromats.

On the other hand, another view maintains that while new commercial activity in the area should provide employment opportunities for local residents, these establishments will be economically viable only if a significant proportion of their customer base is from outside the community. That is, tourists and residents from the rest of Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. Thus, the idea of a flower delivery service to offices in the central business district could both employ local Downtown Eastside residents, and bring money into the community from the "outside". In addition, a flower market located in Pigeon Park could aid in beautifying the area. A portion of the money generated could then potentially be used for a "public good" for the Downtown Eastside, such as a detox centre. Some critics argue, however, that a project such as this would only benefit the community in terms of a few jobs. Their opinion is that most low-income people cannot afford to buy flowers, and when many of these people cannot afford decent housing and food, fresh flowers are a luxury.

Despite some differences of opinion on certain matters, there was enough interest in the project from all three communities to continue the dialogue about the possibilities for the area. The alliance, however, was fragile. Although representatives from the low-income community could see much merit in the project in terms of potential positive benefits for the area's poor residents, there was a continual concern about low-income representation at the meetings, and a sense of

apprehension about the project being a smokescreen for gentrification. An article in the *Carnegie Newsletter* slammed the project, accusing it of being promoted by business and property-owners with the focus on comfort for tourists, and ignoring the needs of local residents:

...this “project” is being pushed by business and tourist interests in Gastown who want to somehow make Carrall Street a safe corridor through the local neighbourhood. That this is an impossibility without the support of local residents and agencies is the first reality check, and the push for “their” vision of beautification & revitalisation, sidewalk cafes and shoppes [sic], runs in to the reality of what the Downtown Eastside deals with—poverty, substandard housing, homelessness, alcohol and drug abuse, an AIDS epidemic, gentrification, displacement and dispersal, the results of other neighbourhoods and the City and Police driving street people from everywhere else into the Downtown Eastside and then saying “We’ve got a problem!”... (*Carnegie Newsletter*, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1998)

While there were strong dissenting voices in the Downtown Eastside community regarding the project, the meetings continued with the hopes that a blueprint could be laid for a project that would benefit all of the communities in the Downtown Eastside, and their residents. However, an incident occurred that had serious implications for the future of the project.

In May, 1998, a coalition of business and property owners from Gastown, Chinatown and Strathcona (some of whom were participants in the Carrall Connector meetings) wrote an “open letter” to Mayor Phillip Owen and Vancouver City Council. Described by one project advocate as being the “right wing element” in the community, the coalition expressed its strong dismay at the conditions in the Downtown Eastside, and stated unequivocally that they did not want to see any new low-income housing or services in the area. In addition, the letter very strongly stated that there were certain segments of the Downtown Eastside population (namely drug addicts) that were not stakeholders in the community, and that their voices were not legitimate in the community.

It was stated by one observer that the act of writing this letter (and holding a subsequent press conference) served to completely alienate a large segment of the Downtown Eastside population.

Many individuals and community groups in the area were outraged that a small group of people could dictate who was and was not a legitimate community member, and what kind of housing and services should be built in the neighbourhood. The letter also turned representatives from the low-income community involved in the Carrall Street Connector off the project completely.

This was extremely frustrating for many involved in the project, as they felt that good progress was being made on reaching consensus between different interests in the community regarding Carrall Street and its potential. After this incident, meetings regarding the Carrall Street Connector came to an end.

However, with the *Program of Strategic Actions* and the Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program, there is a renewed interest in the Carrall Street project. One advocate from the Carrall Street endeavour has stated that the City (particularly City planners) needs to champion the project (although public sector planners rarely have the autonomy to take a stand on potentially controversial issues). While acknowledging the needs and concerns of the low-income community in the Downtown Eastside, he maintained that one factor in the project's demise was that too often City officials are reluctant to take a stand on something that may be potentially controversial, because of "poor bashing paralysis", or the fear of being biased against the poor and marginalized in the community. However, through meetings regarding the *Program of Strategic Actions* and the Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program over the past year, there is a sense that energy is building in the community to revisit the project.

### **5.5.2 The Vancouver Economic Development Commission and Economic Revitalization**

From February to June 1999, the Vancouver Economic Development Commission (VEDC), a non-profit organization operating at arms length from City Hall, has been working on behalf of the City to develop and implement the Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program. The most

significant part of its mandate is to build and create business partnerships between diverse groups both within the Downtown Eastside, the central business district (CBD), educational institutions (UBC, Simon Fraser University, British Columbia Institute of Technology), and the film industry in order to economically revitalize the Downtown Eastside, and create jobs for local residents (*The Vancouver Courier*, Wednesday, July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1999: 1).

One individual (not from the VEDC) involved in the process commented:

...There's a big opportunity to build a SoHo-style community here. It has a totally different social and cultural fabric that the adjacent towers of Concord Pacific or Downtown South. I see Boomtown [a term coined to describe the Downtown Eastside] appealing to GenXers and alternative types alike, with lots of street life... (*The Vancouver Courier*, Wednesday, July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1999: 2)

Over the course of several community meetings, the VEDC identified about 30 businesses that various neighbourhood groups, businesses and non-profit societies would like to embark upon. In turn, the VEDC has approached the downtown business community to help these groups with research, planning and mentoring (ibid.: 2).

Some ideas for possible projects are:

- A film extras service, a powerwashing unit, and a bakery/deli operated by DERA
- A longhouse in Gastown displaying work of Native artists, built by Native Health
- The refurbishment of the Pantages Theatre (on Hastings Street) by Vancouver Community College
- An art gallery opened by the City's Cultural Affairs Department
- A storefront established by UBC on Hastings Street
- A laundromat/community centre run by Common Concerns, a group of Strathcona micro-entrepreneurs

- A weekly public market on Carrall Street initiated by DERA, with cooperation from Gastown Business Improvement Area and the Chinatown Merchants Association. The market would sell crafts and fresh food and provide income for some of the local residents. Merchants in Chinatown have offered to rent equipment from their Night Market. (ibid.: 5)

Regarding the vacant space in the BC Electric building, a group of community activists and artists from the Downtown Eastside are putting together a proposal for capital funding from the City to turn the space into a community arts centre called the "Interurban Project" (*The Georgia Strait*, July 15-22, 1999: 65). This main premise behind the project is to provide shared studio space for residents of the Downtown Eastside, many of whom are artistically talented, but do not have the space to work. In addition, the vision for this space also includes:

...[t]he [reopening of the]old archway where the streetcar used to roll into the building...turn[ing] the courtyard outside into a garden...[and] turn[ing] the former bank vault into a kitchen. Local residents would receive stipends to work on and maintain the building... (ibid).

One unknown is whether or not the City will agree with this plan for the BC Electric building. Considering that it is a significant building abutting the right-of-way, "...a shared artist's studio for residents of the surrounding rundown hotels..."(ibid.) may or may not coincide with any vision that the City has for this space.

### **5.5.3 Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program: Community Mobilization**

As part of the Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program, the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Coalition for Crime Prevention and Drug Treatment have been working with the various communities of the Downtown Eastside on a process of consultation and partnership building in order to design a program of community revitalization for the area, a significant component of which is *community mobilization* (*Downtown Eastside Community Revitalization Program: Progress Report Summary February-June 1999, July 1999: 1-2*).

The objectives of the community mobilization process are:

- “To work with residents, community agencies and businesses in the four DTES neighbourhoods to design an agreed-upon community consultation process as well as avenues for mediation and negotiations, and to develop common strategies for creating a healthy community.
- To create an open, inclusive community process that enables all community members to participate and have a voice.
- To build community capacity by training and hiring local residents as community resource team members and to empower residents to take leadership in the development of sustainable strategies to rebuild the DTES.
- To foster local leadership to assist in the long-term sustainability of a healthy community.” (ibid.: 9)

Through consultation (ongoing) with different groups within the Downtown Eastside on reaching understandings on various issues, and agreements on community process and partnerships, the City-funded street programming project at Carnegie Centre, Pigeon Park and Victory Square has been established, as well as a community clean-up of the neighbourhood held in May 1999.

The Progress Report discusses some insights that those involved in the process have experienced to date. It touches on the lack of trust between different community groups and between community groups and government. It stresses that in order for the Revitalization Program to be successful, slow steps must be taken in order to gain trust from the community, understanding that it is often important for the community to “organize from within first”, and to recognize that the community has many strengths and assets that can be built upon (ibid.: 10).

As the Downtown Eastside Community Revitalization Program is taking place concurrently with the Vancouver Economic Development Commission process, as well as other initiatives coming from the community, there is a significant amount of momentum at present in seeing some of the goals of the Carrall Street Connector project to fruition. In addition to the short-term interventions, such as the outdoor market proposal and the street programming, intended to bring

immediate improvement to the conditions in the public spaces in the Downtown Eastside, much-needed agreements have been made with the senior levels of government to address issues regarding housing, crime and substance abuse. Issues that have, and are, causing serious problems for the quality of life for all residents in the Downtown Eastside.

## 6 CONCLUSION

### 6.1 DISCUSSION

Public spaces are not simply physical entities, but have important social and symbolic meanings for the various actors who utilize the space, thus playing a significant role in the everyday lives of urban dwellers. This is particularly true for those who, either by choice or necessity, make public spaces a central part of their daily lives; these individuals are often the poor and homeless in the inner city. This underscores the importance in planning for inclusive public spaces throughout the city, but particularly in inner city areas that have traditionally been where low-income communities resided, but are experiencing gentrification.

The literature, however, demonstrates that the production and organization of urban public spaces are often guided by social imaginary significations, or social constructions of what constitutes a “good” city (and thus the physical spaces that form the city), “good” users of these spaces, and “good” or appropriate activities occurring there. These social constructions are informed by the value systems that are, generally speaking, held by those who hold the “power” to produce and organize these spaces (namely, planners, designers, real estate developers and city officials), and supported by middle and upper-middle class individuals and community/property-owner associations. What can occur is tension, or conflict between those who rely on public spaces to either live (as is the case for the homeless), or for relaxation and socialization (as is the case for the homeless, but also for those who lack quality housing), and those who also enjoy public spaces, but may have a vastly different notion of what these spaces should look like, or who should be using them.

This conflict is often most evident in inner city areas that are experiencing the movement of higher income individuals and families into the community, and are thus desiring amenities and retail and service uses that cater to their lifestyle. While long term residents may not



object in principle to improving the aesthetics of the public spaces in their community (or may desire it), they may feel that they are, or will be, excluded from these new “aestheticized” spaces because they do not fit in with the vision of what these spaces will be, or what they will look like.

This issue can pose a dilemma for planners, in the sense that must attempt to address the needs of different interests, and the long-term social, economic and physical needs of the community. For example, in the case of the Downtown Eastside, public realm conditions have been deteriorating for years, and there is a consensus among opposing community interests that immediate action is necessary in improving these conditions. However, the problem lies in reaching consensus on what these actions should be, and what the vision of the community in both the short, and long term should be. While this conflict plays out on a multitude of levels, it is immediately apparent in the nature of the public spaces, in terms of physical conditions, activities and users of the space. From a public policy perspective, it is imperative that initiatives be put in place to engage in improvements to the area’s public spaces that are inclusive of all residents in the Downtown Eastside, as well as visitors from outside the community.

An additional issue indicated in the thesis is the disjuncture between physical planning of urban space and planning for the social activities and/or uses within that space. The realm of urban planners, designers and engineers, physical planning can tend toward taking a two-dimensional approach to planning public spaces. That is, the production of “impressive” drawings which may make assumptions about the nature of the uses and users of the space that is being designed. This “neat” approach may collide with the sometimes “messy” reality of the everyday workings of how urban public space is actually used. That is, the unintended consequence of a space being planned and designed for a particular use or “type” of user, when in reality, the opposite may occur. This disjuncture, therefore, calls for flexibility and the involvement of the community in the design of public space in order to mitigate potential conflict.

## **6.2 KEY THEMES**

During the thesis research, several key themes have emerged which inform the principle objective of examining opportunities and constraints for creating “shared” public space in the Downtown Eastside, specifically on Carrall Street and the CPR right-of-way. These themes inform both the theoretical and contextual underpinnings for the Downtown Eastside case study, as well as ideas that have come about through the Pioneer Square case study and the examination of the Downtown Eastside itself.

### **6.2.1 Community Conflict and Establishing Legitimacy**

This theme has surfaced in both the theoretical research in the literature review, and in the discussion of the conditions in the Downtown Eastside. Similar to the production and organization of urban public spaces, the theoretical research indicates that the legitimization of who uses these spaces and the activities which should occur there is the product of social constructions that are informed by the value systems that are held by those who plan, design, and finance the production of these spaces, as well as middle and upper-middle class property owners and merchants.

This is evident in the Downtown Eastside whereby some relatively well-off residents have made public statements regarding the legitimacy of certain other segments of the community. Some members of the low-income community have interpreted these statements as an attack on the poor, and as meaning that only property owners or merchants are legitimate stakeholders in the community planning process.. Conversely, some particularly vocal individuals and groups from the low-income community have made generalized statements regarding higher income community members which portray all property and business owners in the neighbourhood (particularly Gastown) as “poor bashers”. These statements from both sides have served to further entrench feelings of distrust and animosity between opposing interests.

### **6.2.2 Short-Term Action and Long -Term Initiatives**

While the planning of inclusive inner city public spaces is the principle area of investigation in

this thesis, there are a number of issues that are contextually very important to this topic. In the case of the Downtown Eastside, these issues are: the provision of services those addicted to drugs and alcohol; criminal activities, such as drug dealing, theft and assault which are often linked with these addictions, the provision of quality, affordable housing for the poor, and services directed at street-involved women and youth. Underlying most of these issues is the reality of systemic poverty. It is impossible to discuss issues surrounding public spaces without addressing these larger contextual issues.

This said, there is a consensus in the Downtown Eastside that immediate action is required in improving the street-level conditions in the area. While not viewed as a panacea to the community's problems, short-term initiatives are necessary to avert further deterioration, re-instill a sense of pride in the neighbourhood's public spaces, and demonstrate to both the community and "outsiders" that there is still hope for the Downtown Eastside. While long-term initiatives, involving the community, the City and the provincial and federal governments are required on an ongoing basis, short-term, achievable, and highly visible projects and initiatives can involve the community immediately, and provided energy and momentum for future endeavours.

It is with this issue that the Pioneer Square case study has the most to offer. The Action Planning model in Pioneer Square has allowed the community to work proactively in its identification of key areas that need improvement, resources and community "partners" with which these improvements can be realized. A similar approach is now occurring in the Downtown Eastside with the Downtown Eastside Community Revitalization Program and other initiatives concerned with revitalizing Carrall Street and the CPR right-of-way from within the community. However, it is still too early to judge the success or failure of these initiatives. In addition, while the Pioneer Square community worked cooperatively, the situation with the various community interests in the Downtown Eastside remains fragile.

### 6.2.3 The Role of the Planner

What role the planner should play is of significance to the process of planning for public spaces in the inner city where there are divergent community interests. In the case of the Downtown Eastside, it appears that the "community" has different expectations of City planners and officials. On one hand, they want more autonomy to make their own decisions about what should occur in the community, and on the other, they want increased action from the City. This sentiment has no doubt come about from feelings of abandonment and inaction by the authorities which has contributed to the current conditions in the area, and from the perspective of the low-income community, a lack of "protection" from gentrification and displacement.

From the perspective of the planner, the difficulty in granting substantial autonomy to the community is the fact that there is not a consensus within the community about what should happen (in other words, each "community" in the Downtown Eastside wants autonomy to pursue its own vision), and the apprehension that this would result in not enough public policy direction in the future of the community.

The case study in Seattle indicates that when it comes to community improvement projects, initiative must come from within the community in order for these projects to be sustainable over time. The Neighborhood Planning process in Pioneer Square granted almost total control to the community, this may not be feasible in the Downtown Eastside without some mediation and input from planning staff from the City. While there should be substantial input from the Downtown Eastside community, granting full control of a planning process to a community where there is deep distrust, and that has difficulty coming to consensus over relatively minor issues may not be wholly productive. In this case, more leadership may be required on the part of the planner to instigate these projects and mobilize community support. In addition, it may not always be realistic to expect all differences to be put aside within the community.

The planner cannot change human nature, but can facilitate the community-building process. This appears to be occurring with the Downtown Eastside Community Revitalization Program;

but it is too soon to tell if this, and other initiatives in the Downtown Eastside will be successful and sustainable

### **6.2.4 The Nature of Community Leadership in the Downtown Eastside**

The structure of power relations and community leadership within the Downtown Eastside has changed over the past several years. This is reflected in the increasing heterogeneity in the area. For example, at one time, the profile of the low-income community was much more homogenous and easier to characterize--a large number of former resource workers living in single room occupancy hotels. At that time (approximately fifteen to twenty years ago), the Downtown Eastside Residents Association provided a strong voice for the low-income community. In addition, several high-profile individuals who worked as advocates for the disadvantaged community in the Downtown Eastside held positions on Vancouver City Council. Currently, there is no political representation at the local level that reflects the interests of the low-income population in the area<sup>17</sup>, and the nature of this segment of the Downtown Eastside community is characterized by different interests ranging from older, retired men, street-involved women, First Nations, to intravenous drug users.

Therefore, the current leadership at the community level reflects the heterogeneous nature of the poor population in the Downtown Eastside, in the sense that there are many different agencies representing many different groups in the community. What has resulted, however, is a weakened and less effective voice for the disadvantaged in the community as a consequence of many different (and at times, conflicting) interests represented by many different leaders.

### **6.2.5 Public Realm Enhancement Constraints in the Downtown Eastside**

Perhaps the most significant constraint in terms of pursuing a public realm enhancement project

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<sup>17</sup> Jenny Kwan, currently a cabinet minister with the provincial NDP government, was the last Committee of Progressive Electors (COPE) representative on Vancouver City Council to advocate for the interests of the poor in the Downtown Eastside. She did not run for re-election in the 1995 civic elections in order to pursue a career in provincial politics.

in the Downtown Eastside that both involves the community, and is supported by the community is lack of consensus and tensions between different community interests in the area. Without some general level of support, the long-term sustainability of any project may be compromised. While there is consensus that improvements should be made, there are divergent opinions regarding what form these improvements should take. This is particularly true of longer term initiatives which may result in substantial socio-economic changes in the area (in terms of increasing the amount of market housing, and the nature of commercial uses which cater to these new residents).

### **6.2.6 Public Realm Enhancement Opportunities in the Downtown Eastside**

Although the Downtown Eastside has experienced significant problems, it also possesses many opportunities for small interventions for public realm enhancement-interventions which may lay the foundation for larger initiatives.

Physically, the area contains many conditions which lend themselves to lively and attractive public spaces. Carrall Street has a substantial number of heritage buildings (both significant to Vancouver's history and otherwise), a fine-grained streetscape provides opportunities for small-scale shops and services, and the area's central location will attract outside visitors. Pigeon Park, which already contains trees and furniture currently exists, as does Maple Tree Square. The CPR right-of-way has the potential to become a public greenspace, cutting a diagonal through the area, and providing a "green link" through Gastown, the Downtown Eastside core and Chinatown.

The Downtown Eastside community also contains a wealth of talent and potential among its residents, particularly in the arts. There is no shortage of good ideas in the community about what form the area's public spaces could take, and the activities which could occur in them. These good ideas need a forum in which they can be channeled and brought forward. With a renewal of interest in projects such as the Carrall Street Connector, potential opportunities for community-supported and operated businesses and services, as well as proposals by individual

community members and groups, there is increasing opportunity for these ideas to be recognized and perhaps come to fruition. With the initiation of the *Program for Strategic Actions* and the Downtown Eastside Community Revitalization Program, the City is demonstrating that it is intent on taking action (in terms of both short-term projects and longer-term initiatives) to address the most pressing issues in the Downtown Eastside community.

### 6.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

This thesis has demonstrated the importance that public spaces play in the lives of inner city residents, and that planners should incorporate an understanding and sensitivity to the existing residents (often low-income) and conditions when planning for revitalization projects in these areas. While the thesis focused on short-term initiatives pertaining to public spaces in the inner city, and in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside particularly, there are a significant number of larger issues that influence the nature of public spaces in the inner city. While this research acknowledges these issues, it would be beneficial to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between these issues (for example, the housing profile of the inner city) and the nature of the public realm.

For the purposes of future policy implications for the public realm in the Downtown Eastside, it would also be useful to do an in-depth needs assessment and survey of all community interests in the area to acquire a fuller understanding of how different community groups relate to their public spaces, and what they deem to be the most desired and useful form (physically as well programming, if any) these spaces should take.

In addition, as time limitations found it difficult to locate examples of inner city community improvement initiatives besides Pioneer Square, it would be beneficial to locate other case studies, particularly Canadian examples, for a wider breadth of other initiatives that other cities and communities have undertaken to plan for inclusive inner city public spaces.

There is not one magic solution in improving the conditions in the public spaces in the Downtown Eastside. However, the recognition that the public realm in the inner city deserves attention will hopefully act as a catalyst for innovative initiatives that may help in bringing the community closer together, and improving the lives of Downtown Eastside residents-particularly those who depend on public spaces the most.



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## 8 APPENDIX A

Results of Public Ideas Fora (March 13<sup>th</sup> and March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1998) for the Carrall Street Connector Project

TOPIC AREA	IDEAS	# OF ENDORSEMENTS
<b>Street Design</b>	Themes for street improvement (e.g. historical walks, viewing points and steam clock)	24
	Continue to improve on lighting, signing of lanes and premises	18
	Wider sidewalks	14
	Open up street car alignment	9
	Make plaques marking history	7
	Closing off alcove in lanes	0
<b>Traffic Issues</b>	Traffic enforcement (pedestrian traffic for resident safety)	11
	Slow down traffic speed	6
	No major traffic corridors	0
<b>Residents</b>	Encourage local residents to generate money-making self-supporting enterprises	45
	Maintain current residents	8
	Create more jobs for residents	6
	Residential associations combining to have a voice that will be heard	6
	Pigeon Park to be used by eastside residents/Pigeon Park is a public space	0
	The Wings serve out hundreds of meals a day	0
<b>Housing Repair</b>	Clean up existing SROs and hotels	30
	Unconditional support by business and property groups for a real SRO anti-conversion by-law	20
	Demolition and conversion by-law for existing housing	4
	Renovation of hotels	4
	No net loss of social housing	3

TOPIC AREA	IDEAS	# OF ENDORSEMENTS
<b>Market Housing</b>	Increase market housing and protect housing for existing poor	16
	Welcome market housing	15
	Stop gentrification	11
	Housing more affordable	9
<b>Community Mix</b>	Common community position to City Hall	14
	Develop real mix of housing, not just market and subsidized	10
	Make City responsible to create low-income housing in all areas so low-incomers have a choice of where to live	8
	Access for all to public spaces	6
	Community Police Office with all community representation in Pigeon Park	6
	Accept responsibility for our community	4
	Support housing mix	4
	Action against panhandling harassment	4
	No victimization of the poor	3
	Ask for input from the community	0
<b>Social Services</b>	Hostel or clinic for AIDS patients	19
	Street programming for Hastings Street	10
	City-regulated safe places for street-involved women	8
	More genuine social services for the disadvantaged	5
	Provide more storefront community services (e.g. clinics, drop-ins and temporary work offices)	4
	Daycare and preschools for residents	2

TOPIC AREA	IDEAS	# OF ENDORSEMENTS
<b>Economic Development</b>	Attract legitimate business into community to create employment	42
	Increase in welfare rates	13
	Partnerships in community development with training and employment possibilities	11
	Develop economic incentives for private sector investment that is socially responsible	7
	Corporate contributions from breweries, real estate industries etc. that have prospered off this community for years	6
	Decriminalize sex trade	6
	Promote and support community non-profit enterprises	5
	Raise market housing and shelter rates	0
<b>Tourism &amp; Entertainment</b>	Build on existing dollars that exist through the tourist industry and use this as a way to obtain city support	34
	Make plaques marking history; encourage pride	6
	Signage for tourists	9
	Enhance area for tourism in order to increase economic stability which will benefit locals	5
	Do best to protect tourist safety	4
	Create partnerships to bring tourists into the area who might not normally come	1
	Open air market to promote local crafts	0

TOPIC AREA	IDEAS	# OF ENDORSEMENTS
<b>Crime and Safety</b>	Sufficient police	15
	Business groups eliminate private cops on our streets	10
	Law reform on child sex prostitution	7
	Support for public phones	5
	More liquor license enforcement of licensed premises	4
	Action on non-returnable warrants	2
	Inform immigration of the damage they do to our community by allowing criminals to destroy the peace we enjoy	2
<b>Drugs</b>	Detox and counseling seminar for male and female youth	37
	Drugs: we can't tolerate any drug activities; immigration should not import any criminals	24
	Decriminalize drugs and develop a medical model for delivery	14
	Develop a variety of drug treatment and detox programs	8
	Real enforcement of existing drug trafficking laws	7
	Drug rehab/resources for users	3
	Press three levels of government, especially federal, to take control of drug industry	3
	Detox centers and follow-up	2
	Decriminalize/medicalize heroin and cocaine	0
	Drug education treatment; family counseling	0
<b>Clean Streets</b>	Bi-weekly street cleaning	17
	Existing business take responsibility for garbage on their property	9
	Weekly lane cleaning	2
	Public pride in community	2
	By-law on public urination and spitting in public 24 hours/day	1



TOPIC AREA	IDEAS	# OF ENDORSEMENTS
<b>Permits &amp; Licenses</b>	Clamp down on businesses who are fronts for criminal activity	58
	Business license control by the community	20
	Charter change to allow community accountability of business	10
	Panhandling by-law	9
	Fewer liquor licenses	6
	Liaison and City Hall LLCB permits enforced	6
	Working together to get rid of criminals in business	5
	Change in Vancouver City Charter	3
	Need firm control over the distribution of rice wine in the Downtown Eastside	3
	Enforcement by City inspectors of litter by-law	1
	City having more control on March 16, 1998 for license issues	0
<b>Building Maintenance</b>	Hotels who take advantage of poor should be prosecuted	20
	Hotel building owners accountable	14
	Graffiti clean-up by all community	7

## 9 APPENDIX B

Results of Block-by-Block Walkabout of Carrall Street (April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1998)

### BLOCK ONE: BETWEEN PENDER AND HASTINGS STREETS

#### Lane and Backyard

- Lanes and backyards need to be cleaned; increase the number of garbage containers and pickup hours.
- Should be cleaned and flushed constantly to reduce the foul smell of urine and exposed garbage.
- Police enforcement on lanes. Different types of light consideration to reduce criminal activities at night.
- Cleaning of the facades, graffiti.

#### Appearance of the Street

- Visual connection with continuous banners. The emphasis on focal point eg. Gassy Jack; introduce themes and attractions on Carrall Street and Pender Street besides pubs.

#### Hotel Cleaning

- Hotel owners and residents should renew the appearance of the environment. West Hotel is an example of a savable business in this area; strict licensing on hotel businesses.
- These hotels eg. South East side hotel has a historical context to the environment; this location has natural resources, historical crossroads, and business opportunities. The basics somehow still tie to the earlier suggestion of street cleaning.

#### Others

- Night bars are not vitalization [sic]; need enforcement of the activities in bars.
- City should value the historical preservation of the buildings.
- International Village, a new project that would benefit Carrall Street and the Downtown Eastside if careful steps are taken.

### BLOCK TWO: BETWEEN HASTINGS AND CORDOVA STREETS

#### Job Creation/Retail

- Envision a museum built in Pigeon Park comparatively to the one built in Gastown and Chinatown. Create as a destination spot which would eventually/hopefully draw locals and tourists to this area, therefore encouraging local retail. Other examples are community booths or an information booth for tourists.
- Museum idea supports the focus of the historical site, needing employment. A starting point

of establishing a legitimate anchor for other businesses that come later, not necessarily targeting only tourists.

- Concerns over the idea of the museum. Job creation should be focused on the local needs (eg. Meat shops, bakery, flower stands etc). However, these businesses are self-contained by locals and do not encourage outside opportunities that could allow them to seek a broader scale of doing business (eg. Service of flower delivery to other parts of the City). Concerns of invasion and insecurity by locals.
- Traditions and needs that locals are accustomed to (eg. Wings Café, a local support coffee shop).

### **Appearance of the Street**

- Continuity of lighting, mainly historical lighting that carries all the way to Carrall and Pender. Visual path for visitors.
- Signage, found less on Carrall after Gassy Jack, and a couple of restaurants.
- Widen sidewalk, encourage pedestrian concentration to this area.
- More trees and vegetation.

### **Hotel Cleaning**

- Arinia Hotel: complaints about noise pollution for the bar; activities should be reduced after 11 pm.
- North Star Hotel: another preserved and savable hotel that has potential to encourage business.

### **Traffic**

- Change Carrall Street to a communal lane from Water Street and Powell Street
- Street widening to allow for more public spaces, less in vehicular traffic.

## **BLOCK THREE: BETWEEN POWELL AND CORDOVA STREETS**

### **Job Creation/Retail**

- Existing good restaurants (eg. Irish Heather). Encourage more of this type of restaurant to the front of the street; street café if sidewalks are widened. Created open market in public spaces (eg. Blood Alley).
- Community funding for art fairs and open markets.
- Public washroom; locally operated washroom for public use; will reduce public urination