Sustainable development for some: green urban development and affordability

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Many brownfield development projects and many redevelopment projects aimed at improving older urban spaces list sustainable development as a stated goal. It is a key question, however, whether the benefits of these redevelopment projects are equitably shared with the original members of the community, and in the case of brownfields with residents of adjacent neighbours, or are there differential benefits that accrue to new higher-income residents at the expense of current residents and retailers, and at the expense of existing community diversity? A case study of a brownfield development in Victoria, Canada, confirms concerns in the literature about income diversity in brownfield developments; a second case study of a Toronto neighbourhood suggests that there is no guarantee that local sustainable development projects within existing neighbourhoods will encourage or even maintain existing social diversity and equity. A similar trend is demonstrated in a series of infill projects that had profound ramifications on adjacent communities and indeed contributed to greater unsustainability in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, British Columbia. It is concluded that the relationship between sustainable development and gentrification is more complex than has been previously suggested.

Keywords: gentrification; sustainable development; urban redevelopment

Introduction

Urban areas are emerging as incubation zones for sustainable community development. Terms such as new urbanism capture a desire among the creative class for livable and green urban neighbourhoods (Florida 2002). Sustainable development, however, is multi-faceted; a popular description of sustainable development contains ecological, economic, and social imperatives (Robinson and Tinker 1997, Dale 2001). That these imperatives are not always reflected or implemented on the ground, even when they are preconditions for redevelopment approval, has fuelled some of the most damning critiques of sustainable development, such as that by Luke (2005) that sustainable development is not a social movement but rather a locus of greater commodification. He sees green as simply another product category leading to further consumption rather than meaningful change, and certainly, it is critical to question exactly who within our societies has access to urban spaces that are considered to be sustainable or highly desirable and more livable. As Soper (2004) notes, there is a strong division between the role of consumer and the

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role of citizen; whether sustainable community development serves consumers or citizens is a question of utmost importance and has profound implications for the viability of the social imperative of sustainable development. In particular, the discourse on development has failed to evolve to integrate critical issues of equity and distributive justice. Our concern in this discussion is to evaluate the relationship between social sustainability and livability, terms that have often been used interchangeably.

Sustainable development initiatives have been particularly robust at the community level (Roseland 1998). Sustainable development can be regarded as a process of reconciliation of three imperatives: (i) the ecological imperative to live within global biophysical carrying capacity and maintain biodiversity; (ii) the social imperative to ensure the development of democratic systems of governance to effectively propagate and sustain the values that people wish to live by; and (iii) the economic imperative to ensure that basic needs are met worldwide. Community sustainable development initiatives, however, must reconcile all three imperatives to achieve integrated community sustainability planning. A few other terms used in this article need comment; brownfields are sites previously used for industrial purposes or certain commercial uses that may be contaminated by low concentrations of hazardous waste or pollution that have the potential to be reused once remediated. The term was first used in 1992 by a congressional field commission in the USA and is now common terminology in North America and Europe. In the context of this article, brownfield developments create new neighbourhoods through redevelopment of these sites, primarily located in downtown areas. In contrast, local initiatives are community-led projects that occur within existing urban neighbourhoods or communities. Infill, or the creation of housing units where none were before, can either refer to brownfield development or to local micro-initiatives to increase density, such as the development of vacant lots.

The grounding of sustainable development as a citizen's movement rests most heavily upon the social dimension of sustainable development, yet the social dimension is the weakest "pillar" of sustainable development (Lehtonen 2004). Lehtonen argues that the trouble with social sustainability is that it is hard to measure, and certainly compared with the many indicators of ecological and economic community development, the social remains frustratingly abstract. However, when viewed through a social lens, new urbanism can be seen as evolving and exposing its inherent tensions (Godschalk 2004). It is not exactly clear whose interests sustainable urban community development serves, unless equity through affordability is deliberatively planned for, and funded with, strong political will and leadership.

Brundtland's report was one of the first documents to include equitable resource distribution as a central sustainability issue. In fact, the report calls extreme inequality in resource distribution the "main environmental problem" (Brundtland 1987, p. 6). In the words of Brundtland's (1987, p. 43) report "a world in which poverty and inequality are endemic will always be prone to ecological and other crises". At the local level in the industrialised world, however, the social dimension of sustainable development has become associated with two disparate concepts. The first is soft infrastructure, a term used by Len Duhl at the University of California at Berkeley, which refers to community attributes that contribute to social well-being, including human services such as social services, recreation and culture, and informal structure such as voluntary organisations, as well as networks, both professional and social. The second concept is that of livability elements as evidenced by street furniture, green space, and the availability of cafes and other services. These two sides of sustainable development are quite separate and as will be discussed below, soft infrastructure, which evolves and is embedded within a community, can often be damaged or in some cases destroyed as an unintended consequence of brownfield and

greening redevelopment. This is especially exemplified in the case of the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, British Columbia, that we discuss as a final case illustration.

An interesting visual model of the tensions between the various aspects of sustainable development has emerged within the literature. Based on a triangle designed by Campbell (1996) that identifies the tension between ecology, equity, and economy, the sustainable development prism designed by Godschalk (2004) adds livability as a fourth apex. Godschalk argues succinctly that equity and livability are not the same things, and thus cannot be lumped into a general class of social sustainability. The tension between the two often comes to the surface when the issue of gentrification arises. Equity may be construed either as a matter of who gets what and whether the results conform to standards of distributive justice or as a matter of procedural justice; in other words, the extent to which the processes leading to specific outcomes are regarded as legitimate or fair (Rawls 1971, Nozick 1974).

This article questions the relation between gentrification and sustainable community development through a series of examples and case studies. Both brownfield developments and local initiatives in two existing communities are discussed. The differentiation between livability and equity is confirmed through these examples; livable communities as they are currently conceived are not necessarily accessible or affordable to a majority of people, particularly those often defined as marginalised and those in lower-income groups. Sustainable developments are currently in the minority and their enhanced livability features such as walkability and pleasing urban street space can lead to such developments demanding a significant market premium. In short, sustainable communities can and do become commodities as described in Luke's critique. This is particularly worrisome in Canada as housing prices in large urban centres become even higher, especially in the two cities in which our case studies are situated, Vancouver and Toronto. Is there a relationship between gentrification and dominance, that is, where dominance "privileges the interest/ preferences of the most powerful member(s) of a group, and seldom leads to outcomes that fare well in terms of evaluations focusing on considerations of equity". The case studies were conducted using a triangulation approach that employed multiple methodologies. Site visits were combined with focused interviews of key players identified using a targeted snowball approach. Projects in each area were followed over time for periods ranging from 1 to 3 years.

Gentrification of the urban village

Under the right conditions, the urban form has environmental, economic, and social benefits. Rees noted that density reduces footprint due to smaller living spaces, shared walls, and shorter travel distances (Rees and Wackernagel 1996). With more people in a smaller area, shorter pipelines, sewers, and transmission wires are required. The population densities of a traditional downtown and formation of neighbourhood clusters outside of this area have been suggested as a key to sustainable development (Kenworthy and Laube 1996). In most industrial nations, the opportunity for developing such urban villages is vast; most cities are filled with brownfield sites where industry was previously located, and the neighbourhoods that once housed the blue-collar workers from these industries are now run-down and under-utilised. Repopulation and redevelopment of these areas to provide sustainable, livable spaces are seen by many experts and practitioners as both a desirable and achievable goal, as well as crucial to downtown revitalisation in many cities. Dorsey (2003) argues that brownfield redevelopment is in line with long-term sustainable development and spurs job creation, neighbourhood restoration, and the reuse of

urban space. Brownfield developments often create the sort of spaces prized by the groups Florida (2002) feels are key to the economic success of cities and regions. As Jacobs (1961) noted, "new ideas need old buildings". It is thus now often argued that gentrification, a term that once had very negative connotations, can be a positive environmental force. Bromley *et al.* (2005) explore this in depth and highlight in particular a decline in car use and improved street life associated with what they call city centre regeneration.

Although the literature is dominated by success stories of large infill projects in which communities are built from scratch upon brownfields, interest is also growing in regard to grassroots sustainable development within existing communities. It has been argued that community action is a neglected but important site of innovative activity (Seyfang and Smith 2007) and that sustainable development might best be implemented through a collaborative approach at the local community level (Cuthill 2002). Local initiatives can include community efforts to create sustainable neighbourhoods, projects initiated by municipal governments, or small infill projects that add green infrastructure in a more modest way than major redevelopments.

Gentrification is an interesting term, and its implications depend on who is being asked and what the context is. The term was coined in the 1960s by Ruth Glass to describe changes occurring in London neighbourhoods. The debate over the impact of gentrification is extensive [for a detailed debate see Slater (2006) and Atkinson (2003)]. Over the years many impacts of gentrification have been noted; some of the positive impacts observed include increased property values, as well as a critical reduction in sprawl; gentrification restores and upgrades housing stock, improves aesthetic appeal, and increases community safety. Negatives include resentment, decreased social diversity, and increased housing costs (Atkinson 2004), and low-income tenants, particularly renters, are often displaced. Economically disadvantaged groups can be pushed to the edges of a city region, where they can no longer access public transit and needed services, and in fact, greater concentrations of similar populations can lead to more protracted urban social problems. Eisen (1999) maintains that any argument that all brownfields redevelopment is inherently sustainable is unjustified.

We agree in general terms that infill projects and local community initiatives can provide an array of positive development within a community or region, but also agree that caution is needed when we assume that sustainable development projects will be inherently respectful of equity issues and naturally lead to meeting social imperatives that integrate both equity and livability concerns through affordability. In fact, we argue that there may be an inverse relationship: "greening" of neighbourhoods can increase desirability and thus spur gentrification that drives up housing prices, making these developments increasingly less affordable and paradoxically decreases the diversity that Florida claims is so crucial for the creative class. This concern is reflected within the literature to some degree; Berke (2002) argues that new urbanism does not necessarily address social deficits and it has been suggested that the idea of urban villages carries implicit, although rarely spelled out social objectives (Brindley 2003). We argue that without explicit consideration, political leadership, and design for equity based on principles of distributive justice the implicit objectives will not be realised.

As gentrification proceeds, the character of the existing neighbourhood in place changes, and density, ironically, can actually fall as people combine small units to create larger living spaces (Atkinson 2004). Gentrifiers are largely young professional couples with high incomes and, in general, their arrival in a neighbourhood discourages lower-income people from living there (Seo 2002) and displaces existing lower-income residents. This of course occurs as housing costs rise, but there are also other subtle effects at work.

The gentrifiers in many cases are seeking an "urban suburban" lifestyle (Butler 2007) in which the short commutes, walkability, and cultural benefits of city living are combined with the availability of a large variety of consumer products associated with young professionals. New businesses arise to accommodate gentrifiers (Patch 2004), as the retailscape is very important to this demographic (Bridge and Dowling 2001), again pushing out existing small retailers that contributed to the local character of the neighbourhood. Unfortunately, this retailscape is not convenient for the poorer longer-term residents of the neighbourhood. As property values rise, new lower-income families cannot move in, and thus existing lower-income residents face an attrition of community networks (Newman and Wyly 2006). The question that emerges that is of interest in the context of sustainable community development is "should poor neighbourhoods be preserved for current inhabitants?" (Godschalk 2004). Those that Brown-Saracino (2004) calls the social preservationists give an affirmative answer and argue that the existing residents are critical to neighbourhood network fabric. Others question the extent of displacement (e.g. see Freeman 2005). Despite extensive study, it is difficult to be sure exactly how much involuntary displacement occurs as it is extremely difficult to measure from a methodological standpoint (Atkinson 2003, Slater 2006).

Is gentrification leading to greater structural injustices and growing disparities as a result of sustainable redevelopment projects? Or in other words, the questions for cities such as Toronto, Vancouver, and Victoria now "is not whether ideas can flourish in this place, because demonstrably they do, but what consequences in justice that flourishing will entail ... what is our idea of justice?" (Kingwell 2008).

Dockside Green: brownfields and accessibility

On the surface, brownfield developments would seem to be likely sites for enhancing the social imperative of sustainable development as they are in effect taking urban voids and turning them into mixes of appealing public and private spaces. Studies of the extensive brownfield infill taking place at the London docklands reveal that the new neighbourhoods do house a large number of people in a small footprint of land; however, these studies also show the new neighbourhoods are very homogenous. The residents are fearful of older adjoining neighbourhoods and, in general, stay within their "enclaves of social sameness" (Butler 2007). However, it has also been argued that infill projects relieve gentrification pressure within existing neighbourhoods; Godschalk (2004), for example, argues that infill on brownfields moderated gentrification of existing neighbourhoods in his study of the Denver area.

Our research team examined an infill project during a 1-year grant funded by SSHRC and Infrastructure Canada in 2006–2007. This particular case study focused on the Dockside Green area, an abandoned dockyard in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. The site needed extensive environmental remediation and fits the general description of a brownfield area. The city put together an interdisciplinary project team to begin exploring the potential of the site for sustainable housing (Ling *et al.* 2007). The surrounding community, concerned by other developments in the area, demanded a significant voice in the development. The city of Victoria decided on a triple bottom line approach for the development. It was hoped that much of the development could meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) platinum standards. The design that won the community's approval was a new urbanist approach that increased density but provided significant public space.

The site prior to development was a contaminated area of land previously used for various dockland processes. The land was visually unappealing and presented a pollution

hazard for the adjacent Gorge Waterway, a salt water inlet extending right through the city of Victoria and marking a boundary between Victoria to the east and north and Victoria West and Esquimalt to the west and south. The waterway is ecologically significant for the eelgrass beds in its upper reaches. The Gorge provides Dockside with waterfront real estate, and links to Downtown on the opposite bank are over the iconic Johnson Street Bridge. To the north of the Dockside development is the Railyards, another recent brown-field development consisting of high-density townhouses. To the south are the Songhees developments, a series of residential and resort condominiums overlooking Victoria's Inner Harbour on land previously designated as a First Nations reserve in perpetuity under an 1850 treaty but sold back to the city for development in 1910. The Dockside development is part of the Victoria West community, a traditionally lower-income neigh-bourhood, the residential areas of which are separated from Dockside by an area of retail development.

Consultation with the community raised concerns that included architecture and ped-estrian friendly design. Community involvement was highly valued from the beginning; the general attitude was to explore issues until a solution evolved that everybody could accept. The main concerns of the community were sightlines and the appearance of the architecture, as it was felt that previous developments in the area had not provided an attractive environment. Meetings involved 15 members of the Victoria West Community Association as well as the developer's staff. The community association has a long history of local activism and is considered to be representative of the local population.

Once completed, Dockside Green will be a 600-million dollar project, the largest devel-opment project attempted by Windmill Development and their partner Vancity, an innova-tive credit union in the province. In the early stages of construction, the project is emerging as a showpiece of green construction and new urbanism, but the part of the project that has proved the most difficult has been the provision of social housing. Affordable housing was not a central goal of the initial bidding process, nor was it a stated objective of the city or of the community association. The desire to add a social housing component came from city council. It should be noted that the affordability of housing is a major issue in Victoria, which is one of the most expensive cities for housing in Canada. Critics of the project have found the development an easy target in that the number of affordable units is much lower than originally suggested, and in that there is a heavy emphasis on small, one or two bedroom units, and not larger dwellings more suitable for family use (Ling *et al.* 2007). This case study demonstrates the problem with using a "social imperative" umbrella to include both livability and equity; even though the project was designed with the intention of providing social housing, this has not been the outcome. The lack of suitable retailscape for lower-income families is evident here, supporting earlier studies. In this case, gentrification has not served the concern of equity as well as intended, suggesting that the narrow approach of simply designating some subset of units as social housing is insufficient.

Sustainable development from within: Kensington Market

The second case study concerns pedestrian market and walkability initiatives in the Kensington Market area of Toronto, ON (see Newman *et al.* 2008 for a full description). In contrast to infill projects such as Dockside Green, the case is a good example of a local initiative occurring within an existing neighbourhood that is attracting gentrification as an unintended consequence. As a low-income neighbourhood, Kensington provides insights into whether sustainable development initiated within existing communities can

maintain greater social and economic diversity than large, centrally planned brownfield redevelopment infill projects such as Dockside Green.

The Kensington Market area of Toronto is bounded by four major arteries that carry streetcar lines: Spadina Avenue, Bathurst Street, College Street, and Dundas Street. Within the market, the narrow streets contain t-junctions that slow traffic. Rent has traditionally been low, and the lot size is very small, leading to a high population density and concentration of two-story buildings. Usage is highly mixed; row housing co-exists with converted heritage homes, with buildings housing retail on the ground floor and residences above. The mix of services in the market and the vibrant street life draw traffic from outside of the market area: despite the construction of two municipal parking garages, the market's narrow streets are often gridlocked with traffic. The area has historically housed low-income populations. Keninsington Market is very near to Toronto's downtown; to the North it borders the upscale Annex district, which is composed of renovated Victorian homes. To the west it is bordered by the Bathurst area, which is experiencing rapidly rising home prices. The public housing project of Alexandria Park sits to the south, cutting Kensington off from the vibrant area of Queen Street West. Chinatown sits to the east, as does Toronto's downtown core.

Pedestrian Sundays (PS) Kensington began operations in the fall of 2002. PS Kensington worked with the Ontario chapter of the Sierra Club to organise a Harvest Festival with street closures through much of the market on Carfree Day 2003. The event was well received by the community. The following winter a more formal group developed and began seeking city council support for a broader car free Kensington project. They were asked to demonstrate support from the local merchants, so they sought assistance from a sociology professor with expertise in public polling to create a poll for gauging local public opinion. They were able to gain and demonstrate support for a test project of 14 consecutive pedestrian-only Sundays in most of the market, which they dubbed PS Kensington. The PS Kensington days included live bands, public debates, blind taste-tests, performers, skateboard competitions, merchants moving their wares out onto the pavement, and public art.

PS and the related spin-off projects have certainly been a success on many levels (Newman *et al.* 2008). The events have proven popular, have demonstrated a more environmentally sustainable traffic pattern, and have acted as a focal point for enhancing local social capital. The event has also demonstrated the properties of a successful niche activity spurring similar events in other parts of the city. However, if we look at Godschalk's prism and consider both the livability and equity present in the neighbourhood, the picture is not so clear.

Since the beginning of the study period, the neighbourhood has undergone significant gentrification. Gentrification began in the north end of the market and has progressed south at a rapid pace. A new loft project is under construction in the market, and three high-end restaurants and two gourmet food shops have been opened, including two gourmet bakeries, one of which is part of a local chain. Two high-end gift stores have opened, one of which is much larger than the average store size in Kensington, and a small supermarket selling a national name brand has opened. These new businesses are displacing the traditional bulk goods and used clothing stores that previously dominated the market. Interestingly, gentrification has been concentrated in the north end of the market despite the presence of a men's shelter there. It is likely such gentrification would have proceeded in any case given the desirable location of the area, but one has to wonder whether attracting thousands of people (often members of the gentrifying class) to the neighbourhood did not speed up the process. There is a correlation between the popularisation of the market days and the

increase in the pace of gentrification. What is clear is that the initiative certainly did not slow or prevent gentrification, nor change its nature, and no parallel local initiative to counter gentrification in the neighbourhood exists. Paradoxically, the neighbourhood could evolve to contain less-affordable housing than brownfield neighbourhoods such as the London Docklands and Dockside Green. It is clear that if the present development pattern continues, Kingwell's (2008, p. 62) observation that gentrification destroys the very diversity that attracted the gentrification in the first place – as "fauxhemians move in to gentrify an area, ..., driving property values up and grotty art galleries down, the real bohemians, about to lose their studios, lofts and self image, rise up in protest or sell at a higher level" – could come to pass. Ironically, the market's very success at fostering a space with a high degree of social equity could hinder that equity in the long run. Though the retailscape is still varied and accessible to lower-income groups, it is now changing as the newcomers to the market begin to more closely resemble the prospective residents of Dockside Green. Whether such a shift is inevitable is an interesting question for further research.

Vancouver, British Columbia: affordability for some

As a growing metropolis and a meeting place of Pacific Rim cultures, Vancouver, Canada, has emerged as a leader in sustainable urban design. Indeed, Vancouver consistently ranks as one of the world's most livable and sustainable cities and is described as "the poster child of urbanism in North America" (Berelowitz 2005). A concentrated effort to focus development within the existing downtown core has created an urban area with some of the highest densities in North America. The transition from what was largely a hub of resource extraction to a centre of the knowledge economy has opened vast fissures in Vancouver's communities. The downtown is dominated by the worldview of the new middle class (Kear 2007) or creative class of the young, wealthy, and mobile, a creative class that greatly shapes and changes the neighbourhoods they inhabit, often with unintended consequences to complex social issues of access, equity, and social justice.

There is a hidden undercurrent to this showcase of sustainable city development, as an increasingly rich and advantaged gentrified core displaces lower middle and low-income earners to suburban municipalities. A consequence of the gentrification of the adjacent communities of Gastown and Yaletown has been the increased concentration of some of the most marginalised people into one space, the Downtown Eastside, which is the city's traditional low-income housing neighbourhood. The Downtown Eastside is best described in the words of a Vancouver physician.

> The men and women I work with have had every possible negative consequence visited on them. They've lost their jobs, their homes, their spouses, their children and their teeth; they've been jailed and beaten; they've suffered HIV infection and hepatitis and infections of the heart valves and multiple pneumonias and abscesses and sores of every sort. They will not, until something spontaneously transforms their perspective on life, abandon their compulsion to use drugs. The question is only this: How shall we, as a society, respond to their predicament? (Mate 2005)

The phenomenon of gentrification first began to be described by social reform and affordable housing advocates in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside in the early 1980s. Their analysis anticipated that new development and rehabilitation of existing buildings in downtown Vancouver and the surrounding neighbourhoods would drive up real-estate values, making the area less affordable for lower-income residents and workers. It was anticipated that this

escalation in costs and standards would drive out the long time, lower-income residents, who had made their homes in the downtown area, primarily in single-room occupancy (SRO) hotels and rooming houses built prior to 1930. This analysis has proven to be very true.

In the early 1970s, advocates within faith-based missions began to organise residents of the "skid row" area of Vancouver, which was formalised as the Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA). DERA identified its boundaries as including that area bounded on the west by Burrard Street, on the south by False Creek, on the east by Clark Drive, and on the north by Burrard Inlet, most of which today has some of the highest priced real estate in Canada. With a few exceptions such as in a small area further south on Main Street into the northern part of Mount Pleasant, and scattered throughout the West End, most of the SROs and lower-priced rooming houses in the downtown part of the city were included within DERA's boundaries. There were also approximately 1500 residents living in the old hotels and rooming houses in this area, which became known as Granville South. Because the characteristics of the housing and the needs of the residents of Granville South were very similar to those found in the more concentrated Hastings Street area now commonly referred to as the Downtown Eastside, DERA included Granville South residents in its membership.

Demographics of the Downtown Eastside community during the decades following the Second World War reflected a stable population made up mostly of older single males. Many of them had worked in British Columbia's primary industries, in logging and mining camps, and on fishing boats on a seasonal basis. When not working, they returned to Vancouver and used the area's hotels as temporary residences until they were ready to return to work. The area, once a crossroads of an empire where people travelling from Europe would wait for ocean passage, contains an unusual number of small hotel buildings. As they grew older and less able to maintain employment, they made the Downtown Eastside their permanent homes. Low-income wage earners, seniors, disabled veterans, and others with disabilities also lived in the area because it was affordable and close to affordable goods and services.

With the historic restoration and redevelopment of Gastown in the 1960s and 1970s, the Downtown Eastside experienced a loss of hundreds of units of housing through demolition and conversion. There was also a gradual loss of housing stock throughout the area, a kind of demolition by neglect as some landlords, unwilling to invest in their buildings in order to maintain them up to standards required under city by-laws, sold off to developers and real-estate speculators. In the late 1970s, negotiations between Marathon Realty acting for Canadian Pacific, the City of Vancouver, and the Province of British Columbia resulted in the transfer of much of the land on the north side of False Creek, including lands in the Yaletown area to the Province. There was ample evidence of displacement and loss of affordable housing stock during this period.

As an example of damage to soft infrastructure on the ground in the neighbourhood, the gentrification of downtown Vancouver is directly impacting the Downtown Eastside's most successful local initiative empowering street people. United We Can (www.unitedwecan. ca), founded by Ken Lyotier, is a social enterprise of which a major part is a recycling centre for "dumpster divers" or binners. A binner is a street person who takes recyclable material from the big blue garbage bins hidden in the back alleys of downtown Vancouver and returns them to retailers for money. United We Can provides essential infrastructure services to the broader community, recovering over 20 million cans and bottles a year that would otherwise have been landfilled. The organisation recycles 50,000 bottles a day, an average of 100 bottles sorted each minute at their depot, with an annual revenue

of 1.6 million dollars. They average 700–750 street people a day, with 300 core binners returning their recoverables every day (Dale and Newman 2006). More critically, it employs 33 people full-time, most of whom had not been previously employable.

As Vancouver relies more and more frequently on private security and safe streets by-laws and attempts to clean up its urban backyards, the alleyways behind its large condominium developments, paradoxically it is affecting the economic viability of the most successful local initiative in the Downtown Eastside to provide meaningful employment to its residents. United We Can is now at a critical juncture in its evolution; in spite of its success, it is critically dependent upon decisions now being considered by the City of Vancouver. The city is now locking down some of the garbage bins in the alleyways, and the two largest commercial waste collectors who own the large bins (Waste Management and BPI) are complying with the directive from the city. Ostensibly, they are being locked to prevent fires or people sleeping in them and then getting caught when they are emptied in the morning. There is anecdotal evidence that some Vancouver residents object to the binners scavenging through the garbage in what is essentially their urban backyard, although there is probably little understanding of the economic under-pinnings of this activity by the high-rise residents and how crucial it is to their adjacent community.

As with Dockside Green, there were good intentions exhibited in the redevelopment of the neighbourhoods surrounding Vancouver's East Side with respect to social housing. The redevelopment of the north False Creek including Yaletown included goals for the percentage of social housing. These plans have never materialised because successive governments have been unwilling to produce the budgets that could pay for them. Approxi-mately 1000 units of low-income housing existed a decade ago. With the exception of 150 units still to be completed, the same number exists today.

Approximately 25,000 units of new market housing have been built on the north side of False Creek, almost all self-owned and often sublet. These units, even when available for rent, are far beyond the reach of low-income people living around them in squalid conditions. But even if such places were financially accessible, it is unreasonable to expect that people coming out of dire poverty could easily make their homes in them. What is useful about the Yaletown example is how it highlights the gap, not so much between the haves and the have-nots (though it does that too) but the gap between where we actually are as a society and where we think we ought to be.

Vancouver's East Side is an interesting example of the "hollowing out" of a neighbour-hood as surrounding gentrification concentrates poverty in a smaller and smaller geographic area. This case study is very different than the other two and, in many ways, represents the darker side of successful brownfield redevelopment and infill projects. As redevelopments such as Dockside Green and gentrification of neighbourhoods such as Kensington continue the more marginalised citizens of such neighbourhoods can find themselves forced into the neighbourhoods with high crime and a lack of infrastructure and services. Often such areas are retail deserts, offering little to the people living there. The existence of such areas in cities that are otherwise extremely prosperous suggests that the impact of redevelopment on surrounding neighbourhoods must be taken into consideration if issues of equity are to be properly addressed.

Conclusion

If sustainable community development is to address the social imperative, sustainable com-munity development projects will have to actively plan how to keep such communities

accessible to a diverse range of income groups, professions, and retailers. Newman and Wyly (2006) suggest that buffers against displacement are needed; our case studies in Toronto, Victoria, and Vancouver add to existing evidence within the literature that suggests this is not always occurring. First, the sustainable development discourse has to be broadened to include both equity and livability requirements as two separate aspects of the social imperative of sustainability. Livability without equity leads to gentrification of the retailscape and a shift to higher-income residents, forcing out existing lower middle and lower-income residents. Secondly, even when some degree of "accessible" housing is mandated as a requirement for development, the reality often does not meet the needs of lower-income families; in our case studies neither the type of housing provided (single bedroom and bachelor units) nor the retailscapes meet the needs of lower-income families. As for local initiatives within existing communities, they might inadvertently speed gentrification if efforts to protect accessibility are not also undertaken.

The revitalisation of cities is certainly an environmental and economic good, and by no means are we arguing for a halt to brownfield development or local community sustainable development efforts. However, some notice should be taken of exactly who this development is for, and who is poorly served by current trends, and what the social costs are of displacement of existing residents. As Kingwell (2008, p. 64) notes, "Modern distributive models of justice rightly place emphasis on the fate of the least well off: in a non-distributive idea of justice, we can update and expand this idea: a city, like a people, shall be judged by how it treats its most vulnerable members".

It is unlikely that the solution to our social malaise will be a technical or aesthetic fix. While the technique and aesthetics may be critical components of a solution they hardly offer a complete answer. And certainly mixed use should be encouraged for reasons beyond our conscious; from Jacobs onwards there is a growing belief that mixed-use neighbourhoods and human-scale buildings create street life, lower-crime rates and encourage civility. However, as Florida has pointed out, the sorting occurring within modern society as those with resources choose to live in more livable enclaves in the most desirable and vibrant cities is greatly increasing the gap between those who are succeeding in today's economy and those who are left behind. A sustainable development paradigm that addresses the social imperative of sustainable community development in the form of equity and livability should not be building sustainable neighbourhoods for only the higher-income subsection of the population either passively or actively through the displacement of lower-income families. Sustainable development, if it is actually to be sustainable, should not be for some, but for all.

Acknowledgements

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