

**THE DEATH AND LIFE OF THE LITTLE MOUNTAIN HOUSING PROJECT:
BC'S FIRST PUBLIC HOUSING COMMUNITY**

by

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Abstract

Opened in 1954, Vancouver's Little Mountain Housing Project was the first public housing project in BC and among the oldest in Canada. For more than half a century, Little Mountain provided subsidized rental housing for low and moderate income families and seniors. Throughout its years, Little Mountain was at the forefront of housing policy in BC. Little Mountain's initial development in the 1950s spelled out how the federal-provincial public housing partnership would operate in BC. In the 1970s Little Mountain was the first public housing project in Canada managed by a committee of tenants. And today Little Mountain continues to be on the leading edge of provincial housing policy as it is the first public housing project to be privatized and redeveloped under a new province-wide policy announced in 2007. Redevelopment and privatization have involved the displacement of 194 Little Mountain households and the demolition of all but one of the buildings at Little Mountain. The displacement of the tenants and the near total clearance of the large site are among some of the disturbing similarities between the redevelopment of Little Mountain and the old urban renewal programs of the mid-twentieth century. But unlike urban renewal, the redevelopment of Little Mountain is connected to neoliberal restructuring and the erosion of the welfare state. When Little Mountain is eventually rebuilt, it will feature a mixed-income community that will combine social housing tenants and market homeowners. Redevelopment has been justified, in part, on the basis that social mixing will create more social capital for the low-income families at Little Mountain. But this thesis shows that Little Mountain was already remarkably rich in social capital. In contrast to the stereotype of the 'troubled housing project', Little Mountain offered a very supportive, happy, and beautiful living environment. Ironically, displacement has isolated many of the tenants. Through an analysis of the distribution of benefits and losses of redevelopment to various relevant groups, this thesis shows that the Little Mountain tenants are being squeezed out of the benefits of redevelopment while bearing significant losses.

Preface

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Dedication

To my parents, with love.

I. INTRODUCTION

It was on the morning of Saturday, May 12, 2007 when I first learned that BC's first public housing community, the Little Mountain Housing Project, was slated for redevelopment. Little Mountain is located at the approximate geographic centre of the City of Vancouver, bounded by Main Street, 37th Avenue, Ontario Street, and 33rd Avenue (see Figure 1.1). Although redevelopment had been first announced in the *Vancouver Sun* on March 21, 2007,¹ I missed reading that initial article probably because at the time I had a very heavy course load as an undergraduate student. Following that first newspaper article, most of the early press coverage of the Little Mountain redevelopment was in the neighbourhood newspaper, the *Vancouver Courier*, which I did not get at my home deep in Metro Vancouver's suburbs. Thus, by the time I first read about it in the newspaper, relocation of the tenants had already been underway for about a month and a half. Already by this early stage many Little Mountain tenants were angry because they had not been consulted and they were being "pressured" to move. In the newspaper article one Little Mountain tenant said, "They're being told if they don't sign now [an agreement to move to other BC Housing sites], there won't be anything available for them later on."² When I read this I found it deeply concerning because, while it had been several years since I had last been at Little Mountain, I have a longstanding connection to the place stemming from when I lived there as a very young child in the early 1980s. My connection to Little Mountain is also through my mother, who grew up in the surrounding neighbourhood and has many friends who have lived there throughout the years right up until redevelopment. The May 12, 2007 newspaper article announced that the tenants were holding a protest that day from 11 am to 1 pm on Main Street between 36th Avenue and King Edward Avenue. Immediately after reading this article, I quickly got myself ready and ran out the door in order to make it to the protest in time. That was the beginning of what would be my three-and-a-half year emotional, political, and academic journey culminating in this thesis.

Thus, the primary topic of concern in this thesis is public housing redevelopment. Little Mountain, BC's first public housing project, is the first housing project to be redeveloped under a new province-wide approach that involves privatizing public housing sites and rebuilding a mixture of market and social housing on these sites. Mixed-income redevelopment of public housing, while relatively new to BC, has taken hold in cities across North America and beyond. In Canada it started in Toronto with the redevelopment of Don Mount Court, which began with a community consultation process in 2004 that led to the demolition of the housing project later that year.³ In that case, the first phase of redevelopment has

¹ Frances Bula, "Little Mountain to be Redeveloped", *Vancouver Sun* (March 21, 2007), p. B1.

² Frances Bula, "Tenants Protest 'Pressure' to Move", *Vancouver Sun* (May 12, 2007), p. B12.

³ Toronto Community Housing, "History of Don Mount Court/Rivertowne" (2010, accessed online April 11, 2010 from www.torontohousing.ca)

Figure 1.1 Location of the Little Mountain Housing Project



Map created by Tommy Thomson with shape files and spatial data from the Department of Geography, UBC.

already been completed and some of the original tenants have moved back.⁴ Also in Toronto, Regent Park, the oldest public housing project in Canada, is currently being redeveloped into a mixed-income community. In that case, redevelopment started with a community consultation process in 2002 which led to relocation of about one-fifth of the tenants in 2005 and demolition of the one section of the housing project in 2006.⁵ The Regent Park redevelopment, which will involve six phases of demolition and rebuilding, is expected to take 15 years before completion.⁶ A third public housing project in Toronto,

⁴ Donovan Vincent, "Is Public Housing Ready for the Yuppies? Just across from the massive Regent Park rebuild a Mixed-Income Experiment takes Uneasy Shape", *Toronto Star* (April 24, 2010), p. 1.

⁵ Richard M. Schippling, *Public Housing Redevelopment: Residents' Experiences with Relocation from Phase 1 of Toronto's Regent Park Revitalization* (Unpublished master's thesis, School of Planning, University of Waterloo, 2007).

⁶ Martine August & Alan Walks, *From Social Mix to Political Marginalization? The Redevelopment of Toronto's Public Housing and the Dilution of Tenant Organizational Power* (Paper prepared for the ESRC Seminar Series 'Gentrification and Social Mix', Edinburgh, Scotland, February 19-20, 2009, accessed online November 3, 2009 from www.kcl.ac.uk)

Lawrence Heights, is also in an early stage of redevelopment.⁷ In the Lawrence Heights case, what appears to have been an elaborate community consultation process started in 2008 which ultimately led to Toronto City Council approving the Lawrence Allen Revitalization Plan. In contrast to the way public housing redevelopment has proceeded in Toronto, at Little Mountain in Vancouver, relocation of the tenants and demolition of the buildings has preceded community consultation. At Little Mountain, relocation of the tenants started in March 2007, demolition started in November 2009, and community consultation did not really get underway until January 2010 with the formation of the Little Mountain Advisory Group. The timeline of events at Little Mountain would make this redevelopment illegal if it were happening in the US. Since it was initiated in the US in 1992, the HOPE (Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere) VI program has involved the redevelopment of hundreds of postwar public housing projects across the US.⁸ But unlike in Canada, in the US public housing tenants have a legal right to be consulted before public housing is demolished or sold.⁹ Although the goals of public housing redevelopment—social integration and improved physical conditions of aging housing stock—seem to be benevolent, very often public housing redevelopment in both the US and Canada has involved significant controversy. Critics have pointed out how remarkably similar public housing redevelopment is with the old urban renewal programs of the mid-twentieth century that gave rise to the very public housing that is now being redeveloped.¹⁰ Similarities between public housing redevelopment generally and the old urban renewal programs include the displacement of low-income families, the tearing apart of social support networks, inadequate community consultation, and the temporary or sometimes permanent (especially in the US) reduction in the supply of affordable housing.

But public housing redevelopment is being carried out in a very different context than was urban renewal. Urban renewal represented a form of state intervention. Indeed, the rehousing of those displaced by urban renewal in newly constructed public housing projects highlights how urban renewal was connected to the rise of the welfare state. In contrast to urban renewal, public housing redevelopment today is an expression of neoliberal state retrenchment and the erosion of the welfare state. In the US, while most of the financing of redevelopment has been provided by the federal government, such funding has been conditional on Public Housing Authorities' ability to raise private capital. Stricter eligibility

⁷ Toronto Community Housing, "Lawrence Heights Revitalization" (2010, accessed online April 11, 2010 from www.torontohousing.ca)

⁸ See National Housing Law Project (NHLP), *False HOPE: A Critical Assessment of the HOPE VI Public Housing Redevelopment Program* (June 2002, accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.nhlp.org)

⁹ See Marvin Krislov, "Ensuring Tenant Consultation before Public Housing is Demolished or Sold", *Yale Law Journal*, 97, 8 (July 1988), pp. 1745-1764.

¹⁰ See for example Larry Keating, "Redeveloping Public Housing: Relearning Urban Renewal's Immutable Lessons", *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 66, 4 (2000), pp. 384-397; See also Edward G. Goetz, "The Politics of Poverty Deconcentration and Housing Demolition", *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 22, 2 (2000), pp. 157-173.

requirements for public housing after it has been redeveloped in the US also highlight how public housing redevelopment is connected to the rolling back of the welfare state.¹¹ Unlike in the US, public housing redevelopment in Canada involves no (or perhaps very little) federal funding. In Canada, public housing redevelopment is directly linked to the devolution of responsibility for social housing to lower levels of government and the rolling out of a new set of social arrangements in which the private sector takes an ownership stake in redeveloped sites. At Regent Park in Toronto the private sector will have a 50% ownership stake¹², whereas in the Little Mountain case, the site is being privatized outright. After redevelopment, it will probably no longer be correct to refer to Little Mountain as ‘public housing’ because it is unlikely that the state housing authority (BC Housing) will own or even operate the units. Before redevelopment, there were 224 units of public housing at Little Mountain. After redevelopment, between 1650 and 3000 units will be on the site.¹³ Of these, only a minimum of 224 will be replacement social housing units. Thus, the vast majority, if not all, of the additional density developed at Little Mountain will be in the form of privately owned market condominiums. The developer will use some of the profits from the market condominiums to pay for the replacement social housing units. Redevelopment of Little Mountain will also bring major changes to the physical landscape as the modernist postwar structures that were there will be replaced with a neighbourhood that is designed according to New Urbanist and postmodern design principles. The displacement of the tenants, the influx in affluent homeowners, and landscape change are all features of the Little Mountain redevelopment that are consistent with the “core elements of gentrification.”¹⁴ But unlike classical gentrification, this is a form of gentrification in which the state plays a central role as it is the direct outcome of neoliberal restructuring of the state.

But this thesis is about much more than public housing redevelopment as an expression of neoliberal restructuring and its unfortunate similarities with urban renewal. In order to understand redevelopment, one needs to know a great deal about what it is that is being redeveloped. As public housing redevelopment scholar Lawrence Vale has remarked, “Individual places matter. So do the particular residential communities that inhabit them.”¹⁵ In the Little Mountain case, one needs to know what/who was at Little Mountain before redevelopment in order to assess how redevelopment will change the place, either for the better or the worse. There is often a presumption that redevelopment is bound to bring about improved living conditions for the poor. This is because an anti-public housing ideology has

¹¹ Jason Hackworth, *The Neoliberal City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007)

¹² Martine August, Personal email communication, March 30, 2010.

¹³ Thomas Consultants, *Little Mountain Retail Opportunity Study Final Report* (July 20, 2010, study commissioned by Holborn Properties, accessed online October 20, 2010 from vancouver.ca)

¹⁴ See Loretta Lees et al., *Gentrification* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 158.

¹⁵ Lawrence Vale, *Reclaiming Public Housing: A Half Century of Struggle in Three Public Neighborhoods* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002)

reached almost common sense status. According to this ideology, postwar public housing is viewed as a flawed model irrespective of contextual factors in individual housing projects. For many, it just seems obvious that New Urbanist, environmentally sustainable, mixed-income developments offer far superior living environments than the modernistly bland, poorly maintained, socially segregated and troubled postwar housing projects they replace. Much like the case with urban renewal, this view contains a techno-scientific planning paternalism that seems entirely indifferent to the emotional attachments that poor people in particular develop toward their living environments. Much of the controversy surrounding public housing redevelopment seems to stem from these attachments. At Little Mountain especially, many of the tenants deeply loved the housing project and relied tremendously on their social support networks in place at the housing project. Many Little Mountain tenants also appreciated the sturdy construction of the old buildings and the natural beauty of the large open green spaces at the site. This thesis emphatically rejects the view that all postwar public housing projects are intrinsically socially and physically defective. As such, this thesis insists that a thorough understanding of Little Mountain, including why many of the tenants seemed to derive so much joy from living there, is absolutely necessary in order to evaluate redevelopment. What Little Mountain was like before redevelopment represents the baseline against which the changes brought about by redevelopment may be compared.

But understanding what Little Mountain was like before redevelopment is not a simple task. This is because remarkably little has been written about BC's first public housing project. Unfortunately, the Little Mountain Housing Project was severely under-researched as urban researchers of Vancouver have tended to focus on the larger public housing projects built in Strathcona under the urban renewal program. This thesis appears to be only the third thesis ever written on BC's first public housing project. The previous two theses on Little Mountain were both written more than a half century ago, in the 1950s. One of these was concerned with the selection process of the first applicants for the housing project¹⁶, while the other thesis was concerned with the social conditions of Little Mountain shortly after it first opened.¹⁷ After the 1950s, the only other significant research report on Little Mountain is a report from 1982 prepared by architect Byron Olson who was contracted to consult with the Little Mountain tenants and people in the surrounding community regarding redevelopment and renovation options for the housing project.¹⁸ In addition to these reports, Jill Wade's book on housing activism in Vancouver during

¹⁶ Michael Wheeler, *Evaluating the Need for Low-Rental Housing: A Review of Conditions Among Family Applications for the Little Mountain Low-Rental Housing Project, Vancouver, and Consideration of Criteria for Future Housing Projects* (Unpublished master's thesis, School of Social Work, University of British Columbia, 1955)

¹⁷ Etta Elaine Fromson et al., *The Little Mountain Low-Rental Housing Project: A Survey of its Welfare Aspects (Vancouver 1955-1958)* (Unpublished master's thesis, School of Social Work, University of British Columbia, 1959)

¹⁸ Byron Olson, *A Report on the Little Mountain Housing Project, Vancouver, BC* (Prepared for the Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing, January 1982)

approximately the first half of the twentieth century contains several pages detailing the initial development of Little Mountain.¹⁹ Aside from these four rather obscure works, one finds only passing references to Little Mountain in the rest of the literature. In addition, all of these sources that discuss Little Mountain are quite dated. Before this thesis, there was virtually no written record on what Little Mountain was like in the years immediately prior to redevelopment. One of the central goals of this thesis is at least to begin to fill in this significant research gap in order to preserve the memory of this place that has been erased from Vancouver's urban landscape.

Stemming from this lack of research, the historical significance of Little Mountain seems lost on many people. The fact is Little Mountain was enormously important for the development of the welfare state in BC and in Canada. The agreement that was reached in 1950 between the provincial and federal governments concerning the development of Little Mountain essentially spelled out how Canada's federal-provincial public housing partnership program initiated in 1949 would operate in BC. As the first true example of public housing in BC, Little Mountain paved the way for the public housing projects that followed in this province. This is why the initial development of Little Mountain was so controversial in Vancouver in the early 1950s, with opponents coming close to killing the project several times before it ever got off the ground. Opponents of the very concepts of public housing and the welfare state rightly sensed that Little Mountain was only the first such project to come. And at the national level as well, Little Mountain is historically significant. Little Mountain appears to have been only the second public housing project developed under Canada's first federal-provincial public housing program. But Little Mountain may in fact be the very first public housing project in Canada that delivered on all the goals of Canada's early housing movement led by figures such as Clifford Curtis and Leonard Marsh. Since at least the 1930s, the Canadian housing movement had been calling for a federal public housing program that paid the majority costs for public housing development and that included all the conveniences of modern life, such as central heating and hot running water. Little Mountain appears to have been the very first public housing project in Canada that delivered on all these goals. Canadian public housing projects that preceded Little Mountain either did not include central heating, or in the case of Regent Park in Toronto, received minimal funding from the federal government. Before it was demolished earlier this year, the Little Mountain Housing Project embodied the Canadian postwar welfare state.

Scholars of the redevelopment of Regent Park in Toronto²⁰ have not had to research independently all the history of Regent Park throughout the time it existed, even going back to the political struggles that led to its initial development. This is because, as Canada's flagship example of public housing, all this history at Regent Park has been very well documented. But Regent Park is an

¹⁹ Jill Wade, *Houses for All: The Struggle for Social Housing in Vancouver, 1919-50* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994), pp. 156-159.

²⁰ See for example August & Walks, Op. cit.; Schippling, Op. cit.; Stefan Kipfer & Jason Petrunia, "Recolonization and Public Housing: A Toronto Case Study", *Studies in Political Economy*, 83 (Spring 2009), pp. 111-139.

anomalous example of Canadian public housing because it was developed before Canada's federal-provincial public housing program and, with over 2000 units, it has always been Canada's largest public housing project. In many ways, Little Mountain may be far more representative of public housing in Canada, especially in terms of the program under which it was developed, the scale of the site, the number of housing units on the site, and its location outside of the city's downtown core.²¹ But I would not want to take this point too far because Little Mountain had several somewhat unique qualities as well. While compared to Regent Park the number of public housing units at Little Mountain may have been closer to what is typical for public housing in Canada, Little Mountain was still significantly larger than most Canadian public housing projects. Little Mountain was among the less than 4% of public housing projects in Canada that contain more than 200 units.²² The very low density and the fact that over 77% of the site was open green space²³ are features of Little Mountain that also seem to be less common in Canadian public housing generally. The absence of crime and other social problems and the presence of a significant minority of middle class households at Little Mountain also seem anomalous, but it is difficult to be certain just how unusual Little Mountain was in this regard. Little Mountain's apparent uniqueness in this regard may simply result from the tendency that housing projects with the most extreme social problems get the most attention.

Although this thesis is primarily concerned with redevelopment, due to the fact that Little Mountain was under-researched throughout the years it existed it has been necessary that almost half of this thesis deals with Little Mountain before redevelopment. This is why 'death' and 'life' metaphors have been used in the title of this thesis and the structuring of its chapters. The 'death' is redevelopment and the 'life' is Little Mountain before redevelopment, that is, before 2007. As this discussion has pointed out, in addition to redressing the lack of research on Little Mountain and demonstrating its historical significance, dedicating significant attention to the 'life' of Little Mountain before redevelopment has been necessary in order to compare the changes redevelopment brings against the baseline conditions at Little Mountain. But another reason that much of this thesis is concerned with the 'life' of Little Mountain before redevelopment is that I think it is very important that Little Mountain be remembered for more than the recent controversies surrounding its redevelopment. Given the lack of research on Little Mountain over the years, many people in Vancouver only first became aware of Little Mountain after reading press coverage of the protests against redevelopment. There is a risk that the life story of Little

²¹ Much of Canada's public housing stock is not located in inner-city locations, but rather in more peripheral locations on the edges of cities. See Michael Dennis & Susan Fish, *Programs in Search of a Policy* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1972), pp. 182-183; See also Robert A. Murdie, "The Welfare State, Economic Restructuring and Immigrant Flows: Impacts on Sociospatial Segregation in Greater Toronto", in *Urban Segregation and the Welfare State: Inequality and Exclusion in Western Cities*, eds. Sako Musterd & W.J.M. Ostendorf (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 64-93.

²² John Sewell, *Houses and Homes: Housing for Canadians* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 1994), p. 138.

²³ Olson, Op. cit.

Mountain may be subsumed under the weight of these recent controversies. Although it is important to thoroughly understand the deplorable events that have unfolded at Little Mountain as part of its redevelopment hopefully in order to prevent these tragedies from being repeated elsewhere, it is also crucially important to recognize that Little Mountain was a place with a great deal of history and its own story, quite independent of redevelopment. Little Mountain should be remembered far more for its successful life than its tragic death. The ‘life’ and ‘death’ metaphors that structure this thesis also serve somewhat to give agency to the Little Mountain Housing Project as an actant. Although Little Mountain was a community made up of people, the place itself was non-human. Known as Actor Network Theory, ascribing agency to non-human actants is an increasingly common collection of approaches²⁴ that have come out of a rejection of the scientific tradition of treating the object of study as something that is predictable, fully understandable, and as a “resource for appropriation...of the knower.”²⁵ Although I would not go so far as to characterize this thesis as an example of Actor Network Theory, at various points in this thesis, and especially with the ‘life’ and ‘death’ metaphors used throughout, I have attempted to give some agency to the place that was the Little Mountain Housing Project. Finally, the ‘life’ and ‘death’ metaphors used in the title and elsewhere in this thesis are an allusion to the landmark book by Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.²⁶ Jane Jacobs was probably the most influential critic of mid-twentieth century urban renewal who ever existed. Jacobs showed how urban renewal, in its quest to bring new life to American cities, actually destroyed a great deal of what worked in old urban neighbourhoods, ironically bringing about the death of these neighbourhoods. It is not at all my intention to compare myself to the revered Jane Jacobs. Rather, by borrowing the words “death and life” from her title, my intention is to underscore the troubling similarities between the old urban renewal programs of the mid-twentieth century with the redevelopment of the Little Mountain Housing Project.

But before I discuss the death and life of Little Mountain, it is important to engage with the relevant academic literature. In the following chapter, I review more than half a century of social scientific literature on urban poverty and redevelopment. Given the approximately 50-year time frame in the empirical chapters that follow, it is appropriate that the theoretical section of this thesis covers the corresponding time frame. But this is not to say that my literature review is exhaustive. Chapter 2 focuses on three bodies of literature. The first body of literature deals with mid-twentieth century urban renewal and its similarities with contemporary public housing redevelopment. Second, I discuss the literature on public housing redevelopment as an expression of neoliberal restructuring. Third, I consider much of the literature on the alleged failings of public housing and how mixed-income redevelopment is expected to correct these failings.

²⁴ Juliana Mansvelt, *Geographies of Consumption* (London: Sage Publications, 2005)

²⁵ Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective”, *Feminist Studies*, 14, 3 (Fall 1988), p. 592.

²⁶ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961)

The literature review is followed by Chapter 3, which discusses both the methods used to research Little Mountain and my own positionality toward this research topic. In this chapter I discuss my dual role as both a researcher and an activist and the conflicted feelings this often caused me to experience. It is important to disclose my personal connections to both Little Mountain specifically and some of the more general issues at stake with redevelopment in order to do research that is reflexive about how my own social position relative to my research topic has resulted in only a partial rendering of the Little Mountain story as seen from my particular perspective. My perspective on Little Mountain is simultaneously and paradoxically that of an insider and an outsider.

Chapters 4 through 7 present my empirical findings from Little Mountain. The first of these chapters is concerned with the ‘birth’ of the Little Mountain Housing Project, that is, the political battles that were fought in order to equip Vancouver and BC with its very first public housing project. This chapter makes the case that Little Mountain was historically significant both to BC and Canada. This is followed with Chapter 5, which discusses the ‘life’ of the Little Mountain Housing Project from 1954 to 2007. This chapter shows how throughout its more than half century of existence, Little Mountain was a remarkably successful public housing project. Little Mountain avoided conforming to the stereotype of the ‘troubled housing project’ because it managed to hold onto a significant minority of middle class households and it was always rich in social capital, social organization, and social control. Although the Little Mountain tenants themselves deserve most of the credit for Little Mountain’s successes, the good physical design of the housing project facilitated these successes. While the first two empirical chapters deal with Little Mountain before redevelopment, the subsequent two empirical chapters are squarely about redevelopment. Chapter 6 explains how redevelopment has proceeded up to the fall of 2010. This involves discussing the deals reached between the provincial government and the City of Vancouver and between the provincial government and the developer concerning the redevelopment of Little Mountain and the backlash that came from many of the Little Mountain tenants and their supporters in the surrounding community. I also discuss how this redevelopment has been tarnished with a serious democracy deficit as the community consultation process started too late and has effectively excluded most of the Little Mountain tenants. Chapter 6 also shows how the redevelopment and privatization of Little Mountain is part of the neoliberal restructuring of the state and has been enabled by an agreement between the provincial and federal governments that devolves legal title and full responsibility for social housing to the provincial level. Chapter 7 goes on to evaluate redevelopment through a close examination of the distribution of benefits and losses to different relevant groups. The beneficiaries of redevelopment include the homeless, the addicted, and the mentally ill who will be housed in the supportive housing, a highly targeted and specific form of social housing, that is being financed with the proceeds from the privatization of Little Mountain. Thus, I show how the redevelopment of Little Mountain is connected to a broader process of re-targeting social housing away from low-income families toward those with addictions and mental illness. In addition, the developer and those who will purchase the market

condominiums eventually built at Little Mountain also stand to benefit from redevelopment. These actors highlight how the redevelopment of Little Mountain is connected to a broader gentrification process occurring at the neighbourhood scale. While in-moving condominium purchasers, the developer, and even the homeless, the addicted, and the mentally ill all stand to benefit from the redevelopment and privatization of Little Mountain, the Little Mountain tenants have consistently been on the losing end of the deal. This is because, for the tenants, redevelopment has involved living with the immediate reality of displacement. In the second half of Chapter 7 I explain how BC Housing carried out relocation and how resisting relocation resulted in escalating difficulties for the tenants. I also detail the negative impacts of relocation on the tenants, which I classify into three categories: social, emotional/health, and financial/material impacts.

Chapter 8 concludes this thesis by considering where we go from here. This thesis cannot offer the final word on the Little Mountain redevelopment because redevelopment is not expected to be complete for more than another decade. But I offer several empirical research questions for when the Little Mountain redevelopment is complete. I also consider some of the implications the Little Mountain redevelopment may mean for Vancouver and BC in terms of social housing policy, housing affordability, and social inequality. Finally, I discuss some of the insights the Little Mountain case may be able to offer regarding some of the broader academic debates concerning public housing redevelopment and social mix policies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The redevelopment of public housing into socially-mixed communities has taken root in cities across North America and beyond. Since the 1990s, redevelopment has become an increasingly common policy response to the perceived shortcomings of public housing. The most ambitious public housing redevelopment program is HOPE (Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere) VI in the US. HOPE VI was started in 1992 in order to address the problems in America's most troubled public housing projects. The magnitude of redevelopment under HOPE VI is immense. Although HOPE VI was originally intended to target the 6% of US public housing stock considered to be in "severe distress", by 2002 the US federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was "on pace to approve the demolition of nearly twice the number of units identified as 'severely distressed' in 1992."¹ In the first nine years of the program, over \$4.5 billion in federal funds were granted to redevelop 165 public housing sites across 98 US cities.² By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century it is estimated that as many as 160,000 public housing units have been demolished under the program.³ Although tenants are often told they may move back once redevelopment is complete, due to stricter eligibility requirements, the inconvenience of moving again, and the fact that since 1995 social housing has not been replaced on a one-for-one basis, less than one-third of displaced households actually return to redeveloped sites.⁴ Post-war modernistic public housing projects across the US have been replaced with New Urbanist mixed-income communities. But this form of redevelopment is not confined to the HOPE VI program of the US. By the late 1990s, socially-mixed redevelopment had spread to the council housing of the UK⁵ and the public housing estates of Australia.⁶ Canada, which was one of the last Western countries to develop public housing in the first place, was also a latecomer to socially-mixed redevelopment of public housing. Although with several redevelopments now underway in Toronto, most

¹ National Housing Law Project (NHLP), *False HOPE: A Critical Assessment of the HOPE VI Public Housing Redevelopment Program* (June 2002, accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.nhlp.org), p. ii.

² Ibid.

³ National Housing Law Project (NHLP), Testimony to United States House of Representatives Committee on Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity Hearing on Legislative Proposals to Preserve Public Housing (April 28, 2010, accessed online June 18, 2010 from www.nhlp.org)

⁴ Edward G. Goetz, "Desegregation in 3D: Displacement, Dispersal, and Development in American Public Housing", *Housing Studies*, 25, 2 (2010), pp. 137-158.

⁵ See Ian Cole & Barry Goodchild, "Social Mix and the 'Balanced Community' in British Housing Policy – A Tale of Two Epochs", *GeoJournal*, 51 (2001), pp. 351-360.

⁶ See Kathy Arthurson, "Creating Inclusive Communities through Balancing Social Mix: A Critical Relationship or a Tenuous Link?", *Urban Policy and Research*, 20, 3 (2002), pp. 245-261.

notably Regent Park, as well as the redevelopment of Little Mountain in Vancouver, it appears Canada is quickly making up for lost time.⁷

The aim of this chapter is to consider the literature that is relevant to the issue of socially-mixed redevelopment of public housing. This is a major undertaking as not only is there a contemporary debate about public housing redevelopment, much of the literature from the urban renewal era of the 1950s and 1960s continues to be remarkably relevant to the present context. Thus, this review, although far from exhaustive, considers social science literature spanning more than half a century. This review is divided into three major sections. The first section addresses both contemporary and classical literature that shows how public housing redevelopment bears strong similarities to the urban renewal policies of the mid-twentieth century. This section devotes particular attention to what the classical urban renewal literature can teach us about relocation. The second section considers the contemporary literature that shows how public housing redevelopment is an expression of the neoliberal restructuring of both city space and state institutions. The final section deals with the contemporary debate about the merits of public housing redevelopment. This section considers the shortcomings scholars have found with public housing and how socially-mixed redevelopment is expected to correct these failings. A key theme in this debate is social capital.

2.1 PUBLIC HOUSING REDEVELOPMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL

An underlying theme in much of the literature on public housing redevelopment is how remarkably similar this form of redevelopment is to the urban renewal programs of the 1950s and 1960s. Classical urban renewal and contemporary public housing redevelopment are similar in that both programs emphasize demolition over rehabilitation⁸; both target areas amenable to high-end development⁹; both reduce the supply of affordable housing¹⁰; both entail a regressive distribution of costs and benefits¹¹; both disproportionately affect poor, racial minorities¹²; both provide for inadequate

⁷ There were several minor redevelopments of public housing in Canada in the 1980s and 1990s that primarily consisted of cosmetic changes, including Uniacke Square in Halifax and Regent Court in Regina. These redevelopments emphasized rehabilitation over demolition. They did not involve any displacement of residents or any introduction of social mix. This type of public housing redevelopment is not the focus of this paper. See John Sewell, *Houses and Homes: Housing for Canadians* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 1994).

⁸ See NHLP, 2002, Op. cit., p. 37.

⁹ See Elvin K. Wyly & Daniel J. Hammel, "Islands of Decay in Seas of Renewal: Housing Policy and the Resurgence of Gentrification", *Housing Policy Debate*, 10, 4 (1999), pp. 711-771.

¹⁰ See Jason Hackworth, *The Neoliberal City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007)

¹¹ See Ibid.; See also Edward G. Goetz, "The Politics of Poverty Deconcentration and Housing Demolition", *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 22, 2 (2000), pp. 157-173.

¹² See NHLP, 2002, Op. cit.; See also Susan Greenbaum, "Poverty and the Willful Destruction of Social Capital: Displacement and Dispossession in African American Communities", *Rethinking Marxism*, 20, 1 (2008), pp. 42-54.

relocation assistance¹³; both disrupt the social support networks of the poor¹⁴; both induce emotional distress as people are removed from places to which they are attached¹⁵; and both provide for inadequate public participation mechanisms.¹⁶ Although separated in time by several decades and carried out in significantly different political, social, and economic contexts, the similarities between urban renewal and public housing redevelopment are staggering. Thus, any scholar of public housing redevelopment must have a strong understanding of urban renewal.

2.1.1 Overview of Urban Renewal

Urban renewal involved the large-scale redevelopment of inner-city ‘slum’ neighbourhoods in the US, Canada, and beyond. Entire neighbourhoods disproportionately populated by low-income racial minorities were leveled and replaced with office towers, sports stadiums, shopping malls, high-end housing and public housing. Officially, two objectives motivated governments to pursue urban renewal policies. One objective was to stem the tide of disinvestment that was plaguing many central cities and to return these areas to a state of “highest and best use”¹⁷, which would lead to increased municipal tax revenue. The second objective was to increase the supply and quality of affordable rental housing. Critics argued that urban renewal failed to meet both of these goals.¹⁸ Quite contrary to its objectives, urban renewal actually reduced the supply of affordable housing because construction of public housing did not keep up with demolition of ‘slum’ housing.¹⁹

Given these failures, many scholars have argued that the real motivations of urban renewal were far less benevolent. Peter Marcuse argued that the true goals of the program were to clear land for the expansion of cities’ downtowns and to remove poor black people from the inner-city.²⁰ Much has

¹³ See Goetz, 2000, Op. cit.; See also NHLP, 2002, Op. cit.

¹⁴ See Greenbaum, Op. cit.; See also Alexandra M. Curley, “‘A New Place, A New Network?’ Social Capital Effects of Residential Relocation of Poor Women”, in *Networked Urbanism: Social Capital in the City*, eds. T. Blokland & M. Savage (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), pp. 85-104.

¹⁵ See Lynne C. Manzo et al., “‘Moving Three Times is Like Having Your House on Fire Once’: The Experience of Place and Impending Displacement among Public Housing Residents”, *Urban Studies*, 45, 9 (2008), pp. 1855-1878.

¹⁶ See Goetz, 2000, Op. cit.; See also NHLP, 2002, Op. cit.

¹⁷ P. J. Smith, “Theory and Practice of Urban Renewal Planning in Canada”, in *A World of Real Places*, eds. P.J. Smith & E.L. Jackson (Edmonton: Department of Geography, University of Alberta, 1990), p. 194.

¹⁸ See Martin Anderson, *The Federal Bulldozer: A Critical Analysis of Urban Renewal, 1949-1962* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1964); See also Chester Hartman, “The Housing of Relocated Families”, *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 30, 4 (1964), pp. 266-286, reprinted in *Urban Renewal: The Record and the Controversy*, ed. James Q. Wilson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966), pp. 293-335.

¹⁹ Martin Anderson, Op. cit.

²⁰ Peter Marcuse, “Housing Policy and the Myth of the Benevolent State”, *Social Policy*, 8 (1978), pp. 21-26.

also been written on how during urban renewal inner-city ‘slums’ and ethnic enclaves were pathologized as places of vice, disorder, and disease.²¹ These areas threatened the cultural hegemony of the white middle class.²² Herbert Gans argued that the reformers who backed urban renewal “were attempting to maintain the cultural and political power they had held before the arrival of the immigrants by imposing on the city the physical and social structure of the Protestant middle class.”²³

It has been estimated that one million people were displaced by urban renewal in the US.²⁴ As the program wore on and the degree of displacement and destruction that it entailed grew more apparent to people of all classes, a significant backlash developed against urban renewal. In the US in 1961 Jane Jacobs led a successful resistance movement against urban renewal plans for her Greenwich Village neighbourhood.²⁵ This occurred shortly after Jacobs wrote her landmark book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, which is largely an account of what was wrong with urban renewal.²⁶ In Canada, resistance succeeded in halting urban renewal plans for the Trefann Court neighbourhood in Toronto²⁷ and Chinatown in Vancouver.²⁸ This signaled the beginning of the end of urban renewal. In 1973 the urban renewal programs of both countries were scrapped and replaced with smaller programs that emphasized rehabilitation over demolition.²⁹ “By the early 1970s,” urban historian Jon C. Teaford writes, “urban renewal had become synonymous in the popular mind with bulldozers and heartless displacement of the poor and powerless. Consequently, its enduring lessons were primarily negative. It taught America what *not* to do in the future” (emphasis in the original).³⁰

²¹ Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal & Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991); See also Natalia Molina, *Fit to be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006)

²² Ibid.

²³ Herbert J. Gans, “City Planning in America: 1890-1967 A Sociological Analysis”, in *People, Plans, and Policies*, ed. Herbert J. Gans (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 124-125.

²⁴ Herbert J. Gans, “From the Bulldozer to Homelessness”, in *People, Plans, and Policies*, ed. Herbert J. Gans (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 212-224.

²⁵ J. Clarence Davies, III, *Neighborhood Groups and Urban Renewal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966)

²⁶ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961)

²⁷ Graham Fraser, *Fighting Back: Urban Renewal in Trefann Court* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1972); See also John Sewell, *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993)

²⁸ David Ley et al., “Chinatown-Strathcona: Gaining an Entitlement”, in *Neighbourhood Organizations and the Welfare State*, eds. Shlomo Hasson & David Ley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), pp. 112-136.

²⁹ Ibid.; See also Bernard J. Frieden & Lynne B. Sagalyn, *Downtown Inc.: How America Rebuilds Cities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989)

³⁰ Jon C. Teaford, “Urban Renewal and Its Aftermath”, *Housing Policy Debate*, 11, 2 (2000), pp. 443-465.

2.1.2 Urban Renewal and Contemporary Literature

Given the strongly negative experience of urban renewal, claims that it is now being repeated are very disturbing. But this is exactly what many contemporary scholars of public housing redevelopment are arguing. According to Edward Goetz, who has studied public housing redevelopment in Saint Paul-Minneapolis, public housing tenants have raised issues that “are a virtual replica of concerns voiced by ‘slum dwellers’ during the era of urban renewal.”³¹ These include concerns about the loss of affordable housing, displacement, and the loss of social support networks.

The scholar who has perhaps most explicitly linked public housing redevelopment with urban renewal is Larry Keating. In his article entitled “Redeveloping public housing: relearning urban renewal’s immutable lessons”, Keating shows how the redevelopment of two public housing projects in Atlanta in the 1990s carried out under the HOPE VI program is highly reminiscent of urban renewal. Like urban renewal, public housing redevelopment in Atlanta has resulted in a loss of affordable housing, the removal of black residents from the downtown area, and the loss of social support networks among the urban poor. While corporate interests such as Coca-Cola, which had been lobbying to demolish the public housing since the early 1970s appear to have been satisfied, about half the residents who were displaced received no relocation assistance.³² The regressive distribution of costs and benefits³³, the lead role played by cities’ corporate bases³⁴, and inadequate relocation assistance³⁵ were familiar scenarios under urban renewal. The only significant difference from urban renewal is that under HOPE VI the requirements for resident participation in the planning process are “less stringent than the late urban renewal era requirements.”³⁶ The unfavourable comparison to urban renewal in this regard is especially shocking as urban renewal was not known for being a democratic process that enabled community participation in planning to say the least.³⁷

Another area in which there appear to be similarities between urban renewal and public housing redevelopment is the moral and cultural undertones of the two programs. In the 1980s and 1990s, a

³¹ Goetz, 2000, Op. cit., p. 169.

³² Larry Keating, “Redeveloping Public Housing: Relearning Urban Renewal’s Immutable Lessons”, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 66, 4 (2000), pp. 384-397.

³³ See Anthony Downs, “Losses Imposed on Urban Households by Uncompensated Highway and Renewal Costs”, in *Urban Problems and Prospects*, ed. Anthony Downs (Chicago: Markham Publishing Co., 1970), pp. 192-227.

³⁴ See John H. Mollenkopf, “The Post-War Politics of Urban Development”, *Politics & Society*, 5, 3 (1975), pp. 247-295.

³⁵ See Martin Anderson, Op. cit.

³⁶ Keating, Op. cit., p. 391.

³⁷ See Sherry R. Arnstein, “A Ladder of Citizen Participation”, *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35, 4 (1969), pp. 216-224; See also James Q. Wilson, “Planning and Politics: Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal”, *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 29, 4 (1963), pp. 242-249.

“moral panic”³⁸ exploded in the popular media with sensational news reports about gang violence, drugs, and teen pregnancy in poor inner-city neighbourhoods. Public housing redevelopment is expected to address these problems in much the same way urban renewal was expected to reduce vice in the early to mid-twentieth century urban slums. The discourse of distress that surrounds public housing and promises that redevelopment will create balance (implicitly suggesting public housing is out of balance) serve to pathologize public housing.³⁹ Sometimes the pathologization of public housing is quite explicit. For example, this has been shown when metaphors of cancer and the spread of disease have been used to justify public housing redevelopment. By demolishing stigmatized public housing building and introducing middle class residents, the ‘cancer’ of concentrated poverty may be ‘cured’.⁴⁰ During the urban renewal era, the slums were similarly depicted as places that bred vice and disease and urban renewal was presented as a ‘cure’ for blight.⁴¹ It appears that, much like urban renewal⁴², public housing redevelopment is about maintaining and imposing middle class cultural hegemony in poor inner-city neighbourhoods.

But this cultural dimension has remained under-explored in the critical literature on public housing redevelopment. Culture has entered into the current debate only insofar as critics of public housing redevelopment have challenged the validity of the culture of poverty theories that seem to motivate public housing redevelopment.⁴³ Contemporary scholars have also defended the value of the social networks of the urban poor that are disrupted by redevelopment.⁴⁴ But aside from perhaps Venkatesh’s ethnographic research of Chicago’s Robert Taylor Homes, critical contemporary scholarship has not defended the cultural traits of the urban poor and exposed the middle class cultural biases of proponents of redevelopment.⁴⁵ For such arguments one has to look back to the now dated literature on urban renewal, in which several scholars argued that the culture of the poor was an adaptive and

³⁸ Goetz, 2000, Op. cit., p. 160.

³⁹ See Cole & Goodchild, Op. cit; See also Manzo et al., Op. cit.; See also Susan Greenbaum et al., “Deconcentration and Social Capital: Contradictions of a Poverty Alleviation Policy”, *Journal of Poverty*, 12, 2 (2008), pp. 201-228.

⁴⁰ Jeff Crump, “Deconcentration by Demolition: Public Housing, Poverty, and Urban Policy”, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 30 (2002), 581-596.

⁴¹ See Kay J. Anderson, Op. cit.; See Molina, Op. cit.

⁴² Herbert J Gans, 1993, “City Planning in America: 1890-1967 A Sociological Analysis”, Op. cit.

⁴³ See Michael B. Katz, *The Underclass Debate* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993)

⁴⁴ See Greenbaum, Op. cit.; See also Manzo et al., Op. cit.

⁴⁵ Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000)

functional response to difficult circumstances.⁴⁶ Ironically, progressive social science on the urban poor carried out after the cultural turn has avoided cultural issues as they relate to class.

Instead of culture, critical research on public housing redevelopment has focused on issues that are perhaps easier to measure and observe, such as impacts on social networks and relocation outcomes. According to the National Housing Law Project (hereafter, NHLP) report, which offers a thorough review of the HOPE VI program up to 2002 based largely on data from HUD, relocation is one of the key and most troubling areas where urban renewal and public housing redevelopment converge. As the NHLP explains:

The relocation results under both Urban Renewal and HOPE VI have been highly dismaying...Like the old Urban Renewal agencies, public housing authorities seem to regard land re-use under HOPE VI as their primary, and more interesting, task—the new convention center, market-rate housing development, office complex are to Urban Renewal projects what the new mixed-income housing development with retail space is to HOPE VI. Thus, relocation activities, being a secondary task at best, take a back seat to the physical redevelopment work—getting far less attention, fewer resources, and, when pressed, getting done wholly inadequately if relocation issues threaten to stall or block the redevelopment effort.⁴⁷

Given the significant similarities between urban renewal and public housing redevelopment in terms of relocation, and the fact that relocation is a key focus of my research, the remainder of this section considers what the classical literature on urban renewal can teach us about relocation.

2.1.3 Classical Urban Renewal Literature on Relocation

Herbert Gans' pioneering work in Boston's West End detailed the social structure of the neighbourhood's mostly working class Italian-American community and how the community experienced urban renewal in the late 1950s. Despite the neighbourhood's designation as a slum by urban renewal officials, most residents were strongly attached to the neighbourhood and their friends who lived in it.⁴⁸ Urban renewal resulted in the scattering of the West Enders across the metropolitan region of Boston which made it difficult for people to maintain their social connections that had been so important to them in the West End.⁴⁹ Gans argued that the elderly found readjusting to new living environments to be

⁴⁶ See Herbert J. Gans, *The Urban Villagers* (New York: The Free Press, 1962, republished in 1982); Oscar Lewis, "The Culture of Poverty", in *On Understanding Poverty: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, ed. Daniel P. Moynihan (New York: Basic Books, 1968), pp. 187-200; Lee Rainwater, "The Problem of Lower-Class Culture and Poverty War Strategy", in *On Understanding Poverty: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, ed. Daniel P. Moynihan (New York: Basic Books, 1968), pp. 229-259.

⁴⁷ NHLP, 2002, Op. cit., p. 40.

⁴⁸ Gans, 1962, 1982 reprint, Op. cit.

⁴⁹ The scattered relocation pattern of the West Enders is somewhat atypical of urban renewal as most studies reported that people tended to relocate close to their former homes. See Hartman, Op. cit.

especially difficult, a finding that has been supported by subsequent researchers working in other contexts.⁵⁰ Gans saw the disruption to the social system of the West Enders as a significant cost of urban renewal that authorities failed to take into consideration. He emphasized the importance of considering how redevelopment may negatively impact the social structures of urban neighbourhoods:

Renewal proposals that call for the relocation of an entire neighborhood should be studied closely to determine whether the existing social system satisfies more positive than negative functions for the residents. Should this be the case, planners must decide whether the destruction of this social system is justified by the benefits to be derived from renewal.⁵¹

Destruction of their social system and removal from familiar surroundings appear to have caused lasting distress for many West Enders. Marc Fried carried out interviews with people two years after they were relocated out of the West End and found a significant proportion of people (46% of women, 38% of men) demonstrated “a fairly severe grief reaction”⁵² as a result of relocation. Fried found that the longer one had lived in the West End and the more familiar one was with the various parts of the neighbourhood, the greater the sense of grief after relocation. The most severe reactions were found when people were asked the question, “How did you feel when you saw or heard that the building you had lived in was torn down?”⁵³ Fried argued that people’s sense of identity was altered as a result of relocation, which produced the severe grief that many experienced. Fried distinguished between spatial identity and group identity. Spatial identity refers to the attachment one has to the place where one lives, the physical environment of the home and the neighbourhood. Group identity refers to the social environment that one is attached to. Both of these are key aspects of ‘place attachment’. When people are relocated both aspects of identity are changed leading to a sense of loss.⁵⁴

Although the emotional impacts that Fried documented are almost impossible to monetize, they do represent costs that people had to bear as a result of urban renewal. In addition to emotional and social costs, there were several other costs that also went uncompensated under urban renewal.⁵⁵ Typically, the only compensation available was payment for expropriated land and perhaps moving expenses in some

⁵⁰ See F. Brand & R. Smith, “Life Adjustment and the Relocation of the Elderly”, *Journal of Gerontology*, 29 (1974), pp. 336-340; See also Jeffrey R. Henig, “Gentrification and Displacement of the Elderly: An Empirical Analysis”, in *Gentrification, Displacement and Neighborhood Revitalization*, eds. J. John Palen & Bruce London (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1984), pp. 170-184.

⁵¹ Gans, 1962, 1982 reprint, Op. cit., p. 371.

⁵² Marc Fried, “Grieving for a Lost Home”, in *The Urban Condition*, ed. Leonard J. Duhl (New York: Basic Books, 1963), p. 152.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Downs, Op. cit.

cases. Renters usually received nothing for the loss of their homes.⁵⁶ Thus, many scholars argued that urban renewal was being subsidized by those who could least afford it.⁵⁷

To be sure, relocation did bring some benefits for many people. Many people who were relocated as a result of urban renewal did find the physical quality of their new housing improved, sometimes significantly. In many cases, relocation meant that people enjoyed hot running water, indoor toilets, and electricity for the first time.⁵⁸ Often, people found that they had more room in their new homes as well.⁵⁹ Those who relocated into public housing tended to experience the greatest improvements in terms of the physical quality of their homes. But the vast majority of people did not relocate into public housing because they did not want to and because not enough public housing was constructed. Thus, while many people who were relocated did experience an improvement in housing quality, a significant proportion, in some cases a majority, continued to live in substandard conditions.⁶⁰ In many instances, people simply relocated to other areas slated for renewal. Thus, Chester Hartman memorably remarked, “For many families, relocation may mean no more than keeping one step ahead of the bulldozer.”⁶¹

Even for those fortunate enough to have experienced an improvement in housing quality as a result of relocation, this improvement came with costs. For some, better quality homes still came with grief over lost neighbours, a longing for one’s former way of life, and sometimes a change in status from homeowner to renter. In the Africville case, which involved relocating a black community from a semi-rural setting mostly into public housing in Halifax, while most people saw significant improvement in the physical quality of their homes, they missed the “elbow room”⁶² and self-sufficiency they enjoyed in Africville where they could fish and grow vegetable gardens. Also, improved quality housing usually came with higher rents and operating costs.⁶³ People tended to pay higher rents after relocation because urban renewal simultaneously reduced the supply of affordable housing through demolition while increasing the demand for it as those who were displaced flooded local rental markets in search of new homes.⁶⁴

⁵⁶ Martin Anderson, Op. cit.

⁵⁷ Downs, Op. cit.; Gans, 1962, 1982 reprint, Op. cit.

⁵⁸ Donald H. Clairmont & Dennis William Magill, *Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974)

⁵⁹ Hartman, Op. cit.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 322.

⁶² Clairmont & Magill, Op. cit., p. 217.

⁶³ Downs, Op. cit.

⁶⁴ Hartman, Op. cit.

Given the disruption that urban renewal entailed for people who had to be relocated, it is hardly surprising that many people resisted relocation. A common method of resistance was to simply not cooperate with relocation officials. In the case of urban renewal of the Rose-Blanshard area of Victoria, which involved the relocation of 157 households, those who refused to sell their homes to the government were labeled as “holdouts” with comments written on their files such as “exceptionally difficult owners.”⁶⁵ One of the issues in the Rose-Blanshard case was that owners were being offered the 1966 assessment values of their homes in 1967 after their properties had appreciated in value. By 1968, the government gave in to the remaining holdouts and reassessed the value of their properties to reflect the market appreciation that had occurred.⁶⁶ This suggests that, although holding out may not allow one to escape relocation altogether, it may result in a better financial settlement from officials. However, resisting relocation by refusing to move may become progressively more difficult as more and more people leave the community. Clairmont and Magill made note of this dynamic in Africville as did Gans in Boston’s West End. Gans described the process as follows:

As buildings began to empty, the remaining tenants were loath to remain in them, and even those who had planned to stay to the bitter end began to leave. People were afraid of being alone, of being the last in the house and thus isolated from the group. Then, unknown teenagers began to roam through semi-deserted buildings, using them for nocturnal parties, setting fires, and vandalizing wherever they could. The families still remaining in these buildings became fearful and moved more quickly than they had intended. The empty structures were torn down as soon as the last tenant left, and the resulting noise and dirt encouraged people in adjacent buildings to move also. Consequently, the West End was emptied in little more than eighteen months after the official taking of the land.⁶⁷

Thus, relocating an entire community appears to involve a positive feedback loop. At first, relocation may proceed slowly but as more and more people are relocated, those remaining tend to quickly give in as the “costs of resistance”⁶⁸ are increased.

Another social dynamic in the relocation process was observed by Clairmont and Magill in Africville. Rather than bargain collectively to try to get the most possible compensation for the entire group, residents bargained on an individual basis and many kept the details of their negotiations secret from other Africville residents. Africville residents were under the impression that compensation was being dispensed according to a zero-sum principle, meaning if one person got a better deal it would come at another’s expense. This created an air of suspicion and competition among residents and many people

⁶⁵ Quoted in R.W. Robertson, “Anatomy of a Renewal Scheme”, in *Residential and Neighbourhood Studies in Victoria*, ed. C.N. Forward (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, 1973), p. 54.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Gans, 1962, 1982 reprint, Op. cit., pp. 345-346.

⁶⁸ Clairmont & Magill, Op. cit., p. 206.

felt that some people got better deals than others. Compared to most other urban renewal cases, Africville residents received generous compensation which included furniture allowances among other payments, although most ultimately felt that it still did not make up for their losses.⁶⁹

Based on this review of classic literature on urban renewal, it is clear that the program was devastating for low-income communities across North America. As we will see, the insights this literature offers continue to be remarkably relevant to the present context of public housing redevelopment. But urban renewal was part of a very different political-economic paradigm than the current one. Urban renewal was a form of state intervention and part of the rise of the Keynesian welfare state. Public housing was an important and highly valuable legacy of urban renewal. Today, this very public housing is now being demolished in a manner that highly resembles the urban renewal programs that gave birth to it. But contemporary redevelopment, although similar to urban renewal, is occurring in a very different context. Rather than being part of state intervention and the rise of welfare assistance, public housing redevelopment is an expression of the retrenchment of the welfare state and the privatization of public assets. The next section reviews literature that shows how public housing redevelopment is constitutive of the broader process of neoliberal restructuring of both urban space and state institutions.

2.2 PUBLIC HOUSING REDEVELOPMENT AND NEOLIBERALISM

There exists a tremendous body of academic literature from the full range of social science disciplines on that ideological paradigm that valorizes free markets, deregulation and privatization known as neoliberalism.⁷⁰ Although neoliberalism appears to have permeated virtually every part of the globe, several scholars have emphasized its contextual embeddedness.⁷¹ In their essay on “actually existing neoliberalism”, Brenner and Theodore have shown how neoliberal restructuring is shaped by the national, regional and local contexts in which it is carried out.⁷² The city-scale in particular has been identified as important as “it is in cities and city-regions that the various contradictions and tensions of ‘actually

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ See for example Hackworth, 2007, *The Neoliberal City*, Op. cit.; David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Monica Prasad, *The Politics of Free Markets: The Rise of Neoliberal Economic Policies in Britain, France, Germany, & the United States* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006); Raymond Plant, *The Neo-Liberal State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

⁷¹ See for example Harvey, Op. cit.; Hackworth, 2007, *The Neoliberal City*, Op. cit.; Neil Brenner & Nik Theodore, eds., *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002)

⁷² Neil Brenner & Nik Theodore, “Cities and the Geographies of ‘Actually Existing Neoliberalism’”, in *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*, eds. Neil Brenner & Nik Theodore (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 2-32.

existing neoliberalism' are expressed most saliently in everyday life."⁷³ Public housing redevelopment has been identified as one of the key ways neoliberalism operates at the scale of the city.⁷⁴ This section reviews the literature on how public housing redevelopment is part of the neoliberalization of urban space. But first it is necessary to consider how scholars understand neoliberalism at a more general level.

Many scholars have argued that neoliberalism, in addition to being contextually embedded, should be understood as a process.⁷⁵ Rather than presenting itself in its "pure-end state"⁷⁶, neoliberalism is a process of change that is often highly contested and incomplete. The term "neoliberalization of urban space" refers to this process of change at the city scale, both in terms of how it remakes urban landscapes and urban governance structures.⁷⁷ The neoliberal process may be seen as a dialectical one made up of an inherent tension between moments of destruction/roll-back and creation/roll-out.⁷⁸ Neoliberalism seeks to destroy landscapes, policies and institutions of the Keynesian welfare state,⁷⁹ while creating new places, institutions and arrangements that fall under the discipline of the market and offer new opportunities for profit-making.⁸⁰ In other words, neoliberalism involves the destruction/roll-back and creation/roll-out of both landscape forms and state institutions. In terms of state institutions, neoliberalism has rolled back the welfare state as deregulation and privatization have affected virtually every sector of government. But this has been accompanied with the rolling out of new institutions and practices that regulate the lives of those who have experienced the negative effects of the rolling back of the welfare state. Thus, while neoliberalism emphasizes small government, it has actually brought about ever greater levels of state

⁷³ Bob Jessop, "Liberalism, Neoliberalism, and Urban Governance: A State-Theoretical Perspective", in *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*, eds. Neil Brenner & Nik Theodore (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), p. 105.

⁷⁴ See Brenner & Theodore, 2002, "Cities and the Geographies of 'Actually Existing Neoliberalism'", Op. cit.; Kathe Newman & Philip Ashton, "Neoliberal Urban Policy and New Paths of Neighborhood Change in the American Inner City", *Environment and Planning A*, 36 (2004), pp. 1151-1172; David Wilson, "Toward a Contingent Urban Neoliberalism", *Urban Geography*, 25, 8 (2004), pp. 771-783.

⁷⁵ See Brenner & Theodore, 2002, "Cities and the Geographies of 'Actually Existing Neoliberalism'", Op. cit.; Jamie Peck & Adam Tickell, "Neoliberalizing Space", in *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*, eds. Neil Brenner & Nik Theodore (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 33-57.

⁷⁶ Jason Hackworth, "Progressive Activism in a Neoliberal Context: The Case of Efforts to Retain Public Housing in the United States", *Studies in Political Economy*, 75 (2007), p. 30.

⁷⁷ Peck & Tickell, Op. cit.

⁷⁸ Ibid.; Brenner & Theodore, 2002, "Cities and the Geographies of 'Actually Existing Neoliberalism'", Op. cit.

⁷⁹ Hackworth, 2007, "Progressive Activism in a Neoliberal Context: The Case of Efforts to Retain Public Housing in the United States", Op. cit.

⁸⁰ Brenner & Theodore, 2002, "Cities and the Geographies of 'Actually Existing Neoliberalism'", Op. cit.; David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

intervention in areas like immigration, policing, and social welfare policy.⁸¹ Neoliberalism has also ushered in significant landscape change as city space has been remade to allow cities to compete globally. Successful positioning in the global hierarchy of cities is achieved by offering spectacular and highly ‘livable’ urban environments that attract hyper-mobile capital and the cosmopolitan class who work in the growing creative service industries.⁸² This is what Neil Smith means when he talks about “gentrification as global urban strategy.”⁸³

Public housing redevelopment brings all of these themes together. Having dealt with neoliberalism at a highly general and theoretical level, the rest of this section considers the literature on neoliberalism as it relates to public housing redevelopment. First, I consider how public housing redevelopment entails the creative destruction of a particular urban landscape form. Then, I address the scholarship on how public housing redevelopment exemplifies a rolling-back/rolling-out of state institutions. Finally, I consider the contextual variability of public housing redevelopment and its implications for resistance. Where possible, I highlight similarities and differences between public housing redevelopment in the US and Canadian contexts, which serves to underscore Theodore and Brenner’s point that national (and regional and local) contexts shape neoliberal restructuring.

2.2.1 Creative Destruction of Urban Space

Public housing landscapes are artifacts from the pre-neoliberal era. They exemplify, in built physical landscape form, the Keynesian welfare state. Their very existence in the present-day signals the incompleteness and geographically uneven nature of the neoliberal process.⁸⁴ Public housing’s modernist architecture and super-block scale that interrupts urban street grids make public housing stand out as a distinct, highly recognizable urban form.⁸⁵ Redevelopment replaces this distinctive landscape with New Urbanist developments that reconnect these sites to a city’s street grid. Although redevelopment often entails replacing some or all of the social housing demolished, there is general agreement that replacement social housing “should be small-scale and of mixed tenure; it should become ‘invisible’.”⁸⁶

⁸¹ Peck & Tickell, Op. cit.

⁸² Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991)

⁸³ Neil Smith, “New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy”, in *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*, eds. Neil Brenner & Nik Theodore (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), p. 80.

⁸⁴ Hackworth, 2007, “Progressive Activism in a Neoliberal Context: The Case of Efforts to Retain Public Housing in the United States”, Op. cit.

⁸⁵ See Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1972)

⁸⁶ Manzo et al., Op. cit., p. 1874.

Thus, public housing redevelopment entails a drastic change in the built environment of city neighbourhoods and how neighbourhoods relate to one another.

From a political-economy perspective, the landscape change that public housing redevelopment brings about can be seen as a textbook example of creative destruction. According to David Harvey's concept of spatial-fix, creative destruction allows for new opportunities for profit-making by removing physical landscape components that no longer facilitate capital accumulation.⁸⁷ With public housing redevelopment, public housing buildings and landscapes are literally destroyed in order to create "new opportunities for speculative investment in central-city real estate markets."⁸⁸ When public housing was first built during the middle decades of the twentieth-century, it served an important purpose in the capitalist quest to accumulate profit. The initial construction of public housing in the 1930s in the US was part of an effort to stimulate the economy during the Great Depression and create jobs for the growing numbers of unemployed. And after it was constructed, public housing served an important role in providing housing for workers who were employed in the war and shipbuilding industries that were so crucial to the economies of many North American cities at the time.⁸⁹ Scholars have shown how the Canadian government in the early 1940s set aside its ideological aversion to public housing and created Wartime Housing Limited, essentially a precursor to Canada's later public housing programs, due to the fact that the shortage of working class housing in many Canadian cities was hampering the war effort and undermining the local economies of cities.⁹⁰ But today public housing no longer serves an important function for capital accumulation. Central cities have experienced deindustrialization as working class jobs have moved offshore or to suburban business parks, far from where most public housing is located. Rather than being populated by the working class who fuel the local economy, for some time now public housing has been inhabited largely by the permanently unemployed.⁹¹ In the current context, public housing has become 'obsolete', to use the word of so many proponents of redevelopment.⁹² By occupying large tracts of valuable land in the central city, public housing acts as a barrier to profitable real estate

⁸⁷ Harvey, 2003, Op. cit.; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989)

⁸⁸ Brenner & Theodore, 2002, "Cities and the Geographies of 'Actually Existing Neoliberalism'", Op. cit., p. 23.

⁸⁹ John F. Bauman, "Public Housing: The Dreadful Saga of a Durable Policy", *Journal of Planning Literature*, 8, 4 (1994), pp. 347-361.

⁹⁰ John C. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (Montreal & Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); See also Jill Wade, *Houses for All: The Struggle for Social Housing in Vancouver, 1919-50* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994)

⁹¹ Lawrence Vale, *Reclaiming Public Housing: A Half Century of Struggle in Three Public Neighborhoods* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002)

⁹² Rachel Weber, "Extracting Value from the City: Neoliberalism and Urban Redevelopment", in *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*, eds. Neil Brenner & Nik Theodore (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 172-193.

development in rapidly gentrifying inner-city neighbourhoods.⁹³ In the post-industrial neoliberal city, “real-estate development [has become] a centerpiece of the city’s *productive* economy, an end in itself” (emphasis in the original).⁹⁴ Public housing redevelopment removes physical infrastructure that no longer serves any purpose for capital accumulation while creating new opportunities for investment and profit-making in the real estate sector, which is now of central importance to the economies of cities. This is the definition of creative destruction.

Public housing redevelopment creates opportunities for capital accumulation as redevelopment is typically financed through the leveraging of private capital. Under the HOPE VI program in the US, public funds, in the form of HUD grants to local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs), largely pay for redevelopment. But these public funds are conditional on PHAs’ ability to raise private capital, either through public-private partnerships, cross-subsidies from market housing, or through Tax Increment Financing (TIF) schemes, or some combination thereof.⁹⁵ Although the proportion of financing raised from the private sector has grown since the beginning of HOPE VI, federal public dollars have remained the single most important source of financing, making up 79% of budgeted funds in 2001.⁹⁶ Private sources helped pay for 12% of the cost of redevelopment in the US in 2001 and funding from state and local governments made up the remaining 9%.⁹⁷ In the Canadian context the leveraging of private capital to pay for redevelopment appears to be much more prominent than in the US. In the case of Regent Park in Toronto, redevelopment is being financed through a public-private partnership. A nominal corporation is being created in which the developer (Daniels Corporation) and the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC, essentially a PHA, a crown corporation) will each have a 50% ownership stake.⁹⁸ This nominal corporation will own the market component of the new development (presumably, the social housing component will remain under TCHC ownership). TCHC’s 50% stake is being paid for through the transfer of title to the land to the nominal corporation. Thus, a major difference between public housing redevelopment in Canada and the US is that in Canada there is a conspicuous absence of federal public dollars. This difference stems from the different constitutional arrangements in Canada

⁹³ Wyly & Hammel, Op. cit.

⁹⁴ Smith, N. Op. cit., p. 96.

⁹⁵ See Hackworth, 2007, *The Neoliberal City*, Op. cit.; Weber, Op. cit.; Roberto G. Quercia & George C. Galster, “The Challenges Facing Public Housing Authorities in a Brave New World”, *Housing Policy Debate*, 8, 3 (1997), pp. 535-569.

⁹⁶ David G. Wood, *Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Housing and Transportation, Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, US Senate. Public Housing: HOPE VI Leveraging has Increased, but HUD has not met Annual Reporting Requirement* (US General Accounting Office, November 2002, accessed online November 11, 2010 from www.gao.gov)

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Martine August, personal email communication, March 30, 2010.

and the fact that in the 1990s the federal government in Canada completely withdrew from the area of new social housing construction.⁹⁹ But in both countries, public resources (public dollars in the US, public land in Canada) are being used to help generate private profit. The public subsidization of private profit has been shown to be typical of urban development projects generally in the neoliberal context.¹⁰⁰

These various arrangements show how public housing redevelopment is a means of “extracting value from the city.”¹⁰¹ Bringing land that was previously publicly owned and therefore outside of the private real estate market into the market and replacing old, ‘obsolete’ public housing buildings with new high-end condominiums has the effect of closing a significant rent-gap on these properties.¹⁰² Real estate developers and government housing authorities both stand to financially profit. Housing authorities can then re-invest these profits into the social housing system, thereby enabling social housing to literally pay for itself.¹⁰³ This is the entrepreneurial approach to governance that neoliberalism calls for. Although not writing about public housing redevelopment specifically, Swyngedouw et al. have cautioned that urban redevelopment projects in which the primary objective is to close a rent-gap do not alleviate social exclusion, but rather serve to reinforce it.¹⁰⁴ Thus, it is questionable whether housing authorities can meet their social objectives when they essentially assume the role of real estate speculator.¹⁰⁵

Public housing redevelopment also has the effect of privileging exchange values over locally-determined use values.¹⁰⁶ Redevelopment is occurring in a context of rapid turnover times, hyper-mobile capital, and internationalized real estate markets. Indeed, these are key characteristics of neoliberalism.¹⁰⁷ Although the commodification of land is nothing new, the category of ‘real property’ has traditionally not

⁹⁹ See J. David Hulchanski, *Housing Policy for Tomorrow's Cities* (Canadian Policy Networks, 2002, accessed online September 22, 2010 from cprn.org); For a discussion on Canada's Constitution as it relates to housing see also Albert Rose, *Canadian Housing Policies, 1935-1980* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1980)

¹⁰⁰ See Erik Swyngedouw et al., “Neoliberal Urbanization in Europe: Large-Scale Urban Development Projects and the New Urban Policy”, in *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*, eds. Neil Brenner & Nik Theodore (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 195-229.

¹⁰¹ Weber, Op. cit., p. 172.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ See Jason Hackworth & Abigail Moriah, “Neoliberalism, Contingency and Urban Policy: The Case of Social Housing in Ontario”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 30, 3 (September 2006), pp. 510-527.

¹⁰⁴ Swyngedouw et al., Op. cit.

¹⁰⁵ Martine August, “Social Mix and Canadian Public Housing Redevelopment: Experiences in Toronto”, *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 17, 1 (2008), pp. 82-100.

¹⁰⁶ Weber, Op. cit.

¹⁰⁷ Harvey, 2005, Op. cit.

been as fully commodified as other forms of property due to its special place-based qualities. But in the neoliberal context, land is increasingly treated just like any other commodity. As such, land is increasingly becoming “dematerialized”, “deterritorialized” and “detached from place.”¹⁰⁸ As Weber has explained:

Distant capitalists will only invest if the property is recognizable beyond its unique character embedded in space and if it can provide short-term returns...*space is more malleable and potentially more valuable to investors when it is empty.*¹⁰⁹ (my emphasis added)

The full-scale clearance of land is a means of standardizing real estate because it erases its locally-specific qualities. Standardization facilitates the exchange of commodities as exemplified by bushels of wheat, barrels of oil, and board-feet of lumber. These are standardized ways of measuring and valorizing commodities. Land in its empty state is ripe for exchange in an environment where buyers may be living on the other side of the globe and do not possess the local knowledge necessary to appraise the value of land with its place-character intact.¹¹⁰ Thus, there is a built-in incentive to fully clear public housing lands slated for redevelopment.

Thus, it is clear that public housing redevelopment involves a tremendous degree of landscape change, change that is designed to remove barriers to, and create opportunities for, capital accumulation. Such landscape change is also typically accompanied with an influx of higher-income households, as redevelopment usually involves creating socially-mixed communities. Thus, it can be argued that public housing redevelopment is a form of gentrification.¹¹¹ Additionally, public housing redevelopment has been shown to facilitate gentrification in the neighbourhoods surrounding redeveloped sites.¹¹² This is a form of gentrification in which the state is an especially important actor.¹¹³ Public housing lands are owned by the state (at least before redevelopment) and redevelopment is carried out under state policy. Thus, public housing redevelopment exemplifies how gentrification is increasingly a state-led and state-managed activity in the neoliberal era.¹¹⁴ The next section examines how public housing redevelopment involves a rolling-back/rolling-out of the interventionist state.

¹⁰⁸ Weber, Op. cit., p. 182.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 183.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ See August, 2008, Op. cit., Crump, Op. cit., Goetz, 2000, Op. cit.

¹¹² See Wyly & Hammel, Op. cit.

¹¹³ Hackworth, 2007, *The Neoliberal City*, Op. cit.

¹¹⁴ See Ibid., Smith, N. Op. cit., Swyngedouw et al., Op. cit.

2.2.2 The Roll-Back/Roll-Out of the State

Public housing redevelopment entails not only a destruction of welfarist landscapes, but also a rolling back of welfare state institutions. This has been shown to be the case in both the US and Canadian contexts. When the HOPE VI program first started in the US, PHAs were required to replace all public housing units demolished on a one-for-one basis. But in 1995, HUD removed this requirement, which shifted the emphasis of the program away from rehabilitation (due to the high costs of replacing social housing) toward demolition.¹¹⁵ In addition, the lack of one-for-one replacement has resulted in a net reduction in the supply of public housing in the US. Hackworth estimates that public housing stock in the US has been reduced by more than 51,000 units and that over 148,000 tenants have been or will be permanently removed from the public housing system. For Hackworth, this highlights “the fundamentally roll-back nature of the initiative.”¹¹⁶

In Canada, public housing redevelopment itself does not appear to be resulting in a permanent reduction in the number of social housing units, as all subsidized units demolished at Regent Park will be replaced, mostly on-site, but some in other parts of Toronto.¹¹⁷ But this is not to say that public housing redevelopment in Canada is not also part of a rolling back of the welfare state. The redevelopment of Regent Park has been enabled by a major restructuring of the social housing system in Ontario carried out under the province’s Social Housing Reform Act of 2000.¹¹⁸ The Act provided for the down-scaling of social housing responsibility to 47 municipal non-profit housing corporations and the transfer of title of public housing lands to these bodies. Thus, this down-scaling of responsibility, combined with the complete withdrawal of the federal government in the early 1990s, is part of a rolling back of the welfare state in Canada. Hackworth and Moriah posit that this “downloading of responsibility all but guarantees that social housing production will wane considerably.”¹¹⁹ This is because down-scaling has been accompanied with major cutbacks in funding from the provincial government so that any new social housing must be financed through municipal taxes or perhaps through the entrepreneurial redevelopment of public housing sites.¹²⁰ In addition, the restructuring of Ontario’s social housing system has occurred in a context of major cutbacks to virtually every other part of Ontario’s social welfare system carried out under Conservative Premier Mike Harris’ Common Sense Revolution, that lasted from 1995 to 2002. The

¹¹⁵ See Goetz, 2010, Op. cit.

¹¹⁶ Hackworth, 2007, *The Neoliberal City*, Op. cit., p. 50.

¹¹⁷ Martine August, personal email communication, March 30, 2010.

¹¹⁸ Hackworth & Moriah, Op. cit.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 525.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

situation in Ontario exemplifies how “provincial governments have been at the forefront of neoliberal restructuring in Canada.”¹²¹

In terms of rolling-out neoliberalism, this theme comes across clearly in the literature from the US. After 1998, HOPE VI has been accompanied with the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act (QHWRA), which mandates community service requirements, greater regulation of tenant behaviour and espouses a pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps ideology toward urban poverty.¹²² The new ‘One Strike and You Are Out’ program allows PHAs to evict tenants for criminal acts, even if they are committed off public housing property by a household member other than the leaseholder. Stricter screening at post-redeveloped sites sometimes entails mandatory drug tests and employment requirements.¹²³ According to Hackworth, all of these changes are part of a “transparently interventionist set of neoliberal state practices.”¹²⁴ In Canada there is some evidence that public housing redevelopment is part of a rolling out of greater government intervention. One area where the rolling out of greater state intervention has been noted in Canada has been with respect to the devolution of social housing responsibility to municipal non-profit housing authorities in Ontario. Although the creation of these local bodies was meant to bring about greater local autonomy, interviews with people who run these organizations found that devolution has brought even more bureaucratic red tape.¹²⁵ In terms of intervention in the lives of tenants, it has been suggested that following the down-scaling of social housing responsibility in Ontario, evictions increased.¹²⁶ Also, Schippling’s research on the relocation of tenants out of Regent Park in Toronto highlights how the relocation process itself puts tenants in greater contact with the public housing bureaucracy at the Relocation Office and when they sign relocation agreements.¹²⁷

Whereas analysis of the creative-destruction of landscapes lends itself to a political-economy approach following the work of David Harvey on spatial-fix, the Foucauldian concept of governmentality is helpful when considering the rolling out of state intervention in the lives of public housing tenants. Roger Keil explains how governmentality relates to neoliberalism:

¹²¹ Roger Keil, “‘Common-Sense’ Neoliberalism: Progressive Conservative Urbanism in Toronto, Canada”, in *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*, eds. Neil Brenner & Nik Theodore (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), p. 240.

¹²² Hackworth, 2007, *The Neoliberal City*, Op. cit.

¹²³ Susan J. Popkin et al., *A Decade of HOPE VI: Research Findings and Policy Challenges* (Urban Institute, May 2004, accessed online November 11, 2010 from www.urban.org)

¹²⁴ Hackworth, 2007, *The Neoliberal City*, Op. cit., p. 51.

¹²⁵ Hackworth & Moriah, Op. cit.

¹²⁶ See Stefan Kipfer, “Public Housing and Toronto Politics: The Regent Park Story”, *Relay: A Socialist Project Review* (July/August 2005), pp. 7-9.

¹²⁷ Richard M. Schippling, *Public Housing Redevelopment: Residents’ Experiences with Relocation from Phase 1 of Toronto’s Regent Park Revitalization* (Unpublished master’s thesis, Department of Planning, University of Waterloo, 2007)

Particularly important in our context is the notion of neoliberalism as *governmentality*, which refers to the many ways in which neoliberalism emerges on the basis of a restructured political subject: “Neoliberal strategies of rule...encourage people to see themselves as individualized and active subjects responsible for enhancing their own well-being” (Larner, 2000, p. 13) In this view, citizens as active agents—or clients—operate on a governance terrain whereon previous distinctions between state, civil society, and market are largely blurred, as “marketization” rules each of those domains and the relationships among them.¹²⁸ (emphasis in the original)

All the various ways that HOPE VI redevelopment involves heightened regulation of public housing tenants exemplify a new manifestation of governmentality. The emphasis on personal responsibility in order to qualify for social housing and welfare point toward a redefinition of the political subject who is recipient of state assistance. A central point in Keil’s argument is that the new technologies of power are restructuring the everyday. Keil asserts, “In contrast to the situation during the Fordist period, the workplace is no longer the unrivaled center of regulatory practices in the current era.”¹²⁹ This is especially evident in the case of public housing tenants who have moved back to public housing after redevelopment and who find the site of the home to be a place of intensified regulation. Research on such tenants has indeed found evidence that their everyday lives have changed as they feel more stress due to the increased scrutiny from housing authorities, property managers and residents’ associations.¹³⁰

2.2.3 Public Housing Redevelopment as ‘Actually Existing Neoliberalism’

It should already be apparent from this discussion that public housing redevelopment, as an expression of the neoliberalization of urban space, is a highly context-specific phenomenon. The differences between the US and Canada reflected in the literature derive from the political, institutional, and cultural differences between the two countries. But in addition to national-scale differentiation of public housing redevelopment, there is also a great deal of variety at the local scale as each individual case of public housing redevelopment comes with a unique constellation of national, local and place-based factors. Hackworth has compared several cases of public housing redevelopment from three US cities: New York, Chicago and Seattle.¹³¹ There are significant differences in how each of these cities have implemented HOPE VI. New York has made very limited use of HOPE VI, but where it has used it, the number of public housing units has actually increased and there have even been some opportunities for public housing tenants to purchase units at subsidized prices. Chicago, on the other hand, has used

¹²⁸ Keil, Op. cit., p. 582.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 584.

¹³⁰ See Mark Joseph & Robert Chaskin, “Living in a Mixed-Income Development: Resident Perceptions of the Benefits and Disadvantages of Two Developments in Chicago”, *Urban Studies*, 47, 11 (2010), pp. 2347-2366.

¹³¹ Hackworth, 2007, *The Neoliberal City*, Op. cit.

HOPE VI to drastically reduce the amount of public housing in the city. The degree of income-mixing in Chicago has been somewhat limited at the scale of the individual housing development, although by reducing the concentration of public housing units in certain neighbourhoods, a degree of income-mixing has been achieved at the neighbourhood scale. Seattle has created a greater range of income-mixing within redeveloped sites. The different approaches taken in each of these cities reflect the different political cultures, histories and institutional arrangements in these cities. New York's political culture is more receptive of public housing, whereas historically public housing has been a more divisive issue in Chicago.¹³² But even within the same city, public housing redevelopment can follow a very different trajectory from case to case, as Vale's comparison of three redevelopments in Boston has shown.¹³³

One of Hackworth's key arguments is that the context-specific nature of public housing redevelopment has significant negative implications for the potential for tenant resistance.¹³⁴ Even though HOPE VI is transforming the nature of public housing across the US with significant negative implications for tenants, resistance to it has been fragmented and focused only on specific cases of redevelopment. Hackworth identifies three reasons for the fragmented nature of resistance to public housing redevelopment.¹³⁵ First, public housing redevelopment typically involves spatially dispersing the residents across a metropolitan region. This makes it difficult for people to organize. Also, after relocation the issues in one's new neighbourhood tend to become more immediately pressing. Another factor is that tenants often have to compete with one another for a relocation unit, which causes tenants to fear that criticism of the PHA will reduce their chances of being granted a favourable home. This has also been shown to be an issue in the Canadian context with the redevelopment of Regent Park in Toronto.¹³⁶ Second, litigation has been one of the most common outlets for resistance to redevelopment. Although there have been some modest successes under this approach, the litigation process has a tendency of atomizing the issue. That is, the courts deal with specific grievances pertaining to specific housing projects rather than challenges to the HOPE VI program generally. In the US, several lawsuits have been launched on the basis that tenants have received inadequate consultation.¹³⁷ Public housing tenants in the

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Vale, Op. cit.

¹³⁴ Hackworth, 2007, "Progressive Activism in a Neoliberal Context: The Case of Efforts to Retain Public Housing in the United States", Op. cit.

¹³⁵ Hackworth, 2007, *The Neoliberal City*, Op. cit.

¹³⁶ Schippling, Op. cit.

¹³⁷ Hackworth, 2007, *The Neoliberal City*, Op. cit.

US have a legal right to be consulted before public housing is sold or demolished.¹³⁸ This right actually pre-dates the HOPE VI program as it was enshrined into law in a 1984 amendment to the 1937 National Housing Act.¹³⁹ In the Canadian context where public housing redevelopment is carried out without any federal involvement, such a right is non-existent and therefore public housing tenants have much more limited options for litigation. Third, the HOPE VI program has been discursively framed as progressive.¹⁴⁰ PHAs are seen to be finally addressing the problems of ‘failed’ public housing. Understandably, many tenants are happy at the chance of being able to live in a newly-built well-maintained home. This has the effect of obscuring the regressive nature of public housing redevelopment and rendering those tenants who do challenge redevelopment to appear as though they are resistant to change.¹⁴¹ Similarly in the Canadian context, August has argued that the discourse of social mix and integration that surrounds the redevelopment of Regent Park has garnered the project support from the progressive political culture of Toronto despite the negative impacts on tenants.¹⁴² The literature on how public housing is believed to fail its residents and how socially-mixed redevelopment is expected to correct these alleged failings is the focus of the next section.

2.3 MIXED-INCOME REDEVELOPMENT AND FAILED PUBLIC HOUSING

Today, postwar public housing projects are perhaps the most vilified urban landscapes in existence in North America. That public housing has failed its residents has almost become common sense.¹⁴³ Popular culture references to public housing in rap music and movies, often coming from artists who grew up in public housing themselves, have done much to solidify the image of public housing as the hopeless, crime-ridden ghetto.¹⁴⁴ But in professional planning circles too, public housing has a bad reputation. With its monolithic modernist architecture and super-block urban footprint that interrupts the street grid, public housing runs counter to the New Urbanist planning orthodoxy inspired by Jane Jacobs.¹⁴⁵ Jacobs was one of the first to criticize public housing for being “abstracted out”¹⁴⁶ of the rest of

¹³⁸ Marvin Krislov, “Ensuring Tenant Consultation before Public Housing is Demolished or Sold”, *Yale Law Journal*, 97, 8 (July 1988), pp. 1745-1764; See also Dawn Jourdan, “Enhancing HOPE VI Revitalization Processes with Participation”, *Community Development*, 39, 2 (2008), pp. 75-90.

¹³⁹ Krislov, Op. cit.

¹⁴⁰ Hackworth, 2007, *The Neoliberal City*, Op. cit.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² August, 2008, Op. cit.

¹⁴³ Vale, Op. cit.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.; Michael H. Schill, “Distressed Public Housing: Where Do We Go From Here?”, *University of Chicago Law Review*, 60, 2 (Spring 1993), pp. 497-554.

¹⁴⁵ Teaford, Op. cit.

the urban fabric of the city. Scholars have identified two broad categories of shortcomings of public housing: design failings and social failings. I discuss the literature on each of these in turn, before dealing with the literature on how mixed-income redevelopment is expected to correct the perceived failures of public housing.

2.3.1 Design Critiques of Public Housing

Poor architectural design is one of the most significant ways public housing is believed to have failed its residents. Perhaps the earliest critic of public housing design was Catherine Bauer, an architect who had lobbied for years for the creation of public housing. But in 1957 Bauer wrote an article that was highly critical of public housing design. Bauer criticized public housing's institutional design and the lack of privacy it provided for residents.¹⁴⁷ Jane Jacobs was also an early critic of public housing design. Jacobs dedicated an entire chapter of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* to the task of "unslumming"¹⁴⁸ public housing projects. Today, much of Jacobs' thinking on "reweaving projects back into the city"¹⁴⁹ is being implemented in the New Urbanist redevelopment of public housing.

Perhaps the most influential critic of public housing has been Oscar Newman. In his book *Defensible Space*, Newman argued that inferior design created an environment conducive to crime in many public housing projects. The design characteristics of public housing that Newman found to be especially problematic included high density towers, super-block development that lacks through-streets, unused open space between buildings, lack of open sightlines, and stigmatizing design that makes public housing stand out as a distinct form of housing. Newman argued these features provided "pasturelands for criminals".¹⁵⁰ Although Newman's ideas have gone a long way toward reinforcing the idea that public housing architecture is defective, a fact that is often overlooked is that Newman did not characterize all public housing as equally deficient in design. In fact, he devoted an entire chapter of his 1972 book to examples of what he regarded as well designed public housing. These good examples of public housing design featured low-rise buildings, townhouses with front porches, fenced in backyards for individual units, and open space that fostered social interaction among tenants. Newman's ideas have influenced the redevelopment of public housing. In 1996 he wrote *Creating Defensible Space* as a follow-up to his original book. This follow-up work was done under contract with HUD. In the book he reports on several

¹⁴⁶ Jacobs, Op. cit., p. 392.

¹⁴⁷ Catherine Bauer, "The Dreary Deadlock of Public Housing", *Architectural Forum*, 106, 5 (1957), pp. 140-142 & 219-221.

¹⁴⁸ Jacobs, Op. cit., p. 394.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 392.

¹⁵⁰ Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1972), p. 24.

cases of public housing redevelopment in which he worked as a consultant helping to implement his ideas about defensible space.¹⁵¹ In the British context, Alice Coleman has done similar work, which has identified design flaws with British public housing, or council housing as it is called in the UK. Coleman is less forgiving of public housing than Newman as she finds fault even with the designs of some low-rise developments.¹⁵²

In addition to problematic design, Newman and Coleman also cite a lack of maintenance as adding to the physical defects of public housing. The ‘broken windows’ theory is relevant here.¹⁵³ According to this theory, broken windows and vandalism send out a message that the community does not care, which only encourages more vandalism and criminality. In making their argument, Wilson and Kelling focused on some of the very large public housing projects in the US. The broken windows theory can be understood as a form of architectural or physical environmental determinism as the physical environment of public housing is identified as the cause of social and criminal problems in these communities. In fact, according to Oscar Newman, public housing that incorporates his defensible space design principles may “ameliorate”¹⁵⁴ the alleged negative effects of the social composition of public housing (a topic I explore later on).

In the Canadian context, John Sewell has responded to Newman’s and Coleman’s critiques of public housing design. He points out that 90% of Canadian public housing projects have less than 100 units. Density of most Canadian public housing projects is about 30 units per acre, which is not an especially high level of density and not dissimilar from non-public housing urban neighbourhoods in Canada. Also some of the design features that Newman and Coleman especially take issue with, such as fire stairs in the case of Newman and overhead walkways with Coleman, are uncommon in Canadian public housing. Sewell also cites a 1988 survey, granted it is somewhat out of date today, that showed 94% of Canadian public housing units met National Housing Act Minimum Property Standards.¹⁵⁵ Even if one accepts the criticism that lack of maintenance is a problem in public housing, the primary alternative for low-income people, private rental housing, is often far worse.¹⁵⁶ This point is supported by a survey of both Canadian public housing and private market tenants conducted by CMHC that found the

¹⁵¹ Oscar Newman, *Creating Defensible Space* (US Department of Housing and Urban Development, April 1996)

¹⁵² Alice Coleman, *Utopia on Trial: Vision and Reality in Planned Housing* (London: Shipman, 1985)

¹⁵³ James Q. Wilson & George L. Kelling, “Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety”, *Atlantic Monthly*, 249, 3 (March 1982), pp. 29-38. See also George L. Kelling & Catherine M. Coles, *Fixing Broken Windows: Restoring Order and Reducing Crime in our Communities* (New York: Free Press, 1996)

¹⁵⁴ Newman, 1996, Op. cit., p. 26.

¹⁵⁵ John Sewell, 1994, Op. cit.

¹⁵⁶ Janet Currie & Aaron Yelowitz, “Are Public Housing Projects Good for Kids?”, *Journal of Public Economics*, 75 (2000), pp. 99-124.

majority of public housing tenants reported that moving into public housing represented an improvement over their previous living conditions. The survey also found that more public housing tenants (55%) were satisfied with their homes than private market tenants (33%).¹⁵⁷ For all its purported faults, there are lengthy waiting lists to get into public housing.¹⁵⁸ But reality seems to matter little when it comes to popular perceptions. As John Sewell pointed out, “The image of the large projects has contaminated our understanding of the bulk of public housing in Canada.”¹⁵⁹

2.3.2 Social Critiques of Public Housing

In addition to design flaws, critics have also found significant fault with the social composition of public housing. During the early years of public housing in both Canada and the US, the demographic profile of residents was quite different than it is today. Minimum income requirements and a rigorous selection process ensured that the very poor were excluded from Canada’s early public housing.¹⁶⁰ The same is true for public housing in the US.¹⁶¹ Over the years, a number of factors have combined so that now the public housing population tends to be characterized by high rates of poverty, unemployment and welfare dependency. In the US, this has occurred due to changing policies that have shifted the focus of public housing from being a reward for the ‘deserving poor’ to being a form of housing of last resort for the most needy. Deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill has also been a factor, as well as expanded opportunities for homeownership for the white working class in the postwar years. Thus, Lawrence Vale contends that public housing in the US has become a way to warehouse the most destitute portion of society.¹⁶² Similar changes have occurred in Canada, although the level of poverty and deprivation in Canadian public housing appear to be much less than that of US public housing.¹⁶³ Although the issue appears to be less severe in Canadian public housing, concerns were expressed in the 1969 Hellyer Report, which found that public housing had become “ghettos of the poor...[with] too many ‘problem’

¹⁵⁷ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Public Housing Program – Program Evaluation Report* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, April 1990)

¹⁵⁸ Bauman, Op. cit.

¹⁵⁹ Sewell, 1994, Op. cit., p. 138.

¹⁶⁰ See Bacher, Op. cit., Wade, Op. cit.

¹⁶¹ Vale, Op. cit.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ See Sewell, 1994, Op. cit.; See also Michael Dennis & Susan Fish, *Programs in Search of a Policy* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1972); See also David Ley & Heather Smith, “Relations between Deprivation and Immigrant Groups in Large Canadian Cities”, *Urban Studies*, 37, 1 (2000), pp. 37-62.

families.”¹⁶⁴ Thus, a major and now longstanding criticism of public housing has been that it concentrates the urban poor.

There is a long history of academic concern about concentrated urban poverty. This history goes back at least to 1929 with the publication of Harvey Zorbaugh’s seminal work *The Gold Coast and the Slum*.¹⁶⁵ Ironically, concerns about concentrated poverty are in large part what motivated officials to adopt the urban renewal programs that gave rise to the very public housing where today poverty is often concentrated. Although not endorsing it, John Seeley eloquently summarized the concerns about concentrated poverty in the slums during the urban renewal period: “The argument is that the very concentration of evils or ills is itself an additional ill or evil—quite separate from the mere sum of evils concentrated.”¹⁶⁶ In more recent years, with his book *The Truly Disadvantaged*, W.J. Wilson reinvigorated academic interest in concentrated poverty and the related issue of the culture of poverty.¹⁶⁷ According to Wilson, neighbourhoods where poor people are spatially concentrated give rise to a maladapted culture of poverty characterized by high proportions of single mother households, welfare dependency, and crime. These negative cultural attributes of the concentrated urban poor are said to develop due to the absence of a middle class ‘social buffer’. Without middle class social contacts, the concentrated poor are excluded from job networks and middle class role models, preventing the poor from climbing out of poverty. Wilson emphasizes the absence of adult role models in poor neighbourhoods as key to transmitting the culture of poverty to the next generation. Other scholars have emphasized peer relationships between children in poor neighbourhoods, arguing that children acquire the culture of poverty and its associated delinquency from other poor children.¹⁶⁸ Still others have emphasized the breakdown or inadequacy of institutions such as schools and the police in poor neighbourhoods.¹⁶⁹ The common denominator among all these approaches however is that the concentration of poverty in urban neighbourhoods is responsible for the formation and transmission of a

¹⁶⁴ Paul T. Hellyer, *Report of the Federal Task Force on Housing and Urban Development* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, January 1969), p. 53.

¹⁶⁵ Harvey Warren Zorbaugh, *The Gold Coast and the Slum: A Sociological Study of Chicago’s Near North Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929)

¹⁶⁶ John R. Seeley, “The Slum: Its Nature, Use, and Users”, *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 25 (1959), p. 9.

¹⁶⁷ William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987)

¹⁶⁸ Christopher Jencks & Susan E. Mayer, “The Social Consequences of Growing Up in a Poor Neighborhood”, in *Inner-City Poverty in the United States*, eds. Laurence E. Lynn, Jr. & Michael G.H. McGeary (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1990)

¹⁶⁹ See *Ibid.*; See also John F. Kain, “Housing Segregation, Negro Unemployment, and Metropolitan Decentralization”, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 82, 2 (May 1968), pp. 175-197. See also L.H. Spence, “Rethinking the Social Role of Public Housing”, *Housing Policy Debate*, 4, 3 (1993), pp. 355-368.

dysfunctional culture of poverty. According to this perspective, when the concentration of poverty reaches some critical threshold, the culture of poverty and therefore poverty itself become entrenched over generations.¹⁷⁰ Whereas Newman and Coleman might be classified as physical environmental determinists, the maladapted culture of poverty thesis can be seen as a form of social environmental determinism as one's social surroundings are seen to largely determine one's life outcome. Public housing, with its inferior architecture and uniformly low-income population, doubly sets up its residents for failure.

The literature on concentrated poverty is dominated by US sources and therefore a significant focus is the especially dire situation of black people in the US.¹⁷¹ Black people are significantly over-represented in American public housing; in many cases public housing projects in the US are almost exclusively populated by black residents.¹⁷² In Canada, racial minorities are also over-represented in public housing,¹⁷³ although nowhere near to the extent that they are in US public housing. The relationships between race and poverty are very different in the Canadian context, where immigrant status is more closely linked to poverty than racial identity.¹⁷⁴ But even this relationship is tenuous as immigrants in Canada are a highly heterogeneous group, including impoverished refugees and millionaire households. Ley and Smith's analysis of census data does not support the co-existence in Canadian cities of high concentrations of poverty coinciding with other indicators of deprivation and coupled with high proportions of immigrants. There is some relationship between these variables in Canadian cities, but "their bonding is looser than seems to be the case in equivalent US studies."¹⁷⁵

Theories about concentrated poverty and the culture of poverty have significant public policy implications. These theories suggest that job creation and training and welfare programs are not enough to lift people out of poverty, for if real change is to occur the culture of the poor must change. If one accepts these theories, policies that aim to combat poverty must "[seek] means to interrupt the transmission of lower-class culture from one generation to another, and instead arrange to transmit cultural elements that

¹⁷⁰ Jencks & Mayer, Op. cit.

¹⁷¹ See Douglas S. Massey & Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993)

¹⁷² William H. Carter et al., "Polarisation, Public Housing and Racial Minorities", *Urban Studies*, 35, 10 (1998), pp. 1889-1911.

¹⁷³ See Robert A. Murdie, "'Blacks in Near Ghettos?' Black Visible Minority Populations in Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority Public Housing Units", *Housing Studies*, 9 (1994), pp. 435-457. See also Robert A. Murdie, "The Welfare State, Economic Restructuring and Immigrant Flows: Impacts on Sociospatial Segregation in Greater Toronto", in *Urban Segregation and the Welfare State: Inequality and Exclusion in Western Cities*, eds. Sako Musterd & W.J.M. Ostendorf (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 64-93.

¹⁷⁴ David Ley & Heather Smith, "Relations between Deprivation and Immigrant Groups in Large Canadian Cities", *Urban Studies*, 37, 1 (2000), pp. 37-62.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

will enable lower-class people to function in stable working- or middle-class ways.”¹⁷⁶ In essence, anti-poverty policies must include a program of cultural assimilation of the poor. Scholars in the 1960s suggested this might involve special educational programs for poor inner city youth and programs for adults that taught them to adopt middle class behavioural norms, speech and dress.¹⁷⁷ Instead of programs like these, since the 1970s policies that promote poverty deconcentration and social mixing of different classes (and races) have been adopted with increasing frequency. These policies include the shift toward third sector social housing in Canada that started in the 1970s. Third sector social housing such as housing cooperatives and non-profit housing features much more social mix than traditional public housing. In the US, the court-ordered Gautreaux program in Chicago involves helping poor public housing residents move to middle class suburbs with the use of housing vouchers and counseling services.¹⁷⁸ HUD built on the Gautreaux program with the Moving to Opportunity (hereafter, MTO) program, which essentially operates in the same way but is available in many more cities in the US.¹⁷⁹ And of course there is the topic of this thesis—public housing is increasingly being redeveloped into mixed-income communities. Redevelopment promises to correct not only the social (and by extension, the cultural) deficiencies of public housing, but also the architectural shortcomings.

2.3.3 Public Housing Redevelopment, Social Mix, and Social Capital

According to the dysfunctional culture of poverty perspective, public housing projects and other areas with high poverty rates are deficient in social capital. As Loïc Wacquant has explained, the urban poor “possess lesser volumes of all three major forms of capital: economic, cultural and social.”¹⁸⁰ The perceived deficiencies of social capital in particular have received a great deal of attention in the literature on public housing redevelopment due to the way such redevelopment alters the social environments of the urban poor. At the most general level, social capital refers to “the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures.”¹⁸¹ Some scholars focus on more narrow and specific forms of social capital, such as social organization and social control. I will consider

¹⁷⁶ Lee Rainwater, “The Problem of Lower-Class Culture and Poverty War Strategy”, in *On Understanding Poverty: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, ed. Daniel P. Moynihan (New York: Basic Books, 1968), p. 250.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ See Susan J. Popkin et al., “The Gautreaux Legacy: What Might Mixed-Income and Dispersal Strategies Mean for the Poorest Public Housing Tenants?”, *Housing Policy Debate*, 11, 4 (2000), pp. 911-942.

¹⁷⁹ See Alex Schwartz & Kian Tajbakhsh, “Mixed-Income Housing: Unanswered Questions”, *Cityscape*, 3, 2 (1997), pp. 71-92.

¹⁸⁰ Loïc Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2008), p. 114.

¹⁸¹ Alejandro Portes, “Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24 (1998), p. 6.

these sub-variants of social capital in the final part of this section. Alejandro Portes traces the conceptual lineage of social capital back to Durkheim and Marx, but credits Bourdieu and J.S. Coleman for entrenching the concept in contemporary academic discourse. The work of Robert Putnam has also popularized the concept. Putnam distinguished between bridging social capital (also referred to as weak ties) and bonding social capital (also referred to as strong ties).¹⁸² Bonding and strong social ties are the connections between people of the same social group, whereas bridging and weak ties refer to connections with people who are unlike ourselves, either in terms of class or ethnicity. Both types of social capital may confer different kinds of benefits. For poor people hoping to achieve upward social mobility, bridging social capital is believed to be the most helpful because it can allow for the communication across socioeconomic classes of job tips or other economic opportunities. Conversely, bonding social capital can be more helpful for the day-to-day struggles of the poor. Bonding/strong ties may help one “get by”, while bridging/weak ties may help one “get ahead”.¹⁸³

Mixed-income redevelopment of public housing promises to increase the social capital available to low-income tenants by breaking apart some of the perceived harmful (or at best, unhelpful) social connections between the poor and creating new social relationships that cross class (or race) categories. In other words, mixed-income redevelopment replaces bonding/strong social ties with bridging/weak social ties. These new bridging social connections are expected to benefit the poor with job contacts and middle class behavioural role models. Pierre Bourdieu’s theorization of capital is helpful here. Bourdieu identified four main types of capital: social, cultural, economic and symbolic, with each type being transferable into the others.¹⁸⁴ The poor, by definition, lack economic capital which translates into a deficiency of the other forms of capital. Mixed-income redevelopment is believed to increase the social capital of the poor. This in turn translates into an increase in cultural capital, which in this context is the acquisition of middle class behavioural norms. This is essentially the cultural reprogramming of the poor that was called for by some scholars in the 1960s. Increased social and cultural capital of the poor are in turn believed to result in increased economic capital, that is, upward social mobility. This is believed to occur as new social contacts with middle class people will lead to job tips, while new-found cultural aptitude will foster a work ethic in the poor and allow them to fit in with middle class people.

A growing body of literature is challenging many of the assumptions about social capital implicit in the culture of poverty theory and policies of mixed-income redevelopment. One assumption that has come under attack is the notion that proximity of different social classes will lead to social interaction and

¹⁸² Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster)

¹⁸³ Xavier de Souza Briggs, “Brown Kids in White Suburbs: Housing Mobility and the Many Faces of Social Capital”, *Housing Policy Debate*, 9, 1 (1998), p. 178.

¹⁸⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power”, *Sociological Theory*, 7, 1 (1988), pp. 14-25.

the formation of bonds. Two bodies of social theory are relevant to this assumption. First, a significant body of research has shown that the social networks of the poor are highly localized.¹⁸⁵ Second, social contact theory posits that social connections with people of similar status offer the most satisfying relationships.¹⁸⁶ These two theories come into conflict at mixed-income housing as the local social environment is composed of people of differing status. Thus, mixed-income redevelopment provides an opportunity to test these theories.¹⁸⁷ Most studies that have responded to this challenge have found little social interaction across class lines in mixed-income developments.¹⁸⁸ Some studies even report conflict between the social classes in mixed-income sites.¹⁸⁹ Rachel Kleit has found some evidence for social interaction across different classes in her studies that compare the social networks of people living in mixed and unmixed social housing. But although she found that low-income people living in a socially-mixed environment knew their higher class neighbours, she also found that people living in homogenously low-income public housing knew just as many neighbours. Also, the public housing neighbours tended to be more emotionally close with one another. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Kleit also found that greater length of time in the neighbourhood resulted in more social contacts in all categories.¹⁹⁰ Kleit's later research on the social networks in Seattle's NewHolly Phase I, a recently redeveloped public housing site, also yielded mixed results. Although she found some cross-class interaction, "homeowners and public housing renters have few overlapping relationships, and homeowners were more likely to know other homeowners."¹⁹¹ The community is extremely diverse with many different ethnic and

¹⁸⁵ See Karen E. Campbell & Barrett A. Lee, "Sources of Personal Neighbor Networks: Social Integration, Need, or Time?", *Social Forces*, 70, 4 (1992), pp. 1077-1100. See also Claude S. Fischer, *To Dwell Among Friends: Personal Networks in Town and City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); See also Melvin L. Oliver, "The Urban Black Community as Network: Toward a Social Network Perspective", *Sociological Quarterly*, 29 (1988), pp. 623-645.

¹⁸⁶ Rachel Garshick Kleit, "HOPE VI New Communities: Neighborhood Relationships in Mixed-Income Housing", *Environment and Planning A*, 37 (2005), pp. 1413-1441.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ See Paul C. Brophy & Rhonda N. Smith, "Mixed-Income Housing: Factors for Success", *Cityscape*, 3, 2 (1997), pp. 3-31; Susan Clampet-Lundquist, "HOPE VI Relocation: Moving to New Neighborhoods and Building New Ties", *Housing Policy Debate*, 15, 2 (2004), pp. 415-447; Ben Jupp, *Living Together: Community Life on Mixed Housing Estates* (London, Demos, 1999); Kleit, 2005, *Op. cit.*

¹⁸⁹ See Susan Greenbaum et al., "Deconcentration and Social Capital: Contradictions of a Poverty Alleviation Policy", *Journal of Poverty*, 12, 2 (2008), pp. 201-228; David P. Varady et al., "Attracting Middle Income Families in the HOPE VI Public Housing Revitalization Program", *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 27, 2 (2005), pp. 149-164.

¹⁹⁰ Rachel Garshick Kleit, "Neighborhood Relations in Suburban Scattered-Site and Clustered Public Housing", *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 23, 3-4 (2001), pp. 409-430.

¹⁹¹ Rachel Garshick Kleit, "HOPE VI New Communities: Neighborhood Relationships in Mixed-Income Housing", *Environment and Planning A*, 37 (2005), p. 1438.

language groups, variables that were also important in shaping social interaction. Close proximity was also positively associated with social interaction.

In addition to the US HOPE VI program, social mix has been implemented under other programs and in other contexts and studies relating to these other examples of social mix may shed light on the degree of cross-class interaction in mixed settings. Several US studies have looked at the effects of social mixing under the Gautreaux and MTO programs which enable poor families to move to middle class suburbs have found mixed results. Some of these studies have found a lack of cross-class social interaction¹⁹² while others uncovered a fair degree of social interaction.¹⁹³ The findings from the French context are more decidedly negative. Researchers who have studied social mix in French social housing “found that most social groups in such projects tended in fact to restrict their social life to residents of similar backgrounds and socio-economic levels.”¹⁹⁴ Evidence from Canada’s third sector social housing is also relevant to the issue of social interaction that crosses class boundaries. Major reforms to Canada’s National Housing Act in 1973 shifted the emphasis of social housing in Canada toward cooperative housing and housing run by non-profit societies—two forms of social housing that feature much greater social mix than traditional public housing.¹⁹⁵ The St. Lawrence and False Creek South redevelopments in Toronto and Vancouver respectively are both high profile redevelopments that embodied the new approach to social housing and urban development of the 1970s.¹⁹⁶ Both developments involved a mixture of non-profit, cooperative and private market housing. Third sector social housing dominated both projects, accounting for 55% of the unit mix in both neighbourhoods, although a significant proportion of the subsidized units went to moderate income households. In most respects, both projects were major successes and demonstrated that social mix could be achieved in new developments.¹⁹⁷

In the case of False Creek South, a major study was conducted that involved interviewing 25% of the 850 new households about the effects of social mix and the extent of socialization in the new

¹⁹² See Susan J. Popkin et al., *A Decade of HOPE VI: Research Findings and Policy Challenges* (Urban Institute, May 2004, accessed online November 11, 2010 from www.urban.org); Edward G. Goetz, “Forced Relocation vs. Voluntary Mobility: The Effects of Dispersal Programmes on Households”, *Housing Studies*, 17, 1 (2002), pp. 107-123.

¹⁹³ See James E. Rosenbaum, “Changing the Geography of Opportunity by Expanding Residential Choice: Lessons from the Gautreaux Program”, *Housing Policy Debate*, 6, 1 (1995), pp. 231-269.

¹⁹⁴ Francine Dansereau, et al., “Social Mix: Old Utopias, Contemporary Evidence and Challenges”, *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 6, 1 (1997), p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ Bacher, Op. cit.

¹⁹⁶ Richard Harris, “Social Mix, Housing Tenure, and Community Development” in *House, Home, and Community: Progress in Housing Canadians, 1945-1986*, ed. John R. Miron (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), pp. 308-319.

¹⁹⁷ D. Hulchanski, *St. Lawrence and False Creek: A Review of the Planning and Development of Two New Inner City Neighbourhoods* (Vancouver: School of Community and Regional Planning, UBC, 1984)

neighbourhood.¹⁹⁸ The study found that the majority of residents knew some of their neighbours; 97% chatted with neighbours outside and 70% even reported having tea or coffee or a drink with their neighbours. The neighbourhood was divided into eight enclaves, each featuring a different degree of social mix. No relationship was found between the degree of social mix and how well people got along with their neighbours. In other words, there was just as much social interaction in the enclaves that feature a high degree of social mix as in the enclaves with less social mix. Although people were not specifically asked if they socialized with people of different social groups, these results strongly suggest that people of different social backgrounds were indeed socializing in the False Creek South neighbourhood shortly after it was constructed. Geographic proximity was found to strongly shape social interaction as people reported interacting more with neighbours who lived close by. This was especially so for lower income residents who were found to know more people closer to their homes (which is consistent with findings from other contexts that the social networks of the poor are more localized). Higher income residents reported less contact with the social mix and offered more negative comments about it. In terms of tenure mix, owners displayed more neighbouring activity and knew more people in the community but offered more negative comments about social mix than renters. Some of the most interesting distinctions were found between the non-market and market categories. While non-market households were found to know more neighbours, to socialize more with their neighbours, to participate more in community activities and were more politically involved, the market households were found to be less engaged with the community.¹⁹⁹

In addition to the mixed, although largely positive results for social mixing from False Creek South, a significant degree of social interaction was found in the LeBreton Flats neighbourhood in Ottawa, which was similarly redeveloped into a mixture of third sector social housing and market housing in the 1970s.²⁰⁰ Similarly, a CMHC evaluation of its cooperative and non-profit housing programs found that the vast majority of residents of both types of socially-mixed communities knew their neighbours.²⁰¹ Unlike the more recent studies on public housing redevelopment (especially those of Kleit), these studies did not ask whether people were interacting more with people of similar or different social backgrounds. Although given the significant social interaction found and the high degree of social mixing, it is fair to suggest that cross-class interaction likely does occur in Canadian third sector social housing. But even if low-income people do know or socialize with their middle class neighbours in mixed-income settings,

¹⁹⁸ Vischer Skaburskis, Planners, *False Creek Area 6 Phase 1 Post Occupancy Evaluation Final Report* (Report prepared for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, March 1980)

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Environics Research Group, *Evaluation of LeBreton Flats by Residents* (Report prepared for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, April 1984)

²⁰¹ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Section 56.1 Non-Profit and Cooperative Housing Program Evaluation* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1983)

this does not necessarily mean they will benefit from job information. I am not aware of any evidence from Canada's third sector social housing that social-mix led to the transmission of job information to low income residents. Similarly, among the more recent studies of public housing redevelopment, most studies have found no, or very little, evidence that low-income people receive job tips in mixed-income sites.²⁰²

Some of the research on the US housing voucher Gautreaux and MTO programs has shown that social mixing can lead to better employment and educational outcomes among the poor.²⁰³ The Gautreaux program seems to have been particularly successful in terms of improving both the quality of education that youth receive and their labour market outcomes. Research has shown that when families have used the Gautreaux program to move to (mainly white) middle class suburbs (as opposed to other inner city neighbourhoods), youth were “more likely to be (1) in school, (2) in college-track classes, (3) in four-year colleges, (4) in jobs, and (5) in jobs with benefits and better pay.”²⁰⁴ The program was found to be far superior to the alternative of bussing school children from inner city neighbourhoods to middle class suburban schools, a practice that stigmatized students and prevented them from participating in after-school programs. No doubt, these findings are important but the extent to which they may be transferred to other contexts is questionable. Research on the labour market outcomes of people who grew up in social housing in Toronto has found similar employment and income outcomes regardless of whether people grew up in areas with high poverty rates or more socially mixed neighbourhoods.²⁰⁵ In addition, rather than negatively impacting the quality of education, as a stabilizing force that is usually better than low-cost private market housing, public housing may actually improve the educational outcomes of poor children. This was the conclusion of Currie and Yelowitz' analysis of US Census data and other government datasets, which found that for black children, living in public housing reduced the probability of having to repeat a grade by 19%.²⁰⁶ This is not to say that the Gautreaux and MTO programs are

²⁰² See Brophy & Smith, Op. cit., Alexandra M. Curley, “‘A New Place, A New Network?’ Social Capital Effects of Residential Relocation of Poor Women”, in *Networked Urbanism: Social Capital in the City*, eds. T. Blokland & M. Savage (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), pp. 85-104; Elspeth Graham et al., “Mixing Housing Tenures: Is it Good for Social Well-being?”, *Urban Studies*, 46, 1 (2009), pp. 139-165; Mark Joseph & Robert Chaskin, “Living in a Mixed-Income Development: Resident Perceptions of the Benefits and Disadvantages of Two Developments in Chicago”, *Urban Studies*, 47, 11 (2010), pp. 2347-2366.

²⁰³ See Julie E. Kaufman & James E. Rosenbaum, “The Education and Employment of Low-Income Black Youth in White Suburbs”, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 14, 3 (Autumn 1992), pp. 229-240; Susan J. Popkin et al., “Labor Market Experiences of Low-Income Black Women in Middle-Class Suburbs: Evidence from a Survey of Gautreaux Participants”, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 12, 3 (Summer 1993), pp. 556-573.

²⁰⁴ James E. Rosenbaum, “Changing the Geography of Opportunity by Expanding Residential Choice: Lessons from the Gautreaux Program”, *Housing Policy Debate*, 6, 1 (1995), pp. 263-264.

²⁰⁵ Philip Oreopoulos, “The Long-Run Consequences of Living in a Poor Neighborhood”, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 118, 4 (November 2003), pp. 1533-1575.

²⁰⁶ Janet Currie & Aaron Yelowitz, “Are Public Housing Projects Good for Kids?”, *Journal of Public Economics*, 75 (2000), pp. 99-124.

unhelpful, but that their successes are likely context-dependent and therefore should not be over-generalized. Children who live in public housing do not universally and equally suffer from a lower quality of education and so any benefits in this regard are limited to contexts where the quality of schools is a problem. Gautreaux and MTO also differ from public housing redevelopment in that households choose to participate and relocation is voluntary. For a variety of reasons, when relocation is involuntary (as in the case of public housing redevelopment) the benefits of social mixing are less likely to accrue.²⁰⁷

Similarly, the successful social mixing that was achieved in Canada's third sector social housing was created in a very different way than how public housing redevelopment creates social mix. Both the St. Lawrence neighbourhood in Toronto and False Creek South in Vancouver were built on formerly industrial sites. The more recent example of the Woodward's building in Vancouver, which has also been redeveloped into socially-mixed housing, involved the redevelopment of an old department store.²⁰⁸ None of these redevelopments were dealing with a pre-existing community or involved any residential displacement, as is the case with public housing redevelopment. Because it involves a pre-existing community that is involuntarily relocated and broken apart, rather than enhancing social capital, public housing redevelopment appears to damage the social support networks that are so important to the poor. Long before the current wave of public housing redevelopment, a substantial body of scholarship showed the importance of thick social connections among the poor for helping people cope with poverty, essentially the bonding/strong ties discussed above.²⁰⁹ In the current context, scholars have drawn on this literature to argue that public housing redevelopment, rather than increasing social capital for the poor, actually reduces social capital by breaking apart the close social connections that exist in these communities.²¹⁰ In contrast to the notion of public housing being deficient in social capital, Lynne

²⁰⁷ Edward G. Goetz, "Forced Relocation vs. Voluntary Mobility: The Effects of Dispersal Programmes on Households", *Housing Studies*, 17, 1 (2002), pp. 107-123.

²⁰⁸ See Brian Hutchinson, "Why It Doesn't Take a Village: Compared to the cost of Vancouver's Olympic housing, the \$400-million Woodward's Development is a Bargain", *National Post* (June 12, 2010), p. A3.

²⁰⁹ See Clairmont & Magill, Op. cit.; Gans, 1962, Op. cit.; Carol B. Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974)

²¹⁰ See Kathy Arthurson, "Creating Inclusive Communities through Balancing Social Mix: A Critical Relationship or Tenuous Link?", *Urban Policy and Research*, 20, 3 (2002), pp. 245-261; Alexandra M. Curley, "'A New Place, A New Network?' Social Capital Effects of Residential Relocation of Poor Women", in *Networked Urbanism: Social Capital in the City*, eds. T. Blokland & M. Savage (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), pp. 85-104; Edward G. Goetz, "The Politics of Poverty Deconcentration and Housing Demolition", *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 22, 2 (2000), pp. 157-173; Susan Greenbaum et al., "Deconcentration and Social Capital: Contradictions of a Poverty Alleviation Policy", *Journal of Poverty*, 12, 2 (2008), pp. 201-228; Lynne C. Manzo et al., "'Moving Three Times is Like Having Your House on Fire Once': The Experience of Place and Impending Displacement among Public Housing Residents", *Urban Studies*, 45, 9 (2008), pp. 1855-1878; Richard M. Schippling, *Public Housing Redevelopment: Residents' Experiences with Relocation from Phase 1 of Toronto's Regent Park Revitalization* (Unpublished master's thesis, Department of Planning, University of Waterloo, 2007)

Manzo's research on a public housing project in the US Pacific Northwest slated for redevelopment shows that public housing residents can find their social environment to be very supportive:

Residents visited one another and socialized (74 per cent), shared food (57 per cent), helped each other with errands (38 per cent), borrowed small items from each other (34 per cent) and watched each other's children (21 per cent). They took out each other's garbage, watched out for their neighbor's house or car when they were away (36 per cent), and helped one another with repairs (21 per cent). Over half of interviewees (53 per cent) said that they have relied or could rely on a neighbor in case of an emergency...Interviewees periodically relied on their neighbors to give them rides, especially if they had limited mobility...[Cultural] diversity among residents in the community was cited as a positive dimension by most interviewees (77 percent)...[This] was not a socially isolated community; rather, there were opportunities for social engagement that many other neighborhoods do not provide.²¹¹

Redevelopment breaks apart such rich social support networks, which can lead to a decrease in social capital for the urban poor, an outcome that is quite contrary to the purported objectives of redevelopment. In her research of a HOPE VI redevelopment in Tampa, Susan Greenbaum found that before relocation, tenants could rely on neighbours for car rides to appointments or to provide childcare. After relocation, tenants found themselves living among strangers, which "has meant that all these services [had] to be paid for rather than borrowed or bartered."²¹²

Alexandra Curley presents similar findings, but her work is noteworthy because it raises new insights on categorizations of social capital. Curley tested the theory that relocation would lead to more bridging/weak ties by interviewing three groups of women who were relocated as part of the redevelopment of Boston's Maverick Gardens: women who were relocated within the housing project, women relocated to other public housing projects, and women who were relocated into private rental housing with Section 8 vouchers. Curley's results show that the bridging/weak ties versus bonding/strong ties dichotomy oversimplifies the social connections of low-income women as "many ties cannot fit neatly into one category or the other, and perceptions of ties may change depending on the moment in time."²¹³ Some ties were found to be supportive while others were found to drain households of resources. While some bridging/weak ties were found to bring job and education opportunities to the women interviewed, these ties had existed prior to relocation. Thus, "the findings do not support the idea that relocation to different neighborhood environments is necessary for residents to have such weak ties in

²¹¹ Lynne C. Manzo, "The Experience of Displacement on Sense of Place and Well-Being", in *Sense of Place, Health and Quality of Life*, eds. John Eyles & Allison Williams (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), pp. 98-99.

²¹² Susan Greenbaum, "Poverty and the Willful Destruction of Social Capital: Displacement and Dispossession in African American Communities", *Rethinking Marxism*, 20, 1 (2008), p. 50.

²¹³ Alexandra M. Curley, "'A New Place, A New Network?' Social Capital Effects of Residential Relocation of Poor Women", in *Networked Urbanism: Social Capital in the City*, eds. T. Blokland & M. Savage (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), p. 101.

their social networks.”²¹⁴ Curley’s findings represent a significant challenge to the theories that underpin public housing redevelopment:

As anticipated, relocation did break up many existing networks. For some, this translated into a loss in supportive social capital; for others this meant fewer draining ties; and for others a combination. What relocation did not appear to do, however, is improve access to leveraging or bridging social ties—an outcome expected by many policymakers and researchers.²¹⁵

The study was conducted during the first and second year of relocation. Given Kleit’s findings that length of time is positively correlated with social interaction,²¹⁶ perhaps Curley would have found more social ties if she interviewed people after more time had elapsed since relocation. But research by Greenbaum et al. on the relocation of public housing tenants in Tampa found a significant reduction in social ties more than three years after relocation.²¹⁷ Thus, it is not clear how much time is necessary for relocated tenants to rebuild their social networks. Also, it is not uncommon for tenants to move repeatedly as a result of redevelopment.²¹⁸ Assuming that over time tenants will rebuild their social networks, even a reduction in social ties that lasts only a few years seems to contradict the policy expectation that redevelopment will increase social capital among the poor.

As one of the few studies that follows people after relocation, another important contribution of Curley’s research is that it allows comparison of outcomes across different categories of relocatees, including those who relocated into public housing versus those who relocated into more socially-mixed neighbourhoods using Section 8 vouchers. In this regard, Curley reports: “Both women who moved to public housing and those who moved to other neighborhoods with Section 8 vouchers reported little interaction with people in their new communities, and none had used a new neighborhood tie for job information.”²¹⁹ There was one major difference between the two groups that has important implications for the design critiques of public housing:

There was one theme unique to the Section 8 group. Three Section 8 residents talked about how the structure of their neighborhoods does not facilitate interaction the way public housing communities sometimes do. That is, they believe the spatial arrangements of their neighborhoods

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 96.

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 101.

²¹⁶ Kleit, 2001, Op. cit.

²¹⁷ Susan Greenbaum et al., “Deconcentration and Social Capital: Contradictions of a Poverty Alleviation Policy”, *Journal of Poverty*, 12, 2 (2008), pp. 201-228.

²¹⁸ Lynne C. Manzo et al., “‘Moving Three Times is Like Having Your House on Fire Once’: The Experience of Place and Impending Displacement among Public Housing Residents”, *Urban Studies*, 45, 9 (2008), pp. 1855-1878.

²¹⁹ Curley, Op. cit., pp. 95-96.

matter. In public housing developments, a dozen or more families may share an entryway and hundreds may share a common mail room. They pointed out that because most people in their new neighborhoods have their own homes and/or their own yards, they do not congregate in public spaces...Traditional public housing developments house many families in close quarters, which inevitably leads to more opportunities for interacting and forming ties with neighbors.²²⁰

Perhaps redevelopment and relocation would have brought more benefits to the tenants of Maverick Gardens if this were one of the severely distressed public housing projects that the HOPE VI program was originally intended for. Rather than suffering from severe distress, Maverick Gardens appears to have offered a largely supportive environment for tenants and was “much less isolated than many other public housing developments in Boston.”²²¹ Another example of redevelopment that targeted a public housing project that did not suffer from severe distress comes from Portland, Oregon. Portland’s Columbia Villa represents a significant departure from the stereotypical high density, troubled public housing project. Unlike the dominant image of public housing, “Columbia Villa was well designed, racially integrated, and well managed.”²²² In contrast to much of the public housing in the US, at the start of redevelopment in 2003, white people were the largest group at Columbia Villa, accounting for 37% of the residents. Other significant groups included black, Hispanic, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Aboriginal people, making Columbia Villa “the most diverse community in the state of Oregon.”²²³ Although the housing project faced difficulties with crack cocaine and gang violence in the 1980s, local social service agencies fought back against these problems and in 1994 the housing authority received HUD’s best practices award for reducing crime by 75%. In terms of physical factors, Columbia Villa’s low-rise, low density design received praise from Catherine Bauer in the 1940s, who would later go on to criticize the design of public housing generally, as noted earlier. Density at Columbia Villa was exceptionally low, with 462 units occupying 82 acres of land. Having been built in 1943, maintenance was costly and problematic at Columbia Villa. Thus, redevelopment is not so much about addressing crime and social problems as any problems in these areas have largely been resolved. Instead, redevelopment will update the aging housing stock and almost double the density of the site, consistent with Portland’s urban densification policies.²²⁴

²²⁰ Ibid., pp. 100-101.

²²¹ Ibid., p. 87.

²²² Karen J. Gibson, “The Relocation of the Columbia Villa Community: Views from Residents”, *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 27, 5 (2007), p. 17.

²²³ Ibid., p. 9.

²²⁴ Ibid.

Although relocation appears to have been managed exceptionally well in the Columbia Villa case, tenants still experienced a hard time leaving the community to which they were attached. Relocation staff were instructed “to act as though they were helping one of their own family members relocate.”²²⁵ Supportive services, flexible policies, and money for moving expenses and higher monthly utility bills helped tenants cope with relocation. In addition, the housing authority partnered with landlords to ensure that the majority of tenants could relocate within the local area. These efforts appear to have helped tenants as less than 10% indicated they were dissatisfied with relocation. But still, many tenants miss the strong sense of community and the open space they enjoyed at Columbia Villa. Much like the findings from other cases of public housing redevelopment, relocation out of Columbia Villa resulted in a reduction in people’s social support networks. Also, the Columbia Villa tenants appreciated the physical design of the housing project, especially in terms of its open space and separateness:

[That] design, as a community unit, enabled parents to protect their children, because most of the general public did not travel into the Villa. Leslie Esinga, a resident of CV...discussed the positive side of the island-like feature for raising her children: “The amount of freedom that the girls have had living in a community that’s kind of enclosed has given them probably more freedom than what they have now that we’ve moved.” The Villa provided low-income mothers the kind of protection middle-class mothers have long sought for their children in suburbia. In some ways, it provided more of a sense of community than what is typical of residential neighborhoods...Although the housing was aging and needed replacement, for the most part, the people did not seem to suffer from living there; in fact the children (who comprised the majority of the population) appeared to thrive on it...In this case, public housing enabled poor mothers to provide their children with a spacious, friendly, and safe environment which enhanced their family’s well-being. This kind of environment is valued by poor mothers, the elderly, and the disabled, probably to a greater degree than it would be valued by those not raising families; or those with more resources who have more options to enhance their quality of life and are less dependent on their immediate surroundings.²²⁶

Although the Columbia Villa tenants were overwhelmingly satisfied with the social and physical aspects of their community, the buildings were at an advanced age and suffered from serious maintenance problems. Thus, the most significant benefit of redevelopment for the tenants of Columbia Villa is likely the improved physical conditions of the housing. This has been the finding of many other researchers of public housing redevelopment and is consistent with the pattern of urban renewal.²²⁷ But these benefits

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

²²⁶ Ibid., pp. 17-18.

²²⁷ Larry Buron et al., *The HOPE VI Resident Tracking Study: A Snapshot of the Current Living Situation of Original Residents from Eight Sites* (Report prepared for US Department of Housing and Urban Development, November 2002); Susan J. Popkin et al., *A Decade of HOPE VI: Research Findings and Policy Challenges* (Urban Institute, May 2004, accessed online November 11, 2010 from www.urban.org); Joseph & Chaskin, Op. cit.

could be achieved without social-mixing and must be weighed against the losses experienced by tenants. Aside from physical benefits, the only cases of public housing redevelopment that show any social benefits are those that actually target the severely distressed projects that the HOPE VI program was originally created for. But even these benefits are highly qualified.

The redevelopment of Chicago's Lake Parc Place has been held up as a success story of mixed-income redevelopment of public housing, especially in terms of its effects on social capital.²²⁸ A study of Lake Parc Place after it was redeveloped found significant levels of interaction and even friendship formation across the two income categories that now inhabit the development.²²⁹ The study even found that the higher income category created employment opportunities such as babysitting and beautician jobs for their lower income neighbours. These results might give strong support for income-mixing, if only a substantial degree of income-mixing were present at Lake Parc Place. The reality is that there is a very narrow range of income-mixing at the redeveloped Lake Parc Place. After redevelopment, all the units remained as rentals, but with varying degrees of subsidy. There are two groups of renters at Lake Parc Place: the 'project group' is composed of people who lived in the former public housing that Lake Parc Place replaced and who have incomes that are less than 50% of median income in Chicago; the 'non-project group' are families with at least one working adult and household incomes that are 50% to 80% of median income of Chicago.²³⁰ Thus, all of the residents of this so-called 'mixed-income' community have below average incomes. In addition, 100% of the residents are black²³¹—a startling lack of racial diversity for a community billed as 'mixed'. Some of the families in the non-project group even have prior experience living in public housing. Evidence of social capital in a community that is homogenously composed of black renters with below average incomes is probably better interpreted as evidence of social capital in a low-income community than a mixed-income community.

The Lake Parc Place case draws attention to another important issue—the meaning of the term 'mixed-income' varies tremendously.²³² 'Mixed-income' can mean all the units remain as rentals but with varying degree of subsidy as in the case of Lake Parc Place; it can mean mixing subsidized rentals with market rentals; it can mean mixing renters with homeowners; it can even mean creating opportunities for

²²⁸ See Langley C. Keyes, "Housing, Social Capital, and Poor Communities", in *Social Capital and Poor Communities*, eds. Susan Saegert et al. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2001), pp. 136-164.

²²⁹ James E. Rosenbaum et al., "Lake Parc Place: A Study of Mixed-Income Housing", *Housing Policy Debate*, 9, 4 (1998), pp. 703-740.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Alex Schwartz & Kian Tajbakhsh, "Mixed-Income Housing: Unanswered Questions", *Cityscape*, 3, 2 (1997), pp. 71-92.

low-income people to purchase units at subsidized rates.²³³ The proportion of units assigned to these various categories also differs significantly from case to case. In cases where all the units remain as rentals but with varying degrees of subsidy, the income-mix of these so-called ‘mixed-income’ communities may be no greater than some of the traditional public housing projects that have managed to hold onto their middle class residents. It seems that this is an area that needs much more research. If there are benefits to be derived from income-mixing, which types of income categories are necessary and in what proportions? A related question pertains to the scale of social-mixing. Ley and Smith point out that the literature on social isolation and the culture of poverty has not precisely defined the scale at which concentrated poverty becomes a problem.²³⁴ This would have implications for the scale at which social mix should be achieved in order to derive the anticipated benefits. Is it enough to achieve social mix at the scale of the individual housing development or should social mix encompass the surrounding neighbourhood as well? Although Gans offered limited, highly qualified support for social mix, he did not advocate for social mix at every scale.²³⁵ Building on this work, more recent researchers have argued that social mix may be desirable at the scale of the neighbourhood but not necessarily at the scale of individual buildings or housing clusters.²³⁶

Unlike studies of Lake Parc Place, Mark Joseph’s and Robert Chaskin’s study of two HOPE VI redevelopments in Chicago (Henry Horner Homes and Ida B. Wells/Madden Park) actually does examine cases in which a fair degree of social-mixing was achieved.²³⁷ Thus, their results can be seen as more reflective of the pros and cons of social-mixing than studies of Lake Parc Place. Interestingly, Joseph and Chaskin found one case in which a market-rate owner helped a subsidized tenant land a job as a janitor. But the authors consider this to be an “isolated example”, besides which they “heard little to suggest that, at this juncture, there is any evidence to support theorized benefits of social interaction leading to tangible benefits for low-income residents such as access to resources or new opportunities.”²³⁸ They also report several negative outcomes from social-mixing, including tension between homeowners and renters, social detachment, and an increased sense of stigma on the part of the low-income group, some of whom feel that their higher income neighbours look down upon them. But it is not all bad as Joseph and Chaskin

²³³ Hackworth, 2007, *The Neoliberal City*, Op. cit.

²³⁴ David Ley & Heather Smith, “Relations between Deprivation and Immigrant Groups in Large Canadian Cities”, *Urban Studies*, 37, 1 (2000), pp. 37-62.

²³⁵ Herbert J. Gans, “The Balanced Community: Homogeneity or Heterogeneity in Residential Areas?” *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 27, 3 (1961), pp. 176-184.

²³⁶ Dansereau et al., Op. cit.

²³⁷ Mark Joseph & Robert Chaskin, “Living in a Mixed-Income Development: Resident Perceptions of the Benefits and Disadvantages of Two Developments in Chicago”, *Urban Studies*, 47, 11 (2010), pp. 2347-2366.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2360.

found a reduction in stress levels among many low-income tenants. The authors attribute this stress reduction to the high level of stress the low-income tenants were under before redevelopment: “Two-thirds of the relocated public housing residents at both sites mentioned the high levels of emotional stress that they had experienced in their former housing development.”²³⁹ Some residents talked about living in fear of gang violence in their former public housing communities. For these people, mixed-income redevelopment appears to have somewhat alleviated their stress. Presumably, if there had not been a high degree of gang violence in the community before redevelopment, social-mixing would not have improved the stress levels of low-income tenants.

All of these examples from Chicago that show some degree of success from income-mixing—Lake Parc Place, Ida B. Wells/Madden Park, and the Henry Horner Homes—are examples of redevelopment that actually does target the severely distressed public housing that the HOPE VI program was originally intended for. But when redevelopment comes to public housing that is less distressed the benefits are harder to find, as the studies by Gibson, Manzo et al. and Curley show. Thus, ‘severe distress’, social isolation and any benefits from social-mixing are enormously context-dependent. But, “severe distress has become a generalized discourse”²⁴⁰, which obscures from view the fact that much public housing often offers supportive social environments for low-income people. A further problem with the discourse of distress and public housing redevelopment, according to Manzo et al. is that it conflates public housing’s social and physical aspects: “Either physical disrepair or the concentration of a negative social condition is enough to have the community labeled as severely distressed, no matter residents’ experiences or attachments.”²⁴¹ It would seem that urban policymakers need to direct more effort toward considering the positive dimensions of public housing rather than simply assuming public housing is universally harmful to low-income tenants. The now almost half-century old findings of Herbert Gans that the social systems of low-income communities often serve positive functions²⁴² are especially relevant to the present context of public housing redevelopment.

Before finishing this review of the literature, I must consider some of the work on the sub-variants of social capital, that is, social organization and social control, as these concepts are also relevant to my research. These can be considered sub-variants of social capital because they also confer benefits to members of social groups, but they operate in more specific ways than the over-arching category of social capital.²⁴³ Social organization refers to the level of participation in community institutions like residents’

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 2356.

²⁴⁰ Manzo et al., Op. cit., p. 1873.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Gans, 1962, Op. cit.

²⁴³ Portes, Op. cit.

associations, community centres, and schools.²⁴⁴ Robert Putnam has identified participation in such institutions as a key part of social capital. Higher levels of participation may prevent the social isolation that Wilson theorized develops in neighbourhoods with high poverty rates. Neighbourhood groups can also lobby on behalf of residents to get better municipal services.²⁴⁵ According to Temkin and Rohe, “Neighborhood groups, acting on behalf of residents, must command the respect of elected officials, bankers, real estate and insurance agents, and other powerful actors whose decisions help shape the future of the neighborhood.”²⁴⁶ Thus, neighbourhood institutions are where Bourdieu’s fourth form of capital, symbolic capital, enters the equation. Research has shown that higher-income residents are more likely to participate in neighbourhood institutions,²⁴⁷ which may yield an important degree of symbolic capital to the neighbourhood. This improved symbolic capital may lead to better quality neighbourhood institutions, services, and schools, benefiting low- and high- income residents alike. Mark Joseph et al. call this the “political economy of place”²⁴⁸ argument for social-mixing.

According to Joseph et al., “there is essentially no research in mixed-income developments on the role of higher-income residents in leveraging external resources.”²⁴⁹ However, it has been pointed out that the types of neighbourhood institutions and social services that low-income tenants require differ from those that benefit higher income residents.²⁵⁰ Public housing projects, by concentrating low-income families with similar social service needs, may allow for the development of economies of scale necessary to attract the support services they require. By dispersing these residents, some social service needs may go unmet.²⁵¹ In addition, Martine August’s and Alan Walks’ research on the mixed-income redevelopment of Toronto’s Regent Park argues that social-mixing will dilute the political and organizational power of low-income tenants. Before redevelopment, low-income tenants had a monopoly on local community centres and other neighbourhood institutions, but after redevelopment these institutions will have to be shared with in-moving higher income residents. As one of their research participants explained, “After revitalization, these spaces will ‘belong’ to a broader group than just

²⁴⁴ Matthew A. Crenson, *Neighborhood Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983)

²⁴⁵ Kenneth Temkin & William M. Rohe, “Social Capital and Neighborhood Stability: An Empirical Investigation”, *Housing Policy Debate*, 9, 1 (1998), pp. 61-88.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

²⁴⁷ See Crenson, *Op. cit.*

²⁴⁸ Mark Joseph et al., “The Theoretical Basis for Addressing Poverty through Mixed-Income Development”, *Urban Affairs Review*, 42, 3 (2007), p. 392.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 394.

²⁵⁰ See Alastair Smith, *Mixed-Income Housing Developments: Promise and Reality* (Report prepared for the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University and the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, October 2002)

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

tenants, and this will affect their political influence.”²⁵² The study by Vischer Skaburskis, *Planners on social mixing in False Creek South in Vancouver* cited earlier is also relevant here. Perhaps surprisingly, the study found that while non-market households were more politically involved and more likely to try to effect change in the community, “higher income households, in fact, appear to avoid too much involvement in community affairs.”²⁵³ This is explained by the fact that market households were found to be “more oriented to off-site activities and amenities.”²⁵⁴ This led the author to suggest that the presence of non-market households created a greater sense of community in False Creek South. This suggests that the benefits of social mix may not be unidirectional. As the author explains:

Having concluded that the development of a “sense of community” according to traditional indicators is contingent on the presence of non-market households, we suggest that this is one benefit of social mix that accrues to the market component, contrary to popular belief that all the benefits of a social mix accrue to the non-market households.²⁵⁵

Clearly, more research is needed on the relationship between social-mixing and social organization and political/symbolic capital. Following some of the points made previously in this chapter, such research should pay attention to the degree of social organization in public housing communities before redevelopment.

Social control is another sub-variant of social capital. Social control is defined as follows:

Social control refers generally to the capacity of a group to regulate its members according to desired principles—to realize collective, as opposed to forced, goals. One central goal is the desire of community residents to live in safe and orderly environments that are free of predatory crime, especially interpersonal violence.²⁵⁶

Key elements of social control include collective supervision and a high level of familiarity between residents so that “community members recognize each other and can hold each other accountable.”²⁵⁷ Another important element of social control is interdependence, in which neighbours share common interests and goals. High rates of homeownership promote interdependence, as noted by Sampson et al.:

²⁵² Martine August & Alan Walks, *From Social Mix to Political Marginalization? The Redevelopment of Toronto’s Public Housing and the Dilution of Tenant Organizational Power* (Paper prepared for the ESRC Seminar Series ‘Gentrification and Social Mix’, Edinburgh, Scotland, February 19-20, 2009, accessed online November 3, 2009 from www.kcl.ac.uk), p. 23.

²⁵³ Vischer Skaburskis, *Planners*, Op. cit., p. 147.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

²⁵⁶ Robert J. Sampson et al., “Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy”, *Science*, 277 (August 15, 1997), p. 918.

²⁵⁷ Joseph et al., *Op. cit.*, p. 386.

“Financial investment...provides homeowners with a vested interest in supporting the commonweal of neighborhood life.”²⁵⁸ There is a fair amount of evidence that shows social control is associated with higher socioeconomic status neighbourhoods that feature high rates of homeownership and residential stability.²⁵⁹ In contrast, the high crime rates and the breakdown in social order that characterize Wilson’s culture of poverty can be understood as a deficiency in social control in high poverty neighbourhoods. The broken windows theory discussed earlier is essentially a theory about the lack of social control in low-income neighbourhoods. According to these theoretical positions, public housing projects and areas of concentrated poverty lack a patrician class that upholds social order and control. Thus, a “compelling”²⁶⁰ argument can be made that social-mixing will lead to increases in social control.

Compared to social capital more generally, social control has received relatively little attention in the critical literature on public housing redevelopment. But a few studies are noteworthy here. Buron et al. examined eight US case studies of public housing redevelopment carried out under the HOPE VI program. At the time they conducted interviews with relocated residents, one public housing project in their study—San Francisco’s Hayes Valley—had already been redeveloped and substantially re-occupied by its original residents (35% moved back). Before redevelopment, Hayes Valley struggled with serious problems of crime and drug trafficking. After redevelopment, the original residents reported that these problems continued largely unabated.²⁶¹ However, these findings must be interpreted with caution as this so-called ‘mixed-income’ community features no market housing as all the units have remained as rentals with varying degrees of subsidy. But many other respondents in the study who were interviewed after having moved into more income-diverse neighbourhoods with the assistance of Section 8 vouchers also reported problems with crime and disorder in their new communities.²⁶² Another study suggests that social control may have less to do with social mix and more to do with management practices.²⁶³ Others have even suggested that by reducing familiarity between neighbours, redevelopment and relocation may have negative effects on social control. Greenbaum observed: “Most people we spoke with told us they

²⁵⁸ Sampson et al., Op. cit., p. 919.

²⁵⁹ See Ibid.; Robert J. Sampson & W. Byron Groves, “Community Structure and Crime: Testing Social-Disorganization Theory”, *The American Journal of Sociology*, 94, 4 (January 1989), pp. 774-802.

²⁶⁰ Joseph et al., Op. cit., p. 388.

²⁶¹ Larry Buron et al., *The HOPE VI Resident Tracking Study: A Snapshot of the Current Living Situation of Original Residents from Eight Sites* (Report prepared for US Department of Housing and Urban Development, November 2002)

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Smith, A., Op. cit.

felt much safer before they moved. At least then they knew their neighbors...familiarity afforded an important measure of protection. This condition is lacking in new neighborhoods.”²⁶⁴

In addition to these empirical findings, it appears that there is a flaw in the logic that social mix will promote higher levels of social control. As pointed out above, interdependence in which neighbours have common interests is an important ingredient in social control. But in mixed-income communities, the various socioeconomic classes and tenure groups may not share common interests. In fact, their interests may be in direct conflict, as has been observed when the homeowners and the tenants of a mixed-income development created separate residents’ associations.²⁶⁵ This apparent theoretical flaw adds further weight to Joseph et al’s call for more research on the relationship between social mix and social control.²⁶⁶

In summary, this review of more than a half-century of social science literature shows that public housing redevelopment is remarkably similar to the urban renewal policies of the 1950s and 1960s. Similarities with urban renewal include large-scale demolition, inadequate public participation, and displacement of the poor. However, urban renewal was a form of state intervention and a key part of the rise of the Keynesian welfare state. In contrast, public housing redevelopment is being carried out in a context of welfare state retrenchment and privatization. Public housing redevelopment is an expression of the neoliberalization of both urban space and state institutions. As such, public housing redevelopment involves the creative destruction of a particular landscape form and the rolling-back/rolling-out of the state. As with neoliberalism generally, public housing redevelopment is a contextually embedded process. This has negative implications for the potential for resistance. Resistance is also undermined by the discourse of hope and integration and promises that redevelopment will finally fix the failures of public housing. Public housing is widely believed to fail its residents both in terms of inferior architectural design and its income-segregated social composition. Socially-mixed redevelopment promises to correct these failings. This approach is underpinned by longstanding but recently revived theories on the culture of poverty. These theories predict that socially-mixed redevelopment will lead to an increase in social capital and upward social mobility among the poor. But many of the assumptions implicit in this approach lack empirical support. While social mixing has been shown to bring some benefits for low income people when it has been part of the Gautreaux and MTO programs and Canadian third sector social housing, public housing redevelopment differs significantly from these approaches. Whereas the Gautreaux and MTO programs involved voluntary participants, relocation under public housing redevelopment is almost always involuntary. Also, unlike Canadian third sector social housing which involved the creation of entirely new communities, public housing redevelopment deals with pre-existing

²⁶⁴ Greenbaum, Op. cit., p. 50.

²⁶⁵ David P. Varady et al., “Attracting Middle Income Families in the HOPE VI Public Housing Revitalization Program”, *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 27, 2 (2005), pp. 149-164.

²⁶⁶ Joseph et al., Op. cit.

communities to which people are emotionally attached and rely on for social support. A significant body of scholarship has shown that rather than increasing social capital, redevelopment and relocation disrupts and destroys important social networks among the poor. The primary benefit arising from public housing redevelopment appears to be in the form of improved physical conditions of housing. This echoes urban renewal, which did bring about sometimes significant improvements in the physical living conditions among some poor people. But the social benefits of public housing redevelopment have been harder to find. The potential for social benefit is limited by the degree of distress and social isolation existing in the community before redevelopment. Redevelopment proponents seem unaware of the contextual variability that exists among public housing and that not all public housing equally suffers from social distress or physical problems. Indeed, the physical design of some public housing may promote social interaction and a sense of community. When communities that are rich in social support and social capital are redeveloped, the harm caused by breaking apart these social networks is likely to exceed any largely theoretical and unproven benefits that arise from social-mixing.

So much of this literature review has emphasized the importance of context. In order for there to be benefits from socially-mixed redevelopment, there must be problems, either social or physical or both, with the housing project in the first place. If there are no major problems, redevelopment is unlikely to bring any significant benefits for residents. Most of the rest of this thesis is concerned with the specific context of the Little Mountain Housing Project. I give as much attention to Little Mountain before redevelopment as I give to its redevelopment because it is imperative to understand the place that is being redeveloped. But before presenting my empirical findings from Little Mountain, it is first necessary to discuss the methods I employed in producing these findings and my own positionality toward this research topic. Thus, methods and researcher positionality are the issues of concern in the next chapter.

3. METHODS AND POSITIONALITY

Before presenting my empirical findings from Little Mountain, it is first necessary to discuss the methods I employed and my own positionality relative to this research topic. My positionality is an important issue to address in order to do research that is reflexive about how my social position relative to my topic and interview participants shaped this research. This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section discusses methods and the second section discusses positionality.

3.1 METHODS

I employed three methods in researching the Little Mountain Housing Project: qualitative interviews, participant observation, and archival research. In this section, I discuss each of these in turn.

3.1.1 Qualitative Interviews

I did transcribed, audio-recorded interviews with 23 Little Mountain households, which represents 11.6% of the 198 households living at Little Mountain at the beginning of redevelopment in March 2007. Of the 23 households I interviewed, 17 households were interviewed after having been relocated away from Little Mountain and six households were interviewed when they were still living at Little Mountain. The interviews were conducted from September 2009 to January 2010. In addition to these interviews, an earlier round of interviews was conducted in the fall of 2007 as part of my undergraduate honours essay. This earlier round consisted of interviews with nine Little Mountain households who were all still living at Little Mountain at the time of the 2007 interview. I managed to re-interview all nine of these households in 2009 and 2010. Of these nine households that were interviewed twice, at the time of the second interview, six had been relocated out of Little Mountain and three were still living at Little Mountain. Thus, there is a longitudinal component with some of my interviews as I was able to do ‘before moving’ and ‘after moving’ interviews with six of the same households.

Interview participants were allowed to choose whether or not they wanted to participate on a confidential basis. Thus, in this thesis some interview participants are identified by their real names while others are referred to by pseudonyms. For reference, Appendix I provides brief summaries of the households interviewed listed by alphabetical order of the names that appear in this thesis. Appendix I provides information such as the dates of the interviews and whether or not the particular names that appear in this thesis are pseudonyms or real names. But of course, Appendix I does not provide the real names of interview participants who opted to be interviewed on a confidential basis. The reason for giving participants the option of being identified was that, prior to the interviews, many Little Mountain tenants whom I had contact with had expressed pride in their contributions to the community. Little Mountain has been seriously under-researched and this thesis has very much been about filling in the gaps in the historical record of BC’s first public housing project. The specific individuals in the story of Little Mountain matter greatly and it was important that I created a mechanism by which individuals could be

identified, if for no other reason than to preserve the historical record. This has allowed me to give recognition to the Steenhuisen family, who have contributed enormously to the Little Mountain Housing Project and the surrounding neighbourhood for more than half a century. In other cases, this approach has allowed me to give credit to others from Little Mountain, who may be less prominent than the Steenhuisens but who have also made important contributions to community life. Because this thesis has first and foremost been about redevelopment, I only interviewed tenants who were living at Little Mountain at the time of redevelopment. But Chapter 5 is dedicated to the entire lifetime of the housing project before redevelopment. I did not track down former tenants from Little Mountain's distant past in order to reconstruct Little Mountain's history. Thus, the contributions of some Little Mountain tenants such as the Steenhuisens and Margaret E. Mitchell (who has passed away but for whom there is a significant public record of in the City of Vancouver Archives), while no doubt very significant, have probably been overemphasized in this thesis relative to some other prominent past Little Mountain tenants such as Rita Jones, Shirley Card, Vi Davies, and Dr. I Muthanna. It is important to recognize that some of these other individuals have also made very important contributions but these figure less prominently in this thesis simply because I did not interview them or find significant archival documentation on them.

While, for the most part, I consider the unit of analysis to be the household, in some cases it is more appropriate to consider interviews with individuals. In terms of interviews with individuals, I did interviews with 25 individuals. This is because in the case of two households, separate interviews were conducted with two different household members who had quite different experiences and perspectives from their respective fellow household members. One of these households was the Steenhuisen family. In 2009, I did one interview with Toni Steenhuisen, who is the elderly mother of the household. Toni Steenhuisen has lived at Little Mountain since 1957 and raised her seven children there in the 1960s and 1970s. Toni is an excellent source for historical information about the housing project. Also in 2009, I did a separate interview with Ingrid Steenhuisen, who is one of the Steenhuisen children and who returned to live in the housing project as an adult to care for her elderly mother. Ingrid has been the de facto leader of the resistance movement against redevelopment. In addition to historic information, Ingrid is an excellent source for information on the current redevelopment process. Due to her large number of connections within the housing project, she can also provide updates on the status of relocated families. Thus, even though Toni and Ingrid are part of the same household, I had to do two separate interviews with them and I obtained substantially different information from each of them. There was one other case like that but I cannot name them because they participated on a confidential basis. Thus, 23 households gave 25 separate interviews with 25 different viewpoints. In two other cases, I interviewed a husband and a wife together. But in these cases, even though two individuals were involved, they are counted as single interviews and in both cases the information obtained from both the husbands and wives was similar.

To make things even more complicated, two of the 25 interviews were in fact with people who were not legal tenants of the Little Mountain Housing Project, but whom I would consider to be residents nonetheless. These can be considered ‘informal residents’. In his ethnographic study of Chicago’s Robert Taylor Homes, Venkatesh found that a substantial proportion of the people living there were boyfriends, family members, or boarders whose occupation was in violation of the rules of the welfare bureaucracy.¹ Because the rents in public housing are based on the income of all household members, housing authorities and welfare agencies take great interest in who is actually living with people. A live-in boyfriend with a job can lead to a rent increase and a reduction in welfare benefits. Thus, it is not uncommon for public housing tenants to hide from the welfare bureaucracy these extra people that live with them. Even though they are not legally supposed to be there, public housing is still the home for these informal residents, who may become homeless if they were forced to leave. The purpose of my interviews was to understand how redevelopment affected the people living at the Little Mountain Housing Project regardless of the legal categories the government puts them in. The informal residents of the Little Mountain Housing Project were absolutely caught up in the redevelopment and relocation that affected the legal tenants. But as informal residents, they did not have the same protection that the legal tenants had, such as assistance with finding a place to move and paid moving expenses. Throughout this thesis, when I refer to the ‘Little Mountain tenants/residents’ it should be understood that I am including a minority of informal residents.

In order to find research participants, a variety of methods were used, which are summarized in Table 3.1. It all started with my first interview with Toni and Ingrid Steenhuisen. While not especially close family friends, my family has had a longstanding connection with the Steenhuisen family stemming back to the 1960s when my mother, who lived in the surrounding community of private homes, attended General Brock Elementary School with Ingrid Steenhuisen and her siblings. I also remember the Steenhuisens from when I lived at Little Mountain as a very young child. I remember they gave my family a black Labrador dog, whom we named Shadow. In July 2007, General Brock alumnus and well-known entrepreneur Jimmy Pattison hosted the General Brock Centennial Reunion, which brought together General Brock students from throughout the decades. I ran into Ingrid Steenhuisen at this reunion (I was there with my mother, I never attended General Brock school myself) and it was at this time when I got her telephone number. The Steenhuisens have been my bridge into much of the Little Mountain community. Following my October 2007 interview with Toni and Ingrid Steenhuisen, Ingrid invited me to a tenants’ strategy meeting at the Immanuel Baptist Church located at the corner of East 40th Avenue and Quebec Street. It was at this church meeting where I made several other contacts that ultimately resulted in six interviews. Over the months and years that followed, I made a number of other

¹ Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000)

connections with Little Mountain tenants through my involvement in various events and protests, including the last ‘Corn Fest’ that was held at Little Mountain in August 2008 and the Grand March for Housing in April 2009. The social connections I made

Table 3.1 How Interview Participants Were Initially Contacted

How Initially Contacted	Number of Interviewed Households
Personal/Family Connection	2
Church Meeting, October 11, 2007	6
Various community events and protests	10
Referrals/Responses to recruitment letter	5
TOTAL	23

at these various events resulted in 10 interviews. In addition to making connections at community events, I deployed the ‘snowball approach’ for finding interview participants. With each Little Mountain household I interviewed I left a recruitment letter for the interviewed households to pass on to other Little Mountain tenants who might be willing to be interviewed. This approach led to an additional five interviews. Thus, although I lived at Little Mountain as a young child in the early 1980s and I also have a connection to the place via my mother and her social contacts in the neighbourhood, the vast majority of Little Mountain households I interviewed were people with whom I had no personal connection but were found through referrals and my involvement in community events in recent years. Besides the Steenhuisen family, there was only one other interviewed household to which I had some personal or family connection that preceded redevelopment.

In addition to interviews with Little Mountain tenants, in 2009 I also interviewed three public figures, which included two City Councillors and the developer. I interviewed Vancouver City Councillors Kerry Jang and Ellen Woodsworth. The interviews were arranged via email communication. Kerry Jang is a member of the centre-left Vision Vancouver party that came to power in Vancouver in November 2008. Although Vision Vancouver was not in power in 2007 when the Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Little Mountain redevelopment was negotiated between the City and the Province, once in power the party did re-negotiate some aspects of the redevelopment with a 2009 Letter of Understanding. Thus, in my interview with him Kerry Jang was largely defending the Little Mountain redevelopment, at least after 2008 when his party came into power in Vancouver. Councillor Ellen Woodsworth is with the left-wing Coalition of Progressive Electors (COPE). Woodsworth, who attended more protest events at Little Mountain than perhaps any other politician, offered a very critical view of the redevelopment. The third public figure I interviewed is Joo Kim Tiah, who is the President of Holborn Properties, the real estate developer that has been selected by the provincial government to redevelop Little Mountain. I made my initial contact with Tiah at the Open Houses that were held in December 2009. In addition to these interviews with public figures, although my request for an interview with Housing Minister Rich Coleman was denied, I was able to have some of my questions for the provincial government answered via email communication with Ministry of Housing staff, including Sam Rainboth, who is the Senior Manager of Corporate Communications for BC Housing.

3.1.2 Participant Observation

Another major research method for this thesis has been participant observation. From May 2007 through to September 2010 I did more than 60 hours of participant observation research. This has involved participating in a wide variety of events ranging from protests, tenant strategy meetings, and community consultation meetings. Table 3.2 summarizes my participant observation research. Participant observation has been an important method in researching what has been at times a rapidly evolving story. The only way to stay on top of events as they unfolded was to be there when things were happening. Participant observation also gave me the opportunity to interact and speak with several additional Little Mountain households in excess of the 23 households that I formally interviewed.

The majority of people at the various events in which I was doing participant observation research were aware that I was there as both a researcher and an activist. People knew I was there as a researcher because I told them I was doing research and many people had read my undergraduate honours essay on Little Mountain. Most of the time when I was at protest events I was able to fully immerse myself in what was going on. This was enabled by my boyfriend, Bill, who came to many events often as my photographer, thereby allowing me to fully participate in events but still come away with excellent photographs (all of the uncredited photographs in this thesis were either taken by my boyfriend or myself, or in the case of Figure 3.1, by one of my parents). Field notes were typically written after events and once I was away from the other protesters. Participant observation research ranges along a continuum from complete observer, observer-as-participant, participant-as-observer, to complete participant.² In most cases and especially at the protest events, I was at the far end of this continuum, acting as a complete participant. In some cases, such as the community consultation meeting with the Little Mountain tenants in March 2010, I took a few steps back to observer-as-participant. I did this because this meeting was a chance for the tenants to provide their input on how Little Mountain should be redeveloped so it would be inappropriate for me, as someone who is not a relocated Little Mountain tenant, to be providing my input in this particular forum.

When participating in protest events I often found myself walking a fine line between researcher and activist. Many times this dual role caused me to feel that if I were not doing research, I might have been able to do more as an activist. In her essay on her experiences as both a participant-observer and an activist in the Draft Resistance Movement of the 1960s, Barrie Thorne described very similar feelings, “The conflicts I experienced between being a committed participant and an observing sociologist often took the form of great pangs of guilt, and a sense that I was betraying the movement.”³ Thorne discusses how her role as a researcher often compelled her to make decisions about her allocation of time and

² R. L. Gold, “Roles in Sociological Field Observation”, *Social Forces*, 36 (1958), pp. 217-223, cited in Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber & Patricia Leavy, *The Practice of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), p. 245.

³ Barrie Thorne, “Political Activist as Participant Observer: Conflicts of Commitment in a Study of the Draft Resistance Movement of the 1960s”, *Symbolic Interaction*, 2 (1979), p. 83.

Table 3.2**Participant Observation Research, May 2007-September 2010**

Dates	Events	Approx. Time Spent
May 12, 2007	Protest Event: First Protest Against Redevelopment	1 hour
Oct. 11, 2007	Tenants' strategy meeting at the Immanuel Baptist Church	2 hours
Oct. 27, 2007; May 3, 2008; Aug. 16, 2008; Aug 23, 2008; Aug. 30, 2008; June 6, 2009; Oct. 17, 2009	Protest Events: Stand for Housing at Main Street and East 33 rd Avenue	7 hours
Aug. 30, 2008	Community Event: Little Mountain 'Corn Fest'	2 hours
Sept. 7, 2008; Sept. 12, 2009	Community Events: Ingrid's Guided Tours of Little Mountain	2 hours
Oct. 4, 2008	Community Event: 2008 Federal Election All Candidates Meeting at Little Mountain	1 hour
Oct. 18, 2008	Protest Event: Stand for Housing at Vancouver City Hall	1 hour
Nov. 26, 2008	At the BC Legislature with tenants from Little Mountain	5 hours
Dec. 7, 2008; Jan. 11, 2009	Protest Events: Art-Ins at Little Mountain	10 hours
April 5, 2009	Protest Event: Grand March for Housing	2 hours
June 30, 2009	Protest Event: Disrupting a meeting held at Little Mountain for companies wishing to bid on the demolition	1 hour
July 4, 2009	Protest Event: Tying bits of cloth in the fence at Little Mountain	2 hours
Sept. 24, 2009, Oct. 7, 2009; Oct. 15, 2009	Tenants' strategy meetings	3.5 hours
Oct. 8, 2009	CALM strategy meeting	1.5 hours
Nov. 6, 2009	Protest Event: Protesting beginning of demolition	2 hours
Nov. 26, 2009	Protest Event: One of the last tenants was denied access to his garden	0.5 hours
Dec. 5, 2009; Dec. 8, 2009	Community Consultation: First Open Houses	4 hours
Jan. 26, 2009; March 25, 2010; April 15, 2010; May 25, 2010; Sept. 13, 2010	Community Consultation: Little Mountain Advisory Group meetings	10 hours
Feb. 3, 2010	Community Consultation: Site design workshop	2 hours
March 13, 2010	Community Consultation: Tenants' meeting	2 hours
June 12, 2010	Community Consultation: Second Open House	1 hour
TOTAL:		62.5 hours

energy that she felt may have been less than ideal for the resistance movement. She also felt deeply conflicted when she decided against participating in a radical protest event that was expected to result in mass arrests. Although she believed that this radical protest event was important for the movement, she opted against participating because she did not want to face arrest and potentially negative consequences as an academic. Similarly, in my case, if I were not researching Little Mountain for my thesis, I often felt I might have been able to dedicate more time as an activist or take on more of a leadership role in the movement or resort to more militant, but potentially more risky, protest tactics. But on the other hand, had I taken on more of an activist role, I may not have been able to dedicate as much energy to research. The research itself represents a form of activism. My role as a researcher presented me with extraordinary opportunities to meet with people who wield influence over how the redevelopment of Little Mountain unfolds. When interviewing City Councillors and the developer, although my primary goal was to elicit information from them for this thesis, I always managed to inflect these interviews with a tone of advocacy by drawing attention to some of the tenants' concerns in my questioning. In addition, hopefully the research I have produced will be useful toward the very social justice goals that many of the activists at Little Mountain were concerned with. Just documenting the indignities the Little Mountain tenants went through and how politicians manipulated the way events were communicated in the press may help to prevent the same things from being repeated the next time a public housing project is redeveloped in Vancouver. In addition, my dual role as both an activist and a researcher is somewhat consistent with the history of advocacy that infuses much of the academic literature on urban renewal. Many of the most important critical works on urban renewal were produced by researchers who also participated in anti-urban renewal activism to varying extents. Examples include Jane Jacobs in Greenwich Village⁴, Clairmont and Magill in Africville⁵, Chester Hartman in San Francisco⁶, John Sewell in Toronto's Trefann Court⁷, and to a lesser extent Herbert J. Gans in Boston's West End. In Gans' case, he considered quitting his research altogether in order to dedicate more of his time to advocacy. Although he did not quit researching, he did circulate a memorandum that was critical of urban renewal and he was very open with his research participants about his critical stance toward the redevelopment of the West End.⁸

⁴ J. Clarence Davies, III, *Neighborhood Groups and Urban Renewal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966)

⁵ Donald H. Clairmont & Dennis William Magill, *Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974)

⁶ Chester W. Hartman, "Between Eminence and Notoriety: Four Decades of Radical Urban Planning" (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research, 2002)

⁷ John Sewell, *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993)

⁸ Herbert J. Gans, *The Urban Villagers* (New York: The Free Press, 1962, republished in 1982)

3.1.3 Archival Research

Researching this topic has involved a significant amount of archival research. When I first started out I expected archival research to represent only a relatively minor research approach compared to interviews and participant observation. But at many points during the research process, I found myself consulting archival sources. It was not until I was well into the process when I realized what a major methodological component archival research had become. In many cases, archival research filled in large blanks in the story about Little Mountain for which I had no other information sources to go on. This was very much the case in Chapter 4, which deals with the birth of the Little Mountain Housing Project. In other cases, archival research supplemented, clarified, and verified what I learned from the Little Mountain tenants in interviews and in my participant observation research. The combination of all three research methods often allowed me to triangulate my findings. For example, my finding that Little Mountain was very rich in social capital was supported by all three methodological approaches. The evidence for social capital came across in the interviews when tenants told me how they helped out their neighbours. I also saw social capital in action at Little Mountain when the tenants and their supporters in the surrounding community came together to organize the art-ins and various other protest events. Reinforcing these findings, my archival research revealed that the richness in social capital was a longstanding quality of Little Mountain, with a history extending back many decades.

In addition to the City of Vancouver Archives, a variety of other repositories of archival sources were consulted. This included the New Westminster Land Title Office, UBC Rare Books and Special Collections, and old newsletters and various other documents kindly supplied to me by the Steenhuisen family. When searching for old newspaper articles on the creation of the Little Mountain Housing Project, Jill Wade's research on the history of housing activism in Vancouver was enormously helpful.⁹ Many of Wade's endnotes directed me to specific newspaper articles from the early 1950s. In some cases, I was able to supplement these with newspaper articles that I found based on specific dates that emerged from my other archival sources.

3.2 POSITIONALITY

Often when people learn that I once lived at Little Mountain as a young child I am told that I am biased and incapable of providing an objective assessment of the Little Mountain Housing Project and its redevelopment. But feminist and postmodern scholars have produced a significant body of work that argues that positivism and the 'hard' sciences are not as objective as they often seem. Scientific knowledge, like all other forms of knowledge, is produced within an inescapable context of power relations. All knowledge is partial and shaped by the social position of those producing the knowledge.

⁹ Jill Wade, *Houses for All: The Struggle for Social Housing in Vancouver, 1919-50* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994)

Knowledge is produced through a process of interpretation and filtering—we make sense of the outside world by use of socially constructed referent systems. In short, all knowledge contains bias.¹⁰ But this does not excuse researchers from striving to make claims about the ‘real’ world that are as objective as possible. Indeed, in order to advance the liberatory goals of feminist and other critical social sciences and to challenge structural power relations, it is absolutely imperative that researchers are able to make objective claims about reality. Donna Haraway summarized the challenge: “I think my problem, and ‘our’ problem, is how to have *simultaneously* an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own ‘semiotic technologies’ for making meanings, *and* a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a ‘real world’.”¹¹ Haraway’s response to this challenge is the concept of ‘situated knowledges’. In contrast to scientific objectivity, which relies on a socially detached view from above (Haraway calls this a “god trick”), situated knowledges recognize their partiality and the limiting vantage point of the knowledge producer.¹² Haraway argues that the only true path to objectivity is to recognize the partiality and situatedness of knowledge. Thus, this section is a response to both the suspicions of some that my research has been tainted by my personal connection to Little Mountain and the insistence of Haraway and other feminist scholars that researchers should be reflexive and disclose how their findings are partial and situated.

Perhaps because it is so unusual that a researcher of public housing redevelopment has actually lived in the housing project that is the object of their study that explains why my personal connection to Little Mountain has been overemphasized. I lived at Little Mountain from 1982 to 1984, from age three to age five. I was a very young child when I lived there and my memories of those years are very fuzzy. I do not identify as having ‘come from’ Little Mountain. Rather, the bulk of my childhood was spent living in Vancouver’s Marpole neighbourhood and attending David Lloyd George Elementary School and Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School—both on Vancouver’s West Side. I identify with having ‘come from’ Marpole, not Little Mountain. But I always knew about Little Mountain. The memories of when I did live there stuck with me even after my family moved to Marpole. Whenever my family would drive down Main Street, I would point at 5235 Main Street, which was the apartment building we used to live in at Little Mountain. Sporadically over the years, my family would return to Little Mountain to visit old friends. These were not family friends we made when we lived at Little Mountain. Rather, these were social connections that stemmed from my mother’s childhood and teenage years when she lived in the neighbourhood of private homes surrounding the Little Mountain Housing Project. Far more significant

¹⁰ See Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* (New York, Cornell University Press, 1991); See also Nancy C. M. Hartsock, *Money, Sex, and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism* (New York: Longman, 1983)

¹¹ Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective”, *Feminist Studies*, 14, 3 (Fall 1988), p. 579.

¹² See also Gillian Rose, “Situating Knowledges: Positionality, Reflexivities and Other Tactics”, *Progress in Human Geography*, 21, 3 (1997), pp. 305-320.

than my personal connection from having lived at Little Mountain during the early 1980s is my mother's connection to the place and the people. Both of my research participants that I noted above in Table 3.1 as people to whom I am personally connected (Ingrid Steenhuisen and another person who chose to remain anonymous) are people with whom my mother attended elementary school. Thus, my personal connection to Little Mountain is really through my mother and her social network. My connection to Little Mountain is very much a historic connection stemming from the 1970s and 1980s. In Chapter 5, I distinguish between a historic period and a contemporary period, which I define as the 10 years preceding redevelopment (that is, post-1997). Prior to getting involved at Little Mountain in response to redevelopment, after 1997 I only made one social visit to Little Mountain. Many of the tenants I interviewed for this thesis only moved to Little Mountain after 1997. That is why most of those I interviewed did not know me as someone from Little Mountain. To most of the tenants I interviewed I was an outsider. As evidence of this, my interview participants would often talk to me as though I had no inside knowledge of Little Mountain whatsoever. I can think of several occasions when interview participants relayed stories to me from Little Mountain's distant past. But little did they know, I had grown up hearing many of these stories from my mother and her friends. While in the field I was constantly reminded that, given my lengthy absence from Little Mountain prior to redevelopment, I had become an outsider. As an outsider from a university who was coming in to the community in order to research it, I occupied a far more privileged social position than did my research participants. My relative social privilege stems from my university education, my greater economic stability, my security of tenure (while doing this research I was not being displaced like the Little Mountain tenants were), and my childhood upbringing on Vancouver's affluent West Side. My outsider status and my position of privilege in comparison to those I was researching means that this thesis has offered only a partial and incomplete account of Little Mountain and its redevelopment. This partiality became especially clear to me when I was writing Chapter 5, which strives to tell the life story of Little Mountain. The written record of Little Mountain is regrettably scant so when I started writing that chapter, my intention was to tell the whole story of Little Mountain from 1954 to 2007. But I had to accept that I simply cannot tell the 'whole' story because I do not have sufficient knowledge and any one story can only be told from one perspective. This does not mean that one should not try to fill in as many blanks in the historical record as possible, which is what I ended up doing. My social position has also resulted in a partial account simply because it affected whom I was able to talk to. Although only two of the households I interviewed were households to which I was personally connected, the rest of my sample is still somewhat skewed. My sample of Little Mountain households was biased toward the more middle class households who were resisting relocation. I have been repeatedly told that the poorest and recent immigrant families were the first to leave Little Mountain. Those families were the hardest for me to find for interviews. Had I truly been an insider who was actually living at Little Mountain at the time redevelopment started, I almost certainly would have

been able to connect with more of the poorest families who moved early on in the process. I can only speculate on how including more of the poorest Little Mountain tenants would have affected my results.

But while I was an outsider in many ways, I was simultaneously an insider in many other respects. The fact remains that I did have a personal connection to the Little Mountain Housing Project. As one tenant I interviewed told me, *“You were part of it. I remember you being there and living there.”* Because it was so long ago, I sometimes needed reassurance that I really did once live at Little Mountain. Confirmation that I am indeed an insider was provided by both this tenant’s comment and the photograph in Figure 3.1, which shows me when I was living at Little Mountain. My insider status, even if somewhat limited and contradicted by my simultaneous outsider status, helped enormously with doing this research. It was because of my inside knowledge of Little Mountain that I had the ability to do my first interview with the Steenhuisens. The Steenhuisens are the social heart of Little Mountain and that first interview led to most of the rest of my other interviews, through events that I was invited to and referrals that I received. The Steenhuisens also supplied me with a significant amount of historical documentation that is not available in any official archival repositories. Ingrid Steenhuisen is highly trusted by many of the other tenants of Little Mountain. When some of the other tenants saw that I knew Ingrid and that she was helping me, my research and my presence in the community was instantly and powerfully legitimized in their eyes. While many did

Figure 3.1

Positionality



Myself in the Little Mountain Housing Project in 1984. The dog next to me was given to my family from the Steenhuisen Family, who were long-term and well-known Little Mountain residents.

not remember me, trust seems also to have been strengthened when the tenants heard that I once lived at Little Mountain. In addition, my inside knowledge helped me to understand, at least partially, what many of the tenants were going through. Aside from having lived at Little Mountain as a young child, I know what it is like to go without, I know what it is like to be a child in a family on welfare, and I know what it is like to be displaced. Before starting this research, I experienced displacement firsthand in 2006 when I was ‘renovicted’ (eviction-for-renovations) from Chelsea Place, which is a mid-rise apartment building in New Westminster.¹³ In that case, similar to Ingrid Steenhuisen who led the Little Mountain tenants’ resistance movement, I was what is called the ‘Lead Applicant’ of an unusually large joint Dispute Resolution process at the Residential Tenancy Branch that included 28 other Chelsea Place households. But unlike Ingrid and many other Little Mountain tenants, I did not have anything close to the same level of emotional attachment to Chelsea Place. Nonetheless, all these other personal experiences are perhaps even more important than the fact that I once lived at Little Mountain as a young child, because these other experiences helped me to relate somewhat to what the Little Mountain tenants were going through.

In her essay on situated knowledges, Donna Haraway talks about responsibility. According to Haraway, responsible research is research for which the biases and partiality can be “called into account”.¹⁴ According to this view, a great deal of scientific research is irresponsible precisely because its biases are not readily up for scrutiny. Almost every time someone hears I used to live at Little Mountain, I have been made to account for how this has shaped and biased my research. My positionality in this research endeavour has been placed under the microscope more frequently than is often the case. Thus, my research may be considered unusually responsible. This is a good thing. But I think the relationship between positionality and responsible research goes much further than this. I had a responsibility to research this topic and tell this story precisely because of my positionality. Due to my personal connections with Little Mountain, I was in the position in which I was able to provide the detailed account of Little Mountain that this thesis offers. Little Mountain has been wiped off Vancouver’s urban landscape and there exists very little in the written record on Little Mountain. But I knew Little Mountain and I knew that I had people I could talk to who could teach me more about Little Mountain. I had an ethical obligation, not only to Little Mountain and its people, but also to the annals of history, to tell the story of Little Mountain and prevent it from being almost totally forgotten. So much of qualitative social research is about interpreting and translating. Due to a variety of circumstances in my life, I found myself in the position in which I was able to translate what the Little Mountain tenants were going through for an academic audience. This is because I can speak two ‘languages’. I can speak the language of and understand what low-income renters are going through because I have lived, and in many ways continue

¹³ See “NW Renters Appeal their Eviction Notices”, *Burnaby News Leader* (November 10, 2006), p. 3; See also “Evictions Going Ahead, but Help Being Offered”, *Burnaby News Leader* (November 24, 2006), p. 3; See also Lori Pappajohn, “Evictions Shock Tenants”, *Royal City Record* (November 8, 2006), p. 1.

¹⁴ Haraway, *Op. cit.*, p. 583.

to live, this life. But I have been fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to go to university and learn the language of academia. Haraway argues that “there is a premium” on research conducted from the standpoints of the subjugated because these standpoints “have a decent chance to be on to the god trick...[and] promise more adequate, sustained, objective, transforming accounts of the world.”¹⁵ Thus, as someone who has had a rare opportunity to pursue advanced education despite coming from poverty, I have an absolute obligation, to both the low-income class I come from *and* the academic world, to do research that is relevant to both of these domains and that is unyielding in its critique of processes of oppression as seen from my particular perspective as someone who has struggled with poverty, housing, and displacement. It is not an obligation I take lightly and very often it feels like a very difficult burden to carry. But because I take this responsibility very seriously, while I acknowledge that this account of Little Mountain is partial and situated, I have pushed myself to give the fullest possible account I can of Little Mountain. Very often this has meant presenting evidence that runs counter to my argument. Although this thesis has been written very much with an activist tone, my primary goal has not been to prove an ideological point. Rather, I have written this thesis in service of the truth, at least as far as I can see it from my vantage point. There has been no need to hide counterposing evidence because, in the end, the fullest possible account exposes even more powerfully the oppression and inhumanity in this story.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 583-584.

4. THE BIRTH OF BC'S FIRST PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECT

Remarkably little has been told of the story of the Little Mountain Housing Project—the first public housing project in BC. While a plethora of books, dissertations, journal articles and TV documentaries have told innumerable stories about Toronto's Regent Park, Canada's flagship public housing project, the record on Little Mountain is very scant. Instead of Little Mountain, urban researchers of Vancouver have focused on the slum clearance and public housing projects in Strathcona. Thus, when considering the written record of Little Mountain after the 1950s, one only finds brief, often passing, references to BC's first public housing project. John Sewell's *Houses and Homes* has a sentence on it¹; the influential Dennis and Fish report has a paragraph on it²; and Kalman's *Exploring Vancouver* has a brief write-up and a picture of it.³ Only Jill Wade's account of the political struggle for social housing in Vancouver in the first half of the twentieth century dedicates more than a passing reference to BC's first public housing project.⁴ But Wade tells a much larger story about housing activism and, due to practical necessities, cannot dedicate the attention to the Little Mountain Housing Project that it deserves. Based on this meager literary record of Little Mountain,⁵ one could be forgiven for thinking the housing project did not matter much.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Little Mountain was enormously important because it was one of the earliest, perhaps the earliest, public housing project in Canada that delivered on the housing movement's goals of federally-funded public housing with central heating and modern appliances. The birth story of Little Mountain is a story of social activism and the coming together of various groups to lobby for a common cause—the development of affordable, decent housing for regular people. It was a hard fought battle to make public housing a reality in Vancouver as the housing movement had to face off against formidable opponents in the real estate industry and had to contend with sometimes reluctant partners at the federal and provincial levels and escalating construction costs due to the Korean War. The story of the birth of the Little Mountain Housing Project is as much a protracted saga as the current redevelopment has been. Thus, I am including this chapter, not only because this is an important part of history that has been overlooked, although that it is. But perhaps more importantly, the birth story of Little Mountain is crucial for giving context to the contemporary events at Little Mountain. This chapter will show that the Little Mountain Housing Project was a landmark

¹ John Sewell, *Houses and Homes: Housing for Canadians* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1994), p. 152.

² Michael Dennis & Susan Fish, *Programs in Search of a Policy* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1972), p. 203.

³ Harold Kalman, *Exploring Vancouver* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1974), p. 198.

⁴ Jill Wade, *Houses for All: The Struggle for Social Housing in Vancouver, 1919-50* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994), pp. 156-159.

⁵ See also Kaye Staniforth Melliship, *The Contribution of Theories of the State in Analyzing Local Government Housing Initiatives: The City of Vancouver's Housing Actions 1900-1973* (Unpublished master's thesis, School of Community and Regional Planning, University of British Columbia, 1985).

accomplishment for both the local and national housing movements. Little Mountain was one of the first examples of all three levels of government coming together, cash in hand, for the development of something crucially needed by the citizenry. One simply cannot appreciate what is now being lost with the privatization and demolition of Little Mountain without first understanding this history. This is as much a birth story as it is an obituary.

4.1 BEFORE THE HOUSING PROJECT

Unlike much of the public housing built during the middle decades of the twentieth century in North America, construction of the Little Mountain Housing Project in 1953 did not involve any slum clearance. Prior to the housing project, the Little Mountain site was undeveloped. In the 19th Century, in exchange for moving its western terminus from Port Moody to Vancouver, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) was given 5800 acres in the centre of Vancouver; the eastern boundary of which was Ontario Street.⁶ The Little Mountain Housing Project site begins immediately east of Ontario Street. Thus, the site of the housing project was never part of the CPR lands, contrary to what some have suggested.⁷ In 1888 the provincial government auctioned off large tracts of land on both the east and west sides of the CPR lands. It was at that time that a woman by the name of Emma Gold purchased the site that a half-century later would become BC's first public housing project.⁸ Gold, described as a "proprietress", owned the Gold House restaurant on Water Street in Gastown.⁹ The CPR did own the land immediately west of the housing project site. This adjacent site would eventually become Queen Elizabeth Park and is the location of Vancouver's highest point—the Little Mountain after which the housing project and the surrounding neighbourhood are named. But before it became Queen Elizabeth Park, a basalt quarry was located there and a sawmill was located at the corner of Ontario and 33rd Avenue, which was then a skid road for hauling logs.¹⁰ In 1911 the Little Mountain quarry was shut down and in 1928 the CPR sold the land to the City to be used as a park. In 1940, the park was given the name Queen Elizabeth Park in honour of the 1939 Vancouver visit of King George VI and his daughter Elizabeth.¹¹ Another feature of this area before the housing project was developed was the Little Mountain Riding Academy, which was located at the

⁶ Bruce Macdonald, *Vancouver: A Visual History* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1992).

⁷ See Stephen Tait, *Little Mountain Public Housing and adjacent Parklands* (Unpublished History 205 essay, University of British Columbia, 1988, retrieved from UBC Rare Books and Special Collections).

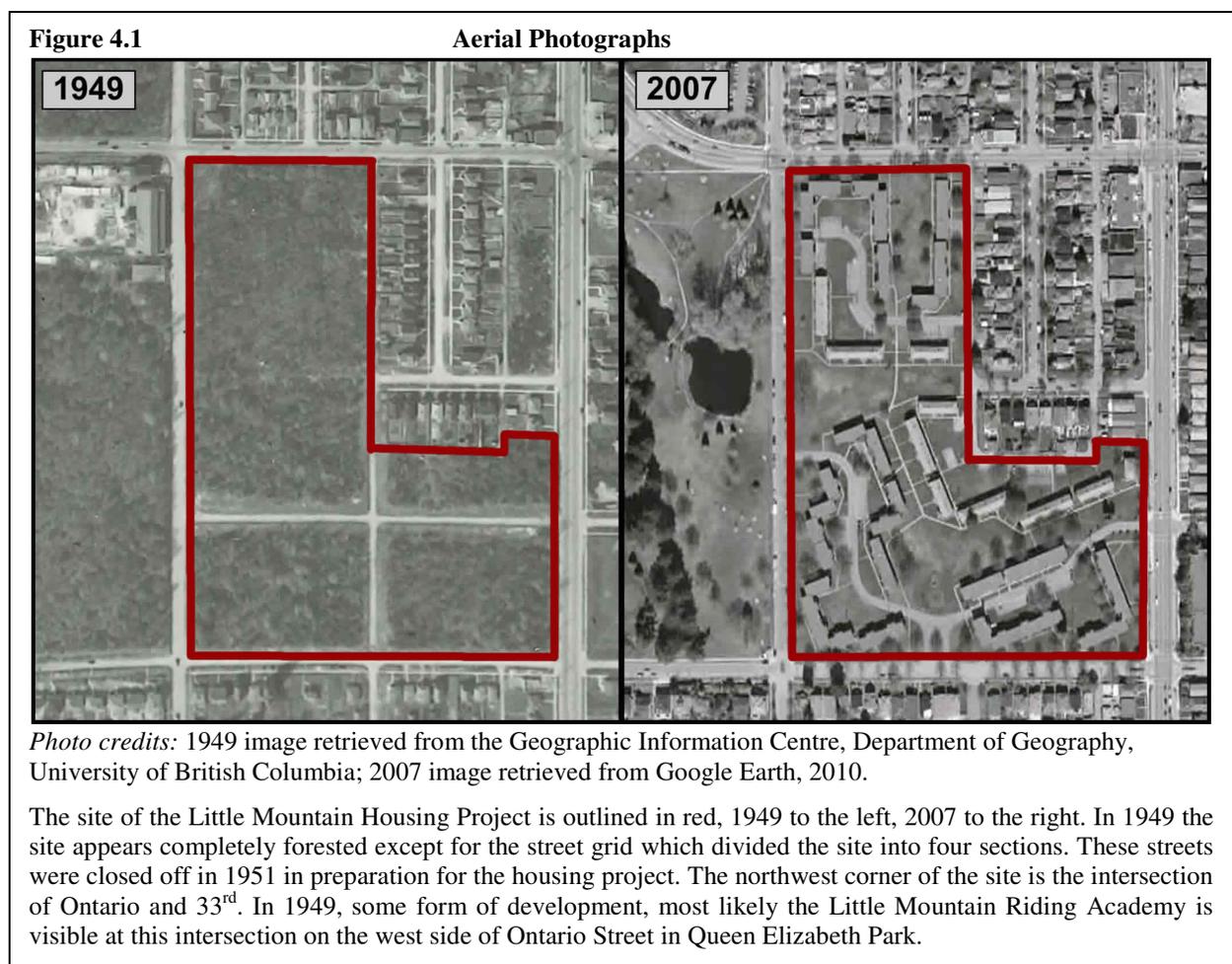
⁸ Macdonald, Op.cit.; New Westminster Land Title Office, Titles No. 44899 (Aug. 12, 1919), 44900 (Aug. 12, 1919), 45699 (Aug. 12, 1919), Vancouver.

⁹ Gold House, Water Street, Vancouver: Dinner Bill of Fare, 1888, CVA PAM Und. 397; Alcuin Society, "Robert Mathison Jr.'s Tasty Printing," *Amphora*, 150 (November 2008). Accessed online July 12, 2010 from www.alcuinsociety.com

¹⁰ Tait, Op. cit.

¹¹ City of Vancouver, "Queen Elizabeth Park" (Website accessed October 8, 2010 from vancouver.ca)

corner of 33rd and Ontario.¹² In the 1949 aerial photograph shown in Figure 4.1, the horse stables appear to be located on the west side of Ontario Street, which was within Queen Elizabeth Park. During these early years, the housing project site itself is reported to have been used for horseback riding and as a place to harvest Christmas trees.¹³ Thus, as late as 1950 when a *Vancouver Sun* article announced what was then just a proposal to build the housing project, the site was described as being “covered with light second growth brush.”¹⁴ The 1949 aerial photograph of the site confirms this. The 1949 aerial photograph also shows the street grid running through the undeveloped site of the housing project. A north-south street (part of which appears today as the back lane of the west side of the 5000 block of Quebec Street) and an east-west street (36th Avenue) cut the property into four sections. These streets were closed off in January 1951 when the various parcels of land that made up the site were consolidated into a single parcel in preparation for the development of the housing project.¹⁵



¹² *The Greater Vancouver & New Westminister City Directory* (Vancouver: Sun Directories, 1949), CVA directories.

¹³ Tait, Op. cit.

¹⁴ *Vancouver Sun*, “200 Low-Rent Houses in Little Mountain Planned” (May 17, 1950), p. 17.

¹⁵ New Westminister Land Title Office, Title No. 249441, Vancouver, January 24, 1951.

It was during my very first interview with a long-time Little Mountain resident when I first heard a resident's account of the origin of the Little Mountain Housing Project. I sat on the floor, surrounded by boxes and stacks of papers—the archives of the project—as I listened to her account of the beginning of the Little Mountain Housing Project:

Because this site originally belonged to a war veteran, a forefather who wanted to build here for veterans but because this was all swamp and bog and forest he had to wait too long. So he says, "I want this site for veterans and for low income people and for the working poor and people on social assistance." He deeded the land to the federal government with the proviso that this land could never, ever be sold or to be used for market value housing.

I thought this story, if true, might save the Little Mountain Housing Project and stop it from being privatized and redeveloped into mostly market condominiums. Since then I have searched for any sort of documentation that could confirm this resident's account of the origin of the project. But the only part of the story that appears to be true is that the site was a swamp due to its poor drainage and low-lying elevation. In fact, the entire area around Main Street from 33rd to 41st Avenues was known as the Main Street Bog (see Figure 4.2). Although the Little Mountain site did have several private owners during the early years, Emma Gold being the first among them, Land Title records show that all these owners lost title to the municipality due to unpaid property taxes. In 1915 and 1919, Emma Gold lost her Little Mountain land in tax sales to the District of South Vancouver, which was then a separate municipality.¹⁶ Records also show that Jessie Muir, confectioner of Main Street, lost her property at Little Mountain due to unpaid taxes in 1936.¹⁷ The same fate fell upon the part of the property owned by Isaac Ernest Bunting in 1939.¹⁸ Thus, through tax sales, the municipal government of Vancouver had acquired by the 1940s title to all the land that would be the Little Mountain Housing Project. So much for the Little Mountain resident's story of a benevolent private donor who would ensure the land's use for social housing in perpetuity. This story strikes me as similar to the myths that the residents of the ill-fated Africville community in Nova Scotia told of the origins of their settlement. In both cases, the origin myths are not supported by evidence, but at a rhetorical level these stories "served to reinforce claims to land."¹⁹

¹⁶ New Westminster Land Title Office, Title No. 44899, 44900, 45699, Vancouver, August 12, 1919.

¹⁷ New Westminster Land Title Office, Title No. 36277, Vancouver, January 25, 1939.

¹⁸ New Westminster Land Title Office, Title No. 56869, Vancouver, December 6, 1940.

¹⁹ Donald H. Clairmont & Dennis William Magill, *Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974).

Figure 4.2

Main Street Bog, 191-



Photo credit: Unidentified photographer; Retrieved from the Major Matthews Collection, CVA 179-H-1 album A-16.
The Main Street Bog between 33rd and 41st Avenues in the 1910s.

4.2 THE FIGHT FOR PUBLIC HOUSING AT LITTLE MOUNTAIN

Rather than the generous donation of land from a philanthropic war veteran, credit for the development of the Little Mountain Housing Project is due to the many years of political lobbying of the Vancouver Housing Association and other concerned groups as well as the municipal politicians who stood by the project when opposition and other circumstances threatened it. As noted by Fromson et al. in their study on the Little Mountain Housing Project conducted just a few years after it opened, “the full story of the effort to equip Vancouver with its pioneer piece of publicly-managed, publicly-subsidized, low-rental housing is a chapter in community organization and ‘social action’.”²⁰ The social action was in response to the serious shortage of affordable rental housing that Vancouver, like many other Canadian cities, struggled with during the 1930s and 1940s. While construction “had ground almost to a halt”²¹ with the onset of the Great Depression, demand for housing increased in Vancouver as Prairie farmers flocked to the city to escape drought conditions. During the Second World War, the problem only

²⁰ Etta Elaine Fromson et al., *The Little Mountain Low-Rental Housing Project: A Survey of its Welfare Aspects (Vancouver 1955-1958)* (Unpublished master’s thesis, School of Social Work, University of British Columbia, 1959), p. 31.

²¹ Wade, *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

worsened as building supplies and labour were diverted to support the war effort. In response to the affordable housing problem, in 1938 the Vancouver Housing Association was formed with membership drawn from labour, church and university groups.²² The outspoken Helena Gutteridge was a key member of the Vancouver Housing Association during its early days. Gutteridge's academic background in hygiene and sanitary science²³ is consistent with the pattern established in other cities in which those in the housing movement were often motivated by concerns over health and sanitation.²⁴ Since its first meeting, the Vancouver Housing Association called for the creation of a national low-income housing program.²⁵ Another prominent member of the Vancouver Housing Association was P.R.U. Stratton, who would eventually go on to become one of the first appointees to the Vancouver Housing Authority when it was created in 1953.²⁶ In the late 1930s, Stratton came up with a plan to develop low-cost rental housing at Trout Lake in Vancouver under the National Housing Act of 1938. During her term as Vancouver city alderman from 1937 to 1939, Gutteridge lobbied in support of the plan, which ultimately failed because Vancouver City Council and the Provincial Government both felt the plan involved too much financial risk.²⁷ This exemplifies how Canada's early public housing legislation was found to be unworkable at the local level.²⁸

With the outbreak of the Second World War, housing activism lessened in Vancouver, but picked up again after the war. Following the war, Vancouver's housing movement was reinvigorated with the involvement of several veterans' groups. Militant protests grew in frequency and veterans squatted at the old Hotel Vancouver which was slated for demolition and at the Little Mountain Army Camp.²⁹ In the mid-1940s army barracks occupied a large area known as the Little Mountain Camp, which was bounded by 37th Avenue, Cambie Street, 41st Avenue and Willow Street.³⁰ Thus, the Little Mountain Camp was to the southwest of the future site of the Little Mountain Housing Project and these two sites should not be

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ See John F. Bauman, "Public Housing: The Dreadful Sage of a Durable Policy", *Journal of Planning Literature*, 8 (1994), pp. 347-361; See also L. Shapiro, *Housing the Poor of Paris, 1850-1902* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

²⁵ Wade, Op. cit.

²⁶ *Province*, "4 To Head Housing Project" (August 14, 1953), p. 2.

²⁷ Wade, Op. cit.

²⁸ See John C. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).

²⁹ Wade, Op. cit.

³⁰ Letter from G.A. Fahlman, Vice-President of Little Mountain Camp Council to Utilities and Airport Committee of Vancouver City Hall dated December 9, 1949, CVA 19-D-4 file 10.

confused. In September 1946 many of the Little Mountain barracks were not being used by the army. Thirteen veterans and their families who were struggling to find housing squatted in some of the Little Mountain army huts, following the example set by veterans in Britain who had resorted to similar tactics. The squatters formed the Little Mountain Squatters Association and asked the City Health Officer to order that water and electricity be turned on again at Little Mountain, which the Department of National Defence had cut off.³¹ The militant occupation went on for several days and the squatting veterans even drew the support of a *Vancouver Sun* editorial.³² In the end, the army entered into an agreement with UBC under which the Little Mountain huts were to be used for student housing for married veterans attending classes at the university.³³ UBC, with the assistance of the federal government, operated the Little Mountain Camp as an “emergency shelter” for student veterans for the next several years.³⁴ It is tempting to link this episode of housing activism with the eventual development of the Little Mountain Housing Project just a few blocks away although I cannot find any evidence that links the two. Perhaps the only connection is that the Little Mountain Squatters Association and the Little Mountain Camp established a precedent for social housing in the Little Mountain area, making the area the natural choice for BC’s first public housing project.

Although the housing movement was certainly bolstered by the militancy of the veterans, veterans groups tended to be primarily concerned with the immediate housing needs of returning soldiers. But the Vancouver Housing Association lobbied for affordable housing generally and continued to emphasize the need for public housing as a long-term solution.³⁵ In 1946, Dr. Leonard Marsh arrived in Vancouver and promptly joined the Vancouver Housing Association and began speaking publicly on the housing issue. His wife, Betty Marsh, became the secretary of the Vancouver Housing Association.³⁶ Leonard Marsh, regarded as the “father of the social security system”³⁷ of Canada, was a long-time advocate for the development of public housing and other welfare state institutions. He authored the Report on Social Security for the federal government in 1943 and acted as a research advisor for the federal committee on postwar reconstruction led by Queen’s University Professor Clifford Curtis.³⁸ The

³¹ *Vancouver Sun*, “Squatters Occupy Little Mountain” (September 19, 1946), p. 1; *Vancouver Sun*, “13 Families Still in Army Hutments” (September 23, 1946), p. 3.

³² *Vancouver Sun*, “Little Patience Over Little Mountain” (September 20, 1946), p. 4.

³³ Wade, Op. cit., p. 149.

³⁴ Letter from C.C.I. Merritt to Vancouver Mayor Charles E. Thompson dated March 22, 1949, CVA 34-E-2 file 13

³⁵ Wade, Op. cit.

³⁶ Wade, Op. cit., p. 154.

³⁷ Steven Hick, “Canada’s Unique Social History” (1998, Website accessed July 13, 2010 from www.socialpolicy.ca)

³⁸ Bacher, Op. cit.

committee's report, commonly known as the Curtis Report and regarded as a "milestone in the enunciation of social responsibility by government"³⁹, called for a national public housing program funded in large part by the federal government. With Marsh's membership, the Vancouver Housing Association's campaign for public housing was bolstered. In 1946, the Vancouver Housing Association presented Vancouver City Council with its 58-page report documenting slum conditions in Vancouver and calling for the development of subsidized rental housing for low-income people.⁴⁰ But with ineffective legislation at the federal level,⁴¹ there was little the City could do at that time.

An effective national public housing program was not established in Canada until 1949. In September of that year, the federal government passed legislation that amended the National Housing Act of 1944 with the addition of Section 35.⁴² Under Section 35, the costs of land acquisition, public housing construction, operating costs and rental subsidies were to be shared on a 75:25 federal-provincial basis.⁴³ These costs were to be covered through direct government loans at fixed rate mortgages amortized over no more than 50 years. Provinces were permitted to pass on part or all of their portion of the costs to the municipal level. In order to participate in the program, provinces passed enabling legislation and were required to create a local housing authority to manage the public housing.⁴⁴ Unlike the locally devolved nature of public housing in the US and Canada's later public housing program initiated in 1964 under Sections 43 and 44, title to public housing developed under Section 35 was to be held by CMHC (itself created only three years earlier).⁴⁵ David Mansur, who created both the CMHC and Canada's Section 35 federal-provincial public housing partnership explained this was done in order "to avoid the establishment

³⁹ Albert Rose, *Canadian Housing Policies, 1935-1980*. (Toronto: Butterworths, 1980), p. 28.

⁴⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, "Housing 'Blight' Cure Urged on Council" (May 14, 1946), p. 3.

⁴¹ See Bacher, *Op. cit.*

⁴² The NHA of 1944 was Canada's third piece of federal housing legislation. The first was the Dominion Housing Act of 1935. This was followed by the National Housing Act of 1938. The fourth and final incarnation was the National Housing Act of 1954, which is still in effect today, although it has been significantly amended over the years. See Rose, *Op. cit.*; Kamal S. Sayegh, *Housing: A Canadian Perspective*. (Ottawa: Academy Book, 1987).

⁴³ Section 35 was renamed Section 40 which was renamed Section 79, the current name of Canada's original public housing program. In 1964 a second public housing program with different cost-sharing arrangements was introduced as Sections 43 and 44, which were later renamed Sections 81 and 82. Both the original Section 35 program introduced in 1949 and the Sections 43 and 44 program introduced in 1964 are still in operation, although no new public housing has been built under either program since 1978. These programs continue only in order to maintain operations of existing public housing projects. See Rose, *Op. cit.*; Sayegh, *Op. cit.*; George Fallis et al., eds., *Home Remedies: Rethinking Canadian Housing Policy* (Ottawa: CD Howe Institute, 1995); Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Public Housing Program – Program Evaluation Report* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, April 1990)

⁴⁴ See John R. Miron, *Housing in Postwar Canada* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988); Rose, *Op. cit.*; Kamal S. Sayegh, *Housing: A Canadian Perspective* (Ottawa: Academy Book, 1987).

⁴⁵ Title to public housing developed under Sections 43 and 44 was held by the provinces. See Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Public Housing Program – Program Evaluation Report* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, April 1990), p. 6.

of long term vested interests and rights in local authorities.”⁴⁶ Critics have argued that the provincial funding requirements and the ability to pass this financial burden onto the municipalities were purposefully designed to undermine the program by dampening the local initiative that is so crucial to getting such projects off the ground.⁴⁷ In the first five years of the program, only 1800 units of public housing had been created under the program.⁴⁸ Bacher (1993) describes the 1949 amendments as producing “a functioning—although essentially tokenist—social-housing sector.”⁴⁹ Albert Rose is more forgiving of the disappointingly low number of public housing units constructed during the 1950s, arguing that the program sacrificed quantity for quality, with the CMHC’s architectural division heavily involved in the planning and design process of public housing in the 1950s.⁵⁰ Whatever one’s view, there is little doubt the 1949 amendments were very important in the development of Canadian public housing as they resulted in some of the country’s most well-known public housing projects: Regent Park South and Lawrence Heights in Toronto, Jeanne Mance in Montreal, Mulgrave Park in Halifax and of course Little Mountain in Vancouver.⁵¹

Shortly after the passage of federal legislation for the public housing program in September 1949, CMHC President David Mansur entered into negotiations with the provinces over how the new public housing program would be implemented at the provincial level. Although Mansur started negotiations with Ontario,⁵² he did not put off negotiations with BC for long. By December 1949, the federal, provincial and Vancouver city governments had reached an “agreement in principle” on how the public housing program would operate in Vancouver, although the provision of city services was a matter that still needed to be worked out.⁵³ In what would be just the first of a series of delays in the development of BC’s first public housing, the housing program stalled in Vancouver in the early part of 1950. In April 1950 a *Vancouver Sun* editorial criticized all three levels of government, but especially Vancouver Mayor Charles E. Thompson, for inaction on the housing file. According to the editorial, the Mayor had “pushed subsidized rental housing into the background” as he was now focusing on the development of subsidized

⁴⁶ Bacher, Op. cit., p. 183.

⁴⁷ See Bacher, Op. cit.; Miron, op. cit; J. David Hulchanski, *Housing Policy for Tomorrow’s Cities* (Canadian Policy Networks, 2002, accessed online September 22, 2010 from cprn.org)

⁴⁸ Bacher, Op. cit.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 203.

⁵⁰ Rose, Op. cit.

⁵¹ See Sewell, Op. cit.

⁵² Bacher, Op. cit.

⁵³ Leslie Fox, “City Reaches Agreement With Victoria on Housing”, *Vancouver Sun* (December 12, 1949), p. 17.

private ownership housing⁵⁴—an approach that also qualified for the 75% federal contribution under the 1949 amendments to the NHA. A few days after this editorial appeared in the newspaper, Vancouver aldermen reaffirmed their commitment to the development of low-rental housing under the new federal program. At the same time, it was reported in the press that the “likeliest location for the low-rental units is believed to be Thirty-third and Main where the city has a proposed subdivision ready for a centrally heated community development.”⁵⁵ This is the earliest mention I can find of the Little Mountain site in connection with subsidized rental housing. The same article also reported that the housing project would likely be targeted at “old age and social service pensioners.”⁵⁶ After more talks between CMHC, the Province and the City, a more detailed plan for the development of public housing at the Little Mountain site had been worked out by May 1950. Capital costs for the project would be paid for by the federal and provincial governments and would be amortized over 50 years. As a subsidized rental project, rental income was not expected to cover operating costs. These costs were to be shared, with the federal government paying 75% and the province and the city each paying 12.5%. The proposal still required city council approval before being sent to Victoria for refinement. Other fascinating details of the proposal were discussed in the press at this time:

A government-subsidized low-rental housing project will likely be started in Vancouver within a month.

Six city blocks of city-owned land in the Little Mountain area will be used for the development.

Up to 200 housing units may be supplied in an initial “trial” block of the 14-acre site...

The new development, first “break” in the long-standing stalemate over how the federal-provincial housing scheme was intended to operate, will not interfere with the city’s previous decision to service 265 lots for private housing development...

The low-rental project will be beside Queen Elizabeth Park, in the area bounded by Main and Ontario, Thirty-third and Thirty-seventh, excluding the north-west corner which is privately owned.

The land has been held for development of a community apartment housing area but no private sponsor of the city’s two-year old plan was found.

It is serviced with sewers and water up to the boundaries...

Before actual rental, however, a Vancouver Housing Authority must be named and approved by the senior governments to administer the project...a City Council policy must be established providing that only really low income groups, such as Old Age Pensioners must be provided for first...

The homes are not likely to be individual houses, but the buildings will definitely not be all alike, officials promise.

⁵⁴ *Vancouver Sun*, “What About Housing?” (April 12, 1950), p. 4.

⁵⁵ *Vancouver Sun*, “Low-Rental Homes Part of Civic Plan” (April 18, 1950), p. 13.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

They will more probably be terrace-type structures, two or three units to a building. They may be restricted to two storeys, but that would restrict the number that could go into the area.

Three-storey structures would not be practical for the old-age group and are not economic heights to include the cost of elevators so the jump would probably be from two-storey to six-storey if any “apartment” blocks are included later in the scheme.

In the city’s original scheme to sell the land to a private apartment-community developer it was estimated that 400 housing units could go into the six blocks.

According to Ald. Miller, however, if the present plan works in the pilot project, the principle will be applied in other sections of the city.⁵⁷

This newspaper article is very significant to the story of the Little Mountain Housing Project because it not only provides insight into some of the thinking that went into the development of the project, it highlights how enormously important Little Mountain was in the development of public housing in BC. It should be noted that 200 units were not seen at this early stage as the total number of public housing units to be built at Little Mountain, rather 200 was the figure associated with the first phase of the project. Plans developed for the Little Mountain project a few months after this newspaper article showed a total of 429 units on the site.⁵⁸ This provides some historical context against which to compare much later controversies in the early 1980s and again in the 2000s over increasing the number of units on the site above the 224 units that were ultimately built there in 1953. This article also explains why the apartments were limited to two storeys and some of the thinking that went into creating a mix of building types (ultimately a mix of apartments and rowhouses). Issues around seniors’ ability to walk up flights of stairs and the appropriate mix of building forms have resurfaced in the current context of redevelopment. But even more important than these details, is that this newspaper article underscores the central role Little Mountain played in the development of public housing policy in BC. BC’s first housing authority, the Vancouver Housing Authority, was created specifically to administer the Little Mountain Housing Project, and as it turned out, was originally headquartered in one of the basements at Little Mountain.⁵⁹ And most importantly, Little Mountain was the “first ‘break’ in the long-standing stalemate over how the federal-provincial housing scheme was intended to operate” in BC, the principles of which were “applied in other sections of the city.”⁶⁰ Indeed, the arrangements worked out in the Little Mountain case formed the basis of plans for subsequent housing projects in Vancouver such as Orchard Park.⁶¹

⁵⁷ *Vancouver Sun*, “200 Low-Rent Houses in Little Mountain Planned” (May 17, 1950), pp. 17-18.

⁵⁸ *Vancouver Sun*, “New Housing Plan Okayed By Council” (November 30, 1950), p. 21.

⁵⁹ Letter from J.E. Brown to Vancouver City Hall dated November 19, 1953, CVA 93-f-7 file 10.

⁶⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, “200 Low-Rent Houses in Little Mountain Planned” (May 17, 1950), pp. 17-18.

⁶¹ Wade, *Op. cit.*; *Vancouver Sun*, “Big Battle Looms on Housing Subsidy” (May 20, 1955), p. 2.

But the announcement in the *Vancouver Sun* in May 1950 of proposed plans to develop public housing at Little Mountain was just the beginning of what was a very controversial project that was almost derailed on more than one occasion. However in 1950, the project was only in an initial planning stage and any opposition to it appears to have been successfully contained. On May 23, 1950 Vancouver City Council unanimously approved the project. Apparently, two city aldermen, George C. Miller and D. Cornett, who both had histories of being unfriendly toward subsidized housing, reversed their positions.⁶² Although some 50 citizens showed up at the council meeting to voice opposition to the proposal, they were denied the opportunity to speak, with the explanation that “delegations are not heard by council except in standing committee, public hearing, court of revision, or committee of the whole.”⁶³ The next step was for the senior levels of government to work out further details of the plan. In July 1950, a draft agreement specific to the Little Mountain project was drawn up between CMHC, the Province and the City, although the final tripartite agreement was not signed between the three parties until November 1, 1950. Although construction of the housing project would still not happen for a few more years, this contract is the agreement that was finally acted upon in the development of Little Mountain. It is summarized in Figure 4.3. It was understood at this time that rents were to be about \$25 per month and

Figure 4.3 The Little Mountain Agreement, November 1, 1950

THE CITY AGREED TO:

- Transfer ownership of the land to the Province and CMHC
- Install services such as roads, walkways, lanes, water mains, storm sewers, fire hydrants, and street lighting
- Provide CMHC with a monthly statement of the costs of service installation
- Provide occupants of the housing project with services such as water, fire, police, education
- Rezone the site to Three-Storey Multiple Dwelling
- Pay the Province an annual sum equal to one-half the amount paid by the Province to the Housing Authority for its operating losses (that is, 12.5% of total operating losses)

THE PROVINCE AGREED TO:

- Provide approximately 200 housing units
- Create a Housing Authority that would pay annual property taxes to the City
- Cause the Housing Authority to pay the City for any future improvements and for water rates

CMHC (FEDERAL GOVERNMENT) AGREED TO:

- Provide approximately 200 housing units
- Pay the City \$36,875 for the land
- Pay the City for the design, construction, and installation of services, including 10% for overhead and 5% for design

Source: Agreement between City of Vancouver, Province of BC, and CMHC dated November 1, 1950, CVA 93-F-7 file 5.

⁶² *Vancouver Sun*, “Civic Housing Plan Okayed by Council” (May 25, 1950), p. 19; *Vancouver Sun*, “200 Low-Rent Houses in Little Mountain Planned” (May 17, 1950), pp. 17-18.

⁶³ *Vancouver Sun*, “Civic Housing Plan Okayed by Council” (May 25, 1950), p. 19

that the housing project was to be for old age pensioners.⁶⁴ The first phase of the project would consist of 206 units among 27 apartment blocks and would cost \$2.5 million. Sketches of final plans were shown to City Council for the first time, showing an ultimate site total of 429 units among 57 buildings.⁶⁵ These plans are presumably similar to those I retrieved from the UBC Library Special Collections and shown in Figure 4.4. By the end of November 1950, both the City's Building and Town Planning Committee and City Council had approved the proposed project. Construction was expected to begin the following April.⁶⁶

But construction did not begin in April of 1951, or at anytime in 1951 for that matter. By the summer of 1951 only one construction bid had been received on the project and the bid was more than \$1 million over the budgeted cost. Provincial housing administrator Everett Brown characterized this turn of events as a "death blow" for public housing in Vancouver.⁶⁷ Rising construction costs were also jeopardizing several other developments around the city that year. The Korean War and the consequent need to re-supply the Canadian Army were behind the rising construction costs in 1951.⁶⁸ Citing rising construction costs and the need to target social expenditures to the poorest groups, in August a *Vancouver Sun* editorial urged politicians to "abandon" the Little Mountain plan.⁶⁹ Previously the newspaper had been supportive of public housing.⁷⁰

Figure 4.4 Early Designs of the Little Mountain Housing Project, 1951

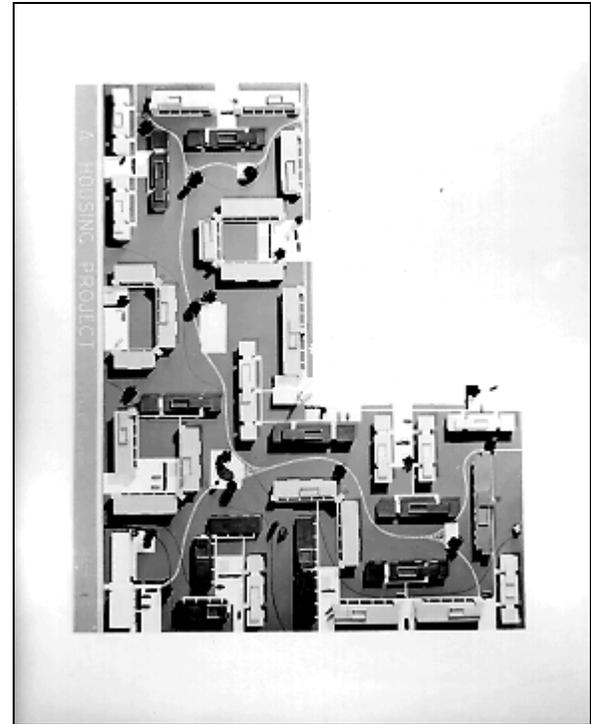


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Original plans called for a total of 429 public housing units but this was reduced to 224 units.

⁶⁴ *Vancouver Sun*, "Ottawa, BC Reach Pact on Housing Plan" (November 15, 1950), p. 9.

⁶⁵ *Vancouver Sun*, "New Housing Plan Okayed By Council" (November 30, 1950), p. 21.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Vancouver Sun*, "Housing Projects Blocked by Costs" (August 8, 1951), p. 17.

⁶⁸ See Bacher, *Op. cit.*; Wade, *Op. cit.*

⁶⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, "Abandon Little Mountain" (August 22, 1951), p. 4.

⁷⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, "What About Housing?" (April 12, 1950), p. 4.

Another blow to the proposed Little Mountain project came to light in January 1952. It was at this time when it was discovered that two months prior, in November 1951, CMHC President David Mansur sent a letter to Vancouver Mayor Hume telling him that CMHC was “not interested” in participating in any “welfare scheme” for older residents.⁷¹ “It is not our intention to subsidize welfare cases,” David Mansur wrote. “That is not within the jurisdiction of the federal government.”⁷² Mansur advised the City to reclassify the project for a higher class of tenants who would require a smaller rental subsidy and to redesign the project to bring down the building costs. “The only other alternative is to abandon the plan,” wrote the head of CMHC.⁷³ For some unknown reason, Mayor Hume did not share this letter with the rest of City Council, which only found out about it after Alderman Archie Proctor telephoned CMHC some two months after the communication had been sent out. This turn of events represented an “about-face” on the part of CMHC because throughout the previous two years when negotiations had been underway it was widely understood and reported in the press that the Little Mountain project was intended for old age pensioners.⁷⁴ Perhaps CMHC wanted to avoid the creation of another Regent Park. In the Regent Park case, CMHC officials also disagreed with the rental structure, which did not consider secondary wage earners and family allowances in the calculation of rent. If these sources of income had been considered, as CMHC wanted, the result would have been higher rents at Regent Park. But the CMHC position on this matter was not adopted at Regent Park due to the need to re-house those who lost their homes in slum clearance and “because the Corporation’s share in the financing of the Regent Park project was relatively small.”⁷⁵ The Little Mountain project differed from Regent Park in both respects as it was not part of any slum clearance project and CMHC was paying the majority of the costs.

Perhaps the Korean War can also explain why the CMHC President appeared to be trying to kill, or at least postpone, a project that his organization had previously supported. In 1951, CMHC restricted financing for both private and public housing so that such construction would not interfere with the need to re-supply the war effort. Bacher reports that the federal Reconstruction Minister Robert Winters wrote to provincial governments in 1951 urging them to keep public housing construction to a minimum because “defence demands in the construction field are very great and have priority over everything else.”⁷⁶ The Saskatchewan Government was told that “plans for development under Section 35 should be

⁷¹ *Daily Province*, “Central Mortgage ‘Not Interested’ in City’s Low-Rental Housing Plan” (January 15, 1952), p. 5.

⁷² *Vancouver Sun*, “Low-Rent Housing Plan Bogs Down” (January 15, 1952), p. 13.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Daily Province*, “Central Mortgage ‘Not Interested’ in City’s Low-Rental Housing Plan” (January 15, 1952), p. 5.

⁷⁵ Albert Rose, *Regent Park: A Study in Slum Clearance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), p. 97.

⁷⁶ Bacher, *Op. cit.*, p. 200.

held in abeyance.”⁷⁷ Even Regent Park in Toronto felt the government’s pull back in the construction sector during the Korean War. Requests of the federal government for steel for the construction of a community centre at Regent Park were refused by the federal government in both February and April of 1952. Rose cited a steel shortage induced by the Korean War as the explanation.⁷⁸

Despite rising construction costs, a reluctant federal partner, and another negative *Vancouver Sun* editorial that pronounced the death of subsidized rental housing at Little Mountain⁷⁹, by the end of January 1952 Vancouver City Council’s Housing Committee resolved to support a second attempt at producing public housing at Little Mountain. The committee heard from CMHC officials T.B. Pickersgill and Dan McNaughton who urged the City to increase the maximum income limit of tenants from \$100 per month to \$200 per month.⁸⁰ In order to make the project economically viable, rents would have to be as high as \$35 per month, which was beyond what most old age pensioners could afford at the time.⁸¹ CMHC also called for the elimination of bachelor suites from the plans and a reduction in the proportion of one-bedroom units, while the proportions of two- and three-bedroom suites were to be increased. These changes shifted the “emphasis [to] family accommodation”, as opposed to housing for seniors.⁸² Other design changes were also called for at this time. Instead of using masonry construction as was originally planned, CMHC suggested a frame and stucco method to bring down costs.⁸³ The committee gave approval to CMHC to redesign the project. In February 1952 Vancouver City Council committed to adhere to the terms of the November 1, 1950 three-party agreement between the City, the Province and CMHC with respect to services and financing of a redesigned housing project at Little Mountain.⁸⁴ Thus, although significantly delayed, at least for the time being, the Little Mountain project had been saved.

For much of the rest of 1952 the project stalled yet again. By the second half of 1952, the Canadian military had been re-armed and CMHC was once again promoting housing construction.⁸⁵ CMHC had completed its redesign of the Little Mountain project and submitted its new plan to the BC Government in mid-July. But the first-time Social Credit government in Victoria sat on the plans for

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Rose, 1958, Op. cit., pp. 167-168.

⁷⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, “Quietus on Little Mountain” (January 16, 1952), p. 4.

⁸⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, “Income Limit Snag in Housing Scheme” (January 29, 1952), p. 3.

⁸¹ *Daily Province*, “Housing Plan Backed But Rental Growing” (January 29, 1952), p. 13.

⁸² *Vancouver Sun*, “Income Limit Snag in Housing Scheme” (January 29, 1952), p. 3.

⁸³ *Vancouver Sun*, “Income Limit Snag in Housing Scheme” (January 29, 1952), p. 3.

⁸⁴ Minutes of Building & Town Planning Committee, November 13, 1952, CVA 97-f-7 file 10.

⁸⁵ Bacher, Op. cit.

several months. Frustrated with inaction on the part of the provincial government, in September 1952 Vancouver City Alderman Archie Proctor again took it upon himself to press senior levels of government. He wired BC Finance Minister Einar Gunderson to request a meeting with officials from the provincial government and CMHC. P.R.U. Stratton of the Vancouver Housing Association also called on the provincial government to act.⁸⁶ The *Vancouver Sun* explained that “the topsy-turvy BC election picture [had] held up action” at the provincial level.⁸⁷ Thus, it was not until November 4, 1952 when the BC Government announced it was approving the new plan for Little Mountain.⁸⁸ The new plan called for the same cost-sharing arrangements agreed to in 1950: the federal and provincial governments would share the capital costs on a 75:25 basis.⁸⁹ The federal government would also pay 75% of the operating losses, with the Province and the City each responsible for 12.5%. Total capital costs were estimated at \$2 million, with construction accounting for \$1.6 million, amortized over 50 years. This meant each unit could be built at a cost of \$8450. Average “economic rent”, which refers to the amount of rent required to make the mortgage payments and pay for other costs if the project were not subsidized was estimated at \$68 per month. In order to bring down the rent paid by tenants to \$45 (a compromise figure between the original \$25 that was talked about and the \$70 that some were suggesting), a monthly subsidy averaging \$23 would be applied to each unit.⁹⁰ The federal government’s annual share of the operating subsidy would be about \$46,000, with the Province and the City’s share each being about \$7728 annually. But the City’s share of the operating subsidy would be more than offset by the \$30,000 the City would collect in taxes on the property every year.⁹¹ Thus, the City stood to make money on the Little Mountain project.

In terms of physical aspects, the 1952 redesign essentially describes the housing project that was ultimately built at Little Mountain. Presumably in order to bring down costs, the total number of units was reduced to 224, rather than the 200 figure that previously represented just the first phase of the project.⁹² Certain landscaping features and a community centre were also cut out of the plans at this stage.⁹³ The plan also called for a switch from masonry to frame and stucco, as had been called for by

⁸⁶ *Vancouver Sun*, “Socreds Get ‘Hurry’ Call from VHA” (September 26, 1952), p. 25.

⁸⁷ *Vancouver Sun*, “Stalling on Housing Plan Annoys Council” (September 5, 1952), p. 3.

⁸⁸ *Vancouver Sun*, “Victoria Approves Low-Rent Housing” (November 4, 1952), p. 19.

⁸⁹ *Province*, “Council to Decide Housing” (November 14, 1952), p. 14.

⁹⁰ Economic rent was based on a number of costs including maintenance, insurance, management, taxes, and capital costs. Capital costs were amortized over 50 years at a rate of 4%. Thus, through its contribution toward operating costs, the City of Vancouver did in fact contribute toward the capital costs.

⁹¹ *Province*, “Council to Decide Housing” (November 14, 1952), p. 14.

⁹² *Province*, “Victoria Approves Low-Rent Housing” (November 4, 1952), p. 19.

⁹³ Fromson et al., *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

CMHC officials.⁹⁴ These cost-saving changes resulted in a “strictly utilitarian project with no ‘frills’ of any kind.”⁹⁵ The design of the buildings was to “follow a pattern similar to that of the units constructed on West Broadway and West 4th Avenue under the Housing Enterprise Scheme.”⁹⁶ This is a reference to veterans’ housing built in 1946—Vancouver’s first effort at government-supplied rental apartments, although technically not public housing because the rents were not subsidized.⁹⁷ The design used at both the veterans’ housing and Little Mountain was the creation of architectural firm Sharp and Thompson, Berwick, Pratt. According to Wade (1994), the design was a “simplified and modernized” version of designs used by the British “Garden City, London County Council, and ‘homes for heroes’ designers between 1900 and 1930.”⁹⁸ The design was also used at a housing project in New Westminster that stood at the corner of Eighth Avenue and McBride. The New Westminster housing project and the veterans’ housing on Broadway and Fourth Avenue were demolished and redeveloped several years ago. Thus, up until the Little Mountain Housing Project was demolished earlier this year, Little Mountain was the last local example of this design import from Britain whose lineage can be traced back to the British Garden City movement.

With designs for Little Mountain firming up and with all three levels of government once again on side, local opposition to the housing project fired up starting in November 1952. One week after the provincial government announced its support for the project, Vancouver real estate leader J.S. Wood attacked the plan in the press for representing “socialized, subsidized housing.”⁹⁹ The day after this negative article appeared in the *Vancouver Sun*, a contentious meeting of the Building and Town Planning Committee was held. At the meeting “a string of delegations assailed the committee with strong arguments for and against the scheme.”¹⁰⁰ Opposition came from the Associated Property Owners, Vancouver Real Estate Board and the Vancouver Building Contractors’ Association. The groups that supported it included the Vancouver Labor Council, Vancouver Housing Association, Community Planning Association, and the Building Trades Council. The committee narrowly voted to support the project, with Aldermen Miller switching his position once again, this time to oppose the project.¹⁰¹ Two

⁹⁴ Minutes of Building & Town Planning Committee, November 13, 1952, CVA 93-f-7 file 10.

⁹⁵ Fromson et al., *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁹⁶ Minutes of Building & Town Planning Committee, November 13, 1952, CVA 93-f-7 file 10

⁹⁷ Wade, *Op. cit.*, p 128.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁹⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, “Low-Rental Housing Plan Under Attack” (November 12, 1952), p. 25.

¹⁰⁰ *Province*, “Council to Decide Housing” (November 14, 1952), p. 14.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

days after the Committee vote, yet another *Vancouver Sun* editorial criticized the Little Mountain plan. Headlined “An Unsound Scheme”, the editorial criticized the project because at \$45 per month the project would not help the neediest people in the city.¹⁰²

But the November 13, 1952 vote of the Building and Town Planning Committee was not the final vote on the project. The matter appears to have gone back and forth between the Committee and City Council over the next several months, during which time the Vancouver Real Estate Board and the Board of Trade continued to lobby against the Little Mountain project.¹⁰³ But there was also a campaign in support of the project. P.R.U. Stratton of the Vancouver Housing Association responded to the criticism that Little Mountain would not help the poorest groups. He argued that the rents may average \$40 per month and that this would benefit people because rents at that level in the private market were for homes that were in “degrading conditions.”¹⁰⁴ The Civic Reform Association and the BC chapter of the Congress of Canadian Women sent letters to Vancouver City Hall in support of the Little Mountain project.¹⁰⁵ Labour groups also continued to back the project.¹⁰⁶ Even Norman MacKenzie, the President of UBC, wrote a letter to the *Vancouver News-Herald* in support of the Little Mountain Housing Project:

The conditions under which too many of our people are living are a bad social investment, from the point of view of producing useful citizens in the future, and from the point of view of maintaining good relationships among the different sections of our society...[The Little Mountain Housing Project would] illustrate the fact that the public at large is concerned for the housing welfare of some of those citizens who are at present unable to live in conditions of minimum adequacy.¹⁰⁷

Meanwhile, details of the Little Mountain project continued to be ironed out in the early part of 1953. In February 1953 a closed door meeting was held between CMHC officials and Vancouver aldermen to discuss a confidential report of the City’s Technical Planning Board.¹⁰⁸ The report outlined in great detail the design specifications of the buildings and the interiors of the units. The report specified there were to be 176 apartment units and 48 rowhouse units. Of the 176 apartment units, 40 were to be one-bedroom units, 92 were to be two-bedroom units, and 44 were to be three-bedroom units. All the

¹⁰² *Vancouver Sun*, “An Unsound Scheme” (November 15, 1952), p. 4.

¹⁰³ *Vancouver Sun*, “Council, CMHC Officials Meet on Housing Plan” (February 10, 1953), p. 15.

¹⁰⁴ *Vancouver Sun*, “Ass’n Defends Housing Scheme” (November 21, 1952), p. 17.

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Civic Reform Association to Vancouver City Hall dated November 21, 1952, CVA 20-A-4 file 5; Letter from Mrs. Hilda Scott, President of the Congress of Canadian Women – BC Provincial Council to Mr. Ronald Thompson, J.P. City Clerk, City of Vancouver dated November 26, 1952, CVA 20-A-4 file 5

¹⁰⁶ *Vancouver Sun*, “Labor Group Presses for Housing Plans” (February 4, 1953), p. 19.

¹⁰⁷ *Vancouver News-Herald*, “Should We Go Ahead With This Project?” (May 15, 1953), p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ *Vancouver Sun*, “Council, CMHC Officials Meet on Housing Plan” (February 10, 1953), p. 15.

rowhouses were to be three-bedroom units (thus, there were to be a total of 92 three-bedroom units, including 48 rowhouse units and 44 apartment units). The most interesting part of the report is that the rowhouses were not going to include stoves and refrigerators. The report noted that for the rowhouses, “Although space for a refrigerator and stove is allowed in the kitchens, these fittings will be provided by tenants.” The report concluded with a recommendation that plans be revised to include these appliances in the rowhouses, a move that would increase the economic rents on these units.¹⁰⁹

On February 16, 1953, despite opposition from Aldermen Bill Orr and Jack Cornett, Vancouver City Council once again voted to support the Little Mountain project. Tenders for construction would be put out the following month.¹¹⁰ Once again the tenders came in over budget, but not by as much as in 1951. On May 15, 1953 the Building and Town Planning Committee learned from Mr. Pickersgill of the CMHC that, of the five tenders that were received, the one from the construction firm of Pyke & White was in the amount of \$1,606,836.¹¹¹ Allowing an extra 5% for contingency, this would put the project about \$49,000 over budget.¹¹² The BC Deputy Finance Minister told the Committee that the provincial government was willing to meet its share of the increased costs. But the increased construction cost would mean a slight increase in the economic rents from an average of \$66.88 to \$69.40. This would require either higher rents paid by tenants or greater operating subsidies. The proportion of the rent that would be subsidized versus that that would be paid by tenants seems to have been a topic of discussion and a detailed breakdown of rent calculations was presented to the Committee by Mr. Pickersgill. The contentious meeting heard from many people, including those in opposition and support of the project. One opponent of the housing project suggested that all tenants and taxpayers in the City of Vancouver should receive government subsidies.¹¹³ After “two hours of wrangling”¹¹⁴ the Committee voted to approve the project and recommended that CMHC “be requested to proceed to take the next step necessary in the construction of the Little Mountain Housing Project.”¹¹⁵

But the controversy continued through the rest of May 1953 because City Council still had to vote on it. It was during this time when the chairman of the Technical Planning Board wrote a letter to City Council in response to allegations that the proposed housing units at Little Mountain were of a

¹⁰⁹ *Report of the Technical Planning Board to the Building and Town Planning Committee Re Little Mountain Rental Project*, February 6, 1953, CVA 124-A-7 file 4.

¹¹⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, “Bids in March on Housing Project” (February 17, 1953), p. 8.

¹¹¹ Minutes of the Building and Town Planning Committee Special Meeting, May 15, 1953, CVA 93-f-7 file 10.

¹¹² *Vancouver News-Herald*, “Should We Go Ahead With This Project?” (May 15, 1953), p. 4.

¹¹³ Minutes of the Building and Town Planning Committee Special Meeting, May 15, 1953, CVA 93-f-7 file 10.

¹¹⁴ *Vancouver Sun*, “Little Mountain Housing Approved” (May 15, 1953), p. 1.

¹¹⁵ Minutes of the Building and Town Planning Committee Special Meeting, May 15, 1953, CVA 93-f-7 file 10.

“luxury type.” According to the letter, “Hardwood floors, refrigeration, electric ranges and aluminum weather stripping were mentioned as examples of luxuries.”¹¹⁶ Such controversy was common with early public housing development generally.¹¹⁷ Thus, public housing was intentionally designed to be minimalist to prevent allegations that it was too luxurious and to prevent it from competing with the private sector.¹¹⁸ In his letter, the chairman of the Technical Planning Board refuted the claims that Little Mountain would be too luxurious by pointing out that the housing was not being built for “speculation purposes” and would have to be maintained for the “fifty (50) year or more life” of the buildings. He also countered that refrigeration and electric ranges were standard in apartment buildings. Although he did agree that the aluminum weather stripping may have been unnecessary:

The plans show a fairly expensive type of weather stripping, which we do not feel is absolutely necessary, in view of our mild climate. The local Central Mortgage and Housing officials inform us that they have already pointed this matter out to the officials in Ottawa, but that so far the Ottawa officials have considered the weather stripping as shown to be necessary.¹¹⁹

It seems that the issue of weather stripping around windows had been simmering for some time. In January 1951, the Vancouver Millwork Manufacturers’ Association sent out a letter to all three levels of government and the architects involved in the first set of Little Mountain plans taking issue with the use of metal window frames. The millworkers called for the use of wood as “lumber is the leading industry of British Columbia and results in the employment of thousands of persons.”¹²⁰ Apparently, when it was redesigned in 1952, the architects did switch to wood, only to switch it again. Another letter written in November 1953 after construction had already started states that “aluminum sash were substituted for the wooden window frames originally called for in the specifications.” The use of aluminum windows increased construction costs by \$9144, although this overrun was expected to reduce maintenance costs over the life of the housing project.¹²¹ Further inquiry determined that the aluminum windows that resulted in the cost over-run were in fact wood sashes covered with metal stripping on the

¹¹⁶ Letter from G. Sutton Brown, Chairman of Technical Planning Board to Vancouver City Council dated May 19, 1953, CVA 93-f-7 file 10.

¹¹⁷ Bacher, *Op. cit.*; Bauman, *Op. cit.*; Rose, 1958, *Op. cit.*

¹¹⁸ Bauman, *Op. cit.*

¹¹⁹ Letter from G. Sutton Brown, Chairman of Technical Planning Board to Vancouver City Council dated May 19, 1953, CVA 93-f-7 file 10.

¹²⁰ Letter from the Mainland Millwork Institute and the Vancouver Millwork Manufacturers’ Association to the Federal Government, Provincial Government, City of Vancouver, CMHC, Sharp and Thompson, Architects, Davies and McNab, Architects, Semmens and Simpson, Architects dated January 26, 1951, CVA 124-A-7 file 4.

¹²¹ Letter from J.E. Brown, Housing Commissioner to Mr. R. Thompson, City Clerk, City of Vancouver dated November 19, 1953, CVA 93-f-7 file 10.

outside.¹²² Perhaps this was done to satisfy both the CMHC officials who wanted metal and the local millworkers who wanted wood. Of all the areas where costs went over budget, the windows were the largest category of cost over-runs and had drawn the attention of the City's legal counsel.¹²³ Although it would be unwise to make firm conclusions based on such limited evidence, perhaps the cost over-runs for windows were allowed to occur in order to maintain the support of the labour unions for what was a very controversial project. There is evidence of a struggle between the opponents and supporters of the Little Mountain project over which side labour groups would support. In 1952 the Associated Property Owners, who were opponents of the plan, appealed to the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council "to reverse its stand in favor of the project." But labour continued to support the Little Mountain project.¹²⁴ Perhaps the ability to bloat the construction bill for the windows at Little Mountain had helped to keep labour on side.

The crucial, although as it would turn out not the final, City Council vote on the Little Mountain project happened on May 25, 1953. Alderman Bill Orr submitted a three-page brief to City Council outlining his opposition to the proposed Little Mountain project. He claimed that rents may be as low as \$16 per month, which would require a much larger operating subsidy from the City. He also took issue with the fact that the City would be liable for the subsidy for 50 years. He cited how opponents of public housing had successfully defeated such projects in Edmonton, Calgary, Seattle, and Los Angeles. Orr felt that the whole concept of public housing gave preferential treatment to "a privileged few." He cautioned that Little Mountain would set a dangerous precedent that could lead to "hundreds—if not thousands more of this type of housing." He called for the delay of the Little Mountain project until after a city-wide plebiscite could be held on the issue.¹²⁵ When this failed, Orr stormed out of City Hall in an attempt to deny Council its quorum and block approval of the housing project. "It was the first time in the city's 67-year history that such action had been taken."¹²⁶ The *Vancouver Sun* described the raucous council meeting:

The young University of BC graduate [Alderman Bill Orr], who is a Progressive Conservative provincial candidate in Point Grey, took a sharp tongue-lashing from Acting Mayor Gervin when he threatened his walkout.

"Take your seat," Gervin told him sternly. "You are not in a position to leave. I seriously warn you not to do it. Take your seat and meet your obligations as an alderman."

"This is so important to me that I will have to leave," Orr replied when he got no support for a delaying move that would have stalled the housing project until after a December plebiscite. "I'm doing it because

¹²² Letter from D.A. Matheson, Building Inspector and G. Sutton Brown, Director of Planning to Mr. R.K. Baker, Corporation Counsel, Vancouver City Hall dated November 26, 1953, CVA 93-f-7 file 10.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ *Vancouver Sun*, "Labor Body Seeks to Speed Up City Housing Scheme" (July 22, 1953), p. 9.

¹²⁵ Letter from Alderman Orr to Vancouver City Council dated May 26, 1953, CVA 505-A-1 file 49.

¹²⁶ *Vancouver Sun*, "Ald. Orr Walks Out in Housing Battle" (May 26, 1953), p. 2.

of my oath of office to serve all of the people equally. This isn't equal treatment. It penalizes 75,000 homeowners and gives special benefits to some."

As Gervin continued to warn him, Orr picked up his papers and walked out.

City officials dived for city statute books to determine the position, found no solution.

It requires five aldermen present to pass legislation. With only four present, the meeting couldn't continue.

Then followed the 10-minute huddle in the mayor's private office that resulted in Orr retracing his steps. In a quavering voice he told the acting mayor:

"I come back, sir, out of respect for you."

That cleared the way for the vote that saw Alderman Syd Bowman join with Orr in opposing the scheme and Aldermen Earle Adams, Anna Sprott and Gervin endorse it.¹²⁷

Orr later regretted his decision to return to the Council chamber, remarking, "It was a mistake to return. I should have resigned and sought re-election on this issue."¹²⁸ He later claimed that the only alderman who truly supported it was Alderman Sprott and the others who voted for it did so despite the fact that it "was not what they wanted."¹²⁹

The fight against the Little Mountain project continued even after City Council gave final approval. Two days later, a group of business people and private landlords announced that they would take legal action against the City to prevent the housing project from going ahead. Harold Itter of the Associated Property Owners claimed the 50-year pact with senior levels of government violated the city's charter. He said opponents would seek a court injunction to stop construction.¹³⁰ Opponents also vowed to increase the political pressure on City Aldermen in an attempt to force them to reconsider the project. Itter claimed the plan represented "socialized legislation" that would invite political patronage because the housing authority would be appointed by the provincial government and would get to select the tenants. Another opponent claimed Little Mountain threatened "the whole system of free enterprise."¹³¹ A major point of contention continued to be the fact that the housing project would not benefit the poorest groups.¹³² In June 1953, the *Province* published two editorials attacking this aspect of the Little Mountain project. According to one editorial "John Jones, through his taxes, Federal, provincial and municipal, will be meeting part of Jim Smith's rent, though Jim Smith's circumstances may be equal to or better than

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, "Fight Set For Little Mountain" (May 28, 1953), p. 23.

¹³⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, "Landlords Plan Suit on Housing" (May 27, 1953), p. 25.

¹³¹ *Vancouver Sun*, "Fight Set For Little Mountain" (May 28, 1953), p. 23.

¹³² *Vancouver Sun*, "Housing Subsidy to Well-To-Do Hit" (June 25, 1953), p. 18.

those of John Jones.”¹³³ Another editorial criticized the elaborate screening process of Little Mountain tenants, which in addition to income would consider factors such as “housekeeping standards, temperance, morality, parental control of children.”¹³⁴ Given that prospective tenants would be so rigorously scrutinized, the *Province* predicted that the Little Mountain Housing Project would become “the most select and exclusive community in Greater Vancouver.”¹³⁵ Very similar controversy swirled around Toronto’s Regent Park in its early days.¹³⁶ On June 15, 1953 Vancouver City Council voted on the matter for a final time as a precaution in order to thwart any threat of a court injunction on the grounds that the May 25 vote had not been properly constituted due to the walk-out of Alderman Orr. The project was successfully approved yet again.¹³⁷ Public housing would finally become a reality in Vancouver.

4.3 BC’S FIRST PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECT IS BORN

By the end of July 1953 construction of the Little Mountain Housing Project finally started. Construction of the entire project was expected to take ten months and would employ a total of 400 workers, including 200 carpenters.¹³⁸ One Little Mountain tenant who had lived in the housing project for 30 years until it was redeveloped recalled the construction of the housing project when she was a child:

There was just, frames was going up, like there was nothing, no trees...I remember coming to see it as kids, running through the frames.

In August 1953, BC’s first housing authority, the Vancouver Housing Authority was appointed to administer the new housing project. It was chaired by Stanley E. Clarke, mortgage manager from Sun Life Assurance Company and its other members included Hugh H. Adair (accountant), Oscar Erickson (father of Arthur Erickson who would become a world-renowned architect), Laura Selman (from the Community Chest), and P.R.U. Stratton (who had been lobbying for public housing since the 1930s and who, in the 1970s, would still be on the board of the BC Housing Management Commission, as it was later called).¹³⁹ By the end of 1953, construction costs had gone over budget by over \$14,000 due to the windows, the need to build an office for the Vancouver Housing Authority in one of the Little Mountain

¹³³ *Province*, “John Jones’ Taxes, Jim Smith’s Rent” (June 18, 1953), p. 6.

¹³⁴ *Province*, “Eligible But Unacceptable” (June 12, 1953), p. 6.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Rose, 1958, *Op. cit.*

¹³⁷ *Vancouver Sun*, “Housing Plan Again Approved” (June 16, 1953), p. 3.

¹³⁸ *Vancouver Sun*, “Bulldozers Opening Up Housing Site” (July 29, 1953), p. 6.

¹³⁹ *Province*, “4 To Head Housing Project” (August 14, 1953), p. 2.; *Citizens United* (July 1974), p. 3, CVA 44-C-1 file 10.

basements and various other minor things.¹⁴⁰ However when including other capital costs such as the installation of city services and legal and engineering fees, the entire capital costs of the project appear to not have gone over the total budget of \$1,989,300.¹⁴¹

With construction still ongoing in part of the housing project, on April 1, 1954 the first 16 families moved into their brand new homes at Little Mountain. At the opening ceremony, keys were handed over to the very first Little Mountain tenants—Mr. and Mrs. Clifford R. Coulthard and their 16-month-old daughter, Marlene. The family is shown in the photograph in Figure 4.5. The family’s four-year old son Garnet was unable to attend because he was sick with measles. P.R.U. Stratton, by now a member of the Vancouver Housing Authority, was also on hand for the opening ceremony.¹⁴² Stratton had been pushing for public housing in Vancouver since the late 1930s so this must have been an especially important day for him. “Tenants found their one, two and three-bedroom suites still smelling of fresh paint, and most of the families cried with delight when they spotted gleaming electric ranges and refrigerators.”¹⁴³ By opening day, over 1200 applications had been received for the 224 units, which underscores the need for housing at the time and the desirability of the Little Mountain units. New applications would continue to be accepted until construction was expected to be complete by November 1954, with 15 to 20 families expected to move in every week until that time.¹⁴⁴ Because tenants were highly screened, in addition to the benefit of affordable high quality housing, it was considered an honour to one’s character to live at Little Mountain. As Alderman Bowman remarked on opening day, “Those who are finally selected can also feel that they are considered by the Vancouver Housing Authority to be good, solid citizens.”¹⁴⁵

The initial Little Mountain families were selected based on an “elaborate points system”¹⁴⁶ that, in addition to income, considered such factors as the quality of their present living conditions, present security of tenure, crowding, present rents, credit worthiness, housekeeping and other factors. Depending on family size, minimum family monthly incomes were set at between \$115 and \$155. Maximum income was between \$290 and \$325 per month, depending on family size.¹⁴⁷ Based on figures offered by Michael

¹⁴⁰ Letter from J.E. Brown, Housing Commissioner to Mr. R. Thompson, City Clerk, City of Vancouver dated November 19, 1953, CVA 93-f-7 file 10.

¹⁴¹ Vancouver Director of Finance, Review of Costs – Little Mountain Project, December 15, 1953, CVA 93-f-7 file 10.

¹⁴² *Vancouver Sun*, “Little Mountain Project Called Sample of Future” (April 2, 1954), p. 3.

¹⁴³ *Vancouver Sun*, “16 Happy Families Move in at Little Mountain Project” (April 1, 1954), p. 26.

¹⁴⁴ *Vancouver Sun*, “Little Mountain Project Called Sample of Future” (April 2, 1954), p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ *Province*, “Low Rental Tenants Move In” (April 2, 1954), p. 25.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Michael Wheeler, *Evaluating the Need for Low-Rental Housing: A Review of Conditions Among Family Applications for the Little Mountain Low-Rental Housing Project, Vancouver, and Consideration of Criteria for Future Housing Projects* (Unpublished master’s thesis, School of Social Work, University of British Columbia, 1955).

Figure 4.5 Opening Day of the Little Mountain Housing Project, April 1, 1954



Photo credit: George Diack/Vancouver Sun, Reprinted with permission courtesy the Vancouver Sun. Originally appeared in *Vancouver Sun*, “Little Mountain Project Called Sample of Future” (April 2, 1954), p. 3.

“First family to move into new low rental housing development at Little Mountain had keys turned over to them Thursday by Alderman Syd Bowman. They are Mr. and Mrs. Clifford R. Coulthard. Little daughter Marlene, 16 months, had distinction of accepting keys from alderman.” So reads the original caption to this photograph. Almost one year earlier Ald. Bowman voted against the Little Mountain Housing Project during the stormy City Council meeting when his colleague Ald. Orr walked out of the Council chamber. But by its opening day, Ald. Bowman showed up to cheer on Little Mountain and what it represented. He remarked that day, “If it is successful, it is the answer to one of our greatest problems—how to provide adequate homes within the reach of incomes.”

Wheeler in his analysis of the over 1700 applications for Little Mountain completed in 1954, the largest categories of rejection were high income (42%), lack of residence (21%) (apparently, homeless families were not accepted) and poor housekeeping (20%).¹⁴⁸ Low-income senior citizens on pensions were allowed to live in the Little Mountain Housing Project from the beginning as an entire block of apartment buildings (110, 120, 140, 150, 160 Grouse Walk, commonly referred to as ‘Pensioners’ Row’) was dedicated to them. Although Little Mountain was noted for being primarily a family project with a large number of children, from the beginning it was meant to integrate a variety of households including families and seniors. This was considered to be a somewhat innovative approach to public housing in North America at the time.¹⁴⁹ In the first few years welfare recipients were barred from living there until

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Fromson et al., *Op. cit.*, p. 44.

later in the 1950s after the City agreed to increase its social allowance for rentals.¹⁵⁰ In terms of its racial mix, Little Mountain started off almost entirely populated by white people, although there was a presence of Chinese residents since the housing project's earliest days. The project's earliest residents were drawn from all over the City of Vancouver, although there was a "total absence of people from the Strathcona area."¹⁵¹ The lack of residents from Strathcona came as a shock in 1959 to Fromson et al. of the UBC School of Social Work as Strathcona was known as an area that had very poor quality housing and was already identified as a candidate for slum clearance. It is possible that the relatively high rents at Little Mountain, which averaged \$45, were unaffordable to the low-income residents of Strathcona or that Strathcona residents liked living in their neighbourhood.¹⁵²

From the beginning, the Little Mountain Housing Project was a mixed-income community. Table 4.1 shows the income distribution of the first Little Mountain tenants. This mixed-income approach underpinned the progressive rent-scale in place at Little Mountain in the 1950s. The progressive rent scale developed by Humphrey Carver and Allison Hopwood for Toronto's Regent Park was "basically used" at Little Mountain.¹⁵³ According to this system, rents were based on income levels and family size with the general principle that rents should be about 20% of family income. At Little Mountain, the average rent for the entire project had to be \$45 in order for the project to not require additional operating subsidies from governments. But depending on income and family size, rents ranged from \$20 to \$66, with an extra surcharge for families whose incomes increased above the entrance maximum while living at Little Mountain. Additional service charges for utilities also ranged from \$2 to \$13 depending on income. Under this approach, the higher income families at Little Mountain were to some extent subsidizing the lower income families by helping to prevent average rent from dipping below \$45, which would require additional funding from taxpayers.¹⁵⁴ The "Canadian formula", as Fromson et al. termed the rent scale in place at Little Mountain, was progressive, not only because rents increased with income, but also because the income mix it created represented progress in public housing policy:

In view of the proportionate rent scale and certain other related considerations, income differences are more important in a project such as Little Mountain than they would be in the kind of slum-clearance housing which is most characteristic in Britain in its earlier stages of public housing, and projects in public housing in the United States before the War. A very low income ceiling (eg. \$1200 per year in some early US examples) confines the project inevitably to marginal or virtually social

¹⁵⁰ Wade, Op. cit.

¹⁵¹ Fromson et al., Op. cit., p. 45.

¹⁵² Fromson et al., Op. cit.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 111.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

assistance groups, and indeed amounts (as wiser observation has perceived) to a form of segregation. Coming later in the day, Canadian public housing has avoided this common mistake; and such projects as have been built so far (there are still very few besides the Toronto pioneer, Regent Park) are proceeding with a moderately wide income range.¹⁵⁵

With two studies on the Little Mountain Housing Project in the 1950s¹⁵⁶, it seems the UBC School of Social Work took a particular interest in Little Mountain. No doubt this interest was due to the fact that Dr. Leonard Marsh was the Director of Research of the UBC Social Work department at the time. As noted earlier, Marsh was a prominent advocate for public housing who had worked at the federal level and helped to write the eminent Curtis Report. The 1959 Little Mountain study by Fromson et al. notes that “Dr. Marsh took more than usual part in the direction of the study and preparation of the report.”¹⁵⁷ Marsh’s keen interest in Little Mountain likely stems from the fact that he understood that Little Mountain was a landmark achievement of the Canadian housing movement that Marsh himself had been a leader of, both in Vancouver and Ottawa. The photograph of some of the Little Mountain children in the 1950s shown in Figure 4.6 appeared in the study by Fromson et al.

Although the Little Mountain creation story about the generous donation of land from a war veteran that I first heard from a Little Mountain tenant in 2007 proved to be incorrect, the truth about the founding of BC’s first public housing project does not disappoint. Little Mountain was the outcome of at least a decade and a half of political activism that brought together labour groups, academics, womens’ groups and veterans. It would not have become a reality but for the persistence of people like P.R.U Stratton and Alderman Archie Proctor who refused to let the dream of public housing in Vancouver die even when the project was stymied by high construction costs, the Korean War,

Table 4.1 Income Mix at the Little Mountain Housing Project, December 1, 1954

Monthly Family Income*	% of Little Mountain households
\$100-\$149	13.4
\$150-\$199	14.3
\$200-\$249	33.9
\$250-\$300	29.5
Over \$300	8.9

*Monthly family income includes income from all sources for all family members, including family allowances. Income information was collected on tenant application forms so it reflects income before families moved to Little Mountain. However, incomes likely would not have changed substantially within the first few months of occupancy. Median income was \$240 per month. Data based on a 50% sampling of Little Mountain households (112 sampled out of total of 224).

Source: Michael Wheeler, *Evaluating the Need for Low-Rental Housing: A Review of Conditions Among Family Applications for the Little Mountain Low-Rental Housing Project, Vancouver, and Consideration of Criteria for Future Housing Projects* (Unpublished master’s thesis, School of Social Work, University of British Columbia, 1955).

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.; Wheeler, Op. cit.

¹⁵⁷ Fromson et al., Op. cit., p. 25.

reluctant partners at the federal and provincial levels, and the vociferous opposition of the real estate industry in Vancouver. The early political controversy around the Little Mountain “pilot project”¹⁵⁸ had little to do with the specifics of the place and more to do with the very concept of public housing. When Vancouver City Council debated about Little Mountain in the early 1950s, it was not just a debate about a specific housing project, it was about whether Vancouver wanted public housing at all. Jill Wade has acknowledged the historical importance of Little Mountain:

Little Mountain is a benchmark in the history of housing in Vancouver. It was the first in a succession of social housing complexes that by the 1970s and 1980s included the cooperatives built under a 1973 amendment to the NHA. Furthermore, housing activism itself was a permanent phenomenon in Vancouver by 1950. The drive that produced Little Mountain became the movement that created other projects in later years.¹⁵⁹

Figure 4.6 Children of the Little Mountain Housing Project, 195-



Photo credit: Unidentified photographer; Retrieved from Etta Elaine Fromson et al., *The Little Mountain Low-Rental Housing Project: A Survey of its Welfare Aspects (Vancouver 1955-1958)* (Unpublished master's thesis, School of Social Work, University of British Columbia, 1959), p. 53.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁵⁹ Wade, Op. cit., p. 161.

As one of the first housing projects built under Canada's national public housing program, there is even a strong argument to be made that the Little Mountain Housing Project is of national significance. In 1950 the *Vancouver Sun* reported that Little Mountain was "believed to be the first subsidized rental scheme proposed by a city under the housing legislation introduced in Ottawa last fall."¹⁶⁰ In fact, the first public housing project developed under the Section 35 federal-provincial partnership introduced in 1949 was the Estbary Estates project in St. John's, Newfoundland. But this Newfoundland project was extremely minimalist as it did not even include heat or hot water. According to Bacher, "The only other project mentioned in CMHC's first annual report for the fiscal year 1950 was located in Vancouver."¹⁶¹ He was referring to Little Mountain, which appears to be the second public housing project initiated under Canada's national public housing program. Regent Park in Toronto, widely recognized as Canada's first public housing project, is excluded because it was started before the 1949 amendment and was carried out with minimal federal or provincial involvement. Thus, Little Mountain was perhaps the first public housing project in Canada that fulfilled the goals set out in the Curtis Report because the majority of the financial burden was shouldered by the federal government (unlike Toronto's Regent Park) and it was built with all the modern comforts of central heating, hot water, refrigerators and stoves (unlike Newfoundland's Estbary Estates). As one of the progenitors of Canadian public housing, surely Leonard Marsh had this in mind when he "took more than usual part"¹⁶² in his graduate students' research at Little Mountain when he was Director of Research at the UBC School of Social Work.

Although the role of the federal government was enormously important in the development of the Little Mountain Housing Project, the importance of the provincial government should not be discounted. If the government of BC had responded to the 1949 amendment to the NHA with inaction or indifference as did Quebec or if BC had passed all of its financial burden for public housing onto the municipal level as did Alberta, Manitoba and Nova Scotia¹⁶³, the Little Mountain Housing Project likely would not have been created when it was and may never have been achieved. And of course the story of the birth of the Little Mountain Housing Project demonstrates the importance of local initiative for making public housing projects a reality.¹⁶⁴ Thus, the birth of the Little Mountain Housing Project is a testament to what can be accomplished when all three levels of government work together and share in the costs of developing what is needed by citizens. As will be shown in the chapter on redevelopment, the death of the Little Mountain Housing Project is very much a story about what goes wrong when the tripartite partnership between the federal, provincial and city governments that Little Mountain embodied breaks down.

¹⁶⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, "Civic Housing Plan Okayed by Council" (May 25, 1950), p. 19.

¹⁶¹ Bacher, Op. cit., p. 185.

¹⁶² Fromson et al., Op. cit., p. 25.

¹⁶³ Bacher, Op. cit.; Rose, 1958, Op. cit.

¹⁶⁴ Rose, 1980, Op. cit., p. 4.

5. 'THE LIFE': LITTLE MOUNTAIN HOUSING PROJECT, 1954-2007

This chapter strives to describe the Little Mountain Housing Project throughout its 50-plus years of existence. But this is not a comprehensive history of the housing project. I simply do not have the necessary information or knowledge for such an undertaking. If that were the goal, I would have had to interview tenants from Little Mountain's distant past in addition to the tenants I interviewed who were living there at the time of redevelopment. Thus, the reader must understand that this is only a very partial account of the Little Mountain Housing Project through the years. A full telling of the history would present events in chronological order and attempt to give equal emphasis to each time period. In this chapter, the events at Little Mountain are not presented in chronological order. Rather, I move back and forth in time as I discuss various aspects of the housing project through the years. The last 10 years, which I consider to be the contemporary period, receive approximately equal attention as I give to the first 40 years. The reason for privileging contemporary events is because this thesis is, first and foremost, about evaluating the provincial government's policy of redevelopment. What Little Mountain was like during the contemporary period is the baseline against which the changes that redevelopment will bring may be compared.

The historic evidence serves several other purposes. As noted in the previous chapter, Little Mountain has been severely under-researched, with no academic studies of it after the 1950s. The historic evidence presented in this chapter helps to begin to partially redress this situation. The historic evidence also tells us something about the place meaning of Little Mountain and helps to preserve the memory of this historically significant place that has been obliterated from Vancouver's landscape. In addition, the historic evidence serves to establish the Little Mountain tenants' longstanding connection and investment in the housing project and the larger neighbourhood. This helps to reinforce the tenants' claim to the place and the neighbourhood, which is now being threatened by redevelopment and relocation.

The provincial government has, in large part, justified redevelopment of Little Mountain on the basis that income-mixing will create a more integrated community. Housing Minister Rich Coleman said, "We want to replace it with a new modern facility, but it just won't be social housing. It's very important to integrate people."¹ Also, BC Housing has said that redevelopment of Little Mountain will create a "balanced mixed-income community"² (my emphasis added). The provincial government's social housing policy document says that redevelopment will create "mixed-income communities with subsidized housing more fully integrated into larger communities."³ With statements like these, the provincial government seems to have bought into the widespread belief that mixed-income communities

¹ Rich Coleman quoted in Sandra Thomas, "Coleman Says Little Mountain Redevelopment All Good", *Vancouver Courier* (March 30, 2007), p. 19.

² BC Housing, "Guiding Principles for Redevelopment", *A New Plan for Little Mountain* (2007, website accessed October 15, 2007 from www.littlemountain.ca)

³ Government of BC, *Housing Matters BC: A Housing Strategy for British Columbia* (2007, accessed online November 6, 2007 from www.bchousing.org), p. 4.

are better than low-income communities. According to much of the academic literature, spatial concentrations of low-income people harm low-income people by denying them social contacts with middle class people. In the near total absence of middle class people, a dysfunctional culture of poverty characterized by permanent unemployment, single-parent households and crime perpetuates itself over multiple generations. But this can be reversed by creating mixed-income communities. According to this view, public housing projects are believed to be deficient in social capital but by injecting middle class households into these communities this deficiency may be redressed. This is a widespread belief that has reached almost the level of common sense. Thus, the provincial government has felt it unnecessary to provide any evidence to substantiate its position that Little Mountain was unbalanced, that the tenants needed to be integrated, or that the tenants suffered from a lack of social capital. As a public housing project, these things are just seen to be self-evident. An anti-public housing ideology has taken hold that views traditional postwar public housing as a flawed model irrespective of contextual factors in individual housing projects. This chapter provides highly contextual evidence from Little Mountain that challenges these theories and policies. Little Mountain, in contrast to the stereotype of the ‘troubled housing project’, was a remarkably successful example of public housing that offered residents a supportive, crime-free, and beautiful living environment.

This chapter is divided into six major sections, in addition to several smaller subsections. The first section discusses the social composition of the housing project, both in the past and in more recent times. This section devotes particular attention to the issue of class. In many other contexts, there has been a widely observed trend of a downgrading of the class composition of public housing as it has increasingly become home to the very poorest groups in society. Thus, public housing projects are believed to be key sites of concentrated poverty. This chapter presents evidence that shows that, although some downgrading of the class make-up of Little Mountain did occur since the time it was first developed, the housing project managed to hold on to a significant minority of middle class households throughout its existence.

The next three sections deal in turn with social capital, social organization, and social control both in the contemporary period and in the past. As already explained, public housing projects are believed to be deficient in social capital, which includes its sub-varieties social organization and social control. This chapter presents a significant amount of evidence drawn both from interviews and a variety of other sources that shows that Little Mountain, throughout the years, was remarkably rich in social capital, social organization, and social control. The high level of social capital helped tenants to cope with the daily challenges of life. Social organization was manifested in both tenants’ involvement in a broad tenants’ movement and their involvement in neighbourhood organizations. This led to improved living conditions in the housing project and also shaped the development of the surrounding neighbourhood. The social control demonstrated by the tenants created a safe, crime-free living environment in the housing project. In contrast to much of the academic literature on public housing, it seems that Little

Mountain did indeed have a poverty culture, but this was a highly *functional* poverty culture. One of the most prominent and longstanding aspects of Little Mountain's poverty culture was the collective supervision of children, which is a form of social capital that was enabled by social control.

The fifth section addresses the design of the Little Mountain Housing Project. In addition to social criticism, public housing generally has been criticized for its inferior design. This section shows how Little Mountain was a well designed public housing project. I also argue that the design of the project helped to facilitate the high levels of social capital, social organization, and social control found there.

The final section considers some of the counterposing evidence I have uncovered that detracts from the arguments of this chapter. In this section I respond to sentiments expressed in the early 1980s by people in the surrounding community and a consultant architect that Little Mountain was isolated and stigmatized and suffered from an inferior design. At many points throughout this chapter references are made to specific areas or features within the housing project, such as the names of the walkways. For reference, Figure 5.1 shows a map of the Little Mountain Housing Project site.

5.1 SOCIAL COMPOSITION

Dominant representations of public housing portray communities that are marked with very high levels of poverty, high proportions of single-parent families, low levels of education, and almost total unemployment. These are key characteristics of the dysfunctional culture of poverty that some scholars have associated with public housing. The provincial government seems to be applying the dysfunctional culture of poverty to the Little Mountain Housing Project when it says that mixed-income redevelopment will “integrate people.”⁴ In order to determine whether or not the dysfunctional culture of poverty may be correctly applied to Little Mountain, it is important to understand the class composition of the housing project.

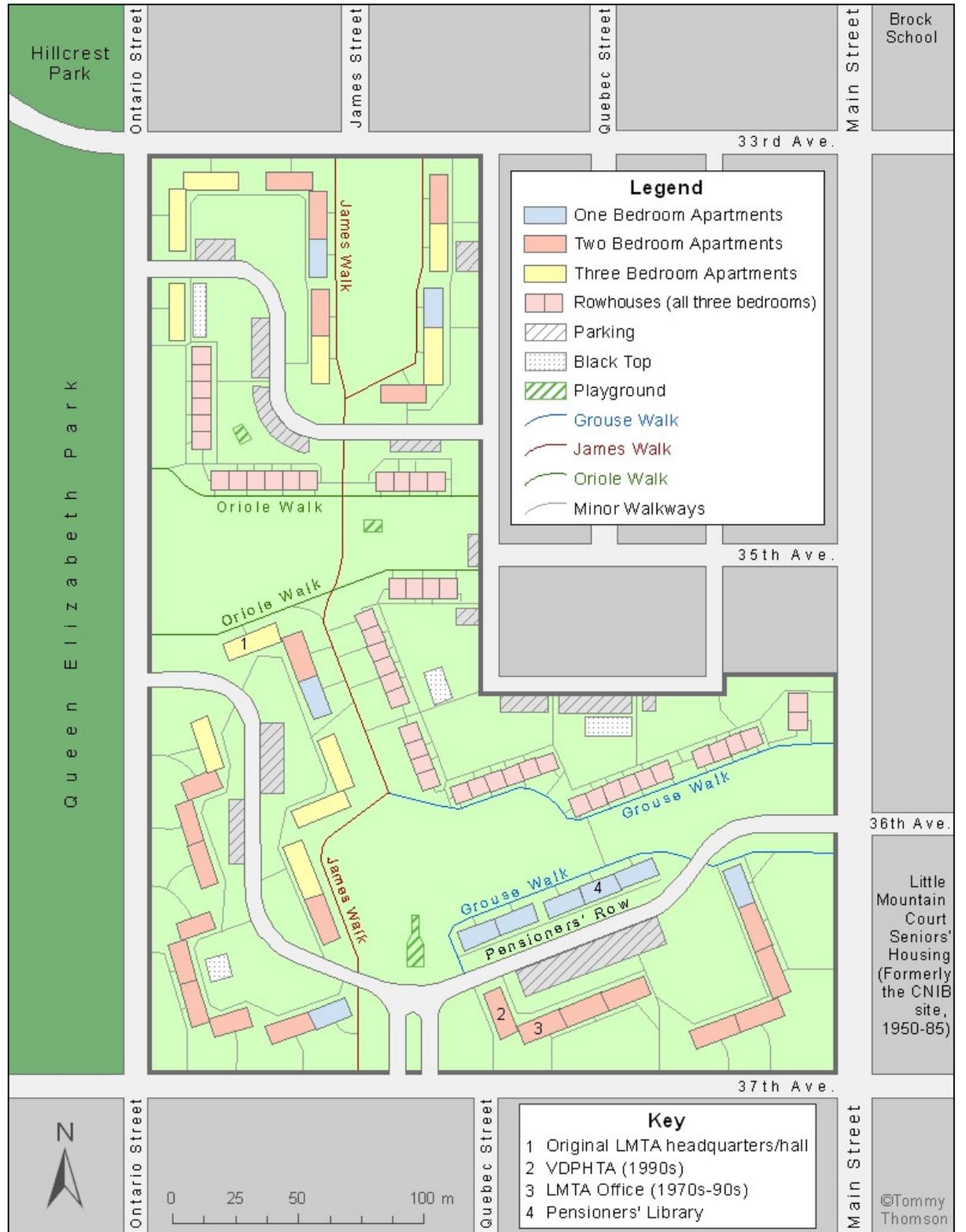
The lack of summary statistics for the population of the Little Mountain Housing Project has been a challenge in researching this topic. BC Housing simply does not make such data publicly available. The census is unhelpful as well because the housing project site is split right down the middle, with equal halves part of two separate dissemination areas that include the private homes in the surrounding neighbourhood. Despite these difficulties, I have managed to piece together information from a variety of sources that at least paints a partial picture of the social composition of the housing project through the years.

As explained in the previous chapter, the Little Mountain Housing Project started off as a mixed-income community. The mixed-income approach was necessary for the rent scale to function as some tenants received greater subsidies than others. The previous chapter also explained how the initial Little Mountain tenants were rigorously screened. The number of low-income tenants was restricted and people on social assistance were not accepted at all. Applicants' homes were inspected and people were often rejected for poor housekeeping. Thus, to be selected to live at Little Mountain when it first opened

⁴ Coleman, Op. cit.

Figure 5.1

Map of the Little Mountain Housing Project



Map created by Tommy Thomson

was a mark of distinction as only “good, solid citizens”⁵ were allowed in. By the close of the 1950s, the class composition of Little Mountain became more polarized as both the low and the high income groups increased while the middle income group decreased.

The increase in the low income group was due to a change in policy of the Vancouver Housing Authority shortly after the housing project opened to accept more low-income families and some social assistance recipients.⁶ As shown in Table 5.1, households earning less than \$200 per month increased from 27.7% in 1954 to 42.3% in 1958. At the same time, the proportion of single-parent families increased from 11% in 1955 to 29% in 1958. By 1958 only about one-third of the households were original tenants from the project’s opening in 1954. Those who stayed tended to be single parents.⁷ Out-moving tenants were disproportionately replaced by single-parent families in the 1950s. As the Vancouver Housing Authority’s 1959 Annual Report noted, “56% of the replacement tenants, were either Social Assistance recipients or working mothers.”⁸ Already by the late 1950s, some people believed these changes had “lowered the tone of the Project.”⁹

But even as the proportions of low-income and single-parent families increased, the proportion of high-income tenants also increased during the early years at Little Mountain. Table 5.1 shows that households earning more than \$300 per month increased from 8.9% in 1954 to 24.3% in 1958. The increase in the high income category was due to rising wages that came with the strong economic growth of the 1950s. These were rising wages of already resident Little Mountain households. Thus, despite the increase in low-income households, during the late 1950s Little Mountain continued to be a mixed-income community with a “fair sprinkling of white collar”¹⁰ workers. One family even had the means to send their

Monthly household income	1954*	1958**
Less than \$200	27.7%	42.3%
\$200 to less than \$300	63.4%	33.3%
\$300 and over	8.9%	24.3%

*Source: Michael Wheeler, *Evaluating the Need for Low-Rental Housing: A Review of Conditions Among Family Applications for the Little Mountain Low-Rental Housing Project, Vancouver, and Consideration of Criteria for Future Housing Projects* (Unpublished master’s thesis, School of Social Work, University of British Columbia, 1955).

**Source: Etta Elaine Fromson et al., *The Little Mountain Low-Rental Housing Project: A Survey of its Welfare Aspects (Vancouver 1955-1958)* (Unpublished master’s thesis, School of Social Work, University of British Columbia, 1959).

⁵ Province, “Low Rental Tenants Move In” (April 2, 1954), p. 25.

⁶ Etta Elaine Fromson et al., *The Little Mountain Low-Rental Housing Project: A Survey of its Welfare Aspects (Vancouver 1955-1958)* (Unpublished master’s thesis, School of Social Work, University of British Columbia, 1959)

⁷ Ibid., p. 43.

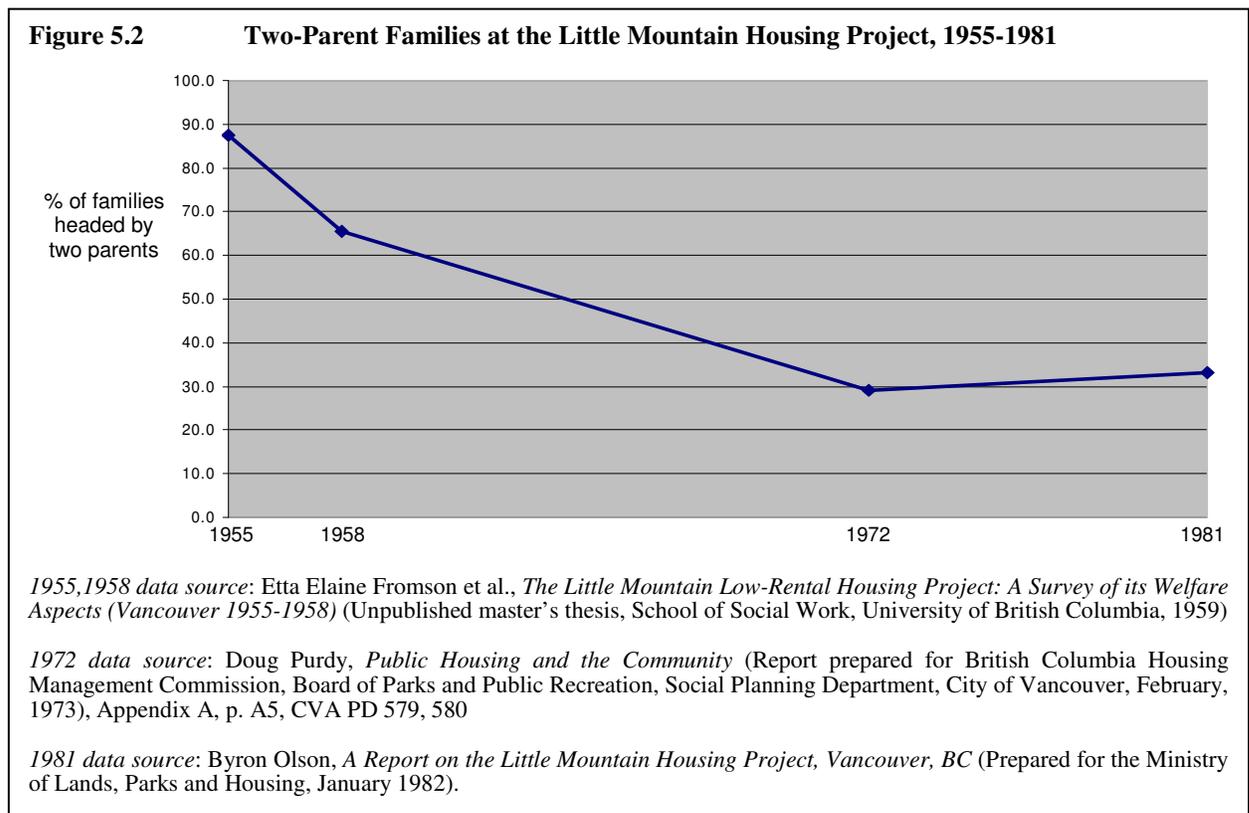
⁸ Ella Mary Reid, *Orchard Park: A Tenant Survey of the Second Installment of Public Housing in Vancouver* (Unpublished master’s thesis, School of Social Work, University of British Columbia, 1962), p. 81.

⁹ Fromson et al., Op. cit., p. 118.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 60.

children to private school. Thus, despite the changes in the admissions policy, in the late 1950s the Little Mountain Housing Project continued to provide residents “an address of which to be proud.”¹¹

In the absence of better data, in order to understand class change in the housing project after the 1950s, information on the proportion of two-parent families may be used as an indicator for class. This is because two-parent families tend to have higher incomes than single-parent families. Single-parent families may also be associated with the dysfunctional culture of poverty that many academics believe characterizes public housing. Of course, a cautionary note must be made that not all single-parent families are of a lower class status than two-parent families and I am not making any negative judgment about different family types. Information on the proportion of families in the project that are headed by a two parents is available for the years 1955, 1958, 1972, and 1981 and is graphed in Figure 5.2. The graph shows that the proportion of families headed by two parents sharply decreased soon after the housing project opened and continued to decrease through the 1960s, bottoming out in the early 1970s. But at some point in the 1970s, Little Mountain stopped losing two-parent families as by the early 1980s the number of two-parent families had started to increase slightly, representing about one-third of all families. Assuming, two-parent families are an accurate proxy for class, this suggests that the class profile of the project reached its lowest point in the early 1970s and then stabilized.



¹¹ Ibid., p. 68.

Even more interesting is that by the early 1980s, the number of households in the highest income group in the housing project had increased to a level that was even higher than when the project first opened in 1954. After the 1950s, the only other available income information for the Little Mountain Housing Project is for 1981 and comes from a report prepared for the provincial government that surveyed the incomes of 190 Little Mountain households.¹² This information is shown in Table 5.2, which shows that even into the 1980s Little Mountain continued to include a mix of income groups. It is difficult to compare the 1981 information with the income information from the 1950s because both sets of information are categorized into income groups that do not correspond well due to inflation. However, when adjusted for inflation, the high income category in 1981 does roughly correspond with the high income category in 1954.¹³ In 1981, the highest income category was families earning more than \$1084 per month. When adjusted for inflation, \$1084 in 1981 is roughly equivalent to \$309 in 1954. The highest income category in the report for 1954 is families earning more than \$300 per month. With just a \$9 inflation-adjusted difference separating these two categories and with the 1981 category being slightly higher and more restrictive, they are roughly comparable to one another. Surprisingly, a higher proportion of project households were in the high income category in 1981 than in 1954. In 1954, 8.9% of households were in the high income category and by 1981 this had increased to 13.7%. To help put this into perspective, when adjusted for inflation to today, \$1084 in 1981 is equivalent to \$2537 in 2010. Based on the information available on the Ministry of Housing and Social Development website, I have calculated that in order to receive that much money from welfare in 2010, a family would have to have 12 children.¹⁴ Granted, welfare rates today are less generous than they were in 1981, but still, a family earning \$1084 per month in 1981 would almost have had to have someone working in a somewhat good

Table 5.2 Income Mix at Little Mountain, 1981

Monthly household income	% of households
Less than \$800	70.5
\$800 to \$1083	15.8
\$1084 and over	13.7

Source: Byron Olson, *A Report on the Little Mountain Housing Project, Vancouver, BC* (Prepared for the Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing, January 1982).

paying job. The same report with the income information for 1981 also says that 35% of the households at Little Mountain at the time were employed. Although this may sound like a low employment rate, one must keep in mind that five apartment buildings totaling 20 units, which represents about 9% of the households,

¹² Byron Olson, *A Report on the Little Mountain Housing Project, Vancouver, BC* (Prepared for the Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing, January 1982).

¹³ Bank of Canada, "Inflation Calculator" (Website accessed August 23, 2010 from www.bankofcanada.ca)

¹⁴ Ministry of Housing and Social Development, "Ministry of Housing and Social Development BC Employment and Assistance Rate Tables, Income Assistance (Effective June 1, 2007)" (Website accessed August 23, 2010 from www.eia.gov.bc.ca)

were reserved for senior citizens on pensions.¹⁵ While Little Mountain's employment rate in 1981 was certainly lower than that of the general public, it was far higher than what is often found in other public housing projects across North America, especially in more recent years. It is not uncommon for public housing to have an almost total absence of employed families. But clearly this was the case at Little Mountain in 1981. The relatively high percentage of employed households (compared to public housing generally) and the increases in both the high income group and the proportion of two-parent families suggest that by the early 1980s, Little Mountain was able to stem the loss of middle income households and in fact slightly increase the number of these households. This is a remarkable finding because it goes against the observed trend of public housing generally, which has been a consistent and unreversing downgrading of class composition and a total loss of moderate income households. The explanation for this anomalous pattern at Little Mountain may be the 'income mix' policies BC Housing implemented in 1975. The goal of these policies was to create more socially mixed public housing, with about 35% of the units occupied by families of more moderate incomes.¹⁶ Market rents were also introduced so that families in public housing who experienced income increases would have their rents capped at a level similar to what they would pay in the private market, thereby encouraging them to continue living in public housing.¹⁷

But even as the high income group increased by the 1980s, so too did the lowest income group. As Table 5.2 shows, the lowest income group in 1981 by far accounted for the majority of the households as 70.5% of households earned less than \$800 per month. When adjusted for inflation, \$800 in 1981 was roughly equivalent to \$228 in 1954. The 1954 income information shows that 61.6% of households earned less than \$249 per month. This echoes the same trend of increasing high and low income groups and decreasing middle income groups uncovered in the very short time period between 1954 and 1958.

By 1981, there was also a significant decrease in the total population of the Little Mountain Housing Project. In 1972, the total population was 802.¹⁸ But by 1981 this shrank to 572.¹⁹ The reason for the decline is that smaller families started moving into the housing project. From 1972 to 1981 average

¹⁵ The number of units occupied by seniors fluctuated over time, but 20 would have been the minimum number. In 1982 Byron Olson says there were 20 senior citizen households. A report in 1962 says there were 24 senior citizen households (See Reid, Op. cit.). In the final years of the housing project, the number of senior citizen households was likely even higher due to the advancing age of many of the long-term residents.

¹⁶ Beverly Jean Grieve, *Continuity and Change: Provincial Housing Policy in British Columbia, 1945-1985* (Unpublished master's thesis, School of Community and Regional Planning, University of British Columbia, 1985); See also Cathy Bryant, "New Rent Scheme for Little Mountain", *Main Street* (February/March 1975, retrieved from UBC Rare Books and Special Collections), p. 3.

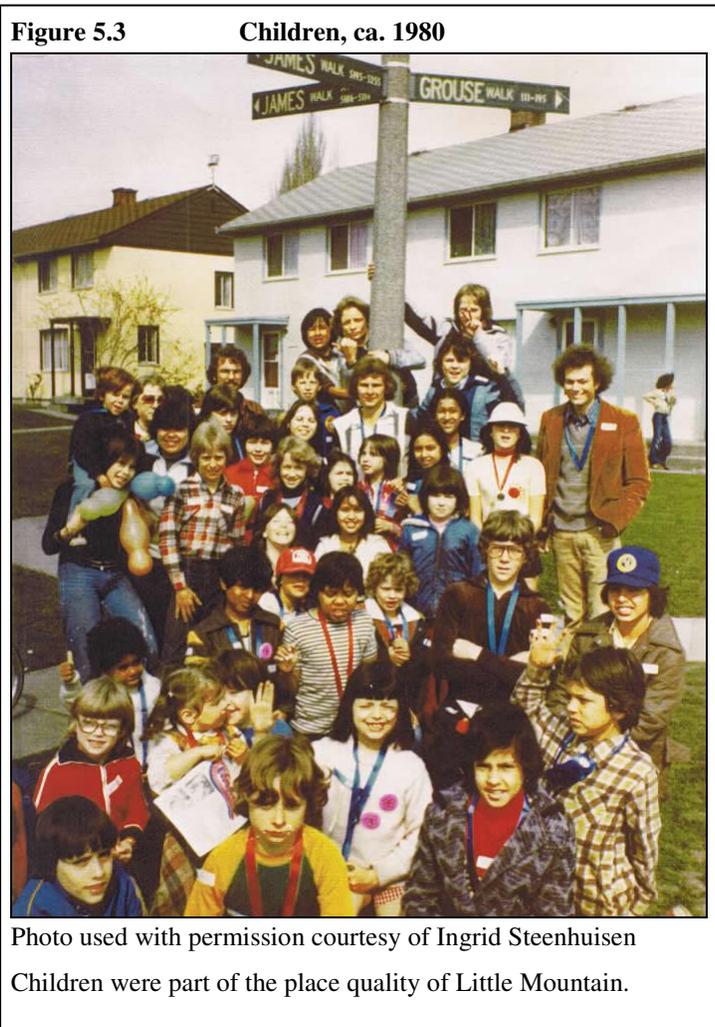
¹⁷ Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Standing Committee of Council on Housing and Environment, May 29, 1975, CVA 600-F-1 file 11.

¹⁸ Doug Purdy, *Public Housing and the Community* (Report prepared for British Columbia Housing Management Commission, Board of Parks and Public Recreation, Social Planning Department, City of Vancouver, February, 1973), Appendix A, p. A5, CVA PD 579, 580.

¹⁹ Olson, Op. cit.

family size (excluding pensioner households) declined from 3.8 to 2.8—on average, one less person was living in each household. This decline occurred even as the number of two-parent families increased. The decline in the total population was due to a major drop in the number of children living in the project. During the 1970s, the Little Mountain Housing Project lost almost 200 children. In 1972 there were 439 children under 19,²⁰ but by 1981 this had fallen to 240.²¹ A likely explanation for this significant decline may be that by the early 1980s the first generation of Little Mountain children from families who moved into the project in the 1950s and 1960s had grown up and moved out. Due to larger societal trends, in-moving families in the 1970s were likely smaller with fewer children. But even though the number of children had declined by the 1980s, the atmosphere of the project continued to be characterized by large numbers of children as shown in Figure 5.3.

Ironically, it is more difficult to put together a picture of the social composition of the housing project for the contemporary period. I have not been able to find any income or demographic data concerning the tenants of the Little Mountain after 1981. But based on my interviews with 23 Little Mountain households, supplemented with some other very general information, at least a very partial sense of the contemporary class composition of the housing project may be understood. In this section, it is important to keep in mind that my sample of 23 households was not a representative sample of the entire Little Mountain population. Several tenants told me that the poorest families and the recent immigrant families were the first to move once relocation started. Consequently, my sample is biased toward the more middle class and longer-term Little Mountain households. Of the 23 households interviewed, the average length of time spent living at Little Mountain was 17.5 years. Table 5.3 shows in more detail how long the interviewed households had lived at Little Mountain.



²⁰ Doug Purdy, *Op. cit.*

²¹ Olson, *Op. cit.*

Of the 23 households I interviewed, 11 were households with young children living in the home. Of these 11, there were four two-parent families. This is roughly consistent with the findings from 1981 that showed about one-third of the families had both parents present in the household.

Table 5.3 Length of Time Living at Little Mountain

How Long at Little Mountain	Number of Interviewed Households
Less than 5 years	4
5 to less than 15 years	8
15 to less than 25 years	5
25 to less than 50 years	4
50 years or more	2

In 2009 every person I interviewed except for one gave information about their employment status. This information is shown in Table 5.4. Of the 23 households that I interviewed, four did not include any people of working age as all residents were senior citizens who were retired. Of the 19 households that included adults of working age, in 10 households at least one adult was employed at the time of the interview in 2009. There was even one household that was professionally employed, with both adults employed in well-paying science laboratories. But most others seem to have been working in lower-paying jobs. Many people were holding down multiple jobs and in at least two cases, employment income was supplemented with welfare. Table 5.4 shows there were two cases of households in which the

Table 5.4 Occupation of Interviewed Households

Employed	10
Unemployed	2
Student	2
Disability	4
Retired	4
Unknown	1

working-age adults were unemployed when I interviewed them. In both of these cases, unemployment was not a permanent condition, as they had only recently become unemployed. In fact, one of these households was employed when I interviewed them the first time in 2007. Out of all 23 households I interviewed, 43% obtained at least some income through employment. Thus, my interviews with Little Mountain households included a high percentage of households with employment income, including many households with multiple sources of employment income, and one household that was professionally employed.

Another indicator of class is education. Many interview participants told me about the educational accomplishments of their adult children. Of the 23 households I interviewed, 12 have adult children who spent at least part of their growing up years living in the housing project. Of these 12, three households reported having children who have completed university. Two have Bachelor's degrees and one has a Master's degree. The adult child with the Master's degree lived in the Little Mountain Housing Project throughout their entire childhood years. In addition to these three households, two other households indicated they have adult children who are currently attending university. Thus, education outcomes for children who grew up in the Little Mountain Housing Project seem strong.

I did not specifically ask the adult tenants about their own educational backgrounds so I have little information in this regard, save for one exception. Mohana and Reshmi are a married couple who immigrated a number of years ago from India, where they earned doctorate degrees in the sciences. Mohana has a PhD in microbiology and his wife Reshmi has a PhD in chemistry. These were the two

mentioned above who are employed in science laboratories. In all my readings of public housing I have never once come across a report of public housing tenants with doctorate degrees, never mind two doctors in one household. The example of this family suggests Little Mountain was more middle class than most other public housing projects (or at least how most other public housing projects have been represented). But this is not to say the family does not struggle with finances. They indicated employment in their field is inconsistent and that they often must collect unemployment insurance. Except for when they are unemployed, the income of this family is high enough that BC Housing charges them market rent. This family seemed eager to counter the popular impression that public housing tenants are not paying their way when they said, “*It’s not cheap for us, you know.*”

It is unknown how many other households at Little Mountain were paying market rent. BC Housing acknowledges that it charges some public housing tenants market rent in its *Tenant Handbook*.²² As discussed above, market rents were implemented in BC’s public housing in 1975. Under BC Housing’s rent-geared-to-income system, rents are set at no more than 30% of gross household income. But rents are capped at the market rent, which is “the amount a unit could be rented for on a monthly basis in the private market, based on an appraisal.”²³ This allows households living in public housing who experience significant income increases to remain living in public housing and pay market rent. As discussed in Chapter 2, in some US contexts mixed-income redevelopment of public housing sometimes means keeping all units as rentals but allocating specific numbers of units to market rents and below-market rents. This is different from traditional public housing in BC where there is no specific number of units allocated to market rent; it all depends on the income of the families living in the units. But still, the fact that BC Housing has a policy of charging market rent and that at least one of the households I interviewed was paying market rent means that some public housing tenants in BC are in fact paying market rent. The BC Housing website says that public housing is for “low-to-moderate income households.”²⁴ This statement and the practice of charging market rent in public housing suggest that, in addition to Little Mountain, public housing in BC generally may already qualify as mixed-income by some definitions. At the very least, it suggests that it is possible to create social mix in existing public housing under longstanding policy practices without resorting to the extreme action of demolishing public housing and replacing it with a majority of privately owned condominiums.

Some understanding of the social composition of the Little Mountain Housing Project at the time of redevelopment may also be obtained from the summary statistics that Sam Rainboth of BC Housing kindly provided for me (See Figure 5.4). The first thing to note is that the total population of 570 people is an undercount because BC Housing does not count informal residents who lived in the housing project

²² BC Housing, *Tenant Handbook* (n.d., accessed online August 23, 2010 from www.bchousing.org)

²³ BC Housing, “Glossary – ‘Market Rent’” (n.d., website accessed August 23, 2010 from www.bchousing.org)

²⁴ BC Housing, “What is subsidized housing?” (n.d., website accessed August 23, 2010 from www.bchousing.org)

in violation of BC Housing policy. Of most relevance to the issue of class is the reporting that “20% have some employment income.” Presumably, this means 20% of the households, not 20% of the people. This is significantly lower than the employment rate I found among the 23 households I interviewed, which was 43%. Much of this difference is likely due to the fact that my sample of Little Mountain households over-represents the middle class households of the housing project. In addition, part of the explanation is that my interviews included informal residents who are not counted by BC Housing. Both of the informal residents I interviewed were employed. If I exclude these informal residents, the employment rate among the households I interviewed drops to 35%.²⁵ But the more revealing comparison is between BC Housing’s 2007 employment figure and the figure I have from 1981. The 1981 figure also ultimately comes from BC Housing so it too would exclude informal residents with jobs and so it is directly comparable to the 2007 figure. As noted above, in 1981, 35% of households were employed.²⁶ Thus, compared to 1981 the employment rate had significantly dropped by 2007. As with the 1981 employment rate, when considering the 2007 figure one must keep in mind that at least 9% of the households at Little Mountain were composed of senior citizens on pensions (and it was likely more than 9% in the latter years given the advancing age of many of the long-term residents). The decline in employed households at Little Mountain between 1981 and 2007 suggest that, while the income mix policies introduced in 1975 may have helped Little Mountain stem the loss of middle class households in the 1970s and 1980s, during more recent years Little Mountain fell in line with the general trend in public housing toward a decrease in middle class households over time.

Figure 5.4 Information about the Little Mountain Population in 2007 supplied by BC Housing

- About 200 households now (about 26 vacant units)
- About 570 people, including 107 teenagers and 162 children younger than 13
- About 35 seniors, about a third of whom have mobility issues
- About 155 people are in the 36 to 54 age range
- Majority are single parents
- Majority of adults are on income assistance or disability; 20% have some employment income
- Very few need interpreters-Cantonese, Farsi, Spanish, Filipino main languages
- Almost all elementary school children attend General Brock
- High school age children who are attending school are at Charles Tupper (majority) or Eric Hamber. A minority are attending alternative schools
- Some have been residents for more than 40 years
- Some have mental illnesses
- Unit turnover is increasing.

Source: Personal email communication from Sam Rainboth, Senior Manager, Public Affairs, BC Housing dated November 9, 2009.

²⁵ Statistics from housing authorities generally likely underestimate employment levels in public housing due to the phenomenon of hidden live-in boyfriends with jobs.

²⁶ Olson, Op. cit.

But even with the drop in employed households between 1981 and 2007, in its final years the Little Mountain Housing Project still did not feature the harsh degree of deprivation found in some other public housing projects. Also, even if my sample of Little Mountain households was skewed toward the more middle class households, it shows that these households were living at the Little Mountain Housing Project right up until the very end. In order for the dysfunctional culture of poverty theory to apply, there must be an almost total absence of middle class employed households. But there never was a total absence of these households at Little Mountain. Based on the information from BC Housing, at least one in five households were employed in 2007. My interviews found an even higher level of employment, partially because my interviews included informal residents who are not counted in BC Housing's statistics. I even found one household with professional employment. I also found households with both parents present and families that value higher education. These are the norms of the middle class that are believed to be entirely absent from public housing. If one accepts the dysfunctional culture of poverty theory, the one in five households that went to work could have served as role models for the other four out of five households who were not working. Thus, the dysfunctional culture of poverty theory of Wilson²⁷ cannot really be applied to Little Mountain. It seems that right up until the very end, there was a significant (lower) middle class minority living at the Little Mountain Housing Project.

Race is a major theme in the academic literature concerning public housing so it is important to consider the racial and ethnic composition of the Little Mountain Housing Project. In this area as well, there is a disappointing lack of information available. In fact, there is even less information on this issue than class because none of the reports from the 1950s, 1970s, and 1980s from which I constructed a picture of class change contained any information on ethnicity. Unlike the housing authorities in the US, BC Housing has never kept information on the racial backgrounds of its tenants. In 2007, Community Advocates for Little Mountain (CALM), which is a group of tenants and people from the surrounding community opposed to redevelopment, performed an informal survey of 55 Little Mountain households. CALM reported a high level of diversity in the Little Mountain Housing Project as tenants were found to originate from 18 different countries.²⁸ The racial and ethnic backgrounds of the people whom I interviewed from the Little Mountain Housing Project are shown in Table 5.5. Unlike the discussion above, here the unit of analysis is the individual as opposed to the household because some of the households I interviewed were made up of bi-racial couples. Thus, I am reporting the race or ethnicity for the people I interviewed and their spouses, giving a total of 33 individuals. Table 5.5 shows that the largest group was white people, the second largest group was Chinese people,

²⁷ William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

²⁸ Community Advocates for Little Mountain, "Survey Highlights" (2007).

and the third largest group was South Asian people. These are the three largest groups in the Vancouver Region overall. Thus, my impression is that the racial and ethnic composition of the Little Mountain Housing Project reflected the diversity of the rest of the city and region. Indeed, this was the impression of people who lived in the housing project as well. As one Chinese man who lived in the Little Mountain Housing Project for 25 years remarked, “*The community is very much like Canadian society, you have people from the local and people who are settled from other countries.*”

Table 5.5
Race/Ethnicity of Interviewed Tenants and their Spouses

White	13
Chinese	10
South Asian	5
First Nations	2
Hispanic	1
Filipino	1
Black	1

5.2 SOCIAL CAPITAL

My original intention with investigating social capital at the Little Mountain Housing Project was to test the dysfunctional culture of poverty theory that the provincial government seems to be applying to Little Mountain with statements that redevelopment is taking place in order to “integrate people.”²⁹ But the above discussion on the class composition of the housing project shows that Little Mountain was already a mixed-income community with a significant minority of employed and two-parent households. This is not the kind of extremely deprived community that the dysfunctional culture of poverty theory was even meant to be applied to. Thus, it could be argued that it is unnecessary to even discuss social capital at Little Mountain. But it still is important to discuss. This is because Little Mountain was still, on average, a poorer community than most in Vancouver. This section on social capital and the next two sections on social control and social organization show that the class culture at Little Mountain was one characterized by friendship, mutual assistance, a lack of crime, and involvement in community life. It was a poverty culture, but it certainly was not dysfunctional. Rather, Little Mountain was a rare public housing success story. These findings undermine the provincial government’s calls to create a “balanced”³⁰ “revitalized”³¹ community at Little Mountain, somehow implying that the Little Mountain community was unbalanced and lacked vitality. Thus, these three sections have the effect of defending the reputation of the Little Mountain Housing Project, which has come under attack from a provincial government that seems eager to buy into the stereotype of the ‘troubled housing project’ irrespective of contextual factors in place at Little Mountain. These sections also show that the Little Mountain tenants were invested in the place and the surrounding community and helped to make it what it became. Within each of these three sections, I first present the evidence pertaining to the contemporary period before

²⁹ Coleman, Op. cit.

³⁰ BC Housing, “Guiding Principles for Redevelopment”, *A New Plan for Little Mountain*. (2007, website accessed October 15, 2007 from www.littlemountain.ca)

³¹ BC Housing, Letter to Little Mountain neighbours dated June 4, 2007 (Accessed online October 15, 2007 from www.littlemountain.ca)

presenting the historical evidence from Little Mountain's past. I have defined the contemporary period as being roughly the last ten years before redevelopment started (that is, post-1997). This is an arbitrary decision based on my impression that the mid-1990s seems to have been a natural break in the course of events at Little Mountain as this was when some of the key individuals moved or passed away. Also, this captures the time period that most of my interview participants were talking about.

Social capital refers to "the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures."³² Thus, in order to demonstrate the existence of social capital, two conditions must be met: the presence of a social network (that is, people have to know or interact with one another); and the social network must confer benefits to its members. In this section, I first present the evidence for social capital in the contemporary period. I then finish this section with a brief consideration of the historical evidence for social capital at Little Mountain.

5.2.1 Social Capital in the Contemporary Period

The tenants at Little Mountain knew each other and interacted with one another. Indeed, most of the tenants I interviewed strongly emphasized the importance of the relationships between neighbours at Little Mountain. As one tenant said, "*it was all about the neighbours*" at Little Mountain. Another tenant said, "*I loved the community, that was one thing that drew my heart.*" Just about everyone knew their immediate neighbours and many tenants knew people throughout the large housing project. As Richard explained, "*Basically, we knew not only our direct neighbours but pretty much everybody in the complex.*" Madeline also knew people throughout the project: "*I knew so many people down there, from my building to the other side by Main and also in the rowhouses.*" Several tenants told me that Little Mountain was the kind of place where "*everybody knows everybody.*"

Some connections between tenants ran deeper than others. For many tenants, social interaction was limited to greeting each other and exchanging pleasantries in the common spaces of the housing project. For example, Irwin said, "*The neighbours, they are acquaintances. In our case, we do not actually develop any personal relationships, but just a friendliness.*" Similarly, most of Beth's interaction with the neighbours was rather limited. She said, "*I know people who I say hello to, and some of them I know by name.*" Long-time Little Mountain resident Ingrid Steenhuisen knew and had the phone numbers for most of the people in the housing project. In some cases, these were close friends whom she had grown up with in the housing project. In other cases, these were shallower connections with new people to the housing project, including many recent immigrants. Often social interaction between neighbours

³² Alejandro Portes, "Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology", *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24 (1998), p. 6.

stemmed from friendships between children—a pattern that Kleit found in her research at Seattle’s NewHolly housing development.³³ As Lorraine explained:

What I liked about living there is the sense of community...I didn’t necessarily have a lot of friends but I knew all the neighbours and we could all rely on each other. Like I guess we were sort of like friends but it was mostly our children who were friends with each other. So we’d get to know the parents and then we’d gain trust with each other. Like for instance, I’d go visit them whenever they were having a barbecue. It was wonderful. Or they’d come and visit me for whatever. That was nice.

In many cases, the connections between neighbours were much deeper than casual acquaintances. Several people described the community at Little Mountain as being “*like a family*”. For example, Seema remembered, “*We were like a family. Everybody was really close...It was very close knit.*” Also, Sally said, “*All my neighbours living here, we are like a family.*” Many people indicated they had very close family friends living in the housing project. In many cases, it seems that long-term residency at Little Mountain helped to create lasting friendships. Seema, who lived in the housing project for 30 years, made life-long friends at Little Mountain. She remembered with fondness, “*I made a lot of good friends here. In fact, some I’m still in contact with after 30 years, they’re still my friends...They were my dearest friends and we did a lot together.*” Similarly, Brenda, a second-generation Little Mountain tenant who lived there as a teenager in the 1970s and returned again in more recent years, indicated that strong, lasting friendships were made in the housing project, “*The really good friends you made in here, you kept. So that’s very important.*” Karin, who lived in the housing project off and on since 1971, made a dear friend whom she has fond memories of traveling to Mexico with.

In other cases, rather than long-term occupancy, it seems that cultural or linguistic similarities brought neighbours together. There was a cluster of suites in one section of the housing project occupied by several Chinese families. These families were quite close and spoke Mandarin with one another. In another case, Leticia, who is a recent immigrant from a Spanish-speaking country and only lived in the housing project for three years, became quite close with a neighbour who speaks Spanish. The bond between these neighbours was so close that they even considered relocating out of Little Mountain together:

Many times it’s difficult for people to understand. Because my English, I don’t speak very well. I found it comfortable to speak in our language. It’s more easy to explain everything, to show the feelings you are having at the moment. We are together almost all the time. Even now, when we are talking about the relocation thing, why don’t we ask BC Housing if it is possible to move together to another place?

In still other cases, the connection between neighbours seemed to stem from similar family circumstances. I am aware of three young single-mothers with small children who became very close friends. These young women were not residents of Little Mountain for several decades like some of my

³³ Rachel Garshick Kleit, “HOPE VI New Communities: Neighbourhood Relationships in Mixed-Income Housing”, *Environment and Planning A*, 37(2005), pp. 1413-1441.

other interview participants. So rather than long-term occupancy, it was similar life circumstances that brought these young single-mothers together. These women became so close that they actually became godmothers for each others' children:

Tenant: *A friendship like this tight, seeing each other everyday...It's amazing.*

Tommy: And are you her godmother of her kids?

Tenant: *Yeah. We were very close...like family. When we used to live together and she used to go to work, the kids would come over to my side. They would play outside and when they were ready to come in they would be hanging in my house. My other friend, I'm her kids' godmother too. We all helped each other and did things for each other.*

The trust between these neighbours was so strong that they actually willed their children to each other in the event of their deaths. The bond between these families was remarkably deep. In this case, the neighbours are no longer just like family, they *are* family.

Similarly, Brenda, who was a teenager in the housing project in the 1970s, married a boy she grew up with in the housing project and had children with him. Brenda returned to the housing project in recent years and one of her grown children also rented a suite in the housing project at the time of redevelopment. This child was a third-generation Little Mountain tenant as their grand-parents were among the very first tenants selected to live there in 1954. I am aware of several second-generation tenants, but this is the only third-generation Little Mountain tenant I am aware of. In this case and others, multiple generations were in more than one suite. In other cases, two generations would be living in the same suite.³⁴ The presence of families living at Little Mountain over multiple generations is very interesting. One of the differences between public housing generally and the old slums that it often replaced is that, while the slums developed organically, public housing communities are constructed by housing authorities who select who gets to move in. Anyone could be a slum dweller in the past, but only those who are selected can be public housing dwellers (except for informal residents who live in public housing in violation of state policy). But Little Mountain had some of the organic quality of the old slums because the community that lived there was not simply a reflection of an artificial selection process. Extended families lived there, in some cases occupying more than one suite. Again, in these cases, Little Mountain neighbours were not just *like* a family, they were in fact blood relatives or relatives through marriage.

The case of Brenda as well as several other second-generation Little Mountain tenants whom I know raises the issue of the coming and going of people from the housing project. The distinction between project residents and non-project residents in the surrounding community is not as tidy as some

³⁴ Venkatesh found multiple generations living in the same suites at Chicago's Robert Taylor Homes. In many cases, a grandparent or aunt moved in to supplement the household income. These people can often be classified as 'informal residents' because they were frequently hidden from the housing authority so the family could avoid a rent increase or a reduction in welfare benefits. See Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000)

might assume. People are project residents at some points in their lives and residents in private housing in the surrounding community at other points in their lives. Of the 23 Little Mountain households I interviewed, seven households included people who lived in private housing in the Main Street area at some point in their lives: four lived in private housing in the surrounding community before moving to Little Mountain and three moved out of the project and then moved back later in their lives. Very often accommodation was rented in an area basement suite. Thus, the community of the Little Mountain Housing Project is not limited to people who happen to be resident there at one arbitrary moment in time. Rather, the Little Mountain community includes people who have left but who keep their connection with the place and who return to Little Mountain to visit family, friends or to actually resume occupancy there. Brenda, herself someone who moved away and then moved back, described the extended community of the Little Mountain Housing Project that also includes friends of siblings who grew up in the project:

In fact, most of my friends that I met here I've continued to stay in contact with, they're still my friends now...We had our own little gang of teenagers that sort of wandered around and sat in little corners of the project...Then I met my husband-to-be. He was born in the suite right above me. I've heard that from so many people who have come back to the project and say, "Yeah I lived in that one, I lived in that one." Like the parties and stuff, people have come back that moved out, they'll say, "Oh yeah, I lived in that suite or so-and-so lived in that suite." People don't forget...Everybody knew everybody. If we weren't personally hanging out with them, then it was a brother's or a sister's group. You know, I've got my sister's friends, my brother's friends, so all these names that come up are always familiar even if I wasn't hanging out with them personally myself.

Before considering how tenants benefit from their social connections at Little Mountain, I want to consider some implications for traditional categorizations of social capital. Much of the academic literature distinguishes between bonding/strong and bridging/weak ties, with bonding/strong ties seen as the connections between public housing residents and bridging/weak ties seen as the connections public housing residents have with people outside of public housing. This view assumes a homogenous public housing community in terms of class, culture, and race that is distinct from the larger non-public housing community. Indeed, the idea that low-income and public housing communities are characterized by bonding/strong ties has its roots in the work of Stack³⁵ and others who studied low-income black communities in the US. I have already shown in the previous section that Little Mountain was a diverse community, both in terms of class and race. Thus, one would expect bridging/weak ties to be present within the highly diverse Little Mountain Housing Project. And indeed they were, as ties traversed the various ethnic, cultural and class groups present in the housing project. For example, Ingrid Steenhuisen knows people from throughout the housing project, including some of the more recent residents who are new immigrants. These people would often come to her for help with understanding their mail or various

³⁵ Carol B. Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974)

communications sent out by BC Housing. As a board member of the Little Mountain Neighbourhood House, Ingrid would often make people aware of the various services available in the community. Thus, Ingrid's ties with some of the new immigrants in the housing project are probably better understood as bridging/weak ties rather than bonding/strong ties that many would expect to characterize the ties between public housing residents. Also, many of the ties Little Mountain tenants had with people in the surrounding community are better thought of as bonding/strong ties rather than bridging/weak ties. For example, as discussed below in the section on social organization, the Chinese woman who is deeply involved with her temple where she is "*famous*" for her cooking probably has stronger ties with people from the temple who live outside of the housing project than with her neighbours within the housing project. Rather than the portrayal in the academic literature of needy public housing residents who stand to benefit from their outside connections, when talking about connections with the surrounding community, Little Mountain tenants emphasize how the surrounding community benefits from the tenants. In Vancouver, different cultural and racial groups cut across both public housing and non-public housing neighbourhoods and people on welfare and low-income renters can be found living both within public housing and outside of it. Although average income is almost certainly higher in the surrounding community than within the housing project, the individual people in the surrounding community whom Little Mountain tenants have connections with are not necessarily higher status individuals. Rather, in most cases when Little Mountain tenants talk about having friends and family in the surrounding community of private homes they are talking about people who are similar to themselves as low-income tenants. I can even think of one example of a homeless man on Main Street who was known by many residents of the housing project. Thus, in some cases connections with people in the surrounding community may be with lower status individuals. And then there are the cases of people moving back and forth between the housing project and the private homes in the surrounding community. Does a bridging/weak tie with someone renting in a private home in the surrounding community automatically transform into a bonding/strong tie when that person moves into the Little Mountain Housing Project? The bonding/strong versus bridging/weak dichotomy makes it difficult to talk about ties between project residents or between project residents and people in the surrounding community without implying something about both the strength of the ties and the relative class/cultural similarity or dissimilarity between the two parties of the relationship. While the majority of the ties I found in the housing project might be thought of as bonding/strong ties because they helped tenants get by and cope with the daily challenges of life, this was the case even when the ties traversed class/cultural groupings and were relatively weak. For all these reasons, although I am not completely rejecting it, I find the dichotomy between bonding/strong and bridging/weak social capital to be unhelpful when structuring my thinking about social capital at the Little Mountain Housing Project. This dichotomy strikes me as overly simplistic for the messy social reality of Little Mountain and Vancouver. Other researchers of public

housing redevelopment have also expressed dissatisfaction with the division of social capital into bonding/strong and bridging/weak categories.³⁶

As Richard explained, even among an extremely diverse group of neighbours, there existed a reciprocal relationship of helping people get by:

We had a Fijian family beside us, Muslim, and then a Vietnamese family on the other side of us. They were like an extended family. Food would be going back and forth between the windows. Anything anyone needed, they could go, whoever was home at that time, chances are that person would be willing to lend them what they needed. We had our phone cut off for a while and we had a neighbour, she let me use her phone, kept my messages and everything. We were willing to do the same thing.

Little Mountain tenants helped each other get by in many different ways. They helped each other with things like babysitting, grocery shopping, gardening, walking children to school, giving rides to appointments, sharing telephones, checking up on ill neighbours, translating English, navigating the bureaucracy of BC Housing, and assisting women who were experiencing domestic violence.

The sharing of food, in particular, was mentioned by several of the tenants I interviewed. This was an area where, not only the recipients, but also the giver of food got something out of the relationship. For example, Lorraine explained:

At Little Mountain I was known as the ‘Pancake Mum’ because on the weekend I would make pancakes for everyone who wanted to come over and eat pancakes. And, on the hot sunny days I’d make slushies. I’d put ice in a beaker and a package of kool-aid and some sugar and it would be slushy and I’d have three beakers of it. When I’d come home from work the kids would be lined up at my house waiting for their slushies. It was wonderful, I really liked it.

Rhonda also has fond memories of food sharing between Little Mountain neighbours:

The German woman who speaks Spanish, oh, she’s a fabulous woman who lived in the seniors’ building. She and I became very, very close. And she was always bringing banana bread over to me. And it was wonderful to have her, especially after my mum died.

In this case, the sharing of food seems to have been incidental to the emotional support that was received during a period of difficulty after losing her mother. In other cases, food was shared in order to provide sustenance to families during periods of economic hardship. Richard remembered:

We went away to a funeral and before we went I made a payment to Hydro, but it didn’t go through in time and they cut my Hydro off so when we got back a week later all the food was thawed and bad in the fridge. So this neighbour here, they went out and bought us a hundred and something dollars worth of food. We didn’t even ask them to do it. They just showed up at the door with flats of food.

³⁶ See Alexandra M. Curley, “A New Place, a New Network? Social Capital Effects of Residential Relocation of Poor Women”, in *Networked Urbanism: Social Capital in the City*, eds. T. Blokland & M. Savage (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), pp. 85-104.

Babysitting was another key way Little Mountain tenants helped each other out. Several parents in the housing project worked out a system in which they would babysit each others' children. Natasha explained how it worked:

There's a lot of single parents who work and so sometimes they're called in to work for a later shift, like six to midnight...What's great about it is your babysitter is right there close at hand and it takes a long time to establish trust...You have your group of people that you really trust and they're close at hand...It's usually trade, which works for a lot of the parents because nobody can really afford a sitter nowadays. Sometimes it's paid, yeah, like if it's such an inconvenience, like a last minute thing, then yeah, here's 20 or 30 bucks. It's like that. But mostly we have an understanding, like let's trade days, which works out really well.

Lorraine was also part of an arrangement like this with her neighbours:

I would call it almost a barter system, sometimes I would take their kids for the whole weekend because they were helping me out with my son at night time so it didn't cost anything. It was really awesome.

In fact, five out of the six households that I interviewed that have young children mentioned relying on neighbours for babysitting, usually based on a trade or barter system. The one family that did not do this did not require babysitting due to the fact that both parents were present in the home and had complimentary work schedules. In some cases, I found that there was not the formalized barter arrangement that Natasha and Lorraine talked about but rather a reliance on the communal supervision of children that seemed to be the norm of the project. Hillary explained: "They watch a lot of people's kids when they go to work and come home. Mum goes to the store, "Can you keep an eye on my kiddies outside playing?" You know, like that, all the time. Whoever's home, more or less, you can ask them." Monique remarked, "No matter if your three-year-old was playing outside, there was always somebody there. There's second eyes out there, always there to help you out." One did not have to have young children oneself to supervise the children in the common open spaces of the housing project. As Rhonda explained,

I'd look and I'd see that the kids were a little bit too far and I'd say, "Oh, you better turn around now." You kept an eye out for everybody...Other people's kids, oh yeah, absolutely. My kids were older, I didn't have to keep an eye out for them...If somebody's kids wandered a little too far. And everybody else did that too. It was safe.

Sometimes people who live in private housing realized what they were missing in this regard when they came to visit the housing project. Donald explained:

Donald: I never lived in a complex like that...But it was over time that the real community value of the place kicked in. We realized most people had to go to daycare centres if both parents were working, whereas because there was a communal playground for the children and things like that, the children always had friends...It was almost like living in a world that had gone by. And a lot of friends came over and said this is ideal because they had children and they realized what they went through in normal isolation of community and we sort of had that.

Tommy: Your friends felt that they were isolated?

Donald: *Oh yes, very much so.*

Tommy: And you had the opposite?

Donald: *Yes, there was actually children to play with and we knew their parents and they lived right around us.*

While a great deal has been written in the academic literature on the isolation of public housing tenants, according to this tenant, his friends who live in private housing are the ones who are isolated in contrast to his family's situation in the Little Mountain Housing Project.

I also heard stories about tenants helping each other during emergencies. Seema recalled the time when her neighbours were invaluable when she needed medical assistance:

I had my asthma attack and...I called my neighbours downstairs, the two little old ladies, I memorized their number because we were very close, like family. And I said, "Help me, I'm dying."...They called the ambulance right away, and two ambulances came.

This section has shown that the Little Mountain Housing Project was very rich in social capital—a finding that runs counter to dominant representations of public housing in the academic literature. Although I found little evidence of bridging/weak social connections that led to job information, I found that the Little Mountain tenants helped each other to cope with the daily challenges of life in a variety of ways. This happened even when the connections were relatively weak and traversed the different cultural groups that lived in the project. The barter-based babysitting system, although it may be thought of as an example of bonding/strong social capital, may actually help tenants improve their economic circumstances if it allows them to take jobs. But the value of social capital should not be judged on the basis of its potential to allow for upward social mobility. Even in the absence of upward social mobility, the benefits the Little Mountain tenants enjoyed from their connections with each other are valuable in their own right. The supportive social capital at Little Mountain was an important resource for the tenants. In a context of welfare state cutbacks and low paying jobs that do not help people get ahead anyways, low-income people need all the support they can get from each other. The next section shows that the rich level of social capital at Little Mountain was not a recent development, but rather, has been a persistent quality of the community.

5.2.2 Social Capital in the Past

Although in its old age Little Mountain may have had some similarities with the old slum communities in that there were some extended kin networks in the project, it did not start off that way. In the beginning, Little Mountain was an artificially constructed community whose social composition was a pure reflection of state policy. Fromson et al. noted that some of the original occupants of Little Mountain missed the extended family networks of their former neighbourhoods. But Fromson et al. did find that

friendships had already started to form in the new housing project. Much like in more recent years, in the 1950s bonds formed between tenants due to a shared way of life and use of common spaces in the project:

It is interesting to find that the majority of tenants feel they belong to a new neighbourhood at Little Mountain. Reasons given for this include the coffee visits among some of the mothers...Others refer to the 'sharing a way of living' which is to be found in the use of basement and laundry facilities, and alternate cleanings of the hallway by some tenants, as was found in one apartment unit... A number of tenants consider that they belong to the Project because this is where they have their closest friendship ties. Those who live closest to the Project boundaries, however, frequently find their closest friendship ties cross boundary lines. One family associates principally with neighbours across the street...A majority of tenants call Little Mountain a community.³⁷

Thus, much like in the latter years, Little Mountain started off as a community that was rich in social connections, with social connections extending beyond the boundaries of the project into the surrounding community.

Another similarity between the 1950s and the contemporary period was the reliance on neighbours for babysitting, which seems to have been a longstanding practice in the Little Mountain Housing Project. In the 1950s at Little Mountain it was found that "the neighbours willingly help each other in this; four women mentioned the particular neighbour with whom they shared babysitting duty."³⁸ In addition, the collective supervision of children was more formalized in the past when there was a designated 'Tot Lot' outside where parents could drop off their kids and other parents took turns watching the kids. Toni Steenhuisen explained how it worked:

We instituted a 'Tot Lot' there. We fenced it off and it was for mothers if they had to go shopping or anything or see doctors. They could bring their little ones there and we watched over them and then they had to pick them back up. And we had lots of toys given to us by different charities. We told them, "It's not a babysitting service. It's strictly some place where you can drop your little ones off and pick them back up, but no more than an hour and a half."

Throughout her over 50 years in the project, Toni Steenhuisen has been helping her fellow neighbours get by:

There was so much love going out from our family to other families that were in need and they would come to my door, "Can you help me with this, can you help me with that?" And it's the reaching out to a person, whether they are in need of a talk, or a shoulder to cry on, or a cup of sugar, whatever, you do so. Whatever's in your power to do to help each other, you do so.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 87.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 75.

Other research has found that some social connections between public housing tenants can be classified as draining ties because they deplete households of resources.³⁹ I asked Toni if she ever felt drained by all the assistance she offered her neighbours over the years. She responded:

No. I didn't find it draining because I learned a lot. I learned that when you help your neighbour it's a good thing because your neighbour will say, if you need anything don't hesitate to call us, to phone. I have lots of phone numbers.

In the 1970s, the formation of social capital was encouraged by the newsletter of the Little Mountain Housing Project, which urged tenants to make others in the housing project aware of tenants in need of support from the community:

*In the past, tenants have suffered tragedies without help or moral support from the rest of us; mainly because we were unaware of the need. We ask all tenants to report if they know of neighbors ill, in hospital or in trouble. Help us see that tenants are not alone during these periods. Phone the office as soon as you become aware of such a need.*⁴⁰

The atmosphere of the Little Mountain Housing Project in the 1970s that comes across in my interviews with tenants is that of happiness, children, and friendship. Seema raised her daughter in the project in the 1970s and she happily remembered what it was like: *"My daughter grew up with all these kids. It was a hustle and bustle and laughter, and it was families, and it was really a nice place to live."* Brenda also had happy memories of the Little Mountain Housing Project in the 1970s: *"You would walk out your door and you couldn't help but be in a good mood because you'd see all your friends out there and everything was great."* Many people have memories like these of the Little Mountain Housing Project. Together these various sources concerning the 1950s through to the 1970s show there was a longstanding history of friendship and community spirit at Little Mountain. Indeed, friendship was an important part of the meaning of the place.

5.3 SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Social organization refers to the level of participation in community institutions like residents' associations, community centres, and schools.⁴¹ Participation in such institutions may bring project residents together with people in the surrounding community thereby creating a socially integrated community. It can also lead to better services and programs for the neighbourhood. As in the preceding section, I first consider social organization in the contemporary period before discussing historical examples of social organization at Little Mountain.

³⁹ Curley, Op. cit.

⁴⁰ *LMTA News* (January 13, 1978), p. 3, CVA 588-C-72 file 2.

⁴¹ See Matthew A. Crenson, *Neighborhood Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

5.3.1 Social Organization in the Contemporary Period

Examples of social organization can be classified into two categories. First, there are organizations and events that are specific to public housing tenants and generally do not include people from the surrounding community. These may involve Little Mountain tenants only or, as in the case of the Vancouver and District Public Housing Tenants' Association (VDPHTA), bring together public housing tenants from several housing projects. Second, there are the broader neighbourhood institutions that are open to project and non-project residents alike. I consider the evidence for each of these in turn.

In terms of social organization specific to the Little Mountain Housing Project, the prime example is the Little Mountain Tenants' Association (LMTA). The LMTA appears to have been at its peak in the 1960s and 1970s. After the death of long-time LMTA President Margaret E. Mitchell in 1994, the LMTA was disbanded except for a one year period from 1998 to 1999 when Toni Steenhuisen revived it. In 1998 and 1999, the LMTA's newsletter *The Chatterbox* was also revived. In the late 1990s, the newsletter read much as it did in the 1960s. Indeed it seems nostalgia for the past is partly what motivated its resurrection. As the May 1998 edition begins, "We would like *The Chatterbox* to become what it *used to be*, a newsletter that informed and relayed information of all sorts" (my emphasis added).⁴² Like in earlier periods, *The Chatterbox* shows that Little Mountain had a healthy level of social organization in the late 1990s. The newsletter advised tenants about upcoming LMTA meetings and events such as a 'Corn Fest' (another throw-back from Little Mountain's past), bingo night and a trip to Splash Down Park. All of these events were organized by the committee of tenants that managed the LMTA. It also included information about various events and groups in the surrounding community, thereby helping to integrate the tenants with the surrounding community. Much like in the 1960s, announcements about births in the project or people in ill health included tenants' names. But unlike in the 1960s, while new tenants were given a "warm welcome", they were unnamed in the newsletter due to "privacy concerns."⁴³ Another change in the 1990s was that some notices included information in multiple languages. But overall, the newsletter and the events put on by the LMTA in 1998 and 1999 were much like they were in the past. It seems that with long-time Little Mountain resident Toni Steenhuisen in charge of the LMTA as well as several other long-time residents active in the LMTA, social organization carried on in the housing project much as it did in earlier periods. The report in the September 1998 issue of *The Chatterbox* on the past summer's Corn Fest could just as well have been talking about an event that was held decades before:

We had a very successful CORNFEST on August 22nd. In addition to the lovely and luscious Jubilee corn, we also had dozens of hotdogs and hamburgers, plus potato salad, tossed crab salad, juice, coffee and tea. So many people from the complex attended, that it was impossible to even

⁴² *The Chatterbox* (May 1998), p. 1.

⁴³ *The Chatterbox* (September 15, 1998), p. 3.

try to count them all. Someone brought a guitar and several people played and sang, and anyone who knew the words sang along. It was great fun and a fabulous, friendly atmosphere. We did have some uncooked corn and hotdogs left, and sold it to the various people who attended, which eliminated the worry of spoiled food and increased our savings.⁴⁴

Throughout their decades in the housing project, the Steenhuisen family have been a pillar of social organization both in the project and in the surrounding community. The Steenhuisen family's extraordinary contributions to community life are summarized in Figure 5.5.

Another major celebration took place in 2004 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Little Mountain Housing Project. This was attended by Grace McCarthy, who was the MP for Vancouver-Little Mountain from 1966 to 1988 and who served as a senior Cabinet Minister in the Social Credit Governments of W.R. Bennett and Bill Vander Zalm. For many decades, Grace McCarthy has been a long-time friend of the Little Mountain Housing Project. Many people have happy memories of the 50th anniversary, which brought current and past tenants together. My mother and sister in fact attended the party. I was invited but as an undergraduate at the time I stayed home to study for an exam—a decision I strongly regret in retrospect. Richard was a key organizer of this event, which he explained was partly motivated out of a desire to showcase local musical talent and create a positive example for children:

This community actually housed quite a few musicians: myself and Sherwin, Red One, Keith Scott, Main Offenders, Poll, a couple other young guys that are coming out now. At that time there was a lot of really underprivileged kids where hotdogs was a high-end dinner for these guys. So I wanted to do something for these kids to show that just because they live in the projects doesn't mean they can't accomplish certain things. So that is one reason why I got the stage and the bands to come and have a barbeque...Some local bands, a band from Main Community Bikes they came and brought a booth up and bikes.

There was also a healthy level of social organization in terms of tenant involvement in broader neighbourhood institutions. In terms of programming for youth, some neighbourhood groups would often come to the housing project, bringing together project and non-project youth alike. Natasha explained:

There's like a program that runs out of there and a lot of kids who live outside of the complex use this program... It's called the Crew Drop-In and it's run by university students. It's just a drop-in and it's also a resource for kids to use the internet or to make resumes...A lot of the kids that don't live there use it, from all over the neighbourhood, actually. There's been art programs that came and used the space for students that were from Brock School, some of them were from the complex, but actually when I looked at the group most of them weren't.

Youth from the Little Mountain Housing Project also participated in a number of off-site programs such as those offered at the nearby Riley Park Community Centre and local churches. One

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 1.

Figure 5.5

The Steenhuisen Family

The Steenhuisen family have contributed to the community for more than half a century. Toni and Dick Steenhuisen and their children moved to the Little Mountain Housing Project in 1957, within 18 months of immigrating to Canada from the Dutch West Indies. Soon after coming to Canada, Dick found work with the Canadian Pacific Railway, where he worked for many years. When the family first moved to Little Mountain they had two children and they occupied a one-bedroom apartment on James Walk. Over the course of living at Little Mountain, the family expanded to include seven children. After moving into a second apartment building at Little Mountain, the growing family finally settled into their Grouse Walk rowhouse in 1964. Dick and Toni were among the founding members of the LMTA and all family members were keen participants in all project events. In the 1960s, the parents were both members of the General Brock PTA, with Dick serving as President. Toni and her neighbour Shirley Card created a free skate program at the nearby Riley Park Community Centre in the 1960s. The women would supervise children from low-income families who were allowed to skate for free on Friday afternoons. This pilot program evolved into the Leisure Access Card Program that is still operated by the Vancouver Parks Board to this day. The family also volunteered at a number of community organizations. The whole family put on a 'movie afternoon' for people with disabilities at the community centre. Ingrid is one of the Steenhuisen children. She recalled how the family spent their Sunday afternoons when she was a child:

There was a movie afternoon at the community centre on Sundays. Dad did the film projection, mum did the concession stand and us kids helped with assisting the patrons with whatever they needed. And these were people in wheelchairs, either paraplegics, quadriplegics, cerebral palsy there to have an afternoon of a movie. But it also was for us to learn compassion and tolerance and understanding.

It was a lesson the Steenhuisen children learned well. As an adult, Ingrid Steenhuisen returned to live at the Little Mountain Housing Project in 2004 to assist her elderly widowed mother. When she is not helping her mother, Ingrid is contributing to community life in Vancouver in myriad ways. She has been on the Board of Directors of the Little Mountain Neighbourhood House Society since 1997, including six years as President. She is a member of the Riley Park/South Cambie Community Vision Steering Committee and Chair of the group's Housing Subcommittee. In addition, she has participated in the City of Vancouver's Ecodensity Dialogue. Ingrid has also been a member of the City of Vancouver's Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee. In 2007 Ingrid helped to organize the General Brock Elementary School Centennial Reunion. Ingrid's work in the community earned her recognition in 2007 when she was awarded the Association of Neighbourhood Houses of Greater Vancouver's Good Neighbour Award. Since 2008 Ingrid has given walking tours of the Little Mountain Housing Project, as part of the Jane's Walks that are organized by the Think City project. Ingrid consistently displays a highly compassionate understanding of people. Given her vast experience in a number of community organizations, Ingrid is very knowledgeable, not only about the specifics of the Little Mountain Housing Project, but also on a much broader range of issues pertaining to city planning, citizen participation, and inclusive communities. Deep gratitude is owed to Ingrid and the rest of the Steenhuisen family for their passion for community service.



Toni and her daughter Ingrid in front of their rowhouse.

project teen's involvement with disc golf that was played at the adjacent Queen Elizabeth Park presented opportunities to earn a little bit of money and to travel to Vancouver Island. As Beth recalled:

He plays disc golf right over there...He goes and he retrieves the discs and he makes himself a little pocket money...And he plays. A few months ago now, he went with them to a tournament in Nanaimo and they took him along as part of the team.

This may be considered an example of bridging/weak social capital. In this case, social ties with people outside the housing project (but who play disc golf right next to the housing project), brought money and a rare opportunity to get out of the city. But it is also an example of social organization because it is involvement with a structured, organized group.

The Little Mountain Neighbourhood House (hereafter, LMNH) on Main Street at 24th Avenue is a key institution for social organization that brought together project and non-project residents alike. The LMNH provides a wide range of educational, cultural, recreational and social services to the broader neighbourhood that included the Little Mountain Housing Project. The LMNH offers childcare programs, literacy and homework groups for school children, cooking and food-sharing programs, yoga classes, ESL classes, counseling services, legal advice, fitness programs for seniors, and settlement and adaptation services for recent immigrants. Many of these services are free or very low cost. Many project residents availed themselves of these services and some project residents even helped to provide these services at the LMNH. Long-time Little Mountain resident Ingrid Steenhuisen has been on the Board of Directors of the LMNH since 1997, including six years when she served as President. Another housing project resident also frequently volunteered at the LMNH. Beth explained that volunteering at the LMNH was something she found rewarding and the prospect of not being able to do that due to relocation was difficult for her:

I look after children at the drop-in. I help just to read to them and play with them and sing songs with them...You get to know everyone. I've been doing that for about a year now. I'll be sad if we can't stay because it's really been a blessing for me.

Another important neighbourhood institution is the Riley Park Community Centre on East 30th Avenue at Ontario Street, just three blocks away from the housing project. Eight households I interviewed mentioned involvement in the programming offered at the Riley Park Community Centre. Tenants from the Little Mountain Housing Project went to Riley Park for swimming, skating, karate, and First Aid training. Little Mountain tenants also made use of the offerings of local libraries, schools, and nearby Langara College.

Some Little Mountain tenants said they were involved in church or religious groups. One elderly Chinese tenant was deeply committed to her temple:

Chinese big temple...lots of times when my mum is feeling healthy she does lots of working for the temple. She is very famous for this area because she does so many good things, like cooking...People are talking about how good my mum is because she is very religious, very religious. She is getting old...It's not possible if she is moving far away.

Once again, concern was expressed that relocation would reduce tenants' abilities to participate in neighbourhood institutions. Although much of the academic literature assumes that public housing tenants stand to benefit from their social connections with people who live outside of public housing, the tenants I interviewed often emphasized how the surrounding community benefits from the involvement of the public housing tenants. As I have already explained, this is one of the reasons why I am dissatisfied with the bridging/weak versus bonding/strong social capital dichotomy in the academic literature. It seems that much of the academic literature, with its pre-occupation with upward mobility in terms of socio-economic status, has under-emphasized how low-income people can contribute to the community despite having a lack of significant financial resources. Beth's comments are pertinent to this point: *"There's all sorts of things you can do if you don't have money. Instead of money, you can swap skills, babysitting. Somebody always has something to offer."*

This section has shown that in the contemporary period, there was a fair degree of social organization, both within the project and in the surrounding neighbourhood. The larger Riley Park neighbourhood has a high density of community organizations that the tenants participated in. Rather than being isolated, the Little Mountain tenants were integrated with the surrounding community. Having discussed social organization at Little Mountain in the contemporary period, I now consider historical examples of social organization.

5.3.2 Social Organization in the Past

Social organization appears to have been even stronger in the past. Historically, social organization, in addition to social events, took on a more political edge. In fact, in its past Little Mountain was a hotbed of progressive politics that sought to advance the interests of low-income tenants. In the 1970s especially, Little Mountain tenants were involved in a broad movement of public housing tenants that extended across the region and the country. With its tenant management committee, the first of its kind in Canada, Little Mountain offered a progressive example of tenant organization that public housing tenants in other projects sought to implement. Little Mountain tenants also held key positions in local organizations that were responsible for allocating government resources in the community. Sean Purdy has documented similar history in Toronto's Regent Park. Purdy argues that "ideological stigmatization of Regent Park as an eye-catching site of poverty and deprivation has obscured the extent to which tenants in Regent Park have resisted, rejected, and organized against dominant ideologies and the oppressive practices of state housing authorities."⁴⁵ Little Mountain, although it certainly stood out against its surroundings as a distinctly welfarist urban form, is less eye-catching and was never stigmatized like Regent Park. But still, the stereotype of the 'troubled housing project' and the recent

⁴⁵ Sean Purdy, "By the People, For the People: Tenant Organizing in Toronto's Regent Park Housing Project in the 1960s and 1970s", *Journal of Urban History*, 30,4 (2004), p. 522.

portrayal by the provincial government of Little Mountain as an unbalanced community that needed to be integrated also hide Little Mountain's rich history of tenant organizing. Thus, this section very much serves to defend the Little Mountain Housing Project from the negative depictions posited by the provincial government and to highlight its historic significance in Vancouver and Canada.

The LMTA was created in 1961 and its objectives are outlined in Figure 5.6. In 1961 a group of about 50 tenants transformed the basement of the apartment building at 30 Oriole Walk into the LMTA's headquarters. The tenants raised \$500 themselves, which was matched by a donation from the Kiwanis Club. These funds were used to paint the walls, install proper flooring, and to purchase tables and chairs. The LMTA hall also had a refrigerator, television, and in later years, a VCR.⁴⁶ While the tenants' efforts in creating this meeting space are impressive, this renovated basement only partially made up for the lack of an on-site community centre, which seems to have been a longstanding sore point for many Little Mountain tenants.⁴⁷ Even BC Housing acknowledged the deficiency: "Little Mountain is the most severely (sic) lacking in common room facilities of all public housing projects in Vancouver."⁴⁸ The original plans for the housing project did include a community centre, but this was eliminated when the project was redesigned in 1952 in order to bring down costs. In the 1970s, there was a portable classroom set up on the housing project site at Oriole Walk and Ontario Street but this was primarily used as a nursery school for the broader community and Little Mountain tenants made "infrequent use"⁴⁹ of it.

The lack of an on-site community centre appears not to have impaired the activities of the LMTA. In the 1960s, the LMTA fostered a strong sense of community in the housing project. The Health and Welfare Committee sent 'Get Well' cards to tenants when they were sick, visited tenants when they were in hospital, and sent sympathy cards to tenants when a loved one passed away. The

Figure 5.6 Objectives of the Little Mountain Tenants' Association, 1961

Article 2 of the LMTA's Constitution identified six objectives of the Association:

- a) To carry on activities designed to assist the welfare of its members. Such activities may include emergency funds, employment assistance and other projects that the membership approves
- b) To carry on social activities to extend the friendship and acquaintanceship of the members
- c) To establish connection or relationship with other groups or organizations interested in the welfare of our association
- d) To eliminate juvenile delinquency in Vancouver by providing good healthy entertainment
- e) To work for the establishment of a public Community Centre in our area
- f) To function solely as a non-political, non-partisan, and non-sectarian association

⁴⁶ "History of Little Mountain Tenants Association (LMTA)", *LMTA Newsletter* (Spring 1998), p. 1.

⁴⁷ John C. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), p. 187.

⁴⁸ Doug Purdy, *Op. cit.*, p. A6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Social and Recreation Committee planned the various events that marked the calendar year at Little Mountain. These included Easter Egg hunts, May Day celebrations, Queen and Princess coronations, Sports Day, Halloween parties, Christmas parties, puppet shows, tea and bake sales, raffles, hootenannies, bingo nights, card nights, and coffee parties. They also ran several clubs for children such as the Boys and Girls Club, the Preteens Club and the Study Club.⁵⁰ Throughout the 1960s, the LMTA also published the project newsletter, *The Chatterbox*, which offers a fascinating glimpse into the social history of the Little Mountain Housing Project. Each newsletter welcomed and named new project residents, offered good wishes to departing residents, congratulated families on new births and offered sympathy to families when they lost a loved one. Tenants' full names, addresses, and often their phone numbers were included in these announcements so everyone in the housing project knew everyone else. *The Chatterbox* encouraged project residents to participate in social events at Little Mountain:

HOOTENANY "We're out for a good time tonight...." COME TO THE LM CELLAR TO A HOOTENANY. Sure as shooting folks, a Folksinging evening right here within walking distance for all...WORLD FAMOUS FOLK SINGING GROUPS. The UBC Quartet who have International renown...Three guitars and a banjo complement the vocal harmony. On the same programme and not to be outdone we present the Jubilation Singers, known clear across Canada, recordings and radio shows, CBC – TV besides numerous appearances at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre and the Playhouse Theatre...Come out and support some good local talent. An evening of fun and entertainment. Come and rub elbows with Celebrities. MEET YOU ALL AT THE CELLAR (30 Oriole Walk).⁵¹

Ingrid Steenhuisen recalled when she and her sisters were coronated Little Mountain royalty:

It was in the Preteen Club, from 9 to 13, and the year my twin sister and I were about to turn 13, it was our last chance. My twin sister got Queen, I got Princess, and another sister got Princess...They were teasing, "Fixed! Fixed!" Because they were throwing names out of a hat and to have all three of us from the same family.

Even into the late 1970s, the LMTA was organizing social events that brought the Little Mountain tenants together. Many tenants from the time have fond memories of the 'Corn Fests' that were held. The Corn Fests were organized by the tenants themselves:

We did car washes, different things to raise money to buy the corn. George Goodrich would go get the corn in Chilliwack. All of Oriole Walk would cook the corn. And then we'd have big tins of melted butter and it was just corn, just nothing but a corn feed...Oh yeah, they were a lot of fun, they were a riot.

⁵⁰ "History of Little Mountain Tenants Association", *LMTA Newsletter* (Spring 1998), p. 1

⁵¹ *The Chatterbox* (November 19, 1965), p. 1.

George Goodrich was also the coach of a local baseball team in the 1970s. The team included children from the housing project and the surrounding community. My mother, who lived in one of the surrounding private homes, was actually on the team.

Another historic example of social organization within the housing project was the seniors' library that some of the residents operated in the basement of one of the apartment buildings. Fromson et al. described the library in the 1950s:

A proud feature of Little Mountain is a library, organized by the older residents, which occupies one of the apartment-house basements. It has been in operation since May, 1955; every Monday afternoon from 2:00 until 3:00 elderly residents may visit the library and usually do. Annually in May, a large tea is held for the library patrons within the basement adjacent to the library; this event is looked forward to with delight by all concerned. The lady who runs the Grouse Walk library has a new purpose in life now. Five years ago she was a retiring person who felt that life held nothing more for her; the library has supplied this purpose.⁵²

Several tenants I interviewed remembered this library in Pensioners' Row. I am told that various different senior citizen tenants continued to operate the library right up until some time in the 1990s.

Tenant organizing that started at Little Mountain in 1961 led to the organizing of public housing tenants across Vancouver by the late 1960s. By 1967 Vancouver had six public housing projects: Little Mountain, Orchard Park, Skeena Terrace, Killarney Gardens, MacLean Park, and Raymur Place. In 1967 tenants from all six public housing projects came together to form the Vancouver Housing Inter-Project Council.⁵³ The goal of the group was: "To help organize tenants in action groups and self-help programs. For example: co-ops, play school, nursery school and day care centres, representation on management and management participation."⁵⁴ According to Ingrid Steenhuisen, one of the major reasons for the formation of this group was the high level of social organization displayed at Little Mountain by the LMTA, which some wanted to bring to other housing projects. Also, long-time Little Mountain resident, Shirley Card was an early (perhaps the first) Secretary of the Council.⁵⁵ In 1968 the Inter-Project Council issued a report entitled *A Tenant Looks At Public Housing Projects* in which tenants offered constructive criticism on how living conditions in public housing might be improved. Several suggestions for

⁵² Fromson et al., Op. cit., p. 89.

⁵³ Joan Adams, *A Tenant Looks At Public Housing Projects* (Report prepared for the Vancouver Housing Inter-Project Council, United Community Services of the Greater Vancouver Area, April, 1968, retrieved from UBC Rare Books and Special Collections)

⁵⁴ Brief to Federal Government, Housing and Urban Renewal from the Vancouver Housing Inter-Project Council, June 1970, CVA 90-F-7 file 2.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

improvement of the Little Mountain Housing Project were included in this report.⁵⁶ Thus, by the late 1960s social organization had advanced beyond simply planning social events to agitating governments for better living conditions. This was an important and early demonstration of the unity of public housing tenants.

Shortly after it was created this group was renamed the Vancouver and District Public Housing Tenants Association (VDPHTA), perhaps to reflect the regional distribution of public housing as by the early 1970s public housing had expanded beyond the borders of the City of Vancouver. Throughout the 1970s the group advocated for the interests of public housing tenants and called for more “public housing from Stanley Park to Chilliwack.”⁵⁷ The group also sent briefs concerning a number of social policy areas to various levels of government. Beginning in 1968, the VDPHTA published its monthly newsletter known as *Citizens United*, which was delivered to all public housing tenants in the Vancouver Region and an additional outside mailing list of 200 people (including then-City Alderman Mike Harcourt, whose files in the City of Vancouver Archives formed the basis of much of this research).⁵⁸ An important annual event was the Leadership Conference that took place every summer for a number of years at Camp Alexandra in South Surrey.⁵⁹ In 1973 Little Mountain resident Toni Steenhuisen remarked in *Citizens United*, “The atmosphere was very friendly...We were one big happy family.”⁶⁰ In addition to building camaraderie among tenants from different housing projects, tenants participated in workshops dealing with a number of public policy areas. The tenants came up with a number of recommendations for government concerning housing policy, recreation, rents in public housing, daycare, and welfare policy. At the 1973 Leadership Conference the workshop on rents was facilitated by Little Mountain tenant Dr. I. Muthanna (apparently there is a long history of doctors living in the Little Mountain Housing Project). The VDPHTA also sent delegations to speak with politicians in Victoria and frequently urged public housing tenants to involve themselves in the political process.⁶¹

In the 1970s social organization of public housing tenants even went to the national level with the National Conference of Public Housing Tenants, the first of which took place in May 1971 in Thunder Bay. The idea for the national conference originated from the VDPHTA.⁶² At the National Conference,

⁵⁶ Adams, Op. cit.

⁵⁷ VDPHTA Press Release dated February 5, 1974, CVA 44-C-1 file 10.

⁵⁸ VDPHTA submission to National Conference of Public Housing Tenants, 1971, CVA 600-E-5 file 1.

⁵⁹ Surrey’s Camp Alexandra has a long history of offering outdoors experiences for disadvantaged groups from Vancouver. See www.campalex.com.

⁶⁰ *Citizens United* (June 1973), p. 3, CVA 600-E-5 file 1.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² National Conference of Public Housing Tenants, *Strength Through Unity: A Report of the National Conference of Public Housing Tenants* (May 1971), CVA 600-E-5 file 1.

public housing tenants passed a number of resolutions calling for greater tenant involvement in the management and planning for public housing, affordable homeownership programs for low-income people, and several reforms to how rents in public housing are calculated.⁶³ One second-generation Little Mountain tenant I interviewed whose mother was a key member of the LMTA in the 1970s recalled how his mother was involved in conferences at the national level: “*My mum had a background in human relations, she went to conferences back east in Montreal and all that sort of stuff so my mum was the brains of the office.*” I cannot confirm whether his mother attended the National Conference in Thunder Bay in 1971, but it seems likely that she did.

By the early 1970s, Little Mountain tenants had already accomplished some of what public housing tenants from across Canada were calling for at the National Conference in terms of tenant management of public housing. The tenants succeeded in convincing BC Housing to delegate routine management responsibilities to a committee of tenants. At this time, Little Mountain was “the only Vancouver public housing project which is managed by a tenant committee.”⁶⁴ One Little Mountain tenant I interviewed recalled how the tenants were better at managing the project because when the tenants were in charge “*things got done right away*”. The landmark Dennis and Fish report, which was largely critical of the existing public housing model, took note of this progressive management approach in place at Little Mountain in the 1970s:

The other major experiment in project management is the Little Mountain project in Vancouver. There, following complaints about the work of the project manager, the BCHMC agreed to transfer certain management functions, including rent collection, to a committee of tenants of the project. The committee acts as an information centre, passing on complaints to the Commission and providing advice to individual tenants. The committee also follows up requests for maintenance services to ensure that the repairs are completed. The authority delegated to the committee tends to be either related to physical maintenance or relatively routine in nature, involving little administrative discretion...The BCHMC has recently indicated to the provincial tenants association its satisfaction with the arrangement and its willingness to enter into similar arrangements for other projects and is awaiting a request from a tenants’ group.⁶⁵

Dennis and Fish compiled their research on public housing in 1971, thus 1971 is the earliest confirmed date I have for the existence of tenant management at Little Mountain. Tenant management

⁶³ National Conference of Public Housing Tenants, Conference Resolutions, Thunder Bay, ON, May 22-24, 1971, CVA 600-E-5, file 1.

⁶⁴ Doug Purdy, Op. cit., p. A7.

⁶⁵ Michael Dennis & Susan Fish, *Programs in Search of a Policy* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1972), p. 203.

was initiated at Toronto's Regent Park in 1973.⁶⁶ Thus, contrary to claims that Toronto's Regent Park was the first public housing project where tenants were delegated management authority⁶⁷, Little Mountain was actually the first housing project in Canada where this occurred. Since the early 1970s, tenant management has become a fixture of Canada's third sector social housing programs. In fact, the non-profit and cooperative housing that often feature tenant management was initiated in 1973 largely in response to the Dennis and Fish report.⁶⁸ Thus, just as Little Mountain was a pioneering project in the 1950s for being one of the first projects with majority funding from the federal government, Little Mountain continued to lead the way for Canadian social housing policy in the 1970s with its innovative management approach that delegated authority to tenants—an approach that would become commonplace in later forms of social housing. Other innovations at Little Mountain in the 1970s included a cooperative store and a housing management course that was developed by the LMTA and the UBC Extension Department.⁶⁹

In the 1970s Little Mountain had an organized roster of leaders who ensured that the needs of the housing project residents were conveyed to government. Prominent tenant leaders from the Little Mountain Housing Project included Rita Jones, Shirley Card, Vi Davies, Margaret E. Mitchell, Toni Steenhuisen, and Dr. I. Muthanna, the lone male leader.⁷⁰ The fact that almost all the tenant leaders from Little Mountain were women reflected the “matriarchal”⁷¹ nature of public housing in BC which was disproportionately populated by women.⁷² One long-time resident I interviewed remarked that these Little Mountain matriarchs had “*political clout*” as they were well connected to some of the top powerbrokers of BC. They knew Les Peterson, who was the BC Minister of Labour throughout the 1960s. They also had the direct telephone number for Grace McCarthy, who was the MP for Vancouver-Little Mountain

⁶⁶ Sean Purdy, *Op. cit.*, p. 538.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ See Peter Dreier & J. David Hulchanski, “The Role of Nonprofit Housing in Canada and the United States: Some Comparisons”, *Housing Policy Debate*, 4:1 (1993), pp. 43-80.

⁶⁹ Bacher, *Op. cit.*, p. 230.

⁷⁰ It is very important to acknowledge the tremendous contributions of Rita Jones, Shirley Card, Vi Davies, and Dr. I Muthanna. There is less information on these particular tenant leaders in this thesis simply because I have had a harder time learning about them compared to the Steenhuisen family (whom I interviewed) and Margaret E. Mitchell (for whom there is significant documentation in the City of Vancouver Archives). I want to acknowledge emphatically that Rita Jones, Shirley Card, Vi Davies, and Dr. I Muthanna were very important tenant leaders at Little Mountain, even though, unfortunately, I have less information on them.

⁷¹ Doug Purdy, *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁷² The matriarchal nature of tenant leadership in public housing was something Venkatesh found in his ethnographic study of Robert Taylor Homes. In that case, women showed leadership in formal tenant participation structures created by the housing authority as well as a form of informal control of the housing project with the formation of groups like the ‘Mama’s Mafia’; see Venkatesh, *Op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

from 1966 to 1988 and who served as a senior Cabinet Minister in the Social Credit Governments of W.R. Bennett and Bill Vander Zalm. Toni Steenhuisen recalled:

I could talk to them because they knew me from way back when Grace McCarthy and Les Peterson ran as a team in Little Mountain. I knew Les Peterson just as well as Grace McCarthy. Grace McCarthy always came when we had the Sports Day Parade, her and her husband would come and she would stay and talk to the kids and hand out the prizes.

One second-generation Little Mountain tenant I interviewed told me about how the political connections of his mother in the late 1970s helped to get the government to replace the kitchen appliances at Little Mountain and make various other improvements. Joe recalled:

My mum knew Grace McCarthy who was a very powerful political head at that point...My mum, through Grace McCarthy, pressured Ottawa to give money to Housing, and I don't know if that applied to every project. But because my mum was a big voice, instantly everybody was getting their places painted, they were getting new fridges and stoves...If it was not working you got a new one, anything you needed, paint. When we all got our places fixed up it gave everybody a feeling of absolute pride.

BC Housing's Appliance Replacement Program started in 1978 and continued for the next five years, replacing the kitchen appliances in public housing across the province.⁷³ The replacement of the appliances at Little Mountain in 1978 and 1979 initiated several years of significant upgrades to the housing project. In the late 1970s through to the mid-1980s, Little Mountain "underwent a major upgrading of building systems"⁷⁴ that involved improvements to the electrical systems⁷⁵, bringing the buildings up to the fire code and installing sprinklers⁷⁶, re-tarring the roofs of the apartment buildings⁷⁷, replacing the oil tanks in the basements of the rowhouses with natural gas heating⁷⁸, installing tile flooring in some units⁷⁹, and renovations to the kitchens and bathrooms that involved installing new counters and cupboards in the kitchens⁸⁰ and new vanities, sinks, and bathtubs in the bathrooms.⁸¹ I have not been able to confirm that the Appliance Replacement Program was initiated due to the agitation and political connections of Little

⁷³ British Columbia Housing Management Commission, *1978 Annual Report*.

⁷⁴ British Columbia Housing Management Commission, *1983 Annual Report*, p. 14.

⁷⁵ Olson, Op. cit.

⁷⁶ Ibid.; British Columbia Housing Management Commission, *1982 Annual Report*.

⁷⁷ Several tenants remember this, including myself because it happened while I was living there.

⁷⁸ Olson, Op. cit.

⁷⁹ Several tenants remember this, including myself because it happened while I was living there.

⁸⁰ British Columbia Housing Management Commission, *1985 Annual Report*.

⁸¹ Ingrid Steenhuisen remembers this.

Mountain tenants, as my interview participant said, although given the high level of social organization, it seems like a plausible story. Some of the later improvements may have been an indirect outcome of the Riley Park Neighbourhood Improvement Program, as discussed later in this section.

Most of the more significant upgrades got underway following the 25th anniversary celebrations in 1979. Thus, according to Joe, “1979 was a very integral year for change” in the project. Many tenants from the time have fond memories of the 25th anniversary, which was celebrated by throwing a big party. Just like every other major event that took place at the project over the years, Grace McCarthy was in attendance. The photograph in Figure 5.7 is from the housing project’s 25th anniversary.

Social organization within the housing project appears to have remained strong through to the mid-1990s. Margaret E. Mitchell served as the President of the LMTA from the 1970s until her passing in 1994. She was also the President of the VDPHTA during much of this period. While the VDPHTA had rented office space on East Broadway in the 1970s, by the 1990s, the Association had retreated to one of the basements of the Little Mountain Housing Project, which is further proof of how important Little Mountain was to the broader tenants’ movement⁸² Nobody challenged Mitchell for President because she was very adept at “*being able to get money for things*”, as one tenant said. In 1990 federal Conservative Housing Minister Alan Redway came to the Little Mountain Housing Project to announce funding for tenants’ associations. The *Vancouver Sun* story about this announcement includes remarks from Margaret E. Mitchell, who was on hand for the announcement. Given Mitchell’s propensity for attracting government funding, it seems likely that Little Mountain was selected as the site for the announcement because Mitchell had lobbied for the funding. During the announcement, the

Figure 5.7 25th Anniversary, 1979



Photo credit: Unidentified photographer; Retrieved from BC Housing’s 1979 Annual Report, p. 8.

“Mary Kerr, James R. Chabot, Vi Davies (seated), Rita Jones (crouching), Kurt Knudsen (child).” So reads the original caption of this photograph.

⁸² Correspondence shows the address of the VDPHTA in the 1970s was 670 East Broadway (VDPHTA Press Release dated February 5, 1974, CVA 44-C-1 file 10). Correspondence from 1983 shows the VDPHTA had moved to 246 East Broadway (Letter from Stan Fraser, Chairman of VDPHTA to Margaret Ford dated May 4, 1983, CVA 238-F-3 file 3). Correspondence in 1994 shows the VDPHTA’s address was 105 East 37th Avenue, which is an address in the Little Mountain Housing Project (Letter from Margaret E. Mitchell to Mayor Philip Owen dated April 21, 1994, CVA 855-A-6 file 9).

Conservative Housing Minister described Little Mountain as “a model” for public housing.⁸³ A summary of Margaret E. Mitchell’s contributions to community is provided in Figure 5.8.

Following Mitchell’s passing, the LMTA was inactive except for the one year period in the late 1990s when Toni Steenhuisen was President. According to Toni and Ingrid Steenhuisen, the death of the LMTA can be attributed to the 1999 Annual General Meeting meeting of the Association when Toni lost the Presidency due to BC Housing interference and a take-over by younger tenants who were “*spies...in the pocket of BC Housing*”. According to Toni, BC Housing officials, “*who had no business being there*”, interfered with the voting process. As she tells it, several people went outside for a cigarette while the key positions were being voted on. That was when Toni won President by acclamation. But when the people returned from their cigarettes, they demanded a re-vote. Ingrid explained, “*Well guess who was officiating the whole voting—BC Housing. So, they turn around and say, ‘Let’s do the whole thing over again.’ And that’s how mum did not get back in.*” Within a few months, those who were elected resigned, citing health problems, which “*sunk the Association*”. Toni suggests that this was part of a BC Housing conspiracy to “*break up the Tenants’ Association*”. She also says that just before Margaret E. Mitchell passed away she wrote her a note warning her that that might happen. When asked if she thinks it was a conspiracy, Ingrid responded: “*I truly would not be surprised. There’s no way to know 100% because they would never admit it.*” Ingrid also says there were some Little Mountain tenants whose first alliance was with BC Housing over the other tenants. In return, they would get preferential treatment when it comes to the housing unit they were assigned to. Ingrid explained: “*If you ingratiate yourself with those who make the decisions and that you’re willing to do things for them in return for being able to get something better for yourself.*” In his ethnographic study of Chicago’s Robert Taylor Homes, Venkatesh described an “*accommodationist*” class of tenants who personally benefited from their close relations with CHA [Chicago Housing Authority] leadership.”⁸⁴ Thus, although these claims by the Steenhuisens may seem far-fetched to some, what the Steenhuisens are describing is actually a familiar story in public housing generally.⁸⁵ The Steenhuisens must be taken seriously because they have over 50 years of firsthand experience with public housing in BC as they have been keen participants in everything since the days when Little Mountain was managed by the Vancouver Housing Authority.

⁸³ Harold Munro, “Public Housing Aid Gains Praise”, *Vancouver Sun* (June 29, 1990), p. B4.

⁸⁴ Venkatesh, *Op. cit.*, p. 251.

⁸⁵ Housing authority manipulation of tenant participation has been documented in the context of the redevelopment of Regent Park in Toronto; see Martine August & Alan Walks, *From Social Mix to Political Marginalization? The Redevelopment of Toronto’s Public Housing and the Dilution of Tenant Organizational Power* (Paper prepared for the ESRC Seminar Series ‘Gentrification and Social Mix’, Edinburgh, Scotland, February 19-20, 2009, accessed online November 3, 2009 from www.kcl.ac.uk); Housing authority interference in tenants’ associations elections has been documented in Houston; see Diane Y. Ghirardo, “Wielding the HACHet at Allen Parkway Village”, in *Ephemeral City: Cite looks at Houston*, eds. B. Scardino et al. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2003), pp. 100-109.

Figure 5.8

Margaret Ellen Mitchell

Margaret Ellen Mitchell was an important tenant leader who lived at the Little Mountain Housing Project for a number of years.¹ She was the President of the LMTA from the 1970s until her passing in 1994. She was also the President of the VDPHTA for many years. Mitchell “*was a woman who felt that different things should be covered by government.*” Throughout her years in the community, she lobbied on behalf of the poor on a variety of issues. In the 1960s, Mitchell lived at Raymur Place and was a member of the Militant Mothers of Raymur. According to activist Jamie Lee Hamilton, her mother Alice Hamilton and Margaret E. Mitchell worked to create a safe overpass for Raymur children to attend school and both women were part of the effort to stop a freeway from going through Strathcona. Also in the 1960s, Mitchell was one of the founding members of the Unemployed Citizens Welfare Improvement Council, which “*was a force to be reckoned with.*”² In the 1970s Mitchell was the Chair of the Vancouver Opportunities Program (VOP), which was had its origins in the Vancouver Housing Inter-Project Council. VOP helped people on social assistance get jobs by providing volunteer placements, vocational training, and subsidies for employers who hired people who completed VOP programs.³ By the 1970s, Mitchell had moved to Little Mountain and became the chair of the Little Mountain Community Resources Board, which later became the Little Mountain Area Human Resources Society.⁴ This Board had discretionary spending power over money allocated from government so this was an important position to hold. In the late 1970s Mitchell was also a member of the Riley Park Citizens’ Neighbourhood Improvement Program Planning Committee. Minutes of the Committee’s meetings show she was an active participant.⁵ In addition, she often wrote letters on various social justice causes. As late as April 1994, Margaret E. Mitchell, in her capacity as President of the VDPHTA, wrote a letter to Vancouver Mayor Philip Owen protesting the cancellation of funding for the Meals on Wheels program. “*For many seniors who can no longer do their own cooking, it may mean institutionalization,*” Mitchell wrote.⁶ Margaret E. Mitchell passed away just three months later on July 22, 1994 at the age of 75. A special issue of the VDPHTA newsletter *Citizens United* was published in her memory. About 145 people attended Mitchell’s funeral, with representation from a wide range of communities including BC Housing management and members of the Hell’s Angels. She was a tough lady who was remembered for her “*down-to-earth wisdom*” and her “*piercing gaze*”. Her memorial issue of *Citizens United* stated: “*She will be remembered deeply by many. She also left clear goals for us to continue to strive for: our leaders need support, families must be preserved, and we must be united in our voice against oppression of any kind.*”⁷ In her memory, BC Housing created the Margaret Mitchell Outstanding Achievement Award, which is a \$750 award available to graduating grade 12 students who live in subsidized housing in BC.⁸

¹ Margaret Ellen Mitchell of the Little Mountain Housing Project should not be confused with Margaret Anne Mitchell who was the NDP MP for Vancouver East from 1979 to 1993.

² Jamie Lee Hamilton, “Little Mountain Love-In” (December 8, 2008, blog post accessed October 23, 2010 from downtowneastside.blogspot.com)

³ Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation fonds, 1971, CVA 52-B-2 file 2.

⁴ Little Mountain Area Human Resources Society fonds – 1972-1978, CVA 588-C-7 files 1-10

⁵ Minutes of the 60th Meeting of the Riley Park Citizens’ NIP Planning Committee, June 13, 1978, CVA 588-C-7 file 10.

⁶ Letter from Margaret E. Mitchell, President of the VDPHTA to Vancouver Mayor Philip Owen dated April 21, 1994, CVA 855-A-6 file 9.

⁷ *Citizens United*, Summer 1994 issue, p. 2.

⁸ BC Housing, “Education Awards Program” (Website accessed August 26, 2010 from www.bchousing.org)

The image shows the cover of a special issue of the newsletter 'CITIZENS UNITED'. The title is in large, bold, outlined letters. Below the title, it reads 'MARGARET MITCHELL In Loving Memory'. There is a black and white photograph of Margaret Mitchell, an elderly woman with glasses, resting her chin on her hand. Below the photo, it says 'PASSED AWAY JULY 22/94'. At the bottom, there is contact information for the 'vancouver & district public housing tenants association (1978)', including the address '105 East 37th Avenue Vancouver, B.C. V5W 1E5', phone number 'Tel: 327-6120', fax number 'Fax: 327-6130', and a logo for 'a participating agency of the United Way'.

Special issue of *Citizens United* in memory of Margaret E. Mitchell

Without an active tenants' association, it has been very difficult to organize tenants around social events or political causes because BC Housing assumed control of the tenants' meeting spaces within the project. Ingrid Steenhuisen explained:

As soon as it folded, they took the keys back for the meeting spaces that are here on the site. That as long as there was a tenants' association, a representative from the association had the keys so that if the tenants wanted to meet they had a space. Now the staff have the key so that if you want to meet you have to go and make a request, you have to state what it's for. That's in essence tipping your hat before you can get anything done...They used to say to phone and ask for it but they don't answer the phone...It's at least three days to a week before they come...It's just so problematic, that it makes it more challenging for people to be united.

Ingrid also alleges that BC Housing undermined tenant organization across public housing projects with the replacement of the VDPHTA with the Public Housing Advisory Council in the 1990s. Unlike its militant predecessor, this new body is made up of tenant representatives who, according to Ingrid, “don't question BC Housing at all” but rather “rubber stamps everything BC Housing does.”⁸⁶ The Public Housing Advisory Council does not even have an independent website. Rather, the only internet presence of the group appears to be a brief write-up on the BC Housing website⁸⁷, which makes the group appear to be part of the BC Housing structure. In contrast, the VDPHTA operated independent of BC Housing and circulated its own newsletter. Consistent with Ingrid's allegations is the fact that the Public Housing Advisory Council was conspicuously silent during the relocation of Little Mountain tenants despite the significant concerns that tenants had and the fact that redevelopment/privatization is a sweeping policy change that is unlikely to remain confined to Little Mountain. It is hard to imagine the VDPHTA taking the muted stance of the Public Housing Advisory Committee on this major change in provincial housing policy. In other contexts, the inadequacies of tenant participation mechanisms have been documented in public housing. As John Sewell has explained about public housing generally: “Many instances of tenant participation smack of management paternalism, with no attempt to ensure that the appointee is anything more than a token representative.”⁸⁸

⁸⁶ It may be that with the creation of the tokenistic Public Housing Advisory Council in the 1990s, BC Housing finally achieved what it had first tried in 1975. In 1975 BC Housing was embroiled in a major battle with public housing tenants as it tried to discredit the legitimacy of the VDPHTA and supported a less militant (but apparently short-lived) tenants' association known as the Central Tenants' Executive Association of Public Housing for BC. As part of the bitter dispute, there were allegations of BC Housing interference in the elections of the tenants' association at Brant Villa, another public housing project in Vancouver. During the dispute, the Canadian Organization of Public Housing Tenants came to the defense of the VDPHTA. See City Councillors' Office fonds, Records of Alderman Michael Harcourt, 1973-1979, CVA 44-C-1 file 11.

⁸⁷ BC Housing, “Public housing advisory council” (n.d., website accessed August 23, 2010 from www.bchousing.org)

⁸⁸ John Sewell, *Houses and Homes: Housing for Canadians* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 1994), p. 153

Thus, the 1990s can be thought of as the decade when social organization of public housing tenants at Little Mountain fell into decline, both at the housing project level with the death of the LMTA and at the pan-housing project level with the replacement of VDPHTA with the tokenistic Public Housing Advisory Council. Much of this decline was due to the fact that many of Little Mountain's strong women leaders were aging, moving away, or passing away in the 1990s. Some have argued that in the 1950s American cities became vulnerable to urban renewal because of the loss of a "patriciate...class."⁸⁹ In the Little Mountain case, rather than a patrician class, it may have been the loss of the housing project's *matrician class* that made it vulnerable to the very negative and unfair form of redevelopment that is being carried out there. But I would not want to take this argument too far because even in the contemporary period, social organization, although less than what it once was, did continue on at Little Mountain. As discussed above, examples of social organization in the contemporary period include the revival of the LMTA in the late 1990s, organizing for the 50th anniversary, and patronizing and volunteering at local community organizations.

Having discussed social organization pertaining to public housing tenants only, the rest of this section deals with social organization at the broader neighbourhood level surrounding the Little Mountain Housing Project. Through their involvement in the surrounding community, Little Mountain tenants helped to create social organization at the broader neighbourhood scale. In the 1950s Fromson et al. reported that, although children from the Little Mountain Housing Project made up one-third of the student population of General Brock School in the 1950s (and likely well beyond that time), 70% of the PTA general membership and seven out of 20 executive members were drawn from the housing project in the 1950s.⁹⁰ In the 1960s, some of the meetings of the Riley Park Community Association, which was the residents' group for the surrounding neighbourhood, were actually held at the LMTA's headquarters in the basement of 30 Oriole Walk. Also in the 1960s, the LMTA and the Riley Park Community Association teamed up to lobby for the creation of a community centre in Riley Park⁹¹, which was ultimately built in 1964.⁹² Little Mountain tenants also helped to create some of the early programming available at the Riley Park Community Centre, such as the 'free skate' program, which was created by Shirley Card and Toni Steenhuisen. When tenants were felt to be inadequately involved in the institutions of the surrounding neighbourhood they were chastised in the newsletters sent out to public housing tenants. One column in the 1973 issue of *Citizens United* complained about the lack of

⁸⁹ Samuel Eliot Morison & Henry Steele Commager, *The Growth of the American Republic* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 920.

⁹⁰ Fromson et al., Op. cit., p. 89.

⁹¹ Minutes of Riley Park Citizens' Meeting, February 10, 1966, p. 2.

⁹² Riley Park Community Centre, "Overview of Riley Park" (n.d., website accessed July 28, 2010 from www.rileypark.ca)

participation of Little Mountain tenants in the Riley Park Community Association Board of Directors elections:

I must say that the representation from the project was very, very poor, only eight people showed up. In other words all you tenants left those who were running for a position on the board, in the lurch. Needless to say that only one of our people got in and that was Dorothy Thomas as Secretary.⁹³

Although the level of participation may have been disappointing to the person who wrote this, the fact that even one project resident was elected to the larger Riley Park Community Association is still impressive.

In the 1970s, other Little Mountain Housing Project tenants also held key positions in local community groups. At this time, social services at the community level were the responsibility of the Vancouver Resources Board, which oversaw the activities of a number of Community Resources Boards that operated in the city's neighbourhoods. Created by the NDP after they came to power in BC in 1972, the Community Resources Boards were composed of elected people from the community, which "resulted in a degree of decentralized decision making concerning use of discretionary money available to Resources Boards."⁹⁴ In the Little Mountain area, long-time housing project tenant Margaret E. Mitchell chaired the Little Mountain Community Resources Board. After this organization was renamed the Little Mountain Area Human Resources Society, Margaret E. Mitchell continued to be on the board and was joined by project tenants Rita Jones and Dr. I. Muthanna.⁹⁵ With housing project residents in such key positions, undoubtedly the Little Mountain Housing Project's needs were kept in mind when the local board used its discretion over how to allocate funds. One such project funded by the Community Resources Board was the Little Mountain Youth Project, which operated out of an office in a house at 366 East 28th Avenue.⁹⁶ Under this project, community workers were hired to work with troubled youth in the area, including both youth from the housing project and youth in the surrounding community.⁹⁷ Some youth workers adopted an individually-oriented approach and provided one-on-one counseling to specific youths, while other workers took more of a community approach. Under the community approach, "young people are met by workers in their (the young people's) own environment and to a large extent,

⁹³ *Citizens United* (June 1973), p. 9, CVA 600-E-5 file 1.

⁹⁴ Sarah Llewellyn Basset Mellor, *The Neighbourhood House as a Social Work Agency* (Unpublished master's thesis, School of Community and Regional Planning, University of British Columbia, 1981), p. 22.

⁹⁵ Little Mountain Area Human Resources Society fonds – 1972-1978, CVA 588-C-7 files 1-10.

⁹⁶ John A. Jessup & Myra Crystal, *A Social Planning Profile of Riley Park* (Report prepared for the Riley Park Citizens' NIP Committee and Area Planning Staff, May 1977), p. 17, CVA 588-C-7 file 3.

⁹⁷ Ronda Howard, *Little Mountain Youth Project Review* (Report prepared for the Vancouver Resources Board, June 29, 1976)

on their own terms.”⁹⁸ The Little Mountain Youth Project was found to have helped to reduce delinquency and cause some youth to re-commit to school.⁹⁹

The Red Door was another important social service agency in the area in the 1970s (see Figure 5.9). Just about every person I interviewed who lived at Little Mountain Housing Project in the 1970s talks affectionately about this community organization that operated out of an office at the corner of East 33rd and Main. I am told that its name was derived from the fact that the front door was painted primary red because that was the cheapest paint available in the paint store at the time. The Red Door was created in 1965 as part of the Area Development Project, which was funded by all three levels of government and foundation funds. As the “doorway to Neighborhood Services for families living in the Riley Park area”, the Red Door helped to create an integrated community by offering “a link between tenants and homeowners, between citizens and professional organizations, between children and parents and school.”¹⁰⁰ The Red Door worked with local schools and other organizations to offer cooperative daycare services and support services for children having difficulty in schools. By the late 1970s, the Red Door became primarily concerned with helping people find affordable rental housing in Vancouver.¹⁰¹ Community workers from the Red Door worked closely with the residents of the Little Mountain Housing Project and some project teenagers were even hired to work at the Red Door. Brenda, who was a teenager at Little Mountain in the 1970s, recalled:

I did work at the Red Door, on a grant once, as a youth worker when I was a teenager. So there was a lot put out for us as teens...I was a youth worker. I worked with the kids that were either on the street or younger kids. It was only for one summer...They used to let teenagers take these jobs as youth workers, with no backgrounds or anything, but just to get the experience and to make some money for the summer because they knew that most kids didn't get too much.

Social organization of Little Mountain tenants at the neighbourhood level also occurred through the Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP) when it came to the Riley Park area from 1976 to 1980.

⁹⁸ Marguerite Reed, *The Little Mountain Youth Project: A Community and Youth Perspective* (Report prepared for the Vancouver Resources Board, July 1976), p. 13.

⁹⁹ Howard, Op. cit.

¹⁰⁰ Riley Park News in *The Chatterbox*, March 18, 1966.

¹⁰¹ Jessup & Crystal, Op. cit.

Figure 5.9 Red Door



Source: *Main Street* (January 1975), p. 9, retrieved from UBC Rare Books and Special Collections.

In December 1976 the Riley Park Citizens' NIP Planning Committee was created with 50 members¹⁰², 14% of whom I have been able to confirm as tenants of the Little Mountain Housing Project. This included the usual figures: Margaret E. Mitchell, Rita Jones, Shirley Card, Toni Steenhuisen, and Dr. I Muthanna.¹⁰³ In 1972 there were 802 people living in the Little Mountain Housing Project¹⁰⁴ and in 1971 the total population for the Riley Park NIP area was 20,160.¹⁰⁵ Thus, tenants of the Little Mountain Housing Project constituted less than 4% of the total Riley Park population. With 14% of the Riley Park Citizens' NIP Planning Committee coming from the housing project, housing project tenants displayed a disproportionate level of involvement in this important committee that shaped the future development of the surrounding neighbourhood. This is consistent with the findings from the socially mixed False Creek South neighbourhood where in the late 1970s, social housing tenants were more engaged in community affairs than people living in market housing.¹⁰⁶ Under NIP, the Riley Park area was allocated a capital budget of \$1.9 million made up of contributions from all three levels of government.¹⁰⁷ Thus, much like the case with the Community Resources Board, Little Mountain tenants were in a position to influence the allocation of government funds in the neighbourhood. But public housing did not qualify for funding under NIP. Nevertheless, a review of the housing project's needs was carried out under NIP with input from project residents, City Planning staff, and BC Housing.¹⁰⁸ In addition, a survey of the rehabilitation priorities was carried out in the community, which found the community at large considered upgrades to the housing project to be of a high priority.¹⁰⁹ Thus, when the Committee completed their final NIP plan for Riley Park in June 1977, one of the actions that was called for was: "That the Riley Park Citizens' NIP Planning Committee in conjunction with Housing Project Tenants approach BC Housing Management Commission to initiate rehabilitation of the Little Mountain Housing Project."¹¹⁰ Although I

¹⁰² Vancouver City Planning Department, *Riley Park Neighbourhood Improvement Program* (1980), p. 10.

¹⁰³ Riley Park Citizens' NIP Planning Committee, *A Plan for Riley Park Neighbourhood Improvement* (June 1977), CVA 10-F-7 file 2.

¹⁰⁴ Doug Purdy, Op. cit.

¹⁰⁵ Census of Canada, 1971, cited in Jessup & Crystal, Op. cit.

¹⁰⁶ Vischer Skaburskis, Planners, *False Creek Area 6 Phase 1 Post Occupancy Evaluation Final Report* (Report prepared for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1980)

¹⁰⁷ Riley Park Citizen' NIP Planning Committee, *A Plan for Riley Park Neighbourhood Improvement* (June 1977), CVA 10-f-7 file 2.

¹⁰⁸ Vancouver City Planning Department, *Riley Park Neighbourhood Improvement Program* (1980), p. 10.

¹⁰⁹ Riley Park Citizen' NIP Planning Committee, *Riley Park Neighbourhood Improvement Program Opinionaire Results* (April 19, 1977) CVA 588-C-7 file 1.

¹¹⁰ Riley Park Citizens' NIP Planning Committee, *A Plan for Riley Park Neighbourhood Improvement* (June 1977), p. 13.

cannot find documentation to confirm this, it seems likely that the significant upgrades that were carried out in the early 1980s were an indirect outcome of the NIP process.

An important community asset that was funded by NIP was the Little Mountain Neighbourhood House. In 1978 the Little Mountain Neighbourhood House Society was founded and began operating out of a storefront location on Main Street.¹¹¹ The need for a neighbourhood house, which offers programming of a more social nature than do community centres, had been expressed by Little Mountain tenants as far back as the 1950s when Fromson et al. (1959) conducted their study of the housing project. In her letter of support to the Little Mountain Neighbourhood House in 1978, Margaret E. Mitchell wrote that “the LMTA has been part of the drive for years to attempt to establish such a facility in this area.”¹¹² As reported previously, since its creation in 1978 Little Mountain tenants have made good use of the Little Mountain Neighbourhood House, both as patrons and as volunteers.

In the 1980s, several Little Mountain tenants were on the Board of Directors of the Little Mountain Neighbourhood House Society, including Shirley Card, Toni Steenhuisen, and June Steenhuisen (another one of the Steenhuisen children who has since moved away). Many other tenants were members-at-large of the society. The Little Mountain Neighbourhood House Society, together with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and a group of seniors known as the Live Wires spearheaded the drive to create non-profit housing for seniors on the CNIB site, which was directly across Main Street from the Little Mountain Housing Project. These three groups lobbied governments for the creation of both assisted and independent housing for seniors on the CNIB site. In 1983 the Little Mountain Residential Care and Housing Society was created to develop and administer the seniors’ housing.¹¹³ Little Mountain Place is an assisted living facility with 117 units that opened in 1987.¹¹⁴ Little Mountain Court, which is an independent living facility with 96 units, opened the following year.¹¹⁵ To help pay for the costs, I am told that some market housing was also developed at the far east end of the site near Prince Edward Street. Combined, Little Mountain Court and Little Mountain Place have 213 subsidized housing units for seniors, which represented a significant expansion of social housing in the Little Mountain area, almost equivalent to the number of units in the Little Mountain Housing Project, but targeted to an entirely different group. Tenants

¹¹¹ “Little Mountain Neighbourhood House, Riley Park Community Library Grand Opening, Saturday, November 14, 1981”, Pamphlet. In 1978, the LMNH operated out of temporary location at Main and 28th. This pamphlet is for the Grand Opening of its permanent location at Main and 24th.

¹¹² Letter from Margaret E. Mitchell, President of the Little Mountain Tenants’ Association to Polly M. Bak, Secretary of the Little Mountain Neighbourhood House Society dated October 19, 1978, CVA 52-B-2 file 2.

¹¹³ Little Mountain Residential Care & Housing Society. (n.d., website accessed August 23, 2010 from www.littlemountaincare.org)

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ *Vancouver Non-Market Housing Inventory* (Prepared by The Housing Centre, Housing & Properties Department, City of Vancouver, March, 1993)

from the housing project were indirectly involved in the effort to create this housing because several tenants held positions on the Board of Directors of the Little Mountain Neighbourhood House Society. Little Mountain Court and Little Mountain Place, which are on a site that is essentially contiguous with the housing project site, may be seen as an extension of the Little Mountain Housing Project. Many long-time project residents have moved over to this housing in their senior years.

Thus, in many ways the Little Mountain Housing Project was the seeding ground for the other institutions that followed in the surrounding neighbourhood. Through their involvement in the LMTA and their disproportionate membership on key committees such as the Little Mountain Community Resources Board and the Riley Park Citizens' NIP Planning Committee, Little Mountain tenants helped give the surrounding neighbourhood many of the institutions that continue to be well used by the larger community to the present day, even after the Little Mountain tenants themselves have been displaced: the Riley Park Community Centre, the Leisure Access Program (which has its roots in the 'free skate' program put on by Little Mountain tenants), the Little Mountain Youth Project (versions of which still exist), the Little Mountain Neighbourhood House, and the seniors' non-profit housing at Little Mountain Court and Little Mountain Place. Even the nearby General Brock Elementary School was expanded in 1956 in order to accommodate the influx of students following the opening of the housing project.¹¹⁶ Thus, as Ingrid Steenhuisen has remarked, "*Out of all these organizations, the one that was here the longest and first was the complex itself.*" Even if some of the individuals have moved on or passed away, the family public housing tenant constituency at Little Mountain has invested time and effort into the surrounding community and helped to make it what it is today and as such absolutely has a stake in the future direction of both the housing project and the surrounding neighbourhood that deserves to be respected.

Little Mountain tenants also showed leadership in the movement of public housing tenants. The LMTA was one of the earliest public housing tenants' associations. A desire to create similar social organization at other public housing projects was part of the motivation for creating the broader Vancouver Housing Inter-Project Council later renamed the Vancouver and District Public Housing Tenants' Association. Little Mountain tenant Shirley Card was an early executive member of this group. The VDPHTA sought unity among public housing tenants and agitated for better living conditions and more public housing development and sent briefs to governments in a number of social policy areas. This group even showed leadership at the national scale as it was the Vancouver group that called for the National Conference of Public Housing Tenants that was held in Thunder Bay in 1971. Many of the resolutions that came out of this national conference called for greater tenant participation in the planning and management structures around public housing. Little Mountain led the way in this regard as Dennis and Fish noted Little Mountain for being the only public housing project in Canada that featured an experimental program in tenant management of public housing. The Dennis and Fish report was highly influential as its recommendations led to many of the reforms that happened under the rise of third sector

¹¹⁶ Fromson et al., Op. cit., p. 48.

social housing in the 1970s. Such third sector social housing is frequently managed by tenant committees, following the example set by the Little Mountain Housing Project. Due to their high level of social organization and their political connections, Little Mountain tenants were able to attract government resources to the housing project for physical improvements such as the kitchen appliances and for social programming such as the Little Mountain Youth Project. Tenant organization at Little Mountain remained very strong until the 1990s when Margaret E. Mitchell, a key Little Mountain leader, passed away. Following her passing, the actions of BC Housing undermined tenant organization at the Little Mountain Housing Project.

The previous section showed how the Little Mountain Housing Project was remarkably rich in social capital. Social organization may be considered a sub-variant of social capital because, like social capital generally, social organization confers benefits to members of social groups. Thus, the high level of social organization demonstrated by the Little Mountain tenants builds on my argument that the Little Mountain Housing Project was not lacking in social capital in the present or in the past. The following section takes this argument even further by showing how the Little Mountain tenants showed a remarkable level of social control over the project, which produced a living environment that was safe and free of crime.

5.4 SOCIAL CONTROL

Social control refers to the “capacity of a group to regulate its members according to desired principles.”¹¹⁷ In order to function effectively, social control requires a high level of familiarity between community members and common goals and interests. A high level of social control can lead to an orderly, safe, crime-free living environment. In this section I first present the evidence of social control in recent years before discussing the historical presence of social control at Little Mountain.

5.4.1 Social Control in the Contemporary Period

All the tenants I interviewed emphasized the high level of safety and the lack of crime in the Little Mountain Housing Project. Unlike other low-income neighbourhoods in the Vancouver Region such as the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver and Whalley in Surrey, Little Mountain is relatively unknown by the general public precisely because it never made the news with reports about crime. Of the 23 households I interviewed, 13 indicated they never experienced or were aware of any incidents of crime ever occurring in the Little Mountain Housing Project. Five of these households had lived in the project for more than 15 years, in most cases for several decades. Those who did recall criminal incidents occurring in the project either referred to events from the distant past or considered the occurrence an “*isolated*” incident that could happen in “*any area, rich, poor, whatever*”. Rhonda’s response was typical

¹¹⁷ Robert J. Sampson et al., “Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy”, *Science*, 277 (August 15, 1997), p. 918.

of what I heard: “*It did not have crime at all.*” In fact, six of the households I interviewed felt so safe in the project that they regularly left their doors unlocked. Hillary said, “*You never worried about locking your door.*” Leticia, who moved to Little Mountain in 2004, was surprised to find that Little Mountain did not conform to what people had told her about public housing:

I remember many people told me this is not a good place, it's bad people there, they sell drugs...I imagined many bad things. But now, like after almost three years, I say I don't want to move...On two or three opportunities, I forgot to put the door with the lock, the lock was open and nothing happened. One time, I went out and when I came back I realized I left the door open too. And nothing happened. For me, it's unbelievable because many people told me, “Be careful, you don't want to stay alone.”...I feel secure here.

Irwin, who lived in the Little Mountain Housing Project for 25 years and raised his three children there, also rejected the stereotype of the troubled public housing project:

We do find security, safety in our living. There is no sense of [being] scared or of any bad images, which we often hear stories from the newspapers about social housing. Sometimes people talk about the ‘project’, they think about some kind of rundown area. This is definitely not the case.

The lack of crime in the housing project likely stems from the high level of social control displayed by the tenants. A key element of social control is the “density of local acquaintance networks” that allows community members to “recognize each other and hold each other accountable.”¹¹⁸ I demonstrated earlier that there was a high level of familiarity between project residents. Little Mountain was the kind of place where “*everybody knew everybody*”. Even if someone was not a personal friend, they were recognized as belonging to the community, either as a children’s friend’s parent or part of the extended Little Mountain community that included friends of siblings who grew up in the project. Ingrid explained that familiarity was so high that the tenants “*knew the regular dumpster divers from the non-regular ones.*” The high level of familiarity enabled Little Mountain tenants to spot outsiders who ventured into the project. Hillary recalled an occasion when she spotted someone who did not belong in the project:

One lady who used to live there, a native lady, everybody called her mother...She's partially blind...She got off the bus there. And this guy, he got off the bus and it looked like he was following her. You know when you wonder whether or not two people are together or not. But because I knew her and this guy's white and this guy wasn't from the project. So I went over there and I caught up with her and I said, “Hey, where are you going?” People do that all the time. Then I walked her right to the house there. I said, “Oh, you're going to stay home? Okay, cool. I'm going to take off now.” She didn't even know somebody else was there until I said.

¹¹⁸ Mark L. Joseph et al. “The Theoretical Basis for Addressing Poverty Through Mixed-Income Development”, *Urban Affairs Review*, 42,3 (January 2007), pp. 369-409.

Natasha also described an incident when she saw people who did not belong in the project:

There's like a gang from another complex that used to sort of walk through. So we put the initiative to find out who they were. They were younger boys but we knew they didn't really belong in our neighbourhood, so we wanted to find out where they came from. They actually came from Culloden Court, but they had a friend who lived in here and they were trying to find out where he lived. It wasn't like a gang, it was more like a group of kids. We would find out who they were and who they were looking for...We've seen them there like two or three times within a week and nobody knows. Like you've asked your neighbours, "Who are those people?" Then you're going to try to find out, rather than having to call the police or something, if it's not really necessary, they're not causing any harm. So you just go out and say, "Are you looking for somebody?" It's all in your approach, you don't want to come across as threatening.

In both of these examples, not only were outsiders quickly recognized as such, housing project residents intervened in the situation. Natasha's example points toward a community that was highly adept at demonstrating social control. It takes a certain level of skill to be able to intervene in such situations. As Natasha said, "*It's all in your approach.*" Her skills in terms of knowing how to approach the teens and her roster of social connections in the project that she could consult for information on the identity of the teens empowered her to handle the situation without calling the police. Natasha explained that it was the norm in the housing project to look out for the overall safety and security of the community:

We have kind of like a block watch system, but nobody is assigned any tasks. It's open, we all sort of contribute, parents call each other. We all have an understanding and we share the same concerns. So pick up the phone, if you see something or someone that doesn't belong, you're going to call your neighbour or somebody.

This sounds very close to the academic definition of social control. A block watch system is an organized system of social control. At Little Mountain it was an informal system of community vigilance. "*We share the same concerns*"—this is the common interest that is said to be a necessary ingredient for social control to properly function.

Social control was not only used when outsiders ventured into the housing project. Little Mountain tenants also regulated the behaviour of fellow tenants. Tenants talked about knocking on doors when neighbours were having loud late-night parties and intervening when women needed help from abusive spouses. Richard remarked, "*Here, you have people that actually stand up for this area. If they see something happening outside, someone would be out there speaking their mind about it.*" Tenants would also get involved when they saw children fighting. Hillary said:

If they see somebody fighting, they'll go over there. Even if it's not theirs, they'll go over there and separate them...Because it's our land, it's our property, it's our people. They don't want a war to break out over there over something stupid. Most of the time it does stay in control because the kids are out there playing again with each other by evening. Most of the time, they fight, they just need to separate.

In the academic literature homeownership has been identified as a trait that fosters social control in a neighbourhood. Even though the residents of Little Mountain were tenants, there was a sense of ownership felt by many residents toward the land and the people on it. “*It’s our land, it’s our property, it’s our people*”—and so for this tenant it seemed natural that the people and the property were regulated by the residents themselves. Critics of public housing design have found fault with the lack of private space and fenced in yards because this is believed to create a lack of a sense of responsibility toward common spaces that do not belong to anyone in particular. At Little Mountain the open space was for all to share and there were no fences. But this did not prevent the tenants from taking responsibility over this space. As Natasha remarked, “*people really take pride in their neighbourhood*”. Similarly, Brenda said there was a “*common respect for this place*”.

One source of pride at Little Mountain was the high level of safety and security there compared to some other public housing projects. As one tenant boasted, “*They talk about the Skeena Terrace Boys, which is one of the other BC Housing complexes, and the gang problem they have there. We don’t have that here.*” Another tenant remarked:

There was no vandalism, none at all...People started coming around, people from universities and doing studies and stuff. There was a fellow from a university back east and he said that he’d been talking to people and he asked about vandalism. He said that he had never ever heard of a housing complex—and he talked to a lot of people in different housing complexes across the country—never heard of a housing complex that didn’t have crime, the way that ours did, for the size of it and where it was located in a major city like that. Never, it had never ever come up that a place like that did not have crime.

In the final years of the Little Mountain Housing Project one tenant told me that a policy change occurred under which people starting moving into the project on the basis of having drug or alcohol addictions.¹¹⁹ Another tenant whom I interviewed was in fact admitted to Little Mountain on this basis, which enabled this tenant to bypass the waiting list and move in immediately. Previously, people were not specifically selected to live there on the basis of having addictions. The BC Housing website contains no information on this policy change. The website does have information on the Addiction Recovery Program, but nowhere does it say that the program involves placing recovering addicts in family public housing.¹²⁰ I was only able to verify this practice by placing a telephone call to BC Housing and speaking to someone employed in the Health Services Program. This person told me over the telephone that people with drug and alcohol addictions are in fact placed in public housing under the Addiction Recovery Program by referral. In order to participate in the Addiction Recovery Program people must be

¹¹⁹ This may help explain the decline in employed households found between 1981 and 2007 as discussed in the section on class change in the project.

¹²⁰ BC Housing. “Addiction Recovery Program” (n.d., website accessed August 23, 2010 from www.bchousing.org)

“committed to an alcohol and drug-free lifestyle” and have “support services integrated into their ongoing recovery plan.”¹²¹ There were no on-site support services at Little Mountain, unlike the supportive housing that is being developed at other locations in Vancouver. Presumably, in the case of people with addictions at Little Mountain, support services were made available off-site. The implication of this policy change is that units at Little Mountain that previously would have gone to low-income families without addictions were in later years being assigned to recovering drug addicts who are now bumped to the top of the waiting list. Since 2006, low-income families without drug addiction are increasingly assisted through the Rental Assistance Program, essentially a voucher program that allows families to rent in the private market.¹²² The policy change to admit people with drug addictions into Little Mountain is part of a broader re-targeting of social housing away from low-income families toward those with addictions. As will be discussed in the next chapter, redevelopment is also an expression of this shift in focus as the proceeds of the sale of land at Little Mountain are being used to develop supportive housing for those with addictions and mental illness. People with drug addiction are frequently referred to as the ‘hard-to-house’ in BC Housing policy documents. The hard-to-house include people with “particular behaviours (e.g. aggressiveness), visual appearance or lack of social skills that are difficult for housing providers or other tenants to deal with.”¹²³ Given the negative externalities that the hard-to-house and the drug addicted often create for their neighbours, it strikes me as highly inappropriate to place such individuals in a housing project like Little Mountain that was predominantly occupied by families with children. Little Mountain was not designed for this group, rather it was designed with the needs of families in mind. The fact that BC Housing was placing people with drug addictions at Little Mountain, a place unequipped to meet their needs, speaks to the government’s growing desperation to address Vancouver’s serious drug problems that are concentrated in the Downtown Eastside. Placing these individuals at Little Mountain could have been seriously disruptive for the families there. The one person I interviewed who was placed at Little Mountain under the Addiction Recovery Program moved there with their children and appears to have been a very good fit with the family housing project. But other addicts who moved to Little Mountain in the latter years were still using drugs and were creating problems for at least some other tenants. Richard explained:

They started allowing recovering addicts under disability move in, so we had all these recovering addicts here but they were still using. I finally narrowed it down, I found out where the pipes were coming from. So I knocked on the lady’s door and I said, “What you’re doing inside is not my business. But this is outside of your place now and now it’s my business. So you’re going to do something about it or I’m going to have to do something about it myself. I’m giving you an opportunity to put an

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² BC Housing, “Rental Assistance Program” (n.d., website accessed August 23, 2010 from www.bchousing.org)

¹²³ Penny Gurstein & Dan Small, “From Housing to Home: Reflexive Management for those Deemed Hard to House”, *Housing Studies*, 20, 5 (September 2005), p. 724.

end to it.” And after a while there was this guy hanging around and he was a junkie and he knew what was going on over there. Finally, I grabbed him and I dragged him over and put him over there, out on the road, because he was kind of a violent guy. He called my daughter a white trash ho and that was it. I took him over there and I threw him on the road and I said, “Next time a car is going to come. Don’t come back to this neighbourhood again, stay away from here. This isn’t what this place is about. This isn’t Pigeon Park. There’s kids that live here.” But other than that it was clean. You didn’t have to worry about needles or anything like that in the play area.

Richard is a very strong man who used to work as a bouncer in a bar. It seems that any time any potentially violent situations arose, he acted as the de facto security guard for the housing project. Besides the person I interviewed who was admitted under the Addictions Recovery Program, Richard seems to have been the only person I interviewed who was even aware that people with addictions were moving into Little Mountain. It seems that only a relatively small number of people trying to get over drug and alcohol addictions were admitted into the housing project as much of the population was made up of long-term residents who had lived there for many decades. In addition, Richard’s vigilance and constant willingness to intervene as required likely helped to ensure that life in the project continued on much as it did before the addicted group moved in. Everybody else I spoke to emphasized the peacefulness of the housing project so they must not have noticed any disruption. It seems that Richard prevented any potential problems from getting out of hand. Thus, social control at Little Mountain was so strong that the housing project was successfully able to absorb a group of residents who never should have been placed in a family housing project in the first place.

The high level of social control present in the Little Mountain Housing Project is not something that develops overnight. Rather, it requires the investment of a great deal of time and effort. Richard explained:

It took a year of banging on doors and directly talking to people, rather than phoning the police on people. Knock on their door and say, “What the fuck is the problem here? You got a problem, just deal with it.” And after a little time, problems solved themselves. For example, someone’s having a party downstairs and it’s really late at night and you hear smash smash smash. Rather than phoning the police right away, some people might be afraid to go knock on their door, suck it up, knock on the door, say, “What’s going on, it’s late, really loud.”

One of the concerns that Richard and his family had with relocation was that their investment at Little Mountain in this regard would be lost. Richard continued:

There’s no other BC Housing project that I would feel comfortable living in. Because you have to start all over again like we did here...[Start over with] finding a spot in it, learning who you can trust and who to stay away from.

This is just one of many concerns tenants had about relocation and that I discuss in greater detail in the next chapter.

Little Mountain tenants did not limit their social control within the housing project site itself. Rather, the tenants kept a vigilant eye on the surrounding private homes as well. In one case, a vigilant Little Mountain tenant called the fire department when she saw smoke coming out of one of the nearby private homes. In another case, Ingrid kept an eye on an adjacent empty privately owned home:

Across the lane, a couple of years back before they built the houses, there used to be a duplex there and it sat empty for a good four or five years. One day I happened to be looking out the back window and I saw some teens doing graffiti on the building and I said to them, "Hey, what do you guys think you are doing?"...And within five minutes they were gone. They never came back.

In this case, the continuous occupation of the housing project offered protection for the adjacent private property, which sat empty for a lengthy period of time before the private owner decided to rebuild. This completely turns on its head the notion that privately owned property is somehow better for the stability and social control of a neighbourhood than public housing. Until redevelopment, Little Mountain was always fully occupied because of the endless waiting list of people trying to get into public housing. In contrast, private property can sit empty for long periods of time due to the vagaries of the market or the whims of private owners.

5.4.2 Social Control in the Past

The early to mid-1970s seems to have been the period when social control at Little Mountain faced its greatest challenge. It was during these years when a group of teenagers known as the Riley Parkers became notorious for causing disturbances in the housing project and the surrounding community. This was the age of the 'park gangs' in Vancouver. In addition to the Riley Park Gang, in other parts of Vancouver in the 1970s there were the Clark Park Gang, the Grandview Park Gang and the Dunbar Park Gang.¹²⁴ Thus, park gangs were not confined to neighbourhoods with public housing. For the most part, the leather jacket-clad Riley Parkers were not residents of the Little Mountain Housing Project. Rather, by all accounts they primarily came from the private homes in the surrounding community into the housing project site where they did have some friends. As their moniker implies, they primarily hung out at Riley Park, a few blocks away from the housing project. Depending on whom one talks to, one gets different perspectives on the Riley Parkers. According to one long-time Little Mountain family, the Riley Parkers congregated in the back lane where they engaged in glue-sniffing and generally caused trouble. They allege the Riley Parkers threw rocks at them, threw a brick through their window, messed up their laundry with black shoe polish, and threatened them with violence. It is fair to say the

¹²⁴ See Michael G. Young, *The History of Vancouver Youth Gangs: 1900-1985* (Unpublished master's thesis, School of Criminology, Simon Fraser University, 1993).

Riley Parkers were a group who had a reputation as being very tough guys that one would not want to be on the wrong side of. According to one article that appeared in the *Vancouver Sun* in the 1970s, the Riley Parkers were “dope-crazed mutants of the electro-techno-acid age...the toughest gang in the city.”¹²⁵ The antics of the Riley Parkers certainly are the stuff of legend as even relatively recent Little Mountain residents who were not even alive in the 1970s talk about them.

But some people offer more nuanced perspectives of the Riley Parkers. According to some, the bad reputation of the Riley Parkers was undeserved, and that although some were trouble-makers they were not all equally delinquent. According to one source, although a few Riley Parkers did engage in glue-sniffing, the gang quickly turned against the practice and came down on anyone they saw doing it. One man I interviewed who was a youth in the housing project in the 1970s told me that any teenage boy in the area was presumed to be a Riley Parker just for wearing a jean jacket. This person also recalled an incident in which the Riley Parkers came to the defence of several Little Mountain teenagers when a gang from Churchill High School came to the housing project looking for a fight. Thus, although many of their activities left much to be desired, in some respects the Riley Parkers enforced a brute form of social control, protecting area teens when outsiders came to fight them and punishing people for sniffing glue.

Social control was also enforced against the Riley Parkers. The Steenhuisen family fought back against the Riley Parkers. Toni Steenhuisen recalled:

Being a policeman's daughter back home, I wasn't going to take anything from nobody...So I nailed their asses to the wall by going to juvenile court so they all did time...I was waiting for them to get close and as soon as they got close to the clothesline I turned around and I says, "Yeah, what you guys all want? The court told me to let them know the minute you come by to harass me again." They were gone like a shot, they went like chicken shits. But I reported it anyways and this time they got put in jail...I took them to court, one by one. I phoned the cops every time.

The fact that Toni Steenhuisen stood up to the Riley Parkers, “the toughest gang in the city”¹²⁶, is testament to her fearless commitment to defending her family and home. Ingrid recalls how many of the single-mothers living in the housing project were afraid to call the police on the Riley Parkers so they would call the Steenhuisens instead. But she also says there were other families who were not afraid to stand up to the Riley Parkers. Another person recalled how the Steenhuisens “*fought like an army*” against the Riley Parkers and other troublemakers. The social control demonstrated by the Steenhuisens and others against the Riley Parkers appears to have paid off. By the late 1970s “there [was] not, in police eyes, a youth problem in Riley Park as there [had been] a few years ago.”¹²⁷ For the most part, life in the

¹²⁵ Cited in Frank Murphy, “Where is Riley Park, anyway?”, *Main Street* (January 1975, retrieved from UBC Rare Books and Special Collections), pp. 8-9.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Howard, Op. cit. p. 24.

housing project appears to have remained peaceful from that point on. Thus, I believe that the Steenhuisen family, who have lived at the Little Mountain Housing Project virtually throughout the entire time it existed, played a very important role in enforcing social control and taking a stand against delinquent behaviour in the housing project. I am convinced that part of the reason why Little Mountain for the most part avoided the really serious crime problems that have plagued some other public housing projects is largely due to the vigilance of the Steenhuisen family. Ingrid Steenhuisen is one of the last residents in the housing project who has successfully resisted the government's relocation efforts. She continues to keep a watchful eye on what is now essentially an empty pre-construction site. The Steenhuisens are still fighting "*like an army*" and it will be to their credit if the last Little Mountain rowhouse is saved.

This section has shown that social control was highly developed at Little Mountain, both in the past and in the contemporary period. Social control was enabled by the high level of familiarity between tenants, their common commitment to creating a peaceful and safe living environment, and their willingness and skilful ability to intervene as necessary. Social control along with social organization and social capital generally were facilitated by the design of the Little Mountain Housing Project. The next section discusses the design features of Little Mountain that allowed social capital to flourish there.

5.5 DESIGN

In addition to social criticism, the design of public housing has also been criticized in the academic literature. As discussed in Chapter 2, public housing design has been criticized for stigmatizing residents and creating an environment that is conducive to crime. The particular design features of public housing that have received the most criticism include high-density towers, lack of open sightlines, and an absence of through-streets that cut housing projects off from the surrounding urban fabric. John Sewell has shown how the bulk of Canada's public housing does not have the design features that critics have found to be most problematic.¹²⁸ In addition to design critiques, the physical conditions of aging public housing projects that have not been properly maintained by housing authorities has also been a source of dissatisfaction of public housing. This issue, as it relates to Little Mountain, is discussed in the next chapter on redevelopment.

Little Mountain was clearly not a high-density project. Density at Little Mountain was just 14.3 units per acre¹²⁹, while most public housing in Canada has densities in the range of 25 to 35 units per acre.¹³⁰ Density was low at Little Mountain because over 77% of the 15.7 acre site was open green

¹²⁸ Sewell, Op. cit.

¹²⁹ Olson, Op. cit.

¹³⁰ Sewell, Op. cit.

space.¹³¹ The buildings were a mix of low-rise apartments and rowhouses. The apartments had back porches and the rowhouses had front porches. As discussed in greater detail below, sightlines at Little Mountain were excellent. All these features that I am pointing out have been identified by Oscar Newman, who is well known as a critic of public housing design, as good examples of public housing design.¹³²

The good design of Little Mountain can be attributed to the timing and the circumstances of its development. As noted in Chapter 4, Canada was a latecomer to public housing development, as the country lacked a public housing program until 1949. The US started building public housing in the 1930s and the UK started even earlier. Albert Rose has pointed out that one of the benefits of this has been that Canada was able to learn from earlier examples and improve upon public housing design. In the 1950s, the architectural division of the CMHC took great care in preparing the designs for public housing. Thus, Rose argues that, while the 1950s resulted in a disappointingly low quantity of public housing, the public housing that was produced under Canada's initial Section 35 program was of a very high quality, in some cases even winning architectural awards.¹³³ Another factor that likely contributed to the good design of Little Mountain was the fact that it was not built as part of a slum clearance project. When public housing was built as part of slum clearance projects, there was a need to rapidly build very high density projects in order to accommodate those who lost their homes due to urban renewal.¹³⁴ In Vancouver, urban renewal of Strathcona in the 1960s involved the development of high density public housing towers at Raymur Place (later renamed Stamps Place) and MacLean Park.¹³⁵ Vancouver's low-density housing projects like Little Mountain and its "sister" housing project Orchard Park were not built as part of slum clearance projects.¹³⁶

Ironically, some of the very design features that made Little Mountain a well-designed project have become a liability in the current context. The low density at Little Mountain was out of line with the City of Vancouver's EcoDensity Initiative, which seeks to create more compact, dense communities in order to reduce the city's carbon footprint. Even more importantly, in addition to a desire to "integrate people"¹³⁷, the provincial government has justified redevelopment on the basis that the land at Little

¹³¹ Olson, Op. cit.

¹³² Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1972)

¹³³ Albert Rose, *Canadian Housing Policies, 1935-1980* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1980)

¹³⁴ Newman, Op. cit.

¹³⁵ Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991)

¹³⁶ Reid, Op. cit., p. iv.

¹³⁷ Coleman, Op. cit.

Mountain was “under-utilized.”¹³⁸ The provincial government has talked about significantly increasing the density at Little Mountain, to perhaps as high as 2000 units¹³⁹—an almost ten-fold increase in density. While all 224 social housing units will be replaced, almost all the additional density will be in the form of market condominiums. Thus, one can surmise that by saying the land at Little Mountain was under-utilized, the provincial government believes that the open space at Little Mountain would be better utilized as private market condominiums. This view only sees the land at Little Mountain as a commodity from which profits are to be maximized. There is absolutely no consideration of local use values of both Little Mountain tenants and the surrounding community, which also made use of the land. The provincial government seems totally indifferent toward how the open space and low densities enriched the quality of life at the Little Mountain Housing Project. Specifically, as the rest of this section shows, the open space at Little Mountain facilitated the development of social capital, social control, and social organization.

But first, a note of caution is appropriate. It is important to avoid reproducing an environmentally determinist argument similar to the kinds advanced by critics of public housing. I am not arguing that the design and the open spaces are wholly responsible for social capital at Little Mountain. Rather, as much of this chapter has emphasized, the credit is owed to the Little Mountain tenants themselves. But it would be foolish to suggest that the design had no impact on how the community developed. Thus, I am arguing that the design and the open spaces *facilitated* the development of social capital, which of course could not have developed but for the efforts of the tenants. The design of the housing project is important to take note of because, as I have argued throughout this chapter, Little Mountain was a remarkably successful example of public housing. It is therefore wise to consider all the factors that helped to make it a success. If there is one day a massive paradigm shift, perhaps the successes at Little Mountain may be re-created in the future. There are three design features of the Little Mountain Housing Project that facilitated the development of social capital there: open green space, porches, and site lay-out. I discuss each of these in turn.

5.5.1 Open Green Space

The vast amount of green space was one feature of the Little Mountain Housing Project that the tenants especially enjoyed. Over 77% of the Little Mountain site was open green space.¹⁴⁰ When asked what they liked most about living there, this was often the first response of the tenants. The open space created a very pleasant, serene living environment that offered refuge from the city. Hillary described it as “*a park in the city.*” Similarly, Rhonda said, “*It was like living in a park.*” Some tenants took advantage of the open space for gardening, which was done both to supply food and for recreation (see Figure 5.10).

¹³⁸ Ibid., See also Government of BC, *Housing Matters BC: A Housing Strategy for British Columbia*. (2007, accessed online November 6, 2007 from www.bchousing.org), p. 4

¹³⁹ Frances Bula, “Little Mountain to be Redeveloped”, *Vancouver Sun* (March 21, 2007), p. B1.

¹⁴⁰ Olson, Op. cit., p. 6.

Myra and her children took delight in the ducks that used to come over from the ponds in Queen Elizabeth Park, which was essentially contiguous with the site (see Figure 5.11). Myra happily recalled, “*The ducks would come to our side and walk around.*” Lorraine appreciated the wild herbs that grew on the property. She recalled, “*I used to be able to get a lot of wild herbs. Like comfrey was one of them that I used if I get a sprain. I put my foot in it and it gets better almost immediately...It was growing wild on the property. It was wonderful.*” Sally, who immigrated from China many years ago, explained how the open green space at Little Mountain made her feel rich:

I’m so happy, I feel rich. You could have a huge beautiful house, it’s no different for me to be in BC Housing. It’s no different...Eleven years ago I returned to China. My rich friend asked me, “Oh, Sally what do you do? How rich are you? How many houses do you have?” I said, “I am not rich but I live in the best area. Everyday I open the door and it’s a beautiful park.” In China even if you’re super rich you don’t have this kind of nature. My friend has a high life, beautiful, lots of money, a whole block. But I live in the best area, this is my richness. Really, I feel rich. Nature, open the door, I can go to the park. That’s enough for me.

The open green space at Little Mountain fostered social interaction among the tenants. Hillary explained, “*It’s a place where people can go and walk around, a big part of socializing. You can go for*

walks in the evening around the project and you see people and you go, ‘Hi.’” Hillary also credited the open space for creating a relaxed living environment that helped the tenants get along. She explained, “I’d go crazy if I had to stare at walls all day...Because open space areas have people who are a little bit more relaxed...Because they don’t feel so crowded and they don’t take everything so darn personally.”

A major theme that came across in my interviews with the tenants was how the open green space provided an environment

Figure 5.10 Gardening, ca. 1980



Photo used with permission of Ingrid Steenhuisen
Gardening was an activity that brought the tenants together.

Figure 5.11 Looking Toward Queen Elizabeth Park, 2007



Green space at the Little Mountain Housing Project was contiguous with Queen Elizabeth Park.

for children to play outside and be active. Beth said, “*It’s somewhere where the kids can get together and have a game of soccer or baseball.*” Rhonda remarked, “*Kids could play the way they should, the kids could ride their bikes.*” Two tenants mentioned children using the open space for overnight camping in tents. For example, Lorraine said, “*In the summer time we used to put up a tent and the kids could sleep outside in it. And it was fun and it was safe.*” Many low-income families cannot afford to take their kids on camping trips so the ability to do this at Little Mountain was very important. Thus, the open space at Little Mountain provided a safe environment where children from low-income families could participate in activities that are important for children’s development and that middle class families often take for granted. Irwin’s comments illustrate this point well:

Irwin: People who argue, well you have Queen Elizabeth Park right beside it, if you need open space you can go to the park. This is not true. Because this open space is like the backyard of this community...for the children of this tiny enclave and this is very important for the young people to develop their healthy attitude...The community with the open space, we always have friends run around and they teach each other in playing and all this activity generates people’s respect for people...With the open space you have a backyard and all these things we can develop citizens with a very good character...Many families, they like their children to learn piano lessons or go to the baseball field to play on some baseball league or all kinds of outdoor activities and some people even think that is equally important to schooling. But for the low-income families, they do not have their own backyard or extra money to let their children learn all these prepaid activities. A common area for them to meet their friends is important...

Tommy: And why is it that Queen Elizabeth Park does not really help with that function?

Irwin: Because it is not within their sight...This is security, safety here...If you go to the park, it’s not safe because any other people can be there.

This quote highlights how valuable and important the open space at Little Mountain was for the children. This quote also explains how the open space at Little Mountain was qualitatively different from a public park. Unlike a public park, the open space at Little Mountain offered a safe play environment for children because it was semi-private and parents could hear and see the children from inside their apartments. This echoes the findings from Portland’s Columbia Village Project, which was also a very low density housing project with significant open space. At Columbia Villa, Gibson found that open space enabled parents to provide “the kind of protection middle-class mothers have long sought for their children in suburbia.”¹⁴¹ Gibson went on to argue about Columbia Villa that, “This kind of environment is valued by poor mothers, the elderly, and the disabled, probably to a greater degree than it would be valued by those not raising families; or those with more resources who have more options to enhance

¹⁴¹ Karen J. Gibson, “The Relocation of the Columbia Villa Community: Views from Residents”, *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 27,5 (2007), p. 17.

their quality of life and are less dependent on their immediate surroundings.”¹⁴² This statement equally applies to the Little Mountain Housing Project.

Like many public housing projects of its era, the Little Mountain Housing Project lacked through-streets. There were, in fact, two roadways that went through the project but these were for project tenants only and garbage pick-up. The lack of through-streets in public housing has been the source of significant criticism because it is believed that this cuts public housing off from the surrounding urban fabric. But the Little Mountain tenants appreciated the lack of through-streets because it meant their children could play in the open fields in safety without having to worry about traffic. Every tenant that I asked about the idea of re-introducing the street grid as part of the redevelopment rejected the idea. In one case, I asked a tenant what she thought about the provincial government’s claim that the land at Little Mountain was under-utilized. She responded, “*Oh, I get so upset when they use that word.*” She then went on to talk about how re-introducing the street grid would be under-utilizing the land because it would take away from the open green space that the children play in. The lack of through-streets at Little Mountain did not isolate the project from the surrounding neighbourhood or prevent people from passing through there. Little Mountain featured a network of pedestrian walkways, making it highly permeable to pedestrians from the surrounding neighbourhood (see Figure 5.12). David Vaisbord is a local documentary filmmaker who has been filming a documentary about the redevelopment of Little Mountain over the past several years. He says that he has hours of footage just showing people from the surrounding community walking through the site, on the walkways and through the fields. This is something that came up in my interviews with the tenants as well. As Natasha remarked, “*The neighbours all around, they walk their dogs, it’s just like a park.*”

Thus, the open space and the lack of through-streets at Little Mountain, rather than isolating the tenants, actually helped to integrate them with the surrounding community. Natasha told me that several community organizations and church groups would come to the site specifically to make use of the open space. Similarly, I was told that kids from the surrounding neighbourhood would come to play in the open green space at Little Mountain “*because it’s safer than a park*”. This helped to integrate the project and the non-project children in the neighbourhood. The open space also provided a venue for project events, which promoted social organization.

Figure 5.12 Walkways, 2007



A network of walkways made the housing project permeable to pedestrians.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 18.

5.5.2 Porches and Outside Stairways

The rowhouses at Little Mountain all had little front porches (see Figure 5.13). The rear of the apartment buildings had back porches that were connected by outside stairways (see Figure 5.14). Due to the design of the apartment buildings, visitors were forced to arrive at the backdoor. This is because the shared front entrance to the apartment buildings lacked an intercom. So one had to go to the back of the building and walk up the open stairway, which led to a back porch and a backdoor. If one was going to a top storey unit, one would actually have to walk through the neighbour's porch on the lower storey. This may sound like an inconvenience to people who are not used to this kind of an arrangement, but at Little Mountain it just seemed natural and I never once heard a complaint about it. It also had the advantage of fostering social interaction among the tenants. As Ingrid remarked, *"I think that part of the success has been that the buildings are walk-ups. You at least know your neighbours with the common walkways, people have to interact just by virtue of the design."* Shortly after Vancouver's second public housing project, Orchard Park was built one Orchard Park resident said that "the apartment blocks should have been designed to include rear and front entrances for each unit, similar to those of the Little Mountain project."¹⁴³ The back porch and stairway system was distinctive of Little Mountain, and also of the veterans' housing on West 4th Avenue and West Broadway and a project in New Westminster, until those were demolished several years ago.

Figure 5.13

Rowhouses with Front Porches, 2007



The rowhouses had front porches, which provided a space for social interaction. I am told this evergreen tree was planted many years ago by a Little Mountain tenant. Notice also the excellent condition of the roof, which I am told was re-shingled recently before redevelopment was announced.

¹⁴³ Reid, Op. cit., p. 75.

Figure 5.14

Apartments with Back Porches, 2007



In order to get to the upper storey, one had to walk through the back porch on the lower storey.

The porches at Little Mountain provided a venue for social interaction and watching people in the open spaces below (see Figures 5.15 and 5.16). The porches are frequently mentioned by tenants when talking about fond memories of tenants interacting. Two examples of this come from Brenda when she was talking about her teenage years in the project in the 1970s:

The guys played baseball, football, everything in that field by Oriole Walk and the girls all sat out on the front porches and watched the games.

As soon as the weather started to get warm, everybody was out sitting on their porch. There was people out everywhere and everybody knew everybody.

Porches are now making a comeback with New Urbanist design.¹⁴⁴ New Urbanist design valorizes the community atmosphere of Victorian Era streetcar suburbs that featured grid-patterned streets and private homes with front porches. This ethos of urban design, largely inspired by Jane Jacobs, rejects the modernist design of public housing and its super-block scale that lacks through-streets. This movement also attaches high value to private property and homeownership. But what is often forgotten is that some postwar public housing projects, which are believed to be the antithesis of New Urbanist design, actually included design features that foster the very kind of sociability that New Urbanist design attempts to create. The porches at Little Mountain were one example of this.

¹⁴⁴ See Barbara B. Brown et al., “Neighbors, Households, and Front Porches: New Urbanist Community Tool or Mere Nostalgia? *Environment and Behavior*, 30 (1998), pp. 579-600; Leanne Brownoff, “Back to the Porch”, *Edmonton Journal* (July 24, 2004), p. 11.

Figure 5.15 Back Porches, 1975



Photo used with permission of Lita Patrick
The back porches allowed one to look down at the people below.

Figure 5.16 Front Porches, 1975



Photo used with permission of Lita Patrick
Neighbours socializing on a front porch of a rowhouse in 1975.

5.5.3 Site Lay-Out

Little Mountain tenants appreciated the lay-out of the buildings in relation to the open space. As Richard remarked, “*When they were building, developers in the past, they knew what they were doing. They had all this land to work with. It’s so important to have this breathing space between the other houses.*” The apartment buildings at Little Mountain were set at angles, with open space surrounded by buildings. A 1953 report of Vancouver’s Technical Planning Board explains the rationale for this lay-out:

The lay-out groups the apartments into three large rectangular shaped blocks, mainly on the periphery of the project, with the groups of row houses set on the inside in square patterns. The general effect should be to create interest in the architectural appearance of the project and to avoid the monotony of regular rows of apartments and houses...The lay-out adopts generally the idea of “rear access”. Both apartments and row houses face outwards on to landscaped areas provided with pedestrian access only...*The basic conception is that the fronts of the properties look on to parkland areas where children can play in safety, while all servicing is done at the rear.* (my emphasis added)¹⁴⁵

Thus, the configuration of buildings in relation to open space was intentionally designed with children’s safety when playing outside in mind. The tenants who lived there decades after this report was written understood that this was the value of the design. Earlier I talked about the norm of collective supervision of children that developed at Little Mountain. This norm was enabled by the lay-out of the buildings at the housing project. The apartment buildings were on the periphery of the site, with windows

¹⁴⁵ *Report of the Technical Planning Board to the Building and Town Planning Committee Re Little Mountain Rental Project*, February 6, 1953, p. 2, CVA 124-A-7 file 4.

and back porches looking out into the open spaces, which were within the middle areas of the site. Children playing in these open areas had parents looking out at them from all angles (see Figure 5.17). The concept that the architects had in mind worked out just as they intended. As Ingrid remarked: *“It’s safer than a park because of the buildings surrounding the open spaces. They knew that it was safer for their kids to be here where there would be invisible eyes watching over them and scolding them if they did something wrong.”*

The 1953 report of the Technical Planning Board mentioned how, while the apartment buildings were on the periphery set at angles, the rowhouses were “set on the inside in square patterns.”¹⁴⁶ This meant that the rowhouses in the middle area had the fullest sightlines throughout the site (see Figure 5.18). Hillary explained that this led the families in the rowhouses to participate most in the collective supervision of children: *“Most of the people who are asked to watch kids are in the rowhouses, the corner piece because they get a view of everything. The excellent part is that you can see the child wherever they are, on that side of the project or the other side. That’s the best part of the rowhouses.”*

In addition to providing a safe environment where children could easily be supervised by all, the lay-out of the buildings promoted supervision of the common spaces and social control more generally, which led to a secure, crime-free living environment. As Ingrid explained:

There’s so many visual sightlines both in and out, that you’re not just relying upon your neighbour for help, that if somebody from across the way of the complex sees something that they would also phone. With all of that, there’s that greater sense of connectedness...Just by virtue of the design, the layout, and the whole concept. One of the neighbours has said, “We’ve got the best unofficial neighbourhood watch program there ever has been.” Somebody else might say it’s nosiness, but the fact that you can see everything.

The notion that physical design can promote safety and an absence of crime is associated with the work of Oscar Newman¹⁴⁷ and Alice Coleman¹⁴⁸, which has done a lot to popularize the notion that public housing suffers from defective design. I am told that progressive planners reject this view, which, in its extreme forms can look a lot like environmental determinism. But the Little Mountain tenants are telling us that design mattered. Little Mountain was an extremely successful example of public housing and its design helped to make it that way. This is part of the reason why its demolition has been so tragic. There was something to be learned from the success of Little Mountain. The provincial government, instead of taking credit for its remarkable achievement at Little Mountain, has done everything to characterize Little Mountain as a failure in need of correction. This is discussed in greater length in the next chapter on redevelopment. But before moving on to the next chapter, it is necessary to consider counterposing evidence.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Newman, Op. cit.

¹⁴⁸ Alice Coleman, *Utopia on Trial: Vision and Reality in Planned Housing* (London: Shipman, 1985)

Figure 5.17

Open Sightlines, 2007



Open spaces were in the central areas surrounded by apartment buildings. This created open sightlines and a safe playing environment for children with parents looking out from multiple directions.

Figure 5.18

Rowhouses, 2007



These rowhouses were in the middle of the site, which gave excellent sightlines of the open spaces and helped to foster a norm of collective supervision of children.

5.6 COUNTERPOSING EVIDENCE

This chapter has argued that the Little Mountain Housing Project did not conform to the stereotype of the ‘troubled housing project’. Specifically, the tenants of Little Mountain demonstrated a remarkable level of social capital and its sub-varieties social organization and social control. This was to the benefit of the Little Mountain tenants and the surrounding community alike, which was greatly shaped by the involvement of the tenants in community life. Thus, the Little Mountain Housing Project was integrated with the surrounding community. The successes at Little Mountain, although primarily the credit of the tenants themselves, were facilitated by the positive design features of the project. In constructing this argument I have drawn upon a wide range of disparate sources. Inevitably, I have come across some evidence that detracts from my argument. In order to provide a fair analysis it is important that I consider some of this evidence.

The most significant source of counterposing evidence is the 1982 report of Byron Olson prepared for the provincial Ministry of Lands, Parks, and Housing.¹⁴⁹ The provincial government hired Olson’s architectural firm to consult with the community about rehabilitating or redeveloping the Little

¹⁴⁹ Olson, Op. cit.

Mountain Housing Project. The outcome of this process is discussed in the next chapter on redevelopment. For the purposes of this section, what is most interesting is the very negative portrayal in the report of the Little Mountain Housing Project. Throughout the report, Little Mountain is said to be isolated and suffered from a stigmatizing design that needed to be re-integrated into the surrounding community.

Olson employed a variety of research methods in order to prepare his report. This included questionnaire surveys and in-depth qualitative interviews with both the Little Mountain tenants and people living in the surrounding neighbourhood. Meetings and group discussions also took place. For the surveys, while the response rate within the housing project was 100%, the response rate was far lower in the surrounding neighbourhood. Out of 240 surveys that were handed out to the surrounding community, just 48 were returned. The low response rate was explained to be due to hostility in the surrounding neighbourhood toward the housing project:

What became very clear, from verbal comments to the staff picking up the questionnaires, and from phone calls to the architect's office, was that there is a strong sense of hostility and fear on the part of some neighbours. Many used quite abusive language about the Project to the team members and some refused to fill out the questionnaires for fear of reprisals from the tenants, should their views become known. Many of these neighbours referred to past difficulties with tenants in extremely angry terms. It was apparent that even though recent relationships have been relatively calm, there is a long and unhappy memory on the part of some of the surrounding residents about past incidents.¹⁵⁰

The past incidents being referred to here probably relate to the Riley Parkers, who, as I have already explained, primarily lived in the surrounding community, although they sometimes gathered in the housing project. My copy of the report is a photocopy of the original that belongs to Toni Steenhuisen and as such it contains her handwritten remarks. Toni Steenhuisen took issue with Olson's statement that "many" neighbours were hostile and fearful of project residents. Over the word "many", Toni Steenhuisen wrote "only one". There is also evidence in the report that contradicts the negative depiction of relations between the housing project and its neighbours. Of the people in the surrounding neighbourhood who did complete the surveys, 51% felt that the housing project was part of the community, a greater percentage (34%) thought the tenants were good neighbours than not good neighbours (31%), and 20% had friends living in the housing project.

It seems that some in the surrounding neighbourhood held incorrect, negative stereotypes about renters. Olson reported, "Many neighbouring home owners have expressed a desire to see the project's units owned so that they can live next to what they perceive to be 'long term' neighbours."¹⁵¹ Although

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 18-19.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 24.

usually incorrect, the stereotype of the transient tenant is a common one. Olson's study found that the average length of tenure among Little Mountain tenants was 8.3 years—not an especially short-term tenancy.¹⁵² There are several families who have lived at the Little Mountain Housing Project for decades over multiple generations. In contrast, the adjacent privately owned homes are not always continuously occupied the way that the housing project was before redevelopment. As pointed out earlier, Ingrid talked about a neighbouring privately owned home that “*sat empty for a good four or five years.*”

An alleged “image problem” of the Little Mountain Housing Project was the topic of group discussions as part of the community consultation process in 1981. Olson reported the outcome of the group discussions:

Two groups felt that there was no image problem for the Project; and one group felt that previous problems had been overcome. One felt that the Project had become the scapegoat for whatever was wrong in the community and that the neighbourhood was isolated from the Project, not the other way around.¹⁵³

There is evidence from the report that supports the view that it was some in the surrounding community who chose to isolate themselves from the housing project. Of those people from the surrounding neighbourhood who did fill out the questionnaires, it was found that 63% had never even entered the housing project site and 40% would not let their children play there. If people in the surrounding community did not interact with the housing project, it seems that this was their own choice because they were welcome in the project. As Toni Steenhuisen explained:

If there was people who lived here who had friends on the outside we didn't say anything. If they wanted to come and have part in the cornfest that was okay...They were taken in, you know. They always said we were a separate community in the community. No, we weren't.

It is perhaps telling that the biggest problem of the Little Mountain Housing Project in 1981 was an image problem. There was no discussion about a need to address a crime problem, a gang problem, or a drug problem—the problems that are stereotypically associated with public housing. These issues were not discussed because these were never problems at Little Mountain. Olson's survey of the Little Mountain tenants found that 81% of the households were “satisfied or very satisfied with the safety in both the Project and the surrounding neighbourhood” and 70% believed that the “Project provides a good environment to raise children.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Olson appears to have underestimated the length of residency of the Little Mountain tenants. According to the report, “a few residents have been there for 18 to 20 years” (p. 70). I can think of at least two families who had been living there in excess of 20 years in 1981.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 17.

Little Mountain’s alleged “image problem” in 1981 was believed to arise from the “institutional look”¹⁵⁵ of the buildings and the housing project’s distinctive urban form that stood out sharply against the surrounding private homes. Olson explained: “Some of the stigma attached to the project is related to the form of the buildings since they are different in scale, orientation, features, and landscaping from the surrounding homes.”¹⁵⁶ The angular placement of the buildings, which I have interpreted as an asset, were seen by Olson as a significant liability. He described the site as having an “awkward placement of buildings”¹⁵⁷ and that there was a need to “improve the deficiencies in the siting of the buildings.”¹⁵⁸ It seems that these views either originated with Olson himself or where the views of people in the surrounding neighbourhood. The survey of surrounding residents found that many wanted to see changes in the building form and more private space in the project. Indeed, the report concluded that improving the image of the project was necessary for “mitigating *neighbourhood* concerns”¹⁵⁹ (my emphasis added)—not the concerns of Little Mountain tenants. Nowhere in the report does it say the tenants wanted to see these changes. Granted many of the tenants expressed a desire for better quality housing, but there is no sense in the report that the tenants were complaining about the distinctive building form and open lay-out of the site. In fact, whenever the site is criticized in the report for having a stigmatizing design that separates the housing project from the rest of the community, Toni Steenhuisen took issue with these statements with her handwritten remarks that appear in my photocopy of the report.

What comes across in Olson’s report is a class bias. It should come as no surprise that the tenants of Little Mountain and people in the neighbouring private homes have different perspectives. Recently, some of the same patterns are repeating themselves in the current consultation process. It seems that there are some people, certainly not all, in the surrounding community who just do not ‘get’ Little Mountain. Whether it was in 1981 or 2010, whenever one hears Little Mountain being criticized for having a stigmatizing, un-integrated institutional design, or looking “like barracks” as I recently heard, it is always coming from someone who never lived at Little Mountain. From an outsider’s perspective it did look institutional, but one has to look past that to understand the value of the design. The evidence I have presented in this chapter, which includes interviews with tenants complimented with archival and other sources, shows Little Mountain was rich in social capital and was well integrated with the surrounding neighbourhood to which the tenants have a long history of contributing and that the tenants credit the design of the project for helping to make it a success. The weight of this evidence is far greater than the

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 70-71.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 67.

uninformed stereotypes about public housing that some may hold in the surrounding community and that come across in Olson's report.

This chapter has shown that the Little Mountain Housing Project was a remarkably successful example of public housing. Like public housing generally, over the first several decades there was a downgrading of the class profile of the housing project compared to the time when it started out when low-income families were restricted and people on social assistance were rejected altogether. Due to policy changes in the early years, out-moving middle class families were disproportionately replaced by in-moving families who were poorer and who tended to be headed by single parents. But the loss of middle class families seems to have been stemmed by the early 1980s, which saw an increase in both higher income and two-parent families. But between the early 1980s and 2007, the loss of middle class families seems to have resumed as the proportion of employed households fell from 35% in 1981 to 20% by 2007. Still, even in its final years, one in five households had someone working. Some of the households I interviewed had numerous indicators of being middle class: two-parent families, working families, one case of professional employment, well educated children. I even found a family in which both parents held PhDs. Thus, Little Mountain, in contrast to the public housing discussed in much of the literature, appears to have been able to hold onto a significant minority of middle class households. This means that the dysfunctional culture of poverty theory cannot be applied to Little Mountain because it did not feature the extreme deprivation and the total absence of middle class households that have been observed in other contexts. But I did find what may be considered a poverty culture at Little Mountain—one that was highly functional and positive. The poverty culture of Little Mountain was characterized by very high levels of social capital, social organization, and social control, both in the past and in the contemporary period. This made Little Mountain a supportive, happy, and crime-free living environment. The success of Little Mountain is primarily due to the efforts of the tenants. It was the tenants who came together to help each other out in times of need, to keep an eye out for trouble in the common spaces, and to organize for the betterment of the neighbourhood and the project. Little Mountain has a rich history of tenant organizing as tenants were involved in a public housing tenants movement that included tenants from across the Vancouver Region and the country. Little Mountain led the way in terms of tenant organizing with its tenant management committee, the first of its kind in Canada. Through their involvement in a number of community organizations, Little Mountain tenants helped shaped the development of the surrounding neighbourhood. This rich history underscores the tenants' claim to the neighbourhood. In contrast to the widespread belief that public housing design is flawed, the design of the Little Mountain Housing Project facilitated the success of Little Mountain by offering plenty of open space for social interaction and open sightlines that promoted security and safety. As a rare example of a public housing project that worked, Little Mountain, instead of being a place and community in need of paternalistic intervention, had something to teach us about how to make public housing a success. But the image of the troubled public housing project has become so entrenched that it almost seems unthinkable

that any public housing project could have been as successful as Little Mountain. Thus, redevelopment is presumed to be something that will benefit the tenants. But given the success of Little Mountain and the high level of satisfaction of its residents, from the tenants' perspective it seems unlikely that redevelopment will be able to improve upon what was already there for them. Of course, the in-moving condominium purchasers will probably enjoy their new homes. As the next chapter will show, instead of improving the living conditions for the tenants, at this point in time, redevelopment has worsened the living conditions for many tenants and replaced what was perhaps the most successful example of public housing there ever was with a devastated landscape for which rebuilding seems to be stalled.

6. 'THE DEATH': REDEVELOPMENT STRIKES

When Donald first read in the newspaper that Little Mountain was going to be redeveloped he did not believe it. *"I just thought this is another false alarm."* From the day Donald and his wife and their three children moved to Little Mountain in 1998 BC Housing had been warning them that they might have to move when the project is redeveloped. Donald remembers three separate occasions when BC Housing announced redevelopment over the ten years he lived there. *"I don't know why those first three didn't go through. You just never heard about it again. It just disappeared."* So on March 21, 2007 when he read in the newspaper that Little Mountain was going to be redeveloped, he did not take it seriously. *"I just thought it was another one of their plans that just was not a plan,"* he said. *"Then by the week's end I realized it was something different—they're actually setting up this office and making people move out."*

In the winter of 1957 when the Boston Housing Authority announced that urban renewal was about to begin in the city's working class West End neighbourhood, much like Donald and many other Little Mountain tenants 50 years later, initially many West Enders did not believe it. On the day of the announcement, one West Ender remarked, "I don't believe it; I won't believe it till it happens."¹ Much like Little Mountain, redevelopment of Boston's West End had been talked about for many years. So when it was announced that redevelopment was finally going to become a reality, many West Enders remained skeptical that it would ever happen.

The initial disbelief that many Little Mountain tenants told me about would prove to be just the first in a shocking series of similarities between the redevelopment of Vancouver's Little Mountain Housing Project in the 21st century and the old urban renewal programs of the mid-20th century. Much like urban renewal, the redevelopment of Little Mountain has involved the displacement of almost 200 mostly low-income families. A once tight-knit community in which people helped each other cope with the daily challenges of life has been scattered across the metropolitan region. Relocation started in the spring of 2007 and by the fall of 2008 only about 30 hold-out tenants remained at Little Mountain. Although BC Housing made good progress on relocation, other aspects of redevelopment have been prone to delays. The private developer was not selected until May 2008, four months behind schedule. Then just four months after the private developer and BC Housing entered into a confidential purchase contract for the site, stock markets around the world crashed, bringing down the global economy with them. This forced the developer to turn his attention to saving his other real estate developments, stalling the Little Mountain redevelopment for more than another year. Demolition did not get under way until November 2009. Community consultation started the month after—*after* demolition and displacement. By the fall of 2010, community consultation is still on-going and participants are eager to find out how tall the new buildings will be at Little Mountain, which is still unknown because the developer has yet to put together any development plans for the site. Thus, three and a half years after the first Little Mountain

¹ Herbert J. Gans, *The Urban Villagers* (New York: Free Press, 1962, republished in 1982), p. 332.

tenants were displaced, there is still no plan in place to rebuild Little Mountain. What was once one of the most successful examples of public housing anywhere now sits as an empty gravel field. The large-scale clearance of the neighbourhood, the reduction in the supply of affordable housing as rebuilding is prone to delays, the displacement of the poor, the tearing apart of social support networks, and the lack of meaningful public consultation and transparency are all characteristics of both the Little Mountain redevelopment and the old urban renewal programs of the post-war decades. Urban renewal is an archaic and seriously discredited approach to urban development. As urban historian Jon C. Teaford has remarked, urban renewal “taught America what *not* to do in the future” (emphasis in the original).² But the redevelopment of Little Mountain demonstrates that the lessons of urban renewal must be re-learned. That urban renewal is being resurrected in the 21st century is made all the more shocking because it is happening in Vancouver—a city that prides itself as being a world leader in sustainable and progressive urban development.

But the redevelopment of Little Mountain is taking place in a very different context than urban renewal did. Urban renewal was carried out through state intervention. The re-housing of those displaced by urban renewal into public housing highlights how urban renewal was connected to the rise of the welfare state. In contrast, the redevelopment of Little Mountain is part of a neoliberal strategy of state retrenchment and signifies the erosion of the welfare state. Privatization of the land is a fundamental part of how redevelopment is being carried out at Little Mountain. Privatization has been enabled by the transfer of title from the federal to the provincial government—a move that has been interpreted as part of the federal government’s “15-year effort to get out of social housing.”³ Although a minimum of 224 social housing replacement units will be rebuilt on the site, “no decision has been made”⁴ as to whether the state housing authority (BC Housing) will own and operate the units. Thus, after redevelopment it will probably no longer be correct to refer to the social housing at Little Mountain as ‘public housing’. Redevelopment of Little Mountain is part of a major reconfiguration of the relationships between the federal and provincial governments and between the state and society.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section presents the events of redevelopment in chronological order. These events primarily concern the stand-off that occurred between the tenants/their supporters and the provincial government and the solution that was ultimately negotiated by the City. It is necessary to discuss this in chronological order because the redevelopment of Little Mountain has very much been an evolving story and it is important to present this story in its entirety before analyzing parts of it. The second section discusses the community consultation process and how most of the Little Mountain tenants are effectively being shut out from this process. The final section shows how the redevelopment of Little Mountain is part of the neoliberal restructuring of relations

² Jon C. Teaford, “Urban Renewal and Its Aftermath”, *Housing Policy Debate*, 11,2 (2000), p. 459.

³ Frances Bula, “Little Mountain to be Redeveloped”, *Vancouver Sun* (March 21, 2007), p. B1.

⁴ Personal email communication from Sam Rainboth, Senior Manager, Corporate Communications, BC Housing dated November 4, 2009.

between different levels of government and between the state and society. This section shows how some of the aspects of this redevelopment that most closely resemble urban renewal—the displacement of the tenants, the clearance of the land, and the interim reduction in the supply of affordable housing—are outcomes of the privatization of the land and not redevelopment per se. I also argue that governments have essentially defrauded the Little Mountain tenants through the transfer of title and the privatization of the land.

6.1 REDEVELOPMENT CONTESTED

As noted above, redevelopment had been looming over Little Mountain for many years. The provincial government first considered redevelopment in the early 1980s when Byron Olson’s architectural firm was hired to consult with the community and consider the alternatives. At that time, Olson and a committee of tenants and people from the surrounding community recommended total redevelopment into a higher density public housing project consisting of 400 units.⁵ But the Social Credit provincial government shelved Olson’s report and did not proceed with redevelopment. This is likely because the recommendations of the report ran against the direction of housing policy in Canada at the time, which was turning against high density public housing projects. In 1998, redevelopment was talked about once again, this time with the NDP in power in Victoria. I have a 1998 information sheet from BC Housing that notified tenants that redevelopment was in a “very early planning stage.”⁶ But redevelopment apparently went nowhere once again because it would be almost another ten years and under yet another political regime in Victoria, the BC Liberals, before redevelopment would actually get underway.

In 2007, in its housing policy document entitled *Housing Matters*, the BC government announced that public housing redevelopment was to become a key aspect of provincial social housing policy.⁷ Redevelopment and privatization of public housing is a new “province-wide approach to replacing postwar social housing and generating money for new projects.”⁸ Under this new approach, “BC Housing Minister Rich Coleman is aiming to redevelop many of the lower-density sites...in order to generate money for housing by getting private developers to buy the sites and rebuild them with a mix of profit-making market and social housing.”⁹ Little Mountain, BC’s oldest public housing project, is the first

⁵ Byron Olson, *A Report on the Little Mountain Housing Project, Vancouver, BC* (Prepared for the Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing, January 1982).

⁶ BC Housing, “Answers to Questions You May Have”, Information Sheet (1998); See also BC Housing, *Annual Report 1997-1998* (Accessed online October 20, 2010 from www.bchousing.org)

⁷ Government of BC, *Housing Matters BC: A Housing Strategy for British Columbia* (2007, accessed online October 20, 2010 from www.bchousing.org)

⁸ Frances Bula, “Little Mountain to be Redeveloped”, *Vancouver Sun* (March 21, 2007), p. B1.

⁹ Frances Bula, “Profits Could Be Recycled for Social Housing”, *Times Colonist* (July 14, 2007), p. A2.

public housing project to be redeveloped and privatized under this new approach. Once again, Little Mountain is at the forefront of housing policy in BC, although as this chapter and the next chapter will show, with disastrous results for the tenants. Under this new policy approach, Little Mountain is going to be redeveloped into a higher density, mixed-income community. Housing Minister Rich Coleman has said that as many as 2000 housing units could be developed on the site.¹⁰ The vast majority, if not all, of the extra density will be in the form of privately-owned market condominiums. In a June 2007 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between BC Housing and the City of Vancouver, BC Housing committed to one-for-one replacement of all 224 social housing units, including at least 184 units suitable for families (184 was the number of two- and three-bedroom units at Little Mountain). But given the density increases being contemplated, 224 replacement social housing units will likely fall short of the 20% standard in Vancouver for social housing in large developments. Also in the MOU, the City agreed to waive its 20% social housing requirement in exchange for BC Housing's commitment to reinvest the proceeds from the sale of Little Mountain into social housing elsewhere.¹¹ In the MOU, BC Housing promised to reinvest 50% of the sale profits within the City of Vancouver and 50% elsewhere in the region and the province. At the time, Vancouver City Councillor Raymond Louie took issue with the agreement to give up half the profits from Little Mountain for social housing outside of Vancouver.¹² But then-Mayor of Vancouver Sam Sullivan lauded this deal as an approach to be implemented at public housing projects throughout the city: "What this does for the Minister is it gives him something to take to the bank. But I have said that out of the wealth generated from up-zoning, that will not be going back into general revenue... This memorandum is really about Little Mountain but I would think it could be used as a template."¹³ The NDP's David Chudnovsky has criticized the provincial government's approach of privatizing public housing in order to pay for social housing elsewhere:

Why in the world does the government need to privatize land to build social housing? If they wanted a new park would they sell off nine-tenths of Stanley Park and some day, maybe, buy land somewhere else for parks and then tell us they're being "innovative"? Not a chance. But that's what Coleman is doing at Little Mountain.¹⁴

¹⁰ Ibid. Note: A report on the retail potential of the Little Mountain site estimates that a total of between 1650 and 3000 units will be rebuilt on the site. See Thomas Consultants, *Little Mountain Retail Opportunity Study Final Report* (July 20, 2010, study commissioned by Holborn Properties, accessed online October 20, 2010 from vancouver.ca).

¹¹ BC Housing & City of Vancouver, Memorandum of Understanding regarding the redevelopment of Little Mountain dated June 8, 2007 (Accessed online October 20, 2010 from vancouver.ca)

¹² Mike Howell, "City Agrees to Half Profit", *Vancouver Courier* (August 1, 2007), p. 14.

¹³ Frances Bula, "Province, City Strike Deal to Fund New Social Housing Projects", *Vancouver Sun* (July 14, 2007), p. A1.

¹⁴ David Chudnovsky, "Big Trouble at Little Mountain: Why Destroying Our Oldest Social Housing Project Was A Mistake", *Megaphone: Vancouver's Street Paper* (March 16, 2010, accessed online September 21, 2010 from www.megaphonemagazine.com)

In what would be an early example of the democracy deficit that has come to characterize this redevelopment, just one Little Mountain tenant was present at the July 26, 2007 meeting of the City's Planning and Environment Committee during which the Little Mountain MOU was discussed. This was because city employees were on strike at the time and, except for one tenant, the tenants who showed up for the meeting refused to cross the picket line. The week before the meeting the right-leaning NPA who were in power at the time denied a motion to relocate the meeting away from City Hall so the tenants and others who wanted to speak would not have to cross a picket line. While decisions regarding the fate of their community were being made inside City Hall, Little Mountain tenants held a protest outside.¹⁵

If Sam Sullivan was correct and the Little Mountain redevelopment really does become the template for public housing redevelopment, a significant degree of disruption is potentially in store for thousands of public housing tenants across the province. Within the first week redevelopment of Little Mountain was announced, tenants were already expressing anxiety in the press. Tenants were concerned about where they would move to and about losing connections with friends and neighbours.¹⁶ On May 12, 2007 Little Mountain tenants and their supporters held a protest against redevelopment, displacement, and privatization.¹⁷ While an affordable housing and homelessness problem worsened across the city, angry Little Mountain tenants marched up Main Street with balloons with the words "50 empty units" written on them (See Figure 6.1). This event would be the first of a series of protests that would take place over the next two and a half years. Tenants already felt that BC Housing was pressuring them to move even though redevelopment was still in a very early stage. Ingrid Steenhuisen remarked, "They want to move everybody out by next year, but I don't see why we should have to move while they're going through the re-zoning process."¹⁸ Thus, many tenants were not protesting the idea of redeveloping Little Mountain per se, but the process through which it was being carried out. Several months later, members of the surrounding community conducted a survey of 55 Little Mountain tenant households that found 77% wanted to remain on-site during redevelopment, 88% wanted to stay in the neighbourhood, and 60% felt pressure to move.¹⁹

In 2007, BC Housing created a website to provide information to tenants and others concerning the redevelopment of Little Mountain. The website is titled "A New Plan for Little Mountain"—an ironic name given that three years later there still is no specific plan for what to rebuild on the Little Mountain

¹⁵ Sandra Thomas, "Respect for Picket Line at City Hall Leaves Little Mountain Residents Feeling Left Out", *Vancouver Courier* (August 1, 2007), p. 14.

¹⁶ Sandra Thomas, "Government Reassurance Little Consolation for Little Mountain Residents", *Vancouver Courier* (March 28, 2007), p. 16.

¹⁷ Frances Bula, "Tenants Protest 'Pressure' to Move", *Vancouver Sun* (May 12, 2007), p. B12.

¹⁸ Sandra Thomas, "Government Reassurance Little Consolation for Little Mountain Residents", *Vancouver Courier* (March 28, 2007), p. 16.

¹⁹ Community Advocates for Little Mountain (CALM), "Tenants Want To Stay", *Newsletter* (October 2007), p. 1.

site. In language that recalls the urban renewal era, Little Mountain was characterized as “obsolete” and “under-utilized.”²⁰ The website presented nine guiding principles for redevelopment, which are shown in Table 6.1. BC Housing promised it would assist all tenants with relocation, either to other social housing or private rental housing subsidized through the Rental Assistance Program. Tenants would have their moving expenses and utility reconnection fees covered by BC Housing. Relocated Little Mountain tenants also have the right to return to Little Mountain once the redevelopment is complete. Housing Minister Rich Coleman has argued that this means the tenants are not being displaced. “These tenants will not be displaced,” said Coleman. “We’re going to help them find a place to live and they’ll pay the same

Figure 6.1

First Protest, May 12, 2007



²⁰ BC Housing, “Why Now?”, *A New Plan for Little Mountain* (2007, website accessed October 15, 2007 from www.littlemountain.ca)

Table 6.1 BC Housing’s Guiding Principles for Redevelopment

According to BC Housing, redevelopment of Little Mountain has followed the following nine “Guiding Principles”¹:

BC Housing’s Guiding Principles	Reality
1. Little Mountain public housing residents will be considered first at all stages of the redevelopment until all the residents have been relocated.	Maximizing profits from the sale of the land is the first consideration.
2. There will be no reduction in the number of subsidized housing units on the redeveloped Little Mountain site.	Since relocations started in March 2007 and until redevelopment is complete (not expected to be before 2023), there has been an interim reduction in the supply of social housing for families and seniors.
3. Redevelopment of the Little Mountain public housing site will ensure that residents who wish to return can be accommodated on the site.	Many tenants may not qualify or may pass away before the new social housing is built. Many tenants were attached to the place qualities of Little Mountain as it was before redevelopment.
4. Any value realized from Little Mountain redevelopment will be reinvested to provide more subsidized housing in BC.	Proceeds are being reinvested in supportive housing for drug addicts and the mentally ill. This is taking from one group of poor people to give to another group of poor people and a violation of the Olympic Inner-City Inclusive Commitment Statement.
5. BC Housing will work with the private sector partner and the City of Vancouver to ensure redevelopment proceeds as quickly as possible.	Redevelopment is many years behind schedule. Tenants were originally told they could move back in 2010. New estimated final completion date is 2023.
6. BC Housing will work with the City of Vancouver to make the new housing more environmentally sustainable.	Environmental sustainability and LEED-certification is an attempt to greenwash this socially unsustainable approach to redevelopment. The environmental sustainability of paving/building over green space that has provided natural drainage for the area is dubious.
7. Redevelopment of the Little Mountain site will result in a better use of this site for Vancouver, and encourage a balanced mixed-income community with subsidized housing more fully integrated into the larger business and residential community.	The provincial government has provided no evidence to substantiate its position that before redevelopment Little Mountain was un-balanced and in need of being integrated. My evidence shows that Little Mountain was a very successful example of public housing. Ironically, relocation has isolated the tenants, who were previously rich in social capital.
8. Redevelopment of older public housing will ensure BC’s most vulnerable citizens and those with low incomes have improved access to housing assistance.	This seems to be hinting at the re-targeting of social housing toward the most vulnerable that public housing redevelopment/privatization in BC is connected to.
9. Redevelopment will result in safer and better quality subsidized housing, reduced maintenance costs, and better use of public funds.	This could be achieved without privatizing Little Mountain and displacing the tenants. Lack of transparency around finances of the Little Mountain deal makes it impossible to hold the government to account over its handing of public resources and funds. There are major public costs associated with relocation and demolition but these are being hidden from the public.

¹ BC Housing, “Guiding Principles for Redevelopment”, *A New Plan for Little Mountain* (2007, website accessed October 15, 2007 from www.littlemountain.ca)

rent that they're paying now. Then we'll help them move back."²¹ But this argument holds little weight with people who are familiar with the academic literature on public housing redevelopment. Under the HOPE VI program in the US, tenants are also frequently promised they may return to redeveloped public housing sites, although few tenants actually do return. In 2002, the National Housing Law Project found that just 11.4% of relocated tenants have returned or are expected to return to redeveloped public housing sites.²² More recently in 2010, Edward Goetz reported, "The national record of HOPE VI in returning original residents to the finished sites is not impressive. National estimates are that less than one-third of displaced families return to redeveloped HOPE VI sites."²³ As discussed in chapter 2, the reasons for this low return rate include the changing circumstances of tenants such that they no longer qualify for public housing, the inconvenience of moving again, stricter admissions criteria, and many tenants simply become lost to the system.²⁴ In the Little Mountain case, as discussed later in this chapter in the section on relocation, many tenants are unsure if they will ever return to Little Mountain. How many tenants will ultimately return to Little Mountain after redevelopment is an empirical question that will have to be answered in a future study.

BC Housing's Little Mountain redevelopment website also offered a timeline for redevelopment. According to the original timeline, the private developer was to be selected by January 2008.²⁵ A media fact sheet available on the website in July 2007 stated that all residents would be relocated by the spring of 2008.²⁶ According to the website, the entire redevelopment was expected to be complete by 2011.²⁷ Many tenants have told me that they were told by BC Housing that they could move back to Little Mountain in 2010. BC Housing annually releases a Housing Listings document that helps applicants select the social housing development they would like to be considered for. The 2009 Housing Listings stated that the estimated completion time for the Little Mountain redevelopment was in 2010.²⁸ The 2010

²¹ Sandra Thomas, "Coleman says Little Mountain Redevelopment All Good", *Vancouver Courier* (March 30, 2007), p. 19.

²² National Housing Law Project (NHLP), *False HOPE: A Critical Assessment of the HOPE VI Public Housing Redevelopment Program* (June 2002, accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.nhlp.org), p. iii.

²³ Edward G. Goetz, "Desegregation in 3D: Displacement, Dispersal and Development in American public housing.", *Housing Studies*, 25,2 (2010), p. 145.

²⁴ NHLP, Op. cit.

²⁵ BC Housing, "Project Timeline", *A New Plan for Little Mountain* (2007, website accessed October 15, 2007 from www.littlemountain.ca)

²⁶ BC Housing, "Little Mountain Housing Fact Sheet on Resident Relocation July 2007" (Accessed online September 21, 2007 from www.littlemountain.ca).

²⁷ BC Housing, "Quick Facts", *A New Plan for Little Mountain* (2007, website accessed October 15, 2007 from www.littlemountain.ca)

²⁸ BC Housing, Housing Listings (July 2009, accessed online October 21, 2009 from www.bchousing.org)

Housing Listings pushes the completion date back to 2012.²⁹ But once again, BC Housing seems to be underestimating the length of time it will take to rebuild Little Mountain. According to a report recently released by the developer, the first phase of the new Little Mountain development will be complete in 2014 and the entire development will be complete in 2023—a much lengthier timeline than what even many of the harshest critics likely ever imagined.³⁰

In May 2008, BC Housing and Holborn Properties signed a contract of purchase and sale regarding the Little Mountain site. The terms of the contract are subject to a confidentiality clause. Because the agreement is confidential, the purchase price for Little Mountain is unknown publicly. But the price is likely to have been substantial. BC Housing CEO Shane Ramsay has indicated that, among other factors, the price Holborn agreed to pay for the site helped land Holborn the deal.³¹ BC Housing's 2008/09 Annual Report shows that the Provincial Rental Housing Corporation (BC Housing's real estate holding company) received a \$20 million deposit for the Little Mountain property³², but this would only represent a fraction of the total sale price. BC Housing has said the sale price for Little Mountain will only be released publicly once the sale is complete, which will not happen until the City re-zones the site.³³ This lack of transparency has generated significant criticism. Recall that in the 2007 MOU, the City agreed to waive the 20% social housing requirement in exchange for a promise from BC Housing to re-invest the proceeds of privatization into social housing elsewhere. Thus, the reinvestment of these sale proceeds is the primary public benefit of redevelopment. Some have speculated that the confidential purchase contract is structured such that the sale price may vary depending on how much additional density the City grants. More density granted by the City may mean a higher sale price and more public benefit in terms of proceeds being reinvested in social housing elsewhere. But the City will have to make a decision about re-zoning the property without the knowledge of the magnitude of this public benefit because the sale proceeds will not be made public until after the re-zoning. As a 'template' for redevelopment, this approach involves a shocking lack of transparency. At a November 2009 meeting of the Standing Committee of Council on Planning and Environment, Vancouver City Councillor David Cadman pointed out how the confidential agreement puts the City in an awkward position:

Councillor David Cadman: How do we go into a process when somebody has an agreement, the owner of the land, the province, with the developer and we don't know what that agreement says?...We are told about this

²⁹ BC Housing, *Housing Listings*, (July 2010, accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.bchousing.org)

³⁰ Thomas Consultants, *Little Mountain Retail Opportunity Study Final Report* (July 20, 2010, study commissioned by Holborn Properties, accessed online October 20, 2010 from vancouver.ca).

³¹ Frances Bula, "Developer Will Listen To Community", *Vancouver Sun* (May 7, 2008), p. B1, B5.

³² BC Housing, *2008/09 Annual Report* (Accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.bchousing.org), pp. 60 & 68.

³³ Frances Bula, "Developer will Listen to Community", *Vancouver Sun* (May 7, 2008), pp. B1, B5.

agreement, upon its successful outcomes hinges the development of eight social housing sites. If we don't agree to what's agreed to...then maybe the resources aren't there for the development of our social housing sites...I wasn't referring to the 224 units and their replacement. I was referring to the revenues off of the sale of this, which are contingent on our development of our eight social housing sites elsewhere in the city. I can't believe that those resources are going to be there without a certain commitment to density having been made by the province to the developer. And I think to go into a process without knowing that really puts us in a very strange position, where the senior level of government, of which we are a creation, holds most of the cards in this one.³⁴

In September 2008 stock markets around the world crashed, sending the global economy into a tailspin that it is still struggling to recover from. In October 2008, work stopped on Holborn's flagship condominium project, the Ritz-Carlton in Downtown Vancouver.³⁵ Over the next several months, real estate projects across the Vancouver Region were struggling with an international credit crisis.³⁶ The Ritz-Carlton was officially cancelled in February 2009 and pre-sale purchasers had their deposits returned.³⁷ Holborn has since revived and redesigned the Ritz-Carlton project.³⁸ Given the troubles at the Ritz-Carlton, the new President of Holborn was forced to put the Little Mountain redevelopment on the backburner. Tiah remarked, "*Without having to sound like this is not important, but I had to save the Ritz-Carlton project first before anything else.*"³⁹ Thus, much of the delay at Little Mountain has been due to the global economic crisis, which required the developer to focus on the Ritz-Carlton project.

At the time of the market crash there were just 30 families remaining at Little Mountain, with the rest of the units sitting empty and boarded up. Following the market crash the whole economic context changed. NDP MLA David Chudnovsky, whose riding bordered the Little Mountain Housing Project, accused the provincial government of participating in real estate speculation at Little Mountain. Following the market crash Chudnovsky remarked, "I don't think social housing should be dependent on

³⁴ City of Vancouver, Standing Committee of Council on Planning and Environment, November 19, 2009 (Video footage accessed online September 22, 2010 from vancouver.ca)

³⁵ CBC, "Ritz-Carlton Condo Project Suspended in Vancouver" (October 23, 2008, accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.cbc.ca)

³⁶ The prime example being the difficulties at the Olympic Village developed by Millenium Developments at South East False Creek. In that case, the City of Vancouver was forced to lend the developer about \$700 million after the collapse of a New York hedge fund that was supposed to have financed the development; see CBC, "Vancouver gets OK to borrow to finish Olympic Village" (January 18, 2009, accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.cbc.ca). In a similar case, construction ground to a halt on the second phase of Surrey's Infinity development; see Katie Mercer, "Mega-Project Runs Out of Cash", *Province* (October 16, 2008), p. A9.

³⁷ Bruce Constantineau, "Putting Off the Ritz", *Vancouver Sun* (February 25, 2009), p. D1.

³⁸ City of Vancouver, *Policy Report, Development and Building* (November 17, 2009, accessed online September 22, 2010 from vancouver.ca)

³⁹ Personal interview, December 21, 2009

the real estate market...They got caught, like speculators in the US and, in the meantime, a community has been destroyed.”⁴⁰ Chudnovsky raised this issue during opposition questioning when the Little Mountain redevelopment was debated in the BC Legislature, with Little Mountain tenants and their supporters looking on from the gallery where we sat as guests of the NDP (See Figure 6.2):

D. Chudnovsky (NDP): Under the Minister’s plan, the proceeds from condo sales at Little Mountain were supposed to fund other social housing projects, but the deal is stalled, and the developer is sitting with a big hole in the ground in downtown Vancouver that’s surrounded by chain-link fence and padlocks. Those other projects will now have to wait and may never happen. That means real people have little hope of having their housing needs met. Meanwhile, 200 habitable units have been boarded up. The province should be directly investing in social housing, regardless of the ups and downs of the real estate market...Today there are people in the gallery who have been displaced or who are watching habitable units being destroyed by this Minister’s decisions. The Little Mountain redevelopment project is seriously delayed. It could even be dead. Even by conservative estimates, the earliest construction will start in 2011. Given this time line, it makes no sense at all for over 200 units of housing to be sitting, to be boarded up or to be demolished. Will the Premier today commit to reopen the 200 units of housing in Little Mountain that people in Vancouver desperately need? Will we have housing in Little Mountain, or won’t we? ⁴¹

Premier Gordon Campbell never answered the question and Housing Minister Rich Coleman avoided the substance of the question by talking about the tenants’ paid moving expenses and investments in the Rental Assistance Program and supportive housing for those with addictions and mental illness.

Herein lies another unfortunate similarity with urban renewal. Under urban renewal, governments progressed quickly with relocation and demolition but private sector rebuilding was prone to significant delays sometimes lasting more than a decade.⁴² At Little Mountain, already by the fall of 2008 most of the families had been relocated and the housing project sat mostly empty and boarded up. But with an international credit crisis jeopardizing real estate developments across the region and no progress being made in terms of the actual redevelopment of Little Mountain, it was looking like rebuilding Little Mountain was still going to be a long way off. In the meantime, the supply of affordable housing in Vancouver had been reduced by about 200 units, which were unoccupied at Little Mountain. If Little Mountain had not been under-utilized before, it now was, ironically due to the provincial government’s own efforts. In the fall of 2010, three and a half years after relocation started and two years after the

⁴⁰ Cheryl Chan, “Activists See Red (and Green) over Housing Shortage”, *Province* (December 8, 2008), p. A6.

⁴¹ Hansard, Official Report of Debates of the Legislative Assembly, British Columbia, Fourth Session, 38th Parliament, November 26, 2008, Afternoon Sitting, 36, 3 (Accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.leg.bc.ca), pp. 13322-13323.

⁴² Martin Anderson, *The Federal Bulldozer: A Critical Analysis of Urban Renewal, 1949-1962* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1964).

Figure 6.2 Little Mountain Tenants & Supporters at the BC Legislature, Nov. 26, 2008



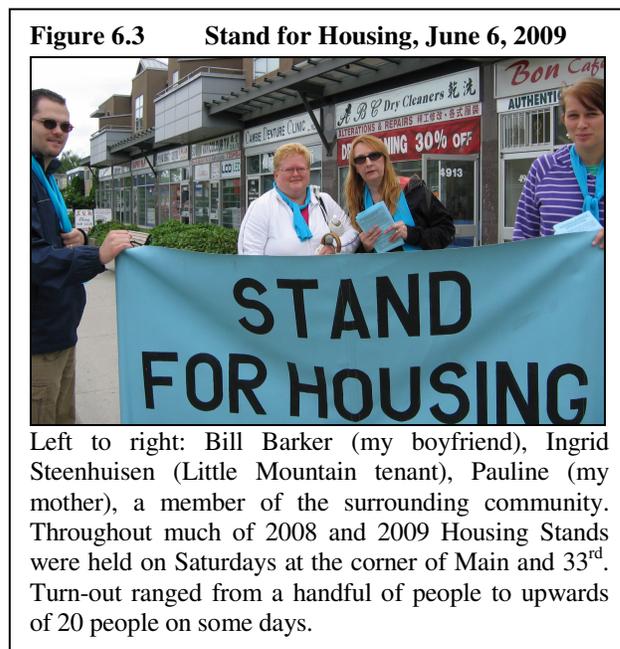
Outside the BC Parliament Buildings wearing the blue scarves that were the hallmark of the movement



Meeting with BC NDP leader Carole James

majority of the units were boarded up, we are still waiting for a development plan from the private developer to rebuild Little Mountain.

But the global economic downturn also offered a reprieve from redevelopment. With redevelopment stalled, or as it seemed at the time, even possibly dead, through much of 2009 tenants and their supporters launched a campaign of resistance to redevelopment and privatization. The resistance movement was led by Community Advocates for Little Mountain (CALM), which included Little Mountain tenants and their supporters in the surrounding community. CALM organized a variety of protest events including art-ins, housing stands (with people wearing blue scarves that became the hallmark of the movement), street marches, and more (See Figures 6.3 through 6.6). When BC Housing tried to host an information meeting on the site for contractors wishing to bid to demolish Little Mountain, a group of protesters disrupted the meeting with picket signs and jeers (See Figure 6.7). We essentially chased them off the property. A few days later another protest event took place at Little Mountain which involved tying little bits of cloth in the chain-link fence BC Housing had erected around an entirely de-populated section of the housing project. Literally thousands of little bits of cloth, including pieces of Toni Steenhuisen’s old dresses, were tied into the fence to spell out the words “SAVE SOCIAL HOUSING” (See Figure 6.8). One of the contractors who had showed up for information to bid on the demolition of Little Mountain a few days earlier actually came to this protest. Mike Cote of Clearwater Environmental Group was interviewed by reporters for the *Vancouver Sun* that day. “What the government is doing here is not right,” Cote said. “We want no part of this until there is a plan.”⁴³ At another protest event billed ‘Selling the Premier’s House’ protesters sold mock shares for Gordon



Campbell’s house, drawing attention to the fact that the BC Government was selling tenants’ long-terms homes at Little Mountain. At many of these events I often found myself protesting alongside Ned Jacobs, the son of Jane Jacobs, who was probably the most well-known and influential critic of urban renewal there ever was. I remember one day when Ned told me his mother would have characterized the displacement of the tenants as being akin to treating people as though they were “interchangeable parts.” Originally from New York, Ned Jacobs now lives with his wife in the neighbourhood surrounding the Little

⁴³ Graeme Wood, “Government Lacks Long-Term Plan for Little Mountain, Protesters Say”, *Vancouver Sun* (July 4, 2009, online edition accessed on July 17, 2009 from www.vancouver.sun.com).

Figure 6.4

Little Mountain Art-Ins, December 7, 2008 & January 11, 2009



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

(a) Sponsors; (b) Supply station; (c) Ingrid Steenhuisen; (d) NDP MLA Jenny Kwan and her daughter; (e) Left to right: a colleague from UBC Geography, Annye (former Little Mountain resident), myself, Margaret (my aunt) (f) Displaced Little Mountain resident

Figure 6.5

Artwork from the Little Mountain Art-Ins



Figure 6.6

A Landscape of Protest



Mountain Housing Project. In addition to tenants from Little Mountain and people from the surrounding neighbourhood, many other people from beyond the neighbourhood also participated in the protest events. Vancouver artist Tiko Kerr helped to organize and raise the profile of the art-ins. Politicians such as Ellen Woodsworth, David Chudnovsky, Jenny Kwan, Don Davies, and Shane Simpson came to several events. The Raging Grannies and well-known activist Betty Krawczyk even attended at least one event.

A major point of disagreement between the tenants/protesters and the provincial government was the quality of the housing at Little Mountain. In order to justify redevelopment, BC Housing said that the buildings at Little Mountain were

“obsolete”⁴⁴, “derelict”⁴⁵, and “old and in poor shape.”⁴⁶ BC Housing also cited the lack of elevators and ramps, which makes the buildings difficult for people with mobility issues.⁴⁷ BC Housing’s Dale McMann said that renovating the buildings would cost “hundreds of millions.”⁴⁸ But unlike when redevelopment of Little Mountain was first considered in the early 1980s, the provincial government did not commission any studies that compare the costs of redevelopment with renovation.⁴⁹ City Councillor

Figure 6.7 Disrupting a Meeting for Demolition Contractors



On June 30, 2009 BC Housing held a mandatory information meeting at Little Mountain for contractors wishing to bid for the demolition. The time and date of the meeting were advertised in the *Vancouver Sun*. Protesters disrupted the meeting and essentially chased the contractors and the BC Housing officials off the property. At one point, BC Housing and the contractors attempted to retreat behind the fence but the protesters followed them. The following weekend one of the contractors who was going to bid to demolish Little Mountain came to a protest event to show his support for the tenants and the protesters.

⁴⁴ BC Housing, “Why Now?”, *A New Plan for Little Mountain* (2007, website accessed October 15, 2007 from www.littlemountain.ca)

⁴⁵ Rich Coleman said this on Global TV’s *News Hour*, July 4, 2009.

⁴⁶ BC Housing’s Dale McMann said this in Tom Sandborn, “BC Housing Applies for Little Mountain Demolition Permits”, *The Tyee* (June 10, 2009, accessed online September 22, 2010 from theyee.ca)

⁴⁷ BC Housing, “Little Mountain Housing”, *A New Plan for Little Mountain* (2007, website accessed October 15, 2007 from www.littlemountain.ca)

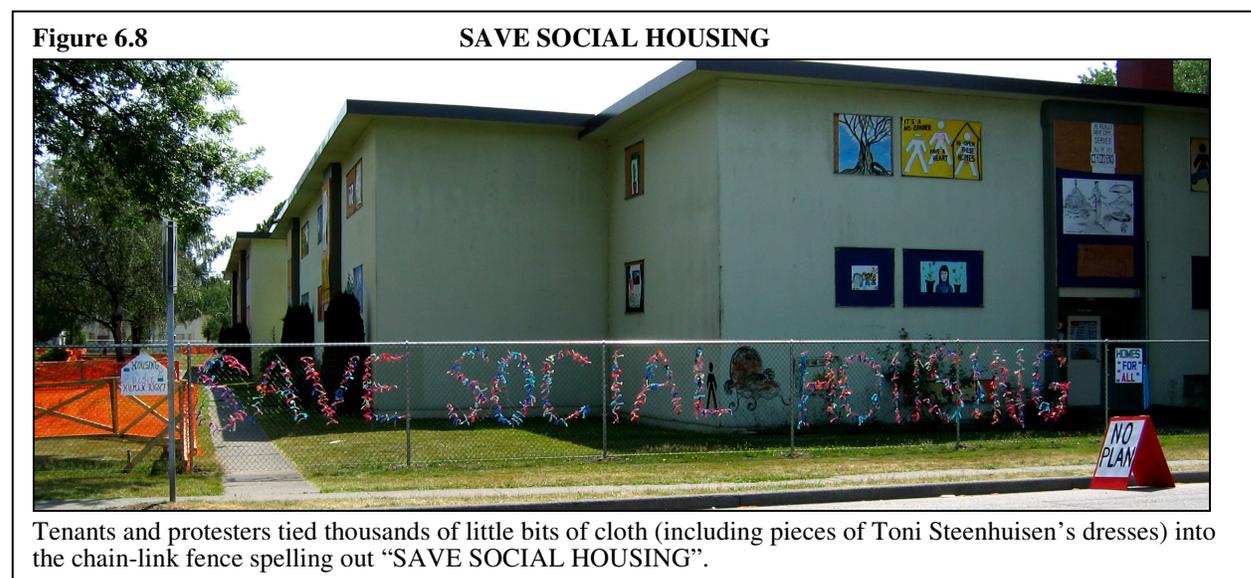
⁴⁸ Tom Sandborn, “BC Housing Applies for Little Mountain Demolition Permits”, *The Tyee* (June 10, 2009, accessed online September 22, 2010 from theyee.ca)

⁴⁹ This is because redevelopment is really only a secondary goal. The primary goal of the provincial government is privatization. The provincial government does not need to compare the costs of redevelopment with the costs of renovation because the provincial government is not paying for the redevelopment—the developer will have to pay for that. For the provincial government, the redevelopment of Little Mountain is first and foremost a money-making exercise.

Ellen Woodsworth said that the former director of the City’s Housing Department Cameron Gray said the units could be refurbished for as low as \$10,000 each, which would be a total cost of just over \$2.2 million. Woodsworth also pointed out that in the summer of 2009 the federal government made funds available for renovating social housing as part of its economic stimulus package.⁵⁰ Indeed, in October 2009 BC Housing announced that it would be participating in the federal Housing Renovation Partnership to renovate 101 social housing projects across the province totaling \$177 million.⁵¹ Renovations are even being carried out at Little Mountain’s ‘sister’, Orchard Park, which is just four years younger than the Little Mountain Housing Project.

In contrast to the provincial government’s depictions of Little Mountain, the tenants described the buildings as “habitable”⁵² and “a great place to live.”⁵³ The tenants also pointed out that the wooden boards BC Housing erected over the windows and doors at Little Mountain in September 2008 created a false impression of dilapidation:

“These homes have been boarded up to look like they’re uninhabitable,” said Wagner, a mother of two. “But they’re perfectly livable.”...“Once the boards went up, I got a feeling in the pit of my stomach. Do the (boards) not say, ‘Vandalize me?’ They were like an attack on those of us who were left.”⁵⁴



⁵⁰ Ellen Woodsworth, Letter to the Editor, “Little Mountain Units Could Have Been Refurbished”, *Vancouver Sun* (July 4, 2009), p. D3.

⁵¹ BC Housing, “BC, Canada Partner To Renew Social Housing”, Press Release (October 14, 2009, accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.bchousing.org)

⁵² Open letter from the remaining tenants of Little Mountain to BC Housing dated June 25, 2009 (Accessed online July 17, 2009 from www.citycaucus.com)

⁵³ Frances Bula, “Little Mountain to be Redeveloped”, *Vancouver Sun* (March 21, 2007), p. B1.

⁵⁴ Kristen Thompson, “Little Mountain Residents Protest Planned Demolition”, *Metro* (December 7, 2008, accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.metronews.ca)

The tenants I interviewed emphasized the strength of the buildings at Little Mountain. Karin's comment was typical of what I heard: *"They're good, solid buildings."* Similarly, Darius said, *"The construction was sound."* Rhonda remarked, *"I think those buildings are very well built. You could roll a marble along my floor and it wouldn't roll into a corner. And I never saw a basement that leaked."* The majority opinion seemed to be that renovation was all that was necessary. As one tenant said, *"It just needed a facelift."* The biggest problems seemed to be with bugs and mold, although these were only problems in parts of the housing project. Many tenants accused BC Housing of incompetence when it came to handling the bug problem. As one tenant said, *"I just knew that they were not handling the proper way of getting rid of bugs. You don't spray one suite, you spray the whole building and that way you might have a chance of getting rid of them all."* But even if there were problems with bugs, this tenant told me she loved Little Mountain so much that she was willing to live with bugs. Any shortcomings aside, many tenants were emotionally attached to the place.

Amid growing calls to re-open Little Mountain for low-income tenants or even the homeless, in June 2009 BC Housing applied to the City of Vancouver for a demolition permit for the entire Little Mountain site.⁵⁵ While it would be several more months before BC Housing was actually granted the demolition permit, this did not stop BC Housing from doing 'pre-demolition' work. This involved gutting the interiors of empty units. Although vast sections of the housing project sat empty, BC Housing opted to begin this work in empty suites adjacent to where people were still living in the row of rowhouses where the Steenhuisens live. Documentary filmmaker David Vaisbord posted on youtube video footage of BC Housing carrying out this work.⁵⁶ In an open letter to BC Housing, the remaining Little Mountain tenants interpreted this as a form of intimidation:

BC Housing has started demolishing the homes at Little Mountain, with no demolition permit. There are no plans or dates for new construction, no dates for re-zoning consultations, no plans or dates for community consultations and it does not look as if the deal with developer is even still on. It is very clear that no construction will happen for years to come. This week, demolition crews came in without warning, right next door to where tenants are still living, took chainsaws to the interiors of the vacant units, ripped out appliances, fixtures and pipes. Perfectly habitable homes are being destroyed...The actions that BC Housing has taken this week are tantamount to eviction by fear and intimidation...Since this site is only the first of many to be redeveloped, we fear that the actions of BC Housing may set a precedent for the treatment of many other tenants. Displacement and intimidation of tenants must not be repeated here or in any future development.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Sandborn, Op. cit.

⁵⁶ See "BC Housing Demolishes Little Mountain Without Demolition Permit", Youtube video filmed by David Vaisbord (June 29, 2009, accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.youtube.com)

⁵⁷ Open letter from the remaining tenants of Little Mountain to BC Housing dated June 25, 2009 (Accessed online July 17, 2009 from www.citycaucus.com)

With 10 hold-out families still living at Little Mountain in September 2009, the City of Vancouver finally granted BC Housing the demolition permit for Little Mountain. By this point, the centre-left Vision Vancouver party led by Mayor Gregor Robertson had been in power in Vancouver City Council for almost one year. Gregor Robertson and Vision Vancouver came to power on a campaign to end homelessness. “We will bring our brightest minds together and end homelessness in Vancouver,” Robertson vowed on election night.⁵⁸ Robertson and Vision Vancouver are widely believed to be socially and environmentally progressive. Thus, with them in power in City Hall there was hope that a better deal might be negotiated for the Little Mountain site. Indeed, during the summer of 2009 the City was in negotiations with the provincial government concerning housing. Throughout 2009, the provincial government was under growing pressure to provide capital funding for social housing. Specifically, the City and housing activists wanted to see capital funding from the province for the 12 city-owned sites earmarked for supportive housing. Although the MOU concerning the 12 sites was signed by BC Housing and the City in 2007⁵⁹ and the provincial government made repeated announcements about how it was partnering with the City to develop supportive housing on the 12 sites⁶⁰, by 2009, just one year before the Olympics were to arrive, there was still no provincial funding for the 12 sites.⁶¹ Another issue in 2009 was five homeless HEAT shelters in the downtown area that the Province and the City and a private partner opened up in the winter of 2008-2009. The City said the Province needed to commit \$4.5 million in order to keep the five homeless shelters open.⁶² The homeless shelters, supportive housing on the city-owned sites, and the Little Mountain demolition permit were all part of the City’s negotiations with the provincial government in the summer of 2009. As was explained in the *Vancouver Courier*:

These seemingly disparate issues are related, according to the mayor’s communications guy Kevin Quinlan. These issues are “all bundled” in negotiations going on between the city and the provincial government led by Mayor Gregor Robertson and Housing Minister Rich Coleman. But it is turning into a giant game of chicken.⁶³

⁵⁸ CTV, “New Vancouver Mayor Vows to End Homelessness” (November 16, 2008, accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.ctvbc.ctv.ca)

⁵⁹ BC Housing & City of Vancouver, Memorandum of Understanding regarding the development of City-owned sites for social and supportive housing dated October 29, 2007 (Accessed online September 22, 2010 from vancouver.ca)

⁶⁰ See for example, Frances Bula, “Social Housing Sites put on Fast Track”, *Vancouver Sun* (November 12, 2007), p. A3; Randy Shore, “Youth Emergency Shelter to Expand”, *Vancouver Sun* (April 15, 2008), p. B1.

⁶¹ Kelly Sinoski & Catherine Rolfsen, “Social Housing Piggy Bank is still Empty”, *Vancouver Sun* (January 31, 2009), p. A13; See also, Jean Swanson, “The Housing Endowment Fund could Build Housing for Homeless”, *Vancouver Sun* (August 17, 2009), p. A7.

⁶² Allen Garr, “City, Province Play Chicken for Housing”, *Vancouver Courier* (June 24, 2009), p. 8.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

While the City wanted provincial funding for the homeless shelters and the supportive housing sites, which by the summer had increased from 12 to 14 sites, the provincial government wanted the demolition permit for Little Mountain. Vancouver City Councillor Kerry Jang was a key participant in the negotiations:

Tommy: It sounds like the provincial government is playing hardball over these 14 sites, really holding that over your head.

Kerry Jang: *We played hardball back and we held the demolition permit...It was daily. Minister Coleman, the mayor, mayor's staff, Penny Ballem, all of us were back and forth everyday. It was a Sunday night, I was at a dinner in Chinatown when I got a call, "I think we got her done." And that's when I knew. I stepped back because I was sort of the public attack dog.*⁶⁴

The fate of the Little Mountain Housing Project was sealed on the evening of Sunday, September 20, 2009. That was when the Letter of Understanding (LOU) was signed between BC Housing and the City of Vancouver in which the City agreed to grant the demolition permit (See Appendix II). The following Monday morning, Mayor Robertson and Housing Minister Rich Coleman held a joint press conference concerning the deal they had reached the night before. The press release is headlined "Social Housing a Priority for Little Mountain." Mayor Robertson gushed over his deal at Little Mountain, "It's great news that we'll be able to maximize the development of social housing at Little Mountain as well as around the City. I'm also pleased with the fact that we have found a way to allow for current tenants of Little Mountain to remain on site, in their community, while demolition is underway."⁶⁵ The next day, on September 22, 2009, in a *Globe & Mail* article headlined, "Families allowed to stay at Little Mountain" people across Canada read: "The families who refused to move out of Vancouver's oldest social housing site so it could be redeveloped are going to be allowed to stay. The province has promised that new social housing will be the first thing built on the site."⁶⁶ But the afternoon before, just hours after the joint press conference, the last 10 Little Mountain families received their eviction notices.

Ironically, the mayor who came to power on a campaign to end homelessness agreed to grant the demolition permit for BC's first public housing project in exchange for what amounted to three almost entirely meaningless concessions from the provincial government. First, in exchange for the demolition permit, BC Housing agreed to "substantial work being underway as indicated by the signing of construction contract agreements on the four remaining supportive housing sites before the end of November 2009 (188 East 1st Avenue; 525 Abbott Street; 377 West Pender Street and 3595 West 17th

⁶⁴ Personal interview, October 29, 2009

⁶⁵ Ministry of Housing & City of Vancouver joint press release, "Social Housing a Priority for Little Mountain" (September 21, 2009 accessed online September 22, 2010 from www2.news.gov.bc.ca)

⁶⁶ Frances Bula, "Families Allowed to Stay at Little Mountain", *Globe & Mail* (September 22, 2009), p. S2.

Avenue).”⁶⁷ This was the first hard confirmation that redevelopment/privatization of Little Mountain was directly linked to supportive housing development. According to Vancouver City Councillor Ellen Woodsworth, the provincial government had already committed funding to these four sites several months before the LOU was signed. Indeed, when I checked the City of Vancouver’s own website in February 2010, the write-ups concerning 188 East 1st Avenue and 3595 West 17th Avenue both stated, “Funding...was announced by the Province on March 17, 2009.”⁶⁸ Thus, the LOU did not get any funding commitments from the provincial government concerning supportive housing. Rather, in exchange for the demolition of Little Mountain, all the public got was a promise that the provincial government would stop dragging its feet on supportive housing projects that had been announced and funded long ago. This seems sorely incommensurate with what the public was giving up with the demolition of Little Mountain. But Kerry Jang believes it was a good deal:

Kerry Jang: Cranes in the ground start in November. Cranes in the ground start work. Not some time this year. Not, oh, budget says we can't now...It's guaranteed now. They have to start. It's part of the Letter.

Tommy: Before this it wasn't guaranteed?

Kerry Jang: *No.*

Tommy: So if we didn't have this LOU what would have been the status of the 14 sites?

*Kerry Jang: They would probably re-announce it and put delays on it again and again and again. They only started one site this year...So we got it here and we get the addresses. A big deal. These are the ones that we said that we wanted and have cranes in the ground.*⁶⁹

A second provincial government promise in the LOU concerns the timing of the rebuilding of social housing at Little Mountain. The LOU states, “BC Housing and the City will give priority to the building of social housing in the redevelopment, which will include the replacement of the existing 224 units. As part of the re-zoning process, the City will require that social housing components of the project will be built as a priority in the first phase of development.”⁷⁰ Many people have interpreted this to mean that the 224 social housing units are going to be rebuilt first at Little Mountain, before any market

⁶⁷ BC Housing & City of Vancouver, Letter of Understanding regarding the redevelopment of Little Mountain dated September 20, 2009.

⁶⁸ City of Vancouver, “City-owned Site: 188 E 1st Avenue” (City website accessed February 10, 2010 from vancouver.ca); City of Vancouver, “City-owned Site: 3595 West 17th Avenue” (City website accessed February 10, 2010 from vancouver.ca)

⁶⁹ Personal interview, October 29, 2009

⁷⁰ BC Housing & City of Vancouver, Letter of Understanding regarding the redevelopment of Little Mountain dated September 20, 2009.

housing is built. Indeed, this is how it came across in the *Globe & Mail*. But that is not at all what it means. Such a scenario would in fact be very difficult under the approach of using market housing to pay for social housing development. As the developer, Holborn President Joo Kim Tiah explained to me:

That does not mean that the social housing will not be built first, but I'm not saying it will either. Most likely, how it works it would be like, we would build 10% of the social housing, you build 10% market housing, so you can take the money to fund the next phase of the social housing, the next phase of construction. Normally, you can't be like, build all the social housing first. Then I will be like, okay, where is the money going to come from? So it's usually that's not the case. But we're still early in the game so I'm not saying it's not possible.⁷¹

All the LOU really says is that some social housing will be included in the first phase of development. One unit of social housing in the first phase would be enough to technically satisfy the terms of the LOU. Also, there are no timelines included in the LOU. If the first phase of rebuilding that includes a social housing component does not take place for another 20 years, the LOU will still not be violated. In addition, phased rebuilding of the 224 social housing units (but without phased demolition of pre-existing public housing) raises troubling logistical questions for the re-tenanting of the social housing units at Little Mountain. How will BC Housing decide which of the relocated tenants, the vast majority of which are anxious to move back as soon as possible, will be selected to move back first? That question has never been answered.

Lastly, BC Housing's promise in the LOU to allow the last 10 Little Mountain families to stay on the site is not much of a concession given that the provincial government had indicated it was open to allowing tenants to remain on-site from the very beginning. Within weeks after redevelopment was first announced several news outlets reported that "Housing Minister Rich Coleman...indicated the project might be phased in, which would allow more residents to stay on site."⁷² Also, in the City's Administrative Report that accompanied the original 2007 MOU it was stated:

The scale of this site, the number of street frontages and likely introduction of new circulation and servicing corridors suggest that it is well suited to a phased redevelopment. This would allow for a gradual transition of accommodation for the existing residents. There, City staff favour a staged approach to development.⁷³

⁷¹ Personal interview, December 21, 2009

⁷² Frances Bula, "Tenants Protest 'Pressure' to Move", *Vancouver Sun* (May 12, 2007), p. B12.

⁷³ City of Vancouver, *Administrative Report – Little Mountain Housing Site – Policy Planning Program* (July 26, 2007, accessed online September 22, 2010 from vancouver.ca), p. 6.

But by July 2007, with 65 families already relocated and another 31 signed up to move out by the end of August 2007, it was apparent that phasing and on-site accommodation was not being pursued by BC Housing. The NDP accused BC Housing of breaking its promise with respect to phasing:

NDP housing critic Diane Thorne has claimed that BC Housing officials told her last March that the redevelopment of the 224-unit Little Mountain social-housing complex would be a phased project. “That’s what they told me,” Thorne told the *Straight*. “It would be phased to try and minimize the dislocation for the tenants.”⁷⁴

In September 2009, with virtually all the tenants displaced and just 10 families remaining at Little Mountain, a commitment from BC Housing to do what it said it was going to do in the first place can hardly be construed as a concession on the part of BC Housing. But if one reads the LOU closely, this is not even what BC Housing agreed to. The impression that virtually everyone got from the joint press conference was that the tenants were being allowed to stay throughout the redevelopment. This is how it came across in the *Globe & Mail*. Following the press conference blogger Mike Klassen wrote, “Gregor Robertson and Rich Coleman have just decided to let them [the last tenants] stay on the construction site while redevelopment happens.”⁷⁵ But this is not at all what the LOU says. All the LOU says is that they can stay “during the demolition of the other buildings.”⁷⁶ There is a big difference between staying during demolition (which, as it turned out, took two and a half months) and staying during redevelopment (which could be several years).

On the day of the press release, the last 10 tenants received eviction notices to end the tenancies for the particular units they were living in. The eviction notices were accompanied with a letter from BC Housing advising that on-site relocation was only a temporary option and that ultimately they would all have to move off-site. The letter read, “I would ask you to give strong consideration to working with our Relocation Office staff now to identify other subsidized housing options, since everyone will have to move off the site eventually.”⁷⁷ While the letter stated, “Details of on-site relocation will be provided as soon as they are worked out,” the letter also told the tenants they had until September 28, 2009 at 4:00 pm to make up their minds as to whether they would opt for on-site or off-site relocation. If this deadline was missed, BC Housing “will assume you will be making alternate

⁷⁴ Charlie Smith, “NDP says BC Housing Broke Pledge”, *Georgia Straight* (July 26, 2007, accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.straight.com)

⁷⁵ Mike Klassen, “Gregor Robertson Claims Win-Win on Little Mountain Demolition”, (September 21, 2009, blog accessed September 22, 2010 from www.citycaucus.com)

⁷⁶ BC Housing & City of Vancouver, Letter of Understanding regarding the redevelopment of Little Mountain dated September 20, 2009.

⁷⁷ Letter from Dale McMann, Regional Director, Vancouver Coastal, BC Housing to the remaining Little Mountain tenants dated September 21, 2009 (the letter accompanied eviction notices for ‘landlord’s use’)

housing arrangements for the redevelopment period without our assistance.”⁷⁸ Although they only had one week to make up their minds, the tenants still had many unanswered questions about on-site relocation: Since ‘Area 3’ is not familiar terminology to the Little Mountain tenants, where exactly on-site would they be relocated to? How long would the tenants be able to remain on-site? Given that on-site relocation would ultimately involve an additional move off-site, would their additional moving expenses be paid for?

The eviction notices forced the final hold-out tenants to choose between on-site relocation to Area 3 or off-site relocation. If the tenants relocated on-site they would enter into new tenancy agreements with BC Housing. Except for these last 10 hold-outs, all the other Little Mountain tenants were relocated without the use of eviction notices. The last tenants were evicted for ‘landlord’s use of property’, which is the same kind of eviction as the rash of ‘renovictions’ (eviction-for-renovation) that have caused so much disruption in Vancouver’s West End.⁷⁹ The fact that these tenants were being ‘renovicted’ by the provincial government strikes me as a bizarre predicament for them to have been in. A provincial government already under fire for weakening the Residential Tenancy Act to allow ‘renovictions’ to occur⁸⁰ was now using the very same tactic against its own tenants.

Receipt of the eviction notices initiated a period of significant anxiety for the last Little Mountain tenants that lasted over the next several months. At a tenant strategy meeting arrangements were made for all the remaining tenants to communicate to BC Housing before the deadline that they wanted on-site relocation, with the understanding that, given BC Housing’s preference for off-site relocation, they could always change their minds and opt to move off-site after the deadline. The tenants requested a meeting with BC Housing and City officials for clarification of on-site relocation. The tenants had their meeting with BC Housing’s Dale McMann and Vancouver City Councillor Kerry Jang on September 29, 2009. At the meeting, Dale McMann told the tenants that the eviction notices would be rescinded once the tenants had selected either on-site or off-site relocation. The tenants wanted written assurance of this. Prior to the meeting, Ingrid Steenhuisen had done some investigating with Vancouver City Staff and determined that the last Little Mountain tenants may have as long as two and a half years before they would have to move off-site given that community consultation typically takes about 10 to 12 months, creating the development plan and re-zoning might take about another 10 to 12 months and then there may be another

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ See CTV, “Hollyburn accused of more West End ‘renovictions’” (May 21, 2010, accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.ctvbc.ctv.ca); Note: ‘Renovictions’ are not limited to the West End. In 2006 I personally experienced a ‘renoviction’ (before that term was coined) from a New Westminster apartment building known as Chelsea Place (525-11th Street). In that case I disputed the eviction on behalf of 29 other tenants at the Residential Tenancy Branch; See “NW Renters Appeal their Eviction Notices”, *Burnaby News Leader* (November 10, 2006), p. 3; “Evictions Going Ahead, but Help Being Offered”, *Burnaby News Leader* (November 24, 2006), p. 3.

⁸⁰ See Sandra Thomas, “Election Result Worries West End Renters”, *Vancouver Courier* (May 15, 2009), p. 18; Jane Armstrong, “Joining Forces in Face of ‘Renoviction’”, *Globe & Mail* (November 12, 2008), p. A10.

four to six months to enact the re-zoning. But according to Ingrid, Dale McMann and Kerry Jang did not appreciate her sharing this information at the meeting:

They were purposely painting as bleak and vague a picture [of on-site relocation] as possible, completely enshrouded in uncertainty and futility...They kept saying they had no idea how long it could be [before ultimately having to move off-site]. It could be a matter of months but they wouldn't say that it could be a year, purposely making it sound as short-term and tenuous as possible. They were using things like, we don't know about the roadways being re-established and road egresses and sewer lines and water lines, etcetera. Those were all possibilities of why we might have to move later. And so when they were finished with that I put up my hand and I shared my little bit of information, that it's a two-year process and I had just had that reaffirmed the week before and how many months for each thing. You should have seen it—the two of them, city councillor and Dale, the two of them took turns shooting out of their seat, literally practically hitting the ceiling. Going on and on and on, with an almost how-dare-you tone, but saying about how there was no way to know. So after they finished their little tirades I said, "You had mentioned that you had no idea. All I wanted to do was share this little piece of information with you."

The Demolition/Redevelopment Addendum that would be attached to the new tenancy agreement should tenants opt for on-site relocation also painted a dismal picture of on-site relocation. The addendum essentially contains the terms and conditions for on-site relocation. Tenants who chose on-site relocation would accept the "Inconveniences" of demolition and redevelopment. These inconveniences would include "noise, dust, dirt, debris, snow removal, traffic disruption, and temporary closure of roadways, alleys, and sidewalks, in and around the Rental Unit."⁸¹ These inconveniences were to be a "material term" of the tenancy agreement. In addition, "the Tenant waives and releases BC Housing and PRHC [Provincial Rental Housing Corporation] from any obligation whatsoever to remedy, minimize, or mitigate any of the Inconveniences caused by the Demolition and Redevelopment." In addition, the tenant would waive the right to sue for compensation. Finally, there would be no guarantee with respect to how long the tenants could stay in their on-site relocation units. "Nothing in this Addendum or Tenancy Agreement will preclude or prevent BC Housing from issuing a notice to end the tenancy with respect to the Tenancy Agreement if, in BC Housing's opinion, the work necessary to complete the Demolition and Redevelopment makes it unsafe for the Tenant to remain in the Rental Unit."⁸²

The two months after the meeting with Dale McMann and Kerry Jang were filled with a frenzy of meetings, negotiations, deadlines, deadline extensions, and emails as the remaining tenants tried to understand their options and figure out what to do. In the absence of written assurances that their eviction notices would be rescinded once they agreed to move either off-site or on-site, the tenants considered

⁸¹ Demolition/Redevelopment Addendum – Additional Terms to the Residential Tenancy Agreement, attached in an email from BC Housing to Ingrid Steenhuisen dated October 13, 2009.

⁸² Ibid.

filing for dispute resolution with the Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB), a common course of action for private market tenants who are 'renovicted'. But BC Housing used intimidation to force the tenants to back down from this position. A staff member from BC Housing's Relocation Office told advocates from the Downtown Eastside Residents' Association who were helping the Little Mountain tenants that if they filed a case with the RTB, all offers of relocation assistance would be off the table. If it had gone to the RTB, the tenants would have been treated essentially just like tenants in the private market who dispute 'renoviction'. Under BC's Residential Tenancy Act, tenants who are evicted for renovations are entitled to two months notice including one month of free rent and nothing more. Given that public housing tenants' rents are usually very low, one month of free rent would be far less than the payments BC Housing was making to tenants who agreed to relocate to cover their moving expenses and utility re-connection fees. Thus, dispute resolution at the RTB is not a viable option for public housing tenants who are being 'renovicted' by the provincial government.

During this time period, Ingrid Steenhuisen essentially acted as the go-between between BC Housing and the other remaining tenants. BC Housing would often call Ingrid in the evening to request an important meeting with the last tenants the next day. This meant that Ingrid would have to scramble to see if the other tenants would be available. Much of her email communication from this time shows she was under considerable stress and she frequently had little time to even eat meals. Ingrid did succeed in having the eviction notice for her and her mother's tenancy rescinded given that they were already living in Area 3 and it would be unnecessary for them to move to another unit in order to remain on the site. By the end of November 2009 the rest of the tenants had figured out what to do. Six of the final hold-outs agreed to off-site relocation. In addition to the moving expenses money that all the other relocated tenants received, each of these last six families received an extra \$3000 in exchange for agreeing to move off-site. This is consistent with the pattern of the old urban renewal programs: Holding out often leads to a better financial settlement.

The other four hold-outs decided to remain at Little Mountain. Three families moved over to the row of rowhouses where the Steenhuisens already were. The four families who live there now have accepted the unmitigated inconveniences of living in a demolition zone and the threat of eviction constantly hanging over them because moving away would be even worse for them. One of the last families is composed of a blind married couple who have lived at Little Mountain for almost 40 years. Off-site relocation would significantly reduce the mobility of this family because they would have to memorize a new neighbourhood all over again, something that would be very difficult at their advanced age. But on the upside, the three families who were relocated on-site got to move into newly renovated suites at Little Mountain. Throughout the fall of 2009 BC Housing had crews in what would be the last remaining rowhouse (149-175 Grouse Walk), fixing up the units for the families to move into them. These were the very same units that BC Housing had trashed just a few months before, when they decided to rip out the fixtures and the piping in the empty units in the Steenhuisens' row of rowhouses.

Now BC Housing had to reinstall what it had ripped out. Given that the whole point of redevelopment for BC Housing is to raise money to be reinvested in supportive housing elsewhere, the fact that BC Housing destroyed the interiors of units only to fix them up again a few months later seems like an egregious waste of government resources. But the units were probably restored to a better state than what they were in before. The one I was in smelled of fresh paint and had beautiful new wall-to-wall carpeting. It was the most modern looking interior to a Little Mountain unit I had ever seen. But this highlights another contradiction on the part of BC Housing that David Chudnovsky has drawn attention to: BC Housing has long insisted that the buildings at Little Mountain were beyond repair, requiring total demolition and redevelopment; but if it was possible to renovate this particular building, surely it would have been possible to have renovated the rest.⁸³

But this is just one of the many contradictions that have come to characterize the Little Mountain redevelopment. Perhaps the most blatant contradiction was the issuing of eviction notices to the last Little Mountain tenants just hours after a press release in which it was said the Little Mountain tenants could stay. I asked Vancouver City Councillor Ellen Woodsworth about this contradiction:

I was at the press conference and I heard exactly what you heard: That they would be able to remain on site and that was part of the reason he [the Mayor] seemed quite happy with the deal. I have no idea why there was that difference between what he said and receiving on the same day a [eviction] letter from BC Housing.⁸⁴

Shortly after they moved, I interviewed one of the last 10 tenants who received an eviction notice and had to choose between on-site and off-site relocation. As much as this tenant did not want to move away, the fact that on-site relocation carried the risk of eviction at any time was too much for them to live with and they decided to move off-site. When I interviewed this person, they really wanted me to understand that on-site relocation was not a viable option. After the interview, this person stopped me before I left their home and made me turn my audio recorder back on so I could record this:

Tenant: My personal opinion, I talked to the school and parents and all. They said you could stay. For the media concerns, public that they are doing a good job, good work and they are helping the people stay. But only four people are staying there, but people think 50.

Tommy: People are under the impression that 50 people are staying there.

Tenant: Yeah. People are asking me, "Why didn't you stay?" It's only for media concerns and they put curtains, they never did this for the BC Housing [tenants]. For the media concern...

⁸³ David Chudnovsky, "Big Trouble at Little Mountain: Why Destroying Our Oldest Social Housing Project Was A Mistake", *Megaphone: Vancouver's Street Paper* (March 16, 2010, accessed online September 21, 2010 from www.megaphonemagazine.com)

⁸⁴ Personal interview, October 29, 2009

Tommy: So you're saying that the reason they allowed these last people to stay is to make it look good for the media, but most people had to go and it was not a real option for you to stay.

Tenant: *Yeah.*

Although English is not this tenant's first language, the meaning of their words comes across. The press conference in which the mayor boasted that the last Little Mountains tenants would be allowed to stay was a bunch of smoke and mirrors designed to create the public impression that a compassionate solution had been found for what the mayor described had become a "flashpoint"⁸⁵ in Vancouver. But rather than a compassionate solution, the reality was the last tenants were being evicted and the demolition permit for BC's first public housing was being granted. And, the press conference entirely achieved that goal as evidenced by the positive news story and blog posts that followed. Blogger Mike Klassen wrote, "Gregor Robertson has found a solution that allows him to avoid any confrontation with the Little Mountain residents, and still keep face with the Housing Minister. That, ladies and gentleman, is the real win-win of today's announcement."⁸⁶ Thus, on the day that the demolition of BC's first and remarkably successful public housing project was announced and the last tenants received their eviction notices, the mayor who came to office on a campaign to end homelessness managed to save face.

In addition to Ellen Woodsworth, I also asked Vancouver City Councillor Kerry Jang about the apparent contradiction between at least the understanding people got from the press conference that the tenants would be allowed to stay and the fact they received eviction notices on the same day:

Kerry Jang: It's not a contradiction. So if you think about how redevelopment works, so the agreement was that they move to a particular place on the site, one area, Area 3 whatever it is. And you want to mince words, we'll mince that. These people said the mayor said, the mayor did not. It's been mistaken. I have had this argument with friends, if you are living on the site and we don't know what the form of development is yet. Say for example that what they will do is built a particular house or style of building where that unit is staying or they want to put sewers in. You can't stay. It just doesn't make sense. And I'm getting quite tired of the activists, oh they said they can stay forever. When I spoke to them initially, I said, "No, that isn't the case because we don't know the form of development. Maybe a road will go through there. Then you're going to have to shift." And that still wasn't good enough.

T: There have been other public housing redevelopments where families have been accommodated on the site throughout redevelopment.

K: *Where?*

⁸⁵ Quoted in Frances Bula, "Families Allowed to Stay at Little Mountain", *Globe & Mail* (September 22, 2009), p. S2.

⁸⁶ Klassen, Op. cit.

T: Regent Park is being done that way in Toronto.

K: *That's Regent Park.*

T: And several others in the US under the HOPE VI program.

K: *Well the reason why is because the way this was going to roll out.*⁸⁷

Jang is making on-site accommodation of tenants throughout redevelopment sound like a near logistical impossibility. But as I show in Section 6.3, it would have been possible to continuously accommodate not just 10 but all 224 households on the site throughout the entire redevelopment. In addition, Jang seems to confuse the issue of on-site relocation with eviction/off-site relocation when he uses the word “*shift*”. If the tenants were willing to relocate on-site they were showing a willingness to “*shift*” and accommodate the redevelopment. What was at issue was the apparent contradiction between the mayor holding a press release after which the media reported the tenants could stay throughout redevelopment whereas in reality the tenants had been evicted and were being bullied into off-site relocation. Although Jang does not provide a satisfactory explanation for this contradiction, he seems to get it right when he says, “*the reason why is because the way this was going to roll out.*” The next section shows that it was not redevelopment per se that necessitated the displacement of all but four of the tenants, but the privatization of the land.

Demolition of the Little Mountain Housing Project started on Friday, November 6, 2009.⁸⁸ Ministry of Housing Communications Manager David Haslam confirmed the suspicions of many that there was a connection between the Olympics and the timing of the demolition: “The goal is to have the buildings removed by Feb. 2010, with the foundations backfilled in time for the Olympics. Following the Olympics, the foundations will be removed and soil remediation will occur, including the removal of old oil tanks.”⁸⁹ In the weeks leading up to demolition, there was talk of militant protests, perhaps including an occupation of the buildings or a blockade. But when demolition finally did get underway, the protest was anti-climatic. People in the area noticed demolition beginning at 7:00 am and promptly started making phone calls and sending out the word that protesters should come to the site. When I arrived at about 10:00 am there were about 20 protesters holding picket signs along 33rd Avenue watching in despair as a bulldozer brought down an apartment building.⁹⁰ Although Ingrid Steenhuisen was not there

⁸⁷ Personal interview, October 29, 2009

⁸⁸ See CBC, “Vancouver’s Little Mountain Housing Project Demolished” (November 6, 2009, accessed online November 7, 2009 from www.cbc.ca)

⁸⁹ Personal email communication from David Haslam, Communications Manager, Ministry of Housing dated October 21, 2009.

⁹⁰ See Naoibh O’Connor, “Protesters decry Little Mountain demolition”, *Vancouver Courier* (November 11, 2009), p. 14.

because she was with her mother who was in the hospital after being injured, a few other Little Mountain tenants showed up, including people who had lived there long ago. Ellen Woodsworth, who has stood by the tenants throughout this redevelopment, was among the protesters. The *Georgia Straight* reported, “COPE councillor Ellen Woodsworth phoned the *Straight*. Speaking from Little Mountain, her voice was cracking, she said, ‘The bulldozers are here. They’re tearing down Little Mountain. It’s so awful.’”⁹¹ I will never forget holding my picket sign in the rain and the overwhelming feeling of sadness and defeat. The air was permeated with the smell of broken red cedar that poured from the building like blood. I had a long conversation with a young woman from Toronto who had recently finished her Master’s Degree. She thought Little Mountain was a housing cooperative. I explained to her that Little Mountain was built before housing cooperatives were part of Canada’s social housing programs. I explained that Little Mountain was one of the first examples of public housing developed under the federal-provincial partnership initiated in 1949. Housing cooperatives often require in-moving tenants to pay large deposits. Public housing projects like Little Mountain are more accessible to the poor. The conversation I had with this young woman highlights the historic value of places like Little Mountain. Many younger people, even highly educated people like this young woman, are simply unaware of public housing. For many people, the only social housing they have ever known is third sector social housing such as housing cooperatives and non-profit housing. Public housing projects, like Little Mountain before it was demolished, serve as physical reminders of a distinct period in history. The architecture, the lay-out, and the scale of public housing projects represent a distinctive urban form that embodied the postwar welfare state. These welfarist landscapes are worthy of preservation for the future so that we can create cities with a rich layering of different types of buildings and urban forms that recall different periods in history and different arrangements between the state and society.

The following few evenings after demolition started a group of dedicated housing activists set up tents on the Little Mountain site.⁹² They camped overnight in the rain and the cold. The purpose of the camp was three-fold: “To bear witness to the continuous demolition of 37 buildings at Little Mountain”; “To continue the LMH movement till the bitter end”; and, “To demand that this travesty never occurs again.”⁹³ Although I did not join them, I wish to thank these activists for their passionate commitment to the fight to save the Little Mountain Housing Project.

⁹¹ Carlito Pablo, “Little Mountain Housing Demolition in Progress”, *Georgia Straight* (November 6, 2009, accessed online November 7, 2009 from www.straight.com)

⁹² See John Streit, “Demolition starts at Little Mountain Housing Complex”, *News 1130* (November 6, 2009, accessed online November 7, 2009 from www.news1130.com)

⁹³ Facebook message, November 7, 2009.

Figure 6.9

Demolition, November 6, 2009



(a)



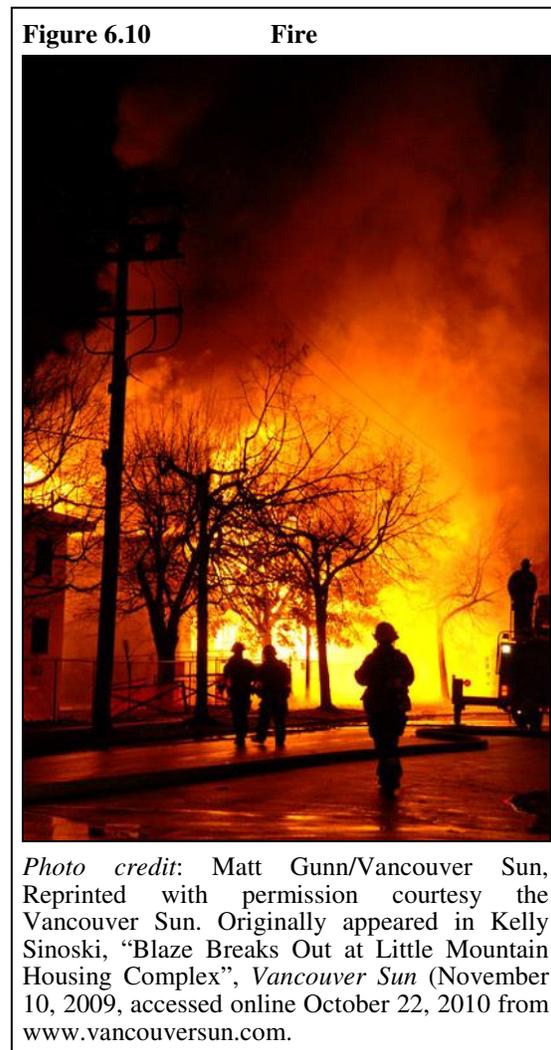
(b)



(c)

Photo credits: (a) BC Housing; Reprinted with permission courtesy of the Government of BC, Intellectual Property Program (b) myself; (c) Dean McLean; Reprinted with permission courtesy of Dean McLean

The sprawling Little Mountain Housing Project would not succumb to demolition quickly. It took two and a half months to reduce what was one of the most successful examples of public housing there ever was to a bare and scarred landscape. Much like many of the tenants I have talked to, during this period I avoided going there because it was just too painful to watch. The evening before Remembrance Day a massive fire broke out in one of the empty apartment buildings (See Figure 6.10). A few days later fire investigators concluded that the fire was deliberately set.⁹⁴ However, there have never been any publicly released findings on how the fire was started and who is responsible. There has been speculation that protesters may have started the fire. But protesters have vehemently denied any involvement, pointing out that they had been fighting for years to save Little Mountain so setting the buildings on fire would be the last thing they would want to do. Protesters have also suggested that perhaps BC Housing or the demolition contractor started the fire to speed up the demolition process. But on the evening of the fire BC Housing's



Dale McMann said the fire may slow down demolition.⁹⁵ It seems the Little Mountain fire will forever remain a mystery. When I went to Little Mountain on Remembrance Day I was confronted with a landscape that looked like it had been ravaged by war (See Figures 6.11 and 6.12). Charred planks of wood were mixed with the debris from demolition and the no trespassing signs on the chain-link fence had melted away. Where the burnt out building once stood all that remained were the concrete front steps. Except for one other time, I would not return to Little Mountain until January 20, 2010, which by coincidence just happened to be the day that demolition was completed (See Figures 6.13 and 6.14). As I walked up to the Steenhuisens' rowhouse—the last Little Mountain building that at least temporarily has been allowed to stand—I took a photograph of Ingrid Steenhuisen with her head in the window looking at the spot where the adjacent rowhouse had just been demolished. Except for the Steenhuisens' rowhouse, almost 56 years after it first opened up, the Little Mountain Housing Project was dead.

⁹⁴ Kimberly Shearon, "Little Mountain Fire Set Deliberately: Official", *Metro* (November 12, 2009, accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.metronews.ca)

⁹⁵ CTV, "Fire Consumes Vacant Apartment in Little Mountain" (November 10, 2009, accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.ctvbc.ctv.ca)

Figure 6.11

After the Fire, Remembrance Day 2009



Figure 6.12

After the Fire, Remembrance Day 2009



Figure 6.13

Demolition Complete, January 20, 2010



Figure 6.14

Steenhuisen's Rowhouse Still Standing



Ingrid Steenhuisen looks out the window at the spot where the adjacent rowhouse was just demolished. The fact that this building is still standing is testament to the resistance displayed by the tenants, especially the Steenhuisens. This is all we have left of BC's first and remarkably successful public housing project. It serves as an important landmark and helps former residents and people who knew Little Mountain to orient themselves at this now drastically changed place. Preserving this building in situ is absolutely essential in order for us to hold onto the memory of Little Mountain and what Little Mountain represented.

6.2 DEMOCRACY DEFICIT

Ever since 2007 when a picket line outside City Hall prevented Little Mountain tenants from participating in the discussion regarding the Little Mountain MOU, this redevelopment has been characterized by an extreme lack of democracy and transparency. Richard said, *"I just feel like we've been shut up, muzzled, and fooled."* Donald summarized BC Housing's approach with the tenants:

There was never any real talking about anything. It was just they had this plan and screw everybody else. You're just pawns in our game, we couldn't care less what you think. If you want a place in BC Housing, get in this line and we'll give you a place. That was the attitude. We aren't talking about anything.

CMHC has made detailed recommendations concerning the planning process for physical upgrades to public housing. CMHC recommends:

Before undertaking a conversion, redesign or redevelopment project, an expert assessment of the problems within the project is necessary and

should be conducted *without a predisposition to recommending physical changes*. Such an assessment could involve a multi-disciplinary team of experts to ensure that the range of physical, administrative, managerial, financial, and social issues can be professionally addressed...tenants should be full participants in the planning process.⁹⁶ (emphasis in the original)

With the Little Mountain redevelopment, BC Housing has ignored these recommendations from CMHC. Only after demolition was well underway and after 194 Little Mountain families had been displaced across the region did the community consultation process finally get started. The consultation process started in December 2009 when the City of Vancouver hosted two open houses in the early part of the month. Participants completed comment forms and were able to speak with planners from the City and people working for Holborn Properties. Holborn President Joo Kim Tiah even showed up at one of these open houses. In the following month the Little Mountain Advisory Group was created. The role of the Advisory Group is “to provide advice to City staff on the preparation and evaluation of the Development Framework for the Little Mountain Site.”⁹⁷ There is no firm membership list of the Advisory Group. The Advisory Group is open to anyone who is interested and who wants to attend. But generally the same group of about 25 regular participants have attended most of the meetings, with another 25 casual participants who come to some of the meetings. Throughout 2010, as part of this process, a number of meetings and events have taken place. Thus far, in addition to the eight formal meetings of the Advisory Group, there were two meetings just for Little Mountain tenants, one meeting for residents of the adjacent private housing, one site design workshop facilitated by the Co-Design Group, one workshop on how to measure density, and two sets of open houses in December 2009 and June 2010. The Advisory Group’s work is still ongoing at this point in time. I have participated in five of the eight Advisory Group meetings, one of the meetings with the Little Mountain tenants, the site design workshop, and both sets of open houses. In addition to community members and interested citizens, these events include City staff, Holborn staff, and a variety of consultants hired by Holborn including the architect James Cheng (who designed the Shangri-La, the tallest building in Vancouver) and Jim Green. Jim Green has had a colourful career as a longshoreman, taxicab driver, university instructor, Downtown Eastside activist, and a municipal politician. He has been instrumental in creating social housing in the Downtown Eastside, as a major proponent of the Woodward’s redevelopment, which includes a mix of social and market housing, and as the co-founder of the Portland Hotel Society, which operates several supportive housing buildings around the city.⁹⁸ Jim

⁹⁶ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Public Housing Program – Program Evaluation Report* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, April 1990), p. 90.

⁹⁷ Little Mountain Housing Planning Program, Advisory Group Terms of Reference (March 25, 2010, available online from vancouver.ca), p. 1.

⁹⁸ See *Globe & Mail*, “Jim Green: The Democratic Solution” (March 3, 2009 accessed online October 7, 2010 from www.theglobeandmail.com)

Green is believed to be respected by the community so his role is to act as a bridge between the developer and the community. At this stage, it remains to be seen if Jim Green will be able to redress the various ways redevelopment has harmed the Little Mountain tenants (these harms are detailed in the following chapter).

Although the people who have participated in and helped to organize the community consultation process are well-intentioned, the process is fundamentally flawed because it started too late. By the time the first open house was held on December 5, 2009, over two and a half years had passed since the first Little Mountain families had been relocated. Back in June 2007, in a letter to the surrounding community, Dale McMann of BC Housing said, “We’re pulling together a consultative group from among the residents at Little Mountain.”⁹⁹ This was an outright lie. There was never any attempt to put together a consultative group of Little Mountain tenants. Even according to BC Housing, the only ‘consultation’ with the tenants in 2007 was regarding where they were to move to. In July 2007, BC Housing said, “Residents who have contacted BC Housing staff at the Relocation Office are being *fully consulted* about their housing requirements”¹⁰⁰ (my emphasis added). Consulting the tenants about where they were to move to (which, as I show in the next chapter, was a highly coercive process itself) should not be construed as tenant consultation regarding redevelopment. Almost one year later on May 7, 2008 in yet another letter to the surrounding community, BC Housing said, “Holborn Properties *will now lead* an extensive public consultation process”¹⁰¹ (my emphasis added). The use of the word ‘now’ suggests the present. But it would be more than another year and a half from the date of that letter before community consultation got underway. On September 3, 2009 Housing Minister Rich Coleman said, “Holburn [sic] Properties will lead an extensive public consultation process at the appropriate stage in the process.”¹⁰² I suppose Rich Coleman considers the appropriate stage for community consultation to be after the buildings have been demolished and after the tenants have been displaced. Although Rich Coleman considers this the appropriate time, consulting the community after demolition is illegal in the US under the HOPE VI public housing redevelopment program. In the US, public housing tenants have a legal right to be consulted *before public housing is demolished or sold*. This right was enshrined into law in a 1984 amendment to the 1937 National Housing Act.¹⁰³ In cases when adequate tenant consultation has not

⁹⁹ Letter from Dale McMann, Regional Director, BC Housing to Neighbours of the Little Mountain Housing Project, dated June 4, 2007 (accessed online October 22, 2010 from www.littlemountain.ca), p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ BC Housing, “Little Mountain Housing Fact Sheet on Resident Relocation July 2007” (Accessed online September 21, 2007 from www.littlemountain.ca).

¹⁰¹ Letter from Dale McMann, Regional Director, BC Housing to Neighbours of the Little Mountain Housing Project, dated May 7, 2008 (accessed online October 22, 2010 from www.littlemountain.ca).

¹⁰² Personal email communication from Housing Minister Rich Coleman, Government of BC dated September 3, 2009.

¹⁰³ Marvin Krislov, “Ensuring Tenant Consultation before Public Housing is Demolished or Sold”, *Yale Law Journal*, 97, 8 (July 1988), pp. 1745-1764; See also Dawn Jourdan, “Enhancing HOPE VI Revitalization Processes with Participation”, *Community Development*, 39, 2 (2008), pp. 75-90.

taken place, tenants have launched lawsuits against Public Housing Authorities in the US.¹⁰⁴ In Canada too, in the case of the Regent Park redevelopment in Toronto, tenants were consulted early on in the process, several meetings took place before demolition, and community animators were hired to engage with the tenants.¹⁰⁵ Even this has been criticized as insufficient, but it is way more than what the Little Mountain tenants got. The late, after-the-fact community consultation process at Little Mountain should be an embarrassment to Vancouver when compared to public housing redevelopment in other cities. This is a 'template' for redevelopment that is sorely lacking in democracy.

The late timing has caused the community consultation process to be flawed in two fundamental ways. First, late timing has prevented meaningful consultation that includes consideration of all the options. At the very first meeting of the Little Mountain Advisory Group in January 2010 architect James Cheng said, "At this stage in the game, we don't want to preclude any options." But demolition had just been completed a few days before he said this. Demolition before consultation precluded the option of saving the buildings. When redevelopment was first considered for Little Mountain in the early 1980s, the community consultation process that occurred then compared a variety of options, including renovation of existing buildings, infill development, partial redevelopment and total redevelopment. It is impossible to compare these various options now because the buildings were demolished before consultation took place. Similarly, in the early 1980s the Little Mountain tenants and the surrounding community were consulted on whether or not to increase the density and on the issue of introducing tenure mix. But in the twenty-first century all these higher order decisions have been made without consulting anyone. The provincial government decided on its own that Little Mountain was to be totally redeveloped/privatized into a much higher density, mixed-income community. By staging community consultation after demolition and after the deal with the developer was struck, community consultation has been prevented from being anything more than a process that serves to legitimize the decisions already made by the provincial government.

The second fundamental flaw that stems from the late staging of the community consultation process has been the effective exclusion of all but a few Little Mountain tenants. In 2007 then-NPA City Councillor Kim Capri said the consultation process will "ensure current tenants receive priority treatment."¹⁰⁶ In retrospect, this statement appears unfortunately laughable. I have never seen representation from more than five tenant families at the Advisory Group meetings and only one or two tenants showing up is more typical. The first difficulty was just contacting the tenants to let them know

¹⁰⁴ Jason Hackworth, *The Neoliberal City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).

¹⁰⁵ Martine August & Alan Walks, *From Social Mix to Political Marginalization? The Redevelopment of Toronto's Public Housing and the Dilution of Tenant Organizational Power* (Paper prepared for the ESRC Seminar Series 'Gentrification and Social Mix', Edinburgh, Scotland, February 19-20, 2009, accessed online November 3, 2009 from www.kcl.ac.uk)

¹⁰⁶ Kim Capri quoted in Sam Sullivan, "Mayor & Councillors to Support Little Mountain Housing Policy" (July 24, 2007, accessed online July 17, 2009 from www.samsullivan.ca)

that consultation meetings were finally taking place. I was actually asked to provide the contact information of my research participants. Only after I explained that providing this information would be a violation of research ethics did BC Housing give in and agree to mail out letters to the tenants on behalf of Holborn and the City. But just the fact that I was being approached for tenants' contact information shows that the processes are not in place to communicate with the Little Mountain tenants. Also, I have never seen these letters and I do not know how often these letters are sent out. I suspect that letters are not being sent out for each and every meeting that takes place. BC Housing also apparently sent out letters to the tenants advising them of the first open house in December 2009 but one tenant I talked to said she never received a letter and only found out about the open house through something I wrote on facebook. In addition, even if the time and place of the meetings are being communicated to the Little Mountain tenants, the location of the meetings makes it difficult for tenants to participate. The meetings are typically held at the Riley Park Community Centre, which is just a few blocks away from where the Little Mountain Housing Project used to be. But most of the tenants do not live in this area anymore. In order to participate, tenants have to travel across the city or even the metropolitan region in some cases. Meetings typically do not start until 7:30pm and often last late into the night. For someone coming in from a distant suburb by transit it is very difficult to commute at these late hours. The meetings take place late in the evening because most of the middle class people organizing and attending the meetings have day jobs and live relatively close by. For Myra in Surrey, she would have to haul her three children by Skytrain and bus across Metro Vancouver late at night. Participation is simply not practical for someone like her.¹⁰⁷ No effort has been made to locate the meetings closer to where the displaced tenants are actually living (right inside Culloden Court would be ideal given the high number of relocated Little Mountain tenants there) and during the day when unemployed single mothers with young children are more likely to be available.

I have voiced my concerns at the Advisory Group that the Little Mountain tenants are being excluded from the community consultation process. Following this criticism, there were two consultation meetings dedicated specifically to the Little Mountain tenants. The first of these meetings was held in March 2010. At that meeting I counted 16 separate tenant families. But in Holborn's report on this meeting it was stated that 25 people attended. The difference is Holborn counts individuals and I count households/families. If I counted every individual from the Little Mountain Housing Project whom I have ever talked to, I could also inflate the participation rate in my study. David Chudnovsky has also pointed out that the meetings with the tenants were organized by Holborn and took place separately from the City's consultation process. According to Chudnovsky, the City has a responsibility to consult the tenants and Holborn's separate meetings with the tenants do not make up for this. The main concern the tenants

¹⁰⁷ It is not clear if bus fare and childcare expenses would be reimbursed for tenants with children who would have to travel long distances to participate. For the meetings that were just for the tenants, the tenants were told to email in advance if they needed help in this regard. But I do not know if this help would be available for the more general Advisory Group meetings. I do not think it has even been an issue because so few tenants are even showing up to these meetings.

had at this meeting was the issue of returning to Little Mountain. The tenants were told they could move back to Little Mountain in 2010 and here they were in 2010 coming to their first consultation meeting. The tenants wanted to know when they could move back but the officials hosting the meeting were non-committal on a timeline. Finally James Cheng said, “Anyone who tells you two years doesn’t have the facts.” This is hardly a timeline, but at least the message was refreshingly clear and straightforward: Do not pack your boxes right now because you are not going to be moving back anytime soon. The next tenants’ meeting was in June 2010. I was not able to attend but Ingrid Steenhuisen reported to me that about 18 to 20 Little Mountain families showed up to this meeting. She said that, although there was discussion of the four design concepts that the Holborn team had created, unlike at the open house that happened a few days later, there were no comment boards on which tenants could write their feedback.

Between all the meetings and open houses that have taken place and what Ingrid has told me and what I have observed, I can count no more than 30 different tenant families from Little Mountain who have participated at least in one consultation event. There is an element of uncertainty here because there could have been a few people whom I did not notice or who came to meetings that I missed and whom Ingrid did not notice. So let us give a generous estimate of about 40 Little Mountain families that have participated at least once. The total number of Little Mountain families at the beginning of redevelopment was 198. That means that, with my generous estimate of 40 families, only about 20% of all the Little Mountain tenant families have participated at least once. And in the majority of cases, participation would have only been once. Out of about 25 regulars in total, only two Little Mountain tenant families consistently participate at the Advisory Group meetings. Thus, Little Mountain tenants only make up about 8% of the regular and consistent Advisory Group members. In the early 1980s when the community was consulted for the first time about redeveloping Little Mountain, tenants consisted of 30% of the committee members. Also at that time, 100% of the tenants were consulted via a survey of the tenants.¹⁰⁸ Today’s Little Mountain Advisory Group is essentially a committee of surrounding homeowners who are understandably concerned about impacts on their neighbourhood due to increased traffic and density. There has been very little talk about the tenants’ concerns and what the tenants want. Inclusion of the Little Mountain tenants has been tokenistic and minimal at best. Thus, the recommendations that are coming out of this group cannot be said to reflect the wishes or the interests of the Little Mountain tenants generally.

There is another, perhaps less significant, but still noteworthy flaw in the community consultation process. The community consultation process and the Little Mountain Advisory Group are part of the updated Little Mountain Planning Program that was approved at a meeting of the City’s Standing Committee of Council on Planning and Environment on November 19, 2009. Advisory Groups are not set up for every development in Vancouver, but given the controversy and the interest surrounding the Little Mountain redevelopment, the Committee of Council wisely authorized the creation of an Advisory Group in

¹⁰⁸ Olson, Op. cit.

this case. At the very same Committee meeting, the Committee made a recommendation concerning the social housing component at the Little Mountain redevelopment. The Committee recommended to Council:

THAT staff communicate Council's priority for dealing with homelessness and creating more social housing to BC Housing and the developer of Little Mountain (Holborn Properties) and seek opportunities to ensure timely planning, while respecting community concerns, through various stages from policy planning to zoning, to development permits with the intent of expediting and achieving *replacement social housing (224 units) or 20% social housing of the total built units, whichever is greater, as soon as possible.*¹⁰⁹ (my emphasis added)

This was cause for hope that the social housing component at Little Mountain may be increased. The Committee of Council is essentially saying that if 224 social housing units fall short of 20% then the social housing component should be increased above 224 in order to reach 20%. But the Little Mountain Guiding Principles document that was circulated at the Advisory Group meeting in March 2010 says something else about the social housing component: "Provide a minimum of 224 replacement social housing units, and seek opportunities to achieve a higher number, with a target of 20% of the total number of units on site." The Committee of Council, of which the Advisory Group is a creation, does not say 20% is merely a 'target'. The Committee of Council makes a minimum of 20% or 224 units (whichever is greater) sound like a firm requirement, at least as far as the Committee is concerned. How can it be that the language used by the Committee of Council that created the Advisory Group has been watered down by the Advisory Group? I only heard Advisory Group participants, homeowners and tenants alike, emphasizing the importance of social housing. I do not remember any Advisory Group participants saying that they want to water down the language used by the Committee of Council. After I raised this issue at the Advisory Group we never saw the Guiding Principles document with the watered down language again. The City of Vancouver has an entire section of its website dedicated to the Little Mountain Site Policy Planning Program on which all the presentation boards, documents, and minutes from every meeting are included. The one thing that is not on this website is the Little Mountain Guiding Principles document with the watered down language concerning the social housing component. If the developer presents a development framework to Vancouver City Council that falls short of 20% social housing, given that the Committee of Planning and Environment has said it wants 20% social housing, certainly this would be grounds for not approving the re-zoning and blocking the privatization of the land. Unfortunately, this would mean the displaced tenants would have to wait even longer before moving back to Little Mountain. But given that the tenants have already been gone for so long and many are unlikely to return, this may be worth it if a better public outcome that increases social housing for low-income families on the Little Mountain site can ultimately be achieved.

¹⁰⁹ Minutes, Standing Committee of Council on Planning and Environment, November 19, 2009. (Accessed online September 22, 2010 from vancouver.ca)

As of September 2010, the Little Mountain Advisory Group is now being told that the social housing component will be increased—by a mere 10 units. The written guarantee in the 2007 MOU is still a minimum of 224 social housing units, but consultants working for Holborn are now saying 234 social housing units will be developed to make up for the fact that the replacement social housing units will be smaller in size than the pre-existing public housing units.¹¹⁰ I welcome the news of any increase in social housing, even a very minor increase such as this. But this little piece of good news has been tarnished by two things: the social housing component will be a long time coming and when it is all built it will still likely fall well below 20% of the total units on site. In the fall of 2010 Holborn released a report on the retail potential of the Little Mountain site to the Advisory Group and the general public. The report contains a number of interesting assumptions that Holborn provided for the consultant who prepared the report. According to the report, the first phase of rebuilding will not be complete until 2014. But this first phase will only include 23 replacement social housing units. According to the report, 23 social housing units will be built each year and it will not be until 2023 when all 224 social housing will be replaced plus an additional 10 units.¹¹¹ While many tenants were told they could move back to Little Mountain in 2010, some may be waiting until 2023. Even though the public is now being told that ultimately redevelopment will lead to 10 additional social housing units at Little Mountain, the fact remains that Vancouver's supply of family social housing was effectively reduced starting in 2007 when the first tenants were relocated out of Little Mountain. The completion date of 2023 means that for 16 years Vancouver will have had to make do with less social housing for families. In addition, even with an additional 10 social housing units, the new Little Mountain development is still likely to fall well below 20% social housing. This is because thousands of market ownership condominiums will be added to the site. The same report on the retail potential for the Little Mountain site showed that Holborn is considering several different density scenarios. The low density scenario is for a total of 1650 units on site and the high density scenario is for a total of 3000 units on site. Previous to this report, the upper estimate for density was 2000 so this report shows that Holborn is thinking about density increases beyond anything anyone else has ever imagined. Table 6.2 shows that given the great numbers of market condominiums being envisioned for the Little Mountain site, even with an additional 10 social housing units, the new Little Mountain development will likely fall well below 20% and well below every other example of public housing redevelopment I am aware of. I circulated a version of Table 6.2 at the Little Mountain Advisory Group. One of my reasons for distributing this at the Advisory Group was that many of the planners at the meetings have drawn comparisons between the Little Mountain redevelopment and other redevelopments in Vancouver, such as Arbutus Walk and East Fraserlands. But neither of those are examples of public housing redevelopment. There seems to be a lack of awareness that what is happening at Little Mountain has never happened in Vancouver before—this is not like any other

¹¹⁰ Personal email communication with Caroline Neufeld of Jim Green & Associates, dated September 14, 2010.

¹¹¹ Thomas Consultants, *Little Mountain Retail Opportunity Study Final Report* (July 20, 2010, study commissioned by Holborn Properties, accessed online October 20, 2010 from vancouver.ca)

Table 6.2 Mixed-Income Redevelopment of Public Housing in Canada and the US

	Before Redevelopment		After Mixed-Income Redevelopment				
	Public rental	Market homeowner	Other*	Public rental**	Total units	Net change in public rental	% Public rental
Regent Park, Toronto ¹	2087	3343	400	1357	5100	-730	27%
Lawrence Heights, Toronto ²	1208	4300-4800	0	1208	5508-6008	-	20%-22%
Don Mount Court, Toronto ²	232	187	0	232	419	-	55%
Holly Park, Seattle ³	871	300	500	400	1200	-471	33%
Roxbury, Seattle ³	60	0	30	211	241	+151	88%
Rainier Vista Garden, Seattle ³	496	300	200	250	750	-246	33%
High Point Garden Seattle ³	750	655	595	350	1600	-400	22%
Arverne-Edgemere, New York ³	1813	0	24	1789	1813	-24	99%
Prospect Plaza, New York ³	102	0	60	308	368	+206	84%
Cabrini-Green, Chicago ³	1324	0	0	493	493	-831	100%
Robert Taylor Homes, Chicago ³	762	0	0	251	251	-511	100%
ABLA Homes, Chicago ³	1882	0	1748	1052	2800	-830	38%
Madden-Wells-Darrow, Chicago ³	2547	100	610	423	1133	-2124	37%
Lake Parc Place, Chicago ⁴	700	0	282	141	423	-559	33%
Miami-Dade Housing, Miami ⁵	850	0	177	177	354	-673	50%
Harbor Point, Boston ⁶	1054	0	883	400	1283	-654	31%
Little Mountain, Vancouver (low density scenario) ⁷	224	1416	0	234	1650	+10	14%
Little Mountain, Vancouver (high density scenario) ⁷	224	2766	0	234	3000	+10	8%

*Includes various combinations of subsidized homeownership units, low-income rental units, and market rental units.

** Refers to subsidized rental units available to the same class of tenants in public housing before redevelopment.

This chart shows that what constitutes ‘mixed income’ varies tremendously in different contexts. I cannot find an example of mixed-income redevelopment that features a lower percentage of social housing units than how the Little Mountain case seems to be unfolding. At these low levels, it is even questionable whether the Little Mountain redevelopment can even truly be considered ‘mixed-income’. Ironically, ‘mixed-income’ redevelopment may actually result in less overall diversity and more of a polarized statistical distribution of income levels.⁸ Although the provincial government has said that mixed-income redevelopment of Little Mountain will result in a more balanced community, it seems hard to characterize 8% social housing with 92% market ownership housing as anything but unbalanced.

Data Sources:

¹ Martine August & Alan Walks, *From Social Mix to Political Marginalization? The Redevelopment of Toronto’s Public Housing and the Dilution of Tenant Organizational Power* (Paper prepared for the ESRC Seminar Series ‘Gentrification and Social Mix’, Edinburgh, Scotland, February 19-20, 2009, available online from www.kcl.ac.uk)

² Toronto Community Housing, “Lawrence Heights Revitalization”, “Don Mount Court/Rivertowne” (2010, accessed online April 11, 2010 from www.torontohousing.ca).

³ Jason Hackworth, *The Neoliberal City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).

⁴ James E. Rosenbaum et al., “Lake Parc Place: A Study of Mixed-Income Housing”, *Housing Policy Debate*, 9, 4 (1998), pp. 703-740.

⁵ Mary Reese et al. v. Miami-Dade County et al. (2009). United States District Court Southern District of Florida. Case No. 01-3766-CIV-Hurley (Accessed online October 22, 2010 from www.clearinghouse.net)

⁶ Paul C. Brophy & Rhonda N. Smith, “Mixed-Income Housing: Factors for Success”, *Cityscape*, 3, 2 (1997), pp. 3-31.

⁷ Thomas Consultants, *Little Mountain Retail Opportunity Study Final Report* (July 20, 2010, study commissioned by Holborn Properties); Note: Data for Little Mountain offer an indication as to what the developer has in mind but are subject to change as events unfold.

⁸ See R. Alan Walks & Richard Maaranen, “Gentrification, Social Mix, and Social Polarization: Testing the Linkages in Large Canadian Cities”, *Urban Geography*, 29, 4 (2008), pp. 293-326.

New Urbanist/Vancouverist redevelopment in which a token amount of social housing will look progressive and radical. This is the redevelopment of the birthplace of public housing in BC. For comparisons to other redevelopments, we have to look at other examples of public housing redevelopment beyond BC and across North America. The next section of this chapter shows that, much like public housing redevelopment elsewhere in North America, the Little Mountain redevelopment is part of the neoliberal retrenchment of the welfare state and devolution of responsibility to lower levels of government.

6.3 NEOLIBERALISM AND THE EROSION OF THE WELFARE STATE

The redevelopment of Little Mountain, in addition to involving physical change to the built landscape and social change in the composition of who will live there, also represents a major reconfiguration of relations between different levels of the government and between the state and society. As discussed in chapter 4, Little Mountain embodied the post-war welfare state. It was one of the very first public housing projects in Canada that was developed under the federal-provincial public housing partnership that was initiated in 1949 with the addition of Section 35 to the National Housing Act. Little Mountain represented all three levels of government working together to provide something that is so important to all citizens—good quality homes that they can afford. Today, the redevelopment and privatization of Little Mountain embodies the erosion of the welfare state.

Under the leadership of Gordon Campbell, the BC Liberals came to power in 2001. During their first term in office the BC Liberals brought about drastic changes in the province: social spending was cut back, thousands were kicked off welfare, the minimum wage was reduced for inexperienced workers, and crown corporations like BC Rail, BC Ferries and parts of BC Hydro were privatized. The BC Liberals, especially during their first term, implemented an agenda that was very similar to the Common Sense Revolution of Mike Harris' Conservative Government in Ontario in the 1990s. Both of these political regimes exemplify how “provincial governments have been at the forefront of neoliberal restructuring in Canada.”¹¹² In addition to the changes already mentioned, during their first term in office, the BC Liberals already had their eyes on the redevelopment/privatization of public housing. BC Housing, which is largely controlled by the provincial government, made the following statement in its 2004 Service Plan:

Future partnership opportunity with the federal government involves the devolution of the administration of the federal social housing portfolio to BC Housing. At present, the ownership of the public housing sites (7800 units in 98 properties) is shared with the federal government. A devolution agreement would provide the province with 100 per cent ownership allowing for Public Private Partnership (P3) redevelopment of these sites.¹¹³

¹¹² Roger Keil, “‘Common-Sense’ Neoliberalism: Progressive Conservative Urbanism in Toronto, Canada”, in *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*, eds. Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), p. 240.

¹¹³ BC Housing, *Service Plan 2004/2005-2006/2007* (Accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.bchousing.org), pp. 14-15.

This quote shows that during the BC Liberals' first term in office, the BC government wanted to negotiate with the federal government so that the provincial government could receive full title to public housing across BC, allowing it to pursue P3 redevelopment of public housing. But it would not be until the BC Liberals' second term in office when the provincial government achieved this goal. With a newly elected minority Conservative government in Ottawa, on June 19, 2006 the federal government and the BC government entered into the Canada-BC Social Housing Agreement (See Figure 6.15). Under this agreement, CMHC transferred ownership of 17,600 social housing units to the Provincial Rental Housing Corporation, which is BC Housing's real estate holding company.¹¹⁴ Under Section 8(b) of the agreement, the BC Government, as the new owner of these properties, "shall be entitled to sell or otherwise dispose of any of those projects and maintain and repair them, without consulting CMHC."¹¹⁵ Thus, this agreement enables the provincial government to privatize and redevelop public housing across BC.¹¹⁶

Thus, much like public housing redevelopment in other contexts, public housing redevelopment in BC is connected to the devolution of social responsibility to lower levels of government and increased reliance on the private sector to fulfill roles traditionally taken on by the state. Since 1993 when the federal Liberal government stopped all funding for the development of new social housing, Canada has been criticized for being the only major country that lacks a national housing program.¹¹⁷ In this context, the transfer of ownership of public housing in BC to the provincial government has been interpreted in

Figure 6.15 Devolution of Social Housing



Photo credit: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), Reprinted with permission courtesy of CMHC. Originally appeared in CMHC, "Canada-BC Social Housing Agreement Signed" (Press release, June 19, 2006 accessed online October 22, 2010 from www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca)

BC's Housing Minister Rich Coleman and the federal Minister of Human Resources and Social Development Diane Finley signed the Canada-BC Social Housing Agreement on June 19, 2006.

¹¹⁴ The 17,600 figure comes from BC Housing, *Service Plan 2006/07-2008/09* (Accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.bchousing.org)

¹¹⁵ Social Housing Agreement between CMHC and BC Housing dated June 19, 2006 (Accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.bchousing.org), p. 8.

¹¹⁶ Vast sections of the Canada-BC Social Housing Agreement available on BC Housing's website have been severed or blacked out under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

¹¹⁷ J. David Hulchanski, *Housing Policy for Tomorrow's Cities* (Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks, December 2002, accessed online September 22, 2010 from cprn.org)

the media as part of the federal government's "15-year effort to get out of social housing."¹¹⁸ But that is not at all how the provincial government sees it. According to the provincial government, the federal government's transfer of ownership of public housing to the province represents a key way that both levels of government continue to be partners in the area of housing:

Provincial Housing Minister Rich Coleman said the relationship the province has with the federal government is working well for developing housing.

"People tend to be critical of the federal government and say they should come up with something," Coleman said. "I have actually no problem with them at all. They've been great partners for us."

Coleman pointed out a little known fact that the Little Mountain public housing project slated for redevelopment was once owned by the federal government.

"It didn't cost us anything," he said of the federal government turning the land over to the provincial government in 2005.¹¹⁹

Whereas the federal and provincial government were once partners in the development of public housing (which Little Mountain embodied), these two levels of government are now partnering to divest themselves of public housing assets (which the redevelopment of Little Mountain now embodies). Records with the New Westminster Land Title Office show that it is not completely accurate that the provincial government paid nothing for the Little Mountain property. The Provincial Rental Housing Corporation in fact paid CMHC \$1 for the property, even though the same documents show the assessed market value for the property in 2007 was over \$61 million.¹²⁰

Another little known fact is that the tenants paid for Little Mountain through their rents. Tenants' rents, although subsidized, were applied to the mortgage and the operating costs of the housing project. As explained in Chapter 4, when Little Mountain was first created in 1954, the economic rent averaged \$69.40 per month per unit. Economic rent refers to the true cost of housing, including the mortgage and the operating costs. The rents the first tenants paid averaged \$45 per month per unit. Thus, at least in the early years, the tenants' rents accounted for almost two-thirds of the total cost of Little Mountain, with government subsidies only accounting for about one-third. The tenants who were at the 25th anniversary celebrations in 1979 remember that a ribbon was cut and that they were told by the presiding officials (including Grace McCarthy) that the mortgage had been paid off. As one tenant remembered, "In '79 it

¹¹⁸ Frances Bula, "Little Mountain to be Redeveloped", *Vancouver Sun* (March 21, 2007), p. B1.

¹¹⁹ Mike Howell, "Federal Minister Responds to 'Housing' Criticism", *Vancouver Courier* (June 2, 2010), p. 7. Note: The date 2005 here is incorrect because the transfer of title occurred in 2006.

¹²⁰ New Westminster Land Title Office, Title No. BB466446 (February 15, 2007), Vancouver; Note: The market value of the property will be significantly higher after re-zoning to allow for increased density.

was bought and paid for and they cut the ribbon that day.” Others have similar memories. It is difficult for me to make sense of this because I cannot find any documentation and what I do have shows that the mortgage was amortized over 50 years, not 25 years. Nonetheless, the tenants who walked away from the 25th anniversary were made to feel like partners at Little Mountain who were being recognized for having helped to pay down the mortgage (even if it was not fully paid off at that point). Although I do not know the average government subsidy applied to the rents in the later years, there is no question that throughout Little Mountain’s existence the tenants were paying rent, which was applied to the mortgage. The monthly mortgage payments would have remained the same throughout the entire 50 years because it was locked in at 4%, while operating costs would have increased over time as the buildings aged. The rent calculations for Little Mountain presented to the Building and Town Planning Committee in 1953 show that an average of \$35.48 per month per unit was all that was needed to cover the mortgage (economic rent was higher at \$69.40 to cover other costs such as taxes, maintenance, insurance, and management).¹²¹ Over the lifetime of the housing project, average rent would have increased above the initial \$45 level as tenants’ incomes increased with inflation. Thus, over the entire lifetime of the housing project, average rent would always have been higher than the \$35.48 that was needed to pay the mortgage. The fact is the tenants paid for Little Mountain because throughout the lifetime of the project their rents more than covered the mortgage.

There is a general sense of having been cheated among many of the Little Mountain tenants I have interviewed. Some have even compared the events that have taken place under this redevelopment to criminal acts. As one tenant remarked, *“It’s just criminal what’s going on...It’s very dubious whether it’s even legal that they can sell this land, period.”* There are many ways to demonstrate how the Little Mountain tenants have been cheated: The misleading timelines and the promise they could move back by 2010; the public statement by the mayor that they could stay at Little Mountain on the same day they received their eviction notices; and, the lack of tenant consultation are just a few examples. But one of the most profound ways the tenants have been cheated has been through the transfer of the title of the land from the federal government to the provincial government for \$1 so that it can be privatized. Although CMHC held title to the Little Mountain land since January 4, 1952 when it bought it from the City for \$36,875, it did so as part of the federal-provincial Section 35 program.¹²² The federal-provincial public housing partnership that Little Mountain was an expression of was more than just a partnership between different levels of government—it was also a partnership between the state and society and the tenants living at Little Mountain. It was part of the social contract that the welfare state represented. Although the federal government held title to public housing lands under this social contract, it did so essentially ‘in

¹²¹ Minutes of the Building and Town Planning Committee Special Meeting, May 15, 1953, CVA 93-F-7 file 10.

¹²² The exact date of the transfer comes from the New Westminster Land Title Office, Title No. 265440, Vancouver, January 4, 1952; the \$36,875 purchase price is in this document and the ‘Little Mountain Agreement’ discussed in Chapter 4, Agreement between City of Vancouver, Province of BC, and CMHC dated November 1, 1950, CVA 93-F-7 file 5.

trust' for the public and the tenants living at Little Mountain (certainly, the government's intention was not to speculatively profit from the land). The tenants' obligation under this social contract was to pay their rents—which they did at Little Mountain for more than half a century. The rents were applied to the mortgage and the operating costs, covering the majority of these total costs and the entirety of the mortgage costs. The Little Mountain tenants have more than fulfilled their end of the bargain. In addition to paying for Little Mountain through their rents, the tenants worked together to create one of the most successful examples of public housing there ever was. Thus, a strong argument can be made that the tenants, many of whom had been living at Little Mountain for several decades at the time of redevelopment, are the rightful owners of Little Mountain. At the very least, the tenants deserve to be among the beneficiaries of the substantial proceeds of privatization. But as is shown in the next chapter, the Little Mountain tenants specifically and the more general constituency of low-income families seem to be the only ones not benefiting from these proceeds. The Little Mountain tenants have been cheated, if not legally then ethically. Thus, when both levels of government entered into the Canada-BC Social Housing Agreement and when the federal government sold Little Mountain to the provincial government for \$1 so that it could be privatized, ethically speaking, the federal and provincial governments essentially colluded to defraud the Little Mountain tenants out of what was rightfully (if not legally) theirs.

Although the redevelopment of Little Mountain is connected to and symbolic of the neoliberal retrenchment of the welfare state, there are a number of similarities with urban renewal, which was carried out in the very different context of state intervention. The almost total clearance of the large Little Mountain site and the displacement of almost 200 families are some of the most unfortunate similarities with urban renewal. But rather than state intervention and the rise of the welfare state, it is privatization and the erosion of the welfare state that have caused full-scale clearance and displacement at Little Mountain. The fact is it would have been possible to redevelop Little Mountain without full-scale clearance and displacement of almost 200 families. Clearance and displacement were only made necessary by the privatization of the land and not by redevelopment per se. BC Housing's Dale McMann admitted that relocation of all the tenants was made necessary by the confidential purchase contract signed with the developer when he said, "Our obligation is to provide this site to the developer as a clear and vacant site."¹²³ In contrast to the way redevelopment is being carried out today, if Little Mountain had been redeveloped in the early 1980s it would have proceeded in a way that would have been far less deleterious for the tenants. This is because when redevelopment was first considered and recommended for Little Mountain in the early 1980s, it had nothing at all to do with privatization. Architect Byron Olson's report, which was produced out of a process of community consultation with the Little Mountain tenants and surrounding homeowners, recommended total redevelopment of Little Mountain into 400 public housing units. The introduction of market housing and the privatization of land were not part of the

¹²³ Quoted in Sandborn, *Op. cit.*

redevelopment plans for Little Mountain in the early 1980s. In that very different context, phasing and continuous accommodation of all tenants would have happened. One of the conclusions of Olson's report was: "Whatever renovation/redevelopment option or combination of options is proceeded with, it should be phased over a 4 to 5 year period to allow for continuous accommodation of the present tenants."¹²⁴ Part of the reason for choosing total redevelopment (which was referred to as 'Option C') at that time was that "accommodation can also be maintained with Option C since new units can be built before any demolition has to take place."¹²⁵ It was possible to build the new units before demolishing the old units because buildings occupied just 13.7% of the total area of what was a very open and large site.¹²⁶ Olson's report even included a four-phase redevelopment plan in which each phase involved demolition and rebuilding with a net increase in units. But this never happened, probably because increasing the density of public housing ran against the direction housing policy was going in Canada at the time. Instead, Little Mountain is being redeveloped and privatized in the neoliberal context of the twenty-first century, which involves treating the Little Mountain site as a commodity from which profits are to be maximized. As Rachel Weber has demonstrated about neoliberal urban redevelopment generally, full-scale clearance often takes place because "space is more malleable and potentially more valuable to investors when it is empty."¹²⁷ At Little Mountain, redevelopment/privatization has involved near total demolition (except for one building) in the beginning followed by phased rebuilding of social housing at some future date, resulting in a net decrease in affordable housing while we wait for all 224 units to come on stream. If redevelopment of Little Mountain really was being carried out according to the principle of "residents first" then it would have been carried out as in Olson's report: without displacing anyone and with the form of development following from this requirement. But rather, redevelopment of Little Mountain in the current context is about putting *profits first* because even accommodating the last 10 families on the site and mitigating the impacts of demolition for them would have reduced the profitability of redevelopment.

Similarly, privatization, and not redevelopment per se, is behind the interim reduction in the supply of social housing. As was shown in the previous section, much of the delay at Little Mountain has been due to the market crash that happened in September 2008. When the crash occurred, just 30 families remained living at Little Mountain and most of the units had been boarded up. Ever since then, the Little Mountain redevelopment has been prone to significant delays, with community consultation not getting

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 67.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 61.

¹²⁶ Byron Olson, *A Report on the Little Mountain Housing Project, Vancouver, BC* (Prepared for the Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing, January 1982).

¹²⁷ Rachel Weber, "Extracting Value from the City: Neoliberalism and Urban Redevelopment", in *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*, eds. Neil Brenner & Nik Theodore (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), p. 183.

underway until December 2009. But even by the fall of 2010, with almost a full year having elapsed since community consultation started, the Little Mountain redevelopment seems to be stalled once again. Although there were supposed to have been community consultation meetings in both July and August 2010, these were both cancelled because there were no new issues to talk about.¹²⁸ The Little Mountain Advisory Group has little to talk about at this stage until the developer can present three development scenarios that deal with density and building heights. When a meeting finally did take place in September 2010, Holborn still did not have any design concepts to present to the community. The City is currently holding off on scheduling any Advisory Group meetings until Holborn can present the development scenarios.¹²⁹ It may be the case that the current uncertainty in the real estate market is causing Holborn to give pause to the Little Mountain redevelopment. Given the struggling economy, some have speculated that Holborn may even walk away from the redevelopment. The Little Mountain redevelopment is not the only public-private partnership in BC that has run into trouble in the current economic context.¹³⁰ In a context in which much of the private sector has required government bail-outs in order to function, the P3 approach may be unworkable in many cases. These issues were raised when the provincial government's private partner on the Golden Ears Bridge project and on several hospital expansion projects, Hypo Real Estate, required a bail-out from the German Government.¹³¹ Since then, Hypo Real Estate has been entirely nationalized by the German Government¹³², so it is no longer even accurate to refer to this company as a private sector partner—the Golden Ears Bridge is more of a partnership between the governments of BC and Germany than between the government of BC and a private sector corporation. Similarly, following the market crash, the BC Government was forced to abandon the P3 approach on its Port Mann Bridge twinning project. This project is now being financed entirely by the provincial government.¹³³ The current delays on the Little Mountain redevelopment may be reflective of a private

¹²⁸ Email from Ben Johnson, Major Projects Planner, City of Vancouver to the Little Mountain Advisory Group dated August 6, 2010.

¹²⁹ Email from Ben Johnson, Major Projects Planner, City of Vancouver to the Little Mountain Advisory Group dated October 13, 2010.

¹³⁰ The Little Mountain redevelopment is probably better understood as an example of outright privatization rather than a P3. This is because no decision has been made as to whether BC Housing will ultimately own the social housing units rebuilt at Little Mountain. Thus, there may be no role at all for the public sector to play at Little Mountain. Regardless of whether the Little Mountain redevelopment is a P3 or privatization outright, the arguments I am making here apply.

¹³¹ See Jonathan Fowlie & Lori Culbert, "A Bridge Too Many?", *Vancouver Sun* (January 24, 2009), p. A10; See also Jonathan Fowlie, "Global Credit Crisis Spells Uncertain Future for BC Infrastructure", *Vancouver Sun* (October 10, 2008), p. A4.

¹³² See "UPDATE 3—Hypo Real shareholders howl at Berlin's squeeze-out", *Reuters* (October 5, 2009, accessed online October 18, 2010 from www.reuters.com); See also, "Germany Strings Out Billions More in Guarantees to Troubled HRE Bank", *Deutsche Welle* (September 11, 2010, accessed online October 18, 2010 from www.dw-world.de).

¹³³ Lori Culbert, "Private Financing for new Port Mann Project Vapourizes", *Vancouver Sun* (February 28, 2009), p. A4.

sector partner that is nervous about proceeding with a massive building program that involves a major increase in density in a city with a sluggish real estate market. And even if the market were functioning normally, the private sector approach would still result in an interim reduction in the supply of social housing. This is because, as discussed in the previous section, phased rebuilding of social housing is necessary under the approach of using market housing to pay for social housing because each phase funds the subsequent phase of development.

Thus, the neoliberal approach to redevelopment being pursued at Little Mountain is the real culprit behind displacement, full-scale clearance, and the interim loss of social housing as we wait for the replacement social housing to come on stream. If the government had proceeded with redevelopment on its own without privatizing the housing project, redevelopment could have proceeded without displacing anyone, without fully clearing the land, and without an interim loss in social housing. These things could have been avoided by redeveloping the site in phases and keeping it as a publicly owned site with redevelopment paid for by the government. The land at Little Mountain was a public asset that served low-income families extremely well for more than half a century. The site featured a large amount of green space that provided a high quality of life for public housing tenants that is not often found in public housing generally. The privatization and permanent loss of this public asset can be understood as part of the rolling back of the state that occurs under neoliberal restructuring. But scholars have shown how neoliberalism also entails a rolling out of the state. These themes are highlighted in the next chapter, which considers the winners and losers of the Little Mountain redevelopment. The beneficiaries of redevelopment include the homeless, the addicted, and the mentally ill because these groups will benefit from the supportive housing being funded with the proceeds from the privatization of Little Mountain. The next chapter shows how the redevelopment of Little Mountain is connected to a broader re-targeting of social housing away from low-income families toward people with special needs such as those with drug and alcohol addictions and the mentally ill. This re-targeting of social housing away from all but the most marginalized can be understood as the neoliberal rolling back of the state. While supportive housing residents as well as the developer and in-moving condominium purchasers all stand to benefit from redevelopment/privatization, the Little Mountain tenants are on the losing end of the deal because many have had very negative relocation experiences. As part of relocation, in the next chapter I show how the Relocation Office, the extra scrutiny that tenants say BC Housing is applying to them, and the contractual agreements relocated tenants are forced to enter into all exemplify the rolling out of neoliberal state intervention in the lives of the poor.

7. ‘POST-MORTEM’: THE DISTRIBUTION OF BENEFITS AND LOSSES

This chapter assesses the redevelopment of Little Mountain through an analysis of the distribution of benefits and losses to different relevant groups. This approach is loosely based on the welfare economics approach, which in the past was used to critically evaluate urban renewal.¹ This chapter is composed of two major sections as well as several subsections. The first major section discusses the beneficiaries of redevelopment, which includes the developer, in-moving condominium purchasers, the homeless, the addicted, and the mentally ill. While all these groups stand to benefit from the redevelopment, the second major section of this chapter discusses those on the losing end of the deal—the Little Mountain tenant. Thus, the second section is concerned with the relocation of the tenants, including how relocation was carried out, tenants’ efforts to resist relocation, and the negative impacts that relocation has caused for tenants. The tenants’ losses due to relocation are divided into three categories: social, emotional/health, and financial/material. I argue that there has been an unfair distribution of benefits and losses, with the Little Mountain tenants experiencing few benefits but most of the losses. I close the chapter with a synthesis of the unfair distribution of benefits and losses, the inadequate financial compensation the tenants received, and the lessons that seem to have gone unlearned both from the urban renewal era and the Little Mountain redevelopment.

7.1 THE BENEFICIARIES OF REDEVELOPMENT

This section considers those groups who stand to benefit from the redevelopment/privatization of Little Mountain. The beneficiaries of redevelopment are divided into two main groups. The first group I discuss is the homeless, the addicted, and the mentally ill. This group will benefit from the redevelopment because the proceeds from the privatization of Little Mountain are being reinvested in supportive housing. I show how the redevelopment of Little Mountain is a key part of a broader re-targeting of social housing away from low-income families. The second group of beneficiaries includes the developer and the in-moving condominium purchasers. When discussing this group of beneficiaries I show how the redevelopment of Little Mountain is part of a broader gentrification process that is occurring at the neighbourhood scale.

7.1.1 The Homeless, the Addicted, and the Mentally Ill: The Supportive Housing Connection

The redevelopment and privatization of Little Mountain is part of a broader re-targeting of social housing away from low-income families toward those groups who are in need of supportive housing—that is, people who suffer from addictions, mental illness and the homeless. Supportive housing is a very particular form of social housing that, in addition to providing these groups with physical shelter they can

¹ See Anthony Downs, “Losses Imposed on Urban Households by Uncompensated Highway and Renewal Costs”, in *Urban Problems and Prospects*, ed. A. Downs. (Chicago: Markham Publishing, 1970), pp.192-227.

afford, provides support services that help these people cope with and potentially overcome their problems. The connection between the redevelopment of Little Mountain and supportive housing development was made clearer as events progressed over the past few years. But from the very beginning there was a sense that low-income families were being sold out by the redevelopment. The following is an excerpt from the very first newspaper article on the redevelopment of Little Mountain:

Alice Sundberg, executive director of the BC Non-Profit Housing Association, said people in her sector are watching this development closely. They want to see the province not just replace existing units, but make sure those units go to the same mix of people they did before. “A big problem to us is that [provincial politicians] don’t care about family housing anymore. Our association has always been in support of redevelopment and intensifying sites to pay for that redevelopment. But what’s going to happen to the families that used to live there?” Sundberg said the BC government has moved increasingly to providing housing only for people who have special needs, not low-income families, except through rents supplements, which she says don’t work well in a tight housing market such as Vancouver’s.²

The connection between public housing redevelopment and supportive housing seemed to be firming up by October 2007 when the provincial government released its comprehensive housing policy document entitled *Housing Matters*. Near the beginning of the document on a page headed “A New Direction”, the provincial government announced “two primary policy changes”:

The first part of this new direction gives priority access for subsidized housing to low-income households with special housing needs.

- BC’s most vulnerable citizens—people who need housing with supports and can’t find housing in the private market—will receive priority for subsidized housing. This will alleviate wait times for those most in need.
- Other households, whose housing problems stem solely from low income, will be helped through a new rental assistance program in the private rental housing market, where most already live...

The second part of the new direction is the renovation or redevelopment of existing provincially-owned subsidized housing to better meet the needs of low-income households with special needs.

Many of the buildings that make up the approximately 7800 units in the public housing portfolio are aging and their mortgages are beginning to expire. These buildings may be renovated to better meet the needs of tenants or to accommodate support services. Other buildings that occupy under-utilized land may be redeveloped.

² Frances Bula, “Little Mountain to be Redeveloped”, *Vancouver Sun* (March 21, 2007), p. B1.

Redevelopment provides a number of significant opportunities. Working in partnership with the private and non-profit sectors, these lands can become mixed-income communities with subsidized housing more fully integrated into larger communities.

Any proceeds from redevelopment of public housing will be reinvested back into affordable housing assistance. These changes will take place over a number of years and in a small percentage of the overall housing stock. The majority of subsidized housing is currently owned by non-profit agencies.

These two changes offer the potential to provide housing assistance for many more people in need and improve the Province's ability to provide housing with additional support where necessary.³

This is the rolling back of the welfare state that is associated with the rise of neoliberalism. It is no longer sufficient to simply suffer from lack of income in order to get into social housing. Increasingly, one has to have an addiction or a mental illness in addition to low-income in order to qualify for social housing. According to *Housing Matters*, "people who need housing with supports", which implies the addicted and the mentally ill, are receiving "priority access" to social housing. Low-income families without addictions or mental illness are to be accommodated in the private rental market with the Rental Assistance Program which was established in 2006. Proceeds from the privatization/redevelopment of family public housing projects are being reinvested in "affordable housing assistance." But given the first policy change, the social housing developed through these proceeds is almost guaranteed to be in the form of supportive housing. The provincial government is divesting itself of welfare state assets that have traditionally helped the non-addicted poor in order to develop other assets for the addicted and mentally ill. It is worth pointing out here that these two policy changes seem to be at odds with one another. On the one hand, social housing is being targeted to "BC's most vulnerable citizens", but on the other hand, the provincial government wants to create social housing that is "mixed-income" and "fully integrated."⁴ Restricting social housing to the most vulnerable is inconsistent with creating integrated socially-mixed communities, like what we had at Little Mountain.

While there were some early hints, it was not until much more recently that the connection between supportive housing development and the redevelopment/privatization of Little Mountain was publicly revealed. The provincial government has long refused to tell the public how much money was being raised from the sale of Little Mountain and precisely how those proceeds were going to be re-invested. All the public knew for almost three years was that the proceeds would be re-invested in social housing (of some kind), with 50% being reinvested within the City of Vancouver and 50% elsewhere in

³ Government of BC, *Housing Matters BC: A Housing Strategy for British Columbia* (2007, accessed online November 6, 2007 from www.bchousing.org), p. 4.

⁴ Ibid.

the region and the province. By 2010, the community consultation process was finally underway with regard to the redevelopment of Little Mountain and the Little Mountain Advisory Group had been created. There was growing pressure from some members of the Advisory Group as well as from the City to increase the social housing component at Little Mountain above one-for-one replacement. It was in this context when the provincial government finally got specific about how it was reinvesting the proceeds of Little Mountain, but still avoided disclosing the confidential sale price of the land. On May 25, 2010 the provincial government announced that it is investing \$205 million to create 1006 supportive housing units on eight of the 14 city-owned sites.⁵ The private sector Street-to-Home foundation is kicking in another \$20 million, for a total of \$225 million. This is in addition to six of the 14 sites for which provincial funding to the tune of \$108 million was announced in March 2009. Thus, all 14 of the city-owned sites earmarked for supportive housing now have capital funding from the province. This major funding announcement has generated significant praise for the provincial government and the Housing Minister. The announcement was described on the front page of the *Vancouver Sun* as “the biggest drive to build social housing in a generation.”⁶

But the coverage in the *Vancouver Sun* left out one major detail for which one has to refer to the government press release directly. In the government press release Housing Minister Rich Coleman says, “A major source of funding for the 14 City-owned sites is the proceeds from the sale and redevelopment of Little Mountain, so the legacy of Little Mountain not only replaces all the social housing on that site, but helps to make possible the creation of more than a thousand new supportive apartments.”⁷ Close observers had long seen the writing on the wall, but finally here was public confirmation from the Housing Minister himself that BC’s first family public housing project was being sold off to raise money for supportive housing for the addicted and the mentally ill. I want to make it absolutely clear that I support building supportive housing. What I think is problematic is the process through which supportive housing is being financed: selling off public housing for families and displacing 194 families from Little Mountain. It strikes me as extremely unfair to be taking from one constituency of poor people in order to give to another constituency of poor people. If the provincial government wants to build supportive housing it should pay for it out of general revenue. The legacy of Little Mountain should not be supportive housing for drug addicts and the mentally ill. Drug addiction and mental illness have nothing

⁵ BC Housing, “\$225M in Housing Investments to Create 1006 New Homes”, Press Release (May 25, 2010, accessed online September 23, 2010 from www.bchousing.org)

⁶ Miro Cernetig, “City and Province Team with Private Sector on Social Housing”, *Vancouver Sun* (May 26, 2010), p. A1.

⁷ BC Housing, “\$225M in Housing Investments to Create 1006 New Homes”, Press Release (May 25, 2010, accessed online September 23, 2010 from www.bchousing.org); Note: This announcement does not mean that the sale of Little Mountain has been complete. The sale has still not been finalized and remains contingent on the zoning of the site. Rich Coleman explained that the funding for the 14 sites was advanced by the provincial government’s Treasury Board and will be repaid once the Little Mountain sale is complete. See: Mike Howell, “Mountain Man”, *Vancouver Courier* (June 9, 2010), p. 5.

at all to do with Little Mountain. The legacy of the redevelopment of Little Mountain should be an increase in the supply of social housing for low-income families and seniors, which is the constituency that has traditionally benefited from Little Mountain and that paid for Little Mountain in more than half a century in rent. But any increase in the supply of this kind of social housing is likely to be extremely minimal and far off in the future. Although the consultants working for Holborn are now saying there will be an additional 10 social housing units built at Little Mountain, these may never materialize and even if they do we will have to wait until 2023 for all the social housing at Little Mountain to come on stream. The only real guarantee is for one-for-one replacement that will be phased in at some future date. In the mean time, the supply of social housing for families has been reduced.

A recently released report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) provides support for my argument that the redevelopment of the Little Mountain Housing Project is connected to a broader re-targeting of social housing away from low-income families toward those who need supportive housing. The CCPA report distinguishes between different types of social housing. While the CCPA report found significant increases in homeless shelters, supportive housing, and people participating in the Rental Assistance Program, it found the province-wide supply of social housing for low-income families, seniors and Aboriginal families has been reduced. The CCPA report distinguishes “independent social housing” from the other forms of social housing:

The independent social housing category is what most people rightly think of when they hear of social housing or affordable housing. This is the housing available to low-income families and seniors, and specialized housing programs such as Aboriginal housing. It is low-rent, non-market housing for households that would otherwise have great difficulty finding housing they can afford. But it does not include special supports. Year over year declines reported in this category suggest an alarming trend when compared to the long waiting lists for BC Housing and the chronic shortfall in the supply of units relative to demand. Independent social housing shows a net decline in the total number of units available (a reduction of 2820 units over five years)...*The loss of family units at Little Mountain in Vancouver is likely captured within this shift.*⁸ (my emphasis added)

Apparently, the CCPA has found it necessary to invent the term ‘independent social housing’ to talk about places like Little Mountain because so frequently the terms ‘social housing’ and ‘supportive housing’ are used interchangeably. Social housing is a very broad category that includes public housing, cooperative housing, non-profit housing, and supportive housing. Supportive housing is a highly specific and targeted form of social housing but when the terms ‘supportive housing’ and ‘social housing’ are used interchangeably it can create an impression that the much broader social housing needs are being

⁸ Seth Klein & Lorraine Copas, *Unpacking the Housing Numbers: How Much New Social Housing is BC Building?* (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Social Planning and Research Council of BC, September 2010, accessed online September 23, 2010 from www.policyalternatives.ca), p. 7.

met when in reality only a highly targeted form of social housing is being created. It seems that part of the problem is that the issues of drug addiction, mental illness, and housing have become conflated. These overlapping, but essentially separate, issues have been rolled into a single issue in public discourse in Vancouver in recent years. This is evidenced by the Premier's Task Force on Homelessness, Mental Illness and Addiction, which explicitly links these three issues.⁹ In order to effectively resolve the Vancouver's drug problem concentrated in the Downtown Eastside, people have correctly identified supportive housing as an essential ingredient in the solution. According to a study prepared for the City of Vancouver, "There is consensus in the literature that 'housing is the cornerstone of care' for homeless persons. Studies of a variety of projects in the US have concluded that one cannot begin to address the alcohol and drug problems of homeless persons unless they are provided with appropriate housing."¹⁰ The Downtown Eastside-based Pivot Legal Society's report entitled "Cracks in the Foundation" linked crime, public disorder, and drug use with an affordable housing crisis.¹¹ According to this perspective, affordable housing is a means of reducing crime and social disorder. But affordable housing should be a desirable end in its own right. Homelessness, social disorder and crime are only the most extreme outcomes of a much more general housing affordability problem that goes well beyond the Downtown Eastside. Well-meaning housing activists, by focusing on the most extreme aspects of the housing affordability problem, have pressured governments to come up with solutions that only address these extremes. While this has been a positive development for the homeless and people with addictions and mental illness who need affordable housing, the downside is the affordable housing needs of the much broader population are at risk of being overlooked. The fact is everyone needs a home whether addicted or not.

In addition to being an inappropriate legacy for Little Mountain, using the proceeds from the sale of Little Mountain to develop supportive housing on the 14 sites is a violation of the Olympic Inner-City Inclusive Commitment Statement. In the lead-up to the 2010 Olympics, this statement represented a commitment on the part of VANOC (Vancouver Organizing Committee) and all three levels of government to "maximize the opportunities and mitigate the potential impacts in Vancouver's inner-city neighbourhoods from hosting the 2010 Winter Games."¹² The document includes commitments in a number of areas, including housing. In terms of housing, five commitments were made, as shown in Figure 7.1. As part of the process from which the commitment statement came out of, a Housing Table

⁹ Government of BC, "Premier's Task Force on Homelessness, Mental Illness and Addictions" (Office of Housing and Construction Standards, 2006, accessed online September 23, 2010 from www.housing.gov.bc.ca)

¹⁰ Deborah Kraus, *Housing for People with Alcohol and Drug Addictions: An Annotated Bibliography* (Prepared for the City of Vancouver, Housing Centre, January 29, 2001, accessed online October 8, 2010 from vancouver.ca), p. i.

¹¹ Pivot Legal Society, *Cracks in the Foundation: Solving the Housing Crisis in Canada's Poorest Neighbourhood* (September 2006, accessed online September 23, 2010 from www.pivotlegal.org)

¹² VANOC, *2010 Winter Games Inner-City Inclusive Commitment Statement* (2007, accessed September 6, 2008 from www.vancouver2010.com)

consisting of a number of community groups and advocates for the poor recommended an Olympic social housing legacy consisting of 3200 units. The Housing Table recommended, “The legacy should be to build supportive housing that is accessible to people who are absolutely homeless—on the street, in shelters, sofa-surfing—and people who are at risk of becoming homeless.”¹³ During the Olympics, the international media were invited by the provincial government to visit its Downtown Eastside information centre, dubbed ‘Downtown Eastside Connect’. Critics called the information centre a “propaganda kiosk.”¹⁴ When I visited the information centre, perhaps unsurprisingly, I found that much of the content concerned the government’s efforts in the area of supportive housing and the 14 sites. There was even a display board that contained the very same addresses that appear in LOU in which the City agreed to give the demolition permit for Little Mountain (See Figure 7.2).¹⁵ The very supportive housing that the provincial government was showcasing to the international media was achieved through the demolition of Little Mountain. As explained above, the connection between supportive housing and the redevelopment/privatization of Little Mountain was made even clearer following the Olympics when Housing Minister Rich Coleman announced that the proceeds from the sale of Little Mountain are paying

Figure 7.1 2010 Winter Games Inner-City Inclusive Commitment Statement

In response to concerns that the Olympics was going to negatively impact the poor, VANOC (Vancouver Organizing Committee) and its Member Partners (which includes all three levels of government) issued the Inner-City Inclusive Commitment Statement. The Statement makes commitments in a number of areas, including accessibility, civil liberties, culture, employment, environment and transportation, among other policy areas. In terms of housing, five specific commitments were made:

- Housing
- a) Protect rental housing stock
 - b) Provide as many alternative forms of temporary accommodation for Winter Games visitors and workers
 - c) Ensure people are not made homeless as a result of the Winter Games
 - d) Ensure residents are not involuntarily displaced, evicted or face unreasonable increases in rent due to the Winter Games
 - e) Provide an affordable housing legacy and start planning now¹

¹ VANOC, *2010 Winter Games Inner-City Inclusive Commitment Statement* (2007, accessed September 6, 2008 from www.vancouver2010.com).

¹³ The Housing Table, *Report of the Inner-City Inclusive Housing Table* (March 2007), p. 3.

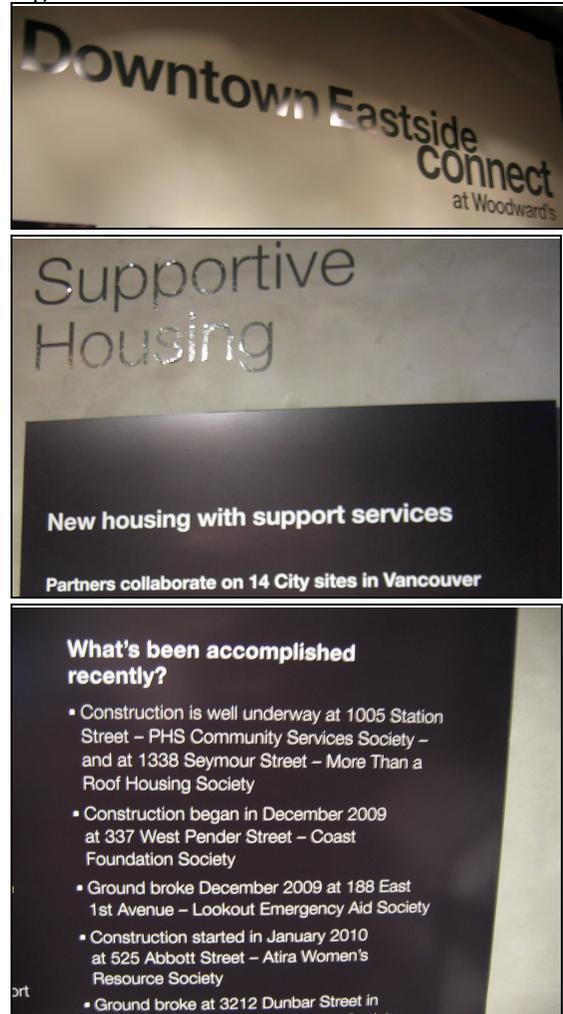
¹⁴ Lori Culbert, “City, BC Housing Open Information Centre for Foreign Journalists Writing About Poor Area”, *Vancouver Sun* (February 1, 2010), p. A13.

¹⁵ Two of the addresses on display at Downtown Eastside Connect are identical to the addresses in the LOU (188 E. 1st and 525 Abbott). Two other addresses are slightly different but refer to the same places: 377 W. Pender in the LOU appears to be a typing error for 337 W. Pender; 3212 Dunbar (on display at the information centre) appears in the LOU as 3595 W. 17th as both these addresses are at the corner of Dunbar and W. 17th Ave. Thus, all four addresses in the LOU were on display at Downtown Eastside Connect.

for supportive housing on the 14 sites. It is very clear that the 14 supportive housing sites, in addition to being a legacy of Little Mountain, are to be considered an Olympic legacy—that is why they were on display at the Downtown Eastside information centre that the government opened up specifically for the Olympics and it is the kind of housing that the Olympic inner-city Housing Table called for. But this Olympic legacy supportive housing was directly paid for by redeveloping/privatizing Little Mountain, which has involved the demolition of over 200 low-cost rental units and the displacement of 194 families. As shown in Figure 7.1, the protection of rental stock and the prevention of involuntary displacement were two of the promises in the Olympic Inner-City Inclusive Commitment Statement, which all three levels of government were party to. Thus, all three levels of government are guilty of violating the Commitment Statement because, although the provincial government took the leading role, all three governments are complicit in what happened at Little Mountain. The redevelopment of Little Mountain initially seemed unrelated to the Olympics (besides the fact that the Olympic curling venue was just a few blocks away at Hillcrest Park), but the provincial government linked the Little Mountain redevelopment to the Olympics by using the proceeds from privatization to pay for Olympic legacy supportive housing.

The approach the provincial government is taking with regard to paying for supportive housing by privatizing public housing and displacing low-income families has the potential of pitting different groups of the poor against one another. I am reminded of the newsletter of the now-defunct

Figure 7.2 Downtown Eastside Connection



Supportive housing on the 14 sites was on display at the provincial government's housing information centre during the 2010 Winter Olympics. Funding for the 14 sites has come from the proceeds of the privatization of the Little Mountain Housing Project. Some of the very addresses on these display boards appear in the LOU in which the City agreed to issue the demolition permit for Little Mountain (337 W. Pender, 188 E. 1st Ave, 525 Abbott, 3212 Dunbar appears in the LOU as 3595 W. 17th Ave). Thus, the very supportive housing being showcased to the international media in Vancouver for the Olympics was achieved by demolishing public housing and displacing almost 200 families. Protecting rental housing and preventing residents from being involuntarily displaced due to the Games were among the commitments made by all three levels of government in the Olympic Inner-City Inclusive Commitment Statement. The Little Mountain redevelopment initially seemed unrelated to the Olympics. But the provincial government has linked Little Mountain with the Olympics by using the sale proceeds from Little Mountain to pay for the supportive housing on display at the Olympics. This is a clear violation of the Inner-City Inclusive Commitment Statement.

Vancouver and District Public Housing Tenants’ Association, which was titled *Citizens United*. But now ‘Citizens United’ runs the risk of becoming ‘Citizens Divided’. So far, that has not happened. Housing activists from the Downtown Eastside have supported the Little Mountain tenants in their resistance to redevelopment and displacement. During the federal election in the fall of 2008, an all-candidates meeting took place in the boarded up Little Mountain Housing Project. One of the speakers at this event was Downtown Eastside housing activist Laura Stannard of the Citywide Housing Coalition (See Figure 7.3). She demonstrated an understanding of the need for both supportive housing and family social housing. She said in her speech something to the effect of, the Little Mountain tenants do not need supportive housing, *yet*. Downtown Eastside activists such as Wendy Pedersen and Jamie Lee Hamilton have also participated in protest events at Little Mountain. In addition, Little Mountain tenants and CALM have participated in the broader social housing movement during the 2009 Grand March for Housing (See Figure 7.4). But if the provincial government continues to sell off family public housing to pay for supportive housing for drug addicts in the Downtown Eastside, we may see this unity begin to break down.

There is still an opportunity to right the wrong that has been committed and to use some of the sale proceeds to increase the supply of ‘independent social housing’, as the CCPA calls it. Recall that in the 2007 MOU the provincial government promised to re-invest 50% of the proceeds within the City of Vancouver and 50% elsewhere in the region and the province. The 14 supportive housing sites that are being funded with the proceeds from the Little Mountain sale *are all within the City of Vancouver*. That means half of the sale proceeds have yet to be committed. The provincial government has created a

Figure 7.3 Laura Stannard of the Citywide Housing Coalition at Little Mountain



Laura Stannard of the Citywide Housing Coalition gave a speech at the Little Mountain Housing Project on October 11, 2008. Stannard is an activist from the Downtown Eastside who has lobbied for the development of supportive housing. But on this day, she was talking about the importance of places like Little Mountain and social housing for low-income families and seniors.

legitimate expectation of roughly equivalent spending to the \$313 million being spent on the 14 Vancouver sites will also be spent on social housing outside of Vancouver. This other half of Little Mountain’s legacy should be for low-income families and seniors—the ‘independent’ type of social housing that Little Mountain was. This would create a social housing legacy of Little Mountain that is more appropriate to what Little Mountain represented. But given the provincial government’s track record, I am unhopeful. Following the May 2010 press release I have asked BC Housing about the other half of the proceeds that

have been earmarked for social housing outside of Vancouver and I have received no response on this particular issue. My sense is that the provincial government would just like the public to forget about this aspect of the deal. How will we ever know if the other 50% of the proceeds are being invested in social housing outside of Vancouver? When the Little Mountain site goes before Vancouver City Council for re-zoning, how can the City of Vancouver hold the provincial government accountable for not investing in projects beyond the City's own borders? Similarly, municipal governments outside of Vancouver have no control over the re-zoning of Little Mountain, so how can municipal governments beyond Vancouver hold the provincial government to account in this regard? This is just one of the many bizarre aspects of this "template" for redevelopment.

Figure 7.4 Grand March for Housing, April 4, 2009



Departing from Little Mountain



Marching down Main Street



Downtown (Ingrid Steenhuisen is holding the umbrella)

Saturday April 4 2009 NOON
JOIN THE GRAND MARCH FOR HOUSING

Sponsored by:
 Charitable Housing Coalition
www.cityofvancouver.ca

Endorsed by:
 BC Construction and Service Employees' Union
 BC Teachers' Federation
 BC Teachers' Guild
 Community Advocates for Little Mountain
 Carnegie Community Action Project
 Council of Homeless Citizens of BC
 Homelessness and Health Action Group, St Andrew's Wesley LC
 Institute on Participation & Social Justice
 Jewish Family Services Agency
 Langara College Community Development Programs
 Longshore Military and Veterans
 Lower Mainland HOA's for Affordable Housing
 Little Mountain Resident Society
 Pivot Legal Society
 Public Housing Society
 Public Housing Committee, Van Burned Presbyterian United Church
 Trinity ALD
 Van St James Epiphany, Unitarian Church of Vancouver
 Van Gey Peterson, St Andrew's Wesley United Church
 West End Residents Society
 St. James Anglican Church, Social Justice Group

Broader:
 Streams of Justice
 Tenants' Resources & Advisory Centre
 YWCA
 Tenants' Support Staff (Union 492)
 Unitarian Church of Vancouver Social Justice Committee
 Vancouver and District Labour Council
 Vancouver School Parents
 Ylang Vancouver
 West End Residents Association
 West Vancouver Residents Association
 Zero Waste Vancouver

CHC acknowledges and honours the traditional territories of the Coast Salish People.

Thank you to the
 BOCCU for printing this poster.

- End Homelessness
- Build Permanent Social Housing
- Raise Minimum Wage and Welfare
- Protect Rentals & Renters

1 Join us at one of these starting points at Noon:
 • Thornton Park @ Main St, Skytrain Station
 • Hastings and Main
 • Peace Flame Park, south end of Burrard St. Bridge

2 Meet us for the Rally
 Vancouver Art Gallery
 (Georgia St.) 1:30pm

At the Grand March for Housing a wide range of community groups from all across the city came together to call on governments to end homelessness, build permanent social housing, raise minimum wage and welfare, and protect rentals and renters. The flyer for the event shows some of the groups that participated included the Carnegie Community Action Project, Pivot Legal Society, Portland Hotel Society, Renters at Risk, Streams of Justice, West End Residents Association, and Community Advocates for Little Mountain. Thus, activists from the Downtown Eastside and with a supportive housing focus were joined with activists from other areas including those from Little Mountain. The Grand March for Housing represented an important display of unity even while government policy approaches have the potential of pitting different groups against one another.

7.1.2 The Developer and In-Moving Condominium Purchasers: The Gentrification Connection

On May 8, 2008 BC Housing announced that it had selected Holborn Properties to purchase and redevelop Little Mountain. Holborn will redevelop Little Mountain into a mixed-income community. Although the developer has yet to present any development plans that show how much additional density it would like to put on the site, the company had indicated that it will seek re-zoning. Under the current RM-3A zoning approximately 800 units could be put on the site.¹⁶ The provincial government has indicated that 2000 units could be developed on the site and the developer is thinking about putting in as many as 3000 units. In terms of social housing, the only guarantee we have is that 224 units will be replaced. Thus, the vast majority, if not all, of the additional density will be in the form of private ownership market condominiums. When Little Mountain is eventually rebuilt, any former tenants who do return will find their community swamped with hundreds if not thousands of wealthy homeowners. The provincial government believes that the conversion of Little Mountain into a community that is majority composed of homeowners is necessary in order to create social housing that is “integrated” and “balanced”. But a critical assessment would characterize these changes as gentrification. The redevelopment of Little Mountain is gentrification because it includes the most important defining characteristics of gentrification: landscape change, displacement of the poor, and in-moving residents of a higher class background than the former residents.¹⁷ Those who stand to benefit from the gentrification of Little Mountain are the developer and the in-moving condominium purchasers. In this section I consider each of these actors in turn.

First, let us consider the soon-to-be new owners of Little Mountain. Holborn Properties is the family business of the Malaysian-based Tiah family. A great deal of information about the Tiah family is available publicly in on-line journalistic sources. The Tiahs are a family of tycoons headed by Datuk Tony Tiah and his wife Datin Alicia Tiah. Datuk Tony is the majority shareholder of TA Enterprise Berhad, which is a stock-broking company that is publicly traded on Bursa Malaysia, which is the name of the Kuala Lumpur stock exchange. TA Enterprise Berhad is the majority shareholder of TA Global Berhad, which is a property company that owns hotels and other developments in Malaysia, Australia, and Canada.¹⁸ In 2008, *Forbes* ranked Tiah Thee Kian, which is another name that Datuk Tony Tiah goes by, as Malaysia’s 32nd richest person with a net worth of \$160 million.¹⁹ But by 2010 *Forbes* reported that

¹⁶ Olson, Op. cit.

¹⁷ For the “core elements of gentrification” see: Loretta Lees et al., *Gentrification* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 158.

¹⁸ Thean Leecheng, “Grooming TA”, *The Star* (September 6, 2008, accessed online October 20, 2010 from biz.thestar.com.my).

¹⁹ *Forbes*, “Special Report: Malaysia’s Richest” (May 21, 2008, accessed online October 8, 2010 from www.forbes.com)

Tiah had dropped off the list, which only includes the 40 richest people in Malaysia.²⁰ In 2002 Datuk Tony Tiah was convicted in Malaysia for filing false reports with the stock exchange. He was forced to resign from TA Enterprise, barred from holding any directorship for five years and fined RM 3 million.²¹ With these troubles now behind them, Datuk Tony and his wife Datin Alicia are getting older and are planning on handing over the reigns of their business empire to the next generation, which includes three daughters and two sons. Datuk Tony Tiah said, “I am not the end. I am the beginning of bigger things to come. If I don’t have good succession, this would be the beginning of the end.”²² The eldest of the two sons is Joo Kim Tiah, who holds a Master’s Degree in International Business from Australia’s Macquarie University. In January 2009 Joo Kim Tiah became the President of Holborn Properties and moved to Vancouver. Not too long before that, the *Malaysia Tatler* ran an article that profiled the young entrepreneur. Joo Kim Tiah described himself in the article: “I’m a very intense person. I strive for excellence in everything that I do.”²³ The *Malaysia Tatler* is an off-shoot of the 300-year-old British *Tatler*, described as a “glossy magazine diary of London’s upper class at play.”²⁴ To be profiled in the Malaysian version of this magazine is an indication that in Malaysia Joo Kim Tiah has a high profile as a young, trend-setting member of the country’s elite.

Holborn Properties owns several properties in BC including the Ritz-Carlton development, the Hudson’s Bay Parkade on Seymour Street, a residential development at Nanaimo and Kingsway, developments in Whistler, and after it is re-zoned, the Little Mountain site. Holborn also owns the Dunsmuir House in Downtown Vancouver, which the company is renting to the City of Vancouver to be used as a homeless shelter. Joo Kim Tiah explained that, although the company is losing money on its deal with the City concerning the Dunsmuir House, it is doing it as a gesture of “*good will*.”²⁵ While the company has primarily focused on high-end residential development in Vancouver up to this point, Holborn is interested in participating in developments that are less high-end in the future. The company

²⁰ Suzanne Nam, “Malaysia’s 40 Richest”, *Forbes* (May 26, 2010, accessed online October 8, 2010 from www.forbes.com)

²¹ Eileen Hee, “TA Group Exec Chairman Tiah Makes a Comeback to Prepare a Succession Team”, *Star Property* (October 7, 2009, accessed online October 20, 2010 from www.starproperty.my); See also: Tee Lin Say, “Famous Past Scandals”, *The Star* (July 3, 2010, accessed online October 20, 2010 from biz.thestar.com.my); See also: Chelsea L.Y. Ng, “Datuk Soh fined RM6mil”, *The Star* (May 15, 2007, accessed online October 20, 2010 from thestar.com.my).

²² Quoted in Hee, Op. cit.

²³ *Malaysia Tatler*, “A League of Extraordinaires” (n.d., accessed online October 8, 2010 from www.malaysiatatler.com)

²⁴ Eric Pfanner, “300 Years of Telling Tales, Britain’s *Tatler* Still Thrives”, *New York Times* (October 4, 2009, accessed online October 8, 2010 from www.nytimes.com)

²⁵ Personal interview, December 21, 2009

wants to do a good job on the Little Mountain redevelopment because it hopes to participate in other public housing redevelopments in Vancouver in the future. Joo Kim Tiah explained to me:

I also say how we don't really focus on certain target market. We are here about elevating lifestyles so it relates to all segments. So I said it just so happens right now that most of our projects are located in a way where it feels like the end product suits to a more high-end product, but that's not necessarily our vision. Our vision is to elevate lifestyles. If Little Mountain does really well, we do such a great job, people might recognize us as well, we can build communities, we can build communities with diversified housing, with a social housing component in it. Maybe the Province will recognize this and the next time they have another site, they will be like, "Why don't we just get Holborn to do it because they did such a spectacular job." That would be great. If it goes that way then all the better. We're not here to limit our possibilities.²⁶

Holborn Properties stands to profit from the redevelopment of Little Mountain. The purchase price Holborn will pay for Little Mountain is unknown at this time, although it is likely to be substantial. But Holborn will make this money back from the sale of the private market condominiums that will be developed on the site. Out of the profits from these condominiums, Holborn will have to pay for the 224 replacement social housing units and any additional amenities that end up being developed, such as a daycare centre, community centre, or any additional social housing that may be built on the site. After all those things are paid for, what is left over is the developer's profits, which the City refers to as 'reasonable developer profit'. Thus, Holborn will have to strike the right balance between additional density developed, the pricing points of the market condominiums, and the cost of the amenities and the replacement social housing in order for there to be reasonable developer profit left over. From the developer's perspective, it is absolutely imperative that the development is structured such that the developer can profit from it. There would be no point to any of this for the developer if the developer simply broke even. As Joo Kim Tiah said when I interviewed him, "*We are not a charitable organization. We need to earn money.*"²⁷

But given the economic context, it may be difficult for Holborn to profit from the redevelopment of Little Mountain. The confidential purchase contract between Holborn and BC Housing was signed in May 2008—just four months before the market crash, essentially at the peak of the market. The price Holborn agreed to pay for Little Mountain would have been based on the rosy economic conditions of that point in time. Although Vancouver has avoided a crash in the real estate market of the likes experienced in US cities, Vancouver has not been immune from the poor global economic conditions. Following the market crash, in the spring of 2009 CMHC was reporting that an ample supply of homes for sale on the market coupled with declining demand had created a buyer's market. In March 2009

²⁶ Personal interview, December 21, 2009

²⁷ Ibid.

monthly average resale home prices were down 15% from the previous year.²⁸ But by the fall of 2009, the market had improved considerably. Home sales in the resale market were up 31% over the previous year and CMHC was reporting that it was once again a seller's market. The increase in sales was due to historically low mortgage rates, lower real estate prices, and excitement associated with the upcoming Winter Olympics.²⁹ But following the Olympics, in the summer of 2010 real estate sales were once again falling dramatically. In July 2010 real estate sales in Metro Vancouver were down 45% compared to the previous year.³⁰ In August 2010 sales were down 36% and prices were down 3% from the previous year. Rising interest rates, stricter eligibility requirements for mortgages, the HST, and continued uncertainty around the economy have all contributed to dampen Vancouver's real estate market.³¹ One study put out by the CCPA has even suggested that a housing bubble burst with downward price corrections in the order of 30% may be imminent for Vancouver and other Canadian cities.³² In this uncertain context, one can imagine that it must be a very difficult balancing act for Holborn to come up with a development plan that pays for the promised amenities and allows for reasonable developer profit. Some have even suggested that if the market continues to deteriorate Holborn may walk away from Little Mountain and not go through with the sale. That could mean Little Mountain may be sitting as an empty lot for many more years to come. When I interviewed Joo Kim Tiah on December 21, 2009 he indicated that, while the global economic downturn has affected the redevelopment of Little Mountain, the impact would have been worse if they had been further along in the development process:

It has affected it, don't get me wrong. But I'm trying to look at it in a positive way. I mean everyone is saying, which is true, that the price of the transaction was during the peak of the market so hence it has to be a high price and because of that it's going to be tough for us and we need to have high densities. It's true to a certain extent. However, if we had started the process and gotten really into it and incurred a bunch of costs, let's say we already got approval for the amount of density to make it work. Then the economy came down. Then we are like, now we are screwed right. Because nobody's going to buy these units, not at these price points. And we've incurred a bunch of costs, maybe we've incurred marketing scheme or sales centre whatever, kind of what happened to us in our other projects like the Ritz. When we were already started in constructing then the market crash comes, that is much worse.

²⁸ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Housing Market Outlook: Vancouver and Abbotsford CMAs* (Spring 2009)

²⁹ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Housing Market Outlook: Vancouver and Abbotsford CMAs* (Fall 2009)

³⁰ Derrick Penner, "Lower Mainland Sales Plummet", *Vancouver Sun* (August 5, 2010), p. C7.

³¹ Derrick Penner, "Buyers Take August Holiday", *Vancouver Sun* (September 3, 2010), p. C2.

³² David Macdonald, *Canada's Housing Bubble: An Accident Waiting to Happen* (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, August 2010, accessed online September 24, 2010 from s3.amazonaws.com)

*So in this case, it was good in some ways that we hadn't actually started, so now we can try to adjust accordingly.*³³

Holborn was one of several companies that bid on the Little Mountain redevelopment. Little Mountain was marketed to the development industry by realtor Colliers International. In its marketing brochure, Colliers International highlighted the positive aspects of the property's setting. Amenities such as views, parks, shopping centres, and the Canada Line were all identified.³⁴ Thus, the Little Mountain site is located within an amenity-rich setting.

When Little Mountain is eventually rebuilt, the in-moving market condominium purchasers stand to benefit from all these amenities on the site's doorstep. As noted above, the fact that Little Mountain will be converted from a 100% public housing tenant community to a community that is majority composed of wealthy homeowners represents one of the key ways this redevelopment is a form of gentrification. Although theoretically speaking, mixing homeowners with public housing tenants is expected to increase the social capital of the public housing tenants, many tenants I talked to have expressed concern that the two groups will not get along very well at Little Mountain. As long-time Little Mountain tenant Gregory remarked, *"It's very tough to get along, rich people and poor people."* Reshmi's comments seem to imply that government-imposed social mix represents a form of social engineering that is beyond BC Housing's mandate: *"Mixing is not the government's problem, it's a personal problem. If people want to go and live with rich people, they can go and rent in their place. Why do they try to mix the people? I don't understand. It's not their job to put people together."* Similarly, Brenda said introducing social mix has nothing at all to do with reflecting the desires of the Little Mountain tenants: *"I've never heard anybody saying anything remotely addressing that, saying, 'Oh yeah, I'd like to live with some higher income people.' Nobody has said that to me and I've talked to more people since this moving out thing has been going on."* Clearly, the Little Mountain tenants I talked to have no desire to live in a gentrified housing project. In addition, the way the provincial government has thrust social mix upon Little Mountain without first consulting the tenants about this sensitive issue may lead to conflict between the tenants and the newly introduced homeowners after redevelopment.

Scholars have shown how public housing redevelopment is also often connected to a broader gentrification process that is occurring in the surrounding neighbourhood.³⁵ In the Little Mountain case as well, gentrification has taken hold in the surrounding area and helped to make the entire neighbourhood highly desirable for the upper middle class. In the 1970s, "poverty [was] a widespread problem in Riley

³³ Personal interview, December 21, 2009

³⁴ Colliers International, "Vancouver's Premier Redevelopment Opportunity: Little Mountain Property, Vancouver, British Columbia" (Brochure accessed online November 18, 2009 from www.colliersmm.com)

³⁵ See Elvin K. Wyly & Daniel J. Hammel, "Islands of Decay in Seas of Renewal: Housing Policy and the Resurgence of Gentrification", *Housing Policy Debate*, 10, 4 (1999), pp. 711-771.

Park, not merely restricted to the Little Mountain Housing Project.”³⁶ In 1971, average household income in the general Riley Park neighbourhood was 20% below the city-wide average.³⁷ But by 2006, the situation was reversed and average household income in Riley Park was 20% above the city-wide average.³⁸ This dramatic change in income relative to the rest of the city is suggestive of gentrification. It seems that gentrification in Riley Park over the past 35 years has followed the classic scenario described by David Ley in Vancouver’s Kitsilano and Toronto’s Cabbagetown neighbourhoods. This is evidenced by all the beautifully restored old Victorian houses that line the grid-patterned streets of this old streetcar suburb. The Riley Park neighbourhood has a disproportionate share of old houses. In the two census tracts that surround the Little Mountain Housing Project, almost 38% of the housing was built before 1946, whereas the city-wide average is 18%. In addition, the quality of the housing has improved in recent years as the percentage of housing stock in need of major repairs fell from 11.6% in 1996 to 8.5% in 2006.³⁹ Through their analysis of census data between 1971 and 2001, Ley and Dobson found that gentrification in Vancouver has been most pronounced on the west side of the city, west of Main Street. East of Main Street, Ley and Dobson only found evidence of “scattered gentrification”⁴⁰ and a lower magnitude of change compared to on the west side. In terms of the east-west divide that Ley and Dobson were discussing, the Little Mountain Housing Project was located in what can be considered an ‘in-between’ space, neither fully on the east side nor the west side of the city. The housing project was west of Main Street so some would consider that to be the city’s west side. But although Main Street is conventionally understood as the dividing street, technically speaking, Ontario Street is the official boundary between east and west. The housing project was east of Ontario Street so officially it was on the city’s east side. Similarly, the Riley Park neighbourhood surrounding the housing project straddles the east-west divide that is so characteristic of the city. Given the increasing income relative to the rest of the city and the restored Victorian homes in the Riley Park neighbourhood, it would seem that much of Vancouver’s eastside gentrification has likely occurred right up against the west-east divide, which would include Riley Park. Although Main Street has long been recognized as the social dividing line between east and west, this may now be in flux. Some have suggested that Fraser Street, which is the next thoroughfare

³⁶ John A. Jessup & Myra Crystal, *A Social Planning Profile of Riley Park* (Report prepared for the Riley Park Citizens’ NIP Committee and Area Planning Staff, May 1977), p. 6.

³⁷ Riley Park Citizens’ NIP Planning Committee, *A Plan for Riley Park Neighbourhood Improvement* (June 1977), p. 3, CVA 10-F-7 file 2.

³⁸ City of Vancouver, “Riley Park – Community Statistics, Census data” (2006, accessed online October 8, 2010 from vancouver.ca)

³⁹ Statistics Canada, *Census of Canada, 1996, 2006* (Accessed via Canadian Census Analyser, University of Toronto).

⁴⁰ David Ley & Cory Dobson, “Are There Limits to Gentrification? The Contexts of Impeded Gentrification in Vancouver”, *Urban Studies*, 45, 12 (2008), p. 2479.

east of Main Street, is the new dividing line between the east and west sides.⁴¹ Indeed, the shops along parts of Fraser Street still have the working class quality that once characterized the shops on Main Street.

While Fraser Street has remained relatively unchanged, Main Street is being transformed into a trendy shopping district. Although some of the old working class businesses such as Helen's Grill, Windsor Meats, and the old cornerstores remain on Main Street, these are increasingly being accompanied with high-end fashion boutiques. The area around 21st and 22nd Avenues has been referred to as "Boutique Row"⁴² and features many cutting edge fashions created by local designers who cannot afford the rents in Yaletown and other parts of the city. There is also a lively underground arts scene on Main Street. The 'Main Street hipster' is a term that has entered the Vancouver vernacular to describe the artistic class that has taken up residence in the neighbourhood. For those times when the hipsters are in need of something to eat and drink, there is an eclectic mix of organic fair trade coffee bars and Southeast Asian eateries to choose from. A recently released report on the retail potential of the Little Mountain site has linked these changes with the changing demographics of the neighbourhoods, which is highly suggestive of gentrification:

- Little Mountain neighbourhood is experiencing a demographic shift, with young families and growing household incomes. This ultimately increases demand for additional retail amenities as the neighbourhood becomes more desirable.
- Main Street corridor has evolved to become a sought after address for urban living, and a unique offering of shopping and dining experiences along one of Vancouver's trendy commercial streets.⁴³

Tourism Vancouver has even started marketing the section of Main Street south of Broadway as SoMa (an abbreviation for South Main), which is a direct copy of San Francisco's SoMa (South of Market) district and an attempt to create the sense of urban sophistication of New York's SoHo neighbourhood. Tourism Vancouver is promoting Main Street south of Broadway on its website:

An up-and-coming neighbourhood located on—you guessed it—South Main Street, this area is full of art galleries, vintage clothing and furniture stores, boutique clothing shops and plenty of restaurants. Combining Yaletown's upscale offerings with Commercial Drive's eclectic businesses, SoMa (as the locals call it) is packed with artist lofts

⁴¹ See Raul Pacheco, "Is Fraser Really the new Main?" (December 16, 2008, blog accessed October 8, 2010 from hummingbird604.com); See also Vancity Buzz, "Is Fraser Street the New Main Street?" (June 26, 2010, blog accessed October 8, 2010 from www.vancitybuzz.com); See also Dick, comment posted January 15, 2010 to blog entry, Mike Klassen, "Let there be light" (Blog accessed October 8, 2010 from www.citycaucus.com).

⁴² Tan Vinh, "Once-Gritty Main Street has evolved into Vancouver's Hip Strip", *Seattle Times* (April 24, 2008 accessed online October 8, 2010 from seattletimes.nwsourc.com)

⁴³ Thomas Consultants, *Little Mountain Retail Opportunity Study Final Report* (July 20, 2010, study commissioned by Holborn Properties, accessed online October 20, 2010 from vancouver.ca), p. 28.

and places to purchase and peruse local art. Most of the activity can be found on Main Street between Broadway and 33rd Avenue, but like all neighbourhoods, visitors will find lots of goodies off the beaten path as well.⁴⁴

I have never heard any locals use that term. The attempt to create a false sense of local authenticity combined with the presence of an artistic ‘hipster’ class and the trendy boutique shops and restaurants all stack up to create a profile of neighbourhood change that looks remarkably similar to the kind of changes that have been documented in Chicago’s Wicker Park⁴⁵ and New York’s Williamsburg⁴⁶ neighbourhoods.

A number of other major changes are taking place in the Riley Park neighbourhood as well. Just three blocks north of the Little Mountain Housing Project, a major redevelopment of Riley Park and the adjacent Hillcrest Park (site of the Nat Bailey Stadium) is currently underway. In preparation for the 2010 Winter Games, the Vancouver Olympic Centre was constructed at Hillcrest Park. This facility served as the curling venue during the Olympics. Following the Olympics, the Vancouver Olympic Centre is being converted into a new community centre that will feature an ice rink, curling club, and library. An adjacent building is also under construction that will house an aquatic centre with indoor and outdoor pools. Construction of these facilities is expected to be complete by 2011. Once this is complete, the Riley Park Community Centre, Percy Norman Pool and Curling Club will be demolished and converted to green space. Nat Bailey Stadium will remain.⁴⁷ This is a major improvement in community amenities on the doorstep of the Little Mountain site. The recreation complex under construction at Hillcrest Park is anticipated to become “a major athletic gathering place for Vancouver Residents”⁴⁸.

The recreation complex under construction at Hillcrest Park will enhance the already high level of livability of the neighbourhood. The “crown jewel”⁴⁹ of the Riley Park neighbourhood is the 130-acre Queen Elizabeth Park, which features beautiful flower gardens, the Bloedel Conservatory, and recreational opportunities such as disc golf, lawn bowling, and tennis.⁵⁰ The Little Mountain in the park, after which the surrounding neighbourhood and the housing project are named, is the highest point in

⁴⁴ Tourism Vancouver, “Vancouver Neighbourhoods: South Main (SoMa)” (n.d., accessed online October 8, 2010 from www.tourismvancouver.com)

⁴⁵ Richard Lloyd, *Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Postindustrial City* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁴⁶ Sharon Zukin et al., “New Retail Capital and Neighborhood Change: Boutiques and Gentrification in New York City”, *City and Community*, 8, 1 (March 2009), pp. 47-64.

⁴⁷ City of Vancouver, “2010 Winter Games: Vancouver Olympic Centre/Vancouver Paralympic Centre at Hillcrest Park” (2003-2010, website accessed October 8, 2010 from vancouver.ca)

⁴⁸ Ray Van Eng, “Vancouver Olympic Centre New Incarnation has a Community and Aquatic Focus”, Vancouver21.com (April 15, 2010, accessed online October 8, 2010 from vancouver21.com)

⁴⁹ Vancouver Guide, “Riley Park-Little Mountain” (n.d., website accessed October 8, 2010 from vancouverguide.ca)

⁵⁰ City of Vancouver, “Queen Elizabeth Park” (2003-2010, website accessed October 8, 2010 from vancouver.ca)

Vancouver and offers spectacular views of the downtown high-rises backed by the mountains. The housing project site is immediately adjacent to the east side of Queen Elizabeth Park. The site of the housing project is also connected to Vancouver's growing network of bikeways as the Ontario Bikeway and the Ridgeway Bikeway, which follows 37th Avenue, intersect at the southwest corner of the Little Mountain property. Also, the new rapid transit Canada Line which connects Downtown Vancouver with Richmond and the Airport went into operation in 2009. The nearest station to the area is at King Edward Avenue and Cambie Street, which is 12 blocks away from the housing project site (if one starts from 33rd and Ontario, the closest part of the housing project site to King Edward Station). But future plans to build a station at 33rd Avenue will mean the housing project site will have a station just four blocks away.⁵¹ In addition, the frequent bus service along Main Street connects the housing project site to Downtown and Chinatown to the north and to Little India to the south. As already discussed, for those interested in shopping or sampling some of Vancouver's ethnic cuisine, the restaurants and fashion boutiques that line Main Street, or SoMa as it is now apparently called, are just a few blocks away from the housing project site. All these elements work together to create a highly livable neighbourhood that is especially well-suited to meet the consumption preferences of the upper middle class.⁵² All of these amenities are sure to be key selling points when it comes time to market the new condominiums that will be built where the Little Mountain Housing Project used to be. Thus, the gentrification of the Little Mountain Housing Project compliments and reinforces the gentrification that is taking place at the broader neighbourhood scale.

7.2 RELOCATION/DISPLACEMENT OF THE TENANTS

Whereas supportive housing residents, the developer, and in-moving condominium purchasers all stand to benefit from the redevelopment/privatization of Little Mountain, the tenants of Little Mountain are on the losing end of the deal. Housing Minister Rich Coleman has characterized redevelopment as a "win/win for everybody"⁵³ and has promised that the Little Mountain tenants will move back to newly-built social housing units at Little Mountain. But that promise means little to the Little Mountain tenants. Many tenants say they doubt they will ever return. Some hope to be earning higher incomes and thus not qualify for social housing in the future. Phyllis, who has lived at Little Mountain since the 1950s and is now at an advanced age, says she expects to pass away before Little Mountain is rebuilt. Others have told

⁵¹ Translink, "Canada Line Station Names Selected" (May 9, 2006, accessed online October 8, 2010 from www.translink.ca)

⁵² See David Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); See also Kris Olds, *Globalization and Urban Change: Capital, Culture and Pacific Rim Mega-Projects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); See also Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

⁵³ Rich Coleman said this on Global TV's *News Hour*, July 4, 2009.

me that two elderly Little Mountain tenants have in fact already passed away following relocation. Many tenants point out that Little Mountain will be radically different after redevelopment and many of the special qualities they cherished most about the place will no longer be there. In addition, many tenants simply do not believe politicians' promises that they will be allowed to return. As one tenant said, "*I'll be quite shocked if they allow public housing. The same excuse they had for False Creek—this is way too expensive.*" Many tenants say they were promised they could move back in 2010 but 2010 has come and the new social housing is still nowhere in sight. After a series of what many feel have been outright lies, the Little Mountain tenants are wise enough to know not to give too much weight to the far-off fantastical promises of politicians. For the tenants, redevelopment has involved living with the immediate reality of displacement from the place and the people they loved so much at Little Mountain.

This section discusses the relocation/displacement of the Little Mountain tenants. First, I begin with a description of how relocation was carried out logistically. Second, I discuss the increasing costs of resistance for those who tried to stay at Little Mountain. The next three sections address the impacts of relocation for the tenants. The third section deals with social impacts; the fourth section concerns emotional/health impacts; and, the fifth section discusses financial/material impacts. The final section summarizes the unfair distribution of costs and benefits and closes with a call for compensation for the Little Mountain tenants. Similarities with the old urban renewal programs are highlighted throughout this section. But unlike urban renewal, which was an expression of the interventionist welfare state, relocation of the Little Mountain tenants was made necessary by the retrenchment of the welfare state and the privatization of the land. Thus, in this section I also point out how relocation has been an expression of the rolling out of the neoliberal state. The experiences of the poor are remarkably similar under both state interventionist and state retrenchment paradigms.

7.2.1 How Relocation Was Carried Out

The relocation of almost 200 low-income families in a tight rental market such as Vancouver's and with thousands of people on the waiting list for BC Housing was a monumental task. BC Housing says that relocation has proceed according to the principle of "residents first"⁵⁴ and has outlined 10 guiding principles for resident relocation (See Table 7.1). In March 2007 BC Housing set up the Relocation Office in an empty Little Mountain rowhouse (See Figure 7.5). The tenants were assigned dates on which they were to report to the Relocation Office and look over the listings of vacancies in BC Housing public housing and third sector non-profit social housing. They were encouraged to indicate their preferences for relocation and view the units they may be interested in moving to. But the Little Mountain

⁵⁴ BC Housing, "Residents First", *A New Plan for Little Mountain* (2007, website accessed October 15, 2007 from www.littlemountain.ca)

Table 7.1 BC Housing’s Guiding Principles for Resident Relocation

According to BC Housing, relocation has followed 10 “Guiding Principles”¹:

BC Housing’s Guiding Principles	Reality
1. There will be no reduction in the number of subsidized housing units on the redeveloped Little Mountain site.	Since relocations started in March 2007 and until redevelopment is complete (not expected to be before 2023), there has been an interim reduction in the supply of social housing for families and seniors.
2. Residents have the option to return to the Little Mountain subsidized housing site following redevelopment.	Many tenants may not qualify or may pass away before the new social housing is rebuilt. Many tenants were attached to the place qualities of Little Mountain as it was before redevelopment.
3. A relocation strategy will be developed that will clearly outline the time for moving out and, if desired, return to Little Mountain subsidized housing.	The timelines have not been clear and have been continuously revised. Many tenants say they were told they could return to Little Mountain in 2010 but in 2010 there is still no plan to rebuild.
4. Residents will be consulted regarding their moving requirements, well in advance of relocation. Every effort will be made to match available units with individual needs.	Residents say they were pressured into moving and that many residents were sent to relocation housing that does not meet their individual needs.
5. Residents will be provided with choices for relocation, and have the opportunity to view these choices before making their relocation decision.	Most relocated residents are dissatisfied with their relocation housing. Some residents were provided with more choices than others. Those who moved early on did not have the option of moving into private rental housing with an enhanced rental subsidy. BC Housing did not allow on-site relocation until only 10 tenants were left and even then it was not a realistic option for most given the conditions BC Housing was putting on it.
6. Reasonable resident costs for moving and utilities reconnection (telephone, cable, etc.) will be covered by BC Housing. These costs will also be covered upon moving back to the redeveloped Little Mountain subsidized housing site.	Moving costs represent only a very small fraction of displaced residents’ total losses. Tenants have not been compensated for their social, emotional, and total financial/material losses.
7. Residents will have a written relocation agreement that will clearly outline their rights and responsibilities before choosing new housing.	The Relocation Agreement is not clear. The agreement says tenants may not move back if the tenancy agreement at their relocation housing is terminated. The tenants have interpreted this to mean they cannot move in the interim but Sam Rainboth of BC Housing says this would only be an issue if tenants were evicted “with cause”. But the words “with cause” do not appear in the Relocation Agreement.
8. Residents will be provided with open communication and clear information before, during and after their move to ensure they are well informed during the redevelopment. These materials will be translated as needed.	This redevelopment has involved a shocking lack of transparency. Many tenants feel that BC Housing has lied to them. There were some cases in which translators were not provided even though there was a need for them.
9. Residents will be supported to gain access to services in their new communities so that the stress of relocation is minimized.	I have found no evidence to support this. Many residents have experienced significant and ongoing stress as a result of relocation.
10. The Relocation Office will be open to assist residents in a fair, respectful and effective manner.	Many tenants say Relocation Office staff treated them with disrespect. Relocation Office staff used pressure tactics similar to those used during urban renewal.

¹ BC Housing, “Guiding Principles for Resident Relocation”, *A New Plan for Little Mountain* (2007, website accessed October 15, 2007 from www.littlemountain.ca)

tenants had not been consulted about redevelopment and had many other questions besides where they were going to move to. Natasha was one of the first tenants to go to the Relocation Office:

I was one of the very first people to actually do it. I wanted to know what all my options were. I wanted to know exactly where I could be relocated; I wanted to know when; How long it could be. I had a thousand questions. When I went into the Relocation Office the first thing they wanted to know was, had I looked at the relocation list and had I picked out options for places to move to. I said, "Well that is just so far from my mind right now, like I have all these other questions that I need to ask." So they didn't really like that and I said, "Well there's only two places that I would consider moving to and so don't even bother putting my name on the list for any other places."

In addition to moving to the vacant social housing units listed at the Relocation Office, the tenants had the option of finding their own accommodations in the private rental market, which BC Housing would assist them with through the Rental Assistance Program (RAP). RAP is for families with at least one dependent child earning a gross annual income of less than \$35,000. Benefits are based on income and a scale of maximum rent levels calculated by BC Housing. For example, for a family of four or more the maximum rent level is \$1100. That means that BC Housing will subsidize a portion of a total rent of \$1100 but if a family is renting a home that costs more than \$1100 per month the portion of the rent that is in excess of \$1100 is not considered by BC Housing. But rents in Vancouver are very high and many large families cannot find accommodation for less than \$1100 per month so renting in the private market was not a practical option for most tenants who were relocated in 2007. By 2008 BC Housing made an exception to its own rules and made available enhanced rental subsidies only for Little Mountain tenants. I am unaware of any tenants relocated in the private rental market under the regular RAP; from what I saw,

Figure 7.5 Relocation Office



Many tenants avoided going into the Relocation Office at 17 Oriole Walk. But for one tenant who was a teenager at Little Mountain in the 1970s, going into the Relocation Office was a chance to re-live fond memories from the past:

They sure fixed up 17 Oriole Walk for the Relocation Office...It looks much nicer than it did when I was in there before. New counters, new floors, new paint, new everything...I like going in there because I lived right next door to it and I was in that suite thousands and thousands of times...It was the Goodriches that lived there...We would all go over there and play 31 and hang out there...The first couple of years I was over there because my girlfriend lived there and then it just sort of became a group locale. It just brought back a lot of memories going in there.

it was only after the enhanced rental subsidy was made available that some Little Mountain tenants started moving into private rental housing. The need to create an enhanced rental subsidy before the Little Mountain tenants could move into private rental housing seems to be an admission on the part of BC Housing that *Housing Matters* is flawed and the regular RAP is an inadequate replacement for purpose-built social housing for families. The need for the enhanced rental subsidy was especially great among the large families with several children. This is because in the BC Housing system there were few vacancies of suites with enough bedrooms to accommodate the largest families. The enhanced rental subsidy also made it easier for tenants to remain in the local area or at least in Vancouver. The enhanced rental subsidy worked as follows: If a Little Mountain tenant found a rental that was in excess of the maximum rent levels of RAP, they could negotiate an enhanced rental subsidy that is in excess of the benefits typically paid out under RAP. Each case of enhanced rental subsidy is different as the terms are entirely dependent on what the tenant was able to negotiate out of BC Housing. Unlike the regular RAP, the enhanced rental subsidy comes with time limits and these also vary from case to case. Two of the families I interviewed received the enhanced rental subsidy, one for five years and the other for just two years. These time limits raise troubling questions if the social housing component at Little Mountain is not rebuilt before the enhanced rental subsidy expires. The family that negotiated a two-year benefit currently only has about one year left but redevelopment is still in the community consultation stage. I simply do not know what will happen to this family if the social housing is not rebuilt at Little Mountain by next year. In the other case, the family is receiving an enhanced benefit of \$2050 per month for five years. Thus, BC Housing is paying \$123,000 to relocate just this one family, excluding the moving allowance and other BC Housing costs associated with relocation. The main objective of redevelopment from the provincial government's perspective is to raise money from the sale of the land to be reinvested back into supportive housing. Not only is the amount of the proceeds being kept secret from the public, the public also does not know how much BC Housing is spending to relocate families. If redevelopment had been phased and the tenants had been allowed to remain on-site throughout redevelopment, not only would that have prevented the displacement of the tenants, but also the relocation costs the public has had to pay could have been greatly reduced.

Regardless of whether a family was relocated into private rental housing, social housing, or in the case of three of the last hold-outs, on-site to another Little Mountain unit, all relocated Little Mountain households signed Relocation Agreements with BC Housing. The Relocation Agreement is shown in Appendix III. In the Relocation Agreement, BC Housing commits to allow the tenants to move back to Little Mountain “upon the completion of the redevelopment of the Property”⁵⁵ and at a date of BC Housing's choosing. In the agreement, BC Housing also commits to paying two moving allowances: one at the time the tenant signs the Relocation Agreement to cover the move away from Little Mountain and a second moving allowance for if and when the tenant moves back to Little Mountain. A moving allowance

⁵⁵ BC Housing, Tenancy Relocation Agreement (2007, accessed online October 10, 2010 from www.littlemountain.ca)

schedule in which payments are based on household size accompanies the Relocation Agreement (See Figure 7.6). Moving allowances were not deducted from tenants' welfare benefits. The second moving allowance and the promise to move back to Little Mountain are conditional on the tenant not being evicted in their relocation housing. The Relocation Agreement states, "If the tenancy agreement has been terminated, there will be no offer to move back to the Property." This provision has caused anxiety among some relocated tenants. It may be possible that tenants relocated into the private market could be evicted for no fault of their own but for landlord's use of property. But in an email sent to me, Sam Rainboth of BC Housing said that only if the tenant is evicted "with cause" would the benefits of the Relocation Agreement (including the promise to move back) no longer apply. Unfortunately, the words "with cause" do not appear in the Relocation Agreement so it is questionable whether Rainboth's interpretation would hold up in the event of a legal dispute.

In addition to the Relocation Agreement, there is also a Student Transportation Agreement that was made available to some relocated tenants. This agreement is for relocated families who want their children to be able to continue to attend the schools in the Little Mountain neighbourhood. Under this agreement, BC Housing reimburses families for the cost of bus passes for the children and one adult who accompanies the children to school. The travel subsidy does not provide for bus passes during the summer months when classes are not in session. The three-page Student Transportation Agreement contains 11 sections and is a remarkably complex legal document for what seems to be a relatively simple issue. The travel subsidy and the enhanced rental subsidy were negotiated out of BC Housing in 2007 several months

Figure 7.6

Moving Allowance

Attached to the Relocation Agreement signed by all relocated Little Mountain tenants was Schedule "A" Moving Allowance, which states:

Pursuant to paragraphs 3 and 4(b) of the Tenancy Relocation Agreement, BC Housing will pay the Tenant the following:

- \$1000.00 if only one person is moving as the Tenant;
- \$1250.00 if two persons are moving as the Tenant;
- \$1500.00 if three persons are moving as the Tenant;
- \$1750.00 if four persons are moving as the Tenant;
- \$2000.00 if five persons are moving as the Tenant;
- \$2250.00 if six persons are moving as the Tenant;
- \$2500.00 if seven persons are moving as the Tenant;
- Another \$250.00 for each additional person that is moving as the Tenant.

The amount for a move from a New Suite to a Redeveloped Suite will be the same. The amounts paid will be determined based on the fewest number of persons involved in the move from the Suite to the New Suite and the move from the New Suite to the Redeveloped Suites, as applicable. For example, if two persons are moving out of the Suite, but only one is moving into the New Suite, only one person is moving as the Tenant. *BC Housing will not pay any other costs, expenses, damages or losses directly related to each move.*¹ (my emphasis added)

The last statement is an admission on the part of BC Housing that the tenants are not being fully compensated for their losses. See Appendix III for the main part of the Relocation Agreement.

¹ BC Housing, Tenancy Relocation Agreement (2007, accessed online October 10, 2010 from www.littlemountain.ca)

after relocation started at meetings that were held in then-BC Liberal MLA Carole Taylor's office. Natasha is a Little Mountain tenant who demonstrated impressive negotiating skills at these meetings. Although Natasha was a relatively recent Little Mountain tenant who did not live at Little Mountain when Margaret E. Mitchell was there and when political organization was strong, Natasha is one of the last examples of a savvy woman from Little Mountain who was able to get something out of government for the benefit of the rest of the housing project. Natasha recalled the negotiations that took place:

There was a meeting at Carole Taylor's office, it was a meeting with the Regional Director of Housing and Shane Ramsey, the CEO. They agreed they would provide subsidies to families that have children in nearby schools that need to stay in their neighbourhood. They've agreed to that, however they didn't put that information out there and so they kept moving people...They weren't going to provide any of these things until people started pushing for them...Once we were sitting at a bargaining table and we were sitting there with Carole Taylor because she is our local MLA, even though she's Finance Minister...They know that they weren't actually looking out for our best interests, that's why they feel obligated to do these things because they were lacking in certain areas. She [Carole Taylor] was right there when we were asking for certain specific things and so she made sure that they were going to provide answers to us. Like for instance, when I brought to her attention that Brock School wasn't filled to capacity and they were going to lose almost 70 students, so what's going to happen to Brock School because of low enrollment? She's supposed to be all about family and community and all this stuff and she was like, "Oh, well, what would you suggest?" And I was like, "I would suggest that there was some extra funding for people to stay in their neighbourhood in order to stay at their schools. It's a crucial time for kids, these are their elementary years, we don't need to be uprooting these kids right now..." She in particular, she took it seriously so they had their discussion afterwards. At the next meeting they said, "Okay, we're going to provide you with that funding." But they didn't come out with that in time.⁵⁶

As Natasha pointed out, the travel subsidy was initiated after relocation already started and was not well publicized. Information about the travel subsidy was never posted on BC Housing's Little Mountain redevelopment website even though the website has an entire section dedicated to providing information for tenants. Myra, who moved to Surrey in August 2007, is one of the relocated tenants who was not made aware of the travel subsidy. Instead of the travel subsidy from BC Housing, Myra used her Child Tax Benefit to pay for a bus pass so her son could attend high school in Vancouver for an entire

⁵⁶ Carole Taylor is the only member of the BC Liberal provincial government who comes off looking compassionate in this story. In November 2007 Taylor announced she would not seek re-election in 2009. There has been speculation that Taylor's departure from provincial politics may have been partially motivated by differences she had with Premier Gordon Campbell. She has publicly expressed concern over how the provincial government's Canada Line construction was negatively impacting her constituents on Cambie Street. One has to wonder if an additional source of tension between Taylor and Campbell may have been how the Campbell government was mistreating Taylor's constituents in the Little Mountain Housing Project. See Miro Cernetig, "Taylor Won't Run Again", *Vancouver Sun* (November 30, 2007), p. A1; Vaughn Palmer, "One Spark Too Many? An Independent Taylor Versus a Flinty Premier", *Vancouver Sun* (July 31, 2007), p. A3.

school year. The Child Tax Benefit is meant for food and other necessities for children—not a bus pass that was only made necessary by the government’s own actions. It is too late for her to receive the subsidy now because after one year of living in Surrey her son switched to a Surrey school. Myra’s child is not the only one who has had to change schools. Although the travel subsidy was supposed to prevent children from having to change schools, of the 10 relocated families I interviewed with school age children, five families have children who changed schools, either because they did not know about the travel subsidy or they moved so far that commuting to school was impractical. Those tenants who do receive the travel subsidy find it requires dealing with an inordinate amount of bureaucracy:

They just royally put you through the ringer to get the bus pass. Just getting it originally was hard...They have no consideration that you’ve got a tight schedule, it’s just like you have to keep on doing these things...We kept on going in and saying it’s still not there, it’s still not there. And then when summer comes, oh no, they aren’t going to give you bus fares when the summer’s on. Okay, so you have to reapply again and so you’re waiting another month and a half to get the reapplication thing through. I mean, why couldn’t that have all been done in the summer time so they have the bus passes there on time?...And now we’re on again until I guess June. But it was just like, instead of giving us something they said they would give us, they made us go in and go in and go in and not release it and go in.

With the Relocation Agreement and the verbose Student Transportation Agreement, relocation has proceeded by treating BC Housing and the tenants as two equal parties who have entered into contractual arrangements under their own free will. These contractual arrangements can be understood as part of the rolling out of neoliberal state intervention in the lives of the poor. Some may counter that nothing has really changed because public housing tenants have long entered into legal contracts with BC Housing in the form of tenancy agreements. But all tenants expect to sign tenancy agreements. The Relocation Agreement and the Student Transportation Agreement go above and beyond the level of contractual ‘legalese’ that public housing tenants typically have to deal with. The benefits the tenants get from these contracts are the promise to return to Little Mountain, paid moving expenses both ways, and bus passes to allow children to stay in the same schools. None of these ‘benefits’ would have been necessary for the tenants if they had been allowed to stay at Little Mountain. Thus, the conditions the tenants have traditionally enjoyed at Little Mountain are now made conditional upon the tenants fulfilling their end of the contracts. Scholars have shown how neoliberalism involves a redefinition of subjectivity. This comes across very clearly at Little Mountain with the Relocation Agreement. Subjects whom the state has traditionally accepted responsibility for are forced to enter into contractual arrangements in order to receive a modicum of state assistance. The treatment of the tenants as free-willed subjects who have entered into these contractual arrangement on their own volition and as equal partners to BC Housing

exemplifies the reconfigured neoliberal state subject that arises as the “distinctions between state, civil society, and market are largely blurred.”⁵⁷

But the Little Mountain tenants are not on equal footing with BC Housing. This is because BC Housing controls their access to a fundamental human need—housing. Rather than entering into these contracts by their own free will, many tenants say BC Housing pressured them to move and enter into the Relocation Agreements. Tenants say that BC Housing was telling them that if they did not choose a relocation unit quickly their relocation options would soon dry up. What I heard from Brenda was typical of what the other tenants told me: “*They felt the pressure. They were told we have to move you, the sooner we move you, the better place you get.*” In addition, although there were some cases in which tenants were assisted with interpreters and legal advocates, in some cases those who needed these services did not receive them:

I just talked to a lady this morning and they gave her a three-bedroom place at Skeena Housing, which she doesn't know about because she is a new immigrant. She doesn't speak English and they are still talking to her without an interpreter. They offered her this place and she went and found out there's no room in the schools nearby so it will take her over an hour to get to Brock School...She is calling Housing saying, “I can't move now because there's no space in the schools for my children.” What they're recommending is to move them and then they'll have to deal with it. I'm saying, “No, they can deal with you staying here until school's out because they know you don't have to actually move yet.” I said, “You shouldn't even be talking to them.” Because her English, you really have to pay close attention when she's talking because her English is not well yet, she hasn't had enough practice yet. You can imagine their lingo is different, when you barely have a grasp of the English language and we're talking technical terms, it's all different lingo.

Many tenants also say that BC Housing staff used the moving allowance to persuade tenants to agree to move. According to the moving allowance schedule, a single person would receive \$1000 upon signing the Relocation Agreement. Although this is nowhere near enough to compensate many of the tenants for their emotional attachments, in most cases this is more than enough to cover moving expenses. A resourceful person with lots of friends can move for a fraction of that cost by essentially drawing on social capital. One tenant told me that BC Housing staff actually instructed her to get her friends to help her move so she could “*pocket the money.*” The poorest Little Mountain tenants, welfare recipients, and recent immigrants were among the very first to move out of Little Mountain because the moving allowance money was simply too much for these groups to resist. As one tenant explained:

A lot of people jumped at the thousand dollars to move and would get a friend with a pick-up and pocket the thousand...It was like putting candy in front of a baby. They hadn't seen a thousand dollar bill in many a year so that was an incentive for them to leave...When these people

⁵⁷ Roger Keil, “‘Common-Sense’ Neoliberalism: Progressive Conservative Urbanism in Toronto, Canada”, in *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*, eds. Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), p. 234.

knew, hey I can have a thousand dollars and it will not come off my [welfare] cheque and we can go buy a new TV, a thousand dollars seemed more like twenty grand to some people.

Pressure to move also came in the form of frequent phone calls and letters from BC Housing encouraging tenants to go see potential relocation units. At some points, tenants were getting calls and letters from BC Housing on a weekly basis. Many tenants resisted relocation by simply ignoring this communication. But when the teenage son of one tenant who had been trying to resist relocation wandered into the Relocation Office, BC Housing staff seized on the opportunity:

There was one point where they talked to my son...I said, "Don't talk to them."...Because I was feeling like I was getting missed out of the loop. Everybody else was talking to each other and they weren't talking to me until I went there. My son said, well, I went to talk today and they said this, this, and this...[It was] as if everybody was taking over my life. Very stressful...I know exactly what happened. They said this place is open for all the kids to come in and ask questions. I said, "Yes, I know that. But my son doesn't understand the distinction."...It's only to ask questions, because he was taking everything as a done deal.

The practice of playing off different family members against one another was also used during the old urban renewal programs. As was reported in the Africville case: "A related tactic...occasionally used was to bring 'third parties' into the relocation negotiations, especially other family members favourably disposed to relocation."⁵⁸ It was also noted that the Africville residents were in a poor bargaining position because they lacked financial resources so some were pre-disposed to accept settlements that were incommensurate with what they were giving up. As this section has shown, this point also applies to the Little Mountain case.

Little Mountain tenants were also pressured to accept relocation housing that did not meet their needs. Beth told me about the experience of one of her neighbours:

One senior was telling me they said to her, "You should think about going into assisted living." She says, "Why?" [BC Housing said,] "Well, you have to look 10 years down the road." This is the kind of thing they're saying to people. She says, "I am independent. I can get up and down the stairs. I like to be out there helping people. I'm not ready for that."

Beth herself was relocated into a unit that is incompatible with her needs. Although she has pain in her ankle and often has a hard time with stairs, she was relocated into a unit that consists of two levels, with the bathroom upstairs. At Little Mountain she was in an apartment so although she had to climb stairs to get into her apartment, once inside everything was on one level.

⁵⁸ Donald H. Clairmont & Dennis William Magill, *Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 183.

Although BC Housing advised the tenants to agree to relocation early on because if they waited their options would diminish, the reality was just the opposite. The tenants whom I interviewed who relocated early on in the process seem to be the most dissatisfied with their relocation housing, whereas those who held out got the best deals. Of the 17 relocated families I interviewed, five families moved in 2007, eight families moved in 2008, and four families moved in 2009. All of the five families who moved in 2007 dislike where they moved to and three of these families are extremely unhappy with their living conditions. None of these 2007 movers moved to private rental housing because the enhanced rental subsidy was not made available to them. Three of these 2007 movers were relocated to suburbs outside of Vancouver: two in North Vancouver and one in Surrey. Of the 12 families who moved in 2008 and 2009, only six of them dislike where they are living. Two of these families are living in private rental housing with the assistance of enhanced rental subsidies. Unlike the 2007 movers, all of these later movers managed to remain within Vancouver. In addition, six of the very final hold-outs received an extra \$3000 on top of the moving allowances all the other tenants got. The pattern at Little Mountain is similar to what was observed under urban renewal: Although holding out may not allow one to escape relocation altogether, it often leads to a better settlement. Table 7.2 shows where the relocated families I am aware of moved to.

When I interviewed Seema in 2007 she was holding out for a suite in Little Mountain Court, the seniors' social housing building right across the street from the housing project. By 2009 when I interviewed her for the second time, she was in the building she had been fighting so hard to get into:

They were sending me all over. One was in New Westminster, I said no. Then they sent me to Knight and 41st, there's another project there, right on Knight Street with the trucks going by—my asthma, with the things blowing all over, no elevator. I said no. Then they sent me to Fraser Street...again, no elevator and it was a leaky condo. I said no. So I said no to several places...They offered me a ground floor and I said no because I don't like ground floors, I'm scared, I'm by myself. So they offered me this and I've been quite happy...They wanted me to go away from Main Street and I didn't want to. That's the only reason I didn't move. I was waiting for this spot.

By refusing to accept what BC Housing was offering her and holding out for the specific building (and even the floor of the building) she wanted, the outcome in Seema's case has been very positive. Due to her persistence, Seema was even able to avoid displacement from the neighbourhood. But people who cooperated with the Relocation Office and who moved to the first place they were sent to are far less happy. Myra was one of the earliest tenants to move and was one of the tenants who moved the greatest distance, all the way to Surrey:

I didn't want to move all the way to this area. I wanted to stay in Vancouver or the area that I chose. This was not the area that I choose...I settled with the first one because they were like, "If you don't take it now everything is not going to work out your way. There's so many people who have to be relocated, it's going to be very hard, so you

Given the tremendous waiting list to get into BC Housing, some tenants have wondered how there came to be so many vacancies within the system. Granted the tenants were bumped to the top of the waiting list (thereby forcing those on the waiting list to have to wait even longer), but still, there seemed to be an awful lot of vacancies within BC Housing. Ingrid Steenhuisen shared a story with me about another Little Mountain tenant who was evicted from BC Housing while others were being relocated. Ingrid was directly involved in the case as the tenant asked her to communicate to BC Housing on her behalf. The tenant had lived at Little Mountain for 30 years and was a “good tenant” but she was evicted based on BC Housing’s unusually vigorous application of some technicalities, which the tenant had resolved. But BC Housing did not care that the problem had been resolved, Ingrid’s impression was that “their sole intent was to get her out.” Thus, while the other tenants were being relocated, this tenant was evicted. She did not get a moving allowance and she cannot move back to Little Mountain after it is redeveloped. The case of this one tenant caused Ingrid to wonder if the vacancies at the other BC Housing projects that relocated Little Mountain tenants moved into had been created as a result of BC Housing evicting tenants by applying the rules in an unusually harsh manner:

They were forced out at the end of March and because of a technicality. It just shows how nitpicky they’ve gotten. Seeing how they did that to them, to me it just speaks volumes on how they were able to get 210 vacancies within 2 years. If they were willing to do that here, definitely they did it elsewhere in order to create that volume of vacancy to provide the units for the families from here to be moved elsewhere. If you think about it, how else would they have been able to get 210 units within two and a half years?...They’ve never had that kind of volume of vacancy in 55 years...They were using every single technicality in order to get people out, whether it was here or elsewhere in order to create the vacancies. That’s why I said, it’s not about the 21 families that are left. It’s about the others who have been forced out, it’s about the families who could have taken those units if these families had been permitted to stay. It’s also about those families that were forced out in the first place in order to create the vacancies. So all of a sudden you go from 210 to three times 210, that’s 630.

Based on the information I have from BC Housing, the number of families relocated out of Little Mountain was 194, not 210. But the argument Ingrid is making is compelling. She presents a plausible explanation for something that BC Housing has never explained: Where did all the vacancies in the BC Housing system come from? A tenant who was relocated to Culloden Court (the project that seems to have received the greatest number of relocated tenants from Little Mountain) said something that seems to support what Ingrid is saying: “Everybody’s being scrutinized in here. They are on a mission to empty this place. She’s kicking people out. She walks right in the door and says, “You get out of here!” If we consider that tenants may have been forced out of other BC Housing projects to make way for the Little Mountain tenants, the magnitude of displacement may in fact be much larger than the 194 who were displaced from Little Mountain. As discussed in Chapter 2, an increasing number of evictions has also

been associated with the redevelopment of Regent Park in Toronto.⁶⁰ This can be seen as another example of greater state intervention in the lives of public housing tenants and the rolling out of the neoliberal state. As the next section shows, the rolling out of the neoliberal state made resisting relocation and attempting to stay at Little Mountain increasingly more difficult.

7.2.2 Costs of Resistance

Many Little Mountain tenants attempted to resist BC Housing's efforts to relocate them. Tenants would often simply not respond to phone calls and letters urging them to come into the Relocation Office. In some cases, this was a political strategy with the intent being to frustrate the provincial government's redevelopment plans. In other cases, tenants were simply holding out until BC Housing offered them suitable relocation housing. Many tenants also felt there was no need to move quickly. Some tenants were resigned to the idea that relocation was inevitable but they loved Little Mountain so much that they wanted to prolong their stay there. But staying at Little Mountain became increasingly more difficult as time went on. The costs of resistance increased as more and more people were leaving. This is yet another similarity with the old urban renewal programs as the same dynamic took place in Boston's West End and Halifax's Africville.

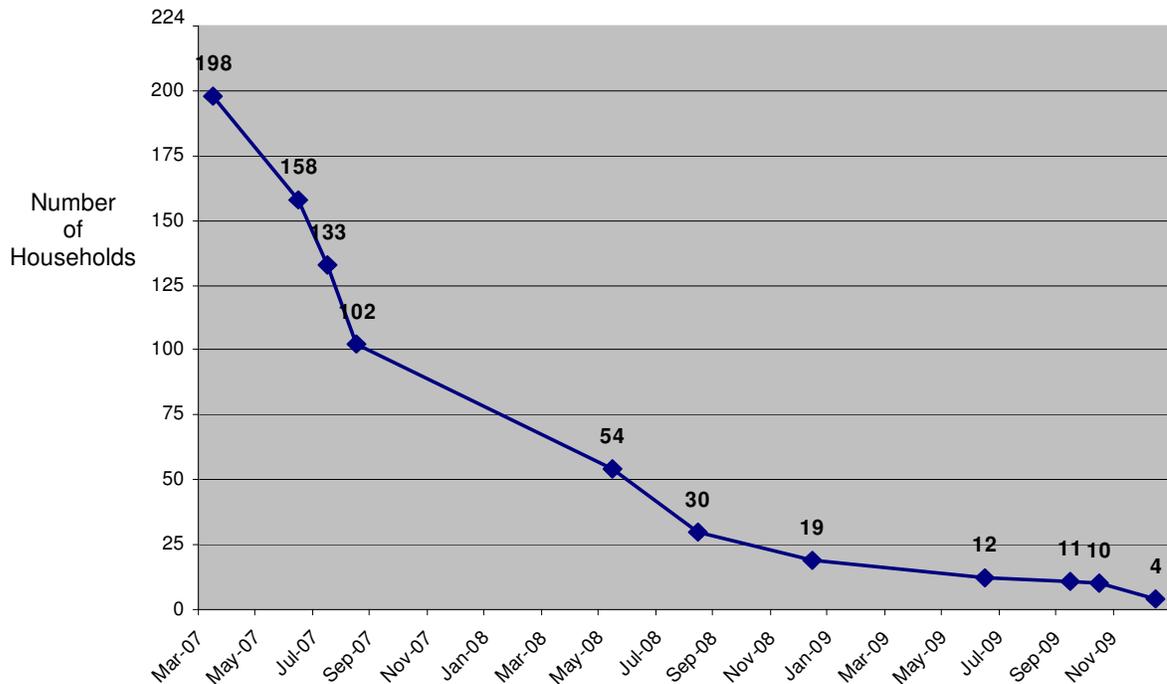
As tenants started to move out, Little Mountain was transformed into a "ghost town." As Figure 7.7 shows, for more than a year leading up to demolition there were just a handful of families living at Little Mountain. The housing project that was once buzzing with neighbours interacting and children playing fell eerily silent. Toni Steenhuisen was left crying because she missed hearing the sound of children playing outside. "*I miss the screaming,*" she wept. Karin also missed her neighbours: "*I miss the neighbours...We had so much fun...I loved my neighbours...I miss my downstairs neighbour who was out on Mondays doing her laundry and hanging it outside on a sunny day...I miss that.*" Rhonda remarked, "*It was so sad to see somebody packing up. As soon as you saw somebody with boxes or something like that, it was just so sad.*"

As the housing project emptied out, an element of insecurity came in. Outside strangers and even coyotes started prowling around the housing project. Rhonda said, "*It was the very first time that I ever felt fear living there. I never felt it before, never.*" Seema recalled, "*I had the whole building to myself...They were going and then I was getting quite frightened. And I wanted to get out.*" Irwin felt so insecure that he said, "*After 10 o'clock I just advise people, don't come and go.*" Rhonda felt that the boards over the windows were an invitation to outsiders looking to cause trouble:

People go, okay, there's boards on the windows, that means there's no one there, that means let's go do a crime. Let's go try the car doors. And then that's when it started. People started hanging around, trying car doors and trying to get into the buildings and hanging around the porches. Things started disappearing from my porch.

⁶⁰ See Stefan Kipfer, "Public Housing and Toronto Politics: The Regent Park Story", *Relay* (July/August 2005), pp. 7-9.

Figure 7.7 Depopulation of the Little Mountain Housing Project, March 2007- December 2009



BC Housing’s original plan was to complete relocation by the spring of 2008. But many tenants resisted relocation thereby prolonging the process until December 2009. This chart shows that within the first six months, already about half of the households at Little Mountain were relocated. During the subsequent two years, while relocation proceeded continuously, it happened much more slowly than in the first six months. Following my findings regarding the increasing costs of resistance over time, this pattern is somewhat unexpected. Given the increasing costs of resistance, one would have expected an opposite pattern, with relocation proceeding slowly in the beginning and then accelerating later on as staying becomes more difficult. But there are additional factors besides the increasing costs of resistance that have shaped this relocation timeline. In the beginning, BC Housing was able to relocate large numbers of families quite quickly because I am told that those who moved first tended to be the poorest families and recent immigrants. These groups were easily persuaded to move by the moving allowance money, which could be used for other things besides moving and was too much money to resist for the very poor. Also, recent immigrants and others who did not live at Little Mountain for a long time would have been less emotionally attached to the place than the long-term, multi-generational residents. For those not attached to the place, there would have been less reason to resist relocation. Some of the early movers may have also been people who, for whatever reason, wanted to move. It is also noteworthy that at the beginning of relocation in March 2007 there were only 198 families living at Little Mountain as there were 26 vacancies. This suggests that BC Housing was deliberately allowing units to sit empty at Little Mountain for some time before relocation started because BC Housing knew that it was going to redevelop the site.

Data Sources (Data values not cited here were obtained via my contact with the Little Mountain tenants):

March 2007, 198 households: Personal email communication from Sam Rainboth, Senior Manager, Public Affairs, BC Housing dated November 9, 2009

June 2007, 158 households: Letter from Dale McMann, BC Housing to neighbours of the Little Mountain Housing Project dated June 4, 2007

July 2007, 133 households and August 2007, 102 households: Charlie Smith, “NDP says BC Housing Broke Pledge”, *Georgia Straight* (July 26, 2007, accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.straight.com)

May 2008, 54 households: Frances Bula, “Developer Will Listen To Community”, *Vancouver Sun* (May 7, 2008), p. B1.

December 2008, 19 households: Carlito Pablo, “Ex-Resident, Activist, and Politicians Haven’t Given Up”, *Georgia Straight* (December 7, 2008, accessed October 10, 2010 from www.straight.com)

June 2009, 12 households: Tom Sandborn, “BC Housing Applies for Little Mountain Demolition Permits”, *The Tyee*, (June 10, 2009, website accessed September 22, 2010 from theyee.ca)

Two other tenants indicated having things go missing from their porches (See Figure 7.8), whereas this had never happened before. Other tenants talked about outside people coming in to smoke drugs, urinate, dump their garbage, and dig up the plants and the landscaping. Homeless people started squatting in some of the empty units (which some tenants seemed not to mind, but this made others feel insecure) (See Figure 7.9). There was even a case of streakers running through the housing project naked. With most of the tenants gone, some outside people felt they could come in and do just about anything at Little Mountain. And there was nothing really to stop these things from happening because the social control that had been so strong at Little Mountain was gone when most of the tenants were gone. Although BC Housing hired a security guard for the nighttime, this was an inadequate replacement for the social control that had existed when Little Mountain was fully occupied. Some of the tenants who tried to resist relocation say they rarely saw the security guard and when they did the guard was more likely to intimidate the tenants and their visitors than provide protection for them:

Some people are feeling intimidated by the security guard now because even though they've been living there 23 years of their life, they're being looked at by the security guard like they shouldn't be there...I've actually seen it, I've watched it. There was a group of guys, they've been living there for a long time, they had a visit from a couple friends and they were all sort of sitting around in a circle and talking and stuff. The security guard came right up and sat across from them and was gunning them like they shouldn't have been there. They felt really uncomfortable, they didn't even say anything to him. But the guy came to me afterward and said, "What's going on? I feel like I'm not even supposed to be here, like the security guard is looking at us like we shouldn't be here." And this is his home, he was raised here since he was three years old.

Thus, the security guard who in theory should be making life easier for the last tenants still at Little Mountain by offering protection, actually contributed to the difficulties of staying at Little Mountain. This example also demonstrates that the security guard was an ineffective replacement for the social control that existed when Little Mountain was fully occupied because, unlike the tenants, the security guard could not distinguish between who belonged and who did not belong.

Resisting relocation also caused stress and divisions within families. One tenant I interviewed told me that while he wanted to stay at Little Mountain, his wife could not handle the stress of staying and wanted to move:

Figure 7.8 Increasing Costs of Resistance



As Little Mountain emptied out those who tried to stay noticed things started to go missing from their porches.

We were in the mode of staying as long as possible but my wife started really freaking out at me about what are you protesting. All of a sudden she started really putting the pressure on me to move out...[My wife wanted to move] because of the strain and the pressure of being there and knowing you're going to get kicked out and so it's like getting kicked out on some terms that are good for your family or just waiting around there. I realized, okay, I can't make this decision for everybody if it involves our children because I can have whatever view I want on it but I don't want them to suffer for my views. I thought it was right to stay myself. But I think it was really taking a toll on everybody.

Another source of stress for people who tried to stay was the poor relations that existed between BC Housing staff (especially those in the Relocation Office) and many of the tenants. Many tenants do not trust BC Housing and did not know what to expect next from them:

There was a huge uncertainty level of what would happen. What would they do? Would they phone the cops? You just didn't know what they [BC Housing] were doing. You were dealing with an institution that was not trustable and so you don't know what the possibilities with these people are.

There was one name of one Relocation Office staff person that just kept coming up in the interviews as someone whom the tenants particularly detest. Donald referred to this person as a “*snake and a shark...[who] could slit somebody's throat.*” I doubt he meant this literally but this comment captures the extreme dislike that many Little Mountain tenants have for this particular BC Housing staff member. Resisting relocation meant living under this detested person's watch: “*They were watching us from the window. And watching us...They can see from the front...We were scared from the BC Housing pressure.*”

There was also an element of being on either the good or the bad side of particular BC Housing employees. Tenants say that those who cooperated with the relocation staff have had certain rules waived and even been allowed to move into suites with extra bedrooms. Whereas some of those who did not cooperate and who resisted relocation say that certain rules are being enforced against them in an unusually harsh manner. One tenant lives in so much fear of specific BC Housing employees that they were even afraid to tell me certain things in the interview, saying “*BC Housing will be mad at me.*”

Figure 7.9 Squatters' Residence



A Little Mountain tenant took me into a unit that he said was unlocked because a squatter was staying there. It looks like the family that used to live here moved virtually right after hosting a child's birthday party. Before redevelopment came along, people had very happy times at Little Mountain. The deflated balloons are a symbol of happier times past.

The lack of professionalism among BC Housing staff was made especially clear when one staff member was busted for setting up a marijuana grow-operation at Little Mountain. Several tenants have told me about the day in 2008 when they saw police bust a marijuana grow-operation in the caretaker's suite. The caretaker was a BC Housing employee who lived in one of the Little Mountain units. Some tenants say the caretaker was not only growing marijuana in their own suite but also in the empty suites after tenants were relocated. But other tenants say that it was only in the caretaker's suite. The eyewitness I spoke with says they saw police removing plant trays with seedlings from the caretaker's suite. The eyewitness also saw the police checking the empty units, but the eyewitness did not see the police remove anything from the empty units. Thus, I have to assume that the grow-operation was confined to the caretaker's suite. Because the marijuana plants were only seedlings, the impression of the eyewitness is that the grow-operation was very recent and that the caretaker was planning on transferring the plants to the empty units once the plants grew larger. This explanation does make sense but it is only speculation. I do not really know when the grow-operation was set up and what the caretaker's plans were. But with the community virtually deserted, the conditions were certainly ideal for a grow-operation. It is possible that, with the housing project mostly empty, the caretaker felt emboldened to set up the grow-operation. If this were the case, this would be an example of the criminal/undesirable element that crept into Little Mountain after most of the tenants were gone. Although unlike the other examples of this such as stolen items from porches and people smoking drugs, in this case it would be a BC Housing employee perpetrating the crime. But I simply do not know if this is the case. It is also possible that the grow-operation had been there for a long time and was entirely unrelated to the depopulation of the housing project. In this case, the removal of the tenants would have just been a fortuitous coincidence for the BC Housing caretaker who was operating a marijuana grow-operation at Little Mountain. Whatever the case, this reflects very poorly on BC Housing and suggests the tenants may have good reason to fear BC Housing employees. Marijuana grow-operations are often connected to organized crime. Although I am told that the caretaker has been fired, who else at BC Housing may have been involved? Are we really to believe that the Relocation Office staff who were on site all day several days a week had no idea what was going on in the caretaker's suite? How deep does corruption truly run at BC Housing? This incident has cast doubt on the whole team of BC Housing employees who were working at Little Mountain. Because the incident was "*hushed up [and] never made the papers*", rumours and speculation are running wild among many Little Mountain tenants.

In addition to social changes such as a lack of social control and an element of insecurity and even criminality, resisting relocation meant living with undesirable physical changes as well. The wooden boards over the windows and the doors created an oppressive atmosphere for the remaining tenants (See Figure 7.10). The boards were put up in September 2008, with about 30 families still living at Little Mountain. Beth described how the boards made her feel: "*It made me feel like I was in some sort of a prison.*" Pamila said the boards made Little Mountain look "*very ugly*". Although boards were not erected

over the windows of occupied suites, they were put up over the windows of the basements of apartment buildings that still had people living in them. This prevented natural light from entering the basements that were still being used by tenants. In one of the most dramatic moments throughout this entire saga, an elderly tenant who has lived at Little Mountain for nearly four decades and still lives there, angrily ripped off the boards that were put over his basement windows and shouted, “Don’t treat me like an animal!” This incident poignantly demonstrated the inhumane treatment that the Little Mountain tenants received as part of the retrenchment of the welfare state and the rolling out of the neoliberal state (See Figure 7.11).

In June 2009 BC Housing installed a chain-link fence around the entirely depopulated northwest portion of the housing project (See Figure 7.12). This cut off easy access to the corner of 33rd and Ontario and forced tenants and visitors to walk different routes. It also prevented access to the field in front of Oriole Walk where many tenants have fond memories of the Corn Fests. In November 2009, with 10 families still living there, fencing was installed around the entire housing project site. Although there were some openings in the fence, for one entirely blind tenant the fencing essentially imprisoned her in her home because it prevented her from walking along her familiar routes. The same elderly tenant who tore off the boards said the fencing also made him feel like an animal: “*I’m not an animal. Don’t fence me up.*” Sometimes the strain of trying to stay was not fully apparent to tenants until after they moved. Rhonda tried to resist relocation for quite a long time but when I interviewed her she had just moved into her new place:

I was talking to a friend the other day. I was saying what a difference it made not looking at boards on the windows, not looking at plywood, in the morning not seeing a whole pile of someone else’s garbage outside my window that’s appeared overnight. And the not knowing what is going to happen next...It was terrible. It was really bad.

Figure 7.10

Boards



The boards created an oppressive and depressing atmosphere for tenants who tried to resist relocation.

Figure 7.11

The Inhumanity of Neoliberal Restructuring



Photo credit: David Vaisbord, reprinted with permission courtesy of David Vaisbord. This Little Mountain tenant ripped off the boards over his basement windows and shouted, “Don’t treat me like an animal!”

The difficulties the tenants experienced with trying to stay at Little Mountain stemmed from the fact that the place was qualitatively changing. Some of the very qualities that tenants were trying to hold onto by staying were disappearing right before their eyes: the friendly neighbours, the social control and security, and the open spaces (some of which were fenced off). Toni and Ingrid Steenhuisen have long emphasized and derived pride from the fact that Little Mountain never matched the stereotype of the ‘troubled housing project’. But when talking about what it was like to live at Little Mountain in the final days when most of the tenants were gone, Toni Steenhuisen indicated that this aspect of Little Mountain had changed: “*They’ve made this place look like a ghetto.*” In the next section I discuss the emotional impacts of relocation and the research Marc Fried conducted many decades ago during urban renewal. Fried showed that when people are displaced they experience grief because their identity is altered both in terms of group identity and spatial identity.⁶¹ In his later work, Fried wrote about the “discontinuities of place” and highlighted how displacement creates discontinuities both in terms of one’s social and physical surroundings.⁶² Much like the experience of displacement, the tenants who tried to stay at Little Mountain also experienced social and physical discontinuities of place. Little Mountain was changed both in terms of social and physical factors. The Steenhuisens, long proud of the success of Little Mountain,

⁶¹ Marc Fried, “Grieving for a Lost Home”, in *The Urban Condition: People and Policy in the Metropolis*, ed. Leonard J. Duhl (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

⁶² Marc Fried, “Continuities and Discontinuities of Place”, *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 20 (2000), pp. 193-205.

now found themselves living in what Toni called a 'ghetto'. Surely, this altered Toni's sense of identity much like one's identity can be altered by displacement. Thus, in many ways people can experience *dis-placement* even without moving. Although one may be able to resist relocation in the sense of remaining at the some point in Cartesian space, it is very difficult if not impossible to resist the discontinuities of place during mass displacements of communities.

The things that made staying at Little Mountain increasingly more difficult included the presence of the Relocation Office, the hired security guard who harassed the tenants, the oppressive boards on the windows and the fencing. These all represent some of the final installations of state infrastructure on the Little Mountain site. The state deployed these resources to allow for the privatization of the land and the retreat of the welfare state. Thus, these resources may be considered examples of the rolling out of the neoliberal state. The indignities the Little Mountain tenants endured

by attempting to stay at Little Mountain are examples of the harsh and inhumane treatment people receive as they try to hold onto the traditional benefits of the welfare state while the neoliberal state is attempting to roll out a new set of arrangements. The next three sections detail the negative impacts of relocation. While these impacts bear striking resemblances to urban renewal, which represented a form of state intervention, the impacts of relocation can also be understood as ways the poor are experiencing the neoliberal reconfiguration of relations between the state and society.

7.2.3 Social Impacts of Relocation

Relocation has involved breaking apart the rich social support networks that flourished at Little Mountain for so many years. As discussed in the previous chapter, Little Mountain was rich in social capital. But the tenants have been scattered across the metropolitan region, making it nearly impossible for them to maintain the close connections they had with their neighbours, friends, and family at Little Mountain. This is one of the most troubling similarities between this redevelopment and the old urban

Figure 7.12 Enclosure of the Commons



Fencing installed June 18, 2009 made it difficult to move through the site. According to David Harvey, neoliberal capitalism involves "a new wave of 'enclosing the commons'."¹ This is exemplified with the redevelopment/privatization of Little Mountain and in particular with the fencing off of the common spaces there.

¹ David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 148.

renewal programs. Ironically, BC Housing has justified redevelopment by saying that it will “integrate people”, implying that redevelopment will increase the social capital available to the tenants.

The tenants who were closest with their neighbours at Little Mountain have experienced the greatest losses. One tenant was relocated to North Vancouver while the godmother of her children was relocated to Surrey. This tenant remarked, “*Most of my friends, my network, my family were moved to Surrey.*” Because there were multiple generations of the same family living at Little Mountain, relocation has literally broken apart families. Due to relocation, Brenda has been removed from her mother who lives in the seniors’ housing across the street and her daughter and grand-daughter who lived in another suite in the housing project. Brenda was relocated deep into the east side of Vancouver, while her daughter and granddaughter moved to the west side. Thus, four generations have been broken apart:

Before I was visiting my mum once, two, three times a day...In the project I would go, I am going to light a cigarette. Oh, I'll throw on my shoes and go have one with my mum. Go up there and then in the summer when it was nice, go up there later. Now I'm lucky if I make it to pub day on Saturdays...If I'm not there she asks everybody where I am...When my daughter was living here, it was okay...I could go to her place...I'd say my relationship with my granddaughter has gone down 50% because I never get to see her.

Brenda’s case demonstrates that the social impacts of relocation are not limited to the relocated Little Mountain tenants only—it is also those who were left behind in the surrounding neighbourhood. Brenda’s mother in the seniors’ housing across the street has lost her daughter, granddaughter, and great granddaughter, who were all relocated out of Little Mountain.

Having been removed from their friends and family at Little Mountain, the relocated tenants have had a hard time forging new connections in their new neighbourhoods. The tenants have found that their new neighbours are just not as friendly as their old neighbours at Little Mountain. Comments from three separate families exemplify how hard it has been for the tenants to make new friends:

People are not talking...The neighbours don't laugh. I don't know why. Just everybody's not the same.

If you're not from North Van, they're rude. I have two years living there; I make friends wherever I go. I can't even call two people friends there, I have no friends over there. I went to every drop-in program to make friends and still I don't have one.

Everybody keeps to themselves...Everybody lives in fear, scared to do things. I'm so used to where everybody would do a barbeque outside, have a fair for the kids, get together once in a while. Over here, nobody do things like that, nothing like that...Everybody sticks to themselves. And I'm coming from a totally different mentality stage where I'm like, “Woo, hi everybody!”

As this last comment shows, the contrast between the social atmosphere at Little Mountain and in the new neighbourhoods is often jarring for tenants. There was something very special at Little Mountain in terms of how the tenants got along so well and helped each other out. But in their new neighbourhoods, the tenants are talking about how the neighbours do not socialize with one another and how there is “*tension*” between the neighbours. The tenants are not simply having a hard time making new friends because they are new to the neighbourhood. Rather, the other social housing complexes the tenants have moved to have very different social norms than at Little Mountain. Many of the other social housing complexes the tenants moved to seem to be far less communal in nature than Little Mountain was. They often lack the large, shared open spaces and feature individually fenced in yards for each unit. One family talked about how this leads to a sense of “*separation*” between the neighbours. The collective supervision of children that was so prominent at Little Mountain seems to be lacking in some of the other housing projects. Monique noticed a “*cultural shock*” in this regard after moving to another public housing project:

I'm really open-minded and over there, they're not really open-minded like me. There's mothers there watching their 16-year-olds play, like keeping an eye on their 16-year-olds. I'm like, I have an 11-year-old and a 5-year-old who are grown up. They want to play with each other, watch over each other, I'm not worried. [At Little Mountain] everybody was watching after everybody. Where I'm at now, it's like, "Oh my God, where's his mother? Let's call the Ministry..."It's the building where I live. It's the cultural shock over there...They're like, "Why do you let your kid be like that? Do you understand what could happen?"...I trust my child to go down two blocks without me...They all look at me like I am a bad parent.

Monique found the lack of parents helping each other out with their children to be especially difficult after she injured herself and needed someone to walk her child to school:

When I was pregnant I fell down and I ripped my muscles from my stomach and I was on bed rest. I wrote on all the laundry room doors, could somebody please help me take my kid up to school because it's up a hill...It took a couple months for somebody to reply. So those couple of months, I'm walking up and down, up and down, and it's like the worst feeling ever what I'm going through. Whereas at Little Mountain, you just have to scream outside, "Hey, go with them!"

Tenants who moved to private rental housing also miss the collective supervision of children that took place at Little Mountain:

Tenant: We made friends with the elderly lady and then the other neighbour, but it's nothing like this. It's like you're divided by a fence. Here [at Little Mountain], there's no fences, you have no choice but to become family with your neighbours. And where we are now it's always lonely, it's pretty lonely.

Tommy: So you don't do any babysitting for the neighbours over there and they don't babysit your kids?

Tenant: No, it's not like that. I don't even think that they would notice if something was happening to my kids outside. It's not like here where you can come and sit outside and watch them and have like a block radius of visual on them. At the new place, it's a street and you walk down to the park. It's not a tragedy or anything, it's just not the same.

In much of the academic literature, private housing with individually fenced off yards is held up as the ideal, especially in terms of social control. But much like what was found in the previous chapter, when people have had experiences in private housing to which they can compare their experiences at Little Mountain, the benefits of an openly-designed public housing project like Little Mountain become readily apparent. Private housing is simply too private to allow for the collective supervision of children that took place at Little Mountain.

Among children in particular, the social impacts of relocation have been especially acute. Of the 17 relocated families I interviewed, 10 had minor children living in the home. Of these 10 families, seven talked about how their children missed their friends from Little Mountain. Although some children have managed to stay in contact with their old friends via the telephone and facebook, play visits are infrequent. As one tenant said:

My older daughter, she misses her friends, these two other girls that she was always with. She's like, "Oh, I want to see them again, I want to see them again." And I'm like, "It's hard, baby. We can't see them because it's far, we can't be traveling back and forth." So it's been hard.

Children have also had a hard time adjusting to new schools and making new friends. Three families talked about how their children are not accepted by the other children in the new neighbourhood. Lorraine found that in North Vancouver there is a stigma attached to children living in BC Housing, whereas at Little Mountain this had not been a problem:

As far as the kids go, it was better at Little Mountain. My kid had more friends to play with and more activities to do. As far as friendship goes for kids, it was better over there. Here the kids are very chilly. It's North Van, West Van and so it's snobbery, you know. I've been told by the kids that when they go to school and they have friends and once their friends find out they live in BC Housing they're very chilly with that. I didn't find anything like that over there, everybody was nice.

The children in North Vancouver were causing Lorraine's son so many problems that she switched him to a school in Vancouver, where he is now doing much better. Myra's son has also been bullied in his new school: "*He got bullied at the school. He feels out of place, no friends. And he's still adjusting. Even after two years that he's been at that school he has about three friends.*" Monique also talked about how her son has been bullied in his new school.

Even when children have received the transportation subsidy and have avoided switching schools, the impacts of relocation have been felt. Traveling to the schools in the old neighbourhood often

involves a tiresome commute. As Rebecca remarked about her teenage son, “*My kid still goes to the same school...He comes back very tired and sleeps and has no dinner...early go to school and come back late.*”

Another impact on children has been a loss of after-school programming. At Little Mountain there were lots of programs for children, both on the housing project site and in the community centres and schools in the surrounding neighbourhood. Those who have moved far found there is less of this. Myra has found Surrey is especially lacking in this regard:

We had those drop-in programs for the kids, after-school programs. Over here, we don't have those. Two years have passed and I haven't found a drop-in centre for my kids to go and do homework and hang out with other kids.

Even for those who stayed in Vancouver, the children are not able to participate to the extent they used to. General Brock School used to offer a great deal of after-school programming for children, including homework, sewing, art, and cooking clubs. I am told these programs are being scaled back because of the loss of children in the neighbourhood. Darren stayed at Little Mountain until the very end because these programs were very important to his children. Although the family did not move far and is receiving the travel subsidy, it is no longer possible for the two children to stay after school because logistically it is difficult for the parents to pick up their children at different times of the day. The parents only have time for one trip to pick up both children. This problem is not confined to children. Adults have also told me that they are participating less or not at all in community centres and neighbourhood houses. When they do participate in these things, it is often because they have made a special trip back to the old Little Mountain neighbourhood. The neighbourhood surrounding the Little Mountain Housing Project was rich in the social programming infrastructure that is so important to the low-income and recent immigrant families who were living in the housing project. With the removal of these families from the housing project, there has been a weakening of this social infrastructure in the Little Mountain area and these families have been sent to other areas where this social infrastructure was not well developed in the first place.

It is important to keep in mind that there has been a range of relocation experiences among the Little Mountain tenants. Although the loss of social supports is the dominant theme in the interviews, it is not the only theme. A few tenants have experienced relocation with their social support network mostly unscathed. They managed this by deliberately relocating together to the same public housing project. I interviewed Leticia, who is a single mother who moved to Culloden Court. She told me that she moved to Culloden Court deliberately in order to be with one of her friends who was relocated there from Little Mountain. After her move, a third friend from Little Mountain moved to the same place in order to be with the other two. All three women continue to help each other and babysit for each other in their relocation housing, much as they did when they were at Little Mountain. The children of these three women were also friends with each other at Little Mountain, so the children have been able to maintain their friendships as well. In fact, the children from two of these families were playing together while I was doing the interview. This example shows that it is possible for groups of tenants to be relocated

together, thereby mitigating the negative impacts of relocation. These three women made these arrangements on their own as BC Housing carried out relocation with little regard for the social networks that were being disrupted.⁶³ If BC Housing carries out relocation again at another housing project, a concerted effort should be made to allow groups of very close tenants to move together.

But most of the relocated tenants have not been so fortunate. I kept hearing about the very serious problems three seniors had after having been relocated to a building near Nanaimo Street. Many tenants have been talking about this as one of the worst relocation stories. Ingrid Steenhuisen was able to provide the most details:

Three seniors were moved to another building which was supposed to be a seniors-only building, which it isn't. It also has a lot of people with mental health and addiction issues. It's one thing if they're stable and in recovery and have the necessary support. It's something else when they're left to their own devices. The fellow who was moved was beaten twice. After the second time, the police would not allow him to return to the building, they moved him elsewhere. The other two ladies who were moved from here were also constantly being harassed and barraged for money in that building and at great risk of their personal safety. One of the ladies, her children paid for her to move back into this neighbourhood, to across the street, which is what she wanted in the first place. That's at her kids' expense. But one lady is still there. Her kids can't afford to cover a cost of the move and she's afraid to ask. She's afraid that she'll be singled out over there by the other problem tenants.

The cases of these three seniors provides further support for the argument that in many cases BC Housing was relocating tenants with little regard for the suitability of the relocation housing for the tenants' needs. The reason why one of these seniors had to have their children pay for the move out of this building while another senior still remains there is because BC Housing does not pay for interim moving expenses. According to the Relocation Agreement, a tenant may only receive a moving allowance when moving out of Little Mountain and when moving back to Little Mountain, but not in-between. Thus, after having been relocated, it is very difficult for tenants to move again, before Little Mountain is rebuilt. Most tenants are essentially stuck wherever they agreed to move to. Tenants may submit a request-for-transfer to BC Housing, but unless there is some pressing, professionally verifiable need to move, they are likely to sit waiting for the transfer for many years. This has proven to be a major problem for Myra, who was relocated to Surrey, to a social housing complex that is operated by a racist manager:

At this place where I moved, it's like the manager is racist toward black people. He said that he don't have no problem with nobody in this complex, just with the blacks. That's the word he said to me. I go, "You don't know my race. My skin colour may be dark but you don't know

⁶³ There were many other cases in which relocated tenants indicated that they recognized other tenants from Little Mountain in their relocation housing. In most cases, these were just acquaintances who stood out as familiar faces, but not the particular individuals from Little Mountain whom people were closest with. That said, some of the tenants relocated across the street to Little Mountain Court (seniors' housing) seem also to have been able to salvage at least some of their social networks.

what race I am.”...He put a lock on the garbage, you have to use a key to open the garbage container...One of the ladies that couldn’t throw the garbage in, she left it on the side. He grabbed the garbage and chucked it into her doorstep and said, “You niggers can’t do nothing right.” He used that word. She moved out. She moved out. She couldn’t stay there any longer whatsoever...He points out, people like you all you know to do is to have babies...I had the birthday party on a Saturday and on a Sunday morning he already dropped off an eviction notice...He asked me to sign on the paper, saying that I would never have a birthday party in my house or a get-together. So now I feel like I’m living in a prison or a holding cell...It’s just been very hard because when this happened, I talked to BC Housing and they said, “You have to keep yourself in a good way as possible because you will get kicked out and if you get kicked out you cannot move back into Housing.” So they scared me too. I don’t know where to fall, the right side or the left side, both sides are smacking me both ways. And I’m like, wow, you have to make sure to not get evicted. If you get evicted you will lose your position of moving back. So that scares me.

The overt racism and the way BC Housing policies are serving to reinforce this racism is absolutely repugnant. When Myra told BC Housing about the serious problems she is having at this place, she received no help. She was told she could fill out a request-for-transfer but that she would likely have to wait for a very long time. She was so discouraged by BC Housing she never submitted the form. Myra also asked BC Housing about moving into private rental housing:

I even asked Housing if I can move into a normal house so that way I can move into Vancouver with my two kids, even in a two-bedroom while I’m waiting for this housing development at Little Mountain. They’re like, “We don’t know if that can be possible. You can lose your position to moving back into the Housing.” If I move into normal housing, it’s not subsidized housing and for me to move back to BC Housing I have to be on a waiting list for more than a year and I have to give them a good reason. I signed a paper which says that I will move back as soon as the housing is done but I guess I’m not allowed to get out of the BC Housing situation.

Something simply does not make sense here. The Relocation Agreement says, “If the tenancy agreement has been terminated, there will be no offer to move back to the Property.” Sam Rainboth told me this only applies if the tenant is evicted “with cause”. But that is not what it says. Myra says that even if she had the means to move into private rental housing on her own, she still would not be allowed to move back to Little Mountain. What Myra is saying is consistent with what the Relocation Agreement says. The Relocation Agreement says tenants cannot move back to Little Mountain if the tenancy agreement is terminated. There is no talk in the Relocation Agreement about ‘eviction with cause’. There are many ways a tenancy agreement may be terminated without a tenant being evicted. All a tenant has to do is give one month notice that they are moving to a building operated by a different landlord and the tenancy agreement is terminated. Thus, a literal interpretation of the Relocation Agreement means that even if a relocated tenant was not evicted but simply chose to move to a place that required signing a new tenancy agreement with a new landlord, the tenant would not be allowed to move back to Little

Mountain. No wonder Myra feels like she is living in a prison, the Relocation Agreement is imprisoning her in an intolerable situation where she is subjected to the racist abuse of the property manager. I have already discussed how the Relocation Agreement exemplifies the rolling out of the neoliberal state. Myra's case demonstrates how neoliberal restructuring imbricates with longstanding patterns of racism. Myra says the manager has a history of targeting black people for eviction so that white people can move in. She desperately wants to move back to Little Mountain when it is rebuilt. Thus, she lives in perpetual fear of eviction and avoids contact with the manager:

If I open my door and I see my manager, I will close my door. Like I don't want to look at him, I don't want to encounter him. So I tend to stay more inside my house instead of get out...Each time if I come out, he be standing wandering around in this small little complex. He makes me feel very awful, like I'm not worth living there.

As one of the earliest tenants to be relocated and as one of the furthest movers, Myra's situation is quite extreme. But many other tenants may be in similar situations. As pointed out in the previous chapter, my sample of the Little Mountain tenants is biased toward the more middle class tenants who avoided being relocated in the early stages. It was the poorest, most marginalized, and apparently most racialized tenants who were the first to leave Little Mountain. These groups were the hardest for me to find for interviews. Myra, who moved in August 2007, is the second earliest mover I was able to find. If her situation is representative of other early movers, there may be many other relocated tenants in similar predicaments. But even among those tenants whom I was able to interview, many others talked about a feeling of isolation after relocation. Reshmi described Orchard Park as "*an isolated kind of place.*" Donald at Redwood Mews said, "*Everybody's more isolated.*" Joe at Culloden Court said, "*It's like a holding cell.*" A tenant in North Vancouver said, "*I feel like I'm in a prison over there.*" I never used the words "isolated" or "isolation" in my questioning and I never asked people if they felt like they were living in a prison or a holding cell. The tenants just kept using these terms to describe relocation, in interview after interview. Housing Minister Rich Coleman says that redevelopment was necessary in order to "integrate people", implicitly suggesting the Little Mountain tenants were isolated. But ironically, it is redevelopment and relocation that are isolating the tenants.

It is important to recognize that what is being done at Little Mountain has never been done in BC before. But even beyond BC, I cannot find any examples of public housing redevelopment that have started out with such a remarkably successful example of public housing. The redevelopment of Little Mountain is an unprecedented policy experiment; the final outcome of which cannot be understood at this stage. The extent to which the returning Little Mountain tenants will reap social capital benefits from living among wealthy homeowners is an empirical question that can only be answered once redevelopment is complete. But given the baseline conditions established in the previous chapter—that Little Mountain was extremely rich in social capital, social organization, and social control—a truly spectacular level of social capital would have to be attained post-redevelopment in order to register an

improvement. Redevelopment is going to introduce hundreds if not thousands of new strangers into the community. Owing to their different class backgrounds, these wealthy homeowners are unlikely to re-create the highly functional poverty culture that was at Little Mountain. Wealthy homeowners are unlikely to participate in the bonding/strong social capital in which low-income people mutually assist each other with getting by because wealthy homeowners do not need help with getting by. Many tenants I have talked to have also expressed uncertainty about living among wealthy homeowners. Many tenants say they foresee conflict unfolding between the two groups. In addition to changing the social setting, redevelopment is also going to change the physical environment of Little Mountain. The open, communal lay-out that helped make Little Mountain a social capital success will be replaced with a form of development that is much more dense and privatized. Given the reduction in open, public space and the social anonymity that will come from the major influx of unknown homeowners, it is hard to imagine the collective outdoor supervision of children occurring in the same way it did before redevelopment. Considering all of this, I seriously doubt that mixed-income redevelopment is going to result in an increase in social capital, social organization, and social control at Little Mountain. But that is a research question for a future date. What I can say right now is that by displacing 194 families and breaking apart social support networks, redevelopment, at least up to this point, has reduced social capital and created a sense of isolation among many tenants.

7.2.4 Emotional/Health Impacts of Relocation

The emotional impacts of relocation were well documented under the old urban renewal programs. Marc Fried's study of Boston's relocated West Enders is the seminal research in this area. Fried found that even two years after relocation, a significant proportion (46% of women, 38% of men) of relocated West Enders demonstrated "a fairly severe grief reaction."⁶⁴ Fried found that the longer one had lived in the West End and the more familiar one was with the various parts of the neighbourhood, the greater the sense of grief after relocation. The grief the West Enders experienced was due to an altered sense of identity following relocation. Fried distinguished between spatial identity and group identity. Spatial identity refers to the attachment one has to the physical environment of the home and the neighbourhood. Group identity refers to the social environment that one is part of. When people are involuntarily relocated both aspects of identity are changed, leading to a sense of discontinuity and loss. Together, spatial identity and group identity are the basis of place attachment.⁶⁵ Place attachment is often very strong among the poor, who are less mobile and more reliant on their immediate surroundings.

⁶⁴ Marc Fried, "Grieving for a Lost Home", in *The Urban Condition: People and Policy in the Metropolis*, ed. Leonard J. Duhl (New York: Basic Books, 1963), p. 152.

⁶⁵ Marc Fried, "Continuities and Discontinuities of Place", *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 20 (2000), pp. 193-205.

Fried found that many people who are experiencing grief do not readily disclose their depressed feelings when being interviewed. But he used one particular question in order to get around this research challenge: “How did you feel when you saw or heard that the building you had lived in was torn down?” According to Fried, “This question in particular, by its evocative quality, seemed to stir up sad memories even among many people who denied any feeling of sadness or depression.”⁶⁶ Following Fried’s methodology, I deliberately asked 18 Little Mountain tenants the same question.⁶⁷ In some cases, the interviews occurred before demolition so the tenants were asked to imagine how they would feel after seeing Little Mountain demolished. In other cases, the interviews occurred after demolition started and the tenants did not need to rely on their imaginations at all because they had actually gone to see the demolition site. But regardless of whether they were imagining it or they had actually seen the demolition, all but two of the tenants who were asked this question reported feelings of sadness and/or anger. The similarities between how the Little Mountain tenants answered this question and how Fried’s respondents answered the question highlight just how qualitatively identical the Little Mountain tenants’ relocation experiences have been with experiences during urban renewal (See Figure 7.13). Two tenants’ responses contain the theme of identity, underscoring the connection between identity and place first established by Fried: “*Even though I’ve only lived there for five years, I would feel like a part of me went away*”; “*A part of us is gone with that*”. Although I never referred to the concept of place attachment in my questioning, another tenant said this: “*After so many years you begin to feel an attachment to the place*.” Three tenants talked about actively avoiding seeing Little Mountain after the demolition started. There were four cases in which more than two years had passed since relocation when I asked the question. In all four of these cases, the tenants were still very sad, which suggests this type of grief can last a long time. In addition, length of time at Little Mountain seemed to matter little. Regardless of whether tenants had lived there only a few years or several decades, most tenants indicated feelings of grief. In fact, the only two tenants who said they were not saddened by the demolition had both lived at Little Mountain for many decades. But these two happy tenants did not have to move far as they only moved to the seniors’ housing across the street. One of these relocated tenants actually witnessed the Little Mountain Housing Project being built when she was a child and she now has a front row seat for the demolition and redevelopment:

Seema: I saw it go up and now I’m going to see it go down...It’s a full circle, isn’t it?...I had good memories there. I brought up my child...I had wonderful times there...I walked through there the other day and I thought, I knew that person, I knew that person, I knew that person...I went there yesterday and they were gutting my building.

Tommy: But that doesn’t make you sad, even though you have these wonderful memories?

⁶⁶ Fried, 1963, Op. cit., p. 152.

⁶⁷ In the other seven interviews, I either forgot to ask the question or I did not have a chance to ask the question.

Figure 7.13**Emotional Attachment to Little Mountain**

I asked the Little Mountain tenants to describe their reactions when/if they saw Little Mountain demolished. In the early 1960s, when the relocated West Enders were asked the same question by Marc Fried, some of the responses were: "It was like a piece being taken from me"; "I felt terrible"; "I used to stare at the spot where the building stood."¹ When asked the same question almost 50 years later, the Little Mountain tenants' responses contained similar themes, while also containing themes that are particular to the Little Mountain case. Clearly, many Little Mountain tenants were emotionally attached to the place:

It breaks my heart.

It hurts, it just hurts.

I cry every time when I pass there. It's very sad to see that. I try to not go too much...It's terrible. I feel sad and mad and everything because it's something crazy.

Even though I've only lived there for five years, I would feel like a part of me went away. You know, like I couldn't believe it's gone.

I don't even want to imagine it. I won't imagine it.

A part of us is gone with that, our memories.

Sad.

Very sad. We took some pictures today, of the basement is all you can see. They knocked down everything...Very sad, only mark you can see is the tree.

Sad, sad. After so many years, you begin to feel an attachment to the place.

Very sad.

I have not gone on foot. On the one hand, I'm thinking, okay, it's necessary, I should. Then on the other hand, I'm just worried about being able to continue doing what I'm doing for mum as well as for myself and would that be too upsetting.

It's sad, sad when I look at it. I said, "Oh my God, all the buildings are gone!" It's so bright there when you look at it. I'm hoping they will keep the trees.

Sad.

Angry. Very sad too that people had the chance to see the future of things in Vancouver but they chose not to do anything...The people that know that this is going to be gone, this is going to be condos and there's no more social housing, for those people I just hope that they never need it themselves.

I feel very bad.

It's pictured in my mind. I'm not really always good with feelings...It's shocking. I'm having a hard time. I know whenever something sticks in my mind like that it's because I'm not dealing with it emotionally...I saw last month or so when I went by there...It just looks like there's a big cat and something on top of it with its big claw thing. It's horrible looking, terrible, terrible...I have to [go by there] to see my doctor every month...This time I found it a little bit harder. I did ask the pharmacist how much longer before I can make it a couple months before I have to come in all the time...I really have to go to that one...I was thinking about taking the long way...because it was horrible seeing the project like that.

¹ Marc Fried, "Grieving for a Lost Home" in *The Urban Condition: People and Policy in the Metropolis*, ed. Leonard J. Duhl (New York: Basic Books, 1963), p. 152.

Seema: *No, no. You know why? Because I'm content. If I was not content then I'd want to say something. But I'm content here. Say they pushed me far away, I would never have fitted in and I would have been really sad. But here, there's still some people from there in here. I've got friends in here.*

In the case of Seema and the one other tenant I interviewed who moved across the street, there is not a grief reaction because they have not experienced true displacement of the kind Fried was researching. By moving across the street, these seniors still have their sense of spatial and group identity mostly intact.

But most Little Mountain tenants have not been so fortunate as evidenced by the dominant theme of sadness that came across in the interviews. Two tenants indicated their grief was so severe that it was negatively impacting their mental health. Both of these tenants said that following relocation they are taking medication for anxiety/depression for the first time in their lives. One relocated tenant said, "*I take anxiety pills over there. Before I moved I was healthy, happy-go-lucky, quite positive. And I live there and I take anxiety pills 'cause the area's not what I thought it was.*" Myra's relocation experience has been so difficult that she broke down in tears:

Myra: *I just went to see a psychologist at the hospital and they put me on depression pills because I told them I don't leave my house...I just went on depression pills.*

Tommy: And did you ever take them before?

Myra: *Never.*

Tommy: And what did the psychologist say?

Myra: *That I'm socially depressed. She thinks I'm depressed.*

Tommy: Because of this move?

Myra: *Yeah.* [breaks down in tears]

Tommy: Well, thank you for telling me this. It's so important.

Myra: *I need to let somebody know what they [BC Housing] have caused.* [crying]

I was able to help Myra to stop crying by re-directing the questioning toward more happy memories from Little Mountain. Here is someone who has actually been diagnosed by a psychologist as suffering from social depression following relocation. It is hard for me to imagine what could be more compelling evidence for the negative emotional/social effects of displacement.

It is because of these two cases in which relocated tenants are taking mental health medication that I am discussing emotional and health impacts in the same section. In her chapter on the relocation experiences of tenants being forced out of a redeveloped public housing project in the US, Manzo has

discussed the connections between place attachment/displacement and mental/physical health. Although the poor physical conditions in so many public housing projects are often identified as a threat to residents' health, Manzo shows how the removal from the places and people to which people are attached can also negatively impact poor people's health.⁶⁸ In my interviews with relocated Little Mountain tenants, I found that the health impacts of displacement are not limited to mental health. Rather, there was some evidence to suggest that some relocated tenants' physical health has also gone downhill.

Myra, who was relocated to Surrey where she is tormented by a racist property manager and prevented from leaving this situation by BC Housing policy, has had the most serious health issues following relocation. She says that shortly after one particularly stressful incident with this manager, she experienced a minor stroke. She attributes the stroke to the stress associated with relocation, the abuse of her manager, and her removal from her social support network.

Other tenants talked about a lack of exercise following relocation. Hillary said, "*This move was like really overwhelming. With my breathing, smoking way too much. I wasn't walking around the mountain, now it's just a little park...I find it boring going two or three times around that little park.*" In addition to smoking more, Hillary is getting less exercise following relocation because she does not have the Little Mountain in Queen Elizabeth Park to walk up to.

In two cases, relocated tenants said their children have gained weight due to a lack of exercise. Following relocation, some children are getting less exercise because they do not have the open (yet safe, collectively supervised by other parents) space to play in and they have been removed from their playmates. Since moving, Myra's son has gained 85 pounds. She says this is because there are no parks or outdoor activities in her new neighbourhood. Similarly, Monique's son has also gained weight following relocation:

In the first year my son gained a lot of weight because he didn't go out and play. When he started to get to know these kids, he was like, "Oh, I'm staying home today." I'm like, "Dude, it's summer time. Go and get yourself in trouble." Of course, he would never. He was like, "No, no, it's okay." He gained weight that first year because he would just sit down and watch TV and not get his exercise. But in Little Mountain, because he was so comfortable with everybody, even if he didn't know them he would play with everybody. This kid, I wouldn't even know if he changed his underwear that day because after school, "I'm out." And then dinner, "I'm done. Can I go out?" Out again. And over here, "No, I'm going to stay in."

This example, in addition to providing evidence for a negative physical health impact, is also suggestive of a negative mental health impact. The shift in attitude toward an anti-social disposition this mother is noticing in her son seems to indicate that the mental health of children can also be vulnerable to

⁶⁸ Lynne C. Manzo, "The Experience of Displacement on Sense of Place and Well-being", in *Sense of Place, Health and Quality of Life*, eds. John Eyles and Allison Williams (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), pp. 87-104.

the effects of displacement. Of course, mental and physical health are inextricably linked so it should come as no surprise that some relocated tenants are experiencing negative impacts in both areas.

7.2.5 Financial/Material Impacts of Relocation

Upon agreeing to move, the tenants received moving allowances according to the schedule shown in Figure 7.7. In some cases tenants were able to get friends to help them move and therefore the actual cost of the move was only a fraction of the moving allowance. In many other cases, tenants say they actually did hire movers and rent a moving truck but still had a little bit of money left over from their moving allowances. But even if they did have money left over from their moving allowances, many tenants have still experienced net financial and/or material losses as a result of relocation. This is because relocation has come with a variety of additional costs in addition to moving expenses. These extra costs fall into two categories: one-time costs and ongoing costs.

In terms of one-time costs, many tenants had to purchase specific items as a result of relocation. Very often these were relatively minor items such as curtains, blinds, or other household fixtures. But in some cases, larger ticket items had to be purchased. Two relocated families told me they had to purchase washing machines and clothes driers as a result of relocation. Both of these families had lived in apartment buildings at Little Mountain where laundry facilities were provided in the basements. But after moving to rowhouses in other public housing projects, the tenants found these things are not provided by BC Housing and they had to purchase their own. One family also had to purchase a lawnmower because BC Housing does not cut the grass within their little fenced in backyard. In one case, a family had to pay hundreds of dollars for Shaw to come and install a cable connection in their new home because the pre-existing connections were not working and BC Housing was unresponsive to requests to have this repaired. While some tenants had to purchase things for the new homes, other tenants had to throw away household items. Two relocated families told me they were forced to throw away some of their furniture because their relocation housing is much smaller than their former homes at Little Mountain. Three other relocated families said that some of their furniture was damaged in the move. Madeline was especially upset that her new couch was damaged as a result of relocation:

My sofa was damaged when I moved in here. This is brand new...I bought it before I moved in here in 2006, brand new. So all the corners, there is just little holes because they tried to put it through the door there, couldn't get it...It's scratched on the fabric, on the corner. Now my sofa is damaged because of this moving out from the old building.

Madeline really valued her couch as it was one of the most expensive items in her home. I can only imagine how long it took her to save up the money to purchase it only for it to be scratched just one year later.

But the more significant financial/material losses have come in the form of ongoing costs. Many tenants talked about paying more for heat and electricity following relocation. My understanding is that in the apartment buildings at Little Mountain tenants only had to pay a BC Hydro bill but not a gas bill

(whereas tenants in the Little Mountain rowhouses had to pay for gas and hydro). Thus, families who have moved from apartments to other BC Housing rowhouses have found their utility costs have increased significantly. One tenant told me her utility costs have increased \$30 per month, another said the increase has been between \$75 and \$100 per month, and in the most extreme case one family told me utility costs have increased \$200 per month. One tenant was actually able to successfully negotiate a rent reduction from BC Housing in order to offset the increased utility costs. In this case, BC Housing acknowledged that relocation has brought about higher utility costs for some families. One tenant told me their heating costs have gone down as a result of moving into more energy efficient private rental housing. But this has been more than off-set by higher rent, so on balance the monthly expenses have still gone up even in this case. In fact, both tenants I interviewed who moved into the private rental market say they are paying more in rent than before. In addition, a tenant who moved to public housing in North Vancouver, says she is spending more money on groceries, which she says are more expensive than in the old neighbourhood. She is spending more money to travel to her school in Vancouver, which is now a more costly two-zone trip. The difference between a one-zone and a two-zone bus pass is an extra \$29 per month this tenant now has to pay. Many other tenants are also spending more money on bus fare simply because they are traveling more as their lives are more geographically spread out. Myra, who has had the most significant social and emotional impacts has also experienced the largest financial losses. Myra has been hit with higher utilities, rent, and bus fare—a triple whammy in increased costs. Myra moved from a three-bedroom apartment at Little Mountain to a four-bedroom rowhouse in Surrey. As a result, she says her heating/electricity costs have increased by between \$75 and \$100 per month. She has also experienced a \$70 rent increase. She says this is because she has an extra bedroom in her new place. But Myra says she did not need an extra bedroom and that the overall size of her new home is actually smaller. The bedrooms are smaller and there is barely enough room for her furniture. But according to Myra, an extra bedroom means a higher rent, even if the overall square footage of the unit is less.⁶⁹ In addition, as already pointed out, Myra was unaware of the travel subsidy so she paid for an entire school year's (10 months) worth of bus passes so her son could go to school in Vancouver. I have calculated that at the time I interviewed her (which was 27 months after relocation) Myra experienced approximately \$4717.50 in increased costs due to relocation. She says that after she paid for her moving expenses, she was left with \$600 of her moving allowance. This means that at the time I interviewed her, Myra had experienced a net loss of about \$4117.50 as a result of relocation. And the losses have continued to accrue since then. Myra does not have a lot of money and struggles to make ends meet. In addition to Myra, three other tenants I interviewed had calculated that, on balance, they too are out

⁶⁹ I cannot find confirmation of this on BC Housing's website. A complicating factor in this case may be that Myra is living in third sector social housing. I have to accept Myra's explanation for her rent increase because there is no other explanation available. She says she has not had an addition to the family and she has not had an increase in her income, which are the only other explanations I can think of for a rent increase.

money, even after considering the moving allowance. Many other tenants have also likely experienced net losses but this is a difficult question for many tenants to answer. Thus, much like under the old urban renewal programs, those who can least afford it are effectively subsidizing the redevelopment/privatization of Little Mountain.⁷⁰

It is clear that the moving allowances, although often more than enough for the moving expenses, did not come close to compensating the Little Mountain tenants for all their losses. The Little Mountain tenants deserve to be fully compensated for all of their losses, including financial, emotional/health, and social costs. Some may counter this point by saying it is impossible to monetize social and emotional/health impacts. Some may also argue that if tenants have moved to newer homes with more bedrooms or into higher quality private market housing the tenants deserve to be paying more. These are old arguments from the urban renewal era. Back then Anthony Downs argued persuasively that when people are *involuntarily* relocated all of these types of costs warrant financial compensation. The fact is, aside from the final six hold-outs who received an additional \$3000, the Little Mountain tenants have not been compensated for their losses. Even BC Housing would have to acknowledge this because from BC Housing's perspective the moving allowance is not meant to compensate tenants for all their losses but just for their moving expenses.

7.2.6 Lessons Not Learned

Throughout this chapter and the previous chapter I have repeatedly drawn parallels between the redevelopment of Little Mountain and the old urban renewal programs. There is the way that many Little Mountain tenants did not initially believe redevelopment would become a reality. There is the paternalistic labelling of Little Mountain as “obsolete” and “under-utilized”. There is the interim reduction in affordable housing due to relocation and demolition preceding phased re-building of social housing. There is the displacement of almost 200 low-income households, which was sometimes achieved by playing off different family members against one another. There is the tearing apart of social support networks and the scattering of friends and family across the region. There are the tenants' emotional reactions to their homes being demolished, which were very similar with what was said during urban renewal. For those tenants who tried to resist relocation, there were the increasing costs of resistance over time. There is the inadequate and sorely late community consultation process. There is also the way the one black tenant I interviewed had the most negative relocation experience. The especially harmful effects urban renewal created for black people so many years ago were well documented. It is truly shocking how close the Little Mountain redevelopment lines up with the old and highly discredited urban renewal programs of the past. But so many times when I have said this to

⁷⁰ See Anthony Downs, “Losses Imposed on Urban Households by Uncompensated Highway and Renewal Costs”, in *Urban Problems and Prospects*, ed. A. Downs. (Chicago: Markham Publishing, 1970), pp.192-227.

politicians and officials my statements have been met with blank stares. It seems that many have forgotten the very negative and painful history of urban renewal.

Then there have been other experiences that one does not necessarily associate with urban renewal but that have been traumatizing nonetheless. The Little Mountain redevelopment has shown how the very young and the very old are especially vulnerable to the negative effects of displacement. There are the seniors who were sent to a place where the other tenants harassed them and even beat one of them. There are also the seniors in the seniors' housing across the street from the Little Mountain Housing Project who have been left behind as their friends and family have been removed from the neighbourhood. At the other end of the spectrum, children are being bullied in their new schools and long for their friends from Little Mountain. Children are spending more time indoors and have gained weight.

While the Little Mountain tenants have experienced all these losses and indignities, they seem to be the only group not benefiting from the proceeds of the sale of the land. The developer is going to profit; condominium purchasers get to move into a highly desirable neighbourhood; the addicted, the mentally ill, and the homeless will all benefit from the supportive housing being funded from the sale proceeds, and even the politicians have come off looking good: the provincial government is getting praise for what is being described as “the biggest drive to build social housing in a generation.” Housing Minister Rich Coleman says the redevelopment/privatization of Little Mountain is a “win/win for everybody.”⁷¹ But one group has consistently been on the losing end of the deal. And this is the group that lived at Little Mountain for more than half a century; that made Little Mountain the extremely successful example of public housing that it was; that helped make the surrounding neighbourhood what it is today; and, that paid for Little Mountain in more than half a century in rent—the Little Mountain tenants. The old urban renewal programs were often criticized for featuring a regressive distribution of costs and benefits.⁷² But the word ‘regressive’ cannot really be applied to the Little Mountain case because some of the biggest beneficiaries are the addicted, the mentally ill, and the homeless. The Little Mountain tenants are being squeezed out of the benefits precisely because they are in the middle. Thus, instead of being ‘regressive’ I call the distribution of costs and benefits ‘unfair’. One displaced Little Mountain tenant eloquently summed up the unfair distribution of costs and benefits:

I did have a plan...My plan was to finish raising my kids there, see each one of them graduate from the same school...Our plan broke down because somebody else's needs and that was not for the low-income families, that was for the rich people that want to buy condominiums. I had to pay that consequence because of these people that want a better life. They could buy condominiums in another area.

⁷¹ Rich Coleman said this on Global TV's *News Hour* broadcast, July 4, 2009.

⁷² See John H. Mollenkopf, “The Post-War Politics of Urban Development”, *Politics and Society*, 5, 3 (1975), pp. 247-295; See also Anthony Downs, “Losses Imposed on Urban Households by Uncompensated Highway and Renewal Costs”, in *Urban Problems and Prospects*, ed. A. Downs. (Chicago: Markham Publishing, 1970), pp.192-227.

Although the Little Mountain tenants received moving allowances, even BC Housing acknowledges that these were not meant to compensate the tenants for all their losses but just their moving expenses. But moving expenses are only a fraction of the tenants' losses. The biggest losses have been in terms of the social, emotional/health, and financial/material (above and beyond moving expenses) impacts of relocation. Much like in the Little Mountain case, relocated families under urban renewal were typically not compensated for anything more than a small fraction of their total losses. But there is at least one example from the urban renewal period that did not follow this pattern. In the Africville case, relocated families received generous compensation packages. Back in 1966 and 1967 relocated Africville families received financial compensation, furniture allowances, sundry costs and waived hospital and tax bills. Some Africville residents owned their homes, others rented, and others fell somewhere in between as they were able to argue they had ownership claims rooted in oral history and tradition. Renters who were considered entirely propertyless received the least amount of compensation. But even still, average compensation for propertyless Africville tenants in the late 1960s was \$1585. Adjusted for inflation for 2010 that works out to just over \$10,000. It is not often that the Africville case can be held up as a progressive model of urban development. Earlier this year Halifax Regional Council issued an official apology to the Africville residents and their descendants for the "deep wounds" urban renewal inflicted on them.⁷³

So many decades later, the displaced Little Mountain tenants have experienced very similar wounds but they have received only a fraction of the monetary compensation the Africville residents got and they have never received an apology. In fact, there seems to be no recognition whatsoever from the various levels of government that anything went wrong at all in terms of how the Little Mountain tenants were treated. There has been no governmental repudiation of the Little Mountain approach as the 'template' for public housing redevelopment in Vancouver. *Housing Matters* still stands as BC's official social housing policy document. The redevelopment and privatization of public housing are still official policy in BC. There is no reason to believe that the full-scale clearance of land and the displacement of low-income families will not continue as redevelopment moves to other public housing sites. How long will it take for the old lessons of the urban renewal era to be re-learned today? How many more families will have to be displaced? How many other public housing buildings—buildings to which people are emotionally attached and that serve as physical reminders of a distinct period in history—will be demolished? Will we even lose the oldest standing public housing building in BC—the Steenhuisens' rowhouse? How long will the Little Mountain tenants have to wait before they get their apology?

⁷³ Halifax Regional Municipality, "Africville: Recognizing the Past, Present and Future – Apology" (February 24, 2010 accessed online October 8, 2010 from www.halifax.ca)

8. CONCLUSION

As I conclude this thesis it is still difficult for me not to be angry about the events that have unfolded at Little Mountain over the past few years. It is now almost one year since that very sad day when demolition of Little Mountain started. One year has passed since demolition and there is still no plan to rebuild Little Mountain. A recent email that was sent out to the Little Mountain Advisory Group from the City of Vancouver's Major Projects Planner Ben Johnson states, "We still are not in a position to call an Advisory Group meeting as the proponent has not yet delivered the 3-D concepts needed for evaluation by the City and analysis by our independent economic consultant. As soon as we are in a position to coordinate a presentation of the concepts and their evaluation, we will arrange an Advisory Group meeting."¹ After June 2010 there has been only one meeting of the Advisory Group, which was on September 13, 2010. But at this most recent meeting the Advisory Group discussed site design concepts that had already largely been discussed at the beginning of the summer but that had been slightly refined over the summer. Meetings that had been scheduled for July and August were cancelled because there was nothing for the Advisory Group to discuss. Although there never has been a believable timeline for this redevelopment, the Little Mountain redevelopment seems stalled once again. As discussed in the previous two chapters, the current delays may be due to the uncertain economic climate and the present challenges in Vancouver's once red hot real estate market. But unlike the previous delays at Little Mountain such as the delay in selecting the developer, the delay in getting all the tenants relocated, the delay in starting demolition, and the delay in getting the community consultation process started, there is little motivation for the provincial government or other influential actors to do anything about the current delay at Little Mountain. This is because the Little Mountain redevelopment has reached a stage of temporary, but perhaps prolonged, stasis. There is nothing to compel the developer and governments to speed up progress with the Little Mountain redevelopment. As long as there were significant numbers of tenants still living there and the buildings were still standing, even when the redevelopment ran into roadblocks, the provincial government was motivated to push the process forward. But once almost all the tenants were relocated and all but one of the buildings were demolished the provincial government had achieved what it wanted to because there is now no turning back on redevelopment. If the economy and the real estate market continue to struggle, Little Mountain may be sitting as an empty site for many more years to come. As it is now, even the developer does not expect redevelopment to be complete until 2023. But even this far-off completion date may be overly optimistic if the developer waits for economic conditions to improve. With Little Mountain now erased from Vancouver's landscape, the political controversies that once swirled around this redevelopment have now quieted because there is nothing left (except for one building) to fight to save. In a remarkably short period of time following demolition, BC's first public housing project has already been all but forgotten in public discourse in Vancouver. As time

¹ Email from Ben Johnson, Major Projects Planner, City of Vancouver to the Little Mountain Advisory Group dated October 26, 2010.

goes on and as more and more newcomers move to Vancouver, some are bound to wonder what ever stood at this now barren place at the geographic centre of Vancouver.

The unfortunate and difficult reality that those who loved Little Mountain must now accept is that the Little Mountain Housing Project is dead and even after it is eventually rebuilt the special place qualities that were once there will still be lost forever. Never again will Little Mountain be a place exclusively for low-income families and seniors to live, to help each other out in hard times, and to play in the vast green spaces that were once there. We have lost what was an extraordinary resource for the poor and it is now time to move on. But before moving on, I want to first consider some of the research questions for Little Mountain in the future. This thesis cannot offer the final word on how the Little Mountain redevelopment will turn out because it is going to be at least another decade before the redevelopment is complete. Once the Little Mountain redevelopment is complete, there will be an opportunity to find answers to several empirical research questions: How many relocated tenants will eventually move back to Little Mountain? How many long-term tenants who come from multi-generational Little Mountain families will move back? How will returning tenants assess the final product at Little Mountain? From the relocated tenants' perspectives, how will the new Little Mountain compare with the old Little Mountain? How will the new Little Mountain compare to the old Little Mountain in terms of social capital, social organization, and social control? Will the collective supervision of children still occur? How successful will the social mix experiment turn out? Will the homeowners and the social housing tenants get along with each other, interact with each other, and support each other in times of need? Will the social housing tenants benefit from bridging/weak social capital as social mix theories predict they will? Will the social housing tenants actually experience upward social mobility as a result of living in a socially mixed residential development? Although answers to these questions are likely to be a long time coming, we must not forget that these are the key questions for the new Little Mountain. In the future, we must not forget that when evaluating Little Mountain the reference point is not other residential developments in Vancouver. Rather, the successes of the old Little Mountain are the baseline conditions against which to judge the new Little Mountain.

In addition to raising questions about how the Little Mountain redevelopment will unfold in the future, this thesis also leads to several other more general questions. As we try to move forward, what are the lessons that we should take away from both Little Mountain's remarkable successes throughout its more than half century of life and Little Mountain's tragic demise? What are the implications of the Little Mountain story for the struggle to create a socially inclusive city and province? And what does the Little Mountain case mean for the larger debates around public housing redevelopment more generally?

First, let us consider some of the implications for Vancouver and BC. The most immediate implication is that public housing tenants across the province have a severe lack of security of tenure. The provincial government now holds title to all public housing in BC and can do virtually whatever it wants with these sites without consulting CMHC. The provincial government's policy of public housing

redevelopment and privatization outlined in *Housing Matters* still stands and was never meant to be a policy specific to the Little Mountain Housing Project. The Little Mountain redevelopment is the ‘template’ for public housing redevelopment across Vancouver and the rest of the province. Public housing tenants across the province should be gearing up for a similar fight with the provincial government that the Little Mountain tenants waged. When battling the provincial government, the odds are very much stacked against public housing tenants. Public housing tenants have no legal right to be consulted about redevelopment in Canada, BC’s Residential Tenancy Act allows landlords (including BC Housing) to evict tenants for renovations, and there is no effective recourse for public housing tenants who are ‘renovicted’ by the provincial government because the Residential Tenancy Branch has not been set up to deal with disputes relating to public housing redevelopment. The Little Mountain case demonstrates that the provincial government is well within its legal rights to ‘renovict’ public housing tenants across the province and sell off all that remains of our public housing stock. There are absolutely no legal mechanisms through which public housing tenants can challenge the provincial government if it opts to proceed this way. Public housing tenants across the province and their advocates should take heed of the very perilous situation they occupy.

But some public housing projects are more likely to be redeveloped and privatized than others. Aging, low density housing projects in locations that are amenable to high-end market condominium development are prime candidates for the same kind of redevelopment that is taking place at Little Mountain. BC’s first public housing project was well suited for redevelopment and privatization because it was old and it is possible to add thousands of market homeownership units to the site in order to pay for the replacement of the relatively small number of pre-existing social housing units. It is possible to add these market units to the Little Mountain site both because it was a large, low density site and because it is located in a gentrifying neighbourhood where there is demand for high-end market housing. In addition to Little Mountain, there are several other housing projects that come close to fitting this bill. Now that Little Mountain no longer exists, its slightly younger ‘sister’, Orchard Park, which is at the corner of Nanaimo Street and East 41st Avenue, has become the oldest existing public housing project in BC. In 2011 Orchard Park will be the same age Little Mountain was in 2007 when redevelopment of Little Mountain got underway. With 15 units per acre,² residential density at Orchard Park is just slightly higher than it was at Little Mountain (which was 14.3 units per acre). Located on the edge of the increasingly desirable Collingwood neighbourhood and with relatively close access to the Joyce SkyTrain Station, there is almost certainly demand in this neighbourhood for more high-end market condominiums. It seems to me that Orchard Park is likely at the top of the list of public housing projects that are potential

² Orchard Park’s density of 15 units per acre is based on information from two sources. First, there are currently 165 units of public housing at Orchard Park. This comes from BC Housing, Housing Listings (July 2010, accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.bchousing.org). Second, the area of Orchard Park is 11 acres. This comes from Ella Mary Reid, *Orchard Park: A Tenant Survey of the Second Installment of Public Housing in Vancouver* (Unpublished master’s thesis, School of Social Work, University of British Columbia, 1962), p. 81.

candidates for redevelopment and privatization. But other public housing projects may be especially vulnerable as well. Skeena Terrace in Vancouver and Cedar Place in Burnaby are also aging, low-rise, low density public housing projects located near rapid transit stations where there is likely to be interest among developers for building high-end market condominiums. Culloden Court, the housing project that received the largest number of relocated Little Mountain tenants, may also be vulnerable given that it too is a low density, aging project. The high density public housing towers of the Downtown Eastside, namely MacLean Park and Stamps Place (formerly Raymur Place), are probably the least likely housing projects to be redeveloped. The high densities of these housing projects mean it would be very difficult to replace all the social housing units and still have enough space left over to develop sufficient numbers of market condominiums to pay for the replacement social housing. But if these high density housing projects are one day redeveloped, redevelopment is likely to proceed as it is at Regent Park in Toronto—with a net on-site reduction in the number of social housing units. Reducing the number of social housing units on these high density sites seems to me to be the only way to free up enough space for the market housing that would pay for the replacement social housing.

But another reason why MacLean Park and Stamps Place are less likely to be redeveloped and privatized may be the high density of militant housing activists in the Downtown Eastside. One of the Downtown Eastside's greatest assets is the array of social service and community organizations in the neighbourhood, many of which frequently agitate against the loss of affordable housing and the gentrification of the neighbourhood. These community organizations include the Downtown Eastside Residents' Association, the Carnegie Community Action Project, the Pivot Legal Society, the Portland Hotel Society, and the Anti-Poverty Committee. Over 35% of all social service offices in Vancouver are located in the Downtown Eastside. The large presence of social service organizations and a neighbourhood political culture that persistently mobilizes in support of the interests of the poor have largely impeded gentrification of the Downtown Eastside, even while other parts of Vancouver have experienced significant gentrification.³ Thus, if the provincial government tried to do in the Downtown Eastside what it did at Little Mountain, the political and community organizations in the Downtown Eastside would be out protesting in full force. It is almost unthinkable that MacLean Park or Stamps Place could be demolished with no plan for rebuilding and only to sit as empty construction pits for several years. If this were to happen it may even lead to a veritable class war in Vancouver. The political strength of the activists in the Downtown Eastside is something that politicians should take heed of.

While the Downtown Eastside enjoys a significant amount of political capital, the poor who live outside of the Downtown Eastside are left almost entirely voiceless. There are very few anti-poverty, anti-gentrification organizations in Metro Vancouver that are outside of the Downtown Eastside. The lack of

³ David Ley & Cory Dobson, "Are There Limits to Gentrification? The Contexts of Impeded Gentrification in Vancouver", *Urban Studies*, 45, 12 (2008), pp. 2471-2498.

anti-poverty activists outside of the Downtown Eastside means that activists from the Downtown Eastside are often called on to assist the poor elsewhere in Vancouver. In the Little Mountain case, although people from the surrounding community were assisting the Little Mountain tenants and organizing protests, during the final days when the last 10 hold-out tenants were being ‘renovicted’ the expertise of advocates from the Downtown Eastside was required. In the fall of 2009 activists from the Downtown Eastside Residents’ Association very kindly helped the last Little Mountain tenants with their negotiations with BC Housing. These negotiations led to a larger financial settlement for the final six tenants who were relocated off-site. In this case, the assistance offered from the Downtown Eastside proved very valuable. But Downtown Eastside activists may not always be the most appropriate advocates for the poor outside of the Downtown Eastside. Jim Green is a Downtown Eastside activist who was hired by the developer of Little Mountain to help bridge the gap between the proponents of redevelopment and the tenants (never mind that most of the tenants have been effectively excluded from the community consultation process). Given Jim Green’s Downtown Eastside credentials, many people believe he will be a powerful advocate for the Little Mountain tenants. But Jim Green is one of the co-founders of the Portland Hotel Society, which operates several supportive housing buildings around the city. The Portland Hotel Society is even going to be operating two of the 14 supportive housing developments being funded from the proceeds of the privatization of Little Mountain (111 Princess Avenue and 1005 Station Street).⁴ Jim Green is essentially in a conflict-of-interest when it comes to the Little Mountain redevelopment as his organization is among the beneficiaries of privatization. Thus, it is incorrect to assume that Downtown Eastside activists can effectively represent the interests of the poor outside of the Downtown Eastside. This is because the issues of the poor outside of the Downtown Eastside are very often not the same issues as the poor who are living in the Downtown Eastside. This does not mean that activists from the Downtown Eastside should be chastised. To the contrary, they should be commended for extending their assistance to people outside of their own community. But the challenge is to develop the political capital of the poor who are living outside of the Downtown Eastside.

One of the unfortunate results of this uneven geography of activism may be a city that becomes increasingly socially polarized. This is because while Downtown Eastside activists have been very effective at lobbying for supportive housing, the supply of social housing for non-addicted low-income families is shrinking. With the major investments currently underway at the 14 supportive housing sites, the City of Vancouver and even the provincial government are demonstrating that going forward there is going to be a place in Vancouver for our most vulnerable citizens. Outside of the Downtown Eastside, but still in the downtown core, groups such as Renters at Risk have effectively agitated against all the ‘renovictions’ that have taken place in the West End in recent years. But ‘renovictions’ elsewhere in the metropolitan region often go unnoticed. As noted above, it is the public housing projects outside of the

⁴ City of Vancouver, “14 Sites for Social & Supportive Housing” (City website accessed November 6, 2010 from vancouver.ca)

Downtown Eastside, in South Vancouver and in Burnaby that may be most vulnerable to redevelopment and privatization. With the recent opening of the Canada Line and the city's EcoDensity policy, South Vancouver is likely to be radically transformed over the coming years as the area has been selected to receive significant density increases.⁵ Given all the anticipated development, I am afraid that the poor in South Vancouver are going to be pushed out of the city and that activists in the Downtown Eastside are not going to be able to lobby effectively for the interests of the poor in South Vancouver. As public housing projects are redeveloped and privatized and as rents in the private rental market continue their upward trajectory, non-addicted low- and middle-income families are likely going to be squeezed out of Vancouver. This process has already started as evidenced by the distribution of the population of school age children in Metro Vancouver. The Vancouver School Board is currently struggling with declining enrollment, which has caused five elementary schools to be put on the short list for closure. Three out of five of these schools are located in South Vancouver.⁶ But while they are looking at closing schools in Vancouver, they cannot build them fast enough in Surrey. Bucking province-wide trends, school enrollment is way up in Surrey.⁷ The City of Surrey reports that 1000 people move to Surrey every month.⁸ Many of these people, myself included, are ex-Vancouverites who have come to Surrey because compared to Vancouver, Surrey is an oasis of housing affordability. As more and more low- and middle-income families are forced to leave Vancouver and move to Surrey, Vancouver is going to be left with a highly polarized population. If current trends continue, Vancouver will be left with a significant minority of the absolutely poor living in homeless shelters and in supportive housing and in any of the 'independent social housing' that may remain in the future (to which the addicted and mentally ill also now have priority access). But the majority population of Vancouver will be made up of people who are wealthy enough to be able to afford the very high real estate prices in Vancouver. The lower middle class and the moderately poor will become increasingly scarce in Vancouver and will be found mainly living in

⁵ See Kent Spencer, "Lots of Grey in Mayor's Green Plan", *Province* (September 19, 2010), p. A4; See also Derrick Penner, "Tallest Tower Outside of Downtown Core is Proposed for Canada Line Site", *Vancouver Sun* (May 26, 2010), p. D1; See also Tyler Harbottle, "Vast High-Rise Plan Divides South Vancouver", *Thunderbird.ca* (October 28, 2010, accessed online November 6, 2010 from thethunderbird.ca); See also Derrick Penner, "Rapid Transit Points the Way to Greater Vancouver Development", *Vancouver Sun* (June 28, 2006), p. F4; See also City of Vancouver, "Cambie Corridor Planning Program" (City website accessed November 6, 2010 from vancouver.ca)

⁶ Carleton Elementary, McBride Annex, and Champlain Heights Annex are all located in South Vancouver and have suffered from declining enrollment. See CBC, "Vancouver School Closures Spark Concern" (October 26, 2010, accessed online November 6, 2010 from www.cbc.ca)

⁷ See CBC, "BC Elementary School Enrolment Shrinks" (August 31, 2010, accessed online November 6, 2010 from www.cbc.ca); See also Sheila Reynolds, "New School Year, Same Classroom Crunch", *Surrey Leader* (September 7, 2010), p. 1; See also Ted Colley, "Surrey District Enrolment Continues to Climb", *Surrey Now* (September 2, 2008), p. 3; See also Government of BC, "The Facts about Declining Enrolment in BC Schools" (Ministry of Education Press Release dated February 2, 2007, accessed online November 6, 2010 from www2.news.gov.bc.ca)

⁸ Mayor Dianne Watts, "2010 State of the City Address" (Speech given at the Sheraton Guildford Hotel, Surrey, BC, March 31, 2010, accessed online November 6, 2010 from www.surrey.ca)

the suburbs, especially Surrey. The City of Vancouver and the provincial government both say they want Vancouver to be a socially diverse city with a range of income groups. But the Little Mountain case shows that their policies are not conducive toward this goal. For me, and for many others whom I have talked to over the past few years, the redevelopment of Little Mountain has symbolized the exclusion of the moderately poor and the lower middle class from Vancouver.

Having considered some of the implications of the Little Mountain redevelopment for Vancouver and BC, I now want to turn my attention to the wider debates on public housing redevelopment. Ironically, one possible interpretation of the Little Mountain case may be to affirm public housing redevelopment approaches more generally. This is because in many ways, the Little Mountain case supports, at least partially, some of the theoretical basis for mixed-income redevelopment. As discussed in Chapter 2, much of the theoretical justification for mixed-income redevelopment of public housing rests on the alleged social and physical failings of public housing. Socially, the public housing model is flawed because it segregates low-income (and often racial minorities) apart from the more general middle class population. The absence of middle class households from public housing is believed to socially and culturally isolate the poor leading to a dysfunctional culture of poverty characterized by permanent unemployed, single-mother households, and crime. In terms of physical factors, many have argued that the design of public housing creates environments that are conducive to crime. Mixed-income redevelopment is expected to correct these failings by both socially and physically integrating public housing into larger communities. But this thesis has shown how Little Mountain did not correspond to the dominant view of the ‘troubled housing project’ that is socially and physically flawed. Socially, the Little Mountain Housing Project always was a mixed-income and mixed-race community. While Little Mountain was consistent with the general trend for public housing of a loss of middle class households over time, there was never a total loss of these households from Little Mountain. Right up until when redevelopment started, there was a significant minority of employed, educated, lower middle class households living at the Little Mountain Housing Project. Although I believe that all the tenants of Little Mountain, including the poorest tenants, contributed to social capital, based on the evidence presented in this thesis one could make the argument that the presence at Little Mountain of the lower middle class households in particular helped to enrich Little Mountain in terms of social capital, social organization, and social control. It is quite likely that Little Mountain had more class and race diversity and more well developed social capital and social control than even many public housing projects in the US *after mixed-income redevelopment*. As discussed in Chapter 2, many US examples of mixed-income redevelopment of public housing have resulted in residential developments that are still exclusively populated by black tenants with below average incomes and that still struggle with issues of crime and inadequate social control. Much of the reason why the Little Mountain Housing Project was such a remarkable success throughout its more than half century of life stems from its longstanding class and race diversity, its rich levels of social capital, social control, and social organization, and its high level of integration with the

surrounding neighbourhood. To the extent that, at a theoretical level, mixed-income redevelopment policies are striving to create public housing projects precisely like what we had at Little Mountain before redevelopment, this thesis can be interpreted as offering support for these policy approaches.

But the problem seems to be that there is a major disconnect between theory and practice when it comes to mixed-income redevelopment of public housing. In theory, mixed-income redevelopment is meant to be targeted toward the most troubled public housing projects. But in practice, mixed-income redevelopment often comes to public housing projects that are not troubled but that occupy locations that are amenable to high-end market residential development.⁹ The Little Mountain case powerfully demonstrates how the discourse of social mix and failed public housing can be used to justify gentrification and the implementation of policies that take away from and hurt the poor. At Little Mountain, the provincial government talked about the importance of creating balance and integration in order to justify an approach to redevelopment that has ironically left the tenants more isolated and that will create a severely unbalanced community at Little Mountain with a lower proportion of social housing than every other example of mixed income redevelopment I can find. All public housing projects, whether troubled or not, are vulnerable to mixed-income redevelopment because the notion that the public housing model is a flawed model irrespective of contextual factors has reached almost common sense status. To push back against this, critical scholarship should take stock of what is working in public housing and how important public housing is for the poor. As postwar public housing projects continue to age, more and more projects are certain to be slated for redevelopment. But redevelopment should be a tenant-centric process that places the needs, desires, and goals of public housing tenants in the heart of the redevelopment process. We need to resist the paternalism inherent in mixed-income redevelopment of public housing in which planners, academics, and other professionals are seen as knowing what is best for public housing tenants. Thus, we need to restore the capacity of public housing tenants to speak out about their own needs and to share their expertise that comes from living in public housing projects.

Throughout this thesis I have talked about how Little Mountain was a remarkably and unusually successful example of public housing. When I have said this I have meant to convey how Little Mountain's successes do not correspond with the stereotype of the 'troubled housing project'. But I have not necessarily meant to suggest that Little Mountain was unique compared to the reality of public housing generally. As I conclude this thesis, I am left wondering just how unique Little Mountain really was. As pointed out in the first chapter of this thesis, in many ways Little Mountain may be far more representative of Canadian public housing than Regent Park, which is often held up as the premier example of public housing in Canada. In terms of its size, its location outside of the downtown core, and the program under which it was developed, Little Mountain was far more typical of Canadian public

⁹ Elvin K. Wyly & Daniel J. Hammel, "Islands of Decay in Seas of Renewal: Housing Policy and the Resurgence of Gentrification", *Housing Policy Debate*, 10, 4 (1999), pp. 711-771; See also National Housing Law Project (NHLP), *False HOPE: A Critical Assessment of the HOPE VI Public Housing Redevelopment Program* (June 2002, accessed online September 22, 2010 from www.nhlp.org)

housing than Regent Park. In the process of researching this thesis, I had the opportunity to visit a number of public housing projects in Vancouver, including Culloden Court, Redwood Mews, and Orchard Park. Although I only spent relatively little time at these projects, when I was there I did not see anything that resembled the stereotype of the 'troubled housing project'. I did not see any evidence of crime, graffiti, or extreme poverty and deprivation at these housing projects. If these things were there, they were very well hidden. The tenants I interviewed from these other housing projects did not indicate there were any serious problems either. In fact, the worst social and racial tensions seemed to be at a third sector social housing development in Surrey, even though third sector social housing is often believed to be superior to public housing. Unfortunately, much like Little Mountain, the other Vancouver public housing projects I have visited have also been under-researched. Academic researchers and the popular media alike focus on the public housing projects that are the most highly visible sites of poverty and social disorder. This has led to a very skewed academic and popular view of public housing. How many other successful public housing projects like Little Mountain are out there just waiting to be discovered? Will they ever be discovered or will redevelopment and demolition get to them before researchers have an opportunity to archive their successes? Going forward, a major research objective should be taking inventory of Vancouver's and Canada's public housing stock that is representative of the true diversity of social and physical conditions that currently exist in public housing.

While Little Mountain did not correspond to the stereotype of the 'troubled housing project' it did feature several qualities that, at the general level, policies and theories of mixed-income redevelopment find fault with. In terms of social factors, although Little Mountain did not feature extreme poverty and a total absence of lower middle class households, it did have higher poverty levels than its surrounding neighbourhood. Although there were many two-parent families at Little Mountain, there was still a high number of single-parent families. But the preponderance of low-income, single-parent families at Little Mountain did not harm the tenants who were living there. While I did find a poverty culture at Little Mountain, it was not a *dysfunctional* poverty culture. To the contrary, the rich levels of social capital, social organization, and social control I found at Little Mountain came about precisely because the low-income families there came together to make their community work. The abundance of social capital that was at Little Mountain shows that theorists on the urban poor such as William Julius Wilson and Loïc Wacquant have erroneously over-generalized the urban poor as deficient in social capital. Rather than Wilson and Wacquant, my findings from Little Mountain are far more in line with some of the social science from the 1960s, such as the work of Herbert Gans, John Seeley, Oscar Lewis, and Lee Rainwater that showed how slums, ghettos, and other areas where the poor are concentrated serve positive functions for the poor and that poverty cultures can be positive adaptations to difficult circumstances. But these theories on the social value of low-income neighbourhoods have all but been forgotten. It is now widely accepted that poor people are harmed by living among other poor people. Thus, at the theoretical level, mixed-income communities are expected to help the poor by enriching their access to social capital, in

particular bridging/weak social capital, which is the form of social capital that is expected to pull people out of poverty. Although I have been reluctant to use the bridging/weak versus bonding/strong social capital dichotomy at Little Mountain because of the way it oversimplifies social relationships, much of the social capital that I found can be classified as bonding/strong social capital because it helped the tenants cope with the daily challenges of life, but did not seem to lead to upward social mobility. Theories that support mixed-income redevelopment privilege bridging/weak social capital over bonding/strong social capital. Thus, proponents of mixed-income redevelopment are untroubled by the breaking apart of social connections between low-income people because the new ties made with wealthy households are seen as more valuable. I find this discounting of the value of the social connections between the poor to be a major flaw of the general policy approach of mixed-income redevelopment. The bonding/strong social capital that was at Little Mountain was probably of more value than any of the bridging/weak social capital among the tenants. This is because many of the poor families at Little Mountain were already working and were already teaching their children to value education. In other words, many of the Little Mountain tenants already had some of the values that are associated with the middle class. The Little Mountain tenants did not need middle class role models and job tips. Rather, the sharing of food, emotional support, and the collective supervision of children—all examples of bonding/strong social capital—are far more important in a neoliberal context of cutbacks to social programs and low-paying jobs that do more to keep poor people poor than allow them to get ahead.

Thus, redevelopment policies need to be reformulated such that they respect the importance of the social bonds between the poor. Such reformulating of redevelopment policies should involve major changes both to the goals of redevelopment and how redevelopment is carried out. In terms of the logistics of redevelopment, respecting the social connections between the poor would likely involve phased redevelopment (which means phased demolition and reconstruction, not just phased reconstruction) or relocating together groups of tenants who share very close bonds. In terms of the goals of redevelopment, the objectives of specific redevelopments should be defined by the tenants themselves and not the unproven and highly questionable theories on social mix. Redevelopment policies should not assume that injecting wealthy households into low-income neighbourhoods will lead to an increase in social capital among the poor. This is probably an issue that is highly context-specific. But in many contexts, leaving the poor together and keeping spaces and neighbourhoods that are for the poor and that are not for middle class and wealthy households will lead to better social capital outcomes because wealthy neighbours are unlikely to help their poor neighbours cope with the daily challenges of life. We need to move away from the fetishization of diversity. It does not always follow that more diversity makes for better neighbourhoods. Much like racial minorities who self-segregate in Chinatown and Little India, poor people's desires to live among other poor people should be respected. We should strive to create cities with neighbourhoods that feature a range of diversity levels. Some neighbourhoods may benefit from very high levels of class and race diversity, but the character of other neighbourhoods may

be enhanced by preserving a more restricted range of class and race groups. This is not a call for a return to the days of rigid class and race segregation. Rather, it is a call for a more nuanced and updated understanding of these issues that is not borne out of an emotional reaction against the painful history of segregation.

While it did not feature the allegedly most egregious public housing design failings, Little Mountain did have several physical qualities that public housing redevelopment policies often find fault with. The scale of the site, the monotonous modernist design of the buildings, the absence of through-streets, and the lack of fences and private outdoor spaces were all features of Little Mountain that critics of public housing have identified as deficiencies. But at the Little Mountain Housing Project all these design qualities worked quite well. The lack of through-streets meant children could play outside and their parents did not have to worry about them getting injured in traffic. The lack of through-streets did not isolate the housing project from the surrounding community because pedestrians from the surrounding community frequently walked through the green spaces and along the walkways of the housing project. The lack of private outdoor space facilitated the collective supervision of children and social interaction among adults. The Little Mountain tenants were untroubled by the scale of the site and the modernist design of the buildings. In addition, as discussed in Chapter 5, Little Mountain featured some design qualities that are associated with New Urbanist design, even though New Urbanist design is often seen as the anti-thesis of the modernist design of public housing. The front porches of the rowhouses and the back porches of the apartments are probably the best examples of this. But architects, professional planners, and people who never lived, visited or understood Little Mountain all seem entirely blind to the design features that helped to make it a success. These groups can only see the ‘institutional’ look of the buildings and the poor paint jobs on the exteriors of some of the buildings stemming from the inadequate maintenance provided by BC Housing. We need to recognize that, owing to their different class backgrounds, different social groups make very different value judgments of the physical qualities of buildings and neighbourhoods. From the perspective of the tenants who lived there, Little Mountain offered a very beautiful living environment endowed with a large amount of green space and natural amenities that poor people often live without. This has implications for public housing redevelopment policies more generally because people who occupy powerful positions and who make decisions concerning public housing redevelopment often cannot see the positive physical attributes that those with an insider’s view of public housing can see.

Perhaps my ability to see Little Mountain from what was at least partially an insider’s perspective has been one of the greatest strengths of this thesis. Many times, the stark contrast between how insiders and outsiders viewed the physical conditions of Little Mountain was made very clear to me. Although sometimes less obvious, I think there is also a major difference between how insiders and outsiders saw the social conditions of Little Mountain. Outsiders are less likely to see the class diversity that existed at Little Mountain and the strengths of the community manifested in social

capital, social organization, and social control. Thus, part of the reason why Little Mountain comes across in this thesis like such an unusual success, in terms of both social and physical factors, may simply stem from the fact that I, as the researcher, am somewhat of an insider and I am therefore in a better position to see the successes of the housing project. In contrast, most research on other public housing projects has been produced by outsiders who may be less likely to see the strengths of these communities. Thus, perhaps the reason why much of the academic literature has overemphasized the social and physical faults of public housing and overlooked much of public housing's successes stems from the fact that the people who are doing much of this research are not coming from insiders' perspectives. This point affirms Donna Haraway's argument about the "premium on establishing the capacity to see from the peripheries and the depths"¹⁰, as discussed in Chapter 3. Perhaps both insiders' and outsiders' perspectives of public housing have something important to contribute, but the lack of insiders' perspectives in the debate on public housing redevelopment means we need more of these perspectives. Including more insiders' perspectives may lead to a more objective account of what public housing is really like, including both the aspects that are working quite well and ways that it can be improved.

The Little Mountain case also demonstrates the need to inject more human understanding in public housing redevelopment processes. People and places are not 'interchangeable parts' that can be mixed up and reconfigured without causing significant human consequences. People in general, but poor people especially, develop emotional attachments toward the places they occupy. Sensitivity toward the emotional attachments to place needs to be incorporated into redevelopment policies. This would likely involve treating redevelopment as a last resort, with the preference being to renovate public housing projects. At the very least, entire neighbourhoods should not be bulldozed. Rather, a concerted effort needs to be made to preserve as much of the memory of these sites as possible. Preserving the memory means more than the tokenistic preservation of a few trees. Rather, it involves preserving buildings in situ so that when relocated tenants eventually do move back to redeveloped sites there is something of the old place quality still there to help them orient themselves. Showing an understanding for the importance of social connections between the poor would also fall under the category of injecting human understanding into redevelopment processes. In addition, in Canada public housing tenants deserve the same legal right to be consulted before public housing is demolished or sold as public housing tenants in the US enjoy. Currently, there is nothing to stop the democracy deficit that occurred at Little Mountain from being repeated in future public housing redevelopments. These are some of the old lessons from urban renewal that must now be relearned.

Finally, I want to reiterate the heritage value of public housing projects, especially very old projects like Little Mountain was. Much has been said regarding the distinctive architecture, lay-out, and

¹⁰ Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", *Feminist Studies*, 14, 3 (Fall 1988), p. 583.

scale of old postwar public housing projects. Perhaps the distinctive urban form of public housing has been so stigmatized that many have failed to recognize the historic value of public housing. As discussed in Chapter 6, the distinctive urban form of public housing signifies a specific period in history and a particular set of arrangements between the state and society. Public housing projects were the built physical embodiment of the welfare state. But the era of the welfare state is now on its way out. The welfarist landscapes of public housing serve as physical reminders of a different time and a different way. The importance of preservation is not about romanticizing the welfare state. Rather, it is about helping future generations remember that there is an alternative to neoliberalism. As time marches on and as the last vestiges of the welfare state are dismantled, people may need help remembering that there was once another way that was far less market-centred than current approaches. In addition, preserving public housing would also help with creating a more fully representative architectural record of our urban heritage. All too frequently, the only buildings that are deemed worthy of heritage status are the grand buildings developed for the bourgeoisie of days gone by. But Dolores Hayden has argued about the importance of preserving what she calls ‘vernacular buildings’, such as the urban tenement of the early 20th century, the public high school, or the neighbourhood pub. Vernacular buildings such as these are especially valuable when it comes to helping us understand urban social history because these were the places of the regular folk who built our cities. It is through the study of vernacular buildings and places that less dominant urban histories may be told and multiple perspectives on urban history may be understood.¹¹ Little Mountain and other old public housing projects are the very kind of vernacular places that, if preserved, may allow for the telling of urban histories from the perspectives of the working class and the poor. This is why it is of paramount importance that the only remaining building at Little Mountain, the Steenhuisens’ rowhouse, is preserved for the future. As indicated above, preserving the Steenhuisens’ rowhouse in situ would also help former tenants and others who knew and loved Little Mountain orient themselves as the new development begins to take shape. After demolition, when I have gone inside the Steenhuisens’ home it seems like the Little Mountain Housing Project is still alive. When inside, I can imagine that everything outside is as it was before demolition. Besides the Steenhuisens’ rowhouse, all we have left of the Little Mountain Housing Project are our imaginations, our memories, and our photographs. I cherish my memories and photographs of Little Mountain now more than ever before.

¹¹ Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995)

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APPENDIX I: QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

Beth (pseudonym)	
Date of interview:	December 5, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	Yes (October 15, 2007)
Interviewed before or after moving:	Both
When first moved to Little Mountain:	1999
How long at Little Mountain:	9 years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to Culloden Court (public housing) in Dec. 2008

Brenda (pseudonym)	
Date of interview:	October 17, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	Yes (October 14, 2007)
Interviewed before or after moving:	Both
When first moved to Little Mountain:	1968
How long at Little Mountain:	Off and on for a total of 12 years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to Culloden Court (public housing) in Sept. 2008

Darius (pseudonym)	
Date of interview:	December 9, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	No
Interviewed before or after moving:	After
When first moved to Little Mountain:	1991
How long at Little Mountain:	18 years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to Culloden Court (public housing) in May 2008

Darren (pseudonym)	
Date of interview:	January 5, 2010
Interviewed in 2007?:	No
Interviewed before or after moving:	After
When first moved to Little Mountain:	2006
How long at Little Mountain:	2.5 years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to Culloden Court (public housing) in Dec. 2009

Donald (pseudonym)	
Date of interview:	November 26, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	No
Interviewed before or after moving:	After
When first moved to Little Mountain:	1998
How long at Little Mountain:	11 years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to Redwood Mews (public housing) in 2009

Gregory (pseudonym)	
Date of interview:	November 6, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	Yes
Interviewed before or after moving:	Before
When first moved to Little Mountain:	1974
How long at Little Mountain:	36 years
Relocation Status:	On-site relocation

Hillary (pseudonym)	
Date of interview:	January 9, 2010
Interviewed in 2007?:	Yes (October 12, 2007)
Interviewed before or after moving:	Both
When first moved to Little Mountain:	1986
How long at Little Mountain:	22 years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to Orchard Park (public housing) in March 2008

Ingrid Steenhuisen (real name)	
Date of interview:	November 26, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	Yes (October 9, 2007)
Interviewed before or after moving:	Did not move
When first moved to Little Mountain:	Lived there from birth (family moved there in 1957)
How long at Little Mountain:	Off and on for a total of 25 years
Relocation Status:	Did not relocate

Irwin (pseudonym)	
Date of interview:	September 16, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	No
Interviewed before or after moving:	Before
When first moved to Little Mountain:	1984
How long at Little Mountain:	25 years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to Culloden Court (public housing) in Dec. 2009

Joe (pseudonym)	
Date of interview:	October 17, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	No
Interviewed before or after moving:	After
When first moved to Little Mountain:	1960s
How long at Little Mountain:	Off and on for many decades
Relocation Status:	Relocated to Culloden Court (public housing) in 2008

Karin (real name)	
Date of interview:	September 25, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	No
Interviewed before or after moving:	Before
When first moved to Little Mountain:	1982 (but her mother lived there since 1971)
How long at Little Mountain:	27 years (but connection to the place goes back 39 years)
Relocation Status:	On-site relocation

Leticia (pseudonym)	
Date of interview:	October 6, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	Yes (October 18, 2007)
Interviewed before or after moving:	Both
When first moved to Little Mountain:	2004
How long at Little Mountain:	3 years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to Culloden Court (public housing) in Nov. 2007

Lorraine (real name)	
Date of interview:	October 7, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	No
Interviewed before or after moving:	After
When first moved to Little Mountain:	2002
How long at Little Mountain:	5 years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to Grant McNeil Place (public housing) in 2007

Madeline (pseudonym)	
Date of interview:	December 10, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	No
Interviewed before or after moving:	After
When first moved to Little Mountain:	1990
How long at Little Mountain:	17 years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to Cypress Walk (public housing) in April 2007

Mohana and Reshmi (pseudonyms)	
Date of interview:	October 11, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	No
Interviewed before or after moving:	After
When first moved to Little Mountain:	2003
How long at Little Mountain:	5.5 years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to Orchard Park (public housing) in Feb. 2009

Monique (real name)	
Date of interview:	September 29, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	No
Interviewed before or after moving:	After
When first moved to Little Mountain:	2006
How long at Little Mountain:	1 year
Relocation Status:	Relocated to Grant McNeil Place (public housing) in Oct. 2007

Myra (pseudonym)	
Date of interview:	December 9, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	No
Interviewed before or after moving:	After
When first moved to Little Mountain:	2000
How long at Little Mountain:	7 years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to third sector social housing in Surrey in Aug. 2007

Pamila (pseudonym)	
Date of interview:	September 25, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	No
Interviewed before or after moving:	Before
When first moved to Little Mountain:	1985
How long at Little Mountain:	24 years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to private rental housing in Dec. 2009

Phyllis (pseudonym)	
Date of interview:	October 17, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	No
Interviewed before or after moving:	After
When first moved to Little Mountain:	195-
How long at Little Mountain:	50+ years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to Little Mountain Court (seniors' housing) in 2008

Rebecca (pseudonym)	
Date of interview:	November 6, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	No
Interviewed before or after moving:	After
When first moved to Little Mountain:	2000
How long at Little Mountain:	8 years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to Redwood Mews (public housing) in July 2008

Rhonda (pseudonym)	
Date of interview:	October 5, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	No
Interviewed before or after moving:	After
When first moved to Little Mountain:	2005
How long at Little Mountain:	4 years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to private rental housing in October 2009

Richard (real name)	
Date of interview:	October 7, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	Yes (his wife, Natasha, pseudonym, on October 19, 2007)
Interviewed before or after moving:	Both
When first moved to Little Mountain:	2000
How long at Little Mountain:	8 years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to private rental housing in October 2008

Sally (pseudonym)	
Date of interview:	September 25, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	Yes (October 14, 2007)
Interviewed before or after moving:	Before
When first moved to Little Mountain:	1993
How long at Little Mountain:	16 years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to private rental housing in December 2009

Seema (pseudonym)	
Date of interview:	September 30, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	Yes (October 14, 2007)
Interviewed before or after moving:	Both
When first moved to Little Mountain:	1978
How long at Little Mountain:	30 years
Relocation Status:	Relocated to Little Mountain Court (seniors' housing) in July 2008

Toni Steenhuisen (real name)	
Date of interview:	September 12, 2009
Interviewed in 2007?:	Yes (October 9, 2007)
Interviewed before or after moving:	Before
When first moved to Little Mountain:	1957
How long at Little Mountain:	52 years
Relocation Status:	Did not relocate, but is currently in a care facility due to health issues

APPENDIX II: Letter of Understanding Regarding Demolition

Letter of Understanding (LOU)

**Between BC Housing Management Commission (BC Housing) and the City of Vancouver
(the City) regarding the redevelopment of Little Mountain**

Date: September 20, 2009

As part of the partnership forged between the City and the Province of British Columbia to create more affordable housing in Vancouver, BC Housing and the City of Vancouver agreed to a MOU, dated for reference June 8, 2007, regarding Little Mountain. BC Housing has applied to the City for building permits to demolish and remediate hazardous materials on the Little Mountain housing site. The building permit is needed to begin the process of removing the identified hazardous materials from the site. A building permit for demolition is needed to start clearing the site of structures. This Letter of Understanding builds from the original MOU and describes the commitments of both parties.

- The tenants will be accommodated by being offered the option of moving into buildings in Area 3 if they chose to remain on site during demolition of the other buildings. This offer will be made prior to the issuance of eviction notices. BC Housing will ensure the building and area are habitable and safe and will fund the work necessary to achieve this.
- BC Housing will offer the remaining tenants assistance to move to a new location if they choose.
- BC Housing and the City will give priority to the building of social housing in the redevelopment, which will include the replacement of the existing 224 units. As part of the rezoning process, the City will require that social housing components of the project will be built as a priority in the first phase of development
- Given the large site, it will be divided into 3 major areas. Demolition will be sequenced area by area in accordance with the Little Mountain Deconstruction Project map (attached).
- Demolition of Area 1, where no tenants are living, will be substantially underway within one week of the issuance of the demolition permits.
- BC Housing commits to substantial work being underway as indicated by the signing of construction contract agreements on the four remaining supportive housing sites before the end of November 2009 (188 East 1st Avenue; 525 Abbott Street; 377 West Pender Street and 3595 West 17th Avenue).
- BC Housing and the City will continue to work co-operatively to identify and address issues with the intent to engage in a public policy process as identified in the MOU. The City will expedite a rezoning application (assuming approval by Council) and Development and Building Permits.
- The City of Vancouver will issue the necessary building permits for hazardous material removal and clearance of structures.

For BC Housing

For the City

(Name)

(Name)

Date:

Date:

APPENDIX III: Relocation Agreement

 BC Housing	<h3 style="margin: 0;">TENANCY RELOCATION AGREEMENT</h3> <p>BETWEEN: _____ Suite _____, Vancouver, British Columbia (hereinafter the "Tenant")</p> <p>AND: British Columbia Housing Management Commission 1296 Station Street, Vancouver, British Columbia (hereinafter "BC Housing")</p>												
<p>WHEREAS:</p> <p>A. BC Housing is the agent of the Provincial Rental Housing Corporation ("PRHC"), the registered owner of the lands and buildings (the "Property") at 33rd Avenue and Main Street in Vancouver, British Columbia, commonly known as "Little Mountain";</p> <p>B. BC Housing and the Tenant entered into a Residential Tenancy Agreement (the "Tenancy Agreement") with respect to a residential unit at the Property (the "Suite");</p> <p>C. BC Housing will be redeveloping the Property, which will require rental units within the Property to be demolished and all rental units to be vacant;</p> <p>D. Under the terms of the <i>Residential Tenancy Act</i>, this would permit BC Housing to simply end the Tenancy Agreement but BC Housing wishes to continue housing the Tenant and is therefore prepared to assist the Tenant with moving to another subsidized housing unit;</p>													
<p>NOW THEREFORE BC Housing and the Tenant agree as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The "Tenant" includes all members of the Tenant's household that are ordinarily resident with the Tenant and permitted to reside with the Tenant under the terms of the Tenancy Agreement. 2. The Tenant agrees to vacate the Suite on or before _____, (the "Vacancy Date"). The Tenant will move into a residential unit (the "New Suite") located at _____, on or before the Vacancy Date. If the Tenant refuses to move to the New Suite on or before the Vacancy Date, BC Housing may issue a notice to end tenancy as permitted by subsection 49(6) of the <i>Residential Tenancy Act</i>, whereupon, this agreement will be terminated. 3. BC Housing will pay the Tenant an amount set out in Schedule "A" to this Agreement (the "Moving Allowance"). 4. Upon completion of the redevelopment of the Property, BC Housing will offer the Tenant the option of moving back to the Property and into a residential unit (a "Redeveloped Suite") suitable for the Tenant's needs at the time. If the Tenant accepts the offer: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the date for moving into the Redeveloped Suite will be at BC Housing's choosing and if the Tenant does not move by that date, the Tenant will be deemed to have declined the offer and waived the Tenants' rights under this paragraph; (b) BC Housing will pay the Moving Allowance set out in Schedule "A". <p>If the tenant declines the offer of moving into a Redeveloped Suite, the Tenant will continue to reside in the New Suite and will not have any further option of moving into a Redeveloped Suite. If the tenancy agreement has been terminated, there will be no offer to move back to the Property.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this Agreement, the size and amenities of the New Suite and Redeveloped Suite will be determined by BC Housing's policies and practices. 6. Any and all disputes that may arise under this Agreement will be resolved in accordance with the dispute resolution procedures set out in the <i>Residential Tenancy Act</i>. 													
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<p>*all adult (19+ years of age) members of tenant's household must sign, regardless of whether they are shown on the original Tenancy Agreement.</p>													
<p>TENANT KEEP ORIGINAL, FORWARD BOTTOM 3 COPIES TO BC HOUSING</p>													

Note: Schedule "A" Moving Allowance is shown in Figure 7.7 on page 246 of this thesis.