Hopes and Expectations for Woodward’s:
Community Perspectives

A Report to the Portland Hotel Society

Report, photography and graphic design by:

Tanya Fink
MA (Social Planning) Candidate
School of Community and Regional Planning
University of British Columbia

May 2010
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, a special thank you to the PHS tenants and condo owners who volunteered to participate in this study. Your insights, concern and loyalty to your future community are inspirational.

Thank you to Jim Green, Gregory Henriquez, John Neate (JJ Bean), Irwin Oostindie (W2), and Bob Rennie for taking time out of their busy schedules to meet with me and participate in my questionnaire. Thank you to Wendy Hartley (London Drugs) and Mike Pare and Dan Bregg (Nesters) for answering my questions via email.

Thank you also to Ric Matthews, Jean Swanson and Wendy Petersen for offering their perspectives on how Woodward’s will fit into the broader community in the Downtown Eastside.

Many thanks to the Portland Hotel Society for partnering with me on this project. I am honoured to be involved with an organization whose work I deep admire and am grateful for. To Tom Laviolette for his support in the background research and implementation of this research. To Liz Evans for giving me the opportunity to attend and facilitate the Bosman Neighbourhood Advisory Committee OMP drafting process. And to the PHS Woodward’s staff (Jerry, Joanne, Tanya and Patrick) for letting me tag along and for accommodating my endless requests for their time.

To Nathan Edelson, my professor, for his support, guidance and revisions...and for pushing me to talk to people I'm not comfortable with and to keep searching for the 'pony'. You have been a terrific teacher.

To Silvia Vilches for saving this project with her expertise in ethics applications. Without your hours and hours of effort, this wouldn’t have been possible. I am very grateful.

To Paris Marshall Smith for supporting this project and for allowing me into her home to do a lot of the 'behind the scenes' preparations.

To Theresa Fresco, Kasel Yamashita and Kevin Fivelsdal for their advice and help with layout.

And, finally, thanks to East Van...for keeping me real.
Introduction

The Woodward’s Department Store was an important part of Vancouver’s history. From its beginning in 1903, it was an inclusive space that served hundreds of thousands of people of all incomes and cultural backgrounds. It was also an iconic anchor for many nearby businesses in the Downtown Eastside. When the store closed in 1993, much of the area’s commerce collapsed. For more than a decade, the future of the site became a focal point of community debate. Some wanted it to be redeveloped exclusively for market housing and some wanted it to be exclusively for low-income housing. In 2003, the City of Vancouver was able to purchase the building and initiated an extensive public consultation process which supported an inclusive mixed-use development with a significant amount of market and non-market housing, as well as space for community organizations, commercial retail, offices and Simon Fraser’s School of Contemporary Arts.

A central question is whether the residents and other users of this large development can form a sense of common purpose or whether there will be isolated environments or even significant conflict amongst the different users. This report contains the first set of interviews with a sample of the people who now live in the market and low-income housing as well as with some of the commercial and institutional tenants. It chronicles the hopes and expectations of the people who are creating the future community at Woodward’s.

The report begins with a brief background on the century-long history of Woodward’s. It then describes the role of Woodward’s in the City of Vancouver’s policies for revitalizing this inner-city area through the introduction of mixed-income earners into a significantly low-income community. As background, it reviews some of the literature on ‘mixed-income communities,’ and social mix as a regeneration catalyst. A framework on creating inclusive communities is introduced and then the findings of the interviews are highlighted.

The findings are illustrated through the direct quotes of the key stakeholders involved in the redevelopment. The analysis of the interviews with the residents and their direct quotes are then divided into three parts:

1) reasons why the diverse residents wanted to live there
2) what expectations they had for the retail/non-profit spaces, the atrium, and social interaction and the hopes they had for their future community
3) conclusions about why people chose to live in Woodward’s and to what degree these may or may not fit the inclusivity framework

Implications for the future community at Woodward’s can be implicitly drawn from the analysis and the actual sentiments expressed by the participants. A further analysis of how the urban form of Woodward’s and the surrounding neighbourhood relates to social interaction and sense of community is added as an appendix.

Whether or not Woodward’s becomes a place of inclusivity for all the diverse groups involved in it is yet to be determined. There are a great many unknowns as the diverse people within it settle in, figure out how to get to know each other and face the challenges of learning to live successfully within this large complex as well as part of the larger Downtown Eastside community. There are many challenges to overcome – not the least of which is the vocal community opposition of some groups in the neighbourhood to this development (see Appendix 1). Yet, this report shows that there is very significant desire by those who have chosen to live or work in Woodward’s to create a great community in spite of its inherent challenges.
Background

If you look far enough back into the history of Woodward’s department store, you will see that the Vancouver landmark is now coming full circle.

When Charles Woodward opened his first retail store in 1875 on Manitoulin Island on Lake Huron, he catered exclusively to newcomers to the fast-growing farming community. After several attempts at retail success back east, Woodward, like many, decided to try his luck out west. He moved to Vancouver in 1891, a town also becoming a mecca for newcomers (Hudson’s Bay Company 2010). Ultimately, he opened the Woodward’s department store we know of in 1903.

For decades, the department store was a fixture in the life of many Vancouverites. It was the heartbeat of the city’s retail shopping district and its “W” sign, erected in 1944, was a familiar sight on Vancouver’s skyline. Woodward’s was a place where the lower-income residents of the city could shop, eat and hang out. It started as an attempt to cater to westward settlers and continued to include many diverse groups throughout its 90-year existence in the community. It was the result of one man’s lifelong desire to make a business thrive in areas that weren’t the easiest to exist in. Ultimately, it was the result of that same man’s championing and sometimes political efforts to bring good to the east end of Vancouver (Harker 1976).

Most Vancouverites remember Woodward’s for its Christmas displays, its big red “W” and its $1.49 days but few people have gone further back to reveal the intentions that Woodward’s began with over 100 years ago: inclusivity and affordability. These two concepts are things that the members of the Downtown Eastside community struggle for continuously. As a result, after closing it’s doors in 1993, Woodward’s sat in limbo for over 13 years before construction began on what we know it as today.

In 2010, over a hundred years since Charles Woodward first thought up the idea of his store, the site it sat on is still a part of this legacy. It is a place where diverse groups are meeting, low-income people are being included and attempts to preserve affordability are being made.

For more than ten years now, the Downtown Eastside has been the subject of intense revitalization plans designed to improve the area (City of Vancouver 2009). One of these plans is to increase the number of market housing units in the Downtown Eastside without displacing any of the low-income people who want to live there (City of Vancouver 2009). The Woodward’s redevelopment is a direct result of the philosophy behind this plan.

With over 500 market-rate condos, 75 affordable family units, 125 SRO replacement units for low-income singles, retail, daycare, university, non-profit and government space, Woodward’s truly is a unique and diverse site.

As of February 2010, most tenants and condo owners had moved into their new homes and most retail spaces had opened. While not completely finished, the future community that will exist on the site is now beginning to form.
‘Mixed-Income Communities’

Neighbourhoods and communities are impossible to understand when separated from the interrelated social processes that form and sustain them (Wilson 1987, 1991, 1997). Inequality in poor communities is usually the result of broader structural change (Wilson 1987, 1991, 1997). This is especially true in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. Throughout history, this has been a low-income neighbourhood but only in the last 20 years has it become as marginalized as we know it today. This is due to economic structural change, deinstitutionalization and government cuts to welfare benefits and social services and a resulting influx of people dealing with multiple barriers such as mental illness and drug addiction.

As a response to the increasing problems in the neighbourhood, the City of Vancouver, like many other large urban areas struggling with similar issues, designed a multi-faceted approach to restoring the area (City of Vancouver 2009). Recognizing that most of the issues the Downtown Eastside deals with fall under the jurisdictions of senior governments, the City is attempting to do what it can (City of Vancouver 2009). The City’s revitalization strategy plans to bring back the health, safety and liveability of the neighbourhood for all who want to live there (City of Vancouver 2009).

One major aspect of this plan is to increase the economic viability of the area by increasing the number of market housing units without displacing the insufficient affordable stock that already exists (City of Vancouver 2009). As a response to the inadequate supply of housing in the area, the City is also calling for more social housing to be built in other parts of the city (City of Vancouver 2009).

Vancouver, much like other Canadian cities, has had to pick up the reins and solve increasing urban social problems such as those seen in the Downtown Eastside. This is a direct result of federal and provincial downloading of funding and responsibility (August 2008). Therefore, cities like Vancouver are under the constant strain of trying to serve dual and often competing interests—to attract investment and growth to their urban cores and fix burgeoning social problems such as inadequate housing and inequality (August 2008).

Federal funding of housing was frozen in the early 1990’s right around the same time Vancouver’s social welfare and housing crisis began. Provincial funding of housing has also decreased over the last two decades and much of the responsibility for housing and homelessness has been inherited by the City. In the process, renewed enthusiasm for the concept of ‘social mix’ has also emerged as an agent of urban revitalization (August 2008).

Woodward’s has been described as “one of the most important and symbolic projects that aim to further revitalization efforts” in the Downtown Eastside (City of Vancouver 2009). The ‘mixed-income community’ that is intentionally being created there is just one example in the current debate about the advantages of adopting regeneration approaches that purposely change social mix in housing situations.

But, there is very little research that proves inconclusively whether or not ‘mixed-income communities’ are beneficial or not for low-income populations (Arthurson 2002, August 2008). But there are three findings that could apply to Woodward’s and be useful in making its version of a ‘mixed-income community’ successful.

In a review of the literature, it has been determined that it is difficult to foster the requisite social contact needed in these developments in order to reap the benefits of integration (Arthurson 2002). It has also been found that often there are tensions rather than cohesion based on the heightened awareness of class differences (Arthurson 2002). And finally, that evidence is inconclusive on whether or not the presence of higher income-earners attracts better services and amenities to the neighbourhood (Arthurson 2002).

It is important to also note that Woodward’s is unique in that it is not a redevelopment of a pre-existing housing development nor does it involve moving low-income people to other parts of the city. Most regeneration strategies that have been conducted internationally have adapted one of these two models (Arthurson 2002).

For the Downtown Eastside, an area that has had a predominantly low-income demographic throughout history, a significant increase in middle or high-income earners has implications that will, inevitably, have to be addressed.
Building ‘Inclusive’ Communities

In the UK, neighbourhood regeneration strategies that alter social mix have been implemented to tackle the problem of social exclusion (Arthurson 2002) with the premise that marginalized groups are better off when not put off to the fringes of society or in ghetto-like situations.

This is also becoming norm in Australia where policies have been put in place that limit the amount of social housing in any one area (Arthurson 2002). Furthermore, in the Australian context, introducing a balanced social mix to a neighbourhood holds the underlying assumptions that that will help create more ‘sustainable,’ ‘cohesive,’ and ‘self-sufficient’ communities.

In Canada, the idea of ‘social mix’ is also popular with the general public for these reasons and for its association with images of social harmony and equality(August 2008). These underlying assumptions are also apparent in the Downtown Eastside revitalization efforts of the last decade. But, the reality of these assumptions is that they are often found questionable once implemented in the form of ‘mixed-income communities’ (Arthurson 2002). In fact, many exclusionary impacts of altering social mix have been determined (Arthurson 2002).

Yet, these impacts were found in ‘mixed-income communities’ that, on the surface, look very different from Woodward’s. They often involved the demolition, redevelopment and complete alteration of the social demographics in pre-existing housing developments or the relocation of marginalized groups to other areas of a city (Arthurson 2002).

Woodward’s proves how the idea of ‘social mix’ is enjoying a new emergence in the Canadian planning context. Taking what we know from previous studies on ‘mixed-income communities’ and infusing this knowledge with earnest intention to create more inclusive communities is paramount to the future success of the community that forms within Woodward’s.

All Canadian urban communities are currently undergoing significant social changes coupled with the lengthy disengagement of the federal government in social programs (Clutterbuck & Novick 2003). In addition, municipalities such as Vancouver, are under increasing pressure to cope with the effects of provincial restructuring of social policy responsibilities (Clutterbuck & Novick 2003). It is has been deemed essential that the future of our communities benefit from a social inclusion framework for shaping infrastructure and guiding relationships between all levels of government (Clutterbuck & Novick 2003).

Whether or not an inclusive community is indeed formed here will greatly affect the well-being of all residents, the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood and the city at large. In order to accomplish intertwined and complex goals such as increasing affordable housing, and revitalizing inner-city neighbourhoods, methods of ensuring inclusivity are going to be a challenge to individual community members, community organizations and local governments.
Characteristics of an Inclusive Community and City

Ideally, the community formed at Woodward’s would include some or all of the following elements:

*Integrative and cooperative* – inclusive communities bring people together and are places where people and organizations work together

*Interactive* – inclusive communities have accessible community spaces and open public places as well as groups and organizations that support social interaction and community activity, including celebrating community life.

*Invested* – inclusive communities are places where both the public and private sectors commit resources for the social and economic health and well-being of the whole community.

*Diverse* – inclusive communities welcome and incorporate diverse people and cultures into the structures, processes and functions of daily community life.

*Equitable* – inclusive communities make sure that everyone has the means to live in decent conditions (i.e. income supports, employment, good housing) and the opportunity to develop one’s capacities and to participate actively in community life.

*Accessible and Sensitive* – inclusive communities have an array of readily available and accessible supports and services for the social, health, and developmental needs of their populations and provide such supports in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways (essential services identified include good schools, recreation, childcare, libraries, public transit, affordable housing and supportive housing, home care, crisis and emergency supports, well coordinated and comprehensive settlement supports).

*Participatory* – inclusive communities encourage and support the involvement of all their members in the planning and decision-making that affect community conditions and development, including having an effective voice with senior levels of government.

*Safe* – inclusive communities ensure both individual and broad community safety and security so that no one feels at risk in their homes or moving around the neighbourhood and city.

“Building Inclusive Communities: Cross-Canada Perspectives and Strategies”

*Peter Clutterbuck & Marvyn Novick*

*2003*
Project Overview

This project took place from September 2009 to May 2010 as part of a course at the University of British Columbia’s School of Community and Regional Planning called Social Learning Studio: Building Inclusive Communities. As part of the course, a service-learning project was undertaken in collaboration with the Portland Hotel Society (PHS), the non-profit housing provider responsible for placing tenants in the 125 low-income housing units at Woodward’s.

This project looked at the hopes and expectations that all of the diverse residents and stakeholders had going into this one-of-a-kind development. Objectively reporting what all sides involved in this complex were saying or thinking served several purposes. First, it helped analyze how they would factor into building a community that is truly inclusive of all its diverse habitants. Second, it exposed real concerns and fears that could hinder the development of a healthy and socially-inclusive community. Finally, it revealed what measures would need to be taken to capitalize on these initial intentions for community in order to make this ‘social experiment’ work.

A total of 27 semi-structured interviews were performed with the residents of the low-income units, the condo owners and the retail businesses/non-profits and other key stakeholders in the development of Woodward’s. The low-income tenants were recruited with the assistance of the partner agency, the condo owners were recruited through a poster in the lobby of the two condo towers, information papers randomly placed in mailboxes, the snowball effect and the condo residents’ Facebook page and the key stakeholders were personally contacted and asked to participate. Each cohort was asked the same questions (see Appendix 2). Staff at the partner agency were shadowed, common areas of the property were observed, key players in the governance of the development were identified and design aspects of the development analyzed.

The main themes are being reported to the community partner agency through this report. It is hoped that PHS will find this information useful in its planning processes and for ensuring that Woodward’s is, indeed, inclusive for its tenants. It is also hoped that everyone who was involved in this project and everyone who reads this report can use the information presented to realize the inclusive potential that this future community has.
“Woodward’s has long played a pivotal role in our city. It once provided food, household goods and employment to many people in the local community and beyond. Today, it is the focus of a neighbourhood’s hopes and dreams....”

(City of Vancouver 2007)
Woodward’s is a net-generator of social housing. Woodward’s is a net-generator of positive urban renewal for the economic vitality of Hastings Street.

“I really believe that integration is the only reason we’re going to get non-market housing built... because the government’s not funding it.”

“I hope it becomes a model for many projects and that people, regardless of their politics, will support this model of inclusivity rather than the other model of separating and trying to contain people with difficulties—which is the Downtown Eastside.”

Key Stakeholders

The City of Vancouver isn’t the only one with hopes and dreams for this redevelopment. Woodward’s was a 250-million-dollar effort that involved many stakeholders from developers to city planners to community advocates.

From the time the design was conceived, inclusivity and community were at the heart of the concept on which Woodward’s was built. When the developer competition was opened, certain stakeholders felt that they needed to make sure that whoever got the bid did not have the wrong motives. ‘Developer-driven’ solutions were something that the stakeholders did not want to see take over.

There was a deliberate focus on inclusivity in the design of the development. Stakeholders hoped that the public areas of Woodward’s would be welcoming to all and not similar to other places in the Downtown Eastside where some community members are discriminated against or excluded.

The fact that some community groups in the Downtown Eastside oppose the way Woodward’s was redeveloped was a concern for all stakeholders interviewed. Many felt that Woodward’s was not ‘true’ gentrification and that it was not displacing anybody. On the contrary, they felt that because it provided the resources for 200 on-site social housing units and a further 200 off-site units, that it was an asset to the affordable housing movement. They also felt that the economic benefits and activity it would bring would be beneficial to the neighbourhood by bringing it ‘balance’ and revitalization. Some felt discouraged and defensive about these attacks and hoped that the future success of Woodward’s would prove people wrong.

When considering the huge community engagement process and the commitment to an inclusive design, it is apparent that there was a great responsibility to the neighbourhood felt by all involved.
Doing ‘the right’ thing was stated as a major reason many of the stakeholders spoken to for this project chose to get involved. The need for conscience to play a role was also stated as important to many. The stakeholders saw Woodward’s as a microcosm of the city and really felt that its convenience, location, amenities and concept were ideal.

All of the stakeholders interviewed were incredibly optimistic about the potential for neighbourhood interaction within Woodward’s and the implications that would have on its future community. They had great faith in the fact that many people chose to buy into an ideal and hoped that those would be the types of people best suited to live in such diversity. They saw the public atrium and courtyard areas as places where people would ideally ‘mix.’

They highlighted the fact that there have been no major problems between people at Woodward’s since residents started moving in. They used this to stress that there really isn’t any ‘us vs. them’ going on between the neighbours and that that was an indication of what good was yet to come.

That is not to say that some didn’t foresee challenges. Some said that communication between the different groups living at Woodward’s was important and essential if the concept was to work. It was acknowledged that a community isn’t physical but spiritual and social and it would need to be properly nurtured in order to be healthy.

Stakeholders involved in Woodward’s all agreed that it would take up to three years to really tell if it was a success or not. As of May 2010, several major tenants have yet to move in. They stressed that no one will be able to say what it becomes until everyone has moved in and there is a real chance for community to form.

All stakeholders interviewed had great hopes for the future of the Woodward’s community. They hoped it would be a healthy part of the neighbourhood, a place where everyone feels included and a site of meaningful community engagement.

“I think pouring gasoline on the fire isn’t the answer anymore. It’s about getting the market and non-market and the developer and the social housing side all sitting at the table together.”

“I believe we’re all just people. If you look into the face of another and just see the humanity inside there’s a huge potential for us to get along.”

“I hope that it gets the recognition that it totally deserves as a model of inclusivity.”
All of the retail outlets and non-profits that participated in this project were local companies or initiatives. The fact that they were all started and were based in Vancouver gave them a stated interest in being involved in the redevelopment of such a landmark site. One felt that his company’s history in the city and the fact that his business was family-run would ensure that he would be treated with respect by Woodward’s customers. One retail participant felt that because he had other locations in the Downtown Eastside, his Woodward’s location was a perfect fit. The retail businesses prided themselves on building quality relationships with their customers and neighbours in other locations and felt that this reputation would follow them to their locations at Woodward’s.

Some of them were deliberate in choosing to be involved based on the role that they would be playing in the rejuvenation of the area. One retail participant felt a social obligation to be involved in the improvement of his city. They identified it as a unique market and were excited about being involved in the broader concept of diversity and inclusivity.

Many saw the future of the development in a positive light and foresaw increased vibrancy and growth. They all expressed interest in becoming an integral part of the future Woodward’s community. Some were well aware of the community that already exists in the Downtown Eastside and said that they were excited to be a part of that community feeling and to have the opportunity to build off of it. One retail participant hoped that the diversity of the people in Woodward’s would contribute to a level of inclusivity in the community. One said that he hoped to be part of a community in which everybody felt comfortable being a part of. Many had signed on for long-term lease agreements and were fully committed to being established members of the future community at Woodward’s.

Some of the retail participants addressed the issue of pricing and stated their plans to keep their prices competitive and relevant for the market they serve. Only one mentioned the fact that some people might not be able to afford its products but that it was open to working on solutions to this. Others were working with local community economic development enterprises and had committed to hiring a certain percentage of their staff from the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood. All of the participants said that they felt their role in Woodward’s was an important one and that they hoped it would contribute to the overall health and inclusivity of the future community there.
“We felt that it was a socially responsible decision to support this initiative.”

“Mixed community is not just about co-mingling on the sidewalk, it’s about co-mingling in the amenities.”

“We want people to meet here and talk.”

“We believe that as more and more tenants move into the development, there will be an increasing vibrancy and excitement in this corner of the downtown and a growing sense of community.”

“My vision for all my stores is to have community.”

“Our customers and neighbours have been great and we hope that we can be successful in becoming an integral part of the community.”

“A conscious effort is needed to thread together these communities and socially engineer so that it doesn’t become a site of ostracization for any of the groups that are on the site.”
Hopes and Expectations for Woodward’s: Community Perspectives
Reasons for Being There
I’ve come to learn that Abbott is like an invisible line.”
PHS Tenants

Having one’s own space complete with a kitchen and bathroom is something most people take for granted. Yet, the reality is that many low-income people in this city live in inadequate and substandard housing.

But this is now a reality for 125 people who were previously living in much worse housing. From the day the PHS started interviewing people to move into the low-income units at Woodward’s there was a certain excitement in the air. Some tenants felt like they had won the lottery and it was certainly life-changing for most.

There is no doubt that every person selected to occupy those spaces moved in with the highest intent to create it as their new and permanent home. Along with that intent was an wish to create or be included in a community at Woodward’s.

There were many reasons the tenants wanted to live in Woodward’s. From the ten participants, the following aspects were the most commonly mentioned.
Most of the PHS tenants came from other housing in the Downtown Eastside. Many described their previous housing as substandard, unstable and unsafe. The participants who had been living in the Downtown Eastside came from buildings that were so bad that the participants could never get a full night's sleep. Twenty-four-hour ‘craziness’, thefts, illegal entry, murders, suicides, open drug-use and trafficking were all things that led the tenants to feel uneasy in their dwellings. The safety and protection that they perceived the Woodward’s units to have was the largest deciding factor in their desire to live there. The fact that the PHS has a long history in the neighbourhood of helping people dealing with multiple barriers and/or concurrent health disorders reassured them. Two participants with mental health issues said that they were abused and taken advantage of in their last living environment and were hoping to be protected from further problems here. There was no longer a reason to be fearful as the units each locked properly and were self-contained. The participants stressed the advantage of having cooking and bathroom facilities within their unit so they didn’t have to leave the room if they didn’t want to. This lead to a greater feeling of safety as well because they had more freedom to decide their comings and goings and who could access their unit. The unit promised ‘protected independence’ to one tenant who felt especially vulnerable because of a physical disability. Another felt safe for the first time leaving her stuff in her room while she went out. Some tenants felt comforted that other people from former PHS units were their immediate neighbours and felt that they didn’t lose their original community by moving. The deciding factor to move into Woodward’s for one resident was the fact that she could now bring her grandchildren over, which she didn’t feel safe doing before. Several residents also commented on how the location, not just the building, were safer. Being located a few blocks further west on Hastings made them feel like they were taken out of the ‘unsafe’ part of town.

“In my last place, if I left stuff in my room it was guaranteed that it would disappear. Even with the room locked and the window closed.”

“I’m safer. People rip people off in other buildings and do whatever they can to get what they want.”

“My friends don’t have to worry about me being murdered or robbed anymore.”

SAFETY
The second biggest reason for wanting to live in the Woodward’s units was the fact that there were no bugs in them. The PHS took great precautions to ensure that Woodward’s would not have pest control issues akin to the rest of the area. They limited what tenants brought in from outside and personally laundered all of the tenants clothing before they moved in. These measures offered a further sense of security to many of the participants. They knew that their unit offered an opportunity to live in a better overall environment. Bedbugs are, especially, rampant in the Downtown Eastside. In addition to this challenge, some buildings also deal with infestations of cockroaches, mice and rats. Every tenant moving in from the neighbourhood mentioned the absence of bugs as a big reason for wanting to live there. The psychological impacts of bedbugs can be devastating. Tenants said that they often didn’t get proper sleep because of them and some even chose to sleep on the street instead of deal with them in the housing that they had. Tenants who were moving in from outside of the neighbourhood were relieved that they wouldn’t have to deal with this problem that has become notoriously associated with the area. Some people avoid looking for housing in this neighbourhood because of this issue and Woodward’s was seen as a positive change.

“I would tape up my sleeves and pant legs to prevent them from getting in while I slept. To this day, I get up and look at my arms and inspect them because they used to be like hamburger.

“The bugs would be all over you. I used to spray my room with bleach every night and then had to inhale it all night.”

“The first night here? I slept like a baby.”
The Downtown Eastside is host to one of the country’s largest open-drug markets. It is hard for anyone who lives there to escape the presence of illicit drugs and the effects they have on some people’s lives. For anyone dealing with addiction, the Downtown Eastside is a constant temptation. Yet, Woodward’s wasn’t considered part of the drug-scene to many PHS tenants beginning to live there. One tenant described moving into Woodward’s as finally moving into ‘the real world’ despite the fact that he came from a building only a few blocks away. Another resident came from a building right across the street and felt that it was somehow much farther away. One assumed, primarily because of its location, that there would be less drug-activity going on in the Woodward’s building and counted that as an asset. Several were recovering addicts and liked the idea of Woodward’s being removed from the usual drug culture they had been living in before. They emphasized how hard it is to stay away from drugs when they are all around you. The move to Woodward’s promised new hope to many. One resident said that he had been using crystal meth constantly over the last five years but hadn’t touched it since moving in. Even if the residents didn’t have addiction issues, they were glad that Woodward’s offered reprieve from drug-related behaviours such as theft, haggling, hoarding, tweaking, bumming money and petty crime. Often these participants said they suffered because of the people doing drugs around them. One was especially glad that he hadn’t seen any drug-use or trafficking in Woodward’s during his first two weeks and hoped it stayed that way.

“It’s hard to stay off of drugs when everyone you know is on them and you’re living in a hell-on-earth shithole.”

“I’ve had the opportunity a few times since moving here. It’s been welfare day. I’ve had money. I got $150 for moving allowance and I actually spent it on my apartment.”

“I’m out of the slum...almost.”
"This is a huge step up for me. It’s time to turn a new leaf and start fresh."

"It’s so nice to have a place you can look at and be proud of. Like, I could bring my mom here! She would say, ‘Oh, it’s beautiful.’"

"I’ve never lived in a brand-new anything. So, for me, that was huge. New year, new start."

Woodward’s was viewed as so much more than social housing to most of the PHS residents. They saw it as a chance to start over and to have a chance to create a home for themselves. Many now have a full, private bathroom and kitchen for the first time in a long time. Simple things like being able to shower once a day, do laundry, have a pet and having a place all to one’s self were things that Woodward’s offered the residents. The fact that Woodward’s was a new, quiet, and accessible building was a godsend to the participants in wheelchairs. One resident could barely get her wheelchair through the door in her last room. Knowing people and staff in the building was also helpful in that they had each other to depend on while transitioning into the new housing. One resident with addiction issues felt that this new start motivated him to try not to use as much as he did before. Several residents felt comfortable inviting friends and family over for the first time and one felt encouraged to start job hunting since he now had the appropriate space to bring work home. Living in the Woodward’s building also gave a few residents a new pride in their housing that gave them confidence to put their address on a resume—something they wouldn’t do before. One resident had recently started working part-time as a result of this new motivation. Woodward’s gave many of the residents a new balance in their lives and a new foundation off of which to live their lives. Some previous housing was so bad that the residents tried to stay away from home as much as possible. The Woodward’s units allowed them to stay home and enjoy their surroundings which many appreciated.
Finally, living in Woodward’s made most of the PHS tenants feel better about themselves and their future. One tenant said that he now has time to think about what he wants for his life whereas before, he was always worrying about just getting by in his unstable housing. It gave them motivation to take better care of themselves and make better choices. It reduced worries and stress-related migraines for one tenant, financial worries for another and emotional problems for yet another. One said that he now feels happy every single day. Most said they felt ‘lucky’ to have been selected to live there.

“I love living here. I know that much. I’m happy every single day. I still sometimes can’t believe I’m here.”

“I’m meeting a buddy today and I’m inviting him over. He’s going to come over. That’s something I didn’t do before. Little things like that.”

“It’s a spirit uplift. That’s the only thing I can come up with. It’s a boost to your soul. I’m happier. It’s going to help me in so many ways.”

“I love living here. I know that much. I’m happy every single day. I still sometimes can’t believe I’m here.”

“Better future and well-being”
“We’re invested. We sold our house to be here.”
Condo Owners

Living in downtown Vancouver is only a dream for some. When the Woodward’s condos went up for sale, they sold out immediately. This indicates just how valuable living and owning there is perceived.

Employees of the PHS and residents of the Downtown Eastside were given a pre-sale advantage over others. They were also sold units slightly below the market rate and contracted to maintain the units as their primary occupancy for at least one year. All of these measures were taken to ensure that people were investing in Woodward’s with the intention to contribute to the future community there. As a result, many of the condo owners who participated in this study felt that they bought into an ‘idea’ and were whole-heartedly committed to creating an inclusive community at Woodward’s.

There were many other reasons that condo owners wanted to live in Woodward’s. From the ten participants, the following aspects were the most commonly mentioned.
The fact that Woodward’s condos were affordable to someone looking to buy real estate was a reason most of the condo residents had for purchasing their unit. For some employees of the PHS and residents of the Downtown Eastside, this was even more true since they had the option to purchase during a pre-sale at a slightly discounted rate. For others moving from outlying areas of Metro Vancouver, living downtown was finally affordable. One condo owner had formerly lived in the Strathcona area of the Downtown Eastside and said that without the discounted rate, she would never have been able to afford to buy a condo. Other condo owners said that they could never have afforded to live in the area in any other condominium building. Several condo owners lived in the exact same neighbourhood before buying into Woodward’s and said that they couldn’t resist the deal and the opportunity to upgrade their housing and stay in their neighbourhood at an affordable rate.
Most of the condo residents referred to their new neighbourhood as Gastown and not the Downtown Eastside. Along with the name of their new neighbourhood came the promise of an edgy, artsy, entertainment-filled and ‘cool’ home. Many considered the area to be ‘up and coming’ and were happy to have gotten in when it was still accessible. Most stated that the location and area of the building was one of the most important advantages of living there. They were excited about all of the shops, restaurants, galleries and nightlife opportunities the area offered. Several found it important to state that they did not want to live in an area known for its ‘yuppies’ and consciously chose this area as part of their identity. Four condo owners mentioned the fact that they didn’t want the area to become like Yaletown or Coal Harbour and would actually consider moving if it did. For the ones who did call their new neighbourhood the Downtown Eastside, they considered Woodward’s an amenity and an asset to this historic neighbourhood. A few condo residents mentioned that they expected the neighbourhood to change, blossom, transition or bloom. It is important to note that it was the promise of this change that attracted them to Woodward’s. On the other hand, several condo residents lived in the Downtown Eastside previous to moving into Woodward’s. For these condo residents, loyalty to their neighbourhood and an upgrade on their previous housing was an important factor in their reasoning for buying in Woodward’s.

“I love Gastown and the diversity of people here. I came from a single-family neighbourhood where you may see a neighbour every couple of weeks and that would only be when they’re mowing their lawn. It feels like there’s something going on around here.”

“We made a very conscious decision that we didn’t want to live in a Yaletown-type community.”

“I’d lived in and around the DTES for ten years before and I wanted to remain here.”
The fact that Woodward’s has been designed with new urbanist design principles was a draw for many of the condo residents. They appreciated the walkability of the neighbourhood and found that they used their cars much less now that they lived there. A few talked about using their bicycles more since the design of Woodward’s has made that easier. Several condo residents worked in Gastown or other areas of the Downtown Eastside and were now able to walk to work. Many of the condo residents moved to Woodward’s from outlying cities in Metro Vancouver such as Langley and Mission exactly for the switch from a more suburban lifestyle. One resident said that she could now pick up bread, wine, flowers and some meat on her 5-minute-walk home from the Canada Line. To do the same where she was living before would have meant taking the car to three or four different places. Some of the condo residents said they no longer have to cross the Cambie Street Bridge to do their grocery shopping if they don’t want to. Most said that they would use the shops within Woodward’s on a weekly, if not daily, basis. Several condo residents mentioned the historical component of the Woodward’s project as another reason for wanting to be part of it. The central location was a bonus for many who could now rely easily on public transportation. To many, moving into Woodward’s signified a new lifestyle and to some this was, in fact, a new start.

“I’ve gotten rid of my car. I’m a two-minute walk from my work now.”

“When I go out with my friends on Saturday nights, I’m no longer one of those who has to run for the last Skytrain.”

“I don’t have to get in my car and drive across the bridge to buy groceries. Everything is so convenient.”
None of the condo owners were unaware of the concept of inclusivity and mixed-income community that Woodward’s was conceived under. Most, in fact, were fully conscious of the goals of it and the potential implications. Not every participant moved to Woodward’s because of this concept but almost all spoke of it during their interviews. After living in other cooperative and communal housing situations, a few of the condo residents moved into Woodward’s anticipating a built-in community. Yet, almost immediately they realized that this community still had to be created and already faced imminent threats. Others realized that there were already significant barriers to forming that community but that they wanted to be involved in the effort. Some expressed doubts as to how all of the different people involved in Woodward’s would successfully integrate but said that they were willing to get involved if integration attempts were formed. One condo resident thought it would be dangerous for Woodward’s to become its own community separate from the rest of the Downtown Eastside. He hoped that the complex itself would be integrated into the larger community that already exists in Gastown and the Downtown Eastside. A few condo owners expressed concern over the treatment of the low-income people within Woodward’s and in the general neighbourhood. Several condo owners were internally conflicted over the perceived gentrification taking place in the area and their role in it. One said that his friends looked down on him for buying into Woodward’s for that reason. He hoped that the fact that social housing was included in this development would offset that phenomenon to some extent. Another hoped that it wouldn’t have a negative effect on the area. Overall, the idea of having an integrated, diverse and mixed community within Woodward’s where all were included and involved appealed to most of the condo residents interviewed.
Moving into Woodward’s meant a many things to the different condo residents but it was definitely a big change for all and a shift in how they live life. This condo was for several owners, their first home. For others, it was the first time living in the downtown of a major city. For one, it was a significant lifestyle change that she never imagined would happen. For another, it was her first time living on her own. Two of the residents were moving out of homes shared with ex-partners and starting new phases in their lives. For one, it meant a considerable downsizing in exchange for the benefits of the type of lifestyle it offered. For another, it was the efforts of all his hard work from the past paying off. For many, the condo at Woodward’s was a deliberate move into a preconceived notion of community that they felt they were lacking in their former residences. They came with the motivation and drive to help foster that idea of what they wanted this community to be. Most could foresee a part of their lives being devoted to this future community.

“Building community here is an interesting challenge in that it just being a series of people living in condos. For me, that is an exciting opportunity.”

“I’m just so excited. This is the first place I’ve ever owned.”

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“It’s a level of luxury that I’m quite uncomfortable with and wouldn’t expect in my life and don’t feel it’s necessary. I’m very aware that my friends and family don’t have the same access to that luxury but I feel excited at the opportunity and extremely privileged.”

“Building community here is an interesting challenge in that it just being a series of people living in condos. For me, that is an exciting opportunity.”

“I’m just so excited. This is the first place I’ve ever owned.”

NEW KIND OF LIFE/COMMUNITY
Expectations
“When the ‘them and us’ goes away, there’ll be interaction like anywhere else.”
Whenever someone moves into a new space, there’s uncertainty about how certain things will be. This is especially true for this development because of its size and its physical and economic impact on the neighbourhood.

For most PHS tenants, this is the first time they will be part of an intentional community with middle and high-income earners. It is also the first time they have had truly adequate housing in a long time. In addition, new retail and non-profit spaces are now part of their environment for the first time in many cases.

The PHS tenants had a lot of expectations for what this next phase in their life would entail. The following are some that they had surrounding the retail/non-profit spaces, the public atrium and interaction with their neighbours.
The general consensus among the PHS residents was that they would be frequenting the retail/non-profit spaces in the Woodward's development. They expected to be able to afford at least some of the products in the grocery store, drug store and cafes. They did not, however, expect to use the cafes much as coffee was often not in their budget. Some stated that they would probably continue buying their products at Army & Navy where they could most afford to shop. Many were excited about the retail spaces but some feared that they would be discriminated against while using them. One resident didn’t think he would feel comfortable shopping in them because they were geared to a higher class. But the feelings on this were varied. One resident said that he doubted retail outlets cared much about where the money came from and another thought that he might be suspected as a thief or shoplifter. A few residents expressed interest in taking part in any events or lectures put on by W2 or SFU.

“A store’s a store for me.”

“There doesn’t seem to be any intermixing capacity other than to go to the stores.”

“They probably have thoughts in the back of their mind that we’re going to steal everything in their shop that’s not nailed down but once they realize that that’s not the case, it’ll be okay.”
The public atrium space was well-known already to most residents and most had at least walked through it since moving in. Some commented on the art inside, the basketball hoop or the stairwell and some didn’t have much of an opinion on the space at all. One PHS tenant said she liked to walk her dog through it and had seen a lot of people from the wider community walking through it. Some saw it as a meeting place and good for holding public events. Most said that they would be willing to attend public events held in it and especially ones that would facilitate them meeting their neighbours in the condo towers. A few participants could see themselves using it as a meeting place but most said they probably wouldn’t spend much time in it otherwise.

"It's just an atrium. It's just a wide-open space."

"It doesn't give you the feeling like you're out of place when I walk through with my ripped jeans."

"I don’t see an atrium drawing and rewriting socially-stratified mix. If that's what they're relying on for social interaction, I just don't see it."
Interaction

It was hard for most residents to be able to predict interaction with the other residents in the complex. They saw Woodward’s as too big to foster interaction. One said that he doubted any interaction would happen and that the development wouldn’t be ‘as mixed as some say.’ One resident said he wouldn’t have any idea who was who and that he didn’t foresee any problems between them and others. Some residents did have fears when it came to this subject. One resident said that he predicted the tolerance level of the condo owners would be low and another thought the condo residents would be ‘snobby’ and ‘not like those on welfare.’ But most said that they were interested in the idea and expressed interest in meeting the other people, but most weren’t sure how. One resident said that she wouldn’t even consider them as ‘neighbours’ until they met and interacted. There definitely seemed to be an open door when it came to interaction between these two groups.

“There are people buying condos here that are not going to like us. That’s a fact. Someone that’s paying $400,000 is not going to be happy about living with people on welfare.”

“It’s going to encourage people to not be so close-minded about putting people in the same community like the high-income and the low-income. I think we can all be at peace with each other and be good neighbours and respect each other.”

“I hardly see them. They’re probably going to treat me like anyone else. They have no reason not to.”
“You see familiar faces and you say ‘hi’ but I’m more familiar with the security guards and the construction workers than I am with my neighbours right now.”
For many of the participants who chose to buy condos in Woodward’s, the move was much more than an ordinary move. Many had relocated from suburban areas and would be adjusting to a completely new lifestyle. Others would be dealing with a new phase of life.

A huge leap of faith had to be taken by most condo owners who participated in this project. Many had bought their units three years before being allowed to physically occupy them. Choosing to be a part of a massive regeneration effort was a big deal to most of them and the implications of that weighed on many of their minds.

Now that they have moved in, the condo owners still have building anticipation and expectations about living in Woodward’s. The following are some that they had surrounding the retail/non-profit spaces, the public atrium and interaction with their neighbours.
One of the reasons the condo owners most liked living at Woodward’s was the convenience that the retail stores provided them. Many already shopped at them on a daily basis. Most emphasized how important it was to have a grocery store so close and counted it as one of Woodward’s most valuable assets. Many mentioned how they appreciated the fact that the retail spaces were local and thought that they would support them more because of that. One particularly liked the fact that the retail outlets seemed to be attempting to be reasonably priced and accessible to the community. She said she would continue to patronize them as long as they were. Everyone expected to use the retail spaces and cafes regularly but would probably buy larger items at larger stores further away. Many also said that they were excited about SFU and W2 opening and said that they would be supporting any events put on by them.

“I don’t think anything is missing from Woodward’s. I will use everything here.”

“I’m looking forward to W2’s cafe and I plan to check out some of their shows.”

“I’m worried about the pubs. They’re going to be loud and annoying.”
Everyone had something to say about the public atrium. Most knew that it was designed to be the space where people would interact but few could foresee that actually happening. Yet, many participants could foresee themselves using the atrium to sit, read, meet people, play basketball, walk their dog, check out displays and have coffee but not until the weather warms up. One participant said that it needed more plants, warmth and art for her to want to use it. Another said has used it as a meeting place but that it was still a construction site as far as he was concerned. One was concerned that the atrium was closed for a number of hours and that that made it inaccessible. She also said that while she liked the concept, she hadn’t seen it come to fruition. One condo owner was really anticipating the opening of W2 and its cafe (which will open onto the atrium) and said he would be supporting it and spending time in its cafe for the atmosphere. Only one of the condo owners mentioned using the atrium for creating or building community but all said that they would probably attend any events put on there for that purpose.

“It doesn’t seem particularly inviting for the public. It’s like a big, concrete wasteland!”

“My dog loves it. He pulls me over to it.”

“I think it’ll be buzzing when SFU opens.”
Most of the condo residents thought it was too early to say how interactions with their neighbours may be. When asked about their neighbours, most spoke about the other units on their floor or, less commonly, about the other condo tower. Some had already had negative interactions with people in their condo tower and were disappointed with the level of interaction amongst neighbours. Most of them had only had interactions with the people on their floor and some had met their neighbours through the use of social media. When asked if they considered the PHS residents their ‘neighbours’ most said yes but some weren’t sure how they would even tell who lived there. One condo resident said that she had attended several strata meetings already and the PHS residents hadn’t been mentioned. Most condo residents were more concerned with interior deficiencies in their unit or direct relations with their fellow condo residents than they were with the fact that the PHS residents were across the way. One participant said that the Downtown Eastside already has a great community so he didn’t know if the PHS residents would care to form another with the condo residents. Another thought that if some had mental illness that might stifle interaction. One condo resident worried most about how other people in the neighbourhood or in the condo towers may treat the street people or marginalized people in and around Woodward’s. Two condo owners had witnessed the harassment of such people since moving in. Many of the condo residents thought that future interactions would only happen in the elevators, in the public atrium and in the courtyard. Several mentioned that they would like to have more interaction and that the only way this would happen would be if someone organized some events like open houses, BBqs, potlucks, etc.

“I don’t know who lives where and who doesn’t...everyone is just everyone. I might have interacted with them already. Maybe if there was a way to bring all the people together...but for now, I’m really not sure.”

“I’m in my own world most of the time.”

“I feel no relationship with the shorter building at all. And as far as the non-market housing goes, they have their own entrance. I very rarely see people going in and out. I even know a couple of people who live in there but I haven’t seen them yet.”
Hopes for the Future
Out of all the people spoken to in this study, the PHS residents tended to have the biggest hopes for this housing. Many saw it as a life-changing opportunity to get ahead and only wanted every aspect of the situation to work out for them. Their hopes ranged from simple, personal outcomes to grander hopes of success for the whole concept of mixed-income neighbourhoods. Most tenants wanted everyone involved to simply co-exist peacefully. One simply wanted to be able to keep this housing far into the future. Another viewed Woodward’s as a fulfillment of his only hope, to have better housing. A few mentioned fears that they would be looked down upon and hoped that that wouldn’t transpire. Some took it a step further and hoped that there would be as much interaction with the neighbours as possible and programming to help foster those relationships. Almost every resident said that they would be willing to attend community/neighbourhood events with the hope that they would meet their neighbours and start getting to know each other. Community was a hope for many.

The PHS residents overwhelmingly wanted Woodward’s to be a part of the positive community of the Downtown Eastside and didn’t want the negative aspects of the Downtown Eastside to become a problem. Many PHS residents hoped that Woodward’s would become a model for future mixed housing developments and that it would offer proof that people from all different backgrounds can live together. There was a general view that if Woodward’s worked as an example, many more low-income residents of the Downtown Eastside would be able to access better housing in a better environment as they had.

“I hope it acts as a model. I hope it works because it’s an interesting idea mixing this kind of mix. If this kind of thing spread, I think it would break down a lot of barriers.”
“I’m hoping they’ll ignore me or be polite. What I don’t need is people looking down on me which nobody has yet.”

“Hopefully we’ll just be one big melting pot.”

“Without the high-income people, we wouldn’t have a lot of the things we have in this neighbourhood. So it takes both. I just hope it (gentrification) doesn’t get rid of all our housing.”

“I just hope that there are some programs or events where people do have interaction and if they choose to develop relationships or friendships then I’m all for it.”

“If we just start mingling with each other. I don’t know if that’s a possibility but to get to know each other and realize we’re not anything scary. We’re just everyday people trying to make it. Trying to get by and survive.”

“I hope it turns into a community of like-minded people that don’t much care how much money we make as we don’t much care how much they make—at least I don’t.”
“I hope that everything works out and that it can maintain itself and show that commercial and market and non-market developments can work out.”

“I hope to live here until I retire.”

“I hope there’s no ‘us vs. them’ in the future and that they (PHS tenants) aren’t blamed for any problems that arise or scapegoated.”

“I really want to meet others and I hope that everyone will be respectful.”

“I hope that it succeeds and I hope that more people will get to know what Woodward’s is about and that more people will give the respect to the people in the Downtown Eastside that they deserve.”

“I hope that the dream is actually realized.”

“I hope that the mix of social and market housing will offset the gentrification.”

“I just hope it doesn’t change the neighbourhood.”
The condo owners who were interviewed for this project were very hopeful for what their future community would become. They hoped that an inclusive and integrated community would form. They hoped for resolutions to the internal problems they were experiencing in the condo towers and for better relations with their immediate neighbours. Several said that they wished more people in the condo towers would have as much respect and pride as they did in their home. Many said that they wanted to get to know the PHS tenants if it was at all possible. Most hoped for the success of the concept Woodward’s was developed under and that they were part of that somehow. Many hoped that Woodward’s would be good for the general community and not have a negative effect on it. There was a hope for greater respect for the neighbourhood and the people living in it. One participant hoped that it wouldn’t push out any poor people in the neighbourhood and another hoped that her fellow condo dwellers wouldn’t blame everything bad that happens on the low-income residents in the area. Overall, there was a hope for interaction amongst condo dwellers and between them and the PHS tenants and other low-income unit tenants. One condo owner said that she was unclear as to how the social housing aspect of the development worked and hopes to have a chance to find out more information. Several condo owners said that they would like this model to be successful so that further social housing can be built and a solution could be found to Vancouver’s housing crisis. One went even further and said that she hoped this could some how spark the beginning of a breakdown of the segregation of social classes and help people become more aware of social issues in the future. Another added that she hoped that it may be a model for social and vertical integration that would decrease the difficulty and complexity of living in diversity.

“I hope the city can use more strategies like they did here to spread the riches around a bit and ensure more social housing.”
“See if we can get together and get to know who’s living here. They can make friends and they don’t have to stay in their rooms all the time. Some of them never had a real good home so it’s kind of scary.”

“I think we’re under a microscope to some extent by the money people. I don’t think they will tolerate as much as they would from one of their own neighbours. I think there’s a certain reservation about whether this is going to work and the fact that they have power and we don’t.” The flip side is that it might keep this place honest.”

“The people I know here are more than willing to do what it takes to get along with them.”

“I don’t really care if buddy wears a suit to go to work or if buddy wears his dirty clothes to go to welfare. It makes no difference to me. As long as they don’t look down on me, I won’t look down on them.”

“Any drug dealer can buy a condo. People who buy condos don’t have to sit in front of a board and justify why they should be able to live here.”

“As long as everyone’s doing what they’re supposed to be doing and not doing anything crazy, then by all rights we should get along great...hopefully.”
“Can’t we all get along?’...Kind of sums it up.”

“Once everyone in the condos realize that we’re not going to come digging through the floor trying to steal from them and our side realizes that those guys aren’t going to have cops phoned on us every time they see us in the elevator or outside smoking a joint...once both sides realize that’s the way it is, it’ll be fine.”

“I think everyone does feel already that there’s a connection to each other but I don’t see everyone holding hands or anything like that.”

“I don’t think the market people and the non-market people are ever going to be fully integrated as one great big society and party together and hang out in the rec room. It’s just like asking why don’t I belong to the Arbutus Club? I’m just not interested. Even if I had a million dollars I wouldn’t want to belong to a stuffy club like that.”

“I think a lot of people are going to be surprised. There’s going to be a lot less problems than people expect there’ll be.”

“I would like to see BBQs, potlucks, etc...activities that would facilitate meeting everyone and I would love to have them on the 43rd floor (Club W). I’m sure some of my neighbours would disagree but I think we should all be able to share it and enjoy it.”

“It may take awhile but you can’t live near somebody and see them every day and not say hello.”
Conclusion

The City of Vancouver has stated that Woodward’s is “the focus of a neighbourhood’s hopes and dreams” (City of Vancouver 2007). Whether or not this is true would have been impossible to say without speaking directly to the people currently involved and living in the development. The hopes and expectations of some of the diverse stakeholders, low-income housing tenants and condo owners recently moved in have now been documented through this report.

Using the policy concept of social inclusion and an inclusive community framework, what everyone had to say can be used to make inferences about what factors are necessary to make their future community truly inclusive of all its diverse members. Some of the quotes also revealed fears and concerns that may act as obstacles to future cohesion. Finally, this project has allowed for the imagination of measures that can be taken to capitalize on the intent many have here to create a inclusive and integrated community.

Many elements of an inherently inclusive community are found in the pure design of Woodward’s. The different people from different socio-economic levels show how diverse it is. The partnership of the private and public sectors and their commitment to providing social resources is an example of the fact that its deeply invested in the community. It is naturally a safe environment where everyone feels secure in their housing. The physical proximity of the two different types of housing make this development naturally integrative and it is accessible and sensitive in that an array of services and supports are nearby.

Areas of the inclusion framework that need improvement are cooperative, equitable, participatory and interactive. Diverse people have been brought together by the Woodward’s redevelopment but they haven’t been given the space or manner to work together. Life at Woodward’s guarantees that everyone has decent living conditions but there has yet to be a way for its residents to develop their capacities and participate fully in community life. In order for meaningful participation to take place, community members need to have an effective voice in the governance of the entire complex, not just in their respective dwellings. Finally, the chance to celebrate community life in an interactive way is missing.

The feelings of the participants in this project reflect what is necessary for the creation of an inclusive community on this site. It was obvious that both the PHS tenants and the condo owners had much hope for their future community. Similar values were identified in the reasons why both wanted to live there and an array of expectations about their experience at Woodward’s were shared. It was also apparent that there was a huge willingness on the part of all involved, to interact and get to know each other. The elements missing from the inclusivity framework at Woodward’s can be achieved if the hopes and expectations illustrated through this project and report are proactively acted upon.

This hope for interaction is of utmost significance. In recent studies of regenerated social housing developments in Scotland, it was found that when more affluent residents are introduced, social interaction decreased between the home owners and social housing residents (Akinson & Kintrea 2000). In another study, it was found that limited contact occurred between social housing tenants and home owners in ten mixed-income communities in England (Jupp 1999). Because of this limited interaction, it was concluded that mixed-income communities are unlikely to yield the expected benefits that they often promise (Jupp 1999).

The overall hope for successful integration should also be highlighted. This relates to some existing research on ‘mixed-income communities.’ From the perspective of social housing residents in an Australian study, regeneration attempts that have the goal of forming ‘mixed-income communities’ often serve to increase awareness of income and class differences rather than leading to frictionless integration(Arthurson 2002). Mixed-income communities were found to be most supported by the residents who earned the least income and less by the middle-income earners who tended to want to distance themselves from the low-income residents in the strata below them (Biggins & Hassan 1998).

Most of the participants interviewed had fears, concerns and insights about living there. They wondered how interaction between the diverse groups would happen and they expressed interest in both the ‘inclusive’ and ‘mixed’ concepts behind the development. Finally, they all agreed that it was too early to say whether these philosophies would be successful or not.

It may be too early to tell, but it’s definitely not too early to start trying. Woodward’s has the potential to be a truly diverse and inclusive community. Yet, the creation of community at Woodward’s will not be easy. In addition to considering the points above, the PHS will need to take a proactive approach to integrating its tenants with the rest of the development and to fostering relationships between its tenants and the condo owners. It must also ensure that its tenants are treated properly by the retail tenants by establishing a strong relationship with the owners of such spaces and having an open channel of communication. Furthermore, factors that affect the surrounding area also present challenges to the formation of the Woodward’s community and for its successful integration into the wider community (See Appendix 3) and cannot be ignored.
References


Appendix One
Example of Community Opposition

THE RIPPLE EFFECTS OF

WOODWARDS

1. Land values increase
2. More real estate speculation
3. Hotel rents increase
4. Hotels close for renovations or sale
5. More evictions & homelessness
6. Stores serving low income residents are forced out
7. Yuppie stores move in
8. More security guards & police harassment
9. City subsidy for Woodwards chain stores
10. Community assets will be lost

To learn about gentrification in the Downtown Eastside, check out www.ccapvancouver.wordpress.com
Appendix Two
Interview Questions

1. Why do/did you want to live/work in the Woodward’s development?

2. How do/did you feel moving into/working in the Woodward’s development?

3. What do you think it’ll be like living/working there a year from now when everyone is in and all the spaces are open?

4. What do you think about the different stores/retail businesses going in?

5. What do you think about the public atrium space?

6. How do you think your neighbours/customers/clients will treat you? Interact with you?

7. What advantages will living/working here provide you?

8. Do you think there’ll be any challenges associated with living/working here?

9. What do you hope for the future of this housing development?
Appendix Three
Woodward’s and Surrounding Area:
Exploring the Connection Between Urban Form, Social Interaction and Community

Tanya Fink
MA (Social Planning) Candidate
University of British Columbia
Background

"Many elements of an inherently inclusive community are found in the pure design of Woodward’s. Diverse people have been brought together by the Woodward’s redevelopment but they haven’t been given the space or manner to work together. Life at Woodward’s guarantees that everyone has decent living conditions but there has yet to be a way for its residents to develop their capacities and participate fully in community life. In order for meaningful participation and interaction to take place, community members need opportunities to meet each other. Finally, the chance to celebrate community life in an interactive way is missing.” (Fink 2010)

• The Woodward’s redevelopment is a mix of market and non-market housing

• For the Downtown Eastside, an area that has been predominantly low-income throughout Vancouver’s history, a significant increase in middle or high-income earners has implications that will have to be, inevitably, addressed

• There is concern from the community that this redevelopment be inclusive of the existing low-income community

• It has been deemed essential that the future of our communities benefit from a social inclusion framework for shaping infrastructure (Clutterbuck & Novick 2003)

• ‘Integrative’, ‘cooperative’ and ‘participatory’ are key components of Clutterbuck & Novick’s aforementioned framework

• These concepts include bringing people together in accessible community spaces that support social interaction and community activity, including celebrating community life (Clutterbuck & Novick 2003)

• There is also concern for metropolitan areas to be able to create a sense of community (Lozano 1990)

• It is difficult to foster the requisite social contact needed in mixed-income developments in order to reap the benefits of integration (Arthurson 2002)

• In Scotland, when affluent residents were introduced, social interaction decreased between the home owners and the social housing residents in some mixed-income communities (Akinson & Kintrea 2000)

• In England, it was found that limited contact occurred between social housing tenants and homeowners in ten mixed-income communities (Jupp 1999)

• In Australia, mixed-income communities often serve to increase awareness of income and class differences rather than leading to frictionless integration (Arthurson 2002)

• Aspects of the public realm are seen, theoretically, as contributing to increased resident interaction and, therefore, sense of community (Talen 2000)

• In order for an inclusive community to form at Woodward’s, social interaction and a sense of community are necessary
Areas Analyzed

New Urbanist design principles are predicated on the role of public space in promoting resident interaction and sense of community (Talen 2000)
Aspects Measured in the Relationship Between Social Sustainability and Urban Form

- Neighbourhood Pride and Attachment
- Social Interaction
- Safety
- Neighbourhood Environmental Quality
- Satisfaction with Home
- Residential Stability
- Participation in Groups
- Use of Neighbourhood Facilities

(Talen 2000)
Housing—Highly dense residential with strong residential integration with streetscape and retail spaces. Mostly hotel buildings with Single Room Occupancy units for low-income singles. Several high-income, luxury condo buildings as well. Very few gardens, yards or terraces but several community parks and gardens closeby.

Streets—Strong social purpose, particularly in this area. Street life is very obvious and vivid but socially stratified. Block sizes small. Entire blocks with no interaction and very little housing or opportunity for interaction. Many streets shut down due to decline.

Retail—Large number of retail and cafe, pub and restaurant space. Much of the new retail is not accessible to the low-income population in the area.

Public Spaces and Gathering Places—High number of non-profits, several health clinics, dentists, community centres and galleries. Ample public areas to promote sense of community but nature of most are geared to the low-income population.

Green Space—On the periphery with the exception of Pigeon Park on the corner of Hastings and Carrall. More socially diverse interactions in the green spaces on the periphery.

Transportation—Major bus routes passing through Cordova, Hastings and Pender. Stops at every block. Traffic congestion high most times of day along Hastings. High use of public transportation. Passengers waiting at most stops. Much foot traffic.

Interaction—Most interaction occurs in informal market in front of recycling depot on Hastings, in the lanes, on street corners and in the green spaces. Very little interaction at Woodward’s during the day. More in the late afternoon. Mostly singles in this neighbourhood and average age is early 40s. Most people live above the ground floor. Local services and transportation high.

Safety—Most living in this area are single males, younger people and renters. Area is poor. Open drug-market and illicit activities within view at most times in Eastern section of area analyzed. Inner-city location next to downtown core. Grid pattern to streets.

Neighbourhood Environmental Quality—Highly density, directly on several through routes, and high buildings throughout. Social housing, poverty and low-income earners dominate. Within Woodward’s there is sufficient maintenance and care of the buildings. Surrounding area is the focus of municipal revitalization strategy.

Satisfaction with Home—No detached housing and very few gardens. High amount of social renters and small units.

Residential Stability—High density. Lack of gardens. Very high turn around for many of the residential units. Many units at Woodward’s unoccupied. Unstable housing prevails in this area.

Participation in Groups—Mixed-use within Woodward’s and some SROs which is seen to promote community. Not everyone can use the retail spaces within Woodward’s. High levels of community activism outside of Woodward’s. Negative lobbying against Woodward’s exists. Some high-income earners being introduced to predominantly low-income neighbourhood.

Use of Neighbourhood Facilities—Close to city centre. Large amount of non-profits. Walkable and part of transport hub. Many renters and culture of using neighbourhood services apparent. Those not from the area may feel uncomfortable or not have a need for certain services. Contrast between traditional services and new ones opening. Affordability questionable.
Disinvestment and economic decline. Gentrification and introduction of new social classes.

Long stretches of ‘dead zones.’ Blocks with zero interaction or opportunities for it. Large spans of parkades. Empty lots awaiting redevelopment.

“The translation between the design of the public realm and sense of community is predicated on the existence of underlying social factors beyond the control of urban design.” (Talen 2000)

Locked green space and shut down opportunities for contact. Overall sense of neighbourhood insecurity.

High number of low-end drinking establishments often attached to SRO buildings.

Part of a greater area of intense community activism and anti-poverty demonstrations.

Open drug-market and homelessness on streets and in lanes.
Implications for Woodward’s

- Design principles (New Urbanist) set Woodward’s up for success
- It is too early to see if the design of Woodward’s will actually foster the necessary social interaction to create community. Right now, it is not a site of noticeable interaction. The area around Woodward’s is the quietest and has the least interaction
- There are several ‘public’ spaces within Woodward’s that are not accessible to everyone or at all times (ie the atrium and the gym)
- Green space is lacking within Woodward’s
- Woodward’s is set within a pre-existing community that has strong sense of community which may make it more difficult to integrate. Furthermore, there are groups in that community who oppose the very existence of Woodward’s
- Retail spaces and other spaces with opportunity for interaction are not accessible or appropriate for all who live in the area
- Sense of insecurity in the area hampers its ability to create or allow a diverse community
- In order to make the integration within Woodward’s successful, social interaction must be fostered within the development and outside of it
- Woodward’s is set in an area with visible and striking effects of years of economic decline. It’s role as a revitalization agent must be carefully balanced with its possible gentrifying effects in order to successfully integrate into the community at large and be socially sustainable
- Whether or not Woodward’s can become a valued part of this neighbourhood is vital to the future inclusivity within it and around it
- The biggest challenge for Woodward’s is for its residents to be able to successfully deal with the social factors that precede it
References


Tanya Fink is a first year Masters Candidate in Social Planning at UBC’s School of Community and Regional Planning. Her major areas of focus are affordable housing, homelessness and social sustainability. She graduated with a BA in Sociology from UBC in 2009. Prior to that she worked for Habitat for Humanity Greater Vancouver and taught English as a Second Language. She also holds certificates in professional photography and journalism.

Being born and raised in East Vancouver and growing up on welfare has shaped her journey as a social advocate and activist for the marginalized, the homeless and the poor. She firmly believes in rights-based approaches that ensure all those who wish to live in Vancouver can. She is a concerned citizen who is dedicating her career to the betterment of her city. She first heard of the Portland Hotel Society five years before going back to school and partly credits them with inspiring her to do more with her life. She chose to work on this project for that reason.

She currently works as a coordinator for the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy and as a research assistant on a project focused on food provision and well-being in homeless shelters and supportive housing. She sits on the Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House Community Board and is a member of the GVSS Homeless Voices Working Group. She will be doing an internship with the City of Vancouver’s Housing Centre in her second year and volunteers once a week at First United Church Mission’s emergency homeless shelter.

She still lives in East Van and prays every month that her rent doesn’t go up.