Dalhousie University School of Planning

Going Full Circle in Life:

Exploring the social construction of housing in rapidly growing Canadian suburbs

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Plan6000 Independent Project
December 7, 2010

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Acknowledgements

As a research assistant to Dr. Jill Grant, I had the opportunity and pleasure of working on the Suburbs Project. The research presented here stems from that project and has therefore been supported by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. With warmth and appreciation I thank Dr. Grant for offering valuable feedback along the way, and for her unparalleled attention to detail.

My colleagues in the Master of Planning program provided indespensible humour and friendship throughout the research process. This work would not be complete without the unwavering support of Nina. Her patience never ceased, and she always reminded me when I had forgotten.

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada
Canada

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1. Executive Summary

Suburban housing trends continue to change as increasing densities and mixed housing neighbourhoods gain attention in community planning and development practice. In many suburban communities the typical pattern of spacious single-detached housing is giving way to compact lots, townhouse projects, and condominium apartments as planning principles favouring a smart growth direction and land economics favouring higher densities influence suburban housing outcomes. Household compositions are diversifying as well in a society characterized by an increasingly mobile labour force, a range of lifestyle choices, and a variety of family arrangements.

A qualitative tradition in housing research is particularly interested in discovering and understanding the changing social meanings attached to housing conditions. This research explores through four case studies in western Canada how discourses in planning and development generate social meanings that link particular household types with particular housing forms and community image in the suburbs.

Through interviews with elected officials, planners, and development professionals, the research explores contemporary definitions of housing trends in Surrey and the Township of Langley, British Columbia, as well as Calgary and Airdrie, Alberta. Interviews were analyzed for emergent themes from which to make theoretical interpretations about housing patterns in communities experiencing rapid growth. A common discourse that emerged in the interviews posits that households pursue a standard lifestyle through consuming a culturally programmed housing sequence. The discourse assumes that the formation of a nuclear family and ownership of a single-detached home is a pinnacle social achievement.

Respondents reinforced the idea that multi-unit housing types, such as condominium apartments and townhouses, are transitional housing forms for households in pursuit of the traditional single-detached ideal. Respondents portrayed multi-unit housing, on the other hand, as the expected destination for empty nester households to retire and age. A municipal planning focus on compact growth envisions a return for empty nester households back into compact housing circumstances, characterizing the move as an ideal route for aging households.

Developers characterized their actions as following rather than leading the housing

market. Despite municipal policy enabling and encouraging higher density projects, development practitioners expressed a preference for conventional single-detached projects until land values and development costs forced them to rethink the nature of the products they offer. Developers take advantage of the life cycle discourse to adapt to changing economic conditions that support greater differentiation in the housing market. Both municipal policy makers (planners and elected officials) and development professionals produce an image of housing consumption in which multi-unit housing types are stepping-stone products on a household's way to detached home ownership. In this way housing producers socially construct the meaning of home.

Respondents reported common negative associations with multi-unit housing types among single-detached homeowners, suggesting an entrenched social perspective of what constitutes appropriate suburban form. As municipal officials and developers introduce mixed housing projects in suburban communities, maintaining a unified neighbourhood image means that practitioners are rewriting the life cycle script to include transitions that suggest households can "go full circle in life" in one community. As economic conditions change to make detached housing less affordable, a life cycle discourse portrays multi-unit housing types as socially appropriate stopping points for households pursuing the suburban dream. The discourse continues to confer social status on households characterized by a nuclear family who own a detached home.

2. Introduction and Research Purpose

This research explores how planners, developers, and elected officials use a concept of the household life cycle to explain residential development patterns in rapidly growing Canadian suburbs. The idea of a culturally shared life cycle sequence presents a model for thinking about the connection between household types andtypes of dwellings. With the increasing influence of smart growth and compact development as strategies for responsible planning, housing producers increasingly favour a mix of housing types in new construction. A better understanding of how development professionals and policy makers socially construct a relationship between life cycle categories and residential space will help clarify challenges planners face in implementing desired objectives. The main question guiding the research is: **In what ways do developers and policy makers in the suburbs use a life cycle concept to explain housing patterns and policy development?** Additional questions include: How similar or different are discourses used in different suburban contexts? In what ways do life cycle discourses give social meaning to particular housing types in rapidly developing suburban communities?

The research is an extension of a larger project directed by Dr. Jill Grant exploring development trends and planning responses in suburban environments. The life cycle idea emerged as a theme for future research in interviews conducted in 2007 as part of Dr. Grant's research. The present study combines previously collected data with new data to explore the life cycle theme in a comparative framework. The main research question seeks to identify patterns in how development professionals and municipal officials (planners and politicians) talk about the life cycle in relation to suburban housing trends. The second question explores the influence of geographical and policy contexts on the use of life cycle discourses. The third question seeks to develop theoretical insights about the social meanings implicit in emerging suburban housing patterns.

3. Literature Review

City planning has long been concerned with diversity, both in physical and social terms. Proponents of socially mixed neighbourhoods have defined diversity in various ways and promoted its merits on numerous grounds throughout the history of community design (Sarkissian, 1976; Talen, 2006). Although economic class, race, and ethnicity are the most common ways of understanding and approaching neighbourhood diversity (Talen, 2008), mixing household types or integrating people at different stages in the human life cycle have also been promoted (Alexander et al., 1977; Jacobs, 1961; Mumford, 1949).

Soon after WWII, as single-use neighbourhoods proliferated under a national agenda to promote suburban home ownership, Lewis Mumford (1949) wrote an essay urging city planners to consider the stages of life as a framework for successful planning and community design. Arguing that the diversity of life stage experiences such as childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and family formation required different environments for human development, he brought attention to the relationship between the built environment and human experience over time. Planners, in his view, should help provide suitable environments for each life stage. Underlying his argument was the notion that as individuals followed predictable life cycle patterns resulting in common experiences of household formation, each stage of life generated particular environmental needs. Attention given to designing cities with appropriate environments to accommodate life stage experiences, he argued, could restore the social balance within an urban community. Similarly, in her observations of city form and urban social life, Jacobs (1961) promoted a diverse neighbourhood form that could accommodate people over time as their lives and household structures changed. A diverse physical form, in her view, supported neighbourhood stability because an adaptable physical environment afforded people the opportunity to plant roots despite inevitable life changes. Christopher Alexander and his colleagues emphasized the need to consider the life cycle and household mix as an essential part of successful community design. Integrating people at different stages of life, in their view, supported both individual and community development. They encouraged communities that allowed a mix of household types to live as neighbours since in their view “normal growth through the stages of life requires contact, at each stage, with people and institutions from all the other [stages]” (Alexander et al., 1977, p.189).

The life cycle concept has received periodic attention as a framework for understanding urban processes, with a particular focus on the process of housing choice and its impact on residential mobility patterns. Rossi's (1955) seminal work on the influence of family development on residential mobility behaviour initiated a tradition of research that looks at elements of the life course to explain housing choices and their broad spatial outcomes. Rossi's central argument held that housing needs change in predictable ways as households enter into and pass through stages of the life course. This perspective holds that the adjustments people make in their housing selection in response to the needs generated by changes in household structure and family development largely explain mobility patterns. Common life events such as marriage, child rearing, and sometimes divorce, influence the search for and attainment of different types of housing (Rossi, 1955). Dwelling size was seen as a key factor in determining housing satisfaction through the household life course.

Geographers have adopted the life cycle model as an approach to housing studies where the focus is on factors that influence the spatial distribution of people in relation to the housing stock. Housing researchers understand that family formation and changing household structures motivate mobility processes and tenure choices (see e.g. Clark et al., 2003; Dieleman & Everaers, 1994; Clark & Davies Withers, 2007; Kendig, 1984; Mulder, 2006). Clark & Dieleman (1996) use the life cycle concept to compare mobility behaviour and housing location outcomes in the United States and Holland, to compare household decisions to move or change tenure in the context of different housing markets, economic conditions, and social policies. They find that many housing choices triggered by changing life course events were similar in both national contexts, but that external factors such as housing policy and government intervention significantly influence the availability of choices within housing markets, resulting in different patterns of social differentiation and tenure arrangements.

Clark and Davies Withers (2007), for example, focus on the pattern of long-distance and short-distance migration decisions among households within the context of life course events. Their research challenges the notion that long-distance moves, motivated by employment decisions, are followed by short-distance adjustments to satisfy housing needs. They conclude that this sequence ignores the complexity involved in the mobility process. In particular, they recognize the significance of gender relationships in dual-earner households, the trend toward later and fewer

marriages, increased divorce rates, and the changing dynamics of child rearing as factors that complicate residential mobility decisions. Their study recognizes that a simplistic notion of a universal household type characterized by the modern nuclear family no longer satisfies serious research in household mobility. The social mosaic of North American cities today is increasingly complex due to the increasing variety of household compositions (Rose & Villeneuve, 2006). Not only are households more diverse, but the timing of life cycle events and transitions, such as the length of financial dependency on parents and the stability of educational and career choices, are changing as well (Beaujot, 2004).

Another societal shift concerns a trend of declining birth rates and increasing life expectancy. A growing body of literature and public policy interest focuses on the implications of an aging population (see e.g. Beaujot, 2004; Myers & Ryu, 2008). Myers and Ryu (2008) project the impacts that aging baby boomers in the United States will have on housing markets. Their research illuminates the potential challenges in adjusting to this 'epic transition' as housing markets respond to the greater number of sellers over buyers and the migration of elderly populations. As home values decline as a result of the housing bubble, they project unprecedented social implications related to declining home equity, reduced municipal revenue, strain on services, and disruption of short-term housing market adjustments. In addition, they point to the affordability barriers younger generations face in entering the tail end of the 'generational housing bubble'.

Despite a belief that 'empty nesters' want to downsize their homes and return to the amenity rich urban core, the concept of 'aging in place' challenges assumptions about seniors' mobility behaviour. Whether as a result of economic strain or place attachment, a trend of staying in the same community or home challenges an assumed pattern of seniors' housing and neighborhood preferences (Rose & Villeneuve, 2006). The growing popularity of age restricted private communities raises further questions about seniors' attitudes and behaviour toward housing (Grant et al., 2004). Gated enclaves of retirees in the suburbs are not a social pattern anticipated by housing theorists interested in the life cycle as an influential force in housing patterns. One explanation of private community living, that of lifestyle, points directly to the idea that a modern, affluent society is experiencing a proliferation of different lifestyles that can disrupt a uniform interpretation of how housing patterns change with the life cycle (Bourne, 1981).

A qualitative tradition in housing research emphasizes the limitations of empirical approaches employed by economists and policy analysts in developing a greater understanding of housing issues (Kemeny, 1992). Criticized for lacking theoretical focus and being trapped by universal assumptions about housing behaviour, researchers have taken up the task of investigating the housing field as a social process, focusing on the attitudes, behaviours, and social meanings driving the production and consumption of housing (Clapham, 2005). Through analysis of social discourses, researchers have explored how individuals and households give meaning to their housing circumstances and construct identities through their experience of home, asserting the relevance of the meaning of housing for policy development (Winstanely et al., 2002).

In studying the influence of the life course on housing experiences, Feldman (1996) and Cooper Marcus (2006) consider the process of place attachment and how life changes affect people's bonds to particular types of environments and housing experiences. In interviews with residents, Feldman (1996) shows that personal housing histories and societal expectations influence the way individuals adjust to different housing types and locations such as the city or the suburbs. Her research suggests that most people sustain attachment to one settlement type but that life stage passages such as getting married or having children can influence people to adjust their self-identity according to cultural norms about "the good and proper type of residential locale at particular stages in life" as they attempt to establish bonds to new settlement types (Feldman, 1996, p 440)

Other researchers have focused on the structural side of housing, exploring how the meanings embedded in planning and policy development shape the environment in which housing choices are made. An early and notable example of this emphasis is the work of Constance Perin (1977), an American anthropologist, who argued that the instruments of planning perpetuate a culturally entrenched land use pattern based on the widely held beliefs and meanings attributed to different forms of housing types and tenure. The social meanings attached to categories of housing tenure, she proposed, became "axioms circulating in the general currency of social exchange" (1977, p. 32). The planners, developers, and real estate agents she interviewed revealed the "habits of thought" that associated particular kinds of people with particular housing types. The general assumption her respondents held saw people moving through a life cycle script while consuming appropriate types of housing according to a correct chronology of life. Perin sees housing expectations

that promote ownership of the single-detached home in fulfillment of the American Dream as a socially constructed value embedded in land use planning decisions. Similarly, Batten (1999) investigates the creation of a housing policy orthodoxy in Australia. By tracing the historical emergence of a national housing discourse, he demonstrates that policy language became infused with moral expectations of housing consumption.

Focusing on either individual or household level attitudes and housing choices on the one hand, or the structural context in which those decisions are made on the other necessarily limits perspective on housing experiences. The theoretical scope of any research illuminates some issues and neglects others. Clapham (1995) tries to reconcile the agency/structure divide in his concept of “housing pathways”, bringing attention to a broader qualitative perspective on the nature of housing. Drawing on the tradition of social constructionism, a perspective that holds that the taken-for-granted meanings and definitions of the world are constructed through social interaction, Clapham offers a framework through which to study both the production and consumption of housing. A housing pathway is “the changing set of relationships and interactions that a household experiences over time in its consumption of housing” (Clapham, 2005, p.27). This perspective emphasizes the interaction of individual or household behaviour and the broader social norms that constrain decisions. Building on the idea of a housing career, which focuses on the progression of physical changes in housing consumption, the pathways approach highlights the changing social practices that go along with the housing experience. These changes may result from the interaction of commonly held beliefs about housing considered appropriate at different times in the life cycle and external influences such as government policy, media rhetoric, or neighbourhood design. The housing pathways approach seeks to understand the processes that create social identities through housing. This framework will be helpful in understanding the implications of the changing form of Canadian suburbs as contemporary planning approaches gain traction.

Advocating compact forms of growth is now commonplace in planning theory. Planners promote the merits of compact development patterns as a strategy for combating the ills perceived in suburban sprawl. In many cases suburbs are becoming the places where planners promote traditional urban forms characterized by higher densities, mixed uses and housing types, and increased transit options. In planning practice, however, prevailing cultural habits of consumption continue to

challenge the successful implementation of these objectives despite widespread support from planners and policy makers (Grant, 2006). An important component of this cultural pattern is the idea that the needs associated with the household life cycle drive housing consumption and neighbourhood form. Suburbs continue to spread at relatively low densities and with a primarily single-detached housing pattern. This pattern reflects a cultural expectation that links household types with particular housing types in a normative view of the life cycle that sees the single-detached home in the suburbs as a preeminent social achievement (Perin, 1977).

If residential mobility decisions play a primary role in shaping the outcomes of neighbourhoods and cities (Clark & Davies Withers, 2007), then an analysis of the household life cycle argument as an influential force in that process is significant. Moreover, given the increasing diversity of living arrangements, household types, and lifestyle choices influencing settlement decisions, a more critical perspective on discourses that link a life cycle concept to housing trends is needed in order to make sense of the changing suburban landscape.

4. Methodology

4.1 Approach

The research is primarily exploratory, and was conducted as a comparative case study. To ensure validity of the research findings, generalizations made from the case examples will inform theory that can be tested and expanded by future studies (Yin, 2003). The sampling frame did not permit empirical generalizations to each particular case location or category of respondent. Rather, the data facilitated analysis from which theoretical generalizations about the social discourse of suburban housing were possible. Similarities and differences among the cases highlight conditions that affect planning and development patterns in the communities. Respondents offered narratives of their experiences working in land use planning, policy making, and development practice, and commented on residents' responses to land use trends occurring in the communities. Respondents' descriptions of land use trends in local contexts provided the textual material from which to explore the connection between discourse and the realities embodied on the ground in residential land uses.

My theoretical approach builds on a tradition of research in housing studies that views discourse as central to the production and practice of social realities (Hastings 2000). From this perspective, studying language has the potential to reveal commonly held assumptions and to illuminate the cultural contexts in which meanings are produced and decisions made.

Although quantitative studies dominate research about the life cycle and housing studies, and focus especially on broad mobility patterns, discourse analysis is gaining legitimacy as a research framework in the housing studies field (Hastings 2000; Jacobs & Manzie, 2000; Jacobs, Kemeny, & Manzi, 2004; Marston, 2002). Fincher (2007, p.632) notes that "spoken and written accounts are not just commentaries on material circumstances, and separable from them, but rather are contributors to those circumstances, part of the set of processes that cause urban outcomes". Investigating what people say and how they represent decisions and processes provides a basis from which to interpret the production of social meaning (Fincher, 2007). A qualitative analysis seeks to develop theoretical insight into larger social processes through in-depth, contextual understandings, without attempting to make representative conclusions.

Clapham's (2005) analytical approach of the housing pathway will help frame the insights gained through the research. A housing pathway is a metaphor for the movement of households between changing housing cicumstances through the life course (Clapham, 2005). Building on the tradition of social constructionism, the housing pathway framework aims to discover and understand the factors that shape meanings and actions. Although much housing research that applies a social constructionist lens focuses on the meanings households attribute to their housing circumstances, understanding the role of housing producers in structuring the environment in which households make decisions is a valuable research direction. Planners create meanings about preferred land use strategies and disseminate their ideas through policy and neighbourhood design. Developers actively market housing products and often reproduce stereotypical social identities in their advertising strategies (Perrott, 2007). These meanings become significant in structuring the options available to households as they pursue their housing pathways over time. Through exploring the interaction of housing producers and consumers, a social constructionist perspective scrutinizes the process by which social consensus among some actors becomes social fact for many. Exploring social realities at this level loosens taken-for-granted assumptions about the world and opens the door to generating new ideas and possibilities for change (Jacobs, Kemeny, & Manzi, 2004).

Figure 1 - Factors influencing the social construction of housing

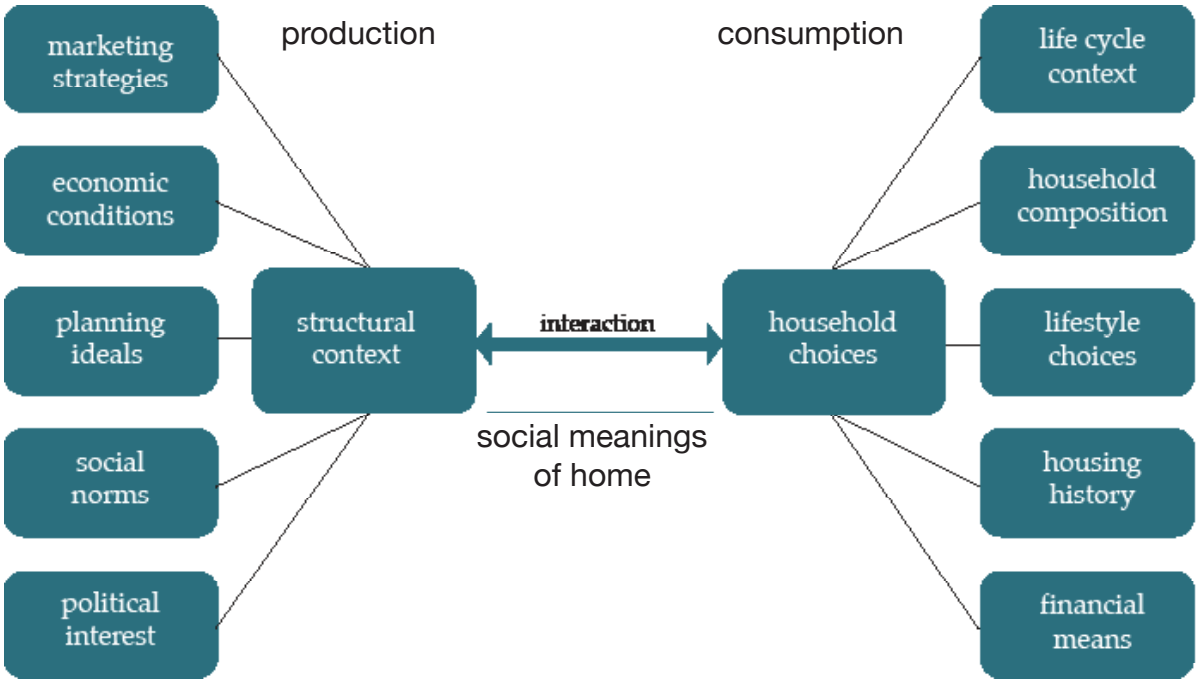

Figure 1 illustrates some of the factors that influence the production of meaning related to housing choices. On the one hand people's previous housing experiences, their current lifestyle choices, level of affluence, and household dynamics influence the meanings households attribute to their housing choices. On the other hand, households make decisions that are conditioned by structural contexts beyond their control. The interaction of households with broader social influences create and recreate social meanings related to housing. This research focuses on the influence of the structural side, and in particular on the ways that housing producers characterize household behaviour and preferences.

4.2 Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews conducted with planners, councillors, and developers in several Canadian suburban communities provide data for analysis. Research assistants working under the direction of Dr. Jill Grant conducted the interviews. The research examines interviews conducted in Calgary AB and Surrey BC in 2007 and in Airdrie AB and the Township of Langley BC during the summer of 2010*. The 2010 locations are smaller, rapidly growing suburbs neighbouring the locations of the previous cases (Figure 2). Preliminary analysis of the 2007 interviews identified a life cycle theme in responses to questions about planning and development trends. The research team conducted the 2010 interviews with the same categories of respondents and a similar question schedule. Interviews in Langley and Airdrie in 2010 included questions designed to encourage discussion of the life cycle theme (see appendix). The questions were open-ended in order to provide space for respondents to share their own perspectives and views on planning and development in the communities in which they work. In a few cases interviews were conducted with two or three participants together.

The sampling strategy was both purposive and convenient. The reseach team selected potential respondents according to their roles in planning and developing suburban communities. Equal numbers of planners, councillors, and developers composed the sampling frame; however, the resulting sample contains an element of convenience since not all respondents contacted could participate during the data collection schedule. We contacted respondents by email and telephone and invited them to participate in an interview of approximately 45-60 minutes. We arranged locations and times for interviews at the convenience of interested

* For convenience this paper refers to the Township of Langley often as Langley. This is not to be confused with the City of Langley, which is a separate municipality (not part of this research).

Figure 2 - Study communities (Google Image composites produced by the author)

Figure 3 - Interview Sample

Interview Sample					
		Planner	Developer	Councillor	Totals
British Columbia	Surrey (2007)	2	5	2	9
	Township of Langley (2010)	3	3	2	8
Alberta	Calgary (2007)	6	5	1	12
	Airdrie (2010)	3	7	1	11
	Totals	14	20	6	40

respondents. Either a hired professional transcriber or the interviewer transcribed interviews verbatim. We gave respondents a coded identification to distinguish their professional role and location. Figure 3 shows the total sample from both years of data collection. Data collection methods followed ethical protocols and received approval as part of Dr. Jill Grant's research program.

The research draws on other data sources in addition to interviews collected during the field visits to support findings and interpretations made from the primary data source (Yin, 2003). Other sources include official planning documents, development marketing material, and photographs taken during field visits. We photographed housing types and subdivisions referred to in interviews as well as examples of new housing trends. Several respondents offered brief guided tours of communities. Marketing materials illustrate development projects either discussed in interviews or documented in photographs. These sources are used to illustrate findings from the interview data and to contextualize comments within their case study locations.

4.3 Process of Analysis

Each interview was analyzed with its particular policy and development context in mind. The secondary materials helped this process. Although the sample is not large enough to broadly generalize the findings, the analysis has generated theoretical insights that future research can test (Yin, 2003).

Since a life cycle discourse was noted but not systematically analyzed in the 2007 data, these interviews were revisited and treated with the same level of analy-

sis as the new data. Interview transcriptions from both years were analyzed in two ways. First, I reviewed and indexed interviews to define literal themes emerging across the data set. Second, I applied interpretive analysis to the themes based on inferences made about what the discourses mean (Mason, 1996).

For each community the transcripts were reviewed numerous times, noting relevant extracts that touched on the idea of the life cycle and housing types. I documented the data thematically in an 'evidence bank', organizing and referencing the analysis in tables according to theme, respondent, and location. I noted potential themes in the first reading and refined and confirmed them through subsequent readings of the data. At the broadest level of analysis the search for connections was intentionally wide. I included data that did not explicitly mention the household life cycle, but did for instance discuss market pressures and changes in the types of housing products available to home buyers. Through multiple readings of the data the significance of land economics as well as policy intentions and limitations became increasingly apparent. The main task was putting the pieces together to find connections in the way respondents perceive the relationship between household change and suburban housing opportunities. The purpose is to explore the social meanings implied in the housing options available as a result of planning and market pressures. A housing pathways framework places emphasis on the interaction between context and household behaviour in producing social meaning.

5. Community Context

Each of the case study locations have their particular planning concerns, but they share several characteristics regarding housing market trends and policy interest in diversifying housing options. Although similar market and policy conditions are increasing suburban densities and affecting the types of housing available in all the communities, Surrey and the Township of Langley are experiencing heightened impacts due to geographical constraints and a regional policy context that strongly supports smart growth principles. This section highlights some shared conditions of rising housing costs, market preferences, and housing policy among the communities, and suggests some conditions that distinguish the British Columbia sample.

5.1 Common conditions

A trend toward compact housing

Single-detached housing remains a dominant market preference in all the communities. Planners, councillors, and developers alike associated suburban life with home ownership and a housing form that offers a private piece of land. In characterizing what they saw as a central feature drawing people to the suburbs, respondents frequently referred to the opportunity for detached housing, often describing the desire for a “plot of land”, “a little piece of grass”, or “a patch of dirt”. Until the last several years, achieving the ideal of a detached suburban home was not difficult for many home buyers, and growth typically followed a conventional suburban model of homes on lots large enough to accommodate a double car garage and substantial yard space. Housing form in all the communities is beginning to change, however, due to increasing land values and development costs. Developers are adapting housing types to suit a market struggling to afford the standard suburban model. A common lot size for detached housing has decreased substantially from 6,000 square feet to 4,000 square feet, or in some cases less. Building detached housing on compact lots results in frontages too narrow to easily accommodate garages at the street front (Figure 4). As a result, zoning regulations often prescribe back lanes for compact lot housing products leading suburban developers to incorporate lanes with detached garages in subdivision design. In addition to compact lots, developers are finding that attached housing forms are becoming increasingly acceptable in the market. Homebuyers are less able to afford detached housing, even on compact lots. Market changes continue to motivate developers to recon-

sider the products they offer. In 2007, a land development consultant in Surrey reflected on emerging changes in development practice that were causing developers to think beyond the conventional single-detached trend. The consultant characterized developers' willingness to create more multi-unit housing in response to escalating development costs.

> *It is evolving. I think the single-family is still the bread and butter for the city, but the market is starting to change now. The cost of land and the cost of construction are getting so high that multiple-family forms of development are becoming more acceptable to the market. It is just getting people into housing at a reasonable cost. Developers that I had, even two years ago, who were not interested in doing multi-unit, are now saying, "We have to look at that."*

This passage reflects how attuned developers are to changes in the market. Although rising development costs push developers to consider higher density housing forms, the experience in 2007 of single-detached housing as the "bread and butter" in development practice suggests developers at the time resisted municipal plans that required more density. Developers' perceptions of the market may conflict with how planners want to direct growth. Municipal officials in both Alberta and British Columbia talked about policy trends adapting to smart growth principles in suburban communities.

Figure 4 - Developers pack in single-detached housing on compact lots in Surrey.

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Relative influence of policy and economics

Municipal policies increasingly favour greater densities to support planning goals to curb sprawl, maximize efficiencies in service and amenity provision, create transit opportunities, and promote affordability. Planners were pleased to see developers increasing densities and introducing more housing variety to a landscape of repetitive single-detached subdivisions. Plans commonly designate compact single-detached lot, multi-unit, and secondary suite zones to manage and direct higher density growth. Developers, however, are not necessarily eager to increase density if given the chance. In the case study communities, development professionals expressed readiness to produce attached housing only when the market directs the change. In explaining the challenges to incorporating a greater mixture of housing types, an Alberta developer commented that municipal demands for higher density conflict with market realities in which detached housing remains a preferred option. The first compromise in detached housing is to build compact lots, but confronted with demands to create a density of 15 units per acre (UPA), this developer emphasized the inconsistencies between municipal objectives and the pace of market adjustment:

> *We know how to sell real estate. We know what to create that the market is looking for. So if you are going to 15 [UPA]... I mean it's multi-unit all over the place to get up to higher numbers like that. So typically the only obstruction I see is that you get into a municipality that starts to force certain planning principles down your throat rather than allowing the market to mature. Because it will mature in terms of density. Affordability will demand it.*

When market preferences defied planning objectives, developers expressed their resistance to producing multi-unit products, preferring to pursue amendments and rezoning back to single-detached. Only when land and building costs forced prices up were developers prepared to venture into multi-unit suburban housing without a fuss. The Surrey development consultant introduced above narrates an interaction between planning staff and a development client over a period of market transformation resulting from soaring land values:

> *Four years ago, our clients picked up the land and decided they wanted to do single-family. The economics just didn't work for the townhouses. I said, "well it is going to be a fight to get staff on board". Staff was very much not on board, but through a lot of hard work, we finally got it changed to single-detached… Then the market*

shifted, and the client, I'm not joking, a month and a half ago, said, "could we go back to townhouse?" So I called the planner I was dealing with and said, "remember that one?" he said, "yeah." I said, "what about townhouses?" He started laughing and said, "you have got to be kidding". But he said, "yeah we can do it". So we may be going back.

Implementing plans for compact residential development in suburban areas is a slow and often tedious process if the market is not prepared to convert to alternative housing products. Although plans increasingly encourage or require a mix of housing types, planners understood the limits of policy when confronted with a resistant market. A constant push and pull between market and policy can frustrate comprehensive planning goals. Planners are under pressure to effectively plan for municipal service provision in new development areas and for upgrading aging services in older areas. As well, planners are trying to incorporate more transit opportunities into suburban areas, which requires substantial increases in residential density. Policies written to support more compact growth are compromised by consumer preferences. Explaining the challenges to providing a mix of housing types, a Langley planner noted:

Obviously, because of economies of scale, it is cheaper for us on a per unit basis to develop apartments, but the market is still very much single-family. People still like to have that space. That's the challenge, if you really want to get down to it. It is not regulatory; it is basically people's desire. It's the mindset.

Despite ongoing challenges in balancing planning objectives with market trends, it appears that a variety of housing types are becoming acceptable to consumers. Compact lots are common and townhouses are increasingly familiar in residential neighbourhoods building out. The change is attributed to land economics as the housing market absorbs mounting development costs. A Calgary planner explained:

There's a constant tension between societal objectives that seem to favour mass transit and a more condensed housing form with individual preferences for single-family homes and the private automobile. Public policy does not seem to be able to resolve that conflict…. In areas where you have condensed housing and high use of rapid transit, it's because land economics have forced consumers into that form of housing or that form of transportation, more so than public policy.

Policies calling for a mix of housing at higher densities may provide a framework

for guiding growth patterns, but policies that directly affect development expenses generate wind for the sails of change. Respondents often cited the affordability problem in suburban housing development as a driving the momentum toward housing production other than the conventional single-detached. Developers commonly attributed affordability not only to rising land values but to policy demands in the form of development cost charges (DCCs), which are the funds municipalities levy from developers, often on a per unit basis, above the cost of putting in basic infrastructure like roads, sewer, and water services. Developers are expected to contribute funding for municipal expenditures to help leverage budgets that property taxes do not fully support. Several developers commented that from their perspective the desire for more DCCs was driving the push for housing variety at higher densities. A developer in Surrey described how land values affected municipal budgets as well, explaining that by promoting affordability through housing mix the municipality "camouflaged" its motivation for higher levies. A land development manager working on projects in Langley explained:

> *Let's just say that this municipality is now focusing on affordable and accessible housing as their new objective. We've gone through parks and open space, riparian areas, storm and silt management, [storm water] detention, child friendly play areas. The stack of objectives we are trying to meet on each project is incredible. And there has never been a reconciliation of all those values against delivering an affordable product.*

Policy aims to create complete communities

Policy development in each community share some common characteristics and motivations. A notable policy objective common to the case study communities is to develop complete communities. The terms complete and balanced communities appear in policy discourse and surfaced in several interviews with municipal officials in each community. Completeness refers both to a mix of land uses and a mix of housing types that together can accommodate diverse social and economic opportunities within the community over time, and contribute to a strong community identity. Mixed housing and uses are seen to complement one another. Including a variety of housing opportunities to support a range of households is often stated as a precondition for attracting business and facilitating higher densities to support town centres, mixed-use areas, and potential transit use. Balancing residential and

business development is a key attribute of completeness, particularly through more compact growth and efficient use of municipal resources. In terms of housing policy specifically, objectives referring to 'complete communities' intend to guide development to ensure a range of housing types and densities are included to accommodate opportunities for different household types, income levels, and lifestyles. As part of the Metro Vancouver region, both Surrey and Langley are obliged to follow several core planning precepts in their community plans, one of which is to develop complete communities. A Surrey housing policy designed to support the complete community objective states at section C-3.1 (City of Surrey, 2010):

> *Accommodate a mix of housing types that will support all age and income groups, renters and household types. Emphasize development of smaller houses on smaller lots, ground-oriented housing, and high density housing particularly within and surrounding the City Centre and the Town Centres.*

The Township of Langley's Official Community Plan (2010a) states more generally as an objective in section 4.2:

> *To provide for an economic range of housing types, densities and sizes, responding to the needs of the various persons who wish to live in the Municipality.*

The City of Calgary Municipal Development Plan (2010) advises at section 2.2.4:

> *Complete communities are vibrant, green and safe places, where people of varying ages, incomes, interests and lifestyles feel comfortable and can choose between a variety of building types and locations in which to live, and where daily needs can be met... The diversity within complete communities generates more choice, so that residents have the opportunity to live and remain in their own neighbourhood as their housing needs change over their lifetime.*

Finally, section 2-1 of the Airdrie City Plan (City of Airdrie, 2009) describes the intent of mixing housing as part of a balanced community:

> *Providing a range of housing opportunities is necessary for a balanced community, both socially and economically. Affordable housing opportunities shall serve to make Airdrie more attractive choice for business and industry that require lower wage manpower. Socially, it is important that every segment of the community has access to liveable housing options. This increases the likelihood that all income strata can remain in Airdrie within an established social and familial network or*

relocate to Airdrie for lifestyle or employment options.

Although the examples above form only part of the complete community policy discourse, a thread related to equal opportunity in finding housing is clearly present. In combining with other objectives aimed at creating complete communities, plans of mixing housing types direct compact, attached, and multi-unit dwellings around neighbourhood and town centres. Relevant to note in the extracts from Calgary and Airdrie is an intention to provide a mix of housing to allow residents to remain in the community "within an established social and familial network" or as "their housing needs change over their lifetime". In these cases a life cycle discourse emerges in the policy documents. The next chapter explores the implications of this discourse as it emerged in interviews with municipal officials and suburban land developers.

In addition to terms of housing mix, policies assign minimum densities to specific areas of the communities under provisions to ensure "compatibility" or "integration" with existing community form. Including minimum density requirements suggests that developers are not hindered by density limits other than avoiding low-density sprawl. Plans commonly identify minimum densities as 7-8 UPA generally. Areas around designated centres may have higher minimum density targets. Surrey, for example, cites a minimum density of 12 UPA for residential areas adjacent to designated neighbourhood centres. Provisions to maintain or enhance community character and neighbourhood identity through design guidelines and separation of single-detached areas from higher density growth claim to ensure a rationally ordered development pattern.

5.2 Divergent conditions

On the road to housing mix

Despite many similarities in policy and development trends in the four communities, several distinctions underscore the significance of their regional and geographical contexts. Surrey and Langley share several constraints to growth that do not encumber development in the Alberta communities. Since the early 1970s, an Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) has constrained urban growth in the lower mainland of British Columbia. Mandated by the province in response to concerns about the loss of valuable farmland, the ALR was established to protect the region's agricultural resources and heritage. In Surrey the ALR comprises 29% of the total land

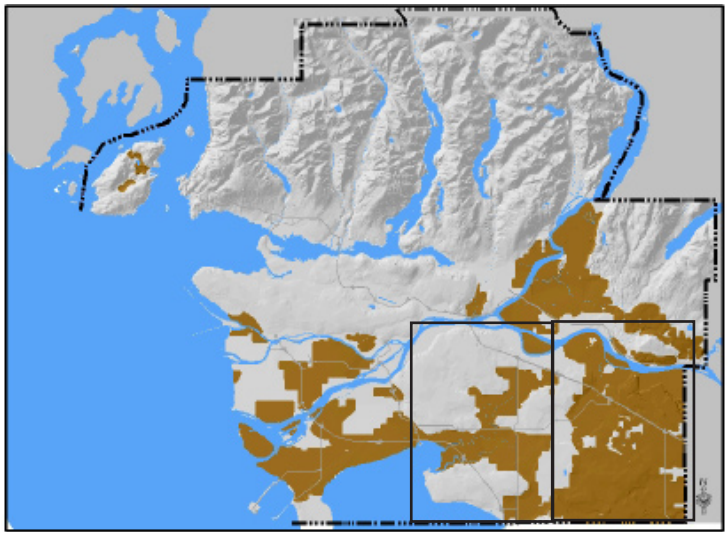


Figure 5 - The Agriculatural Land Reserve protects substantial areas of Surrey (left box) and Langley Township(right box) from urban development. Orange areas are preserved agricultural land. Surrey is divided into two areas of urbanization, while the Township of Langley accommodates growth mostly in a north-south corridor. (Metro Vancouver, 2009)

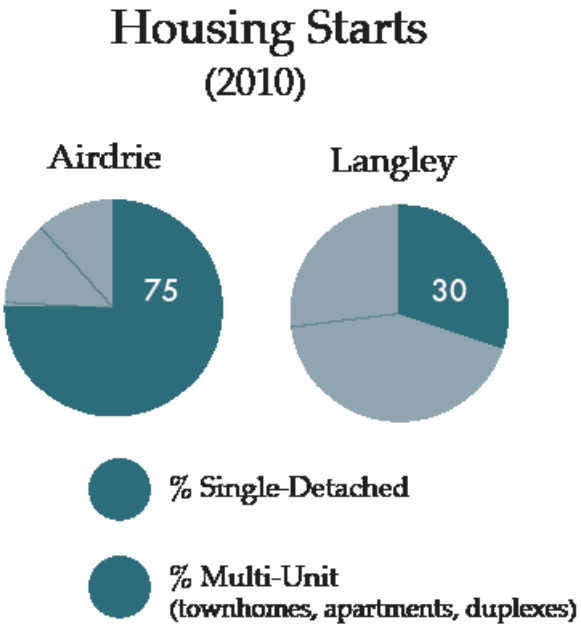
area, while in accounts for 76% in the Township of Langley. The strong boundaries of the ALR confine urban development within designated growth areas (Figure 5). In addition to the ALR, growth in the communities is inhibited by their geographical context. The United States border to the south, the Fraser River to the north and, in Surrey's case, the Pacific Ocean, limit opportunity for outward expansion.

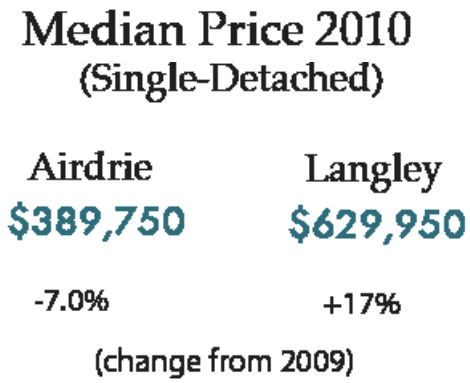
As member municipalities of the Metro Vancouver (formally the Greater Vancouver Regional District), Surrey and Langley must adhere to a regional planning framework in preparing their own community plans. The regional planning strategy assigns population growth targets that member municipalities must consider when writing their community plans. Smart growth principles, such as nodal mixed-use development to support transit-oriented growth, strongly influence planning objectives in the region. Smart Growth BC, a non-governmental organization, provides encouragement and consultation to guide regional growth according to smart growth principles. A further characteristic shared by Surrey and Langley is exorbitantly high land values. Land values continue to rise dramatically due to limited land availability and high demand for growth. Citing a decisive factor convincing developers to turn toward multi-unit development, a consultant in Surrey explained: "*It is land values. Five years ago it was 400K maybe 500K an acre; now it is over a million*".

Conditions in Alberta differ markedly from the lower mainland of British Columbia. Although a metropolitan smart growth agenda also influences planning objectives in the Calgary Region, the rapid pace of growth is able to consume large

sections of farmland. Airdrie's land based filled up quicker than expected, but the city continues to annex land at its edges from the Municipal District of Rocky View. Contiguous parcels of available farmland attract large-scale developers ready to capitalize on the high growth rate by acquiring inexpensive land beyond the urban fringe. Speculative land assembly and "leap frog" development challenge plans that promote the benefits of compact growth patterns. As a result of land availability, developers can keep housing prices relatively lower than in the British Columbia case studies, therefore protecting the option of single-detached development as a mainstay. Figure 6 shows the proportion of housing starts in Airdrie and Langley in 2010, and includes the average price of single-detached homes to illustrate the regional contrast. Policies that stipulate a housing meet greater resistance in Airdrie, and compact lot single-detached housing is often the furthest developers are willing

Figure 6 - Selected comparison of housing market conditions. (CMHC, 2008a, 2008b; 2009a, 2009b; 2010a, 2010b)





to concede. As one planner lamented:

> *Our zones are broken down pretty well to an R1-S product, for example, or an R1-SL, which is a small lot with a lane. If [developers] are looking at like 60% of a quarter section, it's just going to be a monotonous repeating pattern. So we try and get them to mix it up. We've tried to put out there the thought of intermingling types of housing. That hasn't really gone anywhere… The only things we look for form-wise, there's R1-N, R1-SL, which they need to provide us architectural guidelines with. They are checked over, and if it's like "yes, your product looks halfway decent", away you go. But otherwise, all those zones, they can pretty much do whatever they choose.**

Developers continue to choose to provide single-detached home products, perhaps on a compact lot with laneway access, because buyers are still able to afford that option and detached housing remains a suburban ideal.

Langley's plan for its current development area, Willoughby, offers a counter-point to the less stringent implementation practice in Airdrie. Willoughby is ex-

Figure 7 - Typical suburban street in Airdrie. T. Gonzalez

* The general zone R1 refers to single-detached housing. The sub sections refer to variations in lot size. For example R1-S designates a small lot zone, while R1-SL refers to a small lot with laneway access.

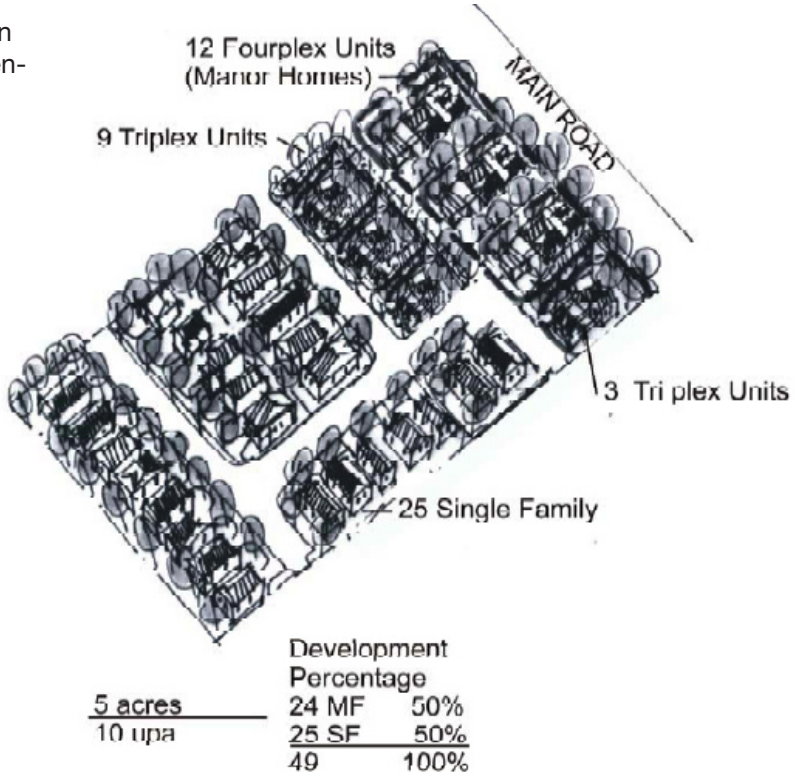
pected to accommodate a substantial amount of growth in the Township following strict smart growth guidelines that include a mixed-use town centre surrounded by mixed housing residential neighbourhoods. Subdivisions already on the ground and development proposals in stream demonstrate a commitment to establishing a mix of housing at densities much higher than older neighbourhoods. In fact, the community plan stipulates residential densities as high as 80 units per acre (UPA) for the town centre core, diminishing with distance in adjacent areas. Separate zoning designations according to housing type were replaced with a 'mixed residential' zone for new neighbourhoods in Willoughby, and staff were actively pursuing amendments that would apply the mixed zone to other growth areas in the community. As one planner explained, they were tired of seeing walls of townhouses and long stretches of compact lot development, so they introduced strict requirements for housing mix with a density of 8-10 UPA.

> *We just required X percentage of each [housing type] for every development. And as well, fit it into a minimum development size. So you have to come in with X amount of acres in order to put in this mixed residential type. And they put in townhouses, they put in... They have the option to put in duplexes and coach homes and all the rest. Everything they possibly can, including compact lots.*

Under these constraints developers must try to assemble enough contiguous parcels of land to make projects viable. Even on two hectares (five acres) projects must include a minimum of 50% attached and maximum 50% single-detached product. The Yorkson Neighbourhood Plan illustrates examples of how a subdivision design might look under these provisions (Figure 8).

The Langley example in particular shows how suburban residential form is changing. Affordability is a key factor influencing a widespread transition from the conventional detached housing pattern that defines popular images of suburbia to a trend of compact lots and a variety of attached housing products at significantly higher densities. High land values, sustained housing demand, and policy intentions aimed at implementing smart growth ideas combine to influence suburban transformation. Developers' resistance to altering the image of the suburbs reflects a continued ideal of single-detached home ownership. Market preferences appear to focus on single-detached products until housing prices force people to consider alternative entry-level homes. Although municipal plans do not impose maximum density requirements, developers produce what the market demands. Developers

Figure 8 - Example of subdivision design in Langley's mixed residential zone. (Township of Langley. 2010b)



accept alternative options only when land values, building costs, and municipal levies make detached suburban housing an impractical housing product.

Housing policies in each community reflect commitments to smart growth principles. Policies of particular interest in this study describe municipal intentions to create complete or balanced communities. Part of the complete community discourse refers to mixing housing types as a central objective to ensure diverse housing opportunities remain available as the community demands change. As new housing forms are introduced into suburban areas accustomed to single-detached development patterns, how are policy makers and development practitioners making the new suburban image acceptable to homebuyers? What social meanings do they attribute to the changes taking place in suburban housing? The next chapter explores how the producers of housing are reshaping the meaning of home through a discourse that connects particular stages of the household life cycle with the housing forms that are becoming more common in communities where homebuyers have traditionally pursued the dream of detached home ownership.

6. Perceptions of the Life Course and Housing Career

6.1 From suburban dreams to complete communities

Suburban communities are renowned as environments of domesticity and privacy. Popular images of the suburbs as single-use realms characterized by endless blocks of private lots occupied by detached homes and nuclear families recall the early decades of the post-war housing dream. National housing agendas in North America after the war opened the gates to a flood of pent up housing demand as veterans returned home and national economies transitioned to a new mode of production in an era of renewed prosperity and domestic consumption. Technological innovation and focused political support enabled the private sector to construct a modern dream of home ownership in which the single-detached home became a symbol of prosperity as the North American way of life. The new housing system reflected a normative social structure in which the ideal household consisted of a nuclear family with a male breadwinner, a mother as housewife, and children reared to fulfill the same roles (Hayden, 1984).

Figure 9 - Proud family outside their Levittown, NY home (Bernard Hoffman, LIFE Magazine © 1950, Time, Inc. Found in Hayden, 1984)

Detached housing became enshrined in policy discourse and zoning bylaws as a sacrosanct symbol of achievement to which every household should aspire. Based on extensive interviews with developers and real estate professionals, Perin (1977) interpreted the land use planning system and development industry as mutual gatekeepers of the social status conferred by the private detached home. Protected from contact with other housing forms, Perin (1977) argued that land use decisions from a national to local scale effectively kept "everything in its place". The spatial organization of land uses, in particular the separation of housing types and tenure, reflected a moral order that defined and separated social categories according to stages of life and the corresponding expectations about the type of housing in which people live. At the time of her analysis, a tenure transition from renter to homeowner represented the paramount social leap and housing achievement. Perin's (1977) interpretation suggested that households were expected to move up the ladder of life through a prescribed life course script in which housing forms accommodated a process of upward social mobility. Ownership of the single-detached home as the apex represented a destination where households "arrived" at a protected social status. Housing producers viewed renters, by contrast, as perpetual transients, without pride, and unstable. By separating residential land uses, Perin argued, housing producers reinforced a social order both spatially and chronologically.

The status conferred by the single-detached home remains mostly intact through zoning boundaries that protect neighbourhood character from corruption by multi-unit housing forms. The stability of the suburban ideal is beginning to fray at the edges in some communities, in light of current planning goals and unaccommodating land economics. What impact do these processes have on social perceptions of suburban housing? Faced with intractable pressures to alter housing standards and neighbourhood design, housing producers are beginning to rewrite the life cycle script to account for new steps in the sequence of housing transitions as households pursue the suburban dream. Rather than a social duality of renters and owners, as Perin (1977) described the ladder of life, suburban housing markets are fragmenting into a range of housing options to accommodate steps along the way.

Respondents portray the household life cycle and the types of housing associated with different phases of life with remarkable consistency. In interviews, life cycle phases are referred to generically and are linked to family development, such as forming couples, marrying, and having children, but also to events of family dissipa-

tion such as children leaving home, retiring, and losing physical independence with age. Characterizing the relationship between family formation and housing needs, respondents invoke the idea of a linear housing career where households pursue larger and more independent housing as the family matures, while young households transition through compact housing types. Respondents also regard compact housing as appropriate or desirable for aging parents. The housing career idea is a metaphor that reflects the notion of professional career development. The process of housing transitions over the life course implies a similar ideal of upward social mobility expressed through consumption of types of housing considered most appropriate for different iterations of the household unit.

One respondent, an elected official in Airdrie, offered a clear narrative of the housing mobility direction related to the availability of housing in the community:

> *I mean it really is about that whole complete community. When I'm explaining it to people, I say, "you're just getting out of university, you're getting your first job, and you live in maybe a small one-bedroom apartment condo. And then you find the love of your life, and now you want a little bit more room. And maybe you've moved up to a townhouse/condo. And now you discover that you're about to have a whole whack of kids. And perhaps a garage-less single-family house is your first stop on a house. And then after a while, wildly successful careers, and you work your way up to the big estate home on top of the hill. And then your kids bail on you and you are alone. And the next thing you know, you are finding yourself back into maybe a two-bedroom condo/apartment sort of thing". So you have to allow for all of that to occur within our community. And I think that is what is really important.*

Both the housing career and household life cycle ideas are encapsulated here in the concept of a complete community. A complete community in this case is one that can accommodate households at different phases in the life cycle with particular types of housing. Providing a mixture of housing types allows households to advance along the housing career path from a condo apartment to "the big estate home on top of the hill". The opportunity to consume a variety of housing types as a household develops without leaving the community is implicit in the housing career narrative. Explaining the housing career process as a necessary part of developing a complete community gives meaning to the policy objectives identified in the previous chapter. From this respondent's perspective a mix of housing will facilitate the routine transitions households make over time.

Although most respondents did not use the term complete community, planners, developers, and councillors in all four locations repeated the sentiment of this narrative nearly ubiquitously. Providing households with the opportunity to move throughout the community as they move up the housing ladder appears as a common concern. Some developers market new subdivisions in this way, hoping to get repeat customers stepping their way up to the suburban ideal. Planners and elected officials explained the benefits of providing a greater mix of housing in terms of providing affordable options for a population with varied income levels, and as a way to promote social integration and community stability over the long run. These ideas are presented in more detail in the next chapter, but for now the specificity of housing references in the narrative begs an explanation. Why a condo, townhouse, garage-less single-detached, estate home, and condo again in that order? How do the social meanings implicit in this narrative relate to suburban form?

6.2 Finding a foothold in the sequence: "A house with no land"

Detached housing as a dominant suburban form is changing to varying degrees in the study communities in response to similar patterns of land economics and planning policies. Respondents portrayed the detached home with a private yard as a recurring preference among suburban homebuyers, but explained that attaining this ideal is now a several step process due to lack of affordability for the detached option. In market terms, respondents frequently described a typical entry-level homeowner product as an apartment condominium, followed by a townhouse and finally a small lot detached home.

According to the housing career narrative the sequence of transitions implies a change not only in housing types but also a movement toward family formation and a preference for home ownership. Mulder (2006) confirms that in North America the transition to home ownership parallels family development. Events such as marriage and parenthood often precipitate the decision to buy a home. In North America, cultural ideas of family formation reproduce social expectations that new families become homeowners at an early stage in the process of family formation. Perceived benefits of home ownership, such as building equity and gaining greater independence for the household, reflect cultural values that emphasize the nuclear family as a new, independent family entity (Ozaki, 2002).

Since new home ownership opportunities in North America are generally more

affordable in suburban areas, households forming families often seek housing in the suburbs. Despite a common preference for detached housing, however, many new family households must first establish their housing independence in a condominium apartment. A development team working in suburban communities in Alberta attributed the need for a condominium as a first step in the housing career process to affordability pressure.

Developer A: The safest form to give anybody would be three times the household income. That would be really safe and affordable. We are about five or six right now, which is really over the top. So if an average family is getting $80,000 a year, this is what they tell me, then three times that is $240,000, is really the sweet spot for buying a house. And that is really a condo.

Developer B: That is a house with no land.

Developer A: Which is a condo.

That a condo is a "house with no land" implies that it lacks an important characteristic of the ideal housing achievement even though ownership is established. Viewed as merely a dwelling without the land as additional space, equity, or independence, housing producers rank condominiums in the suburbs as an inferior housing form that serve as a transitional type in the housing career process. In reference to a recent condominium development in Langley, a planner recognized that young households moving in are likely compromising on their preference in light of what they can afford. The planner noted: "Ultimately they want to ride the market and trade up to a house".

In urban centres many households accept condominiums as a suitable housing form. High land values demand high-density development. People who choose to remain in the urban core as a matter of lifestyle or necessity are accustomed to high-density living. Although condominium apartments are affordable relative to other options in the study communities, strong cultural definitions of the suburban experience exclude condos from the suburban image. Introducing condominium apartments to suburban areas challenges the traditional image of suburbia as a domestic realm of family and privacy. Developers in Airdrie did not perceive condos as appropriate suburban housing in part because condos do not reflect the image ascribed to traditional suburban form. One developer's comments in Airdrie capture this sentiment:

People like their yards in Airdrie. That is why they are going there. They are not going to Airdrie to live in a high-rise. They are going to live in Airdrie to live in a community with open space and Leave it to Beaver kind of family values type stuff… They want to be able to have their kids walk to school, and they want to live in a quiet, safe community, and they want to have a yard. They are not going there to live in a high-rise apartment.

Another developer commented:

There is absolutely no market for multi-family in Airdrie. I mean conceptually, why would you move out there and move into an apartment? That doesn't make any sense to a buyer. We don't have any multi-family right now and I know that others have rezoned some of that to single-family. But those are not really critical or structural changes to the community. The community in its entirety is essentially the same.

Although detached housing ideal still predominates generally, more extreme affordability pressures coupled with stronger policy agendas to densify are making structural changes unavoidable in the other communities. The perceived incompatibility of multi-unit housing in suburban communities is necessarily changing as a smaller segment of the market can afford detached housing than in past years. Respondents explained the resistance to apartment products among established residents as a lingering stigma that associates apartments with a lesser quality resident. A developer working in Langley reflected on the extra level of comfort provided to a neighbourhood by ensuring the units of a new apartment condominium remained owner-occupied:

There is still a bit of stigma with condos among some buyers that they are only affordable housing for maybe a lesser quality of neighbour, believe it or not. It's been hard to stomach.

Recalling Perin's (1977) interpretation of the perceived social status ascribed to renters and owners, this developer's comment points out a continued perception among homeowners that renters are second-rate neighbours diluting the integrity of an expected social order embodied by residential land uses. Households who have arrived at homeowner status stigmatize condominium apartments for resembling a renter product, despite the ownership title. Sentiments of prejudice toward renters, and the housing forms associated with them, appear to persist in new suburban

neighbourhoods. Unlike the developers in Perin's study, the developer in this case portrays the negative characterization and fear of renters as archaic and unwarranted. Although "it's been hard to stomach", to offer peace of mind to previous customers, the development company prohibited condominium owners from renting out units, which suggests that consumer demand from those who have "arrived" at home ownership continues to drive the moral separation of social categories by separating residential land uses. In this case, however, requiring owner occupation of the units assuaged neighbouring homeowner fears about living in close contact with an apartment housing form.

D. Scott

D. Scott

T. Gonzalez

Figure 10 - Conodominium apartments in Langley (top), Surrey (bottom left), and Airdrie. All photos taken in 2010

As the communities incorporate more apartment units into suburban neighbourhoods, a life cycle discourse becomes a useful way to justify the trend to resistant communities. Condominium apartments are explained as housing to accommodate entry-level homebuyers beginning their housing careers, or for empty nesters scaling down their home investment. An elected official in Airdrie recalled a common stigma attached to condominiums by community members who felt the housing form inherently attracted bad neighbours and illicit activities. The image painted by residents opposed to condominium projects, recounted in the interview, portrays multi-unit developments as havens for suburban bogeymen whose presence compromises the safety and social influence of children growing up in the suburbs.

> *There's so many times I hear people make disparaging remarks about the fact that we have condos in this community. And then I point it out, I always ask them, "who do you think lives there?" In their minds it's the drug addicts or criminals because they can't afford really nice houses like ours. And I said, "no, it's your young professionals or your empty nesters. That is who lives in those. And young families who are starting out".*

Each community is beginning to accommodate more condominium apartment development, though acceptance in the Airdrie market is slower due to relative housing costs. While the single-detached hold in Airdrie remains strong, condominiums as entry-level housing are becoming more common in the other communities. Introducing even low-rise apartment buildings into communities with a traditionally low-density single-detached housing pattern means a significant transformation of community identity is under way. Finding a place for condominium projects becomes a delicate design exercise to balance affordable market housing options with maintaining a community identity residents are willing to accept. Planners see an opportunity in condominium housing to develop higher density nodes within the community to support the design ideas for mixed-use town centre models and hubs for public transit. In the communities where housing affordability is increasingly strained, developers are marketing condominium projects to households at both ends of the life course sequence. Several respondents in British Columbia explained that a growing acceptance in central urban areas of condominiums as acceptable housing in which to raise children appears to influence the way housing producers on the urban fringe think about the future of suburban housing trends. Seeing "baby strollers in Yale Town" indicated a cultural shift to a Surrey councillor. In Langley, a planner reflected on the potential future acceptance in the suburbs of

family life housed in apartment form:

> *This whole thing about raising kids with a back yard is changing. So I think hopefully it's a fact of life. And those with single-family homes will be a minority. This is over the long run, because now that we have stopped producing single-family homes and more and more people are moving into apartments… Who knows, maybe in the future we may have three bedroom apartments. We do have some three- bedroom apartments now, but maybe people can raise kids in three bedroom apartments in the future. Many other countries do that.*

Respondents often cited floor space as a main factor stimulating a household's need to move up the housing ladder. Research focusing on the household mobility process identifies space requirements to accommodate additions to the family unit as a central trigger in decisions to move (Clark, Deurloo, & Dieleman, 1984; Rossi, 1955).

Several respondents reflected similarly on the changing nature of inhabiting the suburbs, looking to both urban centres and cultural norms of immigrant populations for conceptual support in reconsidering meanings of multi-unit housing. Some respondents in British Columbia saw a trend in Vancouver of young couples having children and remaining in the city rather than seeking the space and identity associated with family life in the suburbs. A condominium developer working in the lower mainland of British Columbia optimistically recounted the shift in housing expectations taking place as consumers begin to rethink their housing prospects, hinting at a gradual transformation in housing identities over the life course and the influence of imported cultural expectations:

> *The traditional sort of progression would be that you would be in a condo, then a townhouse, and then a house as your family got older and more mature, more people were in it. Now, for the first time, we're starting to build 3 bedroom apartment units because some buyers are recognizing that they are going to probably stay in a condo. They are not going to go through the traditional progression of condo to townhouse to detached home. And so we are starting to accommodate that now. Also, we are finding that because of the immigrant population, a lot of the immigrants who are our customers have lived in an environment where condos are accepted… And so it's made a difference to the way we develop because what happens is we now have people who have always lived a condo and expect to always live in one. So it's not really just a transitional product now. This has affected the product that we've produced. It's not a starter necessarily anymore. It could be the end result.*

To what extent condominiums gain acceptance as suitable family housing in suburban communities remains a question, but there appears to be a nascent trend in the British Columbia communities where steady immigration from East Asian countries contributes substantially to the housing market. The developer quoted above noted that newcomers from East Asian countries in particular are influencing the market in the direction of higher density suburban housing, whereas a wave of immigration in past years from South Asia did not have the same effect since households were not accustomed to condominium life. For the most part, condominium apartments remain fixed in the sequence as a transitional housing product for young households moving up and for empty nesters downsizing. Suggesting a condominium product could be an "end result" rather than merely a "starter" or "transitional product", the BC developer touched on an emergent shift in the housing career discourse. Developers responding to the pressures of land economics and capitalizing on the East Asian market sector may begin to re-imagine how they market condominium products in the suburbs. Can condominiums become a destination rather than a rung on the housing ladder? Integrating condominiums into residential environments that represent fulfillment of the suburban dream remains a delicate task, especially in communities like Airdrie where detached housing remains attainable for many households aspiring to live the suburban dream.

6.3 "Moving up" to a townhouse

Townhouses are having a greater impact on neighbourhood design. Townhouses are proliferating in all the communities, adding a common step in the housing sequence. In Langley, differentiation in the housing market highlights the significance of townhouses as a housing option geared toward newly formed households on their way up the housing ladder. Like condominiums, townhouses provide an opportunity for movement within the housing career in two ways – as an early step as a household matures matures, and as a downsizer product for retired and aging parents. The association of townhomes with young families, on the one hand, reflects the problem of rising housing costs and a growing acceptability of a housing form that can facilitate development in the housing career. Respondents still viewed townhouses as transitional housing, however, in the sense that townhouses achieve only some elements of the detached home, while depriving residents of others. Townhouses designed to meet an entry-level price point (in Langley from $300,000)

are as narrow as 15 feet. A land development manager in Langley described the significance of an entry-level townhouse product in the lower mainland suburban housing market, citing space as a key factor pushing households with children on to bigger and better homes:

> *Those are entry-level homes. For people who are first time buyers it definitely is what they can afford. They're delighted to be able to afford it. Don't get me wrong, these people aren't moving in saying "oh, great, I can only afford the ghetto". No! They're wonderful, quality new homes, and they're excited people, but they are usually first time buyers or they have had an apartment. Now they are having a child or a second child. It's the second child that is the big hit for new couples and they want to make that next move into a larger home. And you know, how many of them do I foresee being there for more than 5 years? Not very many. It's transitional housing for that group of people. And we have a lot of those people.*

Young households starting families still flock to the suburbs at least in part to fulfill a desire to own a detached home. Townhouses may carry a burden of inferiority as a form of suburban housing compared with the single-detached experience at the top of the housing career ladder. Creating an affordable product for first time homebuyers means marketing the townhouse as an appropriate first or second stop in the housing sequence. Although young households may be content with a townhouse – it's not the "ghetto" – in a suburban context where the detached home reigns supreme, developers market townhomes as "entry-level" and "transitional" housing. The developer above suggested the second child is the tipping point leading households to seek a larger dwelling, suggesting that townhouses fulfill a transitional step for nuclear families working their way up the housing ladder. Viewing the townhouse as transitional housing assumes either that households naturally build equity as they mature or that new homebuyers pass through the townhouse form on speculation, believing that they can move up by selling it at a higher price to other first-time buyers a few years down the road. Marketing townhomes to households of young families also instills an image of townhomes as appropriate for families with young children, but not for the same families when their children become teenagers (Figure 11). Many townhouse complexes include playground equipment managed under joint ownership by a condominium strata, which is a collective ownership structure ubiquitously applied to townhouse developments in western Canada. In some cases housing policies require 'child-friendly' amenities such as play equipment, reinforcing the image and function of townhouses as housing for families with

young children.

The townhouse trend is reshaping new suburban development patterns at densities double the conventional pattern of detached housing. In explaining the role townhouses fulfill in planning and development, respondents refer to the question of affordability. But it appears that by providing an affordable compromise to the single-detached ideal, housing producers also help construct a social meaning that situates townhomes firmly as an intermediary step in a normative sequence of

Figure 11 - Marketing a townhouse project to a budding young family (above)

Figure 12 - Entry-level townhouse development mentioned in quote on previous page.

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household development and housing consumption. Within this context households make decisions about the direction of their housing pathways as they connect household identity and lifestyle with the homes they occupy.

As a transitional product, households are expected to pass through the townhouse as they move up to a single-detached house. Residents of predominantly detached housing neighbourhoods who oppose townhouse development in their community prefer to keep the housing types separated. In Surrey, dozens of detached home homeowners turned out in June of 2010 to protest a proposed townhouse development of 145 units. Among traffic and school capacity concerns, residents also cited the perceived damage the development would cause to property values and the idea that townhouses did not "fit" the community's character. Perin (1977) interpreted this residential land use rift by introducing a concept from a tradition in cultural anthropology about the social significance of transition. A cultural interpretation of transition holds that people move through social space by exiting one social category and entering another. Culturally ordained rites of passage carry people through the transitional state after which they arrive safely in a new social category. Connecting this perspective with the housing pathways of households at different times in the life cycle, Perin noted: "The life cycle is believed to consist of moving from a less safe to a more safe status: each stage is correspondingly manifested in land-use categories and each is evaluated by its proximity to the apex [suburban detached house], the sacred and the most safe because there is no better status beyond it" (1977, p.53).

From this perspective the transitional status of the townhouses reflects the transitional status given to the households that occupy them. Keeping the housing forms divided, then, also prevents a transitional social category from compromising the boundary of a social category that has already "arrived", with lives fully planted in a single-detached zone. Perceptions that multi-unit housing types will lower property values, or beliefs that apartments are inevitably associated with "criminals and drug addicts" imply a social discomfort with the transitional social categories attributed to these housing types.

6.4 Aging in place and the social production of lifestyle

Despite a clear differentiation in the housing market to cater to a downsizer niche, respondent perceptions of how seniors see their housing situation are far from clear. Enough mature households are moving so as to create a niche in the townhouse market, but responses in interviews suggest there is considerable uncertainty in understanding seniors' attitudes toward housing and their anticipated behaviour. Many respondents expressed concern about planning for the effects of an aging population in relation to the future of Canadian suburbs. Seniors' housing decisions figure prominently into discussion of the changing circumstances in each community. Perceptions range from seeing evidence of a 'move down' market to seeing trends of seniors remaining in large family homes. How seniors view their life circumstances and where they see their next move, if at all, appears to be an unexplored but emerging topic in the study communities. A Calgary developer scoped the housing pathway expectations for an aging suburban population:

> *We're probably going to start to see some move-down, with an aging population. Calgary has got a pretty young population so we don't get a lot of insight in this context as to what older buyers are doing. I think there was a context out there at one time where a lot of older buyers were going to be selling their homes in the suburbs and moving into smaller homes. What we're finding here is that some of them might be selling their larger homes or buying a smaller condo, but they're going and buying a recreational property as well. So they're doubling the market. Or some of them are staying and they're choosing to renovate. So a lot of them are not necessarily moving out of those larger homes, they're making it work for them down the road. We're seeing some move-down, but not a lot.*

'Moving down' suggests a reduction in the size and expense of the occupied home, although many seniors apparently compensate by 'double the market' through purchasing secondary homes for recreation or lifestyle reasons. The mobility direction implied in 'moving down' also reinforces perceptions of a standard sequence of housing consumption that follows a linear pathway according to expected forms of the household unit. By 'moving down', the value of the suburban detached home is upheld as a social objective in the household mobility process.

The context 'at one time' may refer to social expectations that as families decreased in size the equilibrium of households and housing need would be out of balance by empty nester households consuming too much space. Batten (1999)

documents the translation of these expectations into a housing "policy orthodoxy" in Australia where a discourse about the fit between household size and the size of the house established an official perspective based on normative assumptions about how much house was too much. Seniors occupying large single-detached homes were perceived as underutilizing the space and therefore violating occupancy standards, despite a housing policy context that promoted the detached home as a normative goal. The "mismatch argument", as the Australian policy was called, may not appear officially in Canadian policy contexts, but as a matter of support for current planning principles several respondents expressed hope that seniors would move into smaller units. A logic used to justify this preference assumed that young households moving to the suburbs could replace seniors in detached housing, therefore creating less pressure for new low-density housing. An interview with a Surrey councillor revealed a desire to replace empty nesters who were staying in their homes and perceived to be under-utilizing space with young family households advancing their housing careers in pursuit of the dream to own a house with land.

> *We are getting the people that used to live in Yale Town, but she is now pregnant and they want to have their piece of grass, so they move to Surrey. That is where our pressures are, so we want to get our empty nesters out of their homes.*

The comment reflects a public policy interest in seeing the existing housing stock filter down so that new housing could potentially fulfill planning ideals for compact and mixed-use patterns. A rationale for moving down assumes that as households shrink and age the task of maintaining a large house and property may become an unworthy and expensive burden. Although some respondents made reference to a distinct downsizer market, and developers actively market multi-unit products in a way that appeals to the idea of convenience, simplicity, and manageability, one developer suggested from their in-house marketing experience that only about 25% of seniors preferred to downsize over remaining in a detached home for the rest of their life. Marketing and policy interest aimed at getting seniors to accept alternatives to the single-detached model highlights the uncertain and competing meanings of the concept 'aging in place'. Does aging in place refer to remaining in the family home of many years, or to a smaller home in the same neighbourhood, or in the same community?

Relinquishing the dream of the single-detached ideal may prove a difficult process for many households, one that challenges the momentum of a culturally de-

fined housing pathway. In a society that has placed so much social significance on achieving the suburban ideal of home ownership through decades of consumer conditioning and national policy support, giving up the detached home means also reorienting one's identity and lifestyle expressed through housing consumption. A Calgary planner commented on the entrenched meanings associated with suburban housing as the main obstacle to innovative directions in suburban planning:

> *Typically it's a case where attached housing or multi-unit housing is used as a temporary type of tenure before you buy your house. That's typically how it's been done country-wide and especially in Calgary. We've had national housing policy as well as provincial that has really promoted that for so long that it's very hard to get out of. I call that the number one hurdle or constraint to doing anything really different.*

A planner echoed a similar observation in Langley, suggesting that baby boomers who had not yet achieved the suburban dream were still actively pursuing it:

> *There is that conception that when you move out to the suburbs you can chase the ultimate Canadian Dream to own a single-detached home. We know that baby boomers, even though they are aging, they are still trying to chase after that ideal. Sometimes when they were brought up in a very small rancher, and they feel that now they are deprived and if they can afford it they will have that single family home with the double garage and three bedrooms plus a hobby room. We find that many boomers are still living in single-detached homes with three spare rooms.*

These observations underscore the idea that baby boomers represent a second generation of housing consumers that have socially reproduced the suburban dream initiated by their parents in the post-war era. "Chasing after the ideal" to own a single-detached home highlights a social context where pressure to consume cultural symbols underlies a constant search for identity and social position. Those who have not yet "arrived" socially, as Perin (1977) put it, are still in pursuit. Unless housing producers and consumers in the suburbs can construct and pass on new meanings for multi-unit housing, a preference to age in place in the family home may continue to exceed alternative options.

Lifestyle discourses permeate much of the housing options geared toward a retirement market. To entice aging residents to depart from the familiar surroundings of their home, which may also be viewed as a manifestation of a lifetime achievement, housing producers are finding ways to deliver an attractive replacement.

Housing aimed at this market of buyers tends to promote the perks and benefits of a leisure lifestyle. Gated communities often appeal to these desires (Low, 2003). Although in some locations developers continue to market gated communities as exclusive enclaves of privacy, comfort, and security to an aging population, planners and elected officials reproach gated developments for compromising community integration. Although municipal policies may not explicitly prohibit gating, a common disdain among planners and councils discourages developers from pursuing gated product. Several respondents suggested gating was a thing of the past, with no place in the current framework of land use planning. A Calgary planner expressed doubt that gating remained desirable in the market, suggesting retirees were instead seeking the vibrancy of a more social environment. In response to an inquiry about the popularity of gated communities the planner explained:

> *I think that would be our sense that that's going to be a dinosaur soon. Demographics are changing, with the aging baby boomers, you're seeing this in the States, and you're starting to see it here, where they're moving out of their suburban homes and they want to move into more exciting urban places so that they can get out and walk and they can go places and see people. I think the gated community is the antithesis of that.*

With gated communities declining in popularity among municipal officials and as they appear to attract less interest from developers as a result, housing producers are seeking other ways of appealing to an aging market sector. The perception that aging baby boomers are looking to relocate to "exciting urban places" where they can "go places and see people" produces an image of lifestyle both planners and developers are now creating in suburban areas. Luxury townhouse or condominium apartments and supportive living communities compete to fulfill a lifestyle image suited to retired households. Luring aging households into compact housing in the suburbs changes the meaning of aging in place from remaining in the same home to staying in the same community by making a lifestyle compromise. Municipal hopes of urbanizing the suburbs through compact, mixed-use development with amenities such as transit, main streets, plazas, and public art find support by promoting the lifestyle benefits of aging in place in this way. Luxury condominium units above main street style retail development are described as appropriate housing for young childless couples and empty nesters. A major new project in Surrey shows that lifestyle in this form may be a euphemism for consumer convenience (Figure 13).

Figure 13 - Condominium apartments built as part of a major shopping complex in South Surrey. The building at the end of the road is a Winners discount shopping outlet. D. Scott 2010.

If households of new families tend to enter the housing market through a townhouse in its narrowest form on the basis of price, developers market a distinct type of townhouse in trying to appeal to empty nesters. A developer in Langley explained:

> *If we're looking at the larger, 20 foot wide or 22 foot wide townhomes, with a double car garage, more space in the unit, I would say that those are 75% downsizers. For sure. And the thing I've noticed in this market, townhomes are very well accepted by that downsizer, the sophisticated buyers. They don't see them as a compromise now and I think they are finding the fit and finish, and location that they are happy with. So it's definitely really well accepted. I know a lot of people who see that as their next move.*

The downsizer move to a townhouse or condominium is a significant step in their housing pathway, and extends the meaning of retirement to fit the housing career idea. Downsizers are in a sense retiring from the detached housing experience. The "sophisticated buyer" is willing to part with the luxury of their own home

but expects a high quality alternative, which tends to be out of reach for many first time buyers. Although the housing career paradigm emphasizes a direction of upward mobility, assumptions within the paradigm suggest that older households are entitled to move down from the “estate home on top of the hill” without social judgment, a move that may be perceived in a different light for a younger household trying to move their way up. That “a lot of people see that as their next move” indicates a developer perception that buyers in the downsizer category have scoped their options and are willing to identify with new type of housing. As buyers continue to decide to move down to a townhouse as they age, they validate a market and an image for luxury suburban townhomes. Both housing producers and consumers contribute to creating accepted cultural norms for the housing pathways of aging households and give a new meaning to aging in place. Townhouses, then, have a dual meaning in terms of housing pathways – they are socially constructed as both

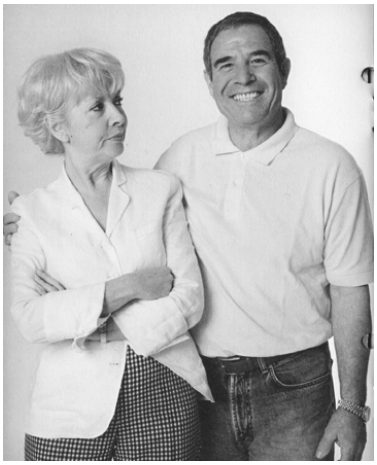

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Figure 14 - Empty nesters ready to move down, shown in a townhouse marketing brochure (above left); a luxury condominium apartment aimed at a senior market in Langley (above right); a high quality finish townhouse project in Langely complete with double car garage.

a transitional foothold for households working their way up the housing ladder, and as an acceptable compromise for aging households, provided the "fit and finish" are high quality. Households considering mobility decisions at either end of the model sequence must consider how their identities fit the housing options available. Both stringent land economics and regulatory directions that favour land use efficiency and density influence current housing market structures in which households make culturally conditioned responses to their housing pathways.

The 'supportive living' framework offers a further alternative for households in their later years. Distinct from assisted living, where a real need exists for assistance and monitoring, the supportive living lifestyle is by choice. Though offering on site medical services, a supportive living complex does not compromise a household's or individual's independence and promotes a social environment. Supportive living is sold as complete lifestyle shift in which the senior couple or individual retire from the single-detached home, but gain a wealth of amenities and peace of mind in return. Other alternatives such as condominiums and townhouses, in the words of a Calgary developer, represent a level progression merely to a new housing type. "*If you're moving out of your house into a condo, it's a lateral move, you're not gaining anything by it"*. The move down discourse, which in earlier examples meant a warranted gain in convenience and leisure, is replaced here by a discourse that suggests a move into a condominium is redundant. In explaining the benefit of the supportive living environment, the marketing manager of such a facility in the Calgary area imagines a typical transition a senior may make in response to supposedly inevitable changes in the household life cycle:

> *One of the downsides of seniors living on their own is in most cases they're living in the same places they've been living in for the last forty years. Maybe their spouse just died a few years back and they don't want to leave the house because that's where they raised their kids and that's where all the memories are. Unfortunately it's on an old double lot. They are not physically able to cut the grass or shovel the snow, so they have to pay for that. The heating bill is horrendous, the property taxes are now way up compared to what they used to be. They're sitting at home, they don't get out very often. The neighbourhood has changed. They don't know their neighbours any more. Relatives are busy, they don't come by as often.*
>
> *If the weather is not nice, they're not going out grocery shopping, so they're eating out of a tin again. They're watching too much T.V., not getting enough exercise. So mentally and physically they're not being challenged and it becomes a slippery slope and eventually they crash. Relatives come and get them at the hospital and they're*

healthy enough now and they start looking for a place to move to. That's usually how it happens. Then when they come to a place like this, they're so surprised that there is a place where they can still be independent, but instead of spending all their time doing chores, they can spend it socializing, having a good time.

The narrative paints a grim picture of the reluctant senior trapped by habit in a degenerating home condition. The supportive living campus is portrayed as a lifestyle refuge and reintegration of community structure. The image of life before the hypothetical move is one of isolation, neglect, and deterioration. The solution to these ailments is relocation to an all inclusive lifestyle community with important support services to fill the void that the previous community had suffered from. The loss of the family home and neighbourhood results in a lifestyle gain enjoyed by others who presumably share a similar social condition.

In the narrative above, the individual's deterioration parallels a declining community condition. Creating a sense of community is a central goal in both planning and development, though for perhaps different reasons. Planners want to create environments in which social interaction is supported and encouraged by land use design. Developers market neighbourhood products as places with instinctive community life. The concern for community may reflect what many perceive as a fragmenting of social networks in an era of increased mobility, labour flexibility, and consumption driven lifestyles. Segregating people and uses in the built environment is discouraged, while physical and social diversity are celebrated as conditions of community strength, economic resilience, and social equity. How do meanings produced for housing at different phases of the life cycle hang together at the scale of the community? The next chapter explores discourses of community stability, which express concern for integrating households at different stages of life to create a community that is larger than the sum of its parts. Providing opportunities to move throughout a community as a household changes is gaining attention in the study communities. Planners and councillors hope to create an inclusive social environment through mixing housing types. Developers pick up on the discourse by marketing communities as places that accommodate the various housing transitions as households move up the ladder.

7. Community Stability: Going Full Circle in Life

The expression complete community is notably scarce in housing discourses in the British Columbia sample. It is surprising not to see it more often in responses from British Columbia because of its official place as a core regional planning goal for Metro Vancouver. The concept's presence in Calgary and Airdrie housing policies as well raise the question of how it fits with discourse about the household life cycle. Respondents in all communities more commonly allude to concerns about community stability, which may provide an operational meaning for the housing component of the complete community discourse. Stability is understood to result from providing different types of housing to accommodate choices for households at different times in the life course. Respondents perceive that a mix of housing types will attract households at various stages of household development, and it appears that the housing market has fragmented along these lines. Many narratives are optimistic that this process can occur within one community so that as household composition changes, their housing needs can be satisfied without having to move away from the community. A councillor in Calgary recognized this for a mixed housing community:

> *Interestingly enough is that you can go full circle in life there. We plan it that way, so that you build your high density so that people can start out their life when that's all they can afford, and then they maybe they move up because they're raising their families into single family homes, then as their kids move out they can stay in the same community if they choose to, maybe back in the same place where they started. That's better.*

Allowing households to go "full circle in life" in one community assumes that people desire to follow a housing pathway in one location. Providing a mix of housing types in the community is expected to facilitate a normative sequence of housing consumption as households change. Households can move up to a single-detached home to raise children and then when the children grow up the parents approaching retirement can remain in the community while adjusting their lifestyle. Retaining young people is of particular concern for suburban communities trying to remain vital. In Langley, where detached homes are not valued in th emarket at less than $500,000 (CMHC, 2010), young people are excluded by cost without alternative housing choices that may not fit the suburban mold. A Langley councillor explained that

…you need to attract young people to a community and keep them. And by young people, it's people in say that 25 to 40 age range that are in their childbearing years. You've got to be putting together options for them so that you can get them and keep them. I don't think we have enough options for them right now.

Presumably more condominiums could facilitate the retention of young households. In Airdrie, where detached housing is still relatively affordable, less pressure for condominium and townhouse development results in more demand for compact lot detached housing to accommodate young households in pursuit of the suburban ideal. As one developer there noted, smaller lots "*make it affordable for kids who grow up in Airdrie to stay in Airdrie*".

An elected official in Airdrie pointed out the underlying economic benefits of providing housing to accommodate households at different stages in the life cycle. Mixing housing to attract young households is perceived to lay the ground for attracting business development in the community. The spin offs of a housing mix extend to the vitality of the whole community. From this perspective young households will bolster the labour force necessary to attract businesses, who in turn anchor a process that leads to community stability and vibrancy. The official explained the benefits of providing housing often viewed as unconventional suburban form – the havens of "drug addicts and criminals":

Companies also are willing to invest in our community. So they provide some seed money to develop recreation facilities and parks and that sort of thing. And then people are happy to live here because they have those amenities. And so it attracts more people. And the kids grow up, and then now they've got to go out and find a house to live in. And they need to start with the small place. And it just keeps going, and it builds on itself. So it is a complex web of reasons as to why you need to have complete communities.

Retaining young people is not the only concern however. Municipal officials also see how land economics are affecting aging households. In communities where rapid growth puts upward pressure on land values and property taxes, households on fixed retirement incomes may not have the choice to age in place in the family home. And, as one councillor noted, if the housing options are not available elsewhere in the community, they may not be able to remain in the community at all when faced with a tax burden on a property valued at eight times its purchase price. With so much emphasis on creating a family friendly image, a Langley councillor

posed the question in the community: “Don’t you want a community where you can raise your kids in the same community where the grandparents can still afford to live?”.

One possible strategy to promote community stability is mixing housing types to provide a variety of price points that facilitate movement through the household life cycle script. Explaining the intent of the housing mix policy requirement in Langley, a planner expressed hope to get away from a pattern of housing separation dominated by single-detached development, which in the current market represented the dominant preference but increasing limited market share.

> *It provides integration of different demographics. And it touches on the notion of being able to age in place. As a family, maybe your first purchase is a townhouse. You can stay in the same neighbourhood and buy your single-detached house. And as you get older, you can buy a multi-unit rancher or an apartment as the kids leave the home. And all that can happen in one neighbourhood.*

Interestingly, this explanation, and the housing policy in Langley, refers to a mix of housing at a close-knit scale to facilitate the housing career within one neighbourhood. Developers are obliged to design new subdivisions with a variety of housing options. Aging in place is given yet another meaning in this case, and in the community stability discourse altogether. Rather than referring to just older households, aging in place can be interpreted as a goal to applied to the full spectrum of the life cycle. Households can form, grow, mature, separate, and dissolve in one community or even one neighbourhood.

Some developers are recognizing the value of mixing housing types in new developments. Those that include a variety of housing types tend to use a life cycle discourse to market a mixed housing product, reinforcing ideas about the proper sequence of housing consumption at different phases of life. Because of rising development costs and fragmentation in the housing market (and policy requirements in Langley) developers see an opportunity to appeal to wide range of customers. One developer talked about the benefit of having repeat customers by providing a variety of housing in a new community because it allows for people to move up within the same development. A development manager in Airdrie reflected on the opportunity:

We are aware as a developer/builder of the opportunity for people to move within the community... I guess it's one of the ideas of sustainability, that people can live in the same community and meet all their housing needs. So we are aware of that. And providing all those different types of housing is a benefit. It allows us to achieve that goal. We have seen examples of that in our old project where people initially bought a townhouse from us, and two or three years later come back and they buy a house.

Another Alberta developer reflected on a competitor's product that provided options for households adjusting their housing lifestyle in a new development in Airdrie:

They can move into a Mattamy community and move throughout that community for the next 15 years of their life as their family unit changes, whether it grows or it shrinks. And that is what people like. They like to live in the same area but have the right product that helps their lifestyle do what it wants.

Fifteen years is a short time in which to move more than once. The developer portrays the consumer as leading the trend of frequent housing consumption over the life course. Desire to move to a new, presumably larger, house is explained as a matter of lifestyle. A short-term view of how long a household will occupy a particular type of home is advantageous to developers hoping to attract repeat customers. Marketing neighbourhoods with housing types to correspond with life cycle and housing career expectations keeps the market active.

Although a mix of housing aimed at different life cycle stages is becoming more commonplace in new subdivisions, a closer look at the site designs shows that developers continue to separate housing types in discrete pods. In the community referenced above various single-detached home styles shape the overall structure of the neighbourhood, while a pocket of townhomes occupies a distinct district (Figure 15). A new development in Surrey shows a similar separation though the design reveals the condition of land economics in the lower mainland of British Columbia that encourages townhouse product (Figure 16). In Langley, where policies designate a proportional housing mix in new developments, and land assemblies tend to be much smaller, developers must integrate housing types to a greater extent, but they still manage to separate types in their designs (Figure 17).

Mixing housing types is not the only strategy municipal officials consider for promoting community stability. Another strategy involves integrating the life cycle with the built environment by creating housing that can adapt to different household

Figure 15 - A site plan for a community in Airdrie shows the separation of multi-unit homes (in purple) and single-detached homes (in orange)

Figure 16 - An aerial rendering of Grandview Corners in South Surrey, a new development area experiencing rapid residential and commercial development. Single-detached homes in the lower left and upper left corner are divided from the three large townhouse complexes at centre.

Figure 17 - A site plan for a new mixed residential project in Langley shows a finer grain housing mix though still designed with housing types in districts. Townhomes on private streets are in orange, row homes and 4-plexes in yellow, and single-detached homes in dark brown.

needs over time. Adaptable housing policies are based on limited municipal powers to affect building codes, requiring new housing to include structural designs to accommodate seniors' needs especially. For example creating wider doorways, level thresholds, and bathroom features accessible to people with limited mobility can make a home more physically suitable for a variety of household types. An interview with a Calgary planner revealed that the idea was an unexplored but emerging topic. In Langley, however, adaptable housing is now written in to housing policy. In addition to stipulations for housing mix, developers are required to include five percent adaptable housing features across all housing types.

A final design consideration to promote community stability, which speaks directly to the question of neighbourhood image and identity, is the contentious presence of secondary and basement suites. Many households who have "moved up" to a single-detached home rely on extra income provided by rental tenants. In some cases municipal authorities approve secondary suites, but respondents in each community often referred to the preponderance of covert secondary tenants. That a substantial number of households rely on secondary tenants reveals an identity conflict in the nature of suburban housing. Perin's (1977) interpretation that segregating renters and owners in the housing system reflected cultural values embodied by planning and land use policy appears to stand true. Renters still endure an identity of perpetual transiency and therefore dilution of a social category that is settled in the cultural context of the suburban dream. A lower mainland developer reflected on the significance of tenure for neighbourhood image:

The other problem with it is allowing a lot of rental in a single-detached neighbourhood. It just doesn't work. The basement suite rental, or the person renting the garage on the back lane, doesn't have the same pride of ownership or pride of community as the homeowner type of people. And you are getting a lot of problems. Social problems.

Allowing rental suites is a delicate issue politically, but several respondents echoed policy statements that recommend secondary dwellings as a component of the complete community goal. Although an affordable housing option, secondary suites do not fit as easily into a housing career sequence that supports a normative housing sequence and suburban image. Renters, in the quote above, are marginalized as a fixed social category dangerous to the stability of community image. Renters' presumed nature as indifferent transients who cause "a lot of social problems" upsets the social order. Those in a transitional state – not yet homeowners – are seen as dangerous to the integrity and safety of the homeowner category (Perin, 1977). Tenure, then, is associated with social behaviour where ownership implies a valued behaviour that presumably renters will adopt when they take on a mortgage.

The developer quoted above attributed social degradation, drugs, noise, and litter to rental tenants as a category of people. An Alberta developer, however, who supported the idea of secondary suites in suburban areas, felt that municipal officials in some Alberta communities were too stringent about when and where secondary suites were permitted: "Don't get me started on why the hell we are so intransigent toward secondary suites in established communities". This developer recognized residents were building suites with or without permission and ensured that a new subdivision the company was building included permits for suites. From the developer's perspective, the City of Calgary's policies regarding rental suites were limited and cumbersome.

Some housing producers are reshaping the image of rental dwellings in single-detached homes through a life cycle discourse. Rather than faceless transients who denigrate neighbourhood character, municipal officials and some developers re-image secondary suite tenants as young households just starting out or grandparents remaining close to the family. The extent to which tenants fulfill these roles remains unclear given that so many suites are rented out under the radar. But the idea of rental suites as another housing form to build into a life cycle sequence offers a way for municipal officials to promote the idea of community stability, and provides a marketing strategy for developers to keep the suburban dream alive. Current re-

sistance to secondary suites may come from existing suburban residents who are accustomed to a perceived position of status safety through housing segregation, or from developers who are unwilling to think beyond social constructs of renters as inherently “social problems”. Municipal officials who talked about secondary suites in interviews appeared to support them in principle, but community resistance to integrated rental housing and logistics of parking make secondary suites a contentious public topic. Several respondents in British Columbia cited the regular presence of five car houses because of additional rental tenants. Other types of rental housing are minimal in the communities. Despite hidden rental units in single-detached homes, tenure appears to remain a line of social division in the suburbs.

8. Theoretical Implications

8.1 Mapping social space in the suburbs

A developer in Alberta admitted that despite the trend toward mixing housing types, the underlying structure of suburban communities has not changed. The suburban dream of detached homeownership remains intact. A life cycle discourse produces an image of a housing pathway for young households with the same ultimate destination, but facilitates several intermediary steps along the way. The discourse assumes that households pursue a normative lifestyle through a singular and inevitable housing sequence, and that housing types parallel distinct household categories. The idea that households will perpetually move up implies that lower rung housing types, such as condominiums and townhouses, are socially transitional. These housing types are viewed as acceptable stopping points as long as the households that occupy them are in a particular stage of life. According to the discourse, townhouses, for example, fulfill an early step in the housing career, but do not represent a socially appropriate housing type for the bulk of a household's life.

The discourse also portrays empty nester households in a state of transition. At best the discourse implies that empty nester households are underutilizing the space of detached housing, and at worst it implies they are isolated in older age in communities with inevitably eroding social networks. The expected housing progression for aging empty nesters is a move down to a townhouse or condominium. Rather than transitioning through condos or townhouses, the intermediary state for empty nester households is continued occupancy of the detached home.

Having achieved and enjoyed the pinnacle house type, the "move down" discourse charts a neutral direction back into a townhouse or condominium without social sanction. For the empty nester household, downsizing to a compact dwelling with high quality finishes is viewed as a reward of leisure for having already progressed through life's proper sequence.

All along this paper has suggested that going through the sequence of housing from a condo to a townhouse, then to a single-detached house, and finally a return to a condo or townhouse implies a normative social direction. The life cycle model projects a coherent and rational succession of housing choices available to households as they grow. By assuming that household wealth inevitably increases over

time, and that households become and remain stable family types, the model neglects the complexity of household permutations that planners and politicians know exists. In advocating for diverse and equitable housing policies, municipal officials recognize the broader scope of household diversity in a contemporary social context. The discourse, however, charts a housing pathway that reflects the consumption patterns of a strictly middle-class market with ever increasing wealth. What does the housing sequence look like when it is overlaid with a dynamic perspective of household composition and possible housing types?

Figure 18 reveals several possible elements of both housing and household types stranded in the discourse. The posited progression ignores common household dynamics, housing types, and life uncertainties that trigger changes to household composition and the search for housing. Notably, a class dimension is sidelined in the discourse. Households with limited income, or a lone parent whose

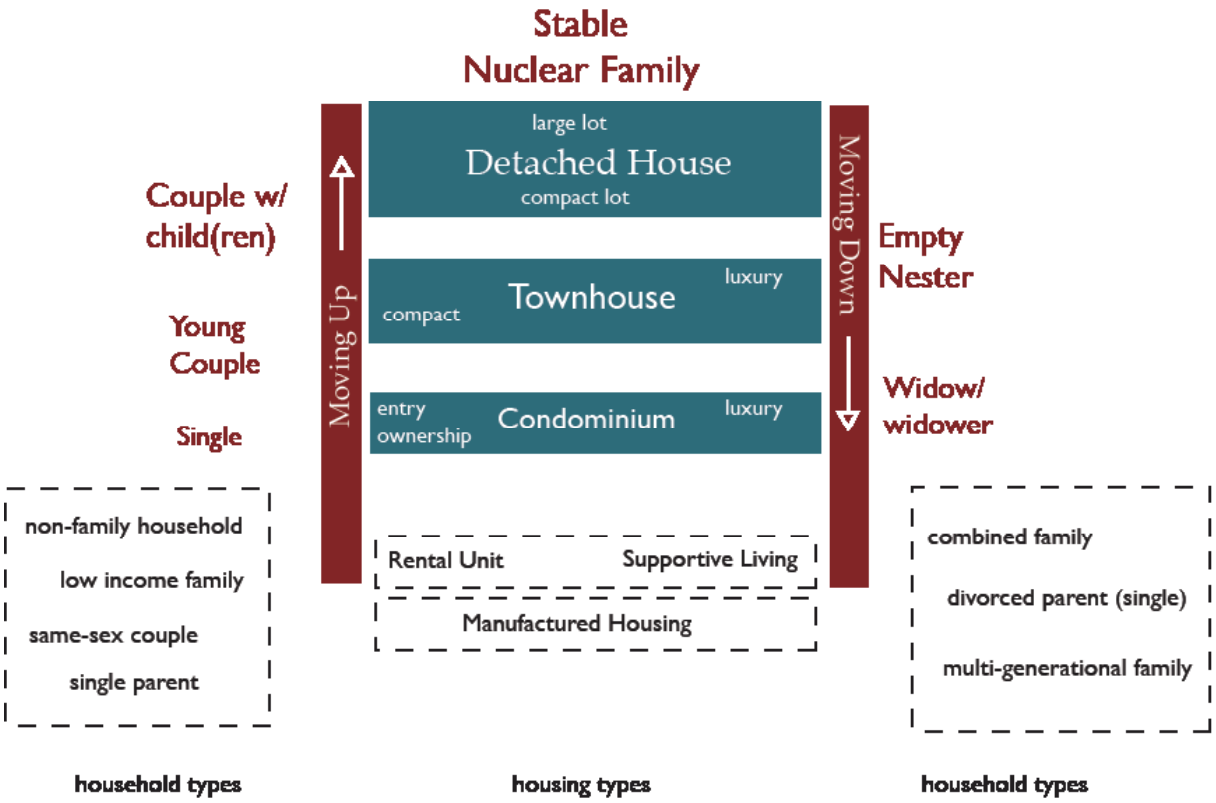

Figure 18 - Conceptual model of the life cycle discourse, showing the stranded elements

housing expenses compete with the cost of raising children are marginalized for not conforming to a taken-for-granted sequence of life cycle stages. Although condominium apartments are embraced in the discourse ("Who do you think lives there? It's your empty nesters and young families just starting out"), rental housing remains a taboo subject.

Class

Although the meanings and social position attributed to renters emerged briefly in interviews, renting is curiously sparse in the housing career discourse, despite the tenure's obviously common presence. The prevailing life cycle discourse views the suburbs as a domain of homeownership, with a defined route through particular housing types and social passages that culminate in the conventional suburban detached home.

Providing rental units is a decision developers make in response to the market. The developer quoted who blamed cumbersome municipal policies regarding secondary suites did not reflect on their own culpability by neglecting to consider the role developers play in providing other types of rental housing. With planners reluctant to interfere with the market workings, provision of rental housing is left up to developers. When asked about the role of rental units in the housing mix, a Langley planner stated, "*We don't look at that… You have to be willing to take what the market is going to give you. Which I guess is a little dangerous, but I think it's more dangerous when you get planning dweebs trying to stick their finger in the market, which we don't know diddly squat about*". Of course, through zoning and land use decisions planners do get involved in the market – a homeowner market. The difference may reflect the planning profession's focus on physical form and the regulatory tools they can work with.

Mobile homes, or manufactured housing, offer an affordable option for households with limited income, yet this housing type is absent in the discourse, which implies that it is socially inferior. Although townhouses and condominium apartments are now constructed in neighbourhoods with single-detached houses, mobile homes remain divided in separate enclaves. The changing image of suburban housing accepts the integration of multi-unit housing while denying mobile homes a similar status despite their affordability. A developer in Airdrie, speculating about the

community's response to the proposition of extensive manufactured housing, said: "Are you kidding? The people of Airdrie would revolt. You can't have that. And yet that might very well be a very true affordable option".

Household changes

Like rental housing and mobile homes, some household types – especially single parent families – are left out of life cycle discourse. This observation does not suggest that a housing type to suit such households is needed; rather, it points out the model's simplicity. Where do households that fall outside the parameters of the discourse get placed in social thought, and how does their social status relate to land use? Like renters, households that are out of place chronologically may also be out of place spatially. For young households moving up, condos and townhouses are consistently depicted as temporary housing types along the pathway to detached housing.

The model presumes that additions to the household unit trigger a need to move up. As long as the housing they occupy parallels their life cycle position in the model, households do not upset an accepted social order. A young couple with young children, for example, fit the townhouse role, but an older household with teenage children still living in a townhouse may be perceived as socially out of place. Because a household with teenagers has not followed through with the sequence, such households are suspended in a transitional state. In contemporary society various household changes trigger and constrain mobility decisions. Divorce breaks up a household unit and causes housing pathways to diverge. The model presented in the discourse assumes that a stable nuclear family unit progresses through a standard life course together, consuming a defined housing trajectory along the life course journey. The assumption suggests that reproductive functions enable and direct household transitions more than economic circumstances.

8.2 Land use and the cultural significance of transition

Referring to the entrenched division of housing types at the time of her study, Perin argued, "what unifies people socially and spatially is that they are moving up the rungs of the ladder at the same time" (1977, p.50). Focusing primarily on tenure distinctions as boundaries of social status, Perin interpreted land use zoning as a mechanism of separation to mitigate contact between those who had "arrived"

definitely in one social category (homeowner) from those who were perceived as perpetually transient and unsafe (renter). In the context of her study, maintaining sufficient division between housing types meant that everyone in a neighbourhood was securely and unmistakably on the same rung together, ensuring an undiluted social order. By rigidly separating residential land uses, the zoning system kept "everything in its place": owners over here and renters over there. Perin wrote that land use arrangements served as a device to protect the integrity of owners, defined as a complete and settled social category, from the dangers of renters as a socially transitional category. Another way to think about this social distinction is that households, having "arrived" at homeowner status, had also proven their status as a family, whereas renters remained as incomplete families.

But what are the dangers? What harmful effect could contact with a transitional category have? And how is this explained in terms of residential land use? To answer these questions Perin drew on the work of van Gennep (1960 [1908]), a cultural anthropologist writing in the early years of the twentieth century. Van Gennep explained that a transitional social status – existing no longer in one category, but not yet settled in another – was dangerous because of its assumed power to unsettle the status of those considered safely established. Van Gennep interpreted rights of passage as culturally defined processes of making complete social incorporation in the next category certain. Extending this perspective to land use categories, Perin recalled a (still) common assumption among homeowners that rental housing nearby will lower property values. The presence of renters, therefore, is seen as dangerous because "renters threaten to redefine the neighbourhood as a whole. The owner's address … is no longer such a 'good address' because in the marketplace its social and monetary value will be lower" (Perin 1977, p. 55). Renters, as a transitional category, are seen as having the power to weaken the safe status of homeowners by overwhelming the image of a neighbourhood.

Respondents in the case study communities reported similar fears about the social dangers associated with residential land uses other than the single-detached house. Residents in a Langley development associated condos with a "lesser quality neighbour" because the form implied the possibility of rental tenants. In Airdrie, an elected official reported that residents opposed condos because the assumed "criminals and drug addicts" lived there. In Surrey, a developer attributed "social problems" to the presence of rental suites. As Perin noted, the security of homeowner status is achieved through land use divisions. Residents in single-detached

homes want to be surrounded only by other single-detached homeowners. According to the paradigm, transitional housing categories, such as townhouses and condos, can appropriately neighbour any unfavourable land use. A planner in Airdrie, recalling an experience in a focus group discussion about acceptable proximity to higher density uses, noted:

> *People were saying, "well, you know, right now if I am living in a townhouse, anything is appropriate next to me, or whatever. But as soon as I reach that status where I can own my deluxe house then I don't want any of that near me. The only thing I want to see around me is more single-detached homes, more double car garages, that type of stuff". So it really is people trying to achieve that American dream type of feeling.*

The planner noted another comment from the focus group that having "arrived" in the American Dream, residents did not want to have to "deal with having an old neighbour or secondary suite" after 20 years of progressing through life's natural stages. The American Dream, then, includes a definite social order, which is defined according to a correct sequence of the household life cycle.

Due to policy reform and development cost pressures, however, respondents in all the communities anticipate a shift in land use patterns. If it is not already occurring, "density is coming", as one Alberta developer put it. Municipal officials in each location spoke of a central aim to educate residents about the benefits of density in attempts to dispel commonly negative associations. The overriding importance of convincing residents that density, in the form of low townhouses and low rise condominiums, is nothing to fear speaks to a fundamental difference between the housing conditions that Perin explored and the trend toward compact residential land uses common in the suburbs today. The introduction of multi-unit housing types in the study communities suggests a need to update Perin's theory to account for contemporary housing trends.

8.3 Building on Perin: Rewriting the script

The communities presented in this paper include substantially more condominium and, especially, townhouse projects in suburban communities that less than a decade ago were communities primarily of detached homes occupied by nuclear families. Figure 19 conceptualizes the connections respondents made between housing types and household types in the study communities compared with the

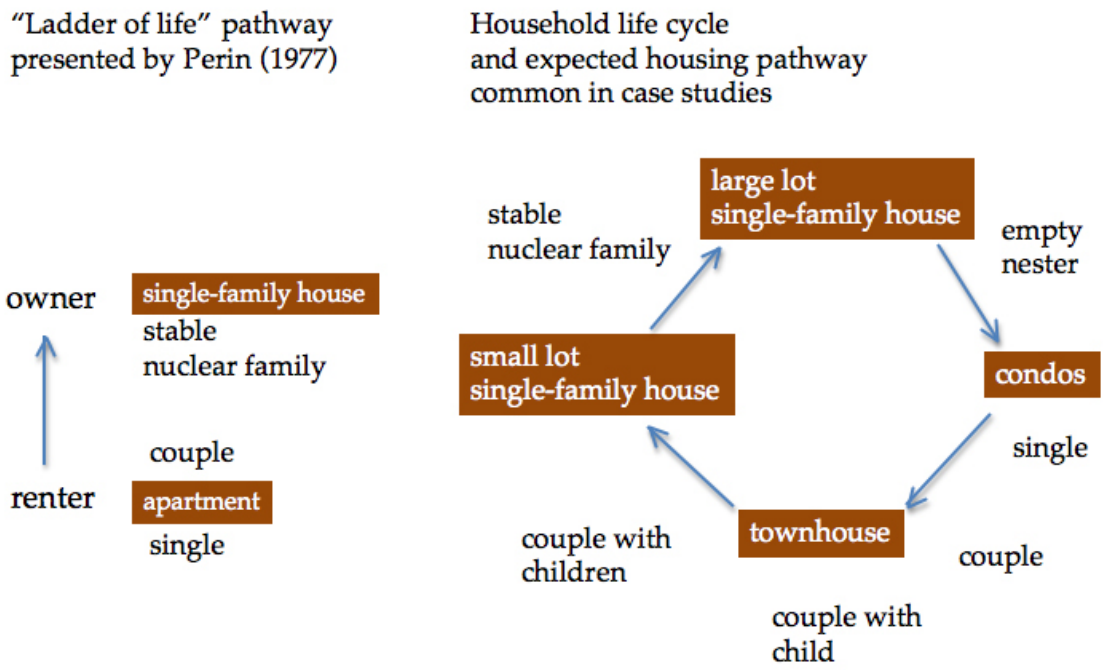

Figure 19 - Comparison of housing pathway models

pattern at the time of Perin's (1977) work.

From this model it is possible to build on Perin's (1977) theory of residential land use separation and the social implications of transition. Several contemporary conditions in the suburbs explored through the case studies provide an opportunity to expand her interpretation. The widespread adoption of smart growth planning principles favouring compact, nodal growth patterns and mixing housing types represents a significant shift in land use objectives since Perin's writing. An uncompromising rise in land values and development costs, particularly in British Columbia's lower mainland communities, add a new dimension to the conditions within which developers rationalize the types of products they offer. The combination of land economics and regulatory action in both regions challenge the ubiquitous nature of single-detached housing in the suburbs, although significantly less in Airdrie where detached housing still represents a market majority. Nevertheless, condominiums and townhouses are familiar if not common housing types in the case studies. Respondents described condominiums and townhouses distinctly as transitional types of housing for young households "moving up", or as destinations for empty nester households retiring from detached homes.

Municipal officials promote housing mix to facilitate social inclusion, but for the most part housing categories remain separated. Attempts to integrate housing types reveals a patchwork of housing districts within new developments - town-homes in one location, compact lot detached houses in another, and the pinnacle single-detached home in yet another. Langley's more closely knit housing mix is perhaps due more to challenges developers face in securing large land assemblies than to the housing mix requirement alone. The larger the tract of land to work with, the more likely developers could achieve the prescribed mix while clearly separating houses by type.

Maintaining a unified neighbourhood image in light of the various housing options means rewriting the life cycle script with new transitions to show that while everyone may not be securely in the same social space, they are appropriately heading in the same direction. The early decades of suburban planning ensured land use arrangements were firmly divided, and Perin (1977) showed that this pattern reflected a social order according to a "correct chronology of life". When renters became homeowners they entered a new social category. The case studies here show that with an abundance of multi-unit housing in close proximity to single-detached housing, a new discourse attempts to make transitional housing types acceptable suburban form. The discourse explicitly recognizes transitional categories, but builds them into an overall community image. The complete community discourse facilitates the idea that transitions within one community are not only appropriate but also necessary for community survival. Developers pick up on the discourse in their marketing strategies in an effort to find a model for business survival in response to changing conditions of development costs. The idea of "going full circle in life" in one community normalizes condos and townhouses as culturally acceptable suburban housing types, thereby reducing the assumed social dangers they pose. The life cycle discourse portrays multi-unit housing types as safe because they represent a right of passage to a valued social category. Despite planning aims to accommodate greater household diversity by advocating a variety of housing types, the model housing producers postulate simplifies the life cycle process to suit a conventional destination in the suburban market.

9. Conclusions

This paper explored through four case studies how structural factors in planning and developing suburban housing generate social meanings that connect ideas about an ideal sequence of the household life cycle with particular housing forms and community image. The housing pathways metaphor (Clapham, 2005) helped frame an analysis that explored the factors shaping meanings and actions regarding suburban housing. By focusing on the influence of housing producers this paper shows that the meanings planning and development practitioners attribute to particular types of housing condition the environment in which households make housing decisions over the life course.

The case studies revealed similar discourses about an expected sequence of the household life cycle and corresponding consumption of housing types. Discourses showed a clear direction of upward social mobility along a linear housing career pathway of increasing house size, cost, and independence that culminates in "arrival" at the traditional suburban single-detached home. A substantive finding of the research shows that in a context of policy development focused on smart growth objectives, coupled with rising development costs, both municipal officials and developers use a discourse that promotes the idea that households "go full circle in life" by consuming a progression of housing in one community. This discourse is beginning to alter the way multi-unit housing is viewed in a suburban context. The transformation of perceptions is only just under way, but housing producers are actively engaged in reframing the image of multi-unit housing to incorporate housing types once foreign and feared in the suburbs into accepted residential options. Indeed, by not reshaping the meaning of attached housing, municipalities would have to thoroughly reconsider their growth projections and planning responses.

9.1 Directions for future research

The interview participants presented in this research often report the perspectives and reactions of homebuyers and residents. By focusing on the role of housing producers in structuring discourses about suburban housing, this research neglects the vital role of residents' perspective and attitudes toward their housing. Both developers and planners spoke about housing in economic terms, as units, densities, and price points. Households contribute another perspective and produce further

meanings by connecting housing to a sense of identity. Although housing serves as an important financial investment, households also approach housing in terms of creating meanings of home. Further research should focus on households' opinions and perspectives to compare with the findings from housing producers.

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11. Appendix

Draft question schedule for semi-structured interviews: 2010

"Trends in residential environments: planning and inhabiting the suburbs"
Principal Researcher: Dr. Jill Grant
Research Assistant: Daniel Scott

Questions added for the proposed research are highlighted

We are trying to understand current trends in planning and developing the suburbs of Canadian cities. We're hoping that you can help us learn more about those trends here in [name of community].

What is your role in planning or designing the suburbs here?
How would you characterize the rate of growth here in this city compared with other parts of Canada?
How do suburban development patterns and characteristics here compare to trends in other parts of Canada?
How have ideas about smart growth or new urbanism influenced policies and regulations here?
What are the challenges you see to implementing smart growth ideas in suburban development?
How do principles of sustainable development influence current developments here?
How effective are your efforts to make the city more sustainable?
What are some of the challenges to implementing a sustainability agenda?

What smart growth, new urbanism, or sustainable communities do you have here?
What role did you and your colleagues play in designing or planning the project(s)?
What were the challenges to making the development(s) happen?
How did municipal planning authorities respond to the project(s)?
    Where did support or resistance come from?
Does the municipal plan support smart growth, new urbanism or sustainable development?
To what extent do municipal authorities promote this kind of development?
What do you see as the benefits of this kind of development?
What are the disadvantages of this kind of development?
How has the local market responded to projects employing these principles?
To what extent are developers following up on the project with other similar ventures?
What do you see as the future of these kinds of projects in this area?

How common are private communities here (that is, enclosed areas with private streets or access ways shared by multiple units, often in condominium ownership)?
How extensive are gated communities (that is, private communities with access controlled entries)?
How have municipal planning authorities responded to private communities?

Where did support or resistance come from?
How does the municipal plan support this kind of development?
To what extent do municipal authorities promote this kind of development?
What do you see as the benefits of private communities?
To what extent is the development consistent with metropolitan smart growth objectives?
What disadvantages do you see to this kind of development?
How has the local market responded to private communities?
How is the development of private communities changing the suburbs?

What are community residents looking for in new suburban areas?
To what extent do you try to accommodate a variety of household types here?
What are some of the benefits of promoting a mix of housing types?
What are some of the challenges to achieving a mix of housing types?
What new development trends do you find appearing in the suburbs here?
What do you see as the key concerns for the future of Canadian suburbs?
What do you see as the long-term challenges to planning and developing sustainable communities?
Planners often prefer new urbanism communities to gated developments, but gated and private communities seem to be proliferating. How do you explain this difference?

Can you comment on how you think the recent economic crisis may affect development in this region?
How do you think the economic crisis may affect suburban areas?

Is there anything you would like to add before we wrap up?

Thank you for your help.

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