

Canadian Gated Communities

Research Highlights: March 2004

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Our research project explores the municipal planning response to the phenomenon of gated communities in Canada. We are investigating the ways in which local planning authorities implement policies and regulations to deal with developers' requests to gate new development projects. Although gating is not as common in Canada as it is in the US, the number of gated subdivisions is increasing. The issue has not yet generated significant social debate regarding the social, economic or political implications of this residential form. While planners in some communities have developed policy to regulate gating, for the most part local planners do not have the tools to respond effectively to the challenges that gating may create. We hope that this research brief will provide you with information and access to resources that may help you and your community in working with gated communities. The Canadian Gated Communities Research Project is directed by Dr. Jill Grant at Dalhousie University. Research for the project has been funded by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Left: Gates in British Columbia
Right: A Barricaded Street in Halifax, NS



WHY GATES?

Is living in gated communities in Canada about security? Yes and no. The gate is advertised as a security feature, but our observations indicate that gates mostly function to keep casual visitors and sight-seers out. In Canadian gated projects, privacy, enclosure, identity, lifestyle, and community seem to be the most important issues both to those selling and those buying homes in gated projects. Gating, and private roads more generally, also offer significant strategies for traffic calming. Gates and barriers reflect a reaction to urban problems that have shown no sign of easing; they also indicate the depth of the problems contemporary cities must address. When people feel they cannot rely on public regulations and political processes to protect their neighbourhoods from unwanted uses (or people), then some find the option of voluntarily entering an exclusive community quite desirable.

RESEARCH RESULTS: INVENTORY

- The average size of Canadian gated projects is estimated at about 80 units.
- Canadian gated communities are much smaller and less security-conscious than their American counterparts.
- Gated projects invariably involve private roads and condominium (strata) development.
- Net residential densities are higher than in conventional development on public roads.
- Most earlier projects have common amenities like lavish landscaping, club houses, fountains, RV parking, tennis courts or swimming pools.
- Some of the most recent projects, aimed at delivering a lower cost product, have few amenities.
- Larger projects are more likely to have common amenities.
- Canadian gated communities tend to focus on the retiree market, although not exclusively.

Province	Total	500 Units or More	Guards	Video Surveillance
BC	288	3	5	5
AB	21	3	1	2
SASK	8			
MAN	1			1
ONT	49	8	9	5
NS	7		2	1
TOTAL	314	14	14	15

Part of our research has involved creating an inventory of gated communities in Canada. We believe that at the current time, the inventory underestimates the number of gated communities in Canada by 1/2 to 1/3. If you know of any gated communities in your area, we would love to hear from you. Please help us make the inventory as complete as possible! Email us at: gated@dal.ca