

# **Sexuality and the City:**

**Exploring gaybourhoods and the urban village form in Vancouver, BC.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

A case study of Vancouver's West End neighbourhood examines the cultural, structural, economic and political impacts of a glbtt (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and two-spirited) community and a gay urban village on its city. This work also queries the role of municipal government in the regulation and maintenance of the social composition and identity of a neighbourhood. Finally, the future of gay urban villages is discussed as their role in promoting solidarity and safety transitions toward a commercial and nodal one.

This research involved three local key informant interviews and nine community residents who participated as photographers in a community visual analysis. Results unveiled a neighbourhood intrinsically well suited to serving a transient gay male community with an increasing dispersion of the identifying demographic.

For the foreseeable future the significance of the Davie Village in the socio-sexual landscape of Vancouver appears secure through the nodal nature of gay retail, bars and services, reinforced by business interests. As an urban typology supporting a comparatively young glbtt culture, the gay urban village plays a unique role in the city, providing spaces of experimentation and invention — a stage for new systems of cultural (ex)change to emerge.

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## DEDICATION

*To Mom, Dad, Karen, Liz, Russ, Bryna, Paul and Mike*

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# 1 | INTRODUCTION

Gay urban villages (GUVs) are well established in some of the largest cities in the Western world. Their rise has come as a result of a bevy of cultural, economic, structural, and political elements that have shifted urban landscapes to cater to sexualities as cultural groups. Many cities have recently begun to recognise and celebrate their gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and two-spirited (glbtt) communities while other cities require glbtt communities to vigilantly defend their space. Is this disparity simply a result of social politics or is there a critical mass at which a gay urban village becomes an economic or political force?

Through the careful consideration of three key questions, I have endeavoured to discover how urban form affects, and is affected by sexuality. Through examining Vancouver's West End neighbourhood as a visible manifestation of queer space, I have been able to explore the forces and factors involved in the emergence of this particular space as a gay urban village. By examining gay urban villages as a visible manifestation of queer space, I have investigated the theoretical implications of queer considerations in contemporary planning and believe there are lessons found in GUVs that can be applied to revitalisation efforts, place-making and community-building on a much wider scale. My goal is to

heighten awareness of queer space for municipal planners and the general public and complement insights from human geography, and gender studies.

## 1.1 Key Research Questions

This work was predicated on three major components posed as questions:

- 1) What cultural, economic, structural, and political impacts do gay neighbourhoods have on urban areas?
- 2) Do city governments formally or informally sanction these areas? If so, how, and why? What benefits might municipal governments receive?
- 3) What are the future implications for queer urban structure?

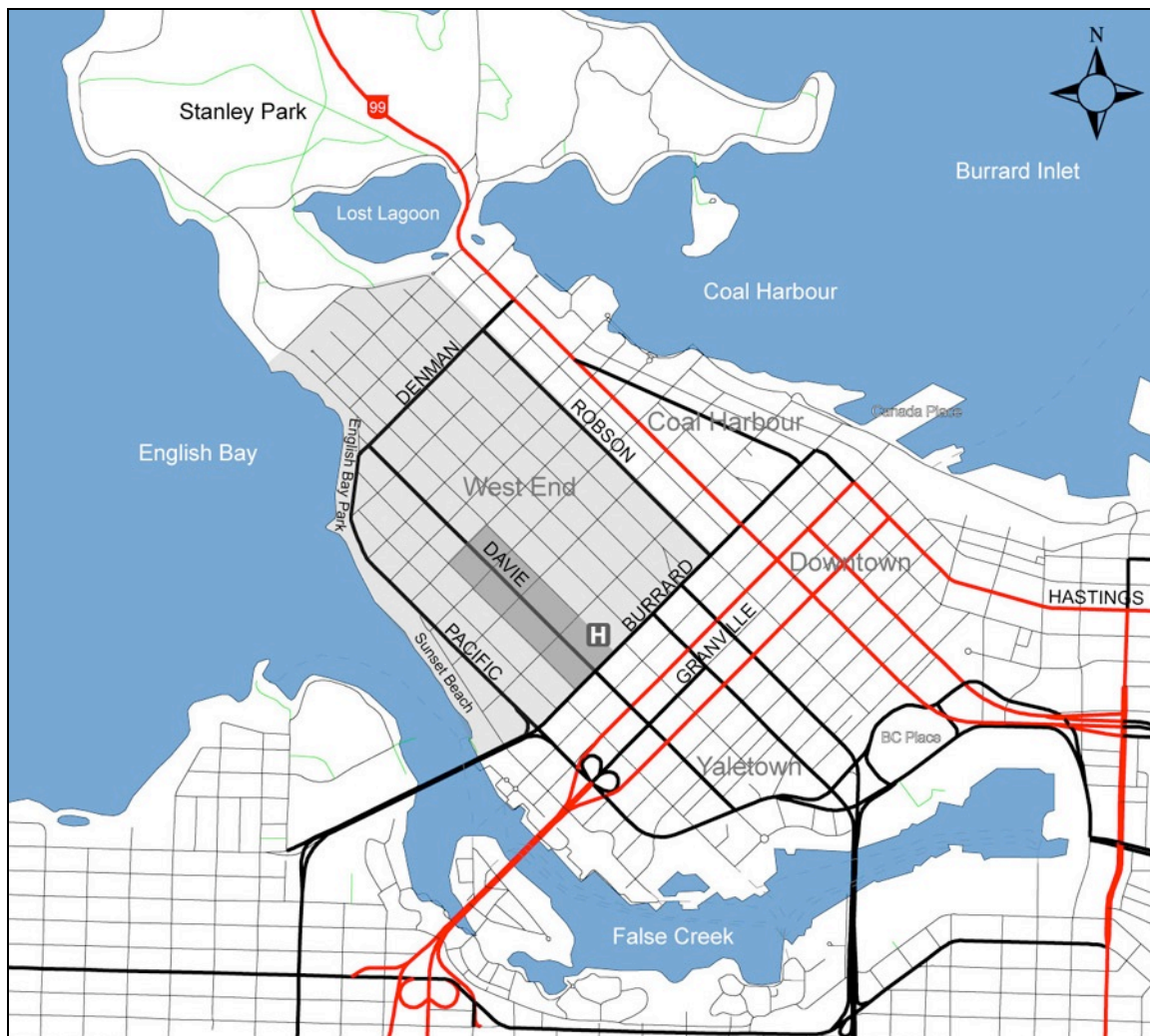
Supplementary to these key questions, I have framed the research as a way to uncover what planners need to understand about these communities and how to interact with them. In conceiving the future of planning as a people-oriented profession and not solely spatial and physical, it is important to recognize the barriers and opportunities planners create and how planning inhibits or contributes to neighbourhood cultural development.

The future of GUVs has not been widely considered in recent literature, but a critical understanding of the role these places have played in the city and how that role is changing is vital to their ongoing success as desirable urban neighbourhoods. If, as Forsyth (2001) and Sibalís (2004) suggest, gay enclaves were created as a social and

political reclamation of urban territory, may growing assimilation, acceptance, and political leverage negate the need for the enclaved gay community?

## **1.2 Scope and Purpose**

This thesis responds to these questions through a case study of Vancouver's West End (Fig.1), encompassing the Davie Village, Western Canada's only visibly concentrated gay community. Although the view to understanding gay urban villages and queer space is much wider, the research is rooted in the local circumstances of this community. As a prominent gay neighbourhood in Canada, its history shares the timeline of many larger gay communities, especially in the United States. Thus the lessons learned may have relevance beyond its borders. An historical overview of this community examined structural changes to the area through politics, planning, community organizations and local circumstances. Interviews with community members and local officials focused on the first and second key questions accompanied by an analysis of civic policies and decisions that relate to the community. Changes in the West End have been guided by significant political and social events across Western gay and lesbian culture. Examining the history and changes in this community will provide significant insight into ongoing changes and future manifestations of gay space.



**Figure 1. Study area and context**

### **1.3 Ethics**

This project has involved minimal ethical risk. A large portion of work has been conducted using publicly available literature, documents and data. Interviewees and community photographers were not from vulnerable populations and were asked to complete a standard consent form guaranteeing meaningful answers to any additional

questions and granting permission to abstain from any portion or withdraw entirely from the study at any time. Privacy and confidentiality of the participants have been protected throughout the research and writing. Names or identifying data from community photographers have been omitted from the final document and key informants have been identified by code. Reference may be made to their professional roles only to highlight context and relevance.

Photographic evidence through this research has emphasised built form. Persons captured in the photographs were all in public spaces, with no expectation of privacy. Photographs where a person is the main subject of the image have been omitted, blurred or simply described verbally.

## **1.4 Biases and Limitations**

### **1.4.1 Biases**

Biases inherent in this research involve the belief that:

- GUVs do have some wider positive impact on the cities that contain them;
- the urban village is a desirable form of planning and development;
- and, lessons from gay urban villages can be applied to other forms and cultures of urban villages.

Results of this study may also be biased due to the research concentration within the primarily white, middle-class gay male population of the West End neighbourhood.

### 1.4.2 Limitations

The scale of this research, with extremely small sample sizes and narrow scope, may limit application of the findings to other contexts and is limited by the knowledge and biases of the invited key informants. Participants were self-selected in this study and may therefore not be an adequately representative sample of the community. Results and insights from this study were grounded in the Vancouver context and cannot necessarily be applied to other municipalities though this thesis argues that key concepts can have purchase elsewhere. The opinions of the wider public were not solicited in defining impacts of this one urban village on the city. Subjects of this research were exclusively residents of the village. Their choice to live in the neighbourhood was expected to positively impact their opinions of the case study area, though this hypothesis was not specifically tested. While segments of this thesis explore definitions of community through other sexualities — lesbian, bisexual, transgender, two-spirited — the glbtt community I examined is limited to the ‘mainstream’ within this subculture, a visible and relatively well-represented social group with interests dominated by gay men. While the role of the business improvement association in the neighbourhood and commercial places in general have been highlighted through this research, efforts to involve members of the business community were unsuccessful.



## 1.5 Significance and Contributions

This project is important because of the paucity of research and writing on the topic of sexuality in relation to city planning. Academic literature is dominated by social, physiological and medical analyses of queer communities. Sexuality in planning and urban design has not been dealt with in a comprehensive way by professional planners or by planning theorists and researchers.

To date, gay and lesbian topics in planning have concentrated on two main areas of apparent fringe interest to real-world city planning concerns. The first theme in the literature aims to address the way that spatial understandings of sexuality have a tendency to marginalise the users as creators of actual, though not desirable places. Literature in this vein (Forsyth, 1997, 2001; Frisch, 2002; Nash, 2006) seeks to redefine the space of sexuality and refutes the view that sexuality is an underground culture and shaping force representing a “dark underbelly” of society. This activist slant of literature is critical for pushing the boundaries of planning concepts, but has modest relevance to city planning policy and systems, as it does not typically provide solutions or processes for attaining this redefinition. The second overarching theme is the historical impact of sexual minorities on city form, especially in terms of gentrification and adaptive reuse. Literature of this oeuvre (Aldrich, 2004; Betsky, 1997; Sibalis, 2004) tends to historicise the development of specifically gay or lesbian areas. Reciting a timeline of emergence provides the beginning of an understanding of the development of gaybourhoods, but the examination of the sources and effects of the emergence are tied to social impacts,

minimising any analysis of physical transition. In these circumstances, regional relevance and potential futures of gay urban villages are ignored. Understanding the history and form at a particular moment in time still begs the question, “are gay urban villages still relevant today, or will they be in the near future?” If, as Forsyth (2001) and Sibalís (2004) suggest, ‘gay ghettos’ were created as a social and political reclamation of urban territory, may growing assimilation, acceptance, and political leverage negate the need for the enclaved gay community? Yes, and no, as this thesis will explain.

This thesis also promotes a queer planning vocabulary, by fortifying a link between sexuality and concepts like gentrification, cosmopolitanism and urban villages. These issues are at the core of many contemporary planning questions, and are potential factors in future successes in urban revitalisation and sustainability, whether glbtt-oriented or not.

## 1.6 Chapter Outline

**Chapter One** has introduced the topic, scope, research questions, ethical considerations, and biases and limitations that apply to this thesis generally. Concerns specifically related to the research methodologies are further examined in Chapter 2.

**Chapter Two** describes the research methods employed in data collection and analysis.

**Chapter Three** is an introduction into the theoretical and semantic tenets of the following chapters. A brief introduction to queer space and background theory as they relate to gay urban villages and sexuality are introduced.

**Chapter Four** delves into literature surrounding more traditional planning concerns such as urban design, neighbourhood change and their application to the gay urban village.

This is followed by an examination of the intersection of traditional planning issues and their relationship to the emergence and transformation of queer space and gay urban villages.

**Chapter Five** explores the history and context of Vancouver with an eye to the West End. I introduce the reader to specifics and idiosyncrasies of the city and provide context for the localised research methods that follow.

**Chapter Six** leads the reader through the results of the study's components and the attempts to decode the information provided by the community and documentation.

**Chapter Seven** concludes the thesis with specific recommendations and responds to the three key research questions. This is followed by a discussion of the implications for planning theory and practice and suggestions for further research.



## 2 | METHODOLOGIES

This thesis employed three methods in reaching its conclusions: literature and document review, key informant interviews, and community photography. These were supplemented by census and other data collection. A variety of methods were employed for the purposes of triangulation, permitting a degree of internal data verification. Multiple methods also added to the breadth of understanding. The primary systems of research were qualitative, with quantitative analysis supporting and extending conclusions from community photography and literature. The literature review established the theoretical parameters and the extent to which other related research had been conducted and corroborated the conclusions outlined in the following chapters. Key informants satisfied the high-level and contextual questions of the study while community photography provided the finer-grain detailed local analysis.

### **2.1 Study Site Selection**

Vancouver provides an ideal setting for the study of gay urban villages, vividly presenting the characteristics of both the urban village typology and a distinct and recognised gay community in North America. Davie Village is one of Canada's three most prominent gay and lesbian communities, in addition to Toronto and Montreal and is

the largest in Western Canada. The West End continues to play a role as a neighbourhood centre in Greater Vancouver as this thesis shows. Davie Village serves a hub primarily for a gay male population, but also for a gamut of sexual identities. The West End is a showcase and prototype for high-density urban living; a starting point for the successes Vancouver has achieved as one of the world's most liveable cities. This thesis examines what impacts sexuality, and the urban forms that contain and celebrate sexuality, have on the city. The West End is both a container and product of an emergent urban sexuality while its prototypical urban design has played a crucial role in Vancouver's ongoing success. The West End is prominent and highly regarded as both a liveable neighbourhood and a gay urban village and thus is an ideal case study of how and why these characteristics are connected.

## **2.2 Literature Review**

Literature was a key component of this research, identifying and articulating themes, issues, processes, and precedents that have governed the development of gay urban villages in general, and Davie Village in particular. The literature review was focused on three primary topic areas:

- queer theory and glbtt spatial studies;
- urban design, development paradigms and neighbourhood change; and
- Vancouver's history and the socio-political forces acting on the West End.

This range of review was necessary to build connections between the social and theoretical studies of gay, lesbian, and queer communities and the practical concerns of planners and the built environment. Queer theory linked sexuality with the spatial concerns of urban villages. An historical review of planning paradigms concentrated first on constructing the idea of the urban village and how its definition has been constituted and changed over time. This provides an understanding of the specific characteristics of the urban village form and how it differs from today's principle neighbourhood typologies such as suburban development and traditional neighbourhood design.

This was followed by a brief review of the relationship between built form and urban spaces. A discussion of urban design precedent identifies elements and potential opportunities for planners to have measurable effect on gay urban villages through design and city form. This brief examination of city-building principles serves as a starting point for evaluating the relevance and intricacies of creating places within cities, in general and specifically relating to glbtt communities.

Finally, I considered general principles of urban design to the circumstances of a gay urban village and queer space. The literature review elucidates previous examinations of gay and lesbian neighbourhoods and the issues unique to gay urban village and queer space. Further, existing literature and case studies provided an initial framework for understanding the impacts of gay urban villages on cities.

The literature review concludes in Chapter 5 by considering the specific factors in the City of Vancouver that have affected the production of Davie Village as a gay urban village. From geography through its social history, I highlight moments and organizations that have impacted Davie Street's emergence as Western Canada's largest gay enclave.

Municipal government documents provided a key insight into the regulation of the Davie Village and provided context during interviews and when corresponding with stakeholders. Municipal documents proved a primary source for information for the second key research question concerning how governments affect these neighbourhoods.

## **2.3 Key Informant Interviews**

A series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants having knowledge and experience relevant to the subject. Each lasted between one and 1.5 hours. Initial textual research provided the background data and a framework for interview questions. The format of the interviews permitted flexibility and a conversational tone while concentrating on a consistent set of thematic queries (Zeisel, 1981). Key informant interviews provide an efficient way to garner specific data from a target community (Crabtree & Miller, 1999, p. 74). Three key informants were asked to participate. Given the breadth of the investigation, key informant interviews allowed the researcher to cover more ground by relying on experts with more in depth, and specifically relevant knowledge, than other community members could provide. While this method is based on non-probability sampling, it has the potential to uncover more data with greater ease. The



key informants included a representative of the glbtt community centre, an organization that provides a multitude of services and is based in the Davie Village; a senior planner with the City of Vancouver; and a former city councillor with expertise in planning issues. These interviews were transcribed and common themes were identified among all interviewees. These themes and opinions provided a baseline for the analysis of images from community photographers while corroborating and focusing ongoing literature review. Vancouver's Neighbourhood Integrated Services Team provided a first point of contact for connecting with key informants. A series of emails led to the participation of two interviewees. A referral from a professor of planning provided the third. All key informants were ultimately self-selected. This provided a ready awareness and interest in the topic. In this case, all the participants had considered the topic previously, allowing a more in-depth discussion and analysis of the topic than was available through the photographic process.

Analysis of interviews was conducted topically. Transcripts were coded according to questions. I sought variations between responses of the participants in hopes of identifying a median that would be supported by further research and the opinions of resident community members. As expected, the key-informants provided the bulk of insight regarding political, social and economic effects. These topics were varied in interpretation and intricate in complexity. All interviews concluded with queries into expected futures of the Davie neighbourhood specifically and gay urban villages in general. I reserved this question for the end believing that consideration of more

grounded topics such as politics and economics would allow for a less impressionistic response to the question. Other categories and questions were not ordered specifically and followed the more natural flow of conversation. Prompts were simply used to move forward during lulls in the interview.

## **2.4 Community Visual Analysis**

### **2.4.1 Theory**

Environment behaviour research (EB research) has been exploring the nexus between space, usage, design and perception for some time. EB research is based on the premise that spatial appearance has a direct effect on how people perceive and use space. It is therefore important to identify and evaluate responses to space from the user's perspective. William Whyte's (1988) landmark analysis of urban space in New York led to a much richer understanding of urban open space and its functions. The work of Kevin Lynch has also been seminal to contemporary urban design ideas. Lynch (1960) states that "a good environmental image gives its possessor an important sense of emotional security. ...[and] also heightens the potential depth and intensity of human experience" (p.4-5). Both of these researchers based their formative work on the review and analysis of photographs.

From a functional perspective the use of photographic research and its subjective basis has its roots in ethnography. "Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning

from people” (Spradley, 1979 in Crabtree & Miller, 1999, p. 73). This thesis attempts to merge the image with the story behind it, through interviews, and elevate the opinion of the user or resident to understand the space of their neighbourhood from a deeper observational perspective. Sanoff (1991) suggests “the use of photographs is a well-established practise in ethnography... The social sciences, however, have been dominated by the written word. Researchers generally think of visual record as illustrative of literary sources,” (p. 95). How the visual character of a place develops is dependant upon “whose meanings receive community attention and resources” (Sanoff, 2000, p. 68), which demands consideration of the politics of place. To that end, “Visual appearance [in conjunction with spatial configuration and form]... explains to observers what the community values” (Sanoff, 2000, p. 69).

#### 2.4.2 Source

The goal of this method was to identify elements characteristic of the Davie Street urban village, to identify specific structural elements of a GUV, and attempt to connect those elements to political, social, or economic effects. This method endeavoured to identify spatial characteristics through the people who know the neighbourhood best — the residents.

The method of community visual analysis used in this research was adapted from various sources (Mehrhoff, 1999, pp. 70-74; Wates, Brook, & Urban Design Group, 2000, p. 95) and its efficacy was explored by Distasio (2006). Their writings have acknowledged the

value of resident participation in a neighbourhood analysis. Distasio regarded “this method as a means of empowering residents to produce images of their neighbourhood as they envisioned it” (2006, p. 120). Resident knowledge of the spaces provides a deeper insight into the circumstances of the neighbourhood than can be gained from an outside perspective. Ideally, this leads to less researcher bias in the conclusions. According to Arthur Mehrhoff, of the Minnesota Design Team, “visual images... represent an absolutely essential research component of the community design process” (1999, p. 70).

### 2.4.3 Process

In this project, a Community Visual Analysis was conducted with nine residents and former-residents of the West End. Candidates were selected through social networks and were invited to participate. They were briefed on the project, provided a supplementary information sheet for reference and asked to complete an informed consent form. Following this, they were given disposable cameras, and left to conduct their photography.

Participants were asked to focus their photography on features that

- Identify the area as ‘gay’
- Are glbtt-positive spaces
- Are glbtt-negative spaces
- Are ‘sexual’ or ‘sexualised’ spaces
- Are unique to or representative of the West End as a neighbourhood
- Are fundamental to an ‘urban village’ form

Photographers were asked to complete the photography and return the camera within two weeks, though some took significantly longer. Cameras were then collected for development and a follow-up interview was scheduled.

Informal follow-up interviews lasted between forty-five minutes and two hours.

Participants were asked what they thought of the method and process, and asked to briefly review the photos, to refresh their memory. Generally the interview process involved the following: going through the photos individually and explaining what the focus and purpose of the image was – what the photo depicts, in the photographer's own words. As they spoke, I recorded notes, quotes and comments on paper that was then affixed to the back of each photo. Upon reviewing the photos, participants were asked to note how their images related to the six categories described above. Participants were asked to specify where photos were taken and mark locations on a photocopied aerial photograph. Following the photo review, photographers were asked to elaborate on their thoughts about the future of the neighbourhood as a gay village and how it might change in the future. Interviews were conducted across a variety of circumstances and times. Cameras were distributed to the ten individuals between June 8, 2006 and September 7, 2006. Follow-ups were conducted between August 29, 2006 and November 12, 2006.

#### 2.4.4 Advantages

In this study, community visual analysis was selected because of its advantages over more conventional research methods. First, the camera reaches closer to representing

physical reality than verbal descriptions, allowing direct comparisons and analysis of similarities in participants' perceptions, which would not otherwise be possible. Second, this research technique combined the advantages of visual evidence with the support of the interviews, providing a reduced interpretive bias when analysing the data.

Third, this study makes no interpretation of the quality of the space; rather, it concentrates on the interpretation as an explanation of neighbourhood preference.

Mehrhoff (1999) holds visual analysis conducted by the community itself as essential to understanding the communities that he designs with. He cautions that traditional methods of planning do not tend to consider a community's physical appearance and its relationship to traditional forms, styles and contemporary preferences. "A holistic, or systems, approach to community design also needs to come to terms with ... the genius loci, or characteristic spirit of a place, in order to be truly successful" (Mehrhoff, 1999, p. 61).

#### **2.4.5 Limitations**

Through previous research I have identified four primary limitations when utilising photographs as a basis for qualitative neighbourhood evaluation: interpreter, interpretation, intent and technique. Each of these roadblocks present cautions for image evaluators and offer protocols for minimising their influence.

*Interpreter*

Many studies have already demonstrated that different groups will appreciate different elements of a building or neighbourhood (Gifford, Hine, Muller-Clemm et al., 2000; Kim & Kaplan, 2004; Stamps, 1999; Zacharias, Stathopoulos, & Wu, 2004). These studies also tend to identify some characteristics in common between the evaluating groups, though in a fairly abstract way. For example Cline (1997, p. 36) reminds us that “in a child’s mind, [a discarded appliance box...a sheet thrown over a card table...the underside of large shrubs] inspire imagination and enchantment.” These places describe an often-unconsidered level of engagement with local structure. A child appreciates her neighbourhood in a very different way than her parents. This poses the first important question; who is conducting the evaluation? Gifford et al. (2000) describe significant differences between the architectural preferences of architects themselves and laypersons. They cite several examples of other studies indicating frequent divergence of opinion between groups in aesthetic evaluations. Similarly, a child will be less concerned with traditional aesthetics and more appreciative of a spatial arrangement that suits their needs to play sports or daydream under a shrubbery.

A simple awareness of the tendencies of the evaluator’s class and role would be enough to keep from invalidating results. The interpretations that divide viewers tend to be aesthetic rather than functional. For instance, both architects and laypersons are equally capable of evaluating the state of repair of a building (Rice & Miller, 1999, p. 823).

*Interpretation*

Can a photograph effectively portray the qualities of a real place? Observer reaction to an environment may be substantially different given the many more sensory inputs that occur when on-site. Noise, or perceived safety from traffic, or an unpleasant odour may change an opinion about a visually pleasing place. Determining change through time at a specific location may be influenced by these non-visual factors. If traffic, for instance has increased substantially between photographs, but the object of study has not changed, the impact of traffic on the neighbourhood would go unnoticed. These external factors may affect the site in widely differing ways. Though an increase in traffic in a residential area might be undesirable, it may indicate an increase in shoppers for nearby businesses. In response, Stamps (1991) notes a high correlation between on-site visual preference and a colour photograph of the site. Nasar and Hong (1999, p. 674) claim that “photographs may overlook noise and odours, but they provide a convenient way to obtain responses to a variety of places, and research consistently confirms color photographs as a valid measure of on-site response, especially for visual issues.” This dispels some of the concerns that use of a photograph would skew results or produce unreliable impressions. It suggests that images are largely reliable in terms of evaluating static objects or circumstances, but it follows that the focus of a photographic neighbourhood evaluation should be object-oriented.



*Intent*

This limitation questions why the photo was taken. A photograph for promotional purposes will be more flattering to a subject building than one taken for a newspaper article about urban decay. Recognising the context of the picture will help to temper the original intent. If intent is a concern, should one even consider images without a known context in a photographic neighbourhood evaluation? Yes, if intent will impact the overall photographic analysis. Intent directly relates to framing and point of view.

Though the building is the same, if seen in a wider context or from another side, the structure may appear very different. Another difficulty relating to intent is that an historical photograph is usually a record of something remarkable, usually taken of a very good or very bad building, with fewer images captured to portray ordinary architecture. To that end, every effort should be made to include a selection of banal buildings alongside the highly visible architecture of storefronts and signature constructs to balance the analysis.

*Technique*

How does one compensate for season or lighting? Can two images of the same location be compared when environmental or photographic circumstances are significantly different? Quality, angle, lighting, and focus all contribute to the interpretation of a photograph by a viewer. One might expect to minimise concerns over interpretation and intent by taking a photograph that closely matches the reference photo. Problems are still likely to arise regarding technique. Will a photo taken in the late afternoon of a dreary day portray the same information as one taken on a bright bustling lunch break? The

building itself can be evaluated based on physical characteristics and to some degree, its surroundings. Variables like the presence of pedestrians should only be considered if there is a substantive explanation for their presence or absence in a picture.

Three methods are considered for overcoming the challenges inherent in these photographic “road blocks”:

- conceptualising – verify a sufficiently similar context for each image;
- objective criteria – base comments on quantifiable items and phenomena, not preferences; and
- community-chosen criteria – to assure indicators are appropriate for the community they are measuring.

By using these methods, limitations associated with using community photographic analysis should be minimised.

## **2.5 Census Review**

The City of Vancouver provides a series of census aggregations based on individual neighbourhoods, which are available through its website. The data included in the census aggregations adequately addressed the questions relating to this study, including housing statistics, family data, and income. Data from the 1996 census was more comprehensive, but the 2001 information was comparable for the West End study area. The census data was examined in order to identify demographic shifts and characteristics postulated by key informant interviews and corroborate neighbourhood characteristics suggested by

other authors. Census information for the city was compared to identify demographic shifts over the period of analysis. A question in Canada's most recent census identifying same-sex partnerships provides a more pointed statistic, but does not identify non-partnered glbtt people. This poses a limitation in correlating past data, but provides a good benchmark for other facets of research.

## **2.6 Biases**

As with all research, this work is predicated with several biases. In conducting this research I was guided by three primary premises:

- The anticipation that GUVs do have some wider positive impact on the cities that contain them, with a tendency to err on the side of effect when interpreting various forms of data.
- The expectation that the urban village is a desirable form of planning and development. Discussion of the urban village form touches on some critiques of this design paradigm. Had the research been framed against some other urban structural pattern the results may have been different.
- In justifying the relevance of this topic, I expected that the lessons from gay urban villages could be applied to other forms and cultures of urban villages.

As a function of the ethnographic qualities of the research techniques, Denzin notes eight characteristics that must be kept in mind when considering the qualitative data of key informants and the community photographers, that the data is:

- (a) inseparable from writing for representing the account,
  - (b) embedded in culture,
  - (c) postcolonial and therefore multicultural,
  - (d) necessarily self-reflexive,
  - (e) gendered,
  - (f) moral,
  - (g) discontinuous, and
  - (h) in evolution
- (Denzin in Crabtree & Miller, 1999, p. 72).

The majority of participants were white, middle-class men. Participants unfortunately did not represent an accurate cross-section of the neighbourhood population, though self-identified participants represented several sexualities — straight, gay, bisexual, and queer. Two women participated as community photographers. Given the nature of the study, a majority gay male sample was a valid representation of the population of interest in this neighbourhood. Since all but one research participant was a resident of the West End, results are likely to skew positively with some inherent expectation of satisfaction with the neighbourhood.

The community photography process included several distinct biases:

- Participants could only take photos of existing people, places and objects. Items from the past, which no longer exist may have been valuable, but could not be included.
- There is some likelihood that non-straight-identified participants were preconditioned to recognise glbtt symbology. Alternatively, straight-identified participants may have relied more heavily on the obvious or stereotypical glbtt symbology.

- Given limited instruction and background, respondents may not have considered less obvious answers or objects.

## 2.7 Limitations

Limitations that were specific to the community photography method are detailed above. Overall, the scale of this research, with extremely small sample sizes for both interactive methods was a key limitation. Other limiting factors were:

- The narrow scope, which limits application of the findings to other contexts. Conclusions herein are based solely on the Vancouver context and the West End neighbourhood, thus their application to other contexts should be considered in light of any alternative context and history. However a GUV of a similar typology may find relevance within this study.
- Parts of the research are limited by the knowledge and biases of the invited key informants.
- The process of self-selection of participants in this study and the methods of soliciting interest may not have provided an adequately representative sample of the community. Participants were solicited casually through social networks and cold email contact, placing the burden of sample variety on the researcher.
- In considering the impacts of the urban village on the city, the opinions of a wider public, living outside the neighbourhood were not solicited. The few former-residents were relied upon to consider non-resident opinions.

- While participants represented a variety of sexual identities, lesbian, transgender, and two-spirited people were notably absent.
- Personal issues, time constraints, availability of the camera when a photographic opportunity presented itself, and quality and capabilities of the camera were identified as limitations to the community photography component.
- The most comprehensive census data set available through the course of this research was from 2001. Interviews and photographers revealed some of the most significant changes in the Davie Village occurred in the last five years. A complete and current understanding of neighbourhood demographics could not be ascertained beyond recent trends and conjecture. Limited sets of 2006 data became available at the end of the research process and its meaningful inclusion was limited. Thus, results may look different today against future more robust demographic analysis.

## 3 | QUEER SPACE

This thesis has endeavoured to expose the qualities of space manufactured by sexuality in general and gay culture specifically. Sandercock asserts: “We need to understand how planning policies, historically, have affected the quality of urban life of gays and lesbians and indeed how they may have reinforced their social oppression” (Sandercock, 1998, p. 42). She raises a multitude of questions about how gay and lesbian issues are intertwined with the urban environment. However, we also need to examine how gays and lesbians have affected the quality of their own urban experience. In order to clarify the discussion throughout this document, this chapter begins with an examination of the language of urban sexuality and the concepts that lie within. I will briefly clarify my use of gay, lesbian, glbtt, and queer, which also serves as a precursor to defining queer space.

In this chapter I introduce the concept of metaspaces as a framework to describe the ethereal spatial qualities that became central to the analysis and conclusions of this research. Metaspaces serve as a vehicle for transmission of social and spatial clues for the users of the space, which may manifest in any number of ways. Chapter 3 focuses on integrating existing theories of metaspaces into a medium for examining queer space specifically, while Chapter 7 enlivens the theory through the analysis of this research.

This thesis concentrates on the urban spaces most associated with gay men, but as I will demonstrate, the categories and roles of sexuality are not as clear-cut as is generally understood. Gay men make up a an important category of urban experiences, but by no means are all gay men, and certainly not exclusively gay men, involved in this process.

### **3.1 Language**

#### **Gay & Lesbian**

“lesbian: noun. a homosexual woman.”<sup>1</sup>

“gay: meaning ‘homosexual,’ dating back to the 1930s (if not earlier), became established in the 1960s as the term preferred by homosexual men to describe themselves. It is now the standard accepted term throughout the English-speaking world”

Recognising that all words representing sexuality are loaded with connotation and encompass definitions and identities that are as individual as the people employing them, I have attempted to be quite deliberate in my selection of nouns throughout this thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> All definitions highlighted in this thesis are derived from the New Oxford American Dictionary, Second Edition (2005).



This thesis focuses on gay men, but the spaces associated with gay men must be recognised as influenced by a variety of identities and interests. Thus, the formal use of gay and lesbian provides clarity when discussing a non-straight community more generally.

Lesbian and gay are used specifically in reference to these two well-defined sexual identities, exclusive of broader formulations and understandings that may exist. For simplicity, I have adopted the formal dictionary definitions as a baseline. This helps to clarify or highlight the influence of a single community upon different aspects of this research and maintains specificity when drawing in other research into urban sexuality that has provided the foundation for this work.

While these are widely understood terms, they have not always been so. The modern definitions of gay and lesbian are distinct from their common usage and understanding as near as 50 years ago. This directly impacts the understanding of historical references to urban sexuality and queer space. For instance, Oram's (1992) work describes a recharacterization of historical figures liberated from an invisible cast such as the spinster or school marm. Despite their unfavourable status in the early 20th century, they represent a reconsideration of historical roles through the lenses of feminism and queer theory.

These terms are also incomplete. Their attached definitions of sexuality are not necessarily inclusive of, for instance, MSM/WSW (men/women who have sex with men/women), a characterisation reserved for straight-identified people who may or may not have contact with gay or lesbian communities beyond the sex act itself. With this, I hope the reader will keep in mind an open but specific understanding of gay and lesbian as they arise through this thesis. For the purpose of encompassing the non-straight world more broadly, I turn to glbtt.

## **GLBTT**

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirited, intersex, queer; the parade of labels continues to articulate the increasingly complicated set of self-identities around sexuality.

I have adopted glbtt as an acronym attempting to stand in for a wealth of sexualities and gender definitions. I acknowledge its incompleteness and hope, for the sake of convenience and clarity, that it is conceived throughout this document in its broadest possible sense as a representation of the struggles of many groups outside the dominant and heteronormative worldview. Glbtt is employed in circumstances where a comment or idea cannot correctly be applied to a single sexual identity and demands recognition of a solidarity between the efforts and roles of a wider cast.

GLBT stands as a preferred terminology in the style guides of several queer media and is present in the Oxford American Dictionary (2005). I have chosen to use glbtt, incorporating two-spirited, to underline the uniquely Canadian context and the ongoing role of aboriginal peoples and their additional level of historical oppression.

## **Queer**

Around the 1930s the term queer represented a sexual division between typically masculine man with homosexual interest as a counterpoint to the term ‘fairie’, which denoted those with a more effeminate display (Chauncey, 1994, p. 16). By the 1950s ‘queer’ had come to represent a pejorative among younger generations of gay men as well as the culture at large and so fell out of use as an identity label.

The word ‘queer’ re-emerged in the 1980s in response to the growing AIDS crisis by activist lesbian and gay groups. Pilcher and Whelehan (2004) recall how “Queer Nation, ACTUP and OutRage ... [appropriated] a term always used pejoratively and homophobically in the past in order to facilitate more radical declarations of gay and lesbian visibility” (p. 129). Its adoption as the key word in the new and evolving realm of queer theory has transformed it from the colloquial ‘strange’ and its historical reference to alternative male sexual expression into a term in transition. For some it represents shorthand for “glbtt, et cetera” While this invocation attempts to compensate for the inadequacies of an acronym the transposition of queer does a disservice to the meanings that queer theory and the radical queer movement has come to embody.

Queer theory, a term coined in 1990 by Teresa de Lauretis, was created as a radical reconsidering of sexuality outside the prevailing dichotomy generated by Western culture and thought. Jagose (1996) asserts that “queer is less of an identity than a critique of identity” (n.p.). The definition I have favoured is to see queer as a challenge to hetero- and homonormativity — the social processes and institutions that perpetuate a sexual binary and exclusivity that relegates alternative sexualities and sexual identities to a secondary status. Fundamentally, heterosexual is considered normal and thus serves as the baseline for social interaction and expectation. Queer demands a reconsideration of this baseline.

## **3.2 Queer Space**

Queer space represents something imagined and real, conceiving of a space that actively serves to subvert heteronormative territory. In the ongoing discussion of glbtq spatial influences and gay urban enclaves I employ the idea of queer space as a characteristic building block generating these urban spaces. Throughout the literature review, queer space was frequently discussed, though each author appeared to espouse a distinct usage of the term. Four major themes arose to describe queer space:

### *Queer space as gay or lesbian territory*

At its most simplistic, queer space is seen as any territory dominated by lesbians or gays. This idea does nothing to consider spatial qualities or the perpetuation of queer space

where gays or lesbians are not immediately present. Part of the problem with this definition is the fact that queer space has existed much longer than gay and lesbian neighbourhoods have. Chauncey (1994) and Holbrook (2005) for instance recognise the existence of queer space in New York and London respectively, long before the bifurcation of sexualities – gay-lesbian, heterosexual-homosexual. In this interpretation, queer space is exclusively demarcated and insular from heteronormative territory. While this territorial definition is an oversimplification McDowell (1999) states “in some of the earliest work about gay gentrification, it was even claimed that gay men were not gay unless they had a visible territorial identity that marked them out as different” (p. 157). Thus it remains a relevant component understanding of queer space. “Gay space is the physical manifestation of gay community; it can include any area which gays use, a place where gay people can be ‘out’, and it can exist at a variety of scales” (Hindle in Whittle, 1994, p. 11).

*Queer space as the contested ‘other’ in a binary spatial relationship*

In a second understanding of the term, queer space is defined by a wider array of sexualities. This definition declares an adversarial ownership of place, ours versus theirs. This meaning concentrates on the interface between queer and normal. For instance, Whittle (1994) identifies “those people who use the facilities of Manchester’s Gay scene, who are not lesbian or gay and yet who are not straight, are placed in some form of unity by outsiders” (p. 27). Kenney (2001, p.210) sees collective expressions of sexuality as blending to present “specific ways sexuality comes into conflict with the norms of social

conduct and social organization in the city today.” Queer space is somewhere one goes ‘outside’ of heteronormative spaces.

*Queer space as sexualised space*

A third reference to queer space focuses on overt sexuality. Defined not by identity or ownership but by sexual acts, or more often, by glbtt sexual tension. Sexuality serves as an important *component* of a spatial manifestation but is again limited in its utility due to its transience. Queer space cannot simply be defined as places where queer people have sex, since the act itself then dictates the construction and dissolution of queer space.

Basing a definition on sexual tension, harkens back to the space of the flâneur and the events of watching and being watched, broadening the definition into a socio-sexual one.

While queer space is more than sexualised space, there is a vital aspect of sexuality to queer space. Therefore, to gay spaces like the urban village the mundane act of two people of the same sex holding hands in public denotes an important shift in the acceptance of acts in public space that are usually suppressed. “Queer geographies are different to (but can include) geographies of sexualities ... the form and substance of queer geographies needs continual and critical exploration” (Browne, 2006, p. 891).

Using sexuality as a determining factor fundamentally limits the perception of the impacts of the glbtt community, which are certainly more significant than a purely sexual reading can encompass.

### 3.2.1 Queer Space: challenging, imminent and contingent

Finally, as a compromise and more holistic definition I have chosen to define queer space in a less concrete, but ultimately more useful and adaptable way. Queer space requires an explanation that is both imminent and contingent, temporary and stable with no specific beginning or end as is demanded by the previous definitions. I have come to regard queer space as a function of some of the theoretical underpinnings of queer theory and reflective of the challenges inherent in the concept of queer as an opposition to normative views. Its understanding is apart from the built form as social order. Reed (2003) sums up the interpretation of queer by theorists who “imagine contingency as an ideal of ‘queer space’, which, because it is continually in the process of being constructed in opposition to a non-queer norm, they see it as too fluid ever to assume concrete visual form and too subversive to be signalled by a government-sponsored design” (p. 435). It is a place of freedom, multiplicity, and flux.

While this theoretical flexibility is a more apt description of queer space, it is challenged to define any physical form. To this end, I attribute the following framework: First, queer space describes the overt physical space where social acceptance of glbtt people is greater, sometimes accompanied by an increased acceptance of alternative public behaviours and symbols. Second, it alludes to the subversive allocation and reuse of places for unintended (in this case glbtt-related) purposes. Historically, this reallocated space provided the only opportunity for glbtt social and sexual interaction. This encompasses the previous definitions and is at least one practical iteration, but Reed

(1996, p. 64) asserts that “no space is totally queer or completely unqueerable, but some spaces are queerer than others. The term I propose for queer space is imminent.” This sentiment is echoed by Jagose (1996) and Browne (2006). The flexibility of the term queer corresponds to the ephemeral nature of queer space, which can range from non-verbal communication within a space to the unacknowledged physical and sensed presence of others. Within the glbtt community, ‘gaydar’ is a prominent example of these nonverbal interactions – the recognition of other lesbian and gay people through interpretation of action and symbol.

In sum, there is truth to all the preceding definitions of queer space. Given the transmutable nature of the word, it by its very theory comfortably recognises them all. This thesis focuses on the fourth as the most robust conceptualisation. In an effort to reify some aspect of queer space and so find application to planning issues and space, I have taken the idea of metaspace, described in the following section as one method of reconciling the theory and spatial implications. Through the medium of metaspace, queer theory can receive a grounded and spatial treatment while providing greater flexibility than buildings and infrastructure can accommodate.

### **3.3 Metaspace in Theory**

Given the fluid nature of “queer” it becomes clear that attempting to reify queer space is at best problematic, since it necessarily encompasses transient ideas. Part of the trouble emerges in definitions that assert all space as queer or that all space is temporarily and



fluidly queered. “Spaces [are] always in a process of becoming so that their meanings and experiences which take place within them are constantly shifting over time, with context (that is, the situation), and across different individuals who occupy the same space” (Kitchin & Lysaght, 2002, p. 9). Hottola (2005) introduces the concept of metaspaces through an analysis of tourist travels and provides an apt framework for understanding the operation and intangible characteristics of queered space. He describes the circumstance wherein backpackers to India tend to congregate together, creating space outside the Indian culture, which permits very selective interactions with locals and the environment. Like the hostel where Western backpackers create pockets of Western culture in foreign, and not necessarily hostile lands, gay urban villages are pockets of queer space in the city. While space itself retains its properties, experience of the space is transformed by the sensorial and social inputs. An individual’s senses and socialisation provide the individualising aspects that allow people to experience spaces differently. I suggest the proverbial question, “if a tree falls in the forest and there’s no one around to hear it does it make a sound?” as an apt analogy describing the role of metaspaces. The elements of metaspaces provide the opportunity for one’s recognition of queer spaces. In other words, metaspaces are the ear to the tree falling in the forest.

Metaspaces come from understanding that people specifically, and temporary objects generally are both of space and, simultaneously, influence the space they occupy, thus transforming it. For instance one not socialised to understand rainbows as a symbol of sexuality may not recognise the queer space of a glbtq-friendly shop. Built architecture is

taken as a fixed point in evaluating spatial sexuality, the architecture or building is not gay, but by virtue of its users or the symbols that adorn it, it can become gay, however temporarily. Gay urban villages are at their core, a successful collection of buildings that serve a specific community. As I will examine in Chapter 4, these villages can function successfully simply as urban villages, but the application of overt sexuality creates a queer space where otherwise there would be none.

Metaspace is in this case a spatial consequence of gaydar and performativity. While a person's understanding of a space can be altered by the recognition of symbols or patterns, an equal transformation can occur through interaction with other people.

Rendell (2000) believes "gendering of space can be understood as a form of choreography, a series of performed movements between men and women, both real and ideal, material and metaphoric, which are constructed and represented through social relations of looking and moving — exchanging, consuming and displaying" (p. 135) which applies equally to lesbian and gay people, supported by Butler and Noack.

Butler (1999) argues that gender is constructed by replicating normative performances through what she calls performativity. Reiterations throughout history dictate the norms of that gender. The flexibility of performance provides the opportunity to reinvent and to queer norms including gender, sexuality, race, and class. Nash (2000, p. 655) explains: "Gender does not exist outside its 'doing' but its performance is also a reiteration of previous 'doings' that become naturalised as gender norms." Gay men and lesbians who

are socialised to adopt gay and lesbian characteristics are at the same time reinforcing a vocabulary of cues they can recognise as queer and passively reinforcing queer space through gaydar.

Noack's (1998) study of lesbian gaydar lists eight categories of cues, which her sample of lesbian women identified as contributing to their evaluation of another woman's sexuality. Body cues, clothing cues, gay and lesbian symbolic cues, eye contact, body language, attitude, political opinions, and activities and hobbies each contribute visually or circumstantially to recognising another lesbian woman. "Gaydar is based on perpetually shifting combinations of different cues. Further, these cues are not only used to identify specific individuals who may be lesbian, they also seem to be used as a basis for evaluating social environments and spaces" (Noack, 1998, p. 5). Noack postulates that these categories could also generally apply to gay men. Metaspace is thus an important spatial function of building glbtt-communities through reinterpretation of spatial and non-spatial cues.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter began by defining some of the central terms and themes used throughout this thesis, important in most clearly interpreting and applying the research findings and multiple understandings of research participants. Queer space is a key concept in describing the circumstances of the gay urban village. It has been interpreted and applied in many ways since the reintroduction of the term by the academic community. Queer

space combines the ideas of applied sexuality and symbolism in space with the refusal of identity that the term queer represents. Metaspaces then provide an important bridge between the varied overlay of queer space and the actual structures and form of the urban village, discussed in Chapter 4.

In the following chapter, I will fully introduce the idea of the urban village and its resultant structure, principles and imitations as well as the various ways gay enclaves have been characterised by ghettoization and gentrification from a more traditional planning perspective. It will become clear however that these frameworks are insufficient for understanding the emergence and impacts of gay urban villages in cities and thus discuss some of the specific elements that have led to the emergence of sexuality as a defining characteristic of urban space.

## 4 | Urban Villages

Urban: from Latin *urbanus*, from *urbs*, *urb-* ‘city.’

Village: from Latin *villa* ‘country house.’

In an effort to understand gay urban villages, we must first have a basis by which to define urban villages more generally. The concept of urban village conceptually merges two often-disparate forms of community development. Separately, they imply wholly different classes of spatial experience. The village, an historically insular and isolated form of human settlement is literally “a group of houses and associated buildings, larger than a hamlet and smaller than a town, situated in a rural area” but impressionistically connected to places where not much happens, gossip is rampant and the pace of life is slow and easy. Conversely, impressions of the word urban imply bustle, concrete, and opportunity.

“The very first mistake in creating comfortable cities would be to take the phrase too seriously. The term ‘urban village’ is at heart a fragment of poetry. It’s a metaphor and a matter of tone. It’s a shorthand way of describing the feel we want from our cities... The brilliance of this phrase is that it sums up our coexisting desires for autonomy and community. We want the quiet, tree-lined street with quick access to the global market. We desire a place of repose as well as a place of activity. This tension in human relations with the environment is an old one. The phrase ‘urban village’ is simply a way of summing it up” (Sucher, 1995, p. 14).

Urban villages are intrinsically linked to concepts like neighbourhood — which describes the physical or political boundaries of an area in a city, community — the human collective that inhabits a neighbourhood, and enclave — a sub-area of a neighbourhood or city that is marked by cultural distinction. In some cases they are associated with ghettos, and have more recently been articulated as cosmopolitan spaces. Urban villages, when identified within a city, are almost universally regarded as desirable places to live.

David Sucher, in his book *City Comforts*, spotlights dozens of small but practical interventions for improving the urban streetscape. Most of the imagery has a direct relationship with more academic literature from use of moveable seating (Whyte) to letting strangers sit together (Peattie) to elevating the role of the pedestrian (Gehl) and thus acts as an encyclopaedia of good ideas. Each of these authors is highlighted in this chapter. It is within these interventions that we see metaspaces form and though city comforts that urban villages are born.

The urban village is a term that has been adopted through a variety of planning theories. Through this chapter I examine some of these paradigms and how they have shaped the idea of the urban village. However, as each iteration tends to focus on one aspect — the services, the style, or the space of an urban village— it is also clear that they cannot fully encompass the spirit that Sucher outlines. Identifying what they mean separately and as a conjoined concept is crucial to understanding both the value of the analysis and

conclusions drawn from one particular case study drawn from the perspective of one particular sub-culture. An urban village is both a construct of its residents and transcends them by being adaptable to any group. The urban design principles and socio-spatial characteristics of place are generated from within but as will be illustrated in several examples, the goals and results are highly transferable. While the finer details can be articulated in various ways, the sense of place is fundamental and generally transferable. This sense provides the basis for the discussion in this thesis. The relevance of structural or statistical data outlining a particular urban village is arguable, but I will begin by setting the stage for an understanding of their multiple, intersecting and evolving meanings.

Key propositions like authentic urbanism and New Urbanism do provide important starting points in understanding the form and structure of urban villages. They provide an opportunity for people to live in higher-density neighbourhoods that contain the elements for living: food, shelter, occupation, recreation, and social relationships. It is in these social relationships that people find the 'village' in the urban enclave reflected specifically in the articulation of the gay urban village that this thesis seeks. Button, Wald and Rienzo, (1999, p. 191) regard urbanism as referring "to far more than population density... the concentration of gay populations in urban enclaves engendered a sense of identity and a collective consciousness." Like villages, urban villages serve many, though not all of the needs of the community. They are places of conviviality and familiar strangers. They are places where if one so chooses, one rarely needs to leave the

neighbourhood. The definition does not ponder the dichotomy of rural and isolated physicality of the traditional village, but rather how the socio-economic functions of a self-sustaining, connected community ring true in the urban manifestation.

As the chapter continues, I connect primary theories of planning and neighbourhood change to the impacts of gay communities through their associated myths and facts. This section reinforces the framework for analysis constructed in Chapter 3 by examining the real scenarios and finer-grained details and issues.

## **4.1 Urban Village Precedents**

Each of the following three sections represents a model of urban development regarded as more ideal than today's sprawling suburbs: authentic urbanism, New Urbanism, the Urban Villages Group of the UK. The presentation of these models is intended to outline the similarities and differences in existing paradigms guiding development of urban villages. The following section sets Cosmopolitan Urbanism apart as a more recent theory that de-emphasises the built form, focusing rather on a reiteration of the social constructions of urban villages past. Cosmopolitan Urbanism promotes conviviality and the vitality of third spaces as cornerstones of sustainable urban patterns of growth, articulated in Sandercock's vision of Cosmopolis. Binnie and Skeggs (2004) discuss cosmopolitan urbanism as an alternative focus that leans heavily on the value of not only mixed uses, but mixed populations — multiculturalism, pluralism, and 'the stranger' as a fundamental factor in urban living.



The properties espoused by all of these paradigms exist in gay and ethnic enclaves today. Research has thus far concentrated on studying the results and relative merits of new traditional neighbourhood designed (TND) communities, leaving a paucity of analysis into the successes of the uncontrived urbanism that currently exists. It is a key hypothesis of this thesis that while immense effort is put into updating traditional urban styles for modern urban benefit, it is necessary to look at existing neighbourhoods for the most apt precedents.

Biddulph argues that the concept of urban villages is reductionist, even parochial (2000, pp. 15-16). Such directly referential solutions seem effective today, because the problems of industry have been mitigated and the knowledge-based economy once again makes live-work integration possible.

#### 4.1.1 Authentic Urbanism: Jacobs and Gans

“Dull, inert cities, it is true, do contain the seeds of their own destruction and little else. But lively, diverse, intense cities contain the seeds of their own regeneration, with energy enough to carry over for problems and needs outside themselves” (Jacobs, 1989, p. 448).

Fundamentally, Jane Jacobs and Herbert Gans share the opinion that planning is about people – not buildings. Jacobs’ ideals are sometimes referred to as authentic urbanism (Brandes Gratz, 2003). This stems from the highly organic evolution of the

neighbourhoods she studied, in contrast to the contrived and imposed character of other urbanist typologies. Jacobs highlights five points that exemplify her characterization of authentic urbanism. First, all services for daily living are contained within the neighbourhood and a full-service grocery store is present. The importance of the grocer to Jacobs is clear, and she illustrates its importance to village viability often in her work. Second, a unique sense of place differentiates the urban village from predominant urban spaces. The character of the neighbourhood and the history from which it is derived is the value-added component of living in an urban village. Both the third: creating a sense of belonging and security – such that people are more aware of others, and the fourth characteristic: life on the street, facilitates the opportunity to know one's neighbours. The potential to run into neighbours and friends provides a sense of community and common understanding if not vision for the community. Fifth, community activities are not necessarily requisite, but extremely common. A street festival, theme day or park outing provides the opportunity for residents to move beyond their perfunctory day-to-day interaction and permits a person to casually relate to those with whom they live. It is perhaps these last two characteristics that define the connection of the village to the urban. It is within that sense of community, inter-personal awareness, and relationships, which harkens back to the character of rural villages.

In Jacobs' seminal book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, she discusses many aspects of desirable urban areas. She suggests there are four necessary conditions to achieve them: mixed-uses – to ensure the presence of people on the street across varied

schedules; short blocks – to help to avoid local isolation and knit the neighbourhood together; mixed building ages – to facilitate mixed tenures and incomes in pursuit of neighbourhood diversity; and concentration – or human density, especially residential.

Jacobs and Gans share a sense that learning from, and replicating the intrinsic success of neighbourhoods is ultimately more valuable than a checklist for success or the superficial condition of buildings and streetscape. They both approach the same problem, namely, understanding the processes and characteristics that seed uncontrived examples of desirable neighbourhoods. Gans (1968) comes from a sociological approach to planning, pointing out the problems associated with a physical master planning perspective and has actually criticised Jacobs for promoting what he calls the physical fallacy. “Planners are enamoured of two environmental or physical fallacies: first, that the physical environment was a major determinant of society and culture; and second, that only an environment based on professional planning principles could deliver the good life” (p. 2). While Jacobs’ principles of urbanism are generally associated with the physical form, they are based on her understanding of the social needs and characteristics of space. Gans recognises the futility of the planning/sociology dichotomy and he argues against reductionist ideas and policies that do not account for the realities of a neighbourhood.

Gans (1968) makes note of the homogeneity of the urban villages that serve as precedents for ‘authentic urbanism’. Thus, he is not an uncritical supporter of neighbourhoods such as Boston’s West End. Rather than presenting a true diversity, “the advocacy of moderate

homogeneity was based on a single set of values: those concerning the quality of social life” (p. 166) which is a recurring criticism of gay urban villages. While perhaps a quality social life is a sufficient goal for some communities, Gans outlines three main reasons why heterogeneity should be sought: demographic balance, tolerance of difference, and broadening children’s social education by exposing them to a variety of lifestyles (p. 167). This perspective is more closely aligned with the cosmopolitan neighbourhood ideals, with a concentration on social interaction and learning, presently a cornerstone of social sustainability.

#### 4.1.2 New Urbanism

The Congress for the New Urbanism, founded in 1993, has become an important new paradigm in planning. New Urbanism (NU) is guided by a charter that lists 27 principles for more appropriate neighbourhood design from graphic urban design codes to recognition of watersheds and regional planning. It is a holistic philosophy that responds to demands for changes to both residential and commercial patterns of development. Moudon (1992) sardonically characterises NU as having “found their norms in the late nineteenth century American small town, which, after some study, they have then modified and spiced up with garden city and city beautiful theories to establish their own theory of design” (p. 334). However, over the past 20 years NU has proven increasingly popular as a strategy for large-scale neighbourhood planning and redevelopment strategies.

While the popularity of NU has grown under the direction of architects and planners that espouse its virtues and actively pursue its incorporation into new neighbourhoods, a significant number of critics have arisen to confront NU as a shallow proposal that epitomises a concentration on the physical fallacy. As Oldenburg (2001) cautions, “[i]t will take more than front porches, reduced setbacks, and mixed-use planning to recreate public life. Front porch use was popular before television and air-conditioning, but has not been popular since” (p. 6). He speaks to the fact that beyond the urban form, society and patterns of communication have radically changed and must be considered in tandem with the development of more convivial, sustainable urban forms. Society is not the same; therefore, the built environment will not serve the same functions and should not be designed as though it will.

New Urbanism’s primary criticism is of its largely uncritical historicism. The implication is if one emulates the forms that made nineteenth century urban living, architects can revive some of the virtues of the period. NU has effectively responded to the nostalgia for decades past without an effective consideration of the present and the intersections between them. NU provides us with a view to an urban form designed specifically for the type of interaction espoused by Jacobs, and modern hopes for urban villages, but thus far has represented the physical fallacy warned by Gans.

New Urbanism is a distinct and often contested form of urban planning and design but the resonance of its founding principles have led to different characterisations that

concentrate on specific aspects of the New Urbanist kit. The variants are still largely based on the overarching idea that turn of the century living was more successful than the suburban model that was its offspring. NU itself is rooted in a neo-traditional design (NTD) philosophy, which seeks to revive historical forms in planning and development in hopes of capturing the values and lifestyle of a period. However as Kohn (2004) writes, “rather than conveying a specific history and geography, the neo-traditionalist building style seems to remove the developments from time and space and situates them in a dream-like alternative dimension” (p. 129). In response to the claims that neo-traditional design provides a superior environment for social interaction, Nasar (2003) finds through his research that “residents in TD [traditional development] and SUBURB showed no difference in sense of community,” (p. 65) one of the primary stated goals of NTD. This is in contrast to the highly localised character of place born out of authentic urbanism and is more indicative of the placelessness that plagues suburbia.

#### 4.1.3 Urban Villages Group

The British Urban Villages Group shares many of the same failings of New Urbanism, namely a focus on the physical space and the expectation that buildings will dictate social behaviour. This may be a result of their mutual admiration or in the case of the Urban Villages Group, an unfocused stricture of urban design, which ultimately led to developer confusion and reappropriation of the term.

The idea of urban villages in the UK took on a much more concrete meaning as a better way to think about urban growth, as opposed to an ethereal ideal of social living as espoused by New Urbanism in North America. The Urban Villages Group and the Prince's Trust had been working to reintroduce the value of the urban village form in order to curb continuing adoption of American-style suburban development. This was born of a stricter outline of characteristics, detailed in Table 1, to which the urban village moniker could be ascribed.

**Table 1. Urban village design and development principles**

3,000 – 5,000 people  
 [I]nclude such adjoining land as is needed for its maximum protection  
 Maximum possible self sufficiency' (p.24)  
 Focal village square  
 Small enough for everything to be in walking distance  
 Mix of housing tenures, ages and social groups  
 Retail mixed with other uses throughout the scheme  
 Primary school within the scheme  
 Pattern of open spaces should be considered  
 Connected street network  
 Traffic calming  
 Locality will set the prevailing architectural style  
 Architectural focal points, street corners, building lines, visual incidents,  
 enclosure  
 Mix of uses within neighbourhoods, street blocks, streets, and within individual  
 buildings  
 Permeable, pedestrian friendly, cul-de-sacs to be avoided  
 Social mix and consultation  
 Legible, focal points, strong street corners  
 Variety of buildings and spaces that change and adapt over time  
 Bring life to the buildings and the spaces in front of them  
 (from Aldous 1992; 1995)

## 4.2 Cosmopolitan Urbanism

The preceding three precedents lay the groundwork for an understanding of how urban villages have been established as a distinct planning strategy. The consistency between them can be seen in their objectives but each differs in its philosophy and physical manifestations. Thus the objectives are a more consistent base for understanding urban villages. The emerging concept of cosmopolitan urbanism moves beyond trying to find a physical form and as a fourth alternative, more effectively communicates the processes and purpose of urban villages with particular application to gay urban villages and their foundation in queer space.

The study of cosmopolitan urbanism takes a step back to look at multiple perspectives of urban development. While Binnie (2006) recognises that “the multiple, contested and often contradictory ways in which cosmopolitan has been applied to the city...are far from unproblematic” (p. 246) they are nonetheless interesting to explore. In attempting to understand a cosmopolitan form of urbanism, more critical questions can be asked about relationships and social structures within the built environment, rather than simply extrapolating desired characteristics from historical precedent. The hypotheses set forth by Sandercock, Binnie and others recognise fundamental changes in the way people interact and the global scales that have changed these interactions.

“Cosmopolitanism can thus be characterised in two major ways: first, as a philosophy of world citizenship which simultaneously transcends the boundaries of the nation-state and descends to the scale of individual rights and responsibilities in an apparently increasingly connected and globalised world; and, second, as a particular set of skills and attitudes towards diversity and difference” (Binnie, 2006, p. 13)



An increasingly diverse mix of cultures has come together over the last century but the interface between people has largely been ignored. As Gans (1968) remarks, “a society of diverse people taking pride in their diversity, enriching their own and their children’s lives by it, and co-operating to achieve democracy and so alleviate useless social conflict is a delightful and desirable vision [and]... a legitimate planning goal. Whether or not the goal can be achieved simply by requiring diverse people to live together is debatable, however” (p. 167). However, according to Lozano (1990), “diversity is the best assurance a community has that it will be able to minimise crises and deal with uncertainty, since most crises originate in the dominant structure of the community” (p. 144). This same assertion is made across scientific and sociological boundaries. Greater diversity permits greater adaptability and creativity in any crisis.

Key to this diversity is the involvement of ‘others’. Through the consumption of space the ‘other’— strangers, non-residents, any people not conforming to the highly local perception of the ordinary — is also a key producer. As a prime example of celebrating others in urban space, “the presence of gay communities and spaces has become part of the arsenal of entrepreneurial governance, giving sexual ‘others’ a central role in place promotion, as symbols of cosmopolitanism and creative appeal. Yet this incorporation has meant tightening regulation of the types of sexualised spaces in cities. This ‘sexual restructuring’ of cities, we argue, is a powerful component of the ‘new homonormativity’, a broader ideological project tied to the logic of assimilationist sexual citizenship” (Bell & Binnie, 2004, p. 1819). By exposing glbt communities to the

scrutiny of others, the intent behind active commercial promotion is to moderate the sense of difference. In short, by calling a neighbourhood cosmopolitan, it attracts a mainstream audience seeking to fulfil their desire for a sense of conviviality with difference.

More importantly though, these interactions awaken a greater awareness of inclusion and exclusion. Sandercock has championed the concept of Cosmopolis as a new “post-modern Utopia to which I will not ascribe built form, and which I insist can never be realized, but must always be in the making” (Sandercock, 1998, p. 163) —contingent and imminent like queer space. She invokes this concept as strategy toward an ever more inclusive planning regime. “We have moved from planning history — the official story — to planning’s contested and multiple histories” (Sandercock, 2003, p. 57). Much like queer space, Cosmopolis is predicated, rather, on the interaction between different groups, presumably with their own established spatial needs and products. Cosmopolitan spaces and queer spaces can therefore be anywhere but are most often found in large multicultural cities. Hottola describes metaspaces based on social interactions between disparate cultures (backpackers and locals) in multicultural cities. He describes metaspaces as “places of recovery; the behavioral and physical tourist ‘bubbles’ where the locus of control is with the tourists rather than with their so-called hosts” (Hottola, 2005, p. 2). However, rather than spaces of control, Cosmopolis describes pockets of exploration within a controlled city. That tension forms a basis for conceptualising queer space as an urban village: a showcase of both inclusion and exclusion.

By accepting mainstream presence as a symbol of success in achieving social acceptance, the 'queer' qualities of space are undermined and reconstituted as a new normal. "We walk through sections of the city that we experience as having unique characters which are not ours, where people from diverse places mingle and then go home" (Young as quoted in Bell & Binnie, 2004, p.1812). Bell and Binnie (2004) critique this perception, suggesting that it implies that "straights may wish to consume (queer) difference 'and then go home', where home is a space set apart from the whirl of difference on the streets" (p. 1812). This implies that consumption serves as a method of populating space and increasing its desirability. Spaces with an original role as a queer space of difference and collectivity are coopted by practices of consumption to serve a desire to make interacting with diversity easier. Real difference is excluded in the cursory experiences of these places. An example from New York demonstrates that "The Village has become the 'place of the gaze', rather than a scene of discourse... Life in Greenwich Village exemplifies perhaps the most we have been able to achieve: a willingness to live with difference, though a denial that this entails a shared fate" (Sennett as cited in Sandercock, 1998, p. 167). This comment simply speaks to an abundant tolerance but lack of recognition that the real value of cosmopolitanism comes in the interaction and social connection. But while oversimplified ideals of cosmopolitanism are criticised, the concern then turns to the determinants of a more authentic experience. "Which forms of contact are seen as authentic and to be valued, and which are seen as inauthentic and without value? And how can the devalued forms of contact be legislated against?" (Bell

& Binnie, 2004, p. 1812). These questions are particularly challenging when considering the context of gay space, since the authenticity of gay culture is rooted in the inauthentic, such as drag performance and the transience of metaspatial elements.

#### 4.2.1 Convivial Cities

Conviviality is the quality of lively socialness (Peattie, 1998). In a planning context, convivial cities are those that provide opportunities for casual social connection between people in the city — communication and collocation — whether through complementary urban design or market-driven development of third places. Conviviality is one important aspect of cosmopolitanism. As Sandercock notes, a community can be multicultural but without communication and social capital, diversity is worth very little.

Illich (1973) defines conviviality as “autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment” (p. 7). His ideas are concerned primarily with social organization and social learning which are apropos to current planning methodology. Peattie (1998) extends this social focus into an ideal for a vibrant urban environment with strong connections in principle to cosmopolitan urbanism. She proposes a broader definition of conviviality as a principal tenant of good planning and community building. It reflects the spirit of “small-group rituals and social bonding in serious collective action” (p. 247). Illich regards conviviality as a strategy towards social equalisation reclaiming the tools of future-visioning and future-making that are currently deferred to experts and leaders. Peattie recasts conviviality as a

counterpart to community — social energy, dissent, and human flowering versus stability and establishment. Though, as she states, this takes us outside the realm of traditional planning roles, Peattie believes that “[i]n human happiness, creative activity and a sense of community count for at least as much and maybe more than material standard of living” (p. 248). She suggests that it is within the role of the planner to help create the spaces that facilitate convivial relationships.

Conviviality is tightly connected to Ray Oldenburg’s concept of “third places”, those besides home and work, which form the basis of community — cafés, pubs, diners, and hangouts (characterised in Table 2).

**Table 2. Characteristics of Third Places**

- On neutral ground
- Place of social equalization
- Conversation as primary activity
- Low profile, plain-looking space
- Open in off-hours
- Regular clientele determines character
- Playful mood, contrasting more serious mood in other spheres
- Psychologically comforting and supportive environment

(adapted from Oldenburg, 1989)

He firmly outlines his idea of the third place through the eight characteristics and is careful to warn of “warming of the product” where “developers build ... socially sterile subdivisions and call them ‘communities’. Officials of a popular coffeehouse chain often claim that their establishments are third places, but they aren’t” (Oldenburg, 2001, p. 3). This same phenomenon is a growing concern in gay urban villages due to the increasing

commercialisation of these neighbourhoods. Since conviviality carries the advantage of existing outside economic frameworks, being exclusively non-material. It cannot be “coerced or bought, but the resources used in the production of conviviality—space, seats, food and drink... may be sold or rented or ceded by owners and governments” (Peattie, 1998, p. 250).

The importance of third places as local, neighbourhood-based entities is clear, unfortunately Oldenburg (1989) couches his explanations of the need for third spaces in excruciatingly heteronormative terms: “Masculinity and femininity refer to styles of appearance, conduct, outlook, and attitude that make the sexes interesting and appealing to one and other. These are nurtured and replenished in same-sex association. Marriage that denies the full measure of same-sex adult association will yield endless rows of isolated homes where community used to be and will plague the joys of marital companionship with tedium” (pp. 252-253). In justifying the need for men to partake in third places, he reinforces a particularly narrow view of sexual relationships. Though the concept of the third place is valid, his understanding of how it applies to a more diverse society is called into question. The role of third places may not be as clearly delineated as his requirements for them lay out. Perhaps a third place need not be plain looking, for instance. Perhaps a third place may serve a community limited in convivial social space despite failing one of Oldenburg’s eight characteristics, serving the same function, though not as ideally as straight counterpart spaces.

The centrality of these convivial third places is acute for glbtt people, who may not find acceptance at work or at home, relying on conviviality for self-expression and third places for community and more importantly, safety. Finding conviviality in ‘third-place’ establishments was also a catalyst for significant movements in lesbian and gay liberation such as Stonewall.

To many glbtt people, a third place is crucial — a place providing familiarity and equalisation. For better or worse this is often the bar. The importance of clubs and bars to mainstream gay culture cannot be dismissed; Brown and others have highlighted the role they play in community building and social networking. Coffee houses, pubs (providing a more conversational atmosphere than bars or clubs) and community centres are other, less common examples of common third places within the glbtt community. In the 1970s activists in Toronto’s gay village derided the community at large, suggesting “that homosexuals who frequented the gay ghetto bar scene were complicit in their own marginalisation... Homosexuals needed to forego the clubs and bars in favour of the alternative spaces created by the homosexual political organizations—the community and drop-in centres, the coffee houses, the dances and fund-raising events. These spaces, Forbes argued, would help gays connect with others in ways that would nurture a healthier self-image and cultivate more appropriate social conduct” (Nash, 2006, p. 6). However, the ongoing dominance of clubs must be acknowledged in fulfilling the role of the third place to the gay community. On the other hand, for many, bars, clubs, and the like are sources of discomfort and discord. In this way they cannot serve the role third

places for everyone, as Oldenburg's examples hypothetically can. Like perceptions of third spaces, however, conviviality does not demand universality either. If the core act within third spaces can vary, why not the place itself?

Conviviality is a central component of cosmopolitan urbanism and ultimately Cosmopolis. While I have discussed the role and form of conviviality, questions remain about what civic mechanisms can provide this type of amenity and what the resultant urban form may look like. Urban design, as a field — also contested in its role and scope — provides a bridge between the theoretical and social and the physical component that planners have a role in adapting. This has so far seen limited success through the articulation of the various existing urban village typologies. A cosmopolitan reading of the role of urban design might be to create the types of spaces that facilitate a sense of community through which everyone is offered a role in city building.

Cosmopolis is not a prescription in the way that the preceding examples of urban village typologies are: concentrating on concrete physical principles. Cosmopolitan urbanism serves as a frame for a patchwork of principles and theories that contribute to an understanding or imagining of neighbourhoods. Within this patchwork lies Ray Oldenburg's description of third places, which are at the heart of diversity and community and the social interactions that these places foster are exemplified by principles of conviviality outlined by Lisa Peattie. Urban design is discussed in the following section. The works of Alexander, Lynch, and Gehl have been central to the



codification of spatial preferences. The successes and acceptance of their design principles mark them as a preferred starting point for discussions of the potential spatial properties of cosmopolitan urbanism and the form of urban villages.

## **4.3 Urban Design**

### **4.3.1 Scope of Urban Design**

With an understanding that urban villages must be conceived beyond their built structure, they still exist in real space. Urban design, more broadly considered still plays a critical role in creating a physical environment supportive of the principles of the urban village. The role of urban design has also changed through time with Cuthbert (2006) criticising its status as “big architecture” where names like Le Corbusier and Howard prescribed complete communities ready for construction. Talen and Ellis argue that urban design should be a fundamental component of city and neighbourhood planning along side, rather than subordinate to, urban processes. “Theories of good city form... have been relegated to the level of urban design, viewed as stylistic or architectural solutions to peripheral problems” (Talen & Ellis, 2002, p. 38). Today, Madanipour sees the value of urban design as “imaging the future of urban environments.

“After an initial period in which urban design was narrowly defined as merely dealing with appearances, there is now a growing appreciation that it also, and more importantly, deals with the organization of urban space and the processes of shaping cities. As urban development is a central part of the process of urban change, we may start to see the potentially strategic place that urban design occupies in shaping the city of the future” (Madanipour, 2004)

These sentiments recall a necessity to understand structure and design as more fundamental to planning concerns. Urban design must seek a role that recognises the debate that Gans considers: whether urban form, more so than sociological factors, influence neighbourhood success. The following players in urban design each suggest that this debate should not be about built form versus people, but rather the interplay between them, and by extension, the metaspace that this interface creates. They take complementary perspectives on how form affects the social and functional life of city spaces, aware that it is human use that demonstrates high-quality urban spaces. There is a general acknowledgement that the ultimate goal of urban design is to create great spaces for people to use.

### 4.3.2 Three Urban Designers

#### **Gehl**

Gehl emphasises the value of the ordinary streetscape over special occasions or “important places”, claiming that “it is in these daily situations that our cities and city districts must function and provide enjoyment” (Gehl, 1987, p. 9). In this way, Gehl links to Oldenburg’s ideas of third spaces by asserting their “important role as the most easily accessible places to go, to meet people and to take part in public life” (Gehl, p. 17). The Scandinavian proverb, “people come where people are” reflects a basic premise of his theories toward designing desirable urban space. “Public spaces can be seen as the important first link in a chain of places to go” (Gehl, p. 17) implying a recognition of the

fact that public open space is rarely the destination, but is a key determinant of where one goes and how one gets there.

## **Alexander**

Alexander's early works are governed by a single overriding rule that "every act of construction has just one basic obligation: it must create a continuous structure of wholes around itself" (Alexander, 1987) or in his words, to heal the city. More recently, *The Nature of Order* asked, "how do we build places and structures that are filled with life?" (Alexander, 2002), a value and goal shared by Sucher. In his earlier book with Sara Ishikawa and Murray Silverstein, "[Alexander] argued for injecting personal, emotional and spiritual qualities into manmade structures, streets and cities. Alexander's book challenged the architectural establishment and derided much that's been built over the past century as 'deadly'" (Ludden, 2005). Similarly, Sucher sees much recent development harming neighbourhoods by failing to recognise the public realm and consider the human-scale details.

## **Lynch**

Moudon (1992) credits Lynch as a "basic source of knowledge available to the urban designer" recognising his particular contribution in "how people see and feel about their environment" (p. 332). The spatial distinctions coined by Lynch — path, node, edge, landmark and district — are primary methods for characterising space and understanding

spatial relationships for designers and for communicating to audiences not versed in planning ideas. In the seed of these spatial ideas was a desire to understand how people perceive cities, believing that in making “cities more imageable... urban designers can create more psychologically satisfying environments” (LeGates & Stout, 2003, p. 425).

LeGates and Stout (2003) contrast the relationship between Lynch’s abstracted forms and the applied principles of William Whyte, whose empirical research into the *Public Life of Small Urban Spaces* (Whyte, Municipal Art Society of New York, Street Life Project et al., 1988) advocates many of the same principles. Whyte’s research coincides comfortably with that of Gehl in regarding the details of seating, and social activity while Lynch concentrates on the broader strokes of physicality. Nodes and the delineation of paths, for instance, are seen as giving prominence to spaces and contributing to their imagability, memorability and thus desirability.

#### **4.4 Creative Class**

Richard Florida argues that young people and equally the glbtt community are drawn to communities and cities based on different characteristics than previous generations. He has articulated these changes through the development of his Creative Class theories. He considers a “scientist or engineer, an architect or designer, a writer, artist or musician, or [anyone who uses] creativity as a key factor in [their] work or business, education, health care, law or some other profession” (Florida, 2002, p. ix) members of the Creative Class. This class is marked by preferences for Creative Centres that provide creative validation,

diversity and high-quality amenities rather than monolithic attractions like malls, stadia and touristy destinations (Florida, 2002, 2005a). Supported by demographic analysis, the creative class is changing patterns of employment and mobility, and altering the basic competitiveness of cities by attracting talent to the creative industries and knowledge-based economies currently dominating the marketplace, at least in North America (Coletta, 2006). “In a global economy in which cities act as firms competing against one another to attract investment and visitors, design is a means of becoming distinguishable from others. It is seen to help transform the image of cities from a place of industrial workers to one of white-collar urban populations” (Madanipour, 2004, p. iii).

Florida (2002) has been a key figure in highlighting the importance of glbtt people by matter-of-factly including them as a key component of his calculations for city success. The ‘creativity index’ of the city is based on four factors: percent of the population in the Creative Class, number of patents per capita, a High-Tech Index and the Gay Index, “a reasonable proxy for an area’s openness to different kinds of people and ideas” (p. 245).

The Creativity Index helps to project the relative attractiveness and success of a city operating in North America’s service- and knowledge-based industries.

Demographers Gates and Ost (2004) developed the Gay/Lesbian Index, which is central to Florida’s hypotheses. “The index is a ratio of the proportion of same-sex couples living in a region to the proportion of households that are located in a region” (p. 2). The impact of glbtt communities on the city is very real and as Richard Florida (2002, 2005a, 2005b) contends, is very rooted in demographics.

Certainly some of the largest cities in the United States contain the largest gay and lesbian populations. Beyond this, few studies have been done to calculate real glbtt-identified populations and their characteristics. Black, Gates, Sanders, et al. (2000) began to rectify the paucity of statistics asserting that “careful theoretical and empirical work that pays close attention to sexual orientation can help us to understand questions about the general nature of labour market choices, accumulation of human capital, specialisation within households and many other issues of interest to social scientists” (p. 153). Table 3 outlines some key statistics from their findings that are relevant to the configuration of gay and lesbian communities.

**Table 3. Statistics on Gay and Lesbian Populations in the United States.**

- Gay men earn 28% less than heterosexual men
- Lesbian women earn 20-35% more than other equally skilled women
- 67.9% of gay men and 93.8% of lesbians lived with a same-sex partner at some time
- The top 20 ‘gay’ cities are home to 26% of the national population and 60% of gay men
- 21.7% of partnered lesbians and 5.2% of partnered gays have children living in the home
- Fraction of gays in the population: 2.5%
- Fraction of lesbians in the population: 1.5%

(Adapted from Black, Gates, Sanders et al., 2000)

Florida’s Creative Class, in search of an urban lifestyle, has underwritten neighbourhood redevelopment efforts throughout North America. Many glbtt people appreciate urban living that permits expanded social contact and local amenities. Bell and Valentine cite “constructionist arguments about the development of gay identity suggest that this is

predicated upon the opportunities offered by city life — by anonymity and heterogeneity, as well as by sheer population size” (1995, p. 113). As social acceptance of gays and lesbians has increased, so too has the community’s visibility.

The usefulness of Creative Class principles for planners is twofold: it quantifies the value of promoting these areas and provides precedent for the spatial characteristics attracting younger people and knowledge-based industries. In terms of its application to the discussion of gay urban villages, his theories are the first to explicitly articulate the role of the glbtt population as an indicator group. The factors he considers are incubators for cosmopolitan neighbourhoods and in effect, quantifies the economic, political, cultural and resultant physical role that glbtt people play.

## **4.5 Gentrification**

As Florida articulates the results and characteristics of a community transformed by the creative class, the processes of gentrification that underlie the demographic changes have been the subject of research for decades. Gentrification describes the process of a wealthier class of resident moving into a neighbourhood and altering its character — “up-scaling” — while ghettoization tends to be understood as economic or social forces segregating a particular minority. Despite the longevity of work in this area, there is still no consensus about the mechanisms of neighbourhood transformation. Beauregard (1990) suggests that the infinite variety of neighbourhoods and circumstances makes a change model irrelevant. However the ongoing association of gay and lesbian urban enclaves

with the forces of gentrification warrants a review. Urban villages are seen as the latest typology to attract gentrifying forces, whether as a result of creative class demographics or cultural shifts attracting residents to the principles underlying authentic and cosmopolitan urbanism.

Within the domain of gentrification, three lifecycle models have persisted as researchers attempt to understand how and why neighbourhoods change. The ecological, sub-culture and political economy models embody different conceptualisations of gentrification (Temkin & Rohe, 1996). The ecological model describes a system of change that is economically-based and embraces outside factors like market pricing as drivers of neighbourhood change and does not consider factors like human agency. The subculture model attributes neighbourhood change to “local residents taking active roles in their communities and harnessing social capital,” (Anderson, 2005, p. 11). Political economy acknowledges the relationship between market forces and human needs and actions in the selection of a home and community, but tends to frame these factors as functions of a systemic structure.

There is strong support for neighbourhood revitalisation in most municipalities today. “Market reintegration enables the broader society (and market) to benefit from the community’s various economic and human resources,” (Zielenbach, 2000, p. 32). Each city has its own way of encouraging neighbourhood turnaround or maintenance, but with revitalisation efforts usually comes the expectation of payoff, whether for residents or the



city at large in the form of economic or marketing spin-offs. It is important to understand the impact that altering a neighbourhood composition will have on nearby areas of the city at large. Beauregard contends that, “a strong community might enhance the city-wide image of the neighbourhood and generate a wide range of services and activities, thus increasing its potential,” (1990, p. 856). There is however no clear understanding that improving one neighbourhood will affect another. Increasing the value of one area creates immense pressure on low-income residents and in the cases of gentrification, they are forced to move away because of rising rents. This only serves to shift demands to another neighbourhood, frequently a neighbourhood that is also near its threshold limit for decline.

Gay enclaves have been known to emerge out of the refurbishment and gentrification of an old neighbourhood by gays for their own purposes; purchasing buildings and land when the area is devalued and slowly building a desirable neighbourhood. This has been seen very clearly in San Francisco but also smaller neighbourhoods like Old Town East, Columbus, Ohio, which will be discussed later.

Unfortunately we do not have a comprehensive model for understanding neighbourhood change in general, let alone incorporating the idiosyncrasies and concerns of specific cultural groups like glbtt people. Lupton and Power (2004) remind us that

“the theoretical approach taken to determining causality will largely determine the explanations produced. If we look for explanations of change within neighbourhoods, for example, we are unlikely to conclude that causes are driven by economic forces at the global, national or regional level” (p. 4).

This emphasises the scale and factors considered as intrinsic to the results. This is also the caution when attempting to apply generalised change theories to a neighbourhood. In the pursuit of some understanding of how our cities function, these theories still serve a purpose. Three primary categories of model continue to achieve wide purchase even with the recognition of their inherent bias.

#### 4.5.1 Ecological Model

“Ecological thinkers believe neighbourhood change is a natural process strictly due to outside market forces” (Anderson, 2005, p. 11). It is more of an economically based model that embraces outside factors like market pricing as drivers of neighbourhood change and does not embrace factors like human agency. Filtering and invasion/succession are two secondary models that have endured alongside the ecological model of change. They are also cornerstones for conservative evaluations of rent control and affordable housing (L. B. Smith, 2003; Tucker, 1991).

Filtering continues to be a frequent explanation for a variety of housing processes consisting of, “lower income groups inheriting the housing that no longer meets the needs of higher income groups,” (Ferguson, 1983, p. 29) who are typically moving away from inner-city neighbourhoods and in the suburbs. This primarily outlines a process of decline while invasion/succession speaks to an overall transformation in a neighbourhood.

Invasion/succession explains how a population moves in to an unestablished area or replaces existing populations through greater adaptability. Ferguson recorded the causal conditions of invasion outline by McKenzie:

1. change in transportation forms or routes;
2. physical obsolescence due to age, change in use or fashion;
3. erection of major public or private building;
4. change in structure or introduction of new industry;
5. redirection of income of their residents due to economic change;
6. real estate promotion changing the demand for sites

(McKenzie in Ferguson, 1983, p. 29)

Invasion/succession acknowledges the more complicated community relationships within a neighbourhood and explains why a neighbourhood might be subject to invasion but not how. Ferguson notes that resistance to invasion by existing populations comes through community solidarity, “as a population develops an effective organization, it improves its chances of survival in its environment” (Ferguson, 1983, p. 30).

#### 4.5.2 Sub-Culture Model

“Sub-culturists believe that neighbourhood change is a result of local residents taking active roles in their communities and harnessing social capital” (Anderson, 2005, p. 11).

The sub-culture model has emerged more recently in response to witnessing examples of communities learning to help themselves, serving as their own agents of change. An empowered group appears to be able to change the tide of neighbourhood decline in

many circumstances. It is more dependent on the idea that residents *choose* to remain in place, or to leave based on the value they place on the area. This appears most closely tied to the patterns of change in glbtt enclaves, which see social networks as central forces of revitalisation and change based in the accretion of people of similar mind and wealth.

### 4.5.3 Political Economy Model

The political economy model tends to be a criticism of capitalist systems. “Political economists do not view change in the same equilibrium context as ecologists but as a conflict between social, economic, and political issues,” (Anderson, 2005, p. 16). It does acknowledge the relationship of market forces and human needs and actions in the selection of a home and community, but tends to frame these factors as functions of a systemic structure. In this way it serves as a more comprehensive combination of the two previous models, but seems to be short in functional details. The social disadvantages of black communities in the United States are well documented (Murie & Musterd, 2004; Squires & Kubrin, 2005) and despite efforts to diminish the disparities, they continue to increase, and by some indicators accelerate.

### 4.5.4 Threshold Factors

Quercia and Galster claim that a neighbourhood will undergo change when a specific variable moves above or below a threshold. Frequently cited, and the most studied

indicator in the American context is percentage of ethnic population (Quercia & Galster, 2000; Winsberg, 1989). They argue that the best reason for the awareness of threshold indicators is because, “planners should strive to keep neighbourhoods from slipping over the various precipices, thereby enhancing the aggregate level of societal well-being in the metro area” (2000, p. 160). This sentiment is firmly rooted in a positivist paradigm where change is caused by external forces. The models from which thresholds have emerged have “typically have been developed to explain only one narrow dimension of neighbourhood dynamics” (2000, p. 160).

Galster, Hayes and Johnson (2005) set out to develop an effective, inexpensive and robust method to monitor a neighbourhood through a minimum of data. The indicators uncovered — home mortgage approval rates, amounts approved for home purchase loans, number of mortgage loan applications, and number of local businesses — are based on traditional conceptions of neighbourhood success. While further evidence needs to be collected to evaluate these indicators separate from confounding variables, it is an interesting prospect whether the intricacies of neighbourhood health and life stage can be predicted easily.

Beauregard (1990) has argued convincingly that gentrification at least is based on a multitude of processes and cannot be pinned down into a generalisable model that can be applied to a neighbourhood exclusive of its particular idiosyncrasies. His analyses of

gentrifying processes in Philadelphia are sufficiently broad to insinuate that lifecycle models in general are subject to the same criticism.

The theory behind lifecycle models have come more in-line with current participatory methodology with a newer concentration on community building as part of the process of revitalisation. Some researchers are approaching a sense of futility in attempting to establish an omnibus model of neighbourhood change (Beauregard, 1990). Given the current selection of change theories, it is irrelevant to debate a theory's dominance, since none are comprehensive in their consideration of factors. As it stands, as in many other housing-related topics, conclusive answers are mired in value-laden debates, stifling the creation and verification of models with broader potential and applicability.

## **4.6 Gay Ghettos? Comparing Ethnicity and Sexuality**

“Cities are truly only sustainable in the long run if they represent the society in all of its diversity” (Plater-Zyberk, 2006)

No single concept has emerged as a successful indicator of neighbourhood lifecycle. But gentrification and ghettoization are two widely accepted examples of processes that explain the phenomenon of neighbourhood change. Both of these processes are often associated with the emergence of gay and lesbian enclaves to varying degrees. The irony of association between the two in relation to gay urban villages is their mutually exclusive characteristics. This curiosity is the focus of a documentary by Linda Goode

Bryant and Laura Poitras (2003) who found that despite a shared history of oppression, there was significant friction and widely separate community goals between one African American community and the growing gay male presence in their neighbourhood. Ghettoization as an idea bares further exploration in this context, with its immediate comparisons to the enclaves of ethnicity.

Of the numerous gay areas listed in Wikipedia (“Gay village”, 2007), many are labelled differently — enclaves, villages, ‘gay towns’, ‘queer quarters’, ghettos. On the surface, they are all describing an identifiable zone in a city with a more highly visible gay or lesbian population. Does the epithet betray real differences in the format of these neighbourhoods? Labelling these spaces ‘ghettos’ conjures images of the urban territories of other marginalised groups and leads to a discussion about the relationship between the spaces of ethnicity and the spaces of sexuality. What emerges is a realisation of the divergence between the territory of gay urban villages as insurgent and ethnic enclaves mired in marginalisation.

**ghetto: a part of a city, esp. a slum area, occupied by a minority group or groups.**

Ghettoization typically implies social, economic or legal pressure upon a group to reside in a certain area. The term ghetto arose in 16th-century Venice where authorities forced Jews to reside. It was much later appropriated by sociologists at the Chicago School of

the 1920s to mean districts dominated by racial or ethnic minorities generally (Sibalis, 2004, p. 1739). As language has evolved, ghetto has taken on the colloquial meanings that minimise its oppressive roots. True ghettos are the construct of cultural forces and a method of containment of disadvantaged communities. The instrumentally rationalist planning that dominated the 20th century dictated policy and land use. Its policies and practices overtly or unknowingly relegated minorities to less desirable neighbourhoods (Mier, 1994, p. 235). These neighbourhoods then often degraded into slums even while the concept of slum was almost indefensibly aesthetic. “My friend’s instincts told him the North End was a good place, and his social statistics confirmed it. But everything he had learned as a physical planner... told him the North End had to be a bad neighbourhood” (Jacobs, 1989, p. 11). Various market forces and disinvestment also contributed to the isolation of these communities, “‘No sense in lending money into the North End,’ the banker said. ‘It’s a slum!’” (Jacobs, 1989, p. 11). The shared experiences of the residents can bring these ghettoised neighbourhoods together through collective struggle, new policies and institutions as in the cases of East St. Louis (Reardon, 1998) and the neighbourhood of Redfern, Sydney, Australia (Sandercock, 2003; Sarkissian, Walsh, Gherardi et al., 1994).

Gay enclaves came together through the building of population into an area based on some desirable characteristic that formed the core of a community structure. According to early political economic stage models, “gay men and sometimes lesbians [were] part of a ‘pioneer’ group looking for cheap rent” (Forsyth, 2001, p. 344). Enclaves were often built



around some unifying icon, establishment, group, or feature that drew more residents until it reached a critical mass, which itself became the draw. This description fails to consider pressure to live in a given area, a key characteristic of the process of ghettoization.

“Structural similarities between gay and ethnic enclaves...included having a concentration of residences of the group, a fairly complete array of commercial enterprises and services, collective action, a sense of history of the group, shared norms, conflict management, and the presence of primary social groups within the population or of isolation from the wide society” (Forsyth, 2001, p. 344).

The true ghetto is more aptly related to decisions that have systematically disadvantaged groups like African Americans and Aboriginal populations. Their ghettos, including reserves, deny opportunity and inclusion. Ethnic ghettos have been characterised less as havens and more often as failures in service of planning to the population of the ghetto (Stafford & Ladner, 1969, 68).

The assertions that the population creates gay enclaves for political purposes and economic potentials (M. P. Brown, 1997; Forsyth, 2001; Sibalis, 2004) are an important distinction between gay and ethnic ghettos. Presently, some tolerance and support for gay and lesbian communities within cities stems from an expectation of very real economic payoff. The renovation and revitalisation that Goode Bryant and Poitras (2003) note as central to the transformation of a neighbourhood into a gaybourhood is frequently cited as its inherent value. Thus, in the largest cities, ‘gay ghettos’ are more accurately described as urban villages, drawn together by social factors.

There has been no evidence of legal pressure to confine homosexuals to certain neighbourhoods, indeed, most examples of legal intervention upon the glbtt community have been to deny it territory, as in the case of Toronto's bathhouse raids (McKenna, 1981), and Vancouver's statutes against very specific areas of prostitution. The Marais in Paris was a source of government consternation and public outcry as the neighbourhood asserted sexuality, but no legislative pressure was brought to bare (Sibalis, 2004, p. 1751). In less residentially-oriented enclaves, such as in Manchester, the added economic pressure and political advantages of opening a queer-oriented business within the established gay zone may tend to ghettoise gay merchants and establishments.

Gay 'ghettoization' is largely self-imposed and beyond the alliterative appeal of the gay ghetto, an exploration of the history and characteristics of a ghetto-proper reveals little in common with their 16th century namesake beyond cultural concentration.

#### 4.6.1 Old Town East: ghettoised gentrification

Gans (1968) reminds us that "ethnic neighbourhoods... are not diverse, but quite homogeneous in population as well as building type" (p. 28). Old Town East in Columbus, Ohio is a fascinating study of the interface between two powerful forces of neighbourhood transformation. It is a majority-African American neighbourhood seeing increasing numbers of white, middle-class members of the glbtt community moving in. *Flag Wars* (Goode Bryant & Poitras, 2003a) investigates the impact of this gentrification. The film asked the question, "what's going to happen when gay whites move into this

black neighbourhood and how will the fact that they both come from communities that experience oppression affect the way that they try to live together? Will it impact it or will it not?" (Goode Bryant & Poitras, 2003).

Gay communities have a history of association with the gentrification of inner-city neighbourhoods. This gentrification has most often been manifested as early adoption as opposed to a concerted redevelopment effort. Gay men bring an incremental and sometimes exponential process of physical neighbourhood improvement. They are drawn by cheap rents, urban lifestyle, architectural and design opportunity.

“Gay whites ‘believe in the houses’. Their strategy is to improve the houses. If you improve the houses, you improve the neighbourhood. African Americans on the other hand, they believe that if you ensure every member of the community has their basic needs met then you improve the neighbourhood. When you bring those two value systems in to the same room to make decisions about how to improve the neighbourhood, you have clash” (Goode Bryant & Poitras, 2003).

The fundamental tension in Old Town East is between internal and external forces for neighbourhood improvement. While the black community is ghettoised, they are mobilised, seeking improvement through grassroots efforts. The incoming gay community is imposing external mores and values on a neighbourhood they see as having potential. “The different values and belief systems and resources of the two communities didn’t lend themselves to find a lot of commonality... both communities saw more of their self interest.” The gay community moving in is very passionate about saving the architecture of this neighbourhood... and feel that the houses have been let go. And so their passion is to renovate and maintain these houses and also to create a sense of neighbourhood”

(Goode Bryant & Poitras, 2003). This prompts questions of the lifecycle of a neighbourhood: identifying where the cycle of improvement in Old Town East began. In this case it is unclear whether gay men validated the neighbourhood for improvement and investment or whether it was recognition of the changing tides of the neighbourhood activated by existing residents.

The ongoing mainstreaming of gay culture, declarations of independence and demands for social rights are increasing awareness and breaking down barriers. Though queer theory might argue that new barriers to sexuality and identity freedoms are being erected in their place. Ghettoization tends to reinforce a fundamentally unsustainable state of oppression and homogeneity. Conversely, gay villages are born out of the fight against oppression, thus creating a social environment supportive of greater diversity. The case of Old Town East demonstrates two disparate states within a continuum of ghettoised and gentrified. Socio-economic forces ghettoise the African-American community, while the gay gentrification is an assertion of economic clout and the active dismantling of oppression.

## **4.7 Building the Gay Urban Village**

Gentrification and ghettoization are certainly relevant considerations in gay urban village emergence, but these processes alone do not explain the queer qualities of particular neighbourhoods that attract the glbtt population to them. This section explores several other ways of thinking about and characterising the glbtt community's spatial

characteristics and perceiving their needs. Beyond neighbourhood change in the abstract, Brown has presented a hypothesis linking urban features and predilection for gay adoption of a neighbourhood. Finally, given the apparent commodification of gay urban villages and queer space in general, Forsyth and others connect population with the businesses that serve them, arguing that these establishments have a greater founding role than given credit, and perhaps more fundamental as a catalyst than the typical forces of migration.

#### 4.7.1 Sex, Transit and the Scene

According to J. Brown (1997), the emergence of gay villages in the UK has been tied to three spatial factors: that they are peripheral and nodal areas, they are near or based on pre-existing public sex environments (PSEs), and they are marginal and entrepreneurial places (pp. 15-16). The factors that he outlines are much more closely tied to male-dominated spatial development, a sentiment echoed by Forsyth (1997, 2001). ‘Scenes’, as he describes gay neighbourhoods, “have developed near nodes of transportation... which offers a higher level of security at the end of a night” (J. Brown, 1997, p. 15). The resulting sense of safety and insulation from opportunities to be harassed or recognised is an important characteristic and reason for the growth of GUVs in the first place. The second factor is the proximity to PSEs. Public sex environments already exist as hubs of homosexual activity and connection. They provide transient and anonymous theatres for sexual gratification and until less than 30 years ago, were vital to the safety and anonymity of gay men who could not come out. PSEs become gay areas because gays

already know about them. The existence of PSEs usually indicates a marginality of the space, a place where one's presence is not immediately suspicious, but is sufficiently separated for a modicum of privacy; this marginality is part of the final characteristic. Third, villages develop where there is space for, "secluded growth... beyond the mental map of the mainstream urban dweller" (J. Brown, 1997, p. 16). Scenes are often found developing in areas of low rent and character buildings that could be adapted en masse to the needs of gay communities, typically beginning with bars and clubs.

The Marais in Paris builds on two elements of Brown's model. Growth of public transport facilities in the area through the 1970s, the aesthetic appeal of the quarter, and its increasing cultural importance with the construction of the Centre Pompidou in 1977, and the recognition of gay businessmen that, "with its low rents and real-estate prices, [the Marais] was ripe for investment" (Sibalis, 2004, p. 1745).

#### 4.7.2 Raising the 'Bar'

Urban segregation of homosexual populations has been primarily visible in commercial districts (J. Brown, 1997; Reed, 2003; Sibalis, 2004). Until recently, mapping of homosexual communities has largely been conducted through gay business directories and mailing lists (Forsyth, 1997, 2001). These primary sources provide evidence of the commercial focus of gay urban villages. The nature of the community seems to differ between North America and Europe with Europe emulating the commercial districting of North American areas, without the corresponding growth of residences. North American

cities more frequently have an added residential layer in their gay villages, along with notable European exceptions like London, Berlin and to a lesser degree Paris (Aldrich, 2004; Forsyth, 2001; Sibalís, 2004).

France's only 'gay ghetto', the Parisian neighbourhood of Le Marais "shares certain characteristics of both the British gay village, which is primarily commercial, and the North American gay ghetto, which is commercial and residential" (Sibalís, 2004, p. 1740). Sibalís attributes the appearance of the Marais to entrepreneurs who opened the first gay bar in 1978. They were attracted by low rents, available commercial space and a vibrant arts and cultural scene that was growing in the area in the 1970s. The history of this neighbourhood goes back hundreds of years with gay emergence here related to patterns of settlement that shaped the community. With some of the oldest housing stock in Paris, and historical conservation laws in place since 1964, gentrification began in the 1960s and proceeded apace until the early 1980s. This gentrification was supported by government grants for renovations and led to a significant population decline of the area and an "uncelebrated area of extreme overcrowding and urban poverty' thus became 'a gentrified landscape of consumption'" (Noin & White as quoted in Sibalís, 2004, p. 1744).

GUV structure relates more to the model of a central – gay – business district, with residences as peripheral. Great Britain's gay villages are in most cases commercial, social and predominantly non-residential (Sibalís, 2004, p. 1740). North American sites have

greater residential elements, like the Castro. In Toronto, Church Street is the defining axis of the gay neighbourhood. Stores and establishments line the street for several blocks, and further retail concentration on Yonge and Bloor help to delineate the district. Outside these strips though, the original residential character is obvious. Homes and apartments line the cross-streets with rainbow flags visible in many windows.

Gates (2005) recounts the transformation of Wilton Manors, FL — America's third gayest town (according to his index),

“Once a haven for the middle class, it became so riddled with crime and drug problems that the local Piggly Wiggly supermarket had to post a security guard at the door. Then, a gay bar opened in a run-down strip mall in the late 1990s, and a remarkable change began. Coffee shops and men's clothing stores followed, and the town's modest 1960s bungalows began selling for more than \$300,000. Today, an estimated 40 percent of adult men in Wilton Manors are gay, yet the town hardly seems to notice” (p. 81).

This story hints at the major role an individual business played in the transformation of a town.

Manchester's gay village, featured in *Queer as Folk*, is the second largest in the UK. It is also a prime example of Brown's model, but even his introduction to it credits the introduction of bars as the catalyst for change. Brown (1997) recalls that “lesbian and gay venues were originally dispersed throughout Manchester, but eventually the area now known as the Village began to grow around a number of pubs on a generally forgotten periphery of the city centre” (p. 27). The whole of downtown Manchester is very pedestrian friendly. The gay quarter is located in the southeast, with easy access to the city's largest train station, Piccadilly, and even nearer to the transit hub at Piccadilly



Gardens directly north. The national coach station is near the heart of the village and the A57 motorway is a primary vehicular access point to central Manchester. The village has a long history as a warehousing district for cotton (Hall, 1998). The (in)famous canal alongside Canal Street was used to transport supplies. Bars that were originally built to service dockworkers became part of a gay community here as early as the 1960s.

Anecdotal evidence of the area suggests a bustling sex trade in this warehouse district with ample nooks and crannies in and around buildings. The opportunity for redevelopment of warehouses and light industry was ripe after the decline of Manchester's industrial sector. Gay bars were found throughout the city, within the last six or seven years, the village has consolidated. Manchester's gay ghetto, as another characteristically European element, is quite removed from residential dwellings.

University residences are nearby but housing is relegated to areas outside the village and mostly outside the central business district. The ten boroughs that make up Greater Manchester are well connected and provide ample living space outside the city centre.

These models for the incubation of gay urban villages and structural observations relate more specifically to the commercial districting of gay communities. According to Forsyth (2001, p.343), "lesbians... tended to concentrate in specific low-income, inner neighbourhoods," but often, lesbian neighbourhoods do not tend to be about space-making at all.

### 4.7.3 Business Improvement Areas

Gay urban villages have almost always developed organically, with social, structural or market forces fostering the emergence of an identifiable gay neighbourhood. Recently as cities have begun to celebrate these areas, political and market interventions have increased to solidify their identity. Business improvement areas (BIAs) have had a significant role to play in the urban villages through branding, marketing, streetscapes, and business advocacy. In Vancouver the Davie Village BIA is credited with solidifying the neighbourhood as the gay urban village after years of bar and business transience throughout the downtown.

A Business Improvement Area (BIA), also commonly referred to as Business Improvement Districts or Zones (BIDs, BIZs respectively), is a non-profit organization within a discreet neighbourhood boundary. A BIA brings together local businesses and pools additional tax-based levies imposed by the BIA for the purposes of area improvement. They are most often operated through volunteer boards with members elected from contributing businesses. Funds collected are based on a percentage contribution of a business's percentage of the territory's overall commercial tax base, ensuring equitable contributions from all sizes of businesses.

Hoyt (2005) characterises BIAs as “a self taxing mechanism that allows business and property owners to offer additional services, [and] is a viable approach that encourages place-based investments, contributions to the quality of life in commercial areas, and

facilitates urban revitalization” (Hoyt, 2005, p. 198). Symes and Steel see BIAs as “localized attempts at ‘place-marketing’” citing the axiom “build for the locals and the visitors will come; build for the visitors and only the visitors will come” (Symes & Steel, 2003, p. 304).

There remains some question as to the implications of BIAs on individual neighbourhoods. Schaller and Modan outline some specific drawbacks of this model including lack of accountability to residents, who do not play a role on the board and are thus removed from political channels of recourse. “BIDs, then, are structured as a means of managing space rather than as democratic models of governance, and they are legitimised by the concept of improved efficiency” (Schaller & Modan, 2005, p. 396).

The authors are critical of the implications that these organizations have for power relations in a community. Their research into public space perceptions and business improvement districts in Washington, DC recorded significant disparity between the interests of residents and businesses. “Although an NBID might regulate public life on the street in Mount Pleasant and although it may increase the perception of safety for some constituents and restructure the business environment to suit their preferences, it also threatens to suppress the varied expression of human interaction, constrain the capacity of small businesses to stay afloat and inflame already existing tensions” (Schaller & Modan, 2005, p. 405). Their research is based in an economically challenged neighbourhood and so their conclusions may be less applicable in a district like the West End, where its influence is primarily cosmetic and promotional.

Chicago provides another example of intervention to highlight and legitimise a gay urban village. In 1997 as part of its effort to raise awareness and celebrate the identities of neighbourhoods and commercial centres, the City of Chicago commissioned the North Halstead Streetscape Project. The municipal government “announced plans to give visual designation to a district that realtors call ‘Lakeview’ and everyone else calls ‘Boys Town’.” The streetscaping featured highly controversial and considerably phallic ‘rainbow rockets’ as gateways along the street. They were significant as “the first permanent government-sponsored marker of gay community” (Reed, 2003, p. 425). The programme of neighbourhood identity-building began with Greektown and a Puerto Rican neighbourhood and encompassed generic streetscape improvements. These efforts were wholly supported by the mayor whose multicultural policies aimed to rise above the local ward competition and celebrate Chicago’s ‘gorgeous mosaic’.

There are fewer examples of direct municipal intervention but cities and business groups have begun to embrace gay enclaves whether in recognition of their creative class potential or tourism advantages. This led to increased community support being felt in the form of council proclamations of Pride celebrations or financial support for community-based organizations.

## 4.8 Briefly: the lesbian experience

A thorough analysis of the lesbian experience in cities and the urban environments they create and occupy would certainly encompass a volume unto itself. Lesbian women have played a role in the construction of gay urban villages and even more significant role in the assertion of glbtt rights. There is however much less research into the urban structures of lesbian communities.

Lesbian spatial uses and residential concentrations have recently begun to emerge as an entirely separate area of consideration (Forsyth, 1997, p. 38). The limited breadth of research into queer planning issues in general has prompted many surveys to lump together gay and lesbian issues in space. Forsyth (1997) notes several studies where lesbian populations are considered separately, the results of which are demonstrating a stronger connection to feminist planning concerns than to those of gay men. Several authors (J. Brown, 1997; Forsyth, 1997) suggest that, “lesbians have no desire to conquer space, being content with interior, and so, invisible networks and friendships” (McDowell, 1999, p.104). This suggests that women have very different uses and needs in their communities. Gay urban villages with their concentration on social and spatial visibility may not serve the needs or lifestyles of lesbians. This highlights a suspicion that several authors have posited namely, that gay urban villages are not in fact inclusive spaces, but simply serve as an alternative zone with different but equal pressures to conform. They may not even be a queer haven for all types of glbtt people, but rather a construct specific to the uses of gay men in the city. Lesbian enclaves are appearing in

literature as separate, though often related or near gay male areas. These neighbourhoods are primarily residential, rarely having any overtly lesbian commercial or community space at all. “While research confirmed the presence of lesbian residential concentrations these areas did not support an overtly visible lesbian commercial and/or institutional space similar to gay male areas” (Nash, 2001, p. 240).

The Castro and upper Market Street area of San Francisco had already established itself as a gay enclave with numerous bars and clubs in the 1970s (Lipsky, 2006). These were the first to populate the village, followed by requisite business from clothing stores to coffee shops and florists. The Castro’s popularity and explosive growth tripled rents within five years. Because of income disparity and more limited financial opportunity for women, the “increased housing costs forced many lesbians out of the Castro. Those who did not leave the city altogether created new neighbourhoods for themselves on Potrero Hill, Bernal Heights, and along Valencia Street” (Lipsky, 2006, p. 107).

The Scene, as described by J. Brown (1997), that arises typically engages lesbians differently, and peripherally. Academics have only recently begun to make note of different spatial characteristics in lesbian communities and their implications for planning. Findings of Adler and Brenner (1992) suggest that lesbians tend towards, “involvement in wider feminist politics rather than an exclusively lesbian one” (p.33). This implies that gender issues and not sexuality are paramount for lesbians. The needs of women in cities are more universal and have more practical implications for social and

structural improvement, whereas gay men's focus on sexuality is more about empowerment and visibility. Nash (2001) finds that "lesbians operating outside the accepted gender roles of wife and mother may find themselves, as women, less able to compete economically and socially. Gay men, as men, are more financially and socially capable of organising spatially and upgrading neighbourhoods" (p. 238). Financial constraints of female-female couples versus female-male pairs drive women into different residential markets. "Overall, the lesbian area had lower rents, less expensive homes and was not a prime area for gentrification [compared to gay residential areas]" (p. 239). Winnipeg has a good example in Wolseley, where a liberal population and obvious queer presence exists (noted, again, by the frequency of gay symbols as compared to other neighbourhoods). The area, however does not have a commercial focus, there are no specifically lesbian businesses. Rental rates are lower on average, and the economically diverse community is unlikely to undergo any gentrification in the near future.

Northampton, Massachusetts and its surrounding towns have received a lot of media coverage regarding lesbian presence in the area. Forsyth (1997) examined the public character of lesbian concentrations in Northampton. Citing frustration with the assertions of two previous analyses that lesbians do not tend to generate visible urban enclaves in the same way that men do, Forsyth noted three very different concentrations of lesbian dwellings in Northampton around downtown, which was also the centre for lesbian visibility in the area to an increasing degree since 1990; the Amherst neighbourhood, primarily settled by students, with an academic focus on its activities; and the rural

surroundings and exurban developments, where an 'out' lifestyle was less prevalent. Northampton is unique in its lesbian visibility according to available research, and not characteristic of lesbian communities in other American, let alone world, cities. Its existence does suggest that urban configurations, increasingly attributed to male homosexuals are not necessarily exclusive to that group. Castells' (1983) original assertions that, "lesbians, unlike gay men, tend not to concentrate in a given territory, but establish social and interpersonal networks," (p. 140) may not be inaccurate, but evidence suggests that planners may need to consider alternative ways by which communities identify themselves.

## **4.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on understanding the principles and form that surround the concept of the urban village. Rather than try to articulate a decisive vision for the concept of the urban village, I have framed urban villages as a "fragment of poetry" as described by Sucher. This chapter has articulated the varied understandings of their form and function according to Jacobs, Gans, Aldous, and New Urbanists. While these forms are useful starting points in approaching the creation of these spaces, the concepts like conviviality and cosmopolitanism are in fact a common theme between these disparate typologies. These ideas are at the heart of the urban village motif. Conviviality and cosmopolitanism can serve as conceptual building blocks in the imagining and actual development. By maintaining more theoretical underpinnings, principles of urban village development can be rooted in context, serving local needs, interests and specialisations.



This chapter described some of the circumstances associated more specifically with the development of gay urban villages. The key and critical distinctions between ghettos and urban villages as neighbourhood typologies were explained. This clarified the fact that most frequently, these areas are gay urban villages.

Neighbourhood transition has been a central discussion around the formation of gay enclaves. This chapter outlined a host of factors that researchers have postulated to explain their impacts on city development. Catalysts from demographics to urban form affecting change from a physical and socio-cultural perspective. We have seen through Old Town East, an example of the tensions created by applying contrasting forces for neighbourhood redevelopment – internal and external and finally articulated the separate circumstances of the lesbian community in creating urban spaces that serve their needs. Chapter 5 will begin to apply the generalities and concepts identified herein to the context of the case study community of Vancouver and its West End neighbourhood.



## 5 | VANCOUVER

Over the last decade, Vancouver has emerged on the world scene as a model community. It has been hailed by many organisations as the world's most liveable city. "In 2000 it was placed top equal with Zurich, Switzerland, for liveability for business people in the Mercer Ratings" (Punter, 2003, p. 3). In 2007, the same ratings placed Vancouver third, tied with Vienna, Austria, and first in North America. It is Canada's Western metropolis and gateway city to the Pacific Asian countries. This has promoted expansive growth in the city and surrounding regions through immigration. The 2006 census estimated the population of the Vancouver census metropolitan area at over 2.1 million, which loosely incorporates 21 municipalities in B.C.'s Lower Mainland. Vancouver proper had a population of 578,041 (BC Stats, 2006).

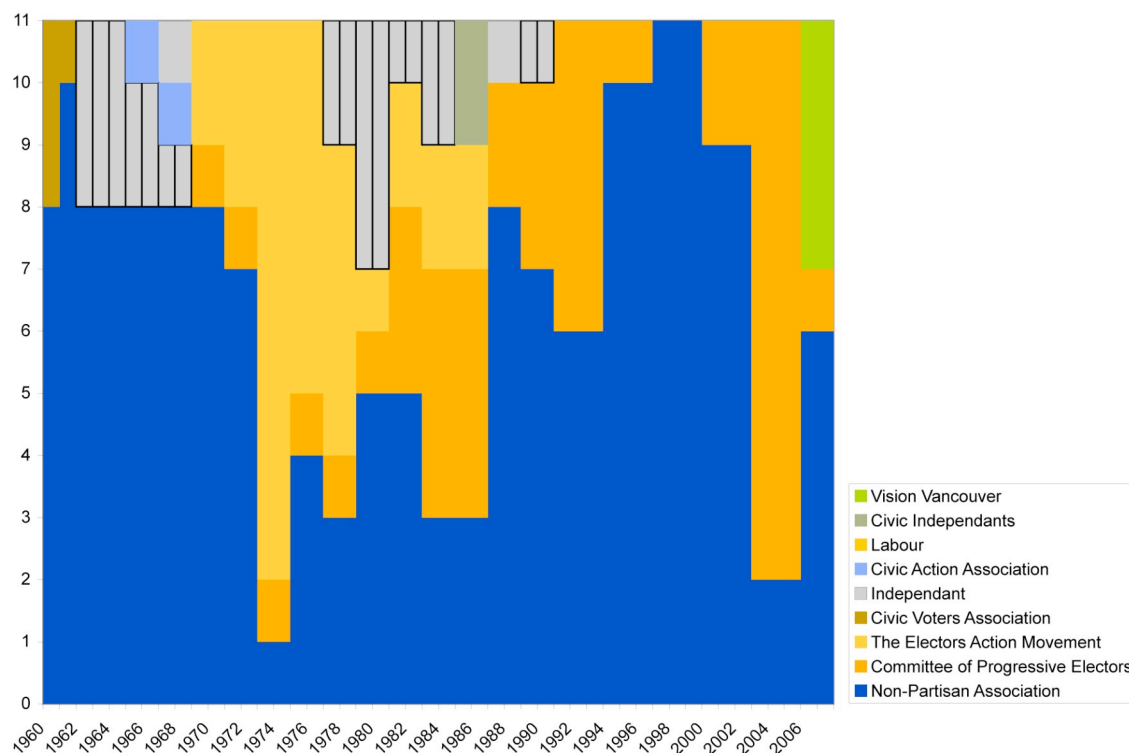
Vancouver is highly regarded for its natural beauty, positive attitude towards the environment, and progressive social attitude. M.P. Brown (1997) discusses the relatively uncontested emergence of Davie Village: "According to popular local history, securing a gay enclave in the city occurred without the intense political conflict common on other emerging gay areas... This lack of confrontation was usually explained culturally, with an emphasis on Vancouver's being "West Coast," or a "lotus land" with a relaxed attitude about differences" (p. 37).

Politics, geography and planning policies have had an enormous impact on the formation of the West End and specifically Davie Street as a gay urban village. The realities of the West End as a centre of gay life and glbtt community are premised on the organizations, circumstances and highly local politics that have affected it.

## **5.1 Politics of a Model City**

The current municipal political structure in Vancouver consists of a Mayor and ten councillors elected on an at-large basis. It was introduced in 1936 and follows “the American reform tradition: a weak mayor, a small number of councillors...owing no allegiance or accountability to specific segments of citizenry – and a dominant city manager” (Punter, 2003, p. 13).

“From 1937 to 1972, the city was run by the Non-Partisan Association (NPA)... drawn from the city’s social and business elite, [they] favoured business leadership, efficient and lean government and generally discouraged public participation. The West End and Westside neighbourhoods – especially south of Broadway – supported the NPA to near monopoly power between 1937 and 1968, and from 1990 to 2002” (Punter, 2003, p. 13). The NPA, generally considered to be conservative, has been the dominant force on council for nearly 50 years.



**Figure 2. Political affiliation of Vancouver’s mayor and councillors since 1960.**

A municipal political shake-up occurred in 1970 with the election of The Electors Action Movement (TEAM) to a majority on council. Punter credits this shift with initiating the policy and planning reforms that have made Vancouver the success story it is. Under TEAM’s influence, “[t]he defining characteristics of the Vancouver approach to urban design review – inclusive and transparent processes, clear delegation of decision making, political non-interference, clear design obligations and incentives, and peer-review – were established” (Punter, 2003, p. 17). Though the NPA had regained a majority on council by 1986, the planning culture had been established in the preceding years. While interests may have changed, the city’s practices and guiding principles transcended party

politics. Punter recognises that TEAM was a catalyst for change, but also indicates that “most city councillors since 1970, certainly those who have most influenced planning practices, have shared a common approach to planning and development... broadly speaking, since 1986, Non-Partisan politicians have implemented the vision of the “liveable city” first articulated by the TEAM council in 1970” (Punter, 2003, p. 14).

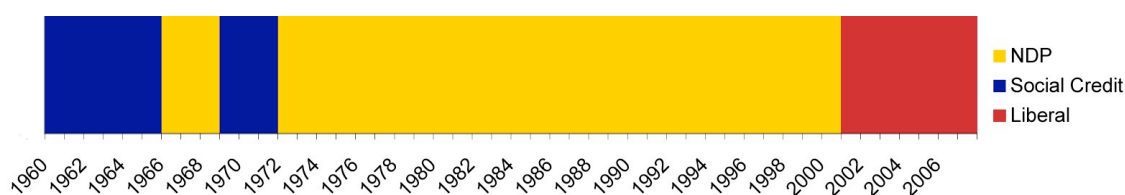
There are various criticisms that have been levied on the form of government adopted by Vancouver, including a lack of accountability and electoral wins by minority groups. Button, Wald and Rienzo (1999) studied the political opportunities of gay and lesbian candidates and concluded that “the factors that inhibited minority representation were at-large election systems, non-partisan elections, and the city manager-commission form of government”, all of which are found in Vancouver. They go on to say that “subsequent research has conclusively demonstrated that at-large election systems severely diminish the electoral representation of residentially segregated groups” (p.194). However Betsky (1997) states, “at the height of its development, the Castro was perhaps the most vibrant urban center in San Francisco. It helped elect a mayor and dominated many political debates” (p.177). Susser concurs, reporting that “since 1977 San Francisco has elected a supervisor who publicly ran as a gay candidate and no mayor can afford to risk openly opposing gays in the election” (p. 181). Similarly in Vancouver, an openly gay or lesbian candidate has been consistently elected to the city council since at least 1984.

In defence of the at-large system, Punter (2003) states that it acts to limit NIMBYism and the rise of fiefdoms that occur in other cities employing ward-based elections. It also allows for more impartial consideration of planning and development issues, where councillors are not beholden to any one group of constituents and can presumably make decisions with an eye to what would benefit the whole of the city (p. 13).

Vancouver is also unique in Canada for its charter, granted by the Province in 1953. Vancouver's Charter gives it greater freedom for self-governance than any other British Columbian or Canadian city. "The city could amend its Charter by means of private bills submitted to the BC legislature, and this has allowed council and the director of planning very significant scope for policy innovation and direct response to local circumstance" (Punter, 2003, p. 14).

Federal and provincial politics have also had important impacts on the neighbourhood. Representatives since the 1970s have arisen from across the political spectrum. Gay men, lesbians and queer people are typically seen as left-leaning, politically, though as Robinson (2005) notes, the gay conservative movement has continued to grow. As a riding with a highly visible glbtt population since at least the 1970s, one might expect an almost exclusively liberal bias, but the politics of the West End have also changed along with the times.

Provincially, the liberal attitudes of Vancouver-Burrard (formerly Vancouver-Centre) were represented primarily by the NDP. In 2001 provincial Liberal Lorne Mayencourt won a hotly contested race over NDP candidate Tim Stevenson, both of whom are openly gay. The provincial Liberal party, not associated with the federal Liberal party, is still regarded as having Social Credit roots, the conservative party that governed BC almost continuously for 40 years. The shift in the West End's representation to a Liberal candidate may be partially explained by changes in the makeup of the Vancouver-Burrard riding. The provincial riding boundaries almost entirely encompass the downtown peninsula. Until the concerted redevelopment efforts of Coal Harbour and False Creek North (Concord Pacific's Expo Lands) began, which were both approved for development in 1990 (Punter, 2003, p. 186), the West End was by far the dominant residential zone. Shifts toward the Liberal right in provincial politics were associated with higher incomes and more conservative values, at least fiscally, in these new and growing residential zones, according to the local media.

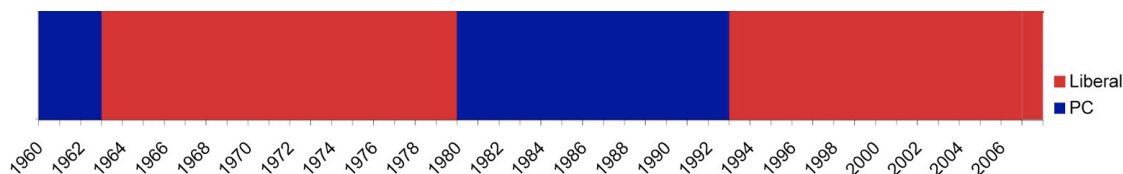


**Figure 3. Provincial political representation of the West End since 1960**

At the federal level, both Conservative and Liberal candidates have represented the riding of Vancouver Centre, including former Progressive Conservative Prime Minister Kim Campbell. Between 1980 and 1993, elected Conservatives had won by comparatively



small margins against NDP or Liberal candidates. Since 1993, the Liberal party has retained comfortable leads in Vancouver Centre.

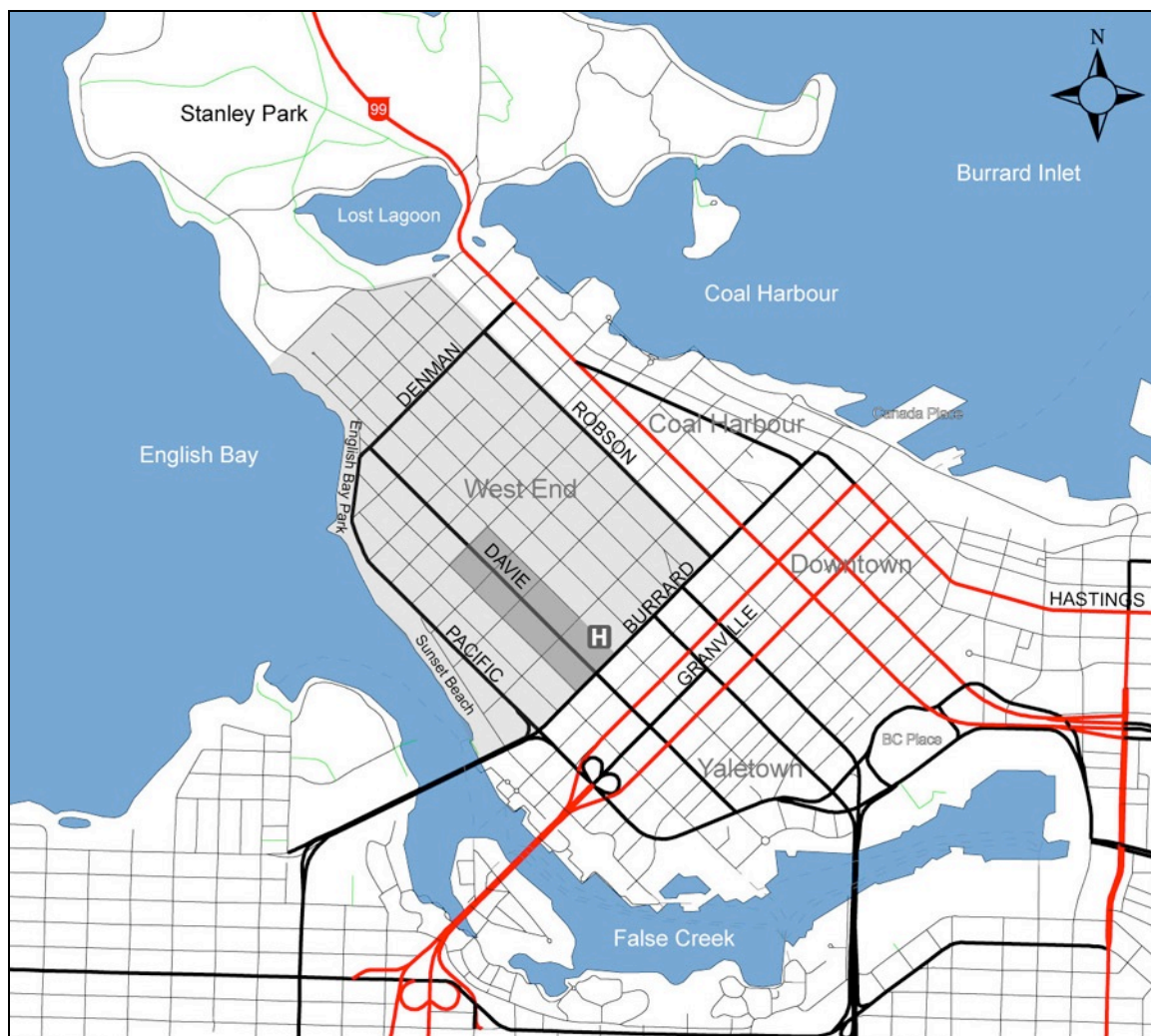


**Figure 4. Federal political representation of the West End since 1960**

The neighbourhood's shifts between liberal and conservative representatives indicate the variety of opinion, and perhaps the limits of political strength of the glbt community, in the West End.

## 5.2 Lay of the Land

An analysis of Vancouver, and certainly the West End (WE) neighbourhood, cannot be completed without considering the geographical advantages found within and among it. “[T]he unparalleled scenic views afforded by the sea, the north shore mountains, and Stanley Park have contributed to making the West End a highly desirable place in which to live, and have saved it from the urban blight which has afflicted inner-city areas close to the Central Business District in many North American cities” (Gray, Keddie, Kwan et al., 1976, p. 9). The WE is a well-treed neighbourhood with a dense street canopy that is valued by its residents and highlighted in its history.



**Figure 5. Vancouver, BC downtown neighbourhoods and context**

Population density is an often discussed and disputed figure when discussing the WE. With a population density of 20,161.7/km<sup>2</sup>, it exceeds all but Manhattan, NY; Gutenberg, NJ; and Union City, NJ as the most densely populated neighbourhood in North America. Douglas Coupland (2000) quips, “...if it *is* the highest density of people on the continent, you’d never know it to walk through the West End’s sleepy quite little roads, where people of all stripes wend their way” (p. 143). Topographically, Nelson Park is

approximately the highest point on the downtown peninsula at 44m, with streets sloping away on all sides to varying degrees.

The West End neighbourhood is defined by notable edges including Burrard Street, False Creek, Stanley Park and Robson Street.

*Burrard Street* is the eastern boundary of the neighbourhood, which runs perpendicular to Davie Street. The intersection represents the gateway to the three-blocks of Davie Village-proper, centre of gay Vancouver.

*False Creek* marks the southern edge of the downtown peninsula and the neighbourhood. Residential buildings are buffered by the beaches, parks, and a paved seawall recreation path that circumscribes the peninsula.

*Robson Street* is the generally accepted northern edge, though the lines between West End and the emerging Coal Harbour community are still blurred. The three blocks west of Burrard have been a commercial hub of downtown Vancouver for decades and a counterpart to the major shopping district of East Hastings until the 1970s. In the past this area consisted of a strip of small shops with a distinctly European flavour and clientele. For that reason, the area was called Robsonstrasse. In his 1973 report Hotson reported; “An international flavour is created principally by German specialty shops, delicatessens and restaurants. High pedestrian use often fills the sidewalks with a pleasurable hustle-bustle of shoppers, strollers, and people gazing into store windows” (p. 61). This

character remains today, though the German flavour has vanished and retail shopping has usurped the restaurant as a primary storefront use. Robson Street stands as an outdoor mall today, with many of the same retailers. Robson extends west to Denman Street, with more local stores and services, but with somewhat reduced pedestrian density. Robson Street ends at the foot of Stanley Park with two residential blocks.

*Stanley Park* has stood as the third-largest urban park with its present boundaries since its 1000 acres were leased to the City of Vancouver in 1886. Petitioning the Federal government for this land was one of the first acts of the fledgling city, and set the stage for a prominent ongoing interest in the physical development of the city. The 99-year lease of the Stanley Park lands led to the creation of the Vancouver Parks Board, a separately-elected body charged with all matters relating to maintaining and developing green space within the city, a political body and structure that is unique in Canada.

Within the West End, there are several discreet districts, though their edges tend to be less specific than the defined physical boundaries on all sides. 'West of Denman' features somewhat higher home values with an older median age of residents. The Denman Street shopping area is home to more independent shops and smaller restaurants, though it also possesses a minor indoor mall. Mole Hill and adjacent Nelson Park are landmarks in the neighbourhood. Neighbourhoods north and south of Davie Street are somewhat distinct; proximity to the False Creek waterfront and beaches are a distinguishing factor. Davie Street itself is indeed a distinct area within the WE whose limits are the subject of the

mapping exercise conducted with community photographers, as detailed in the next chapter. Upper Robson serves as a regional shopping destination and an outdoor mall, while Lower Robson is again a neighbourhood-oriented retail area.

### **5.3 1890-1980: Planning the West End**

The city's first streetcar line opened in 1890. The resultant city form is still visible in the grids today. Streetcars delineated the West End, running down Robson, Denman and Davie. The West End has thus retained, in large part, the characteristics of the streetcar suburb from whence it originated.

In 1907 the CPR proposed development of the exclusive suburb of Shaughnessy. This neighbourhood was marketed as the destination of Vancouver's elite. The Provincial government passed several acts that reinforced and protected that exclusivity by denying future subdivision of the large lots or more than one dwelling per lot. It was also mandated that the value of the neighbourhood houses must be greater than \$6000. Typical new home prices at the time were approximately \$1000 (Vancouver, 2005). These policies effectively drew the upper-class population out of the West End and were the catalyst for staking out the social divides that exist today.

The Sylvia Hotel, built in 1912 was the tallest building in the West End, at eight stories, until the early 1950s. It still stands today as an historic architectural feature and one of only ten percent of remaining buildings in the neighbourhood that were constructed

before 1946. Between 1930 and 1950, low-rise apartments began to succeed the Victorian architecture and classic character of the community. “Victorian-era houses were replaced by 90 three-storey walk-ups, built with little thought to design or style” (Chadwick, 2006, p. 63). The Vancouver Sun in 1953 hailed the construction of these apartment blocks as “an architectural revolution unique in Vancouver... The apartment house, once associated with cramped quarters, tenement conditions and a general lowering of residential standards, is now a symbol of rejuvenation” (Marsh, 1953).

Brown (1997) credits zoning changes in the 1960s with creating the pull factors that drew gay men into downtown Vancouver. “What that provided was one-bedroom apartments for lower-middle-income younger people. Well, if you had gone out to design a gay neighbourhood, you couldn’t have done a better job than that” (p. 35). These planning changes set the stage for wide acceptance of the West End’s potential to exemplify emerging planning practices. Punter (2003) reports that “by the end of the 1960s the ideology of preservation and neighbourhood planning, of the liveable cities and socially mixed, compact, and diverse central area, had become a major plank of urban reform” (p. xxiii). The extensive apartment construction and identity of the neighbourhood as home to “swinging singles”, a discreet housing market segment that was not well understood, began to generate a new rush of development interest curtailed by a more critical planning eye in the 1970s.

The 1970s was a formative decade for the West End and full of opinions on the future of its form. Into 1970 there were calls for permitting more tall buildings in the WE as a way to manage density while permitting more open space – essentially, moving to taller, skinnier towers. Discussion also ensued about the construction of a major underground tunnel project aimed at shifting traffic off the Lions Gate Bridge. The proposed route would have taken the tunnel beneath Thurlow Street and out across the Burrard Inlet (Kennedy, 1971). This was occurring at the same time as debates raged about freeway expansion though Vancouver proper. The freeway expansion debates were analogous to the ones that were eventually dismissed in New York, which Jane Jacobs had been instrumental in opposing. It was no surprise then, that her theories and ideals of neighbourhood character were central to UBC planning professor Robert Collier’s reframing of the West End in 1971 (McWhirter, 1971).

In Hotson’s 1973 report on urban design across the neighbourhood, Robson was characterised as “the unique shopping precinct of the West End attracting local, regional and tourist shoppers” (p. 61). Meanwhile, Davie Street was seen as a limited local shopping strip, but “a regional influx occurs at night for several clubs and restaurants and the ensuing street walking activities... At night the block from Bute Street to Thurlow Street is the centre of club activity, people watching and illicit business transactions” (p. 73). Of note is the turn of phrase ‘street walking’ as intentional or unintentional euphemism for prostitution, which had begun to dominate the nights on Davie.

Even in 1971, the WE was noted as the most densely populated square mile in Canada, home to approximately 36,000. This was also the year a pivotal study was conducted within the neighbourhood by Robert Collier (McWhirter, 1971). He articulated several important characteristics: there was less than 50 percent car ownership, and the majority of the population were from outside BC and Canada. “The main leisure-time activity of West Enders is walking, with Stanley Park, English Bay, Robson, Davie and Denman streets providing special attractions” (McWhirter, 1971). The West End was not without its share of ills however, with high rates of single-parent families and a “lack of community spirit,” which Collier attributes to “diversity among the population – ethnic variety, age groups, income ranges” while reminding readers that “most people living in he (sic) West End are there by choice” (McWhirter, 1971).

Collier’s was the first comprehensive sociological study that recognised the nature of community in the West End. Until that point, the increasing density discouraged planners and politicians, fearing it as a harbinger of crime and social problems. “One has to remember that this was a neighbourhood destined to fail, and, at one stage, it was assumed it would be bulldozed to make way for the upper crust market” (Ford, 1993). The Collier report redirected debate from the trouble with density to the maintenance of the liveable aspects of the neighbourhood. Until that point politicians and planners appeared primarily concerned with raw numbers and the demographic makeup of the WE, looking to the USA and the troubles that were connected with high-density, low-income ghettos. Collier’s report reframed the debate by suggesting that there is no



inherent problem with high-density living, as long as the needs of residents were met. This led to a reconfiguration of traffic and an increased pedestrian-focus of the streets throughout the area that remains today.

1972 saw the area's first major down zoning, from 3.6 floor-space ratio (FSR), and a maximum population density of approximately 305 persons per acre down to a residential FSR of between 2.4-2.9 and commercial of 3.0, with a resulting population of 200 to 250 persons per acre. The Simpson Block, a four-storey heritage building on the corner of Davie and Denman, directly across from English Bay Beach, was sold and slated for demolition to make way for the Sands Hotel in September 1972. "The end is coming for the old apartment block at Davie and Denman built in the days the West End had Easter parades... and no muggings" (Campbell, 1972). This redevelopment came amid the lament that the West End is "a good place to invest—but not to live anymore" (Campbell, 1972).

In 1973 city officials recognised the negative impacts of continuing growth pressures. The Province reported on two development applications that were in front of planners as zoning changes were being considered. "The Nelson tower would further add to the creation of the solid wall in front of Stanley park, the panel said, and the Haro tower application 'was a blatant case of meeting the proposed West End zoning changes deadline of Oct. 31 by submitting identical plans (from another site), with no consideration to the location of the site'" (Coffin, 1973). In 1975 the city officially

decreased buildable density of the neighbourhood on an area-by-area basis. They moved from a floor-space ratio (FSR) of 2.4 across the WE, to a range between 1.5 and 3.0FSR, although the maximum height was still 210ft. This was part of the process that contributed to the single-person character of the dwellings – leading directly to the crisis that emerged in the 1980s over the liveability of the WE.

#### **5.4 1980-1990: Building the Liveable Neighbourhood**

As the 1970s conversations focused on form, the 1980s saw a more social focus to planning issues. “Between 1941 and 1981, the population of the West End almost doubled; between 1951 and 1981, however, the number of dwelling units quadrupled as lower-income families were replaced by single-person households” (Punter, 2003, p. 19).

The birthplace of Vancouver’s experiment in bonus density credits also began in the WE in 1986 (Buttle, 1989). It was initially put in place to encourage investment in heritage buildings, which were under threat from the real estate pressures of the day and high-density zoning that had been allowing tall, modern towers to replace low-rise buildings and heritage homes. While the real estate pressures on the area have not decreased, the limited amounts of new construction have been more compatible with historical densities, and have been characterised by duplexing, triplexing, and quadplexing existing single-detached homes. Bonus density has since become a hallmark of the City of Vancouver’s planning successes, promoting accessibility and affordable dwelling units in towers across the downtown peninsula.

Expo '86 is largely considered a turning point of development and international perception. It celebrated the centennial year of the city and Canadian Pacific Rail. The planning for Expo kicked off in 1980, with the announcement of development of BC Place stadium and the SkyTrain mass transit system, connecting many of the growing suburban communities of the lower mainland. These were the two greatest infrastructure legacies, but in terms of the West End, Expo precipitated two significant impacts: the transformation of the False Creek waterfront and downtown Vancouver and the additional transit accessibility. Yaletown was born out of the lands vacated by Expo and has affected the demographics of the West End. By creating an even more urban, upscale area in close proximity, Yaletown and False Creek North can share many existing amenities while incorporating their own, drawing wealthier residents away from the West End. SkyTrain enhanced connections between the downtown and municipalities to the East. This both allowed the downtown to grow as a regional centre and facilitated migration of residents into different neighbourhoods, as their relative convenience evened out.

Yaletown development began in 1990 as an extension to the Concord Pacific/ False Creek North transformation of the Expo lands. Yaletown has since become an upper-class counterpart to the high-density WE. Gay men who have achieved a certain status often see Yaletown as a more desirable place to settle with more modern suites while retaining the advantages of highly urban living. According to Price (personal

communication, 12 June, 2006), the WE has lost some of its cache as a gay *residential* area as it now boasts a younger, more transient population, along with, comparatively, almost no new development.

Mole Hill is a prime example of the efforts to retain the character of the neighbourhood while responding to social needs and wishes. While the fight to secure these two blocks of the neighbourhoods was long and contentious, it is now regarded as one of the finest examples of heritage preservation and restoration and low-income housing in Canada (Pemberton, 1999). Mole Hill is also an example of the growing sense of community identity and cohesiveness. The community came together as a result of much public outcry against the city-owned property, which had been marked for sale to developers (Cramp, 1997).

The city's history of planning and its policies continue to explain Vancouver's renown on the world stage. Appropriate and innovative development and a more progressive relationship with density than other Canadian urban centres maintained a vitality in nearly all areas of the city. "In the 1980s Canadian municipalities faced problems finding areas where major residential intensification could take place without incurring forceful citizen opposition. They [Vancouver] did not need to embark on policy initiatives for gentrification as American cities did because it was already proceeding apace" (Punter, 2003, p. xxiv).

The West End has largely escaped the development boom being seen across the Lower Mainland of BC. Urban design principles have been rigorously applied to any construction in the neighbourhood, as laid out in Vancouver's zoning by-law and its Urban Design Panel, which vets development applications. For example, in 1989 the council voted for WE height limits of 6 stories (18m) (Buttle, 1989). Some exceptions are still permitted in keeping with the WE's history of spot zoning and discretionary approvals.

## **5.5 1980-Present: Building the Gay Neighbourhood**

A 1983 article on Vancouver's gay community opened; "that there are gay people living in the West End there is not doubt. How many gay people is another question" (Andrews, 1983). Though the presence and importance of the gay community in the Village has grown, there are still no concrete numbers about the glbtt population. The article goes on to discuss an emerging understanding and recognition of a well-established gay culture including the Vancouver Gay Community Centre, Vancouver Men's Chorus, Gay Athletic Association, a host of bars and restaurants catering to gay men and lesbians and a Police/Gay Liaison Committee in place since 1979. This representation of an established collection of services indicates a history that predates recognition and sexual liberation.

### 5.5.1 AIDS

“AIDS. Just so many men died off from ‘81 to the mid-90s and again that just changed so many factors, lifestyle above all” (KI01)

AIDS hit British Columbia early. The province, and overwhelmingly Vancouver, had the highest rate of AIDS per capita in Canada by the late 1980s (M. P. Brown, 1997, p. 43). Betsky (1997) laments the impact of AIDS in San Francisco saying “The devastation the AIDS epidemic let loose on the queer community destroyed many of the spaces queers had created for themselves over the last century... this whole city of forms became hollowed out by death and disease” (p. 179). But while the spaces were changing in San Francisco and similarly in Vancouver, the social environment of support and community was forced into action as a result of the crisis.

“Through the 1980s AIDS exerted strong *internal* pressures inside the gay community that were hardly felt before. For the first time Vancouverites had to form a broad-based coalition to meet hard material needs quickly... Before AIDS, there had not been much link between gay men (and lesbians) across their social differences. Nor did gay men ever before have to deal with the state *as* gay men so publicly or collectively” (M. P. Brown, 1997, p. 44).

“The city had been at the forefront in responding to the AIDS crisis ever since this mysterious illness began to affect North American gay men in the early 1980s” (M. P. Brown, 1997, p. 33). St. Paul’s Hospital located at Burrard and Davie became the Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS Research in 1992. It was central to an active network of “shadow government” that emerged quickly in the 1980s in response to the Provincial government’s refusal to fund many HIV/AIDS-related services in apparent “moral

opposition to premarital sex and gays” (M. P. Brown, 1997, p. 47). This shadow government was a loose coalition of organizations that provided a host of services to individuals with HIV/AIDS from prevention to meals and social support to palliative care.

Vancouver hosted the 11th International AIDS Conference in 1996. It focused on new therapies and real hope for living with HIV. Politically, the conference called for Prime Minister Chrétien to engage a national strategy for dealing with the disease in Canada. The conference was also credited with refocusing the geography of AIDS outside San Francisco, New York and Los Angeles (M. P. Brown, 1997, p. 32).

In the face of the AIDS epidemic, cultural and economic forces were improving the prospects for Davie Village as a safe and accepting home for the glbt community. As the gay population cemented its visible role in the neighbourhood, the 1980s also brought struggles around public space issues, such as those brought into focus as a result of prostitution.

### 5.5.2 Prostitution

This period also demonstrated one example of the legal influence of a gay urban village. By the 1980s the sex trade had become a highly visible part of the neighbourhood, especially within the Davie Village. “The hookers on Davie moved on to the side streets and differentiated themselves there, so you had transvestites on the lane south of Davie,

particularly along Jervis, you had women along Jervis north of Davie and they would go to Bute and Broughton. Boys were at Nicola and Cardero. It was really a 24-hour sex bazaar all sub marketed... It started in about '79, '78 and reached its peak around '81" (Price, personal communication, 12 June, 2006).

Price attributes the surge in prostitution to the liberal attitudes that permeated the community, indicating that "they were able to establish a beachhead there in a sense, because the community was quite accepting of all kinds of sexual expressions, so that became part of the brand" (Price, personal communication, 12 June, 2006). A report from the Director of Social Planning in 1984 summarized the official neighbourhood concerns. "The prostitutes, numbering between 20 and 40 on an average night, congregate in the nine block area bounded by Comox, Bute, Burnaby and Nicola Streets. Their nightly activity results in traffic congestion, a high noise level and consequent disruption of residents' sleep and neighbourhood peace precipitated by customers and onlookers" (Vancouver, 1984). The BC Civil Liberties Association became involved when the situation came to a head in 1984. Price recalls:

"The Supreme Court said basically you have to be pressing or persistent, which effectively decriminalized soliciting...

Since the federal government wasn't prepared to change the criminal code, the province realized, or at least the Attorney General did, what was really at stake here was the legitimacy of government, indeed the maintenance of social order if government couldn't basically determine whether the streets could be used for wide-open sex trade.

Ottawa was too far away so the attorney general applied for what was called a civil injunction. You had the names of those people who were creating the disturbance, you had affidavits of local residents and the supreme court of BC justice was asked to say, 'that person could not do that activity in that place.' It



was very specific, but what it really resulted, literally overnight, May 31 if I recall, the hookers just decamped over to the other side of Granville, knowing that as it turned out the judge said basically you cannot be engaged in that activity west of Granville street. At this point Seymour and Richards were just one-way streets, there was really very few people living there. So it dealt with the problem people were complaining about — which was having this activity in a residential neighbourhood” (Price, personal communication, 12 June, 2006).

Today prostitution has migrated into other neighbourhoods, especially the Downtown East Side, with a concentration of male prostitution remaining across Burrard Street at Drake and Davie.

## **5.6 Davie Village Business Improvement Area**

BIAs have emerged as important organizations for the revitalization, identity and voices of a neighbourhood. The Davie Village BIA has had a significant effect on the landscape of the West End as the group that funded neighbourhood identity programmes – most visibly, by installing banners and pink street furniture. Bus stops and trashcans painted a bright pink are the subject of comment from all participants of this research.

Given the mandate of organizations with such specific spatial characteristics, BIAs play an important role in generating metaspaces. In some cases they contribute directly, through physical impositions, such as the rainbow flags on Davie Street. At other times they contribute indirectly by simply creating a specific type of business environment that encourages a particular form of interaction.

Public space concerns are acute in the West End given its connections to queer space and the very present disparity between economic classes and interests. Thus far, the DVBIA has tempered its response to the public domain, avoiding security patrols employed by other BIAs and the accompanying public space concerns, as well as oppressive cleanup policies. The DVBIA has acknowledged the social factors of the area, and their role as a voice for an increasingly consumer-oriented gay community and thus the neighbourhood. They sponsor an annual street festival, and focus on local business and the glbtt community. This has differentiated it somewhat from streets with exclusively retail interests. The Davie Village BIA has played a crucial role in constructing an open and accessible neighbourhood with a queer theme.

City Council approval for the creation of the Davie Village BIA was granted February 16, 1999 and the BIA came into effect in April (Vancouver, 1998, 1999). This is considered a pivotal point for the area as a gay village. Anecdotal stories about the neighbourhood suggest that the emergence of the BIA led to the overt coding of the area as a gay village and the active promotion of the neighbourhood as a destination.

The stated interests of the Davie Village BIA are listed on their website and include the following:

- to draw a larger customer base to the BIA area;
- to develop and strengthen the business community as a unified body;
- to be the voice of BIA businesses;
- to make the BIA an enjoyable experience for each person who visits;
- to reflect the concerns and needs of the BIA business community to all levels of government;

to maintain and increase awareness of the BIA to BIA members;  
to strengthen the organization  
to promote and market the district;  
to retain, strengthen, and recruit new businesses;  
to improve the district's common areas  
(DVBIA, 2006)

Interestingly, nowhere in this mandate is there mention of sexuality. In contrast, “[t]he Church-Wellesley Village Business Improvement Area (CWVBIA) [in Toronto’s gay village] is deeply committed to preserving and improving our diverse urban community through high energy promotion of the business district and civic engagement with a remembrance of a history rich in advocacy for sexual liberation, social justice and equality” (Church Wellesley Village BIA, 2006). While the BIA in Davie Village has shown interest in forming and supporting the area as a gay village, their blanket support of diversity is an interesting reflection of the organization’s detachment from its current consumer base.

On February 13, 2007 Vancouver City Council voted to approve expanded borders for the Davie Village BIA to include Denman Street and Robson Street up to Jervis, the border of the Robson Street BIA (Mills, 2007; Vancouver, 2007). The 2005 Davie BIA AGM passed a resolution protecting the identity of the Davie Village in the face of the expansion plans that had been put forward. At that time, the intent of the resolution was to create an organizational structure that would respect the autonomy of component business neighbourhoods while pooling the collected resources of the larger area.

The stated reasons for this expansion were to “...accomplish a whole lot more with a larger area and a larger budget... to pool their resources [of Davie, Denman and Robson] into one combined structure, avoid duplication and keep the money they save for other projects” (Mills, 2007). The impact of this decision on the Davie Village and its character has yet to be determined. Whether these three blocks of concentrated queer space will be amalgamated into the marketing of the whole of the WE or will retain enough focus and character to continue to stand on its own, changes to the commercial streetscapes are likely. How these disparate retail districts will be marketed while under a single organizational umbrella will be a key consideration.

The vocal role of the BIA in the neighbourhood is but one organization tending to the cohesiveness and maintenance of the urban village. Its interests are also tempered by active voices of the non-business sector. The West End Residents Association and Save St. Paul’s Coalition are examples of interests groups playing an important role in communicating community messages to decision-makers. Below are vignettes of organizations that have been noted as central to the character and role of the Davie Village and Vancouver in the national glbtt movement.

## **5.7 Icons in Social History**

The following vignettes reflect the long and varied history of glbtt organizations and queer space in Vancouver. Each of these organizations have been central to the glbtt community in the city, but they also reflect the contributions to the city itself, and in

many cases, even wider contributions to the province and beyond. They represent a variety of ways that the gay village has had effect on the city and how the city has affected both glbtt culture and the creation of the gay urban village in Vancouver.

### *Little Sisters*

Queer organizations in Vancouver are also no stranger to litigation. The queer community of Vancouver has supported with pride the Little Sisters Bookstore, now located in the 1200 block of Davie Street. ‘The little bookstore that could’ has endured years of back and forth prosecution with Canada Customs over its definitions of obscenity. Litigation began in 1986 against Canada Customs and only in 1996 did the BC Supreme Court order Little Sister’s off the “lookout list” and compensation of \$170,000 to the bookstore (Dafoe, 1996).

### *Gay Games 1990*

Celebration '90 and the Gay Games III are regarded as a coming of age for Vancouver’s glbtt community with approximately 20,000 participants and spectators and economic spin offs upward of \$20 million. The third Gay Games were hosted in Vancouver in 1990 at the height of the AIDS crisis. They were another example of Provincial Government disapproval of the glbtt community, rejecting requests for grants or financial support, and blamed for a final shortfall of \$130,000, despite projected tax revenues from the games of over \$1.4 million (Griffin, 1991). During their one-week run, the media and participants were enthusiastic about the event, which was “1990’s biggest sports event in North America” (J. Smith, 1990).

*Out on Screen*

This annual film festival lays claim to the title: largest queer media event in Western Canada. The festival is celebrating its 19th season in 2007. A 1991 interview with the former artistic director characterises the value of this event. “If they don’t see what you’re doing, then you don’t exist. And if you don’t exist, then you don’t have rights. It’s the simplest political equation I know of” (Aird, 1991).

*ASK*

The Association for Social Knowledge was Canada’s first gay organization. It published the first edition of the ASK Newsletter in 1964 but had disbanded by 1968 (Rayside, 2005).

*Vancouver Men’s Chorus*

From their mission statement: “Comprised of gay men and their friends, the chorus promotes community spirit and a positive image of the gay community” (“Vancouver Men’s Chorus”, 2007). On the heels of San Francisco’s gay chorus, the first in the United States, the VMC was founded in 1981 as Canada’s first gay chorus. “Early programming was based on the traditional choral music Schubert and Brahms, which evolved into AIDS-related programming a decade ago and today, the VMC is exploring pop ballads...arranged by Zwozdesky” (Wholberg, 2002). In a similar vein to *Out on Screen*, VMC provides an opportunity to make the gay community and culture visible and dispel misconceptions and contribute to Vancouver’s artistic scene generally.

*St. Paul's Hospital & Doctor Peter's Centre*

St. Paul's Hospital anchors the east end of the Davie Village. It is an important facility for the seniors living in the area. In 1971 the census reported that 18.6 percent of the West End population was over 65 (Gray, Keddie, Kwan et al., 1976). In 1973, the Vancouver Sun reported that 32 percent of housing west of Denman was occupied by persons over 65 years old. More recently this statistic has diminished, with 12 percent of the total West End population over age 65 (Vancouver, 2006). St. Paul's Hospital is presently the centre of a debate about moving health care services out of the downtown core and away from a large population of seniors and patients, as well as the local healthcare ecosystem that it serves. Provincial health organizations are considering a significantly altered role for St. Paul's. Save St. Paul's Coalition has formed to resist the transfer of its primary care role to a new facility to be constructed at the foot of False Creek. Glbtt people are also strongly in favour of the hospital's continued presence as a first-tier HIV/AIDS research facility in Canada, which made great strides in the early 1980s in assessing and understanding the infection.

Doctor Peter Centre opened a new facility on the edge of the Mole Hill community in 2003, with praise from the architectural press. As St Paul's HIV/AIDS care arm it offers "AIDS patients nutritious meals and healthy supplements, nursing care, intravenous and other therapies, physical rehabilitation therapy, psychiatric support, and counselling" with 20 residential-care beds on the Mole Hill site ("Unexpected AIDS-Centre Plan Heats Up Mole Hill Debate", 1995).

## 5.8 Conclusion

The West End is a successful neighbourhood that has avoided the pitfalls of inner-city decay. In large part, this is due to its location and natural amenities. The ‘west-coast culture’, the scenery, the community precedent, all contributes to Vancouver’s role as Canada’s glbtt centre of the West. “The West End has become the home to a sizable male gay community that has grown substantially since the decriminalisation of homosexual acts in 1969” (Punter, 2003, p. 9). The gay history of Vancouver is difficult to pin down due to a lack of historical documentation. As has been noted in other cities and contexts, the concept of homosexuality was completely different in the past from how it is understood today, and was an underground phenomenon. As sexual liberation brought homosexuality out of the closet, more history was recorded.

In this brief history of the West End, some of the critical planning decisions that have had direct and indirect effects on the glbtt community have been explored. Vancouver has remained steadfast in its policies of innovative planning. “Thus far, local practices have survived global economic forces, and Vancouver’s planning and design review practices have resisted the deregulatory forces that have emasculated planning in so many equivalent cities in Anglo-America” (Punter, 2003, p. 14). But with all the innovation and world-class urban environments, Gordon Price states “if you just showed me where there was a big stock of rental, one-bedroom apartments near the downtown core, I could tell you where the gay neighbourhood was” (personal communication, 12 June, 2006). Is this the fundamental basis for a gay urban village? Or is the neighbourhood’s success as a



GUV directly related to the planning decisions and market forces that have pushed and pulled the WE into its present form?

From its roots as the upper-class neighbourhood through its low periods with high levels of crime and prostitution, this history shows how the WE has not been party to the gentrification that other cities attribute to their glbtt areas. It has remained a primarily diverse, transient, and middle-class neighbourhood. This may be changing with the gradual dispersion of the gay male population into other residential areas, from Coal Harbour to Commercial Drive. This dilution of the population has led to fears in the neighbourhood that the local queer establishments will become irrelevant to the local population. These concerns will be examined as part of the research analysis in Chapter 6.



## 6 | ANALYSIS

To this point, this thesis has relied upon available literature to respond to the key queries. The preceding chapters have addressed many of the questions I had initially sought to answer through this research. This chapter focuses on the results of the primary research methods outlined in Chapter 2 to draw further conclusions and complement the findings thus far.

Chapter 4 examined urban village precedents including authentic urbanism, New Urbanism, and the Urban Villages Group. What these typologies do not address are the underlying principles for why urban villages work. The latter two are highly prescriptive in their execution and all fall victim to the Gans' physical fallacy criticism to some degree. Cosmopolitan urbanism gets nearer the heart: a better way to consider urban villages with a focus on social qualities of space and support in the form of conviviality, third places and broadly considered cultural diversity. The photographic analysis examines the question of how gay urban villages operate by exposing their key structural elements and upon deeper reflection, the elements of metaspaces that distinguish gay urban villages from other forms.

Understanding the overlay of queer space, as defined in Chapter 3, and articulated in the Vancouver context below, partly explains how current modes of neighbourhood transformation like gentrification hold only part of the explanation for GUV emergence.

What has been missing from literature thus far is a clear explanation of how sexuality itself and outward expressions of it play a role in creating the space of gay urban village. Urban villages have been created by cultural communities in their desire to express culture (i.e. Greek Town, Chinatown) and are formed in response to a way of living and interacting that has been transported from some time or place. The glbtt community does not have that history or a cultural cohesion, leaving a continuous flux of cultural changes to define the community and its space. In this chapter we see how characteristics intrinsically linked to sexuality play a key role in making the West End the neighbourhood it is.

The following analysis synthesises results from the two primary research methods: key informant interviews and community visual analysis. Both methods sought to answer the three key questions:

- 1) What cultural, economic, structural, and political impacts do gay neighbourhoods have on urban areas?
- 2) Do city governments formally or informally sanction these areas? If so, how, and why? What benefits might municipal governments receive?
- 3) What are the future implications for queer urban structure?

Each of these methods uncovered a variety of explanations and opinions in response to these questions. However, strong relationships did emerge through the data contributing valuable insights into the effects of gay urban villages on their cities.

Key informant responses were organized by the five categories of inquiry prompted by the three key questions: structural, cultural, economic, political and futures. Sentiments shared by all three participants or points of significance that were raised individually were highlighted. While they provided a baseline for the studies that followed, the interviewees also independently provided valuable insights, which will also be summarized here.

The community visual analysis was a fascinating glance into how people perceive and use the space of a gay urban village. Though it is marketed and defended as a whole it is experienced individually. Various categories were used to code the photographs in search of meaning and relevance. The question at the heart of this method was “in your opinion, what elements contribute to making the Davie Street a gay urban village?” It was anticipated that great variety would come from this question with strong patterns and consistencies in the image sets arising, despite having spoken to people from varied backgrounds and experiences. The community photography also provided the data with which to map the space of the GUV.

The results of this case study of the West End may not necessarily be applicable to any other enclave or municipality due to the limited scope of the study. However, in conjunction with social consistencies that have appeared across borders through the literature, the conclusions that will emerge through this chapter will likely be valuable considerations in the study of GUVs or at least provide a starting point for future localised research.

## **6.1 The Tough Questions: Key Informants**

Three key informant interviews provided a firm basis for the analysis of Vancouver's situation and the local example of a gay urban village — Davie Street. This section is a recounting of the key themes that emerged under each of the five categories of inquiry. Questions attached are those posed in the interview guide. Given the semi-structured format of the interviews, not all questions were posed as written or at all. Each interviewee exhibited different interests and areas of expertise through the course of the conversation. These were tapped in order to maximise the time and insights of the participants. What follows are brief summaries of collectively dominant opinions as well as unique responses that were deemed relevant or insightful.

### **Inquiry 1: Structural**

*What various economic, structural, cultural and political aspects have contributed to the creation of the GUV? (housing stock, location in the city, etc.)*

*Have you noticed changes in physical aspects of the neighbourhood that you would attribute to the glbtt community? (housing stock, effect of tenure, beautification, revitalization, etc.)*

Given the disconnect between literature describing American GUVs, typified by strong gentrifying forces, and the circumstances in Vancouver, which saw the Davie GUV emerge from a relatively stable neighbourhood. I was interested to identify how these would be reconciled.

- From the outset, two informants asserted that the ample presence of rental housing, one-bedroom apartments, and their affordability, permitted and even encouraged the West End's emergence as a gay urban village.
- According to informants, the high proportion of retail as well as professional jobs throughout the downtown make the West End an attractive residential option generally. They suggest that a natural gravity toward retail and the arts (and creative occupations) — all of which are abundant in downtown Vancouver — draw gay men to the neighbourhood. “Because so many gays are in the service industries, particularly near where there would be a significant tourist trade...they're going to be where you're going to find those kinds of services” (KI01).
- Before Yaletown and the Coal Harbour neighbourhoods were built-out, the West End served as the only residential option on the downtown peninsula. This role

has diminished and the West End is now simply one of the markets available, though the most local to and associated with the gay community. In one informant's view, "the availability of housing has shifted, Yaletown didn't really exist 10 years ago, 15 years ago, now there's huge development of condos and certainly a lot of gay people, queer people live there" (KI03).

- The generally liberal and tolerant attitudes in Vancouver are credited with creating an environment supportive of a vibrant gay community. The natural features and physical attributes of the neighbourhood are also a draw, but are harder to associate specifically with the glbtt population.
- In explaining the structural component of this interview, informants turned to stereotypes and 'gay traits' as explanation for the development of gay urban neighbourhoods and their higher economic and aesthetic values. They cited gay preferences for shopping and design as indicative of their role as gentrifiers and urban pioneers. Neighbourhood physical improvement is often associated with gay urban villages and corroborated by Goode Bryant and Poitras (2003). The interviewees credit greater financial resources for these improvements. "Gay people are gentrifiers, or pioneers. A lot of gay people have a knack for design, and physical improvement. They've got more resources and time to do that sort of thing..." (KI02). While they all recognised the generalisations, several of these, such as financial status were supported by researchers like Black et al. (2000), described in Chapter 4.



- They indicated that gay men typically have a preference for the social environment of a vibrant streetscape. This permits more casual encounters and opportunities for flirtation.
- Further, the concentration of services and shops and the nodal nature of a niche market help to attract and retain complementary businesses. As a shopping district (including Denman and Robson) Davie serves community needs and desires. One informant commented, “gay areas tend to be busy places. Lots of stores, lots of restaurants, a lot of café culture. It’s a great thing” (KI02).

The West End serves as an ideal location for a gay urban village based on existing housing stock, proximity to jobs, its historical role as the central residential district, and how its “19th century form” suits the social habits and economic needs of gay men, especially a younger and transient set. There may well be some validity to the stereotypes that associate gay men with liberal social attitudes and aesthetic neighbourhood maintenance, which has helped to buoy the West End’s attractiveness across decades.

## **Inquiry 2: Political**

*Do GUVs have any effect on overall city politics? (GUVs are almost exclusively a function of large cities. Do the political issues emerging from a GUV reflect a focus on their own neighbourhood or is there a greater emphasis on the big urban questions than other neighbourhoods might have?)*

*Are there advantages to having a concentrated glbtt community from your perspective?*

*Can you recall any municipal decisions that have obviously affected the neighbourhood?:  
contributed to the label or created barriers to its development?*

The image of GUV politics is dominated by the San Francisco model; a radically liberal enclave with a high profile and significant municipal influence. I hoped to uncover if Davie Village had a similar relationship with municipal politics in Vancouver or indeed if its relationship was positive or influential at all.

- The concentration of left-leaning voters in the Davie Street area has been a force in all levels of politics. As described by an informant, “they tend to lean very much to one part of the political spectrum... so actually, politically the gay community in its public sentiments is not diverse at all” (KI01).
- The municipal ‘at large’ system of election limits opportunities for glbtt candidates, though the total population has been sufficient to elect gay candidates since at least 1984.
- The city council has recognised the economic value of the glbtt community by directly supporting organizations like the Pride Society, and The LGBT Centre.
- Despite a generally accepting climate, politically it appears that support for the glbtt communities tends to come from glbtt elected officials. “It was largely with the support of the two queer city councillors in the previous government that they were able to secure money for the feasibility study” (KI03).

- West End politics tends to be parochial, resulting largely from a gay-male territorial desire and “I don’t think you could be elected in the West End without some connection to our community” (KI03).
- The community is resistant to change. “There’s still this resistance to moving the Pride Parade out of the West End... the idea of moving it... into other neighbourhoods... is somehow challenging [gay men’s] power, their status and the rest of it” (KI03).
- Planners have played a direct role in the character of the area through down-zoning and specifying a “requirement to have a storefront character... they kept the scale of the neighbourhood. They’ve encouraged the retention of older buildings, they’ve allowed things like café’s, and they’ve allowed more bars to be in that area” (KI02).

The politics of the glbtt community may not play the significant role it does in other cities. Representation by lesbians and gay men at all levels of government is not proportional to the population but neither has it gone unrepresented over the past 30 years. The ‘west coast mentality’ may have also played a role in avoiding the adversarial response to the community seen in other cities at the municipal level. However, the glbtt community has not been without struggles and has had a significant impact on policies at the provincial and federal levels.

### **Inquiry 3: Economic**

*Has there been active creation of 'gay' shops or have existing businesses just started to cater to the gay market?*

*Is there sufficient business diversity and complete menu of services? What is the area lacking? (economic sustainability of the neighbourhood)*

The economic potentials of gay men and lesbians have been discussed in Chapter 4. These studies have come primarily from an American context and represent a generalised view of diverse population. This theme queried the completeness of the gay urban village in its role as community node and neighbourhood hub.

- The Business Improvement Area is credited with the leadership and creating the legal and financial structure to manufacture the images of the gay urban village
- The gay qualities of the Davie Village come from going above and beyond the basic components of an urban village. The party infrastructure — bars in close proximity, late operating hours, amenable liquor licensing — and support of custom needs makes the area gay.
- Glbtt owned and oriented has been present, changing and growing in the West End since the 1970s. This shows it to be central to any consideration about the GUV.
- The economic value of the glbtt community has been recognised through the importance of events like Pride to city tourism.

Because of its unique glbtt theme, the DV BIA is well suited to attracting consumers, especially since consumerism appears to play an important role in framing a homonormative lifestyle. Despite being a neighbourhood more frequently identified as immediately identified as one of Vancouver's centres though its budget is little more significant than the BIAs of smaller urban villages dotted around Vancouver (Vancouver, 2006a). Its presence likely has some wider significance in representing Vancouver as an accepting city and glbtt tourist destination. In cities like San Francisco and Toronto, the Pride festivities are some of the most lucrative events on the city's calendar. The analogous statistic for the City of Vancouver was not uncovered over the course of this research.

#### **Inquiry 4: Culture**

*Would the neighbourhood have the same energy without the 'gay' label?*

*Has the glbtt community had effect on the arts community of the city or is it simply a function of city size?*

Gay women and men have had enormous impact on all aspects of the arts, from fine art to fashion to architecture. This section was intended to probe whether having a prominent high-density gay enclave would measurably enhance the creative elements of the city.

The primary challenge identified was in defining culture. In querying culture, vernacular

impacts emerged separate from wider artistic influences. With such a significant impact on the role local creative industries, the effects on the media arts and Vancouver's role as "Hollywood North" further muddied this component of the research.

- One should think of the glbtt world in terms of culture, not shared simply oppression. "Constructing a culture, a place of celebration and coming together, of solidarity and not just because we're being oppressed.... It's like the Jewish community doesn't only exist because of anti-Semitism" (KI03).
- There are few public venues in the West End, leaving most glbtt cultural expression to be exhibited in other neighbourhoods.
- Davie Village enriches the West End. The gay character makes it more than the local retail strip it might be otherwise, complementing Denman, Robson, and Burrard.
- It is a sexually liberal area, "lines [between what's acceptable and what isn't] are there and are part of what makes a neighbourhood identifiable as a place of behaviour... in gay neighbourhoods... the level of behaviour that would not be acceptable in other places is acceptable here" (KI01).
- Reflecting on negative aspects of gay culture, respondents see it as materialistic, predatory, club-oriented and convenience seeking.
- Gay history has a strong tradition of urban culture. Gay men contribute to sidewalk activity and making it interactive, implying the sexual overtones of flirtation and cruising.

- There has been a limited quality and contribution of local art as a whole, generalising music, film, literature and fine art as formulaic and vapid. “Given the fact that they’re outside the mainstream, given the fact that they’re unbridled from long-term monogamous relationships... I think the gays could have contributed a lot more” (KI02).

This research was ultimately unequipped to draw defensible conclusions about the impact of gay urban villages on wider culture. Urban culture and street life, film, music, fine art, architecture and social culture have all been touched by gay culture with prominent gay and lesbian practitioners in every sector.

### **Inquiry 5: Future**

*What is your vision for the future of the West End? Where is it headed?*

*Are gaybourhoods still going to be a necessary component of gay culture or relevant to the glbtt community in the future?*

Each interview concluded with the question “how do you see the future of the Davie Village in Vancouver?” With this question I hoped to gain some insight into its process of transformation and the ultimate role of the gay enclave. Since they began to appear around the 1960s gay urban villages have played a central role in mobilizing glbtt communities and manifesting visibility for gay men and lesbians. More recently

demographic trends have seen a shift away from close-knit residential patterns and dispersion into wider markets; indeed, Gates and Ost (2004) discovered that “same-sex unmarried partners were present in 99.3 percent of all counties in the United States” (p. 1). Understanding the future role of gay enclaves will be important to effective planning policy and practice in cities with large glbtt populations and as a tool for managing the social and physical improvement of inner-city neighbourhoods that have relied, at least in part, on glbtt populations to demonstrate more sustainable high-density patterns of urban housing.

- The goal of the glbtt movement should be freedom and safety anywhere. “Even though there’s a very strong identifiable community in Vancouver, particularly in the West End, you have to remind people that we live in all communities. I think the danger is thinking that we only live in the West End” (KI03).
- The nodal nature of niche markets makes movement very difficult. The interviewees see this as a self-perpetuating sort of urban structure.
- More choices of safe and accepting neighbourhoods and more freedom to seek other housing options will dilute the gay population of the West End. “A lot of rich gay guys are living on the waterfront, and a lot are living in the new Yaletown” (KI02).
- Success is based on structure – housing stock, density, street character and proximity to jobs. Davie will not change unless the underlying structures that made it a gay village do. “The conditions will continually attract young gay men



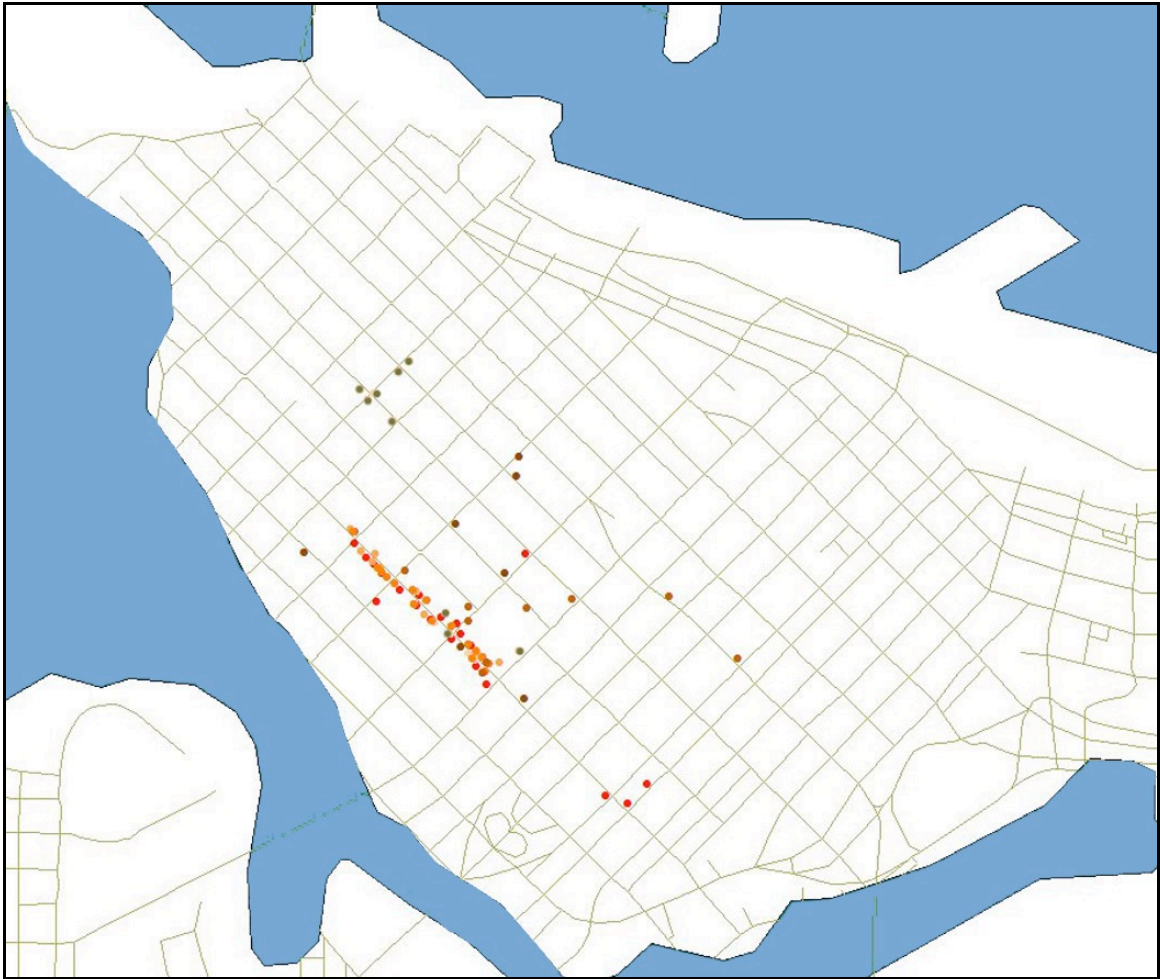
looking for the same type of housing stock, the same circumstances, same kind of job, but I think it will get diluted” (KI01).

- There will always be a need for queer spaces - in seeking friendship, relationships, and sexual encounters. “I also like having very queer-identified spaces where you know, quite honestly, that you’re in the majority” (KI03).

The future of Davie Village is uncertain, but this appears primarily due to the glbtt community being a victim of its own success. Davie Village emerged as a place of acceptance and safety. The glbtt rights movement has been successful in fostering tolerance throughout the city, diminishing the need for residential segregation. However, Davie Village does not appear at risk of disappearing. Its commercial and nodal role is likely to continue. Iconic neighbourhoods in Vancouver like Chinatown and West Broadway have survived and still serve their communities, despite a dilution of their founding demographic.

## **6.2 Mapping the ‘Cosmo’s: Community Mapping**

As discussed in Chapter 4, the bar scene remains a central component to gay male social life and an important third space for the community. Vancouver’s assortment of gay-oriented bars and clubs are presently dotted along Davie Street, most within the heart of the village. Though these establishments have coalesced around the Davie Village, they were not always confined to the territory established by the Business Improvement Area.



**Figure 6. Distribution of community photographs**

The June 2006 edition of the Xtra West featured an historical review of bar culture in Vancouver. Queer space is fluid and so too are the social establishments that often embody it. For all the available data on gay social establishments and bars, it is clear that Davie Village has only taken on its role as centre of the community in the recent years. Past locations for gay social establishments however, were not far from the neighbourhood and the downtown peninsula has long been the heart of the gay male world in Vancouver and the lower mainland (see figures 6-10). The process of mapping

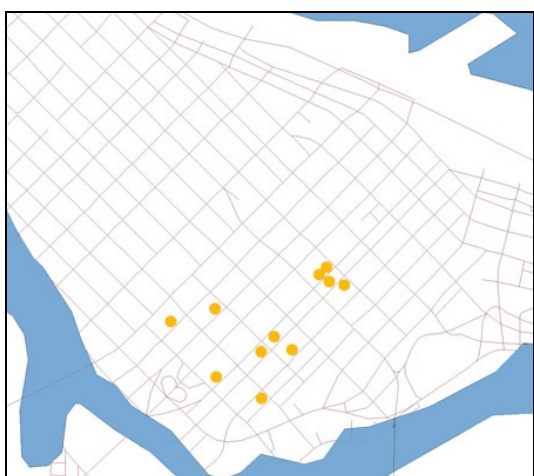
these spaces is telling, especially when taken within an historical context. Seeing how these spaces came and went in has already been recognised as an important indicator of glbtt community progress.



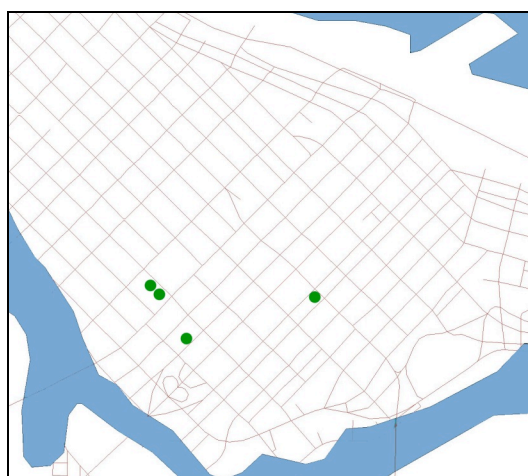
**Figure 7. Gay and lesbian-oriented nightclubs 1960**



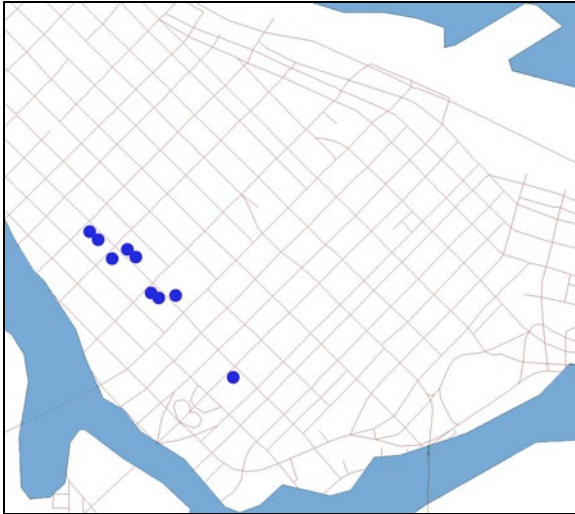
**Figure 8. Gay and lesbian-oriented nightclubs 1970**



**Figure 9. Gay and lesbian-oriented nightclubs 1980**



**Figure 10. Gay and lesbian-oriented nightclubs 1990**



**Figure 11. Gay and lesbian-oriented nightclubs 2000**

These maps reflect the ongoing presence, and influence of the glbtt community on bar culture in Vancouver. Establishments come and go, but the persistence of these third spaces is telling. Gay businesses and the ‘pink dollar’ have been influencing the city’s changing entertainment district for some time. Also of note is how few early bars were conceived as gay businesses or queer spaces. They were frequently co-opted and adapted to serve the needs of an under-serviced community. This might indicate to planners that necessary spaces, which are not incorporated or considered in a planning scheme, will simply be created outside of regulations and controls. Factoring in these elements to the greatest efficacy then becomes the challenge for planners.

### **6.3 What would the neighbours think?: Visual Analysis**

Community photography provided two types of information. First, common images were tabulated to help identify key landmarks for the Davie Village. These provided insight into the veracity of responses to the six themes addressed to community photographers. Rudimentary geocoding of the data — by marking an ortho photograph, then combining all sets — set out more clear boundaries for the gay urban village proper, which was described in the previous section. This allowed me to more narrowly define the services present, as well as demographic and physical indicators.

Nine photographers participated in the community visual analysis, resulting in 150 photographs between them. Photographers were all current or former-residents of the West End, primarily self-identified as non-straight, with the majority of participants male. Candidates were invited to participate through social networks and were self-selected. The pictures were coded according to the image presented and the dominant characteristic recognised by the researcher, according to the theme or subject of the image as identified through the photographer's description, and according to the thematic coding described in the introduction of the task and applied during the follow-up interviews.

### 6.3.1 Coding by Image

First-pass coding revealed 33 categories that identified the area as a gaybourhood (Table 4). These categories were established based on themes from the photographers' follow-up interviews and contained a collection of images expressing a varied level of understanding and expression of the area as a gay neighbourhood. Categories were determined by grouping images that represented similar ideas or spaces, and ranked by total number of images. Often similar images were taken by photographers to represent very different ideas. The groups with the most images identified the most important components of the area that identified it as a GUV.



**Figure 12. Locations Representing ‘hang-out’ space**

Foremost were representations of bar culture, recorded by all participants, with 18 total images. This category was identified as distinct from the second most frequently photographed category — hangout places. A careful examination of the review responses noted this distinction between the sexualised bar culture and the comfort of social interaction with peers. While in some ways these categories appeared to overlap, the separation went some way in identifying key characteristics of the neighbourhood —



illustrating the separation between queer space and sexualised space. Tied for third-most images, with 8 photographs each, were general residential images and Davie Street's iconic pink street furniture. The residential set appeared to speak primarily to urban village living including sense of community and its manifestations. It depicted the physical space of and around apartments and homes. This set also spoke to the substitutes and compromises between village living and the idealised suburban environment. The street furniture was viewed as a signpost demarcating the boundaries of the gay urban village more distinctly than any other factor. Reaction to this feature of the neighbourhood fell between jovial and averse. Several photographers saw the colour as stereotyping the community and its aesthetics, while others took issue with the process employed to select the colour as undemocratic. Banners and gateways were next-most photographed and representative of the territory of the village, followed by iconic gay retail, such as Little Sisters and Priape, followed by a category of general retail with no specific association to the glbtt community, though often still supportive of it. Interestingly, if all subcategories of retail were combined (including sex shops and health and wellness, which incorporated specifically healthy places to eat and supplement stores), the 31 photos would be the largest category (Table 5). Public displays of affection, followed by sex shops and images of personal health and wellness rounded out Table 4's top 10 categories identifying the neighbourhood as gay.

**Table 4. Image categories derived from community photographs**

bar culture	18
hang-out places	14
general residential - tacit gay	8
pink street furniture, gaybourhood identification	8
banners/gateways	7
iconic gay retail	7
retail - non-gay, catering to gay	7
PDA	6
sex shops	6
wellness, fitness	6
diversity	5
bathhouse, sex club	4
cruising	4
dr.peter's, hospice, death/dying	4
little sisters	4
public awareness, announcements, poster	4
the centre	4
urban village services	4
st. paul's, hope, prevention, active	3
we culture	3
we lifestyle	3
decadence	2
figureheads	2
gay clothing, image (conscious culture), retail	2
helping	2
parade	2
residential display of sexuality	2
west end character	2
west end life - underside	2
xtra west, gay media	2
general health	1
gentrification	1
institutional adaptation	1

150

What was not evident through this method of organization was how interdependent these categories were. Would the area still be identifiably gay if the bars were removed or the street furniture was more conventional? The supplemental interviews highlighted the



central importance of the bars to an understanding of the gay urban village for all respondents whether attendance was part of their routine or not. A possible interpretation is the pervasiveness of bar culture in the gay community generally. The bar is also often a centre of community events and activities, in addition to the ubiquitous night out stories from friends and acquaintances. Spatially, bars clearly have some prominence in the community. In Vancouver, many have large windows or outdoor patios that attract the interest of any passer-by. As we have seen, an emphasis on the bar is born out across all western examples of GUVs. The question that arises is whether bar-centrism is a uniquely gay male phenomenon or if it plays a more critical role in wider society or particular subgroups.



**Figure 13. Three Vancouver Bars**

British culture, for example, has a strong association with the neighbourhood pub as central to public life, counted among the most important third spaces for Britains. French and Italian culture might recognise the café in this way. Does the gay bar play the same third place role as in other cultures and how might it be different? Part of this explanation comes from an interpretation of the split between the bars and cafes by photographers. Cafes and the like were more often associated with friends, “friendly environment”,

“flirty”; while comments about bars frequently alluded to sex: “cruising window”, “blind dates”, “coming-out experience” though distinct from places of overt sexuality like bathhouses and sex stores in that photographers still referred to these with third place terms like “central location”, “social hub”, and as a “strong part of social fabric”. One participant met his boyfriend and “found true love on the dance floor” of Celebrities indicating openness to more than carnal interaction and demarking a three-tiered system of gay social spaces — ‘hangout’, bars, and bathhouses — with distinct but overlapping roles depending on the person.

### 6.3.2 Coding by Spatial Typology

A third grouping that encompassed all the images once again outlined physical categories for the collection. Exterior commercial images comprised the single largest category of images, 45 of 150. Distinct from this category, though intrinsically linked were window displays. These were identified frequently at a closer range, concentrating the image on some symbolism or message usually unrelated to the establishment behind the glass. They commented on the contents of the displays and the inherent or overt messages through 17 images. People in general were the focus of 15 images, followed by sidewalk-oriented shots (13) and street furniture or neighbourhood artefacts (12) acknowledging the pedestrian experience. Streetscapes (11) were distinct as more illustrative than experiential. Open space and parks (10), institutional buildings (9), interior commercial space (6), outdoor signage and posters (6), and residential exteriors (4) were also photographed.

**Table 5. Image categories based on spatial typology**

Exterior Commercial	45
Window Displays	17
People	15
Sidewalk	13
Artefacts/Furniture	12
Streetscape	11
Open space/Parks	10
Institutional	9
Internal Commercial	6
Media/Posters	6
Exterior Residential	4
Bus	1
Public Facilities	1
	150

This method of coding reflects continuity in the representations of what comprises the GUV. It reflects the ubiquity of the commercial influence, which is also reflected by Table 4's 'image-conscious' category. Representations of the pink street furniture remain high on this list, but comparatively rare against the number of overtly commercial images.

Window displays, people, artefacts/furniture, and media/posters are all important sources of metaspatial characteristics, which provide the opportunity for one's recognition of queer spaces. Metaspace emerges from the recognition that people and objects within a space influence the character of the space. The symbolism and messages relayed by items in the space in turn influence how a new user of the space responds. These media can transmit messages about the type of space, in this case queer space, which a person is in.

Window displays communicate to a target audience, frequently featuring rainbows, media and posters highlighting events of interest to the glbtt community. These are often sexualised depictions of men. People contribute to metaspaces through gaydar and performativity as discussed in Chapter 3, and artefacts such as the pink bus stops serve as important symbols. When considered in sum, these elements surpass exterior commercial in their numbers and perhaps importance.



**Figure 14. Elements of metaspaces**

### 6.3.3 Coding by Intent

During interviews, photographers were generally encouraged to suggest codes for their images based on the set of questions, which prompted their work. These were labelled A through F and associated with the set of supplementary instructions provided at the outset. Their instructions were to “photograph physical features (spaces, buildings, objects), or events occurring within public spaces that:

- A) Identify the area as ‘gay’
- B) Are glbtt-positive spaces
- C) Are glbtt-negative spaces
- D) Are ‘sexual’ or ‘sexualised’ spaces
- E) Are unique to or representative of the West End as a neighbourhood
- F) Are fundamental to an ‘urban village’ form”

In quantitative terms, the number of images in each set varied, with B and E each associated with 32 photographs, 26 with F, 20 with A, 16 with D and 1 negative picture (C). Twenty-three photos were not categorized.

Photographs labelled A, identifying the area as gay, covered the gamut of first-pass categories with a higher frequency of retail, social space and gay symbology; primarily rainbow motifs. This category was highly individual and interpretive, with all participants selecting different icons for identification.

In seeking positive spaces (B), photographers identified both symbols as well as actual spaces. They were not necessarily directly associated with queer space or particularly homosexual or homonormative interests. What could be understood from this set was that positive spaces were perceived simply by layering information that might subtly

communicate with people acculturated into glbtt or specifically gay culture. This category lent significant support to the idea of metaspaces since the images represent little more than ordinary spaces, but these were perceived as particularly glbtt-friendly.

Photos identifying negative spaces (C) were conspicuously absent from the collections of all photographers. The notable, ironic exception was a picture of The Centre. This intent however was focused on the building and site, rather than the services and qualities of the organization. The Centre can only be accessed by a lengthy staircase up to its second-floor premises, effectively denying access to disabled members of the community. The deteriorating quality of the building was also mentioned as making it an undesirable space for users and staff alike. In addition to these criticisms, the exterior view also encompassed “crissy corner” a location widely recognised for its drug trade, especially methamphetamine or crystal meth, a popular recreational drug in the gay community and club scene. This was identified by the participant as an ongoing problem in the gay community and reflective of some of the negative qualities of the culture.



**Figure 15. Locations representing sexualised space**



Sexualised spaces (D) was a topic also conceived broadly by participants, comprising mainly sex shops, bars, and bath houses — places with obvious displays of sexuality. Health care also featured in this category, representing the realities and consequences of sexuality. Gay culture is highly body-conscious and tied to imagery and physical beauty as evidenced through advertising, window displays in gay-oriented retail and the prominence of pornography. It is interesting to note that only one image in this category featured a shirtless man on the street. Certainly sex shops and the like are intimately connected with this attitude of objectification, but it is unclear how these interstitial spaces between having and getting sexual gratification were most strongly represented in a category seeking spaces that were themselves sexualised. To elaborate, sexualised spaces were represented by the front door of commercial establishments where people seek sexual resources or encounters. Places of actual intercourse, including the bedroom, were not photographed or discussed, nor did participants consider sexualised public spaces like Wreck Beach or the space created by a suggestive advertisement at a bus stop.



**Figure 16. Advertisements on Davie Street bus stop**

Surprising in its absence was English Bay Beach, an observed and oft-mentioned place for people watching and a substantial amenity in the West End. The reason for this disparity is unclear, but as an element I had expected to see I would posit that while spaces like the beach provide a detached form of sexualization, where, in most cases, the object of desire and flâneur never intersect to yield real sexual gratification. Sex shops, purveyors of pornography, and bathhouses are sources for many of actual sexual encounters, or at least the awareness, for those that do not directly partake. They are therefore represented more directly in the identification of sexualised spaces. While shirtless men on the street represent desire, the spaces chosen represent attainment and gratification.

Photographs taken to characterise the West End as a unique neighbourhood (E) were eclectic in their subjects. Upon review, few of the photographs taken can be directly attributed to the West End neighbourhood; rather they were found to be symbolic representations that distinguished the area for residents themselves. The results of this question uncovered a symbolic bifurcation between an internal and external identification of a neighbourhood. With the research sample involving only residents of the area, it can be expected that their area landmarks might differ from those visiting the neighbourhood. This was likened to brand identification, with residents recognising local brands and characteristics that may not translate to outsiders. Planners need to build both internal and external brands for community success — good places for people to spend money or move to, while building a rich and convivial environment with many layers and services



for residents. A parallel might be in the difference between touring and becoming intimately familiar with a city. While conviviality and the like is a direct contributor to the desirability to a neighbourhood to visit, it does not make the area special. In these photographs, there was little represented that could not be found or analogised elsewhere. I would argue that amenities, views and proximities might have been at least mentioned by people less invested in the everyday life of the West End. The landmarks that were represented were diverse — eccentric, mundane, beautiful, and kitschy.

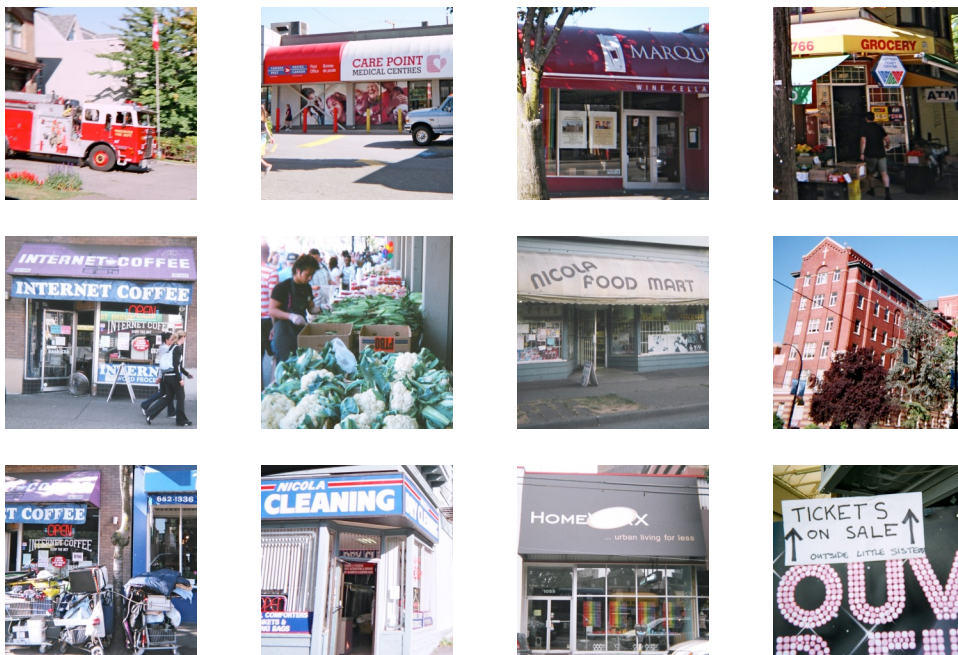


**Figure 17. Image diversity in community photographs**

Images that were considered fundamental to the urban village form (F) covered the gamut and were a fairly faithful reiteration of principles of Jacobs (1989) and Sucher (1995).

Images in this category depicted;

- groceries
- alcohol
- community centre
- drug store
- “dark side” – homelessness
- post office
- medical/ health/ hospice
- art/ culture
- one-stop source of information
- third spaces/ hangouts
- safety (fire) – community police station notably absent
- street festival
- house wares
- corner store
- dry cleaning
- bar
- restaurant
- residence
- markers (banners, identifying characteristics)
- community services “acceptance of problems” (Gayway, the centre)



**Figure 18. Selection of images noted as fundamental to an urban village**

Given the six categorisations, I then attempted to identify characteristics that looked beyond the urban village form to identify gay space. For this, F served as baseline as to what must be in an urban village, and A represented the culture of a community — the story of places, and expressions of ownership, safety and comfort or the internal language of living there. Images labelled with both A and F were interpreted as identifying things that are crucial to an urban village, F, but with some gay characteristic, A. The resulting collection spoke to the branding of the neighbourhood and importantly, its metaspatial characteristics. Facilities and amenities serve the community without added labels, but are celebrated by residents because they have them. These spaces are tailored in their small way to be of the community of Davie Village. This illustrates a merger between urban village form and the reification of gay culture. The rainbow banners that line Davie Street are an example. One can have a village without banners, but they relay a specific message about the area and reinforce the characteristics that make it successful. The concepts linking images from categories A, F, and A+F can be summarized respectively as gay, urban, and GUV wherein A represents spatial comforts and identifies the area as gay, F represents the base condition for an urban village, and photos marked with both A and F demonstrate the queering of space. This phenomenon is much the same as category B, where the symbol, more than the space communicated a glbtt-positive space. The act of queering an otherwise banal facility like a grocery store by adding gay symbolism (A) provides a level of comfort to glbtt users. This comfort may permit them more freedom for performativity, enhancing the queer aspects of metaspaces through their performance.

**Table 6. Interpretation of image classification**

<p><b>A</b></p> <p><b>Gay</b></p>	<p><b>F</b></p> <p><b>Urban</b></p>	<p><b>A+F</b></p> <p><b>GUV</b></p>
<p><b>Metaspace</b></p> 	<p><b>Space</b></p> 	<p><b>Queer Space</b></p> 
<p><b>Identity</b></p> 	<p><b>Function</b></p> 	<p><b>Localisation</b></p> 
<p><b>Constituents</b></p> 	<p><b>Development</b></p> 	<p><b>Planning</b></p> 
<p><b>Social</b></p> 	<p><b>Infrastructure</b></p> 	<p><b>Urban Design</b></p> 

Gay identifiers may also heighten awareness of other glbtt people, anticipating that others may be drawn to the comfort of the glbtt-positive space.

This table is central to understanding the relationship between the GUV and metaspatial theories articulated in Chapter 3. The distinctive elements highlighted by being marked A and F are those contributing particular spatial messages to the user and influencing the experiential qualities of the space or adjusting spatial perceptions to permit different experiences, which are created by the users of the space themselves.

This table also distinguishes the components of an urban village that planners can directly affect. While each of the columns must be considered and can be influenced each is tied to a specific planning realm, specifically social, infrastructure, and urban design.

## **6.4 Conclusion**

The research methods of key informant interviews and community visual analysis have yielded many insights in the three key questions and the characteristics of the gay urban village in Vancouver. Key informants relayed a variety of themes under the five categories of inquiry, some of which corroborated evidence from the literature review and some that identified unique circumstances of the West End in Vancouver.

Community photographers contributed significant insights into the operation and interpretation of the Davie Village. The next chapter will serve to summarize these findings in conjunction with the earlier literature reviews.



## 7 | Summary and Conclusions

### 7.1 What impacts do gay neighbourhoods have on urban areas?

In considering the wider urban implications of the GUV I have demonstrated the role they have played in spatial delineation within cities. This thesis pointed out four general roles that GUVs play in the wider urban experience — economic, structural cultural, and political. How does the gay urban village impact the city at large? In this chapter I summarize the key findings.

#### 7.1.1 Economic

The economic role of GUVs has increased significantly in the last 20 years. Tourism and retail components of these spaces appear to have grown with the social prominence of gays and lesbians. Amendola (personal communication, 16 October, 2006) identifies gay events as the two largest festivals in the state of California, while Vancouver recognises the impacts of the gay community's substantial Pride celebrations on the city coffers. GUVs provide a boost to tourism in general with the GUVs serving as an attraction for

the levels of discretionary income possessed by gay men in particular (Gates & Ost, 2004, p. 256).

In the long term, there is evidence of significant increase in real estate values of a neighbourhood associated with GUVs, as we have seen in Old Town East and in San Francisco. Vancouver's connection between housing and market value is more tenuous simply because the neighbourhood possesses characteristics that would provide for buoyancy despite market conditions or the dominant social group in the area.

Nevertheless, the obvious attractions of gay men to the West End as expressed by all key informants have likely played some role in the marketing of the area as an open and accepting niche within the city and contributing to the vitality of the downtown peninsula.

In Vancouver's case, the GUV provides a prime example of a more authentic, market-driven urban village concept than those put forward by the derivatives of traditional neighbourhood design.

“The West End really functions like a late 19th century city... things really aren't that different. I'm still walking to the same place to get my groceries, do my banking, as I am to getting the streetcar, now the trolley line, but you know, things are pretty much where they used to be” (KI01).

In this way it supports a wider array of businesses and a more public space than the suburban and New Urbanist developments that rely on malls, big box stores and management companies to determine the mix of retail.



Thus, gay urban villages have not been economic engines beyond their role in serving a citywide glbtt niche through a concentrated local economy per se. Their presence has however provided the critical mass and optics for wider recognition of the city. The gay village is a signpost for queer tourism and catalyst for larger events like Gay Pride, the Gay Games and the 1996 International AIDS Conference, for instance.

### 7.1.2 Cultural

It is worth reiterating that gay and glbtt culture is far from static. This population does not possess the historical mythology and references that ethnicity affords. It is true that most gays and lesbians are not well versed in glbtt history; indeed large parts of queer history have only recently been recorded or extrapolated. However, these spaces serve as a reflection of the needs and desires of a community that once came together in solidarity, seeking political and economic expression (Castells, 1983; Forsyth, 2001). GUVs are now more actively recognising the diversity in the population, and having to reconcile the many-faceted needs of various communities within. This will likely induce significant change over time, eventually giving rise to communities more amenable to the disparate segments of queer culture and varied invocations of queer space.

KI03 argues that the glbtt population should be considered in the same vein as any ethnic culture. He also asserts that glbtt people should be recognised for contributions to society instead of finding their primary connections through shared oppression. However, the contributions that gays and lesbians make to conventional definitions of culture have not

been defined. KI02 believes that artistic pursuits have languished and tend to be insular and self-referential, providing limited relevance to society at large. He also sees an insufficient amount of criticism for such a prime role as outsiders of heteronormative, mainstream culture. The glbtt population as a whole has not contributed in the same overt way as more established cultural groups; gay life has no cuisine. KI03 argues that these forms of expression such as film and painting have significant value as a foundation for defining a queer culture.

The development of ethnic enclaves is based on an imported culture, adapted to an urban environment. Patterns and spatial requirements are transposed from other places. Little Italy and Chinatown, generically recreate an environment from elsewhere to support the culture of the residents. Simultaneously, the accessibility of this territory feeds cultural characteristics back into the city that supports them. This is at the heart of multicultural communities.

From Florida's (2002) perspective, "to some extent, homosexuality represents the last frontier of diversity in our society, and thus a place that welcomes the gay community welcomes all kinds of people" (p. 256). The indexes he and Gates created in their demographic constructs of the Creative Class also correlate bohemian qualities of a city and high-tech industry. While this does not imply that gays precipitate improvements in the cultural and high-tech industries, sometimes "gays can be said to be the 'canaries of the Creative Age'" (p. 256). In this way, the value of an established gay community is not

in traditional cultural contributions but its symbolic value as a welcome sign for the melting pot that may draw ethnic cultures together.

Does gay culture have a defined aesthetic? Betsky argues it does, in the baroque, though this serves today as a more conceptual definition. Has queer culture and aesthetic been so reduced and commercialised to be embodied by the Fab Five on *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*? The commercial focus of the community photographers suggests this is a very real possibility.

While parallels between glbtt and ethnic urban villages can be drawn, I believe the lack of precedent space for gays and lesbians outlines a fundamentally different role for these neighbourhoods. The gay community has comparatively little cohesive cultural history to contribute to the wider city. GUVs are spaces of experimentation and invention of the glbtt community. Social forces are changing the face and demographics of the neighbourhood (e.g. marriage rights altering home ownership patterns). GUVs provide the stage for new systems of cultural change to emerge rather than contributing a cohesive culture. As a young culture, the glbtt community does not have the same traditions and elements that are typically associated with culture. GUVs provide places to integrate new thoughts, forms of expression, and freedoms rather than actively cradling a new culture. It has often been mentioned that gay culture is elusive, because fundamentally, the only characteristic all homosexuals share is sexual attraction to the same sex.

### 7.1.3 Structural

Structural qualities are the most context-based component of the impact of GUVs on cities. In other cities, the GUV has been a transformative force regenerating neighbourhoods and radically affecting housing market segments.

In Vancouver however, the role of the glbtt community is difficult to establish. In some ways the desire for social connectedness may have contributed to the accretion of gay male population but this neighbourhood may equally have served any number of populations. By all accounts, the landscape and history played an important role in maintaining the quality of the neighbourhood through the decades. The gay penchant for upgrading housing stock has little application in the West End, with the vast majority of housing units being apartments — over 80 percent rented accommodation. In this case, the stereotypical revitalisation role that Goode Bryant and Poitras (2003) point to (“we care about the houses”) has limited impact on West End stock.

Most importantly, the territory of queer space that is the GUV provides a bastion of safety for glbtt people, connected to both the culture and politics of the neighbourhood. This queer space is defined through its metaspacial qualities, a key characteristic being a sense of safety. All of the research participants noted aspects of safety as a crucial role of the gaybourhood. The boundaries of the GUV were exposed in the photographic analysis, as two photographers specifically noted their discomfort with leaving the GUV

and entering the straight entertainment district of Granville Street. One key informant, KI01, associated this fear with the failure of ‘gay nights’ at bars on Granville. While glbtt people are still persecuted in some circles, gaybourhoods provide safe places of expression and interaction.

Though more research is required, the social cohesion that exists, however tenuously in the Davie Village serves as a precedent for the value and structures of authentic urbanism and cosmopolitan urbanism. The porches and historical aesthetic advised by neo-traditional design was all but destroyed by the construction booms through the 1950s and 1960s. In the last 30 years, the neighbourhood has seen little physical change, but significant social transformation. This is one indication that fostering active streets and third places where people can interact convivially and en masse is more important to successful neighbourhood development than the built form that ultimately bears it.

In analysing the structural implications of the GUV, it was clear that central to the structure of a GUV is a high density of one-bedroom apartments. As a side effect of trying to understand why this neighbourhood filled a need within the gay community, differences in spatial needs of groups were also identified. The structural features that emerged through the economic factors affecting the neighbourhood led to ideal conditions for a gay enclave. They did not lead to a high family population, for instance. This should remind planners to understand the type of community they are creating through zoning and other intrinsically political measures.

#### 7.1.4 Political

The political impacts of GUVs are twofold: as places of resistance, and places of influence. The emergence of gay enclaves was based on a desire to connect with other gays and queer people. Their initial role was one of connection, which rapidly developed into places of resistance against societal norms and sanctioned urban ways of life.

Through the 1960s to the 1990s GUVs provided places of resistance and were incubators of critical thought and expression with organizations like ASK, ACTUp!, and Little Sister's becoming active in the neighbourhood. The conglomeration of marginalised identities in these spaces have led to various forms of collective action and influence on the wider politics of the city, province and even country as seen during the height of AIDS activism and the role Little Sister's has played in censorship law. These organizations would not have emerged without the spatial consolidation of preceding decades.

GUVs today also bring together volumes of highly educated and relatively wealthy constituents that would not possess the same strength of voice as in cities without a defined space of glbtt community. The politics of Vancouver have brought attention to the growing rifts within the image of "a gay community". As witnessed in the electoral challenges between Tim Stevenson and Lorne Mayencourt, the fight between left and right ideologies is not confined to the straight world. Indeed KI02 indicates that within

the gay population the continuing achievement of equality rights has led some to refocus their attention on personal concerns rather than collective issues and radical perspectives.

“I know Republican, or SoCred or conservative gay guys, I’d say they were very politically naive or their priorities were very materialistic or wealth. They really wanted more for themselves” (KI02).

In contrast, KI01 suggests that “politically the gay community in its public sentiments is not diverse at all. Or at least it hasn’t found a way to really reflect that.”

A GUV contributes a strong voice, amplified by its territory. At the same time this territoriality can limit the effectiveness of the political voice as discussed by Button, Wald and Rienzo (1999). Their research has demonstrated the diminishing effect that residentially segregated communities have on elections without a ward system of localised interests.

The political role of GUVs has changed over time. They began as a place of congregation, developing a new order of community around sexuality. GUVs grew into a source of collective voice and action, which have been incubators for wider societal impacts. Today the political focus appears to have diminished as the various facets of the glbtt community have begun to assert more individualised concerns and views. These neighbourhoods, however, continue to be an important place of visibility and participants generally recognised their role, not just in serving the glbtt community, but also serving to integrate glbtt and straight people in a more subversive way.

## 7.2 The Role of Government in GUVs

Municipal and other levels of government have not played an obvious role in the creation and development of GUVs in many cities. What is not as often discussed is the implicit role that governments have in regulating and organizing the space of cities. Through legislation, policy and particularly through city planning, governments at all levels play a role in the presence of GUVs.

For example, liquor licensing has proven to be a very contentious and central concern of Vancouver's gay urban village. KI02 discusses the loosening of liquor regulations along Davie Street in the effort to develop an alternative entertainment district serving the glbt population. Prior to the efforts of Davie Village business owners, the city was exclusively focused on establishing new liquor permits in a concentrated, entertainment district on Granville Street, promoted as easier to police than bars disbursed throughout the downtown. With regard to safety for the glbt population, it was felt that Granville Street did not serve the glbt needs and was inappropriate for new nightclub openings serving that community.

As discussed, embracing gaybourhoods provides benefits to governments, namely economic and Creative Class enhancement. Intangible benefits might also include wider perception of cities as progressive and open, such as is the case of Austin, in the otherwise maligned state of Texas.



Gay urban villages have not only had an impact on government at the local level. The collective force of an enclaved gay community has in a roundabout way effected change in higher orders of government legislation such as freedom of expression and obscenity laws as part of Little Sister's fight. Little Sister's may very well not exist without the critical mass of gays and lesbians to keep it viable, not to mention the direct community support through fundraisers and lobbying throughout litigation. Censorship and the criminalization of sexuality have continued to be challenging questions within the glbtt community. The hard-fought victories that have enshrined human rights for glbtt people were conducted on the backs of government interventions like the Toronto bathhouse raids and organizations like Little Sister's Bookstore.

### **7.3 Planning implications of GUVs**

“We need to understand how planning policies, historically, have affected the quality of urban life of gays and lesbians and indeed how they may have reinforced their social oppression” (Sandercock, 1998, p. 42)

Michael Frisch (2002) comments on the complicity of planning in the oppression of marginal groups. “Recent work increasingly shows how planning laws were enacted to control immoral sexuality and especially women's sexuality” (p. 254). He argues for an inclusive model of planning that would “promote (not just tolerate) multiple sexual orientations” (p. 255). He references current definitions of family in many governments and zoning statutes that discriminate against same-sex partnerships.

Frisch's arguments have in some cases proven moot under Canadian statutes and contemporary practice, as greater sexual and social freedoms have levelled many of the inequities that were faced by the glbtt population. His arguments are, however, still very relevant in more oppressive regimes that provide no rights protections for gay men and lesbians, including in many American states.

Today the influence and role of zoning is finding ever more prominence in GUVs, which have depended upon mixed-use spaces that permit the creation of a viable and desirable urban enclave. The government's openness to mixed-use forms of development has proven to be central in the emergence of the urban village form around gay communities. They have served as proto-typical examples of cosmopolitan urban spaces. As such they have improved the structural characteristics that have fomented a public gay life and provided a theatre for growing acceptance of gays and lesbians.

Zoning is an important consideration of the mix of uses in an area, but also, more specifically the types of businesses that are permitted. Zoning has long regulated adult-oriented business, for instance, along with bars and clubs. An appropriate mix of commercial establishments is crucial in keeping the neighbourhood from being inundated with only one type of establishment, but the approval process must also recognise the community it is serving. The village moniker requires a full range of services and in the case of these urban spaces, often 24-hour options. Queer space is rooted in sexual

difference and openness. The infrastructure must exist to serve the unspoken needs of the residents, even more true in a neighbourhood fundamentally defined by these needs.

Consultation and collaboration should be key aspects to any planning process. With such a diverse set of needs and interests, representation for the glbtt population becomes a challenge. For simplicity we look to prominent organizations and community members for insight into wider needs. But planners must remember that the BIAs and community organizations have agendas and politics of their own and cannot serve as the sole representatives of a varied and diverse community.

This thesis emphasised the scope of the research and the fact that GUVs only represent one segment of the glbtt population. Generally these areas do not serve the needs or interests of lesbians, or the suburban gay set who still see a greater value in living outside the gaybourhood. It must be remembered that planners should not conceptually ghettoize gay communities, generalising them as Davie Village dwellers. Because of the distributed nature of the glbtt population, new tactics must be employed to reach out to these groups in unexpected places. This may be as simple as advertising suburban community meetings in 'urban' queer publications.

## **7.4 Imag(in)ing the Future of GUVs?**

While we in Canada are privileged to see the host of rights afforded to glbtt people, there is still a long road toward the achievement of equality. The role of the gay enclave has

changed and throughout its history it has reflected the circumstances of the glbtt community. In 1970 this may best be described as “out of sight, out of mind”. Through the 1980s, these were centres for constructing solidarity and an image of community. Whereas today gay enclaves represent a commodified culture and perpetuation of a homonormative image.

The future of gay urban villages is a far more speculative element emerging from this research. Though it is one of the central questions, it quickly proved to be relatively untestable. Without precedent or model, understanding the future of gay urban villages, and more generally queer space was left to the speculation of the participants.

Overall, there was consensus that Davie Village was here to stay for the foreseeable future. Its role as a safe space, a centre of community and go-to location for the needs and recreation of the gay community is not likely to change without some equally unlikely alternative emerging in its place. As KI01 states “if you just showed me where there was a big stock of rental one-bedroom apartments near the downtown core, I could tell you where the gay neighbourhood was.” The structural characteristics and existing housing stock are the most important element in attracting new gay residents and keeping them in the neighbourhood over their life stages. For the foreseeable future, people just coming out will be drawn to higher concentrations of gay men as they explore their sexuality and assert their identity. There is, however, increasing pressure on the West End to follow the up-scale development patterns of neighbouring Yaletown and Coal Harbour, as it had

begun to do before down-zoning in the 1960s and 1970s. This is one factor that may contribute to a more rapid dissolution of the queer qualities of Davie Village. The factors against this occurring are twofold. There is a political unwillingness to see downtown Vancouver transformed into a resort community. Ongoing development across the downtown peninsula has generally been up-market, housing activists and politicians alike see the dangers in ghettoising the upper class in the core area. The pace by which substantial new construction would happen would likely be mitigated by planning policies that hesitate to revisit unbridled construction of the 1950s and '60s and the challenges it created.

Most participants also acknowledged the dispersion of the community out from the West End and into Yaletown, Commercial Drive and suburban areas, depending on their proclivities. But none of them believed this would significantly impact the sense of Davie Street as the centre. Indeed, the build-out of Yaletown and new residential development to the north may knit together the liberal social attitudes of both communities, further enhancing and extending queer space across the peninsula. These neighbourhoods might provide more options for glbtt people pursuing a lifestyle beyond sexuality. This can already be identified to some degree with the perceived adoption of lesbian areas, as is the case with Commercial Drive as home to a 'hippie' set of gay men, Yaletown for 'yuppies' and Main Street for 'alt/hipsters'

However, the dispersion of gay and lesbian populations will not likely be reserved to high density areas. Equally, they may turn to the suburbs and communities like Surrey and New Westminster, especially in the Vancouver region, where house prices are often inaccessible. Simple economics, and perhaps the desire to own and renovate one's own home, are just as likely to drive certain segments of the glbtt population out of the city.

With gay men constructing a space of political and economic self-consciousness (Castells, 1983), the experiment in urban design for conviviality in the 20th century is a success. GUVs have proven the potential and value in creating mixed-use walkable neighbourhoods and the value of awareness of their nodal qualities. In Vancouver, there are several neighbourhoods that have achieved success through this typology, and each has a character or ethnicity attributed to it. While cities build-out and build up there are new spaces created with the potential to anchor an urban village.

The early-adopter role that gays and lesbians have played in cities may change to be more predictive. Fashion and necessity have seen many prime inner-city areas revitalized at a relatively fast pace. Gays and lesbians no longer find themselves as economically marginalised as in previous decades, giving them greater freedom to choose where to live. These factors make the wholesale gentrification of neighbourhoods into gaybourhoods less likely. While the glbtt population may remain indicative of neighbourhood transformation — “canaries” as Gates suggests (Florida, 2002) testing the viability of neighbourhoods. It may no longer be the domain of gays and lesbians to create

cosmopolitan urban space as the value and precedent has been firmly rooted in urban design and planning. Glbtt populations may serve as economic explorers staking out future centres within the city and continue to set the precedent for high-density living.

Ultimately, it would be desirable to see a greater role for queer space moving outside gay territory. As Frisch indicates, “it is not enough to create spaces that are separate but equal. Rather, we must try to create spaces of interaction” (Frisch, 2002, p. 264). Perhaps an entirely new category of queer spatial construct will evolve beyond the gay city-within-a-city.

## **7.5 Recommendations and Directions for Future Study**

Through the course of this research a number of gaps in the literature relating to urban villages in general as well as gay and lesbian enclaves, glbtt communities and queer space were identified. Below, I specify some of these missing links as a reminder to others and myself the value, limitations, and missed understandings that exist when thinking about GUVs in a city planning context.

While gay men and lesbians today may not see a central role for a territorialised gay population, little thought has been given to life after the Village. The loss of cohesion affects conviviality, communication and a sense of shared goals and values. Will gay life be absorbed into suburbia?

Are there other ways to achieve the political goals that have emerged through the bloc of gay villages or is this an outmoded system of activism? Have gays and lesbians reached a stage where 'activism' lies in simply being visible and present in all communities and neighbourhoods to demonstrate that homosexuality is not 'a lifestyle over there'?

My analysis of gay urban villages also raised several issues that I was unable to effectively tackle, but are keenly related to the transformation of glbtt culture and lifestyles. The Internet has been an undeniable influence on everyone's life, but for gays and lesbians, this form of communication has real implications for changing the role of public space and has already radically altered queer space and the interface between sexuality and urban space.

What would a non-heterosexist city look like? Delores Hayden brought us a vivid image of the possibilities for a new urban archetype that better considers the needs of women and men in a changing society. The gay urban village has been the only clear structure to emerge in response to the needs of gay men and women. It certainly has its critics though, and its future role and social sustainability are unclear. Does the built environment have a role to play in levelling differences of sexuality? How could designers and architects be directed to create for better queer inclusion?

It would be worth exploring how or if planners and urban designers can actively create and sustain gay enclaves. What this thesis did not examine was how active a role the



development community has in creating these neighbourhoods. As seen with the ‘gay condos’ in Toronto, gay enclaves have (d)evolved into simply a niche segment for marketing. What lessons can be learned from how gay villages came to be? How can their role in community building and neighbourhood change be applied to new neighbourhoods, with the goal of drawing people back into cities? In what ways can gay villages practically contribute to the articulation of more diverse cosmopolitan urbanism?

A longitudinal study of the history of gay enclaves from an urban development context could provide valuable insights into neighbourhood change theory. My review of gay urban villages could not delve into the socio-structural factors of each city that produced these spaces. It would be interesting to investigate the similarities and differences between patterns of development under a unified framework and comprehensive historical analysis.

Turning on the questions that anchor this thesis, one might ask what the city at large thinks about GUVs. How are the perceptions of non-glbtt-identified people formed, managed, and changed to the best advantage of all citizens?



## 8 | Bibliography

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## 9 | Appendices

**A: Key Informant Interview Guide**

**B: Written Consent Form: Community Photographers**

**C: Supplementary Information for Photographers**

**D: Written Consent Form: Key Informants**

## A: Key Informant Interview Guide

### Personal Introduction

Background info

### Structural

- What various economic, structural, cultural and political aspects have contributed to the creation of the GUV? (housing stock, location in the city, etc).
- Have you noticed changes in physical aspects of the neighbourhood that you would attribute to the glbtt community? (housing stock, effect of tenure, beautification, revitalisation, etc).

### Political

- Do GUVs have any effect on overall city politics?
  - (GUVs are almost exclusively a function of large cities. Do the political issues emerging from a GUV reflect a focus on their own neighbourhood or is there a greater emphasis on the big urban questions than other neighbourhoods might have?)
- Are there advantages to having a concentrated glbtt community from your perspective?
- Can you recall any municipal decisions that have obviously affected the neighbourhood?: contributed to the label or created barriers to its development?
- (specific questions emerging from document search)

### Economic

- Has there been active creation of 'gay' shops or have existing businesses just started to cater to the gay market?
- Is there sufficient business diversity and complete menu of services? What is the area lacking? (economic sustainability of the neighbourhood)

### Culture

- Would the neighbourhood have the same energy without the 'gay' label?
- Has the glbtt community had effect on the arts community of the city or is it simply a function of city size?

### Future

- What is your vision for the future of the West End? Where is it headed?
- Are gaybourhoods still going to be a necessary component of gay culture or relevant to the glbtt community in the future?

## B: Written Consent Form: Community Photographers

### Research Project Title:

Sexuality and the City: Exploring gaybourhoods and the urban village form in Vancouver, BC.

### Researcher:

Richard Borbridge, Masters of City Planning Candidate, University of Manitoba

### Purpose of Research

This research explores the nature of gay urban villages in relation to the cities that contain them. I am endeavouring to discover how urban form affects, and is affected by sexuality. This case study of Vancouver's West End neighbourhood will explore the cultural, structural, economic and political influences of and on this neighbourhood.

Photographs taken by neighbourhood residents will help to explore the interface between socio-cultural and physical characteristics of the community. Your images in concert with subsequent interviews will examine how the urban village form has been affected by the dominance of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and two-spirited (glbtt) community.

### Consent

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. Please also read and consider the *Supplementary Information for Community Photographers* for more details on your role in this study before signing. Please take the time to read both carefully and to understand any accompanying information. Feel free to ask the investigator to explain any words or concepts you would like clarified. Please ask the investigator if you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here.

Your participation will involve a community photography exercise and an interview. You will be provided with a disposable camera and asked to photograph objects, spaces or people through the ordinary course of your day that respond to a given set of questions. You may keep the camera for up to five (5) days, after which the film must be returned to be developed by the investigator. You will be asked to participate in an in-person interview, no longer than one hour, at your convenience to discuss the images you selected in more detail. No payment or reimbursement will be provided for any expenses related to taking part in the study.

Your identity will be kept confidential. Numeric ID codes will be used on the original records to guarantee confidentiality. Photographs taken and comments made during the subsequent interview will only be associated with a numeric ID code in the final document. All interviews will be audio taped with your permission. Photographs and audio recordings and interview notes will be kept secure and retained by the researcher for the duration of the study, after which, they will be destroyed.

This research will be published in the form of a thesis available through the University of Manitoba Libraries. It will also be e-published and available online using the University of Manitoba's digital repository, known as 'MSpace' and Library and Archives Canada. This research has been supported in part by the Maxwell Starkman Scholarship Fund. The results of this study may, as a stipulation of the scholarship, be presented in a Faculty of Architecture colloquium. A digital copy of the research results will be provided via email at your request.

**SEE OVER**

**Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.**

Richard Borbridge, (XXX) XXX-XXXX or <\_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_.\_\_\_\_>  
 Thesis supervisor: Dr. Sheri Blake, (XXX) XXX-XXXX

**This research has been approved by the Joint Faculties Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or e-mail [margaret\\_bowman@umanitoba.ca](mailto:margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.**

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 Participant's Signature

Date

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 Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature

Date

## C: Supplementary Information for Photographers

Research Project Title: Sexuality and the City: Exploring gaybourhoods and the urban village form in Vancouver, BC.

Researcher(s): Richard Borbridge, Masters of City Planning Candidate, University of Manitoba  
 Contact Information: (XXX) XXX-XXXX or <\_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_.\_\_\_\_>

**This document supplements the *Informed Consent Form: Community Photographers*. It will provide you with more details about your role in this research. Please take the time to read both carefully and to understand any accompanying information. Feel free to ask the investigator to explain any words or concepts you would like clarified.**

### Your Role

Photographs taken by neighbourhood residents will help to explore the interface between socio-cultural and physical characteristics of the community. Your images in concert with an informal interview will examine how the urban village form has been affected by the dominance of the glbtt community.

### Your participation will involve:

1. Carrying the camera with you through the normal course of your day, over several days, capturing images that you feel fall into one or more of the categories below.
2. Returning the camera to the researcher. The research will have the film developed.
3. Participating in an informal follow-up interview, in person, at your convenience, and lasting no longer than one hour. You will be asked to elaborate on why particular images were chosen and what they represent.
4. Assisting the researcher at the time of your interview to map the photographs

### You have been asked to photograph physical features (spaces, buildings, objects), or events occurring within public spaces that:

- Identify the area as 'gay'
- Are glbtt-positive spaces
- Are glbtt-negative spaces
- Are 'sexual' or 'sexualised' spaces
- Are unique to or representative of the West End as a neighbourhood
- Are fundamental to an 'urban village' form

### General Procedures and Cautions:

- Write your name on the camera when you receive it.
- Limit your photography to areas in and immediately surrounding the West End, as you define it.
- Keep note of where photographs are taken and which category you are attempting to represent. It may be useful to write this down. You will be asked to provide approximate locations for photographs on a map of the area.
- If a desired shot cannot be achieved due to obstruction or otherwise, take the picture anyway and make a note of your intention.
- Please limit photography of people to public places and events.
- Please be prepared to explain the project to people you are photographing. Direct any questions about the validity of the project to the researcher or thesis supervisor.
- Ask a person if he or she wants their picture taken. Accept "no" as an answer and thank them anyway.
- You are free to photograph any subject in the neighbourhood, but please respect private property and wishes.

- Take general caution to ensure your personal safety. Do not go into unsafe places, or places you are not allowed
- Do not give your camera to anyone else, unless you want someone to take a picture of you.
- Only use the camera in the service of this research.
- Do not lose the camera.

**I will return the camera to the researcher on or before the following date:**

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
D/M/Y

\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature D/M/Y



## **D: Written Consent Form: Key Informants**

### **Research Project Title:**

Sexuality and the City: Exploring gaybourhoods and the urban village form in Vancouver, BC.

### **Researcher:**

Richard Borbridge, Masters of City Planning Candidate, University of Manitoba

## **Purpose of Research**

This research explores the nature of gay urban villages in relation to the cities that contain them. I am endeavouring to discover how urban form affects, and is affected by sexuality. This case study of Vancouver's West End neighbourhood will explore the cultural, structural, economic and political influences of and on this neighbourhood.

Key informant interviews will help to explore political and economic effects of gay urban villages as well as future projections for the direction of these neighbourhoods. These interviews will supplement broad-based research and insights from text sources with information and opinion grounded in the Vancouver context.

## **Consent**

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information. Feel free to ask the investigator to explain any words or concepts you would like clarified.

Your participation will involve an interview, of no longer than one hour, scheduled at your convenience to discuss the nature and impacts of gay urban villages on cities in general and specific circumstances related to Vancouver. No payment or reimbursement will be provided for any expenses related to taking part in the study.

Your identity will be kept confidential. As a key informant of this research, it may be important to associate a generic job description with your comments. You will never be personally identified. All interviews will be audio taped with your permission. Numeric ID codes will be used on the original records to guarantee confidentiality. Audio recordings and interview notes will be kept secure and retained by the researcher for the duration of the study, after which, they will be destroyed.

This research will be published in the form of a thesis available through the University of Manitoba Libraries. It will also be e-published and available online using the University of Manitoba's digital repository, known as 'MSpace' and Library and Archives Canada. This research has been supported in part by the Maxwell Starkman Scholarship Fund. The results of this study may, as a stipulation of the scholarship, be presented in a Faculty of Architecture colloquium. A digital copy of the research results will be provided via email at your request.

**SEE OVER**

**Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.**

Richard Borbridge, (XXX) XXX-XXXX or <\_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_.\_\_\_\_>  
Thesis supervisor: Dr. Sheri Blake, (XXX) XXX-XXXX or <\_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_.\_\_\_\_>

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Participant's Signature

Date

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Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature

Date