Current practices for housing families in the city

A report of selected examples and lessons from cities in Canada and the US

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Introduction

This report presents lessons and experiences from selected cities in North America regarding current practices for housing families in the city. The report, commissioned by City of Montreal's Municipal Family Policy Team and the Housing Development Division, is meant to nourish and orient the ongoing discussion of how to best house families in Montreal. It presents a series of experiences, strategies, tools, and modes of operation to highlight how other major cities are presently experiencing the challenge of creating housing policy and programmes that encourage families to live in urban areas.

The report includes
   I. *A general state of affairs commentary on the subject matter (Context, methodology, key results & concluding comments)*
  II. *A list of individuals interviewed during the information-gathering phase*
 III. *A bibliography of consulted resources*
 IV. *Four brief case studies of selected cities that have elaborated strategies to house families in their city, and*
  V. *Four profiles of interventions emanating from the cities studied*

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Context for the study
How to make Montreal a better place to live for families?

The Province of Quebec is unique in Canada for its direct policy attention to families. Brossard adopted the first municipal family policy in 1989; by the end of 2006, approximately 175 Quebec municipalities and metropolitan regional councils had followed suit.

Montreal, Quebec's largest municipality, is one of the last to elaborate a municipal family policy in the province. Given its relative size in comparison with other municipalities in Quebec, officials felt that in addition to the lessons that could be learnt from its neighbours, the city might be wise to look elsewhere to learn from other major cities in North America and Europe who are grappling with ways to better accommodate families in the city.

For many decades the public has seen the suburb as the typical environ for raising a family. Its sought after typology includes more recreational and open spaces, local schools and community centres, and larger and lower-cost housing. Urban planners have long been concerned with the quality of life for families that reside in and around the central city, especially regarding low income and immigrating populations. Now, accommodating all types of families in the city has become opportune as we strive to create diverse and balanced neighbourhoods and observe the societal costs of suburban sprawl and long commutes.

Some of the reasons why cities have experienced a major loss of families with children include successive suburban exodus' since World War II; demographic changes over the last few decades characterized by dropping birth rates; changes in family structure, size and composition; and an ageing population. In addition, recent economic shifts have led to rising land and housing prices in coveted central areas making housing unaffordable in some traditionally middle income 'family' neighbourhoods. At the same time, other declining neighbourhoods continue to be regarded as inappropriate to raise a family due to ethnic or class composition. While each contributing factor may be more or less present in each case, the general result is penury of middle-income families in cities' central areas, affecting, among others, the degree of services those who remain will receive. Some effects of this penury include increased socio-economic and racial segregation, bi-polarization of rich and poor populations, decreases in the tax base leading to municipal revenue loss, and resulting equity issues regarding social mix, schooling, recreational services etc. due to weakened political and financial power.

Although Montreal sprawl has spread typically of the North American trend, the city has remained a relatively compact agglomeration. In many ways, the urban form of the Montreal area more closely resembles European cities than North American cities. Montreal was the first city in North America to make renovation grants available to older, privately owned properties in the mid 1960's, which supported both its high tenancy and an owner-occupier landlord culture. From the 1960's through the 1990's Montreal developed and maintained a multitude of facilitative housing and neighbourhood policies. Most of these focused on promoting middle class resettlement in inner city areas through policies that encouraged redeveloping older industrial neighbourhoods. These policies indeed led to a larger urban dwelling population. Moreover, trends severely affecting some cities in the United States such as *white flight* did not affect Montreal in the same manner as its North American counterparts. Thus, although many districts around the Montreal downtown core are functionally and socially mixed, there are, nonetheless, large social disparities among densely knit populations.

Immigration has always played a significant role upon servicing and retaining families in the city. In many cities across North America such as Miami, New York and Montreal, the longstanding trend of middle income families leaving the city has been complemented by waves of recent immigrants arriving in the city with important needs in housing, schooling and amenities. The average percentage of households with children of all the major US cities is around 30% (varying from a low 19% in San Francisco to a high 33%

in Los Angeles).[1] Given population projections and the proportion of recent immigrants topping Montreal's social housing waiting lists, responding to families in cities means, among other things, responding to the immigrating population.

Keeping families in the city is a complex issue involving many parts. A family's decision to live in a central city area involves a host of complex factors, every household weighing factors differently according to their individual situation. Important factors such as schooling, safety, parking, open space needs, neighbourhood quality and appropriation, access to recreational and cultural activities, and citizen participation are among a family's locational concerns. Chief among these concerns are the consideration of the scarcity of time (for example, the reconciliation of time between work and private life) and improved access (to transportation, services, and housing, etc.). Most often, the top reason families move out of the city is housing.

Although most families in Quebec are relatively well housed, there is, of course, room for improvement.[2] In the last few years, the Montreal Metropolitan region has experienced a housing market boom and the city itself experienced a housing shortage, driving land and housing prices up in the central areas especially. Many families have not been able to find housing in their neighbourhoods of choice to raise their children in the city. In Montreal and elsewhere, families with children (especially single parent and immigrant ones) are the most difficult to house, given both the cost and the rarity of larger housing units. Generally those choosing to leave the city are middle-income earners with or soon to have young children.

In its notes concerning the future housing theme within Montreal's municipal family policy, the *Conseil Régional des Élus (CRÉ)*, Montreal's regional social development council, defines the following as priority objectives to be considered.[3]
- *Improve access to housing, with specific attention to families who are economically vulnerable or susceptible to discrimination,*
- *Improve housing conditions and prevent further deterioration of existing housing,*
- *Promote housing stock that responds to differing family realities (large families, intergenerational cohabitation, disabilities etc).*

The purpose of this report is to nourish the discussion within the Municipal Family Policy Team with lessons learned elsewhere regarding strategies, tools and modes of operation regarding the challenge of housing families in cities. Montreal has the potential to be the first major city on the continent to adopt a municipal family policy, applying well-tailored family oriented housing initiatives based on the lessons learned from other cities.

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[1] Statistics regarding children in the city vary tremendously given the variable definition of city from one place to another; the statistics are largely reported by the media, thus sources are difficult to verify.
[2] Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance, 2005
[3] Ibid.

Methodology, research challenges and terminology

Methodology
The aim of this study is to present a non-exhaustive "scan" of current practice regarding housing families with children in the city. The report is meant to identify issues related to - and ways in which - cities might attract families to live in the city, particularly via housing initiatives. This information is meant to nourish the City of Montreal's Municipal Family Policy team and others on current patterns, trends and modes of intervention in other cities regarding their experience of this phenomenon. Given that the City of Montreal already has a range of programmes to assist vulnerable and low-income families, the objective is to present successful policies or related interventions especially geared (but not necessarily limited to) towards the attraction of and/or retention of the middle-income group.

Methods to attain the information included a review of current literature and interviews conducted with individual planners in selected cities, from January through March 2007. The results are compiled into a general report commentary, and accompanied by a few case studies and profiles that both describe the opportunities and challenges in more detail and highlight the most interesting interventions (including targeted policies, broad orientations, specific programming, etc.).

Research limitations, challenges and terminology
Limitations & challenges
This research study was undertaken to do an overview in a short period of time with a limited budget. Given the resource limitations, the research aim was to learn from a few "leader" cities and interventions rather than performing a comprehensive review. Thus, this report aims to present some key results without an exhaustive backdrop of contextual information. However, should a more profound research on the subject matter be carried out in the future the bibliography included in this report provides a good foundation of articles and literature regarding this matter.

Only a limited number of initiatives are discussed, and the four case studies come from a particular region of the American continent due mostly to the challenges these cities have faced in response to high housing costs. As such, the results of the study are limited and cannot be generalized. However, the initiatives observed in these cities are similar to those that have been instituted in Quebec municipalities (rural and urban) under the guise of municipal family policies. Given the currency of many of the interventions found, we might assume that cities can be placed along a continuum in terms of their maturity with relation to this subject matter. Therefore, it is most likely that a more comprehensive overview of other cities would provide similar results to those found in terms of reflection, process and interventions.

Regarding the applicability of results, cross country and cross-city comparisons must be interpreted with caution given the particularities of each municipality and the enabling powers it is granted from higher governments. While the comparisons are noteworthy inasmuch as they apply similar planning phenomena, ideals and responses, they are not necessarily applicable in the same form when applied to a different jurisdictional context. For example, inclusionary enabling legislation is generally granted at the state/provincial level, and is therefore beyond a municipality's direct control. In addition, Quebec's social infrastructure is quite extensive compared to general experience in major US cities, where philanthropic and private enterprise generally make up where government monies fall short. This is particularly evident when speaking about systems that govern property taxes, the educational system and other social services and amenities geared to families. With these caveats in mind, experiences and lessons form others can nonetheless nourish debate about whether they would be worthwhile practices to apply in Montreal's particular context.

Terminology

The principal challenge in conducting this research involved appropriate terminology. Municipal family policies are unique to Quebec. The research conducted reveals that policies targeting families vary in scale and specificity, from broad policy statements to targeted interventions around transport, childcare, or other family-priorities without specifically being named municipal family policies. Furthermore, a number of interchangeable or misrepresented terms cloud the research potential of this subject matter leading to a wide range of possible research pathways to find information about housing families with children in the city.

Within this report the following concepts may be expressed by differing words intended to be interchangeable terms:
-*Child-friendly cities*, kid, youth, family friendly. All meant to invoke the idea that the concept, policy or environment is especially suited to the specific needs of children and their families.
-*Central area*, urban core, inner core, inner urban core, central area, centre city, etc are all used interchangeably to mean the inner urban areas of a city. Each city has a different definition of its limits, where possible, the areas in question are defined by density level (high, medium, low) for clarification.

Family, family Policy, and middle class: tenuous terms at best

Family

Families matter- to individuals, neighbourhoods, communities, cities and society. Yet, the term 'family' is a tenuous one. The dramatic transformation that family life has undergone over the last few decades has had a major impact upon government and our institutions. The idea of what constitutes a family is subjective and in constant flux. If we take Quebec's municipal family policies as an indicator, each municipality defines its families in its own way. For policy purposes there is a variety of ways in which the term might be applied. The *Quebec Council of Families and Childhood (Conseil des familles et de l'enfance)* defines *'la famille'* as requiring a minimum of one child. The family committee at the CRE suggests that the definition of family should be large and inclusive, not necessarily mentioning children but nonetheless including biological or social links, intergenerational ties and care giving roles among members.[4]

For the purpose of this research, the broad definition of family was kept in mind when searching for information, while the stricter definition (minimum one child) was used to differentiate policies that would qualify as appropriate examples given the context of this report.

Family vs. household

The nebulous nature of the term family can also skew comparative research in this area. In New York City's recently released $7.5 million *New Housing Marketplace Plan* to build and preserve 165,000 units of affordable housing, specific programmes refer to housing middle class families yet within the document itself there is no definition of the term. When questioned regarding the terminology, the Assistant Commissioner for Communications of New York's Department of Housing Preservation and Development replied that in effect, the term *families* is used in a broad sense, to include a single person household (family of one) on up and that there are no specific initiatives to target housing middle class *families with children* in the city. One can deduce that their policy assumes that by default any middle class initiative will attract a certain number of families with children, but it is not explicit. In San Francisco families are differentiated by size: small families (1 person) and large families (with children). Some policies will differentiate families with children; others might refer to households. To clarify, the report refers to households with children or family households.

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[4] Notes du Comité Famille pour l'élaboration de la politique familiale municipale de la Ville de Montréal- CRÉ 2006

Family policy

Up until the 1970's *the family* was generally considered a private institution beyond the reach of the government. Over the last few decades it has become more commonplace to have a family orientation in policy making. Experience from the last thirty years indicates that state intervention into private lives is largely accepted so long as it presents as many solutions as possible to improve peoples' quality of life and so long as it is not imposed. There is, however, still much hesitancy and disassociation from the term *family policy* given both its possible populist connotations and the moral/religious value agenda that has been recently infused in the term.[5]

Despite the fact that policymaking has become considerably more family focused, the term family policy is still not widely used. As such, family policies might best be recognized as any policy measure that influences families or that treats familial questions without the measures necessarily being enunciated as family policies.

> *"Policymakers are eager for information to help them enact sound family policies but what information exists is often scattered or not in a useable form. Researchers, advocates, and government officials frequently focus only on a part of the family – children, mothers, fathers, (...) without seeing the larger picture - how the different parts fit together or threaten to pull apart. Families are not easy units of analysis; they are complex, dynamic, messy and ever changing systems. A family policy orientation requires one to think about individuals and families in a comprehensive way and to design holistic responses for meeting their needs".* [6]

Middle class vs. middle income

The primary expected benefits of efforts to retain or bring back middle-income households to the city are improved fiscal conditions (by increasing the tax base) and decreased socio-economic isolation of central city (especially for low-income households). It must be duly noted that a long-standing debate continues to exist regarding the desirability and perceived benefits of middle class populations in the central city as being an appropriate vehicle for improving the conditions of the poor.[7] The purpose of this research and report was not to enter into such a debate but rather to (1) present real cases of cities attempting to create a more balanced inner city population, and (2) to underline that mixed income development should not only focus on a mix of income levels but also on household demographics.

As a general rule current housing literature refers to income brackets rather than class defined groups. It was evident throughout the research that planners and politicians alike are recognizant of the need for more families in the middle-income bracket to be represented within city neighbourhoods. Of the leader cities only Seattle refers to the need to direct housing policy towards its 'middle class and growing families' and in others areas the term 'workforce' families is used in the same regard. Many cities approach the debate by referring to housing product needs instead. That is, 'families' fit into three options regarding housing: they afford market rate housing, they need affordable housing or they fit into social housing requirements.

> *"Much like its peer cities, the greatest challenge in Seattle's core neighbourhoods seems to be creating housing options that are affordable and amenable to middle-class and growing families".* [8]

This report refers mostly to middle income families, those households who might choose inner city living if they could find an affordable housing product in a desirable neighbourhood.

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[5] Bogenschneider 2006, Hantrais 2006

[6] Bogenschneider, 2006 p. xi

[7] See Varrady and Raffel 1995; Dansereau, 2005; and Bailey et al. 2006, among others

[8] *Seattle FUN! Initiative Draft Report*, 2006

Key Results (abridged)

- If we understand municipal initiation of housing policies and programming intended to retain/attract families as a maturation process, then different cities are at different stages along a continuum. Higher level governments play a significant role in instigating or supporting municipal level family-oriented housing policies.

- There are three initial 'raisons-d'être' for devising specific strategies for housing families with children in the city: (a) to balance neighbourhood populations or income levels, (b) to reduce sprawling conditions/encourage a more sustainable growth pattern, or (c) to maintain or improve the current level of neighbourhood services

- Major obstacles and opportunities to increase family friendly housing in central areas can be grouped in three categories: (a) affordability, (b) the integration of housing to other public amenities, and (c) spatial-design issues.

- Among the cities researched, there are no specifically targeted municipal family policies such as those found in Quebec. The 'leader' cities researched make use of a varied assortment of (a) affordable housing strategies; (b) a roster of complimentary tools including inclusionary zoning, guided bonus density exchanges; among others, and (c) assorted partnerships to encourage families to stay in the city.

- Overarching lessons based upon the four cities researched in detail: all have (a) resembling initial processes, despite being at differing stages (b) specific resources dedicated to families to aid in realising objectives, (c) measures that are meant to become increasingly institutionalized with time, and (d) intended successive positive results that will predispose their municipal officials to further the momentum.

Key Results (complete)

> **If we understand municipal initiation of housing policies and programming intended to retain/attract families as a maturation process, then different cities are at different stages along a continuum. Higher-level governments play a significant role in instigating or supporting municipal level family-oriented housing policies.**

The research reveals that many cities are both experiencing a loss of middle-income families and reflecting on how to strategically retain a balanced urban family population. In terms of reactive measures, those who lead the way have been grappling with strong housing demand markets and a difficulty in housing families for a number of years such as Vancouver, Seattle, and San Francisco.

Vancouver can be considered the leader city. It has the oldest documented experience; in the manner of twenty years of guided strategies to include family oriented policymaking and practices in its municipal planning decisions.

Next along the continuum are a few cities that have just recently begun processes to combat the issue such as Portland, Seattle, and San Francisco. Seattle and Portland have only recently (2006) begun processes towards inclusive municipal family policy and planning orientations, yet they have had various small and piecemeal attempts over the years to make their cities more family friendly. San Francisco, despite its reputation as an unaffordable city to families for many years, has been instating measures only since 2005 in an attempt to retain its 'workforce' families.

Montreal might place itself just ahead of others such as Toronto and New York City that have seemingly just begun to consider that their housing strategies might benefit from explicit measures that target families. While New York's newest housing policy targets middle-class households specifically, it does not make mention of families with children. Alternatively, when referring to the 15,000 to 20,000 housing units that are being completed in the city every year- ranging from bachelors to two-bedroom apartments- Toronto's mayor Miller mentioned as recently as January 2007 that the next wave of growth will have to be more family driven.

> *"To me, the challenge will be a better distribution of the type of units so we have more family units...the city has to continue to intensify but be more family oriented".* [9]

Given the currency of the experiences of the 'leader' cities, it can only be assumed that many more cities have not yet entered into this debate in a strategic manner. Although it was impossible to survey every city, leadership in this area has been concentrated in the cities studied in detail in this report.

Although not necessarily explicitly stated, in most cases, higher-level governments play a significant role in instigating the movement towards family oriented housing policies. Federal or state/provincial legislation or funds dedicated towards sustainability, redevelopment and service provision have all, in some form, supported initiatives at the municipal level.

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[9] Byers, 2007

> **There are three initial 'raisons-d'être' for devising specific strategies for housing families with children in the city: (a) to balance neighbourhood populations or income levels, (b) to reduce sprawling conditions/encourage a more sustainable growth pattern, or (c) to maintain or improve the current level of neighbourhood services.**

(a)To balance neighbourhood income levels or populations

Portland Schools, Families and Housing Initiative is a citywide effort rooted in the losses experienced by the public school system in Portland. The initiative is based upon the idea that an important part of retaining and attracting families is maintaining and strengthening the quality of school facilities and curricula. In an attempt to balance its neighbourhoods and services the initiative is mostly being implemented via affordable housing and mixed income initiatives to help families consider living in some of Portland's less favourable neighbourhoods and raise enrolment in the schools, with hopes of eventual neighbourhood regeneration.

It should be noted that some cities are explicit in their desire for a more balanced population or income mix while in others the language used is less clear. Although much of the literature surrounding the Portland initiative targets an immigrant population, income mix is not explicitly referenced. Instead the language within the documents focuses much more on enrolment and grassroots community development issues. In San Francisco, the US city with the lowest number of families with children, initiatives aimed at retaining families are explicit in addressing key social service and accessibility issues of immigrant families living in unsanitary conditions or choosing to locate in disadvantaged neighbourhoods due to high housing costs.

(b) *To reduce sprawling conditions/encourage a more sustainable growth pattern*

The *Family Urban Neighbourhoods Initiative in Seattle* intends to make its Center City more attractive to family urban dwellers. Its genesis came partially out of a city council concern to abide to new zoning proposals to recently passed smart growth legislation. The concern prompted the municipal council to pass a companion policy to the zoning recommendations to look at other issues beyond land use. Similar reasoning is behind several 'urban renaissance' experiences in the United Kingdom.

(c) *To maintain or improve the current level of neighbourhood services*

In the 1980's, Vancouver adopted a new *Central Area Plan* that consisted of a major rezoning and selling of excess city lands. The *Living First* comprehensive integrated strategy insisted on housing intensity and diversity; supportive neighbourhoods; and suitable domestic urban design and architecture to provide a framework to attract a diverse population including families.

Given previous major losses of families in cities such as San Francisco and Paris (France), planners have implemented a number of measures to increase local level citizen participation and accessible services in an effort to support and retain their family populations. While San Francisco's case is mostly based upon a very strong housing demand market due to the emergence of the *Information Technology* sector, the French experience is rooted in state populist ideals. Although its measures are supported by a strong state level campaign to increase the national birth rate, the Parisian choice to accommodate families with proper amenities speaks to the importance of considering time and access as crucial features in a family's locating criteria.[10]

Given that most cities are struggling to varying degrees with these three challenges simultaneously, clearly the benefit to retaining families with children in the city inevitably reaches beyond its initial raison d'être.

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[10] For details, see Paris' *Bureau des Temps* and Quebec municipalities Gatineau and Longueil that emphasize time and access as primary concerns for their families.

The following excerpt from a Seattle report is a perfect example of how the complexity of keeping families in the city is expressed via a multitude of reasoning:

> *There are many reasons we should encourage children and families to choose to live in the Center City. From reducing our impact on the regional environment to encouraging greater physical activity among youth, the benefits of family urban neighbourhoods are wide-ranging. In short, making Seattle's urban center amenable to families with children is a socially responsible choice towards building an inclusive, sustainable Seattle.[11]*

Major obstacles and opportunities to increase family friendly housing in central areas can be grouped in three categories: (a) affordability, (b) spatial-design issues; and (c) the integration of housing to other public amenities.

(a) Housing affordability

Housing affordability is a highly complex issue beyond the scope of this report; however, some current research and selected key findings are discussed.

Families need spacious affordable housing in the city. Though suitability plays a role in the housing decisions of families with children, the more looming issue is whether housing is affordable. Though most cities do have a certain number of larger unit development in their high and medium density areas, much of it is not affordable to most middle-income families. In Seattle, San Francisco and Portland, recent surveys have shown that the number one factor affecting parents' decision to move is housing affordability. Qualitative interviews with city planners in Toronto, New York and Montreal affirm such results.

Land use regulations, regional supply/demand flows, economic cycles, interest rates and the costs of land and raw building materials are the major factors that influence housing prices. With the exception of land use regulations, most operate beyond municipal influence. Still, although providing sufficient affordable housing for families in desirable urban neighbourhoods is a large task, it is not an insurmountable one.

All leader cities demonstrate that housing is only one part of a complex equation that must be undertaken from many angles, with strong political backing. To foster family urban neighbourhoods, cities must look at how housing and various nearby spaces and places can be integrated to complement one another.

> *"Often the success of affordable housing programs is determined by the extent to which it achieves a narrow set of objectives, such as the number of new units created or the number of households with affordable housing costs burdens. Although important, these narrow criteria do not reflect the array of demands currently being placed on affordable housing programs. Today, affordable housing policies must help promote healthy families and communities".[12]*

Strategies for increasing affordability are well known and not unusual in all cities of a certain size, for example: renovation subsidies, down payment assistance and other homeownership opportunity programmes, affordable rental housing, renter stabilization programs, community land trusts, promoting alternative forms of housing such as cooperatives and so on. Leader cities demonstrate, however, that it is the explicit matching of these programmes to an overarching preoccupation with housing families with children in the city that allows them to be optimized to such an end.[13]

Vancouver's experience shows us that cities can use many strategies to enhance the affordable housing offering to low and middle-income families. In Vancouver's case, success is yielded by implementing

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[11] *Seattle FUN!Initiative Draft Report*, 2006

[12] Katz et al. 2003, pvii

[13] Recently, in the name of municipal family policies, Quebec municipalities have begun instituting a number of interesting strategies to house families, ranging from reserved large housing in central areas (Saint-Magloire) to residential land lotteries (Laval).

regulatory tools such as inclusionary zoning and local development levies during development negotiations, as well as by exchanging density bonuses for reduced parking requirements, amenities and/or family oriented units. Portland, Seattle and San Francisco have all recently begun processes to study which of their municipal policies and programmes could be specifically targeted to include a family orientation to increase affordable *family* housing in urban areas.

The issue of middle-income affordable housing is central to current practice in new mixed income development and neighbourhood revitalization schemes. Current practice dictates that new housing development should include strategies to capture the middle-income bracket for inner city living alongside lower income residents (by which families are indirectly targeted), and certainly some lessons may be drawn from their experience.

A very recent study commissioned by the *Rowntree Foundation* based on four case studies of mixed income new developments in England reveals that families may be crucial in to the achievement of mixed income policy goals in that children are the common ground that provides for mixing across classes, income levels services and tenure types. The study found that (1) the supply of appropriate family homes (due to size and /or design) in inner cities is limited by high land values and higher-level governments targets in terms of units rather than accounting for internal space/bedrooms; (2) attracting families to inner urban mixed new communities via housing options is possible; (3) a demand exists for a 'family' urban lifestyle that surpasses developers usual assumptions that families do not want to live in the city; and (4) mixed income new development neighbourhoods can work for families provided they are carefully planned delivered and managed with families in mind (amenities etc.). [14]

The study concludes that 'income mix' is expensive to do well and that because family households who are willing to live in these developments exhibit particular characteristics, mixed income development policies should be extremely well crafted to reflect targeted clienteles. Furthermore, some argue that the number of middle-income households in a given area must surpass particular thresholds for significant fiscal, and social benefits to accrue and that these thresholds should be considered when developing inner city revitalization programs and policy.[15][16]

Although not expressly designed with families in mind, some consider the USA HOPE VI program a successful story in retaining families in the city.[17] This particular version in a long series of federal HOPE redevelopment grants is recognized as an effective jumpstart catalyst in wholesale neighbourhoods improvement, and it has shown the most promise in terms of mixed income housing strategies in the US, without precedent.[18] The projects generally include, among many options, market priced and affordable ownership housing and the redevelopments often include larger units and other appropriate amenities for families.

> "*By leveraging other public and private dollars, the HOPE VI program has converted the nation's worst public housing projects into the foundations of healthy neighbourhoods, providing quality affordable housing while attracting new market activities and radically changing the urban landscape*".[19]

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[14] Silverman et al., 2006

[15] Quercia & Galster, 1997

[16] Rohe and Stewart, 1996, 1994, suggest that increases in housing prices cannot be seen as trivial when speaking of attracting middle income households to the city, given that they exhibit most of the same homeownership desires as their suburban counterparts. After controlling for housing stock characteristics and economic factors, their research reveals that increases of $4000,00 (US) in home prices resulted in a 5% change in the homeownership rate.

[17] Sack, 2007; Piper et al., 2005

[18] HOPE redevelopment grants are federally funded in the US aimed at revitalizing public housing projects in chronically poor areas

[19] Piper & Turbov, 2005

(b) Spatial-design issues

Although not the focus of this report, this section offers a brief description of some of the spatial design features that improve the urban environment for families. Spaces and places designed with kids in mind generally work well for everyone. Children are more sensitive and vulnerable to their surroundings than adults, and can therefore act as indicators of the quality and safety of the built environment. Buildings, at various scales from the intimate (design details and material choices), through to unit and building configuration must be designed with family spatial needs and life stages in mind. Beyond the buildings themselves, the neighbourhood context must be equally addressed. Accessible and easy-to-use transit, and clean, comfortable public spaces are kid-friendly assets that all citizens can enjoy. Open spaces also play an especially important role in urban neighbourhoods. The Seattle Fun! Report notes:

> "Child development literature is clear about the benefits of, indeed the necessity for, exercise and play for the physical, social, and mental development of children…Open spaces provide for many types of recreation, from active structured (sports) to low-intensity unstructured (people-watching or creative play) that are beneficial for children's health on many levels." [20] [21]

In addition, connections, corridors and rights-of-way such as sidewalks, streets, and streetscape amenities are vital and play an important role in the relationship children and youth have with their city, and can often act as social destinations in themselves. Creative use of existing urban features, such as laneways and community gardens can complement formal parks, and can also help make the urban core more attractive to families. Family accommodating environments include comfortable sidewalk and street environments that kids can negotiate safely, wide sidewalks and/or minimized traffic speeds, crossing distances and corner radii, as well as well furnished pedestrian/cycling-oriented features like street trees, bollards, lighting, weather protection, interesting paving and seating (especially important).

(c) The integration of housing with other public amenities

The integration of other amenities is critical to housing families in the city. Physical space, proximity, transportation, and access to schools and services all play a crucial role in a family's location choice. Municipal services intended for families make sense when they consider scarcity of time in busy lives and limits to access.[22] As such, there must be a mind shift from simply offering services to assuring equitable distribution and access to them. Cost, service hours, transport, childcare facilities, safety and security, and attitudes of service providers are among the factors to be considered.

Because family-serving amenities merit an entire report in and of themselves, they are not discussed in detail in this particular report. Below, however, is a brief section dedicated to the issue of schooling since it is essential in a family's locating decision, second only to housing.

Schooling

Of all the public amenities that must be considered, schooling is the second most important feature in a family's housing location choice.

There are three stages at which families seem to move from the city, as prescribed by life stage developments. The Vancouver, Seattle and Portland case studies reveal details regarding the challenges and opportunities each of these cities are facing in relation to attracting/retaining families in each of these stages. Briefly, (a) many families move when they are about to have children, (b) of those who remain, many families are willing to live in two bedroom apartments until their children reach school age (c) when children reach school age, many families move for lack of more housing space (affordable 3 bedroom units) and (d) of those who remain, the lack of appropriate high schools in the inner city persuades them to move

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[20] City of Seattle, 2006

[21] A recent study from Australia shows that inadequate spatial design can have detrimental effects beyond strict health concerns: see http://planetizen.com/node/22129

[22] 'À Paris, 2006 'Familles, on vous aide!' (sept.) no. 20 p.6-9 http://www.paris.fr/portail/viewmultimediadocument?multimediadocument-id=21894

once their children reach the pre-teen ages. Accordingly, the British, Seattle and Vancouver experiences reveal that families can be persuaded that inner cities work for child rearing provided adequate secondary schooling is anticipated.[23] Portland officials estimate that every child a city loses can mean an average loss of $5,000 (USD) for the school district.

The provincial ministry of education governs the schooling system in Montreal. As such, the municipality has very little power within the schooling mandate. However, as school closings become more prevalent in the inner city, a closer look at Portland's and other experiences such as the *community school* movement and New Brunswick's municipally governed school board, might offer creative ways to use the local public school as a primary family attractor in urban neighbourhoods.[24] Furthermore, the role of the private school sector is not to be neglected, specifically in Montreal, given the relatively low cost of private education in Quebec. Many families who live in the city opt for private secondary schooling.

In the leader cities studied, because housing prices are very high and private schooling is not an affordable option, direct measures are being taken to support the public school system concurrently in order to attract families. Alternatively, it should be noted that some industrial cities in the US are seeing an increase in families with school-aged children locating in the central areas, despite their struggle for many years to retain family populations due to *white flight*. The families who are countering this long-standing trend are swayed by cheaper housing, nice architecture and lower commuting costs as a trade-off for private schooling costs.

> Among the cities researched, there are no specifically targeted municipal family policies such as those found in Quebec. The 'leader' cities researched make use of a roster of (a) affordable housing strategies; (b) complimentary tools including inclusionary zoning and guided bonus density exchanges, among others, and (c) partnerships to encourage families to stay in the city.

Selected promising strategies and noteworthy complimentary tools and partnerships are mentioned below, most are discussed in greater detail within the case studies and profiles.

-Design guidelines to guide development
Design guidelines to be used by all sectors (private, public and para-public, development, construction, design...), which include solid definitions of what constitutes family friendly housing units, developments and neighbourhoods. With such guides, policies can be clear and results are less likely to be skewed. Vancouver, Seattle, San Francisco and Portland have, or are developing, a guide to steer development.

-Inclusionary zoning policies for affordable and social housing, with an additional family component. Directed in lieu fees, development levies, incentives and exchanges towards units and amenities for families
Vancouver provides the most successful model of this practice, other cities are following suit. Most leader cities have set up or are considering an inclusionary zoning policy as a base, in concert with 'family orientations'; and/or firm negotiating stances with developers to include affordable family friendly housing and amenities. Vancouver's 20% inclusionary zoning policy for social housing has been helpful in negotiating a certain amount of family housing in the city. The City engages in firm public benefits negotiations for large development sites involving rezoning, it requires development cost levies at the building permit stage and community amenity contributions for site specific, smaller rezoning. San Francisco

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[23] A recent public consultation conduced by Montreal's central area festivals organization *Quartier des Spectacles* revealed that bussing children to other areas for schooling was a major concern among residents living downtown.
[24] Many Quebec rural municipalities have been experiencing demographic decline for a number of years, drastically affecting its primary schools. Initiatives in these communities are similar to the Portland Initiative, using the local school as a central pivot and attractor in the community.

and Seattle are undergoing similar processes to implement inclusionary zoning policies with a family component. All of these tools help offset the costs of new parks, daycares and replacement housing (affordable housing, non-market). Vancouverites claim that the availability of amenities within close proximity (daycares etc.) was critical to their choice to stay or move downtown. [25][26]

-Streamlining permitting and planning reviews for developers who produce affordable family friendly housing on a separate "fast track"

In response to frequent complaints about the tedious and costly process of obtaining planning permission and permits, Chicago and Austin have begun to streamline permitting and planning reviews for developers who produce affordable family friendly housing. Putting developers who produce family friendly housing on a separate "fast track," has indeed translated into the creation of more units of affordable housing in those cities, San Francisco is initiating similar practices as a result.

-Density changes, strategies for addressing parking requirements, and subsidized central city dwellers

Standard-parking requirements may act as a barrier to affordable housing in downtown areas given their spatial requirements. Consequently, cities such as Vancouver, San Francisco and Portland have re-addressed parking standards to allow for increased residential development. If appropriate amenities exist within walking distance, many families may opt for alternative forms of transportation such as car sharing and public transportation. Although some families might be detracted from housing that does not offer parking availability, all leader cities and as well as many in Europe have shown that alleviating parking standards in some areas, all the while complimenting with appropriate amenities and ensuring some family housing options with parking, are necessary measures to allow density-increasing strategies in the inner city.[27]

Other density increasing initiatives include the Santa Cruz Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Development Program and the 'Granny Suite' allowances in Vancouver. Santa Cruz is one of the least affordable cities in the United States in terms of housing; Vancouver is Canada's equivalent. Both have encouraged the addition of housing in the inner city, which has led to increases in the amount of affordable rental housing in those communities.[28][29]

The San Francisco Working Families Credit Program (WFC) is a symbolic matching subsidy that raises awareness among 'workforce families' who live in the city regarding a series of (higher level government) tax credits and discounted public transit passes that they may be entitled to in order to offset the high living costs in San Francisco.

-Long-term proactive plans for 'family' dedicated municipal housing funds

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[25] Gragg, 2005; Whitlock, 2007

[26] In August 2005, the City of Montréal adopted an inclusionary housing policy entitled *Strategy for the inclusion of affordable housing in new residential projects*. The approach adopted is what has been called voluntary inclusionary zoning that includes a large dosage of negotiation with private developers and the use of social and community based housing programmes and renovation/revitalization grants. A combination of programs and tools has produced a considerable volume of affordable housing. For example, in 2005 and 2006, 2,206 social and community-based units were developed for a variety of clienteles. In 2006, 27% of the units produced had two or more bedrooms.

[27] See Carmon, 2002; Cope, 2006; Karsten, 2003

[28] *ADU or Granny suite*: an additional living unit that has separate kitchen, sleeping, and bathroom facilities, attached or detached from the primary residential unit on a single-family lot.

[29] Quebec City has approached this same challenge in the opposite way: in order to better accommodate families in its city centre, zoning bylaws were amended to discourage the division of larger housing units (housing costs in Quebec City are relatively inexpensive compared to Vancouver and Santa Cruz).

Many cities have instituted long term funds meant to be matched with private and non-profit partnerships in the form of trusts or similar to address the lack of funding to affordable housing.

The following are some examples of current initiatives in the US context to increase affordable housing opportunities for more affordable housing family units.

-Most of Santa Clara's job-rich Silicon Valley workers live in neighbouring counties because of high housing costs. In partnership with the Silicon Valley business community, the city has created a Housing Trust in order to keep workers. Over $10 million has been leveraged against other investments to increase affordable housing in the area.

-Affordable housing was a hot issue in Los Angeles' last municipal elections. As a result, Mayor Hahn proposed an affordable housing trust fund in the amount of $100 million each year.[30]

> Overarching lessons based upon the four cities researched in detail: all have (a) resembling initial processes, despite being at differing stages (b) specific resources dedicated to families to aid in realising objectives, (c) measures that are meant to become increasingly institutionalized with time, and (c) intended successive positive results that will predispose their municipal officials to further the momentum.

A good part of Vancouver's success in planning for families is making sure the infrastructure they need is in place and paid for through the development process. Spearheaded years ago by the planning department, Vancouver's strategies have been decentralised with time and successive positive results. The newest major housing development in Vancouver exemplifies its maturation and momentum: it will be used for Olympic housing, thereafter to be converted for regular use. The City has required that 50% of its housing stock be family oriented.

Leadership and coordination has also been a determining factor in Vancouver's success and other cities are following suit. Municipal family policy planning necessitates a cross sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach. As such, detailed and monitored plans as well as a concerted effort across city agencies can help ensure the implementation of an integrated strategy over time and that competing demands upon housing resources do not impede results.

In all leader cities an overarching reflection/strategy leads the way to thinking about how to integrate different city departments and programs together to provide housing and amenities for families. Most have set up taskforces within their planning departments to coordinate action plans and further interventions such as *Portland's Schools, Housing and Families Initiative* and *Seattle's Families Urban Neighbourhoods Initiative* while San Francisco has its recently established *Mayor's Policy Council on Children and Families*. All recognize that it is necessary to appoint key leaders in both the administrative and political arenas to spearhead such strategies.

The engagement of a public education campaign to explain what it means when cities lose families with children is not to be underestimated. Despite family oriented efforts, both San Francisco and Seattle are struggling to meet family needs in light of aggressive campaigns to fight homelessness that have large and highly publicized dedicated housing budgets.

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[30] The San Francisco Policy Council on Families and Children (2006) writes about Los Angeles: Advocates focused on the number of dollars as a goal ($100 million) rather than the source of funding or on whom it would be spent. This allowed the campaign to bring in more allies since it avoided disagreements about where the money would come from or where it would go.

Concluding comments

Many cities are experiencing a loss of middle-income families to the suburban fringe. It is clear that immigration should play a significant role in any measure to maintain or increase the number of families in urban neighbourhoods. The research reveals that there are few direct interventions with the explicit purpose retaining/attracting middle-income families with children to locate in urban areas. A selected few major cities have instituted over-arching strategies meant to face the challenge of housing families in the city as a result of high housing costs. Most of the cities that have initiated policies and programmes have benefited from the opportunities created by higher level government legislation, 'top-down' priority setting, or funds which have encouraged or supported their examination of the issue.

To target families, "leader" cities teach us that:
   (1) Housing is the most important feature, while schooling ranks as second, in terms priorities that sway a family's decision to locate within or outside of the city;
   (2) Affordable housing is the tool of choice. Families want and need both affordable ownership and 'rentership' programmes to stay in the city. Matching an explicit family orientation and coordinating complimentary planning tools to such programmes is key; and,
   (3) Appropriate child-friendly amenities and spatial design that respond to the needs of families in an urban setting are of crucial importance.

Certain implementing conditions and administrative features in leader cities that are conducive to applying a 'family lens' to municipal policies and programmes that can be highlighted include:
- A high level of cross-sectoral and cross-government coordination is needed to ensure that projects happen in a timely fashion and that amenities such as daycare provision (among others) are not left behind.
- Housing is part of a complex equation that must be undertaken from many angles, with strong political backing. Appointed key leaders in both administrative and political arenas to spearhead integrated strategies in addition to detailed and monitored plans are necessary to ensure that competing demands upon municipal (housing and others) resources do not impede results.
- New design and development models as well as public consultation and awareness campaigns to promote the city as a viable housing option for families are not to be underestimated.

CASE STUDY: Vancouver, British Columbia

1. Context

Vancouver's downtown has been the centre of densification strategies for the last two decades. Efforts to diversify its housing stock offering, restructure neighbourhoods, increase community development and promote human scale architecture and design have all contributed to its renowned vibrancy.[31]

Vancouver's housing market is very strong; access to affordable housing is a major challenge for families. However, the city has also long been a magnet for immigrants who are accustomed to childrearing in dense cities such as Asians and Europeans, which is a blessing considering a close-in single-family house is currently priced at about the 1 million $ mark and suburban commutes run more than an hour.

Vancouver's intense housing boom has allowed for its planning agencies to make strong demands and to be firm negotiators when negotiating development rights with landowners. The city owned large tracts of land and sold these to developers during the 1980's with 'family oriented' conditions- Vancouver's attitude towards development became known in planning circles as '*development is a privilege, not a right*'.[32] As such, the imposed conditions have been instrumental in creating family oriented neighbourhoods, whereby 27 000 inner city housing units have been built since 1990. Approximately 65 000 people live in the Central Area of Vancouver, 20 000 of which have come in the last decade; its child population has tripled since the 1990's to more than 4000. In the same time frame, the number of children living in the city's central core (downtown) has doubled.

Vancouver's latest development is Southeast False Creek, in its plan is stated:

> *Housing will comprise of 2,353 units for 4,949 people planned in the area north of 1st Avenue, with family housing a priority. (...) Community amenities and commercial-industrial space will provide residents with opportunities to live, work, play, learn, and interact with neighbours.*[33]

2. Brief historique

Vancouver has made children a top priority in its planning decisions for the last twenty-five years. In 1992 the city adopted mandates for new parks, community centres and day care facilities along with minimum requirements for the number of two bedroom units in every building, to make downtown more family friendly.

The goal was to build complete neighbourhoods- with schools, day care, and good safety, and to have child-friendly amenities so that people could envision raising a family in the city. "*Community centres, day care facilities and larger units are as basic to a complete neighbourhood as pipes and streets*" said L. Beasley, Director of Vancouver's central area planning at the time.

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[31] Coralys Cuthbert, a Social planner with the City of Vancouver writes: *In general, Vancouver has been striving since the 1970s to encourage more diversity in housing types, to ensure there is affordable housing, and that families have access to suitable housing. In the 1970s, the majority of the City's housing was located outside of the downtown in neighbourhoods dominated by one housing type – the single family home. One exception to this was an area in the downtown peninsula called the West End. At the time the West End's high rises were more typically occupied by adults, not families. Two areas were redeveloped by the City to demonstrate a more intensive use of land with low-rise buildings and townhouses. The two areas were the South Shore of False Creek and the Champlain Heights. Social housing was part of the housing mix along with cooperative housing and market housing. One of the goals was to provide affordable housing for families.*

[32] Johnson, 2007

[33] http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/southeast/index.htm

Applying the lessons learnt from the their experiences in mixed housing development during the 1970's, the City began planning for the redevelopment of former waterfront industrial sites in False Creek and Coal Harbour in the 1980s with public consultations and policy broadsheets which included a set of planning principles.[34]

One of these planning principles was to "plan for all ages". The policy broadsheets set the tone for the creation of official development plans and the negotiation of public benefits to meet the needs of the new residents, e.g. community centres, parks, daycares, schools, etc. Recognizing that much of the housing would be delivered in towers, social planners worked with the planning staff to develop a document called *High-Density Housing for Families with Children Guidelines.* In the words of C. Cuthbert, a social planner in Vancouver, 'A lot of thought was put into making sure new neighbourhoods would be welcoming for families. (In the first experiences of False Creek) ten percent of the market units were designed for families with small children and 20% of all of the units were for non-market housing'. The bustling False Creek North community, which features 12 foot sidewalks and a double row of trees on the streets, houses an arts and recreation centre as well as a family day care centre, and is now home to five thousand children.

3. Approach and intervention tools used
General Approach

"Living first" has been the strategy of choice for downtown growth since the 1980s. Vancouver's council took bold, definitive action in adopting a *Central Area Plan* which consisted of a major rezoning of excess commercial capacity, waterfront and industrial lands to allow residential development. The success of the strategy, however, is not just the result of changing zoning to favour housing nor of a vibrant market but rather in the comprehensive integrated strategy that insisted on housing intensity and diversity; structuring for coherent, identifiable, and supportive neighbourhoods; and fostering suitable domestic urban design and architecture. Efforts to densify the central area also included zoning changes to permit the building of secondary suites, by both increasing building to land ratios and reclassifying housing from single to multi-family accommodation. Given the high price for housing and land in Vancouver this has allowed many families who might otherwise not be able to afford to stay in the city, to 'double up' to lower housing costs. The following excerpt from the Vancouver Planning agency explains the ideas behind the Living First Strategy:

> *"The underlying theme in Vancouver's strategy is to bring out the competitive advantages of the urban lifestyle in preference to a suburban lifestyle. To truly make the residential city a reality, the city must succeed at the intuitive level of lifestyle choice. Part of the strategy is obvious: to try to create an attractive surrogate for the single-family dwelling in the single-family suburb...The other part of this theme is to facilitate a life experience even more exciting and convenient, yet equally as safe and secure, as that offered in the suburbs. Going to the theatre, being minutes from a host of great restaurants and shops, taking an evening stroll, biking to work, and connecting with all kinds of people is what the urban lifestyle is all about. For Vancouver, this has a powerful attraction for an ever-widening cross-section of citizens".[35]*

A good part of Vancouver's success in planning for families is making sure the infrastructure they need is in place and paid for through the development process.[36] The City engages in public benefits negotiations for large development sites involving rezoning, it requires development cost levies at the building permit stage and community amenity contributions for site specific, smaller rezoning. All of these tools help offset the costs of new parks, daycares and replacement housing (affordable housing, non-market).

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[34] http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/Guidelines/fc/index.htm
[35] http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/currentplanning/living.htm
[36] For more information on how the City of Vancouver plans for growth see the publication *Financing Growth*.

Along with efforts to increase densities in the downtown and provide homes and amenities for families close to work, recent efforts have been instituted in Vancouver's neighbourhoods through a community-visioning program, called City Plans.[37] This planning program seeks to engage residents in having a voice in the future design of the neighbourhoods - for example, where would they want to see increased densities. Recently Mayor Sullivan has expanded the discussion on increasing density in a sustainable way and is spearheading an initiative called "Eco-density".[38]

Additional noteworthy policy
The City of Vancouver's Children's Policy provides the framework for other policies such as the *Civic Childcare Strategy* and the *Civic Youth Strategy* which both ensure that youth have a "A PLACE" in the city; ensure a strong youth voice in decision-making; promotes youth as a resource to the City; and strengthen the support base for youth in the city. In 2003, City Council funded the hiring of a team of youth as City staff, reaffirming that youth are a valuable resource to the municipality. Thus, the *Youth Outreach Team* was born, a unique model of youth engagement for the *Civic Youth Strategy.*[39] [40]

Complimentary intervention tools
-High Density Housing for Families with Children Guidelines (see profile)
Provides guidelines for project planning, project design, and unit design, created to improve the quality and quantity of housing for families with children especially in projects of 75 units+/hectare.

Adopted by the City Council in 1992, this guide has been critical in guiding the residential housing boom in downtown Vancouver. While not absolute requirements, they work in concert with Vancouver's regulatory system to challenge developers to incorporate design principles and think creatively to accommodate families.

-Social housing inclusionary zoning
Since 1988, the City has required 20% of the units in major residential projects to be social housing. The City has also set the policy that at least 50% the social housing should to be designed for families (2 or more bedrooms). There is no exterior distinction between market rate and subsidized units. Social housing projects routinely include larger units, that is, at least one 5 bedroom, a certain number of 4 bedroom units, and so on.

-Development Cost Levies (DCL)
These levies can be used to both create non-market social housing and community equipment (parks, schools, daycares...). They exist by charter authority; thus they apply to all multiple residential dwelling developments of 3 units or more, in the amount of 6$ a square foot. Levies amass in a fund dedicated to replacement housing, daycare, parks, and infrastructure according to a prescribed formula.

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[37] http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning/cityplan/Visions/index.htm
[38] http://vancouver.ca/ecodensity/pdf/ecodensity_leaflet.pdf
[39]http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/socialplanning/;http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/socialplanning/initiatives/cys/PDF/childpolicy92report.pdf
[40] Coralys Cuthbert, A Social Planner for the City of Vancouver writes: *A few things have changed since it was written. Health services are now delivered by the Province of British Columbia and are no longer a city responsibility. Departments annually report on work they do in relation to youth. This is presented in an annual progress report on the Civic Youth Strategy. Departments do not report together on work they do specifically for the younger age groups. Lastly, staff is directed to report on a variety of implications of various recommendations in their reports to Council, e.g. financial implications, legal implications. It is optional to include implications for children and families and Social Planning is the department most likely to quote this policy in their reports.*

The Roundhouse Community Centre is an example of a DCL put into practice. In the 2nd phase of development of the False Creek North Project, the city required the developer to renovate a 19th century roadhouse and fill it with a theatre, art gallery classrooms and a daycare center, in addition to two other daycares, and parks already included in the development.

-Density bonuses
Vancouver has proactively fixed precise objectives for family housing in certain sectors of the city. In its latest new development sector, it was required that 25% of housing was devoted to families, referring to both unit size and access to common facilities (minimal number of 2 bedrooms and views on play areas). In exchange, the City offered subtle incentives for larger units by exempting up to 40 feet in storage and enclosed outdoor decks from being counted under zoning rules.

-Negotiated voluntary contributions
Cost Amenity Contributions (CAC) are negotiated particularly in rezoning demands by developer. These can result in several types of contributions including in-lieu-payment, housing units, or in-kind cultural amenities (such as a local theatre) in exchange for significant density bonuses. The public benefit negotiation with the developer ensures that large new communities have on-site amenities to meet residents' needs. An internal municipal interdisciplinary committee made up of representatives from planning, culture, and other departments make the amenity choices and recommendations are brought to municipal council for approval.

4. Results

The "Vancouver model" of vibrant urban living is world renown. However, in light of the popularity that has surrounded the "Vancouver Model", some argue that Vancouver is not the *mecca* it is purported to be. Criticisms range from questioning the merit of Vancouver's densification strategies to its irreplicabilty as a "model" given its particularly strong growth.[41] Nonetheless, the sheer number of families who reside in Vancouver is testimony to its ability to attract a substantial family population. Planners, social service workers and parents say that the 'baby boom' in Vancouver is a direct result of planning and design and firm negotiation.[42]

5. Lessons learned
▪ *Regarding Inclusionary zoning and 'catch up' of appropriate amenities for families in the city*
Vancouver is a leader on social housing inclusion. The effect of its long instituted inclusionary zoning policies was that developers of major projects had to make social housing sites available to sponsor groups at a price that worked within the maximum budget set by the senior governments. By mid-1998, almost 800 social housing dwellings had been built or committed as a direct result of the 20% policy and the policy has created an additional capacity for 2760 dwellings in major projects across the city. Despite the requirement that developers provide land at below market prices, the bulk of funding to create the housing itself (and some amenities) is dependant upon higher-level government programs. Because of changes in programs and fluctuations in program budgets, land may be left vacant for variable periods until new funding is available.

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[41] See Berelowits, 2006; Body, 2005. Arguments that have been brought to the table include (1) Vancouver's central core densification is an insubstantial compensation for the disproportionate amount of low density single family housing zoning in its inner suburbs;(2) the city exhibits archaic parking standards and a lack of regional coordination; (3) residential densification in the downtown core has led to a weak business community downtown; (4) the quality of design has been sacrificed to subsidize social amenities; and (4) Vancouver's example is unable to be replicated because its atypical high growth and guaranteed market allows for the financing social benefit.
[42] Sandra Menzer, director of the Vancouver Society of Children's Centres c/o Gragg, 2005

More than 800 units have been successfully built or funded, leaving an unfounded capacity of almost 2000 units. With limited senior government funding available, it may be difficult to achieve development of the full capacity.[43]

Moreover, similar lags in implementation have been noted in some of the much-needed complimentary family amenities. For example, the demand for licensed downtown childcare far exceeds the supply: in 2005 more than 1700 children awaited only 500 slots

"No one envisioned the numbers of families who would move downtown".[44]

- *Regarding retaining middle income families in the city:*

56% of Vancouver's housing stock is rental units. There has been no sizeable amount of additional private rental stock built since the 1970's, which is a problem because that is which is generally 'affordable' to the middle income market in Vancouver, according to R. Whitlock, an urban planner with Vancouver's housing centre. Consequently, the latest challenge involves exchanging density bonuses for rental housing.[45]

- *Regarding the High Density Housing for Families with Children Guidelines:*

The guidelines have had a profound effect upon Central Area housing for families in Vancouver and have proved to be an inspiring document to many other cities considering inner urban family oriented housing initiatives (for example, Seattle, San Francisco). However, in the words of one planner in Vancouver 'the guidelines are long overdue for a review'.[46] Although planners make frequent reference to guidelines, their utilization to the full extent is not as significant as it could be because the context for their applicability has changed over time, due to evolving conditions. Thus, sometimes the "Family requirements" distil down to simply the requirement of 2 bedroom units, which was not their original intention (see profile on Guidelines for details).

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[43] City of Vancouver Housing Centre, Social Housing in New Communities September 2005
[44] Sandra Menzer, director of the Vancouver Society of Children's Centres c/o Gragg, 2005
[45] Whitlock, 2007
[46] Whitlock, 2007

CASE STUDY: Seattle, Washington

1. Context

Seattle is often referred to as one of the new *creative economy hubs*, as such, it attracts an increasingly childless population who will pay high prices for housing and who do not necessarily fret about the dwindling school system infrastructure. Most families in the city have fled to the suburbs due to high housing costs in the city and what is perceived as a mediocre public school system. A modest bungalow in Seattle sells for upwards of $400,000. In terms of percentages, greater Seattle is second only to San Francisco when it comes to the lowest number of households with children in U.S. cities – it has 15%, with only 5% living in Center City neighbourhoods.

Very strong growth is projected in the urban core in the next few decades. 60-70% of the city is zoned low-density single-family housing, generally in neighbourhoods that are typified by small local business districts (urban village type). Historically these neighbourhoods have provided the appropriate infrastructure for families and most of Seattle's neighbourhoods have remained in good shape over time and therefore housing fetches an unaffordable price tag. Even in some of the more problematic neighbourhoods there have been improvements in the last couple of decades via targeted revitalization efforts and a Light Rail transportation system has brought in a certain amount of speculation in some traditionally disadvantaged areas where gentrification is now of greater concern than it ever has been in the past.

Typically it is the middle-income families with children that sprawl in Seattle, but the recently enacted urban growth boundary enacted in 2006 has meant that all policies at the municipal level are seen in the light of smart growth accommodation.

> *The new zoning rules are an essential component of the vision for the Downtown commercial core and "Center City" and move Seattle forward on two major policy goals: promoting affordable housing and encouraging 'smart growth' in the city and the region. The changes provide strong incentives for building more residential units in the Center City as well as the potential for a significant increase in funding for affordable housing.*[47]

2. Historique

Seattle's battle with keeping families in the city began in the 1980's when then Mayor Charles Royer (1979-1990) launched an initiative called Kids Place, a campaign meant to persuade parents to stay in the city and counter *white flight*- to keep Seattle safe and congenial for families and to "reinvent the city as a place for children". *Kidsplace* has since been institutionalized as a citywide program providing low-income families with positive education and fun activities for school aged children and it has been widely applied by other cities.

> *Mr. Royer said he was ridiculed for signs placed around town proclaiming "Seattle is a KidsPlace" and took criticism from social service agencies who thought bringing in more families would only place more demands on the limited money they had. Mr. Royer said he was bucking historic changes. "I said things like, 'We don't want to be like San Francisco,' but in the end, I don't think we were terribly effective at stemming that tide," Mr. Royer said. "It's not so much a social problem as it is a demographic and financial problem".*[48]

Indeed, Seattle has not been able to counter the problems; it now has some of the highest-priced real estate in the US. Census results during the 1990's showed the city's population had the lowest percentage

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[47] http://www.seattle.gov/DPD/Planning/Downtown_Zoning_Changes/Overview/
[48] Egan, 2005

of residents between ages 5 and 17 (10.8%) of any major US city. In 2001 results show Seattle second only to San Francisco, with 87,827 kids in a city of 563,374.[49]

However, given the recent smart growth policy climate instituted by higher-level governments, the City is forging a new path. Implementing policies based on the smart growth orientation is contributing to a mosaic of emerging neighbourhoods in the Center City that represent exciting new opportunities for attracting and supporting families with children.

3. Approach and intervention tools used

General Approach

The Family Urban Neighbourhoods Initiative, City of Seattle, Places and Spaces for Seattle Families and Children in Seattle's Center City (see profile for additional details)

The favoured approach in Seattle is the Fun! Initiative, which, in its current draft report, details an array of intervention tools to be implemented in order to make the Center City more attractive to family urban dwellers.[50] Its genesis came partially out of a city council concern for a more holistic smart growth approach during a recent up zoning process (legislation enacted May 2006), which prompted the passing of a companion policy to look at other issues beyond land use.

The FUN! Initiative is in its early stages. It is broadly committed to coordinating policy and implementing strategies, expanding public and private awareness, and developing research/market studies that focus on youth and family well-being.[51] The hope for the FUN Initiative is that it leads to policy language and direction that stands the test of time in addition to positively affecting near-term opportunities and budget priorities.

The report focuses primarily on the design aspects of family friendly neighbourhoods in order to
- *Increase awareness of existing resources and facilities that attract/meet the needs of family and youth;*
- *Show what is possible by highlighting successful places and spaces;*
- *Identify new areas of opportunity;*
- *Distil key elements of successful places in order to develop and apply family-friendly principles to future projects and activities;*
- *Serve as a launching pad for the development of more detailed guidelines and policies to serve families and youth in the Center City*

Complimentary intervention tools

Inclusionary Zoning

Early in 2006, the state legislature passed enabling legislation that bolsters Seattle's ability to require affordable housing in major new developments. Municipal inclusionary zoning policy is currently under discussion, it is anticipated that the process will take about one year to complete. The hope is that the inclusionary zoning capacity will combine with a rigorous bonus density program to allow for more affordable housing, thereby attracting a greater number of families.[52]

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[49] The Olympian, 2001

[50] Center city is more of a concept than of a specific jurisdiction. It includes nine neighbourhoods plus the downtown business district, and it is not necessarily defined by street-by-street boundaries. It stays clear of those neighbourhoods that are clearly defined by either perception or barriers and it is fuzzy around the edges on purpose (Johnson, 2007).

[51] FUN! Initiative, 2006

[52] For details see: http://www.seattle.gov/DPD/Planning/Downtown_Zoning_Changes/Overview/; http://www.huduser.org/rbc/search/rbcdetails.asp?DocId=706

Green Streets program

This programme is of noteworthy mention because the *FUN! Initiative* sees this program as a strong candidate for potential policy matching/reformulation with family oriented initiatives to create, among others, family friendly pedestrian environments. Seattle's Green Streets program was innovative when adopted in 1993. The program, enacted as a land use code initiative, designates certain urban corridors as Green Streets for the purpose of improving the pedestrian environment. The Municipal Code defines a *Green Street* as *a street right-of-way which is part of the street circulation pattern, that through a variety of treatments, such as sidewalk widening, landscaping, traffic calming, and pedestrian-oriented features, is enhanced for pedestrian circulation and open space use*. The land use code provides incentives for developing projects along designated Green Streets in the form of floor area bonuses akin to those given for other public benefits, such as weather protection, hill climb assist, etc.[53]

4. Results

Given that Seattle's initiatives are in their early stages it is too soon to judge any results.

5. Lessons

For a detailed account of some of the challenges faced by implementing the *FUN! Initiative* see the profile in this report.

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[53] http://www.djc.com/news/co/11149502.html

CASE STUDY: Portland, Oregon

1. Context

Along with other new creative economy hubs such as San Francisco, Seattle and San Diego, Portland has built thousands of downtown condos and apartments, luring empty nesters and young professionals to city life, but few children are among them. Additionally, improvements from Portland's beloved light rail line have contributed to rising real estate prices. During the past 10 years Portland has built about 6400 units of downtown housing in the (relatively expensive) Pearl District. School district demographers say that in 2005 only 25 children were living there, and fewer than 20 babies annually are expected in the coming years.[54]

With very little developable land left in downtown, opportunities to make the central areas child friendly are dwindling. The mayor, Tom Potter, says demography does not have to be destiny: he has dedicated his term to trying to keep children in the city.[55]

As far back as the mid 1980's a Portland Development Commission (PDC) market study showed pent up demand for downtown family housing, particularly for downtown workers and single women with children, the 1992 city policy for one neighbourhood "river district vision" states that the 15 000 residents expected for the area should reflect the makeup of the city as a whole, but implementation has narrowly focused on a mix of income levels and not on family demographics. [56][57]

2. Historique

The City of Portland has a child population slightly higher in proportion to the United States' average, but it has struggled to retain families, despite affirmative efforts to do so. According to demographers at Portland State University, from 1990 to 2003, selected downtown neighbourhoods of the city added more than 90,000 people, growing to an estimated 529,121 residents. Despite this growth rate, the number of school-age children grew by only three between the censuses counts in 1990 and 2000.[58]

The entire Portland school district is losing 300 to 500 students per year, which equates to an annual budgetary loss of $1.5 million to $2.5 million. Officials say this student loss is due to the lack of affordable housing in the city's core, which pushes families out to the suburbs and outer Southeast Portland. After a drop of 10,000 students in the last decade, officials called for the closing of six schools in Portland's central school districts. The pool of school-age children is shrinking so fast that Portland projects (based on 2005 numbers) to close the equivalent of three or four elementary schools a year over the next decade.[59]

After interviewing 300 parents who had left the city, researchers at Portland State found that high housing costs and a desire for space were the top reasons. 68% of the families that left the Portland Public School District identified lack of affordable housing as the central reason. At the same time, the other school districts that serve Portland neighbourhoods have seen a dramatic increase in student enrolment over the past 5 years, which has resulted in overcrowding in some schools.

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[54] Gragg, 2005

[55] Egan, 2005

[56] Sam Gailbraith, Portland Development Commission, former Housing Director

[57] A report from Portland's City Auditor's office in 2002 found that 41% of all new housing units constructed during the previous four-year period were supported in some way by a municipal housing subsidy, demonstrating that the City plays a significant role in the development of housing across the city's neighbourhoods (Rogers, 2006)

[58] Blash et. al., 2005

[59] ibid

3. Approach and intervention tools used

General Approach

Schools, families and housing initiative (see profile)

Spearheaded by the City's housing portfolio commissioner, in June 2006, this initiative is a citywide effort to stem the losses felt by the public school system in Portland.[60] The idea behind the initiative is to put Portland's schools at the heart of a community development approach to make its neighbourhoods family friendly. The aim is to empower resident experts, neighbours, parents, principals, teachers and students to help families to connect to Portland's neighbourhood schools through a web of partnerships and subsidized affordable housing projects, in hopes of raising enrolment at about half a dozen schools. The effort is especially targeting parents of elementary and pre-K children.

Although much of the literature surrounding the initiative refers to an immigrant population, the reference is not explicit (as opposed to San Francisco's initiatives). Instead the language within the documents focuses much more on enrolment and community development issues.

> *We'll combine the housing and school planning strategy with family marketing strategy, aiming for the 'stroller set'.* [61]

The initiative is in its early stages and evolving. It is primarily looking at 5 target areas to align city policies and school district needs, an expanded role for the City in building and maintaining strong schools and neighbourhoods, a community engagement process, and specific housing program activities and community development ideas.

Included in this initiative is a design competition meant to promote high-density family housing infill development in Portland's central areas by means of creating both a model for development and a resulting guidebook for developer consultation. The *Living Spaces Family Friendly Courtyard Design Competition* is detailed in the profile section of this report.

Complimentary intervention tools

Limited Tax Abatement for Single Family Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation[62]

Adopted in the 1990's by the Portland Development Commission (PDC), this subsidy is aimed at new homeowners. Originally the measure was put in place to counter building abandonment and the lack of new housing development in Portland inner urban neighbourhoods, however, more recently its emphasis has shifted to help spur increased affordable housing development, mostly consisting of larger units that accommodate families. This exemption forgives all property taxes on the improvement value of the homes for a period of ten years.

Single Family New Construction Tax Abatement Guidelines[63]

Same principal as above, homes must be a maximum of two years old. Although not specifically designed for families, this tax exemption is nonetheless showing promise with regards to helping keep some families in the Portland inner neighbourhoods given that there is a substantial proportion of larger units being constructed (most units have 3 bedrooms).

The Portland Development Commission's Market Assessment for Family-Oriented Condominiums Survey

This analysis intended to answer the basic policy question of whether the lack of families in central areas is a demand or a supply problem. The analysis shows that there are a significant number of families with

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[60] Declining enrolment appears to be a function of both the lack of affordable housing in the 'good' neighbourhoods and negative perceptions of the schools in the 'bad' neighbourhoods (Sack, 2007).

[61] Housing Authority of Portland (HAP) executive director Steve Rudman

[62] http://www.pdc.us/housing_serv/hsg_development/reguide.asp

[63] http://www.pdc.us/housing_serv/hsg_development/sf-lta.asp

children, or planning to have children, who are interested in living in the Central City and who would consider buying a market rate family oriented condominium. 15-20% of these buyers would be willing to pay at least $400 per square foot for a condominium. The survey results indicate developers need to build condominiums with more than two bedrooms priced below what such units currently sell for in the market to attract the above-mentioned group. The analysis suggests that the solution is therefore to build smaller units with multiple bedroom and den options that are affordable to younger families but also remain financially viable to developers.[64] [65]

Portland Community Land Trust for affordable housing.
Since 1999 Portland Community Land Trust has been helping families own homes at prices they can afford by removing the land cost from the housing equation.[66] [67]

3. Results
Given that Portland's initiatives are in their early stages it is too soon to judge any results.

4. Lessons
In the words of one Portland planner,

"Most of the city beyond a really intense downtown core is pre-war 'streetcar line neighbourhoods', (as housing prices continue to rise in these inner ring suburbs) policies to make these neighbourhoods more accessible (in addition to the current downtown initiatives) will be needed eventually as well".[68]

For a detailed account of some of the challenges faced by implementing *Schools, Families and Housing Initiative and the Living Spaces Family Friendly Courtyard Design Competition,* see the profiles in this report.

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[64] Exerpted from study results: *Based on a review of recently built projects in Portland, two-bedroom units with a den average 1,860 square feet in size sell for an average price of $833,000. None of the existing projects that were evaluated in the analysis included three-bedroom units, the most attractive unit type to this demographic group. The solution is to build smaller units with multiple bedroom and den options that are affordable to younger families but also remain financially viable to developers. Three basic unit options were included in this analysis. They ranged in size from 1,100 square feet to 1,475 square feet and contained two bedrooms, two bedrooms and a den, and three bedrooms. All of these units would be considered small relative to comparable units currently being built in the market. Despite their size and the associated price, all were still acceptable to this target market. Other features of a unit, including the quality of finishes, parking spaces, access to play areas, etc. were found to be less important than the basic need for a home large enough to accommodate a family at an affordable price. However, consumers willing to pay at least $400 per square foot for a condominium in the Central City wanted all the upgraded features tested in the analysis, despite the fact that the upgrades would increase the price of the unit. By far the most important upgrade to this consumer group is the ability to have a second parking space. Seventy-five percent of interested families would pay $30,000 more for their unit to have a second parking space, implying the ideal parking ratio for families is 1.75 parking spaces per unit.*
[65] http://www.pdc.us/pdf/housing_serv/market-assessment-family-oriented-condos.pdf
[66] Housing developed for median income, affordable housing usually on edges of the city.
[67] http://www.pclt.org/
[68] Cunningham, 2007

CASE STUDY: San Francisco, California

1. Context

California has some of the most child rich communities in the nation, with 28 southern and central valley communities ranking in the top 50 most child-dense communities in the country. In contrast, less than 1 in 5 households have children in San Francisco; Census 2000 reports indicated that the city had the lowest percentage of people under 18 of any large city in the United States.[69]

Family migration from urban centres does not serve as the only explanation for San Francisco's alarming loss of families with children. Housing production has not kept pace with housing demand and the city suffers from a well-documented housing shortage, which impacts virtually all San Franciscans—particularly families. Strong job growth and lower cost financing resulted in an unprecedented demand and a subsequent increase in rental and purchase prices. Since the year 2000, the median price of a home in San Francisco increased from $550,000 to $760,000. Between 1990 and 2000, the rent for a median priced two bedroom apartment increased from $975 to $2400, then fell after the dot com bust to approximately $2100.[70] In 2005, an annual income of $241,018 was needed to purchase the median priced home in San Francisco ($760,000). Even with two incomes, most working people are priced out of today's homeownership market in San Francisco.

The vast majority (65%) of San Francisco households are renters (US average 34%). The current monthly rent (median) for a two-bedroom apartment is not affordable to a household earning $75,000.[71] The housing cost burden affects not only low to moderate-income families, but also moderate income and above moderate-income families. In effect, two bedroom rents are in excess of what can be afforded by working people earning the average hourly earnings in San Francisco's elementary school teachers, police officers, nurses, retail workers and janitors. The need for affordable housing among San Francisco families with children is highlighted by the waiting list for subsidized rental housing maintained by the San Francisco Housing Authority. Out of a total of 6451 public housing units, 5749 are available to families with children. These are filled to capacity, while 28,747 households are on the waiting list.

Many families in San Francisco have adapted to the housing shortage by doubling up, accepting unsafe or unsanitary conditions, or moving out of San Francisco.[72] According to the 2000 Census, almost half (46%) of the housing stock in San Francisco was in studios and one-bedroom apartments, 32% of the housing stock is single-family homes. The planning department reports that "studios and one-bedrooms dominate new construction".

Of the newer family-friendly affordable housing developments that have been constructed in high-density areas, demand has been so great that the City has had to impose lotteries in order to fairly distribute the units, for example, 4300 families applied for 20 units in one development.

2. Historique

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[69] Egan, 2005

[70] San Francisco Department of Planning; Mayor's Policy Council on Children, youth and Families Housing Brief 2006: http://www.sfgov.org/site/frame.asp?u=http://www.dcyf.org/

[71] Even a household with an income of $75,000 is burdened by the median rent for a two-bedroom apartment ($75,000 divided by 12 months is $6250 x 30% = $1875 available for rent). This market hits low-income working families the hardest: over half (58%) of households in San Francisco earn less than $75,000 a year. Source: ibid.

[72] According to Mayor's Office of Housing most recent consolidated plan, 80,586 renters and 4,282 homeowners have unmet housing needs.

Since January 2006 Mayor Newsom's *Policy Council* has been charged with developing policies and programmes to retain and increase the number of families in San Francisco. Council staff have worked collaboratively with Policy Council members, public sector colleagues, and community members to develop an analysis of family housing needs in San Francisco and to craft high level housing recommendations as part of the City's family retention policies.

One of its first tasks was to determine the underlying causes for family flight. In the publicly commissioned *Getting behind the headlines* survey (2005), 4 out of 10 family respondents cited either cost of housing or overall cost of living (of which housing is a major component) as a major drawback to living in San Francisco. Furthermore, 44 % of San Francisco parents with children under age six said they were "very likely" or "somewhat likely" to leave within the next three years. These families either could not afford housing, found their neighbourhoods unfriendly to children, fear violence, were disappointed in the educational opportunities available, or felt isolated and unwanted.

San Francisco has one of the most racially and ethnically diverse populations of children in the country. The 2005 *Community Needs Assessment* revealed that the three most striking demographic features of San Francisco's 112,802 children are their diversity, their small numbers relative to the adult population, and their concentration in low-income neighbourhoods. Over the past 20 years, the ethnic mix of the city's children has changed and both the public and private schools have experienced declines ranging between 5-15 %/year over the last decades. As such, four current challenges for the city are (1) to address changing language and cultural needs, (2) shift locations of services to where children reside, (3) keep children's issues a high public priority despite their small numbers in the population, and (4) keep families in the city.

3. Approach and intervention tools used

General Approach

The *Policy Council* has recommended the following in order to provide a framework for advancing the goal of recruiting/retaining San Francisco families: (1) all neighbourhood and redevelopment area plans should include a minimum threshold of 20% family friendly housing; (2) *families with children* representatives should be appointed to key housing and land use decision making bodies (such as the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency Commission and Planning Commission) and, (3) a plan should be developed with strategies to encourage private and public sector development to reach a measurable family housing goal. Other suggestions included creating a permanent, dedicated local source of funding for housing families with children and running a public education campaign.

The lack of developable land in San Francisco requires that any future housing development will consist of multi-family units. As such, the policy council developed a set of guidelines based on Vancouver's *High Density Housing for Families with Children Guidelines* in order to define family-friendly units, developments and neighbourhoods for use by all sectors. The guide is presented as follows:

Family Friendly Units
First and foremost, family friendly units should be integrated into the development, not segregated. Family friendly units should not be identifiable from their exteriors. Units should be large enough to accommodate families with children. Developers must include 2, and 3 bedroom units, possibly 4 bedrooms if market requires. Family Friendly housing units should have:
- Ample closet space.
- Full bathrooms with baths as well as showers. In the larger units, an additional half bathroom
- Larger kitchens providing enough space to cook in
- Family room, large common area
- Space for families to eat together
- Access to the outside— either yard space, balconies. Balconies must be safe for children
- Windows that open, with safety locks

Family Friendly Developments
Developments should be designed with amenities that serve the needs of families with children to the greatest extent possible. Such amenities include:
- Adequate laundry facilities
- Child care
- Outdoor play space for children from babies to teens
- Play rooms/community rooms/gathering space for children, youth, family and community functions
- Elevators
- Additional storage (bikes, etc)
- Clean common areas
- Property management policies which allow pets

Family Friendly Neighborhoods
Neighborhood plans should include key supports for families with children. Ideally such supports would be within a reasonable walking distance. Such supports include:
- A place for children and youth to be active and safe-ride bikes, play games and sports
- Public transit
- Neighborhood serving retail
- Schools
- Library
- Child care (if not available within a development)
- Recreation center
- Grocery store selling healthy food

The Working Families Credit Program
San Francisco is the only municipal entity that actually makes use of an income strategy that is partially funded by the municipal coffer, partly privately matched.[73] The WFC program is given to families residing in San Francisco and is meant to raise awareness about other benefits they can receive to ease their financial burden in a city where the basic cost of living is so high. Families may be eligible for discounted public transit passes and federal tax credits.

Housing policy
In 2005, an aggressive new strategy was implemented to increase the supply of housing in San Francisco. HOME 15/5 called for the creation of 15,000 housing units over a five-year period. The plan included

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[73] The Working Families Credit was created to encourage more families who live in San Francisco to apply for the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). It is estimated that $12 million of EITC funds go unclaimed by eligible *San Francisco* residents, equivalent to 11,000 individuals who would have otherwise qualified for the program. The Credit, which is funded partly by city funds and by private donations, provides a 10% match to the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which can equate to as much as $4,300 to families earning less than $38,000 per year. http://www.sfgov.org/site/mayor_page.asp?id=37543

several elements such as increased staffing, improved neighbourhood planning, technology investments and streamlining the permitting process to increase housing production. The Consolidated Plan articulates three priorities: (1) to end widespread chronic homelessness in San Francisco; (2) to create Affordable Rental housing Opportunities for Individuals and Families between 0-60% Average Median Income (AMI), and (3) to create homeownership opportunities for individuals and families between 60-120% AMI.

Affordable housing inclusionary zoning & development fees
Each development project undergoes a hearing before the Planning Commission to determine the project's affordable housing requirement. The 2006 Ordinance imposes a mandatory 15% of affordable units to be constructed on all projects of five units or more. The Mayor's *Office of Housing* and the developer work in concert to find potential buyers and renters who qualify for the affordable units (chosen through a lottery process) and fees must be paid prior to issuance of the first site or building permit. Should the developer opt to construct its affordable units off-site, the construction requirement jumps to 20%. These units must be constructed within a one-mile radius of the original project. Units slated as rental units are restricted as rentals for the life of the project. Developers can also opt to pay an in-lieu fee instead of constructing units. The fee is per unit size, is determined by the Mayor's *Office of Housing* and is typically adjusted annually on July 1.[74]

City Second Loans for Purchase of Designated Townhouse Units
The Mayor's *Office of Housing* offers financial assistance to eligible first-time buyers with no interest, deferred payment loans. In lieu of interest, repayment includes a share appreciation in the value of the property at the time of resale. The City loan is in second position on the title after the first mortgage and can be repaid at any time without penalty. The loan is available only on the purchase of units located within specific development areas. Applicants must be first time homebuyers and income cannot exceed 120% of the AMI.

Down payment Assistance Loan Program
This program is designed to assist eligible low and moderate-income first-time homebuyers in the purchase of their first home. Borrowers must be first-time homebuyers and household income cannot exceed 100% of the AMI.

The American Dream Down payment Initiative
These homeownership assistance funds are available for first-time homebuyers; and are meant to attract and retain low- and moderate-income families in urban neighbourhoods.

4. Results
Similar to Seattle, San Francisco has a large homeless population. In assessing resource allocation under the current housing plan, the *Policy Council* found that families with children gain the least ground. Although families make up 36% of those San Franciscans with unmet housing needs, only 24% of the City's housing resources are being used to address families in need, equating to less than 4% being addressed over the next five years (900 units in next five years). In contrast, there are a proposed 3,000 units of supportive housing for chronically homeless individuals.[75]

5. Lessons
Applying lessons learned from Vancouver and other cities, the *Policy Council* is presently continuing its recommendation process.

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[74] http://www.sfgov.org/site/moh_page.asp?id=48003
[75] Policy Council on Children, Youth and Families, 2006

PROFILE: High Density Housing for Families with Children Guidelines

1. Context

Vancouver's downtown has been the centre of densification strategies for the last two decades. Vancouver's housing market is very strong; access to affordable housing is a major challenge for families. Vancouver's intense housing boom has allowed for its planning agencies to make strong demands and to be firm negotiators when negotiating development rights with landowners.

2. Stakes/issues

Thinking about families and their needs is not usually a developers' priority, especially when building units in high-density projects. Adopted by the City Council in 1992, the guide provides guidelines (not absolute requirements) for project planning, project design, and unit design. It was created to improve the quality and quantity of housing for families with children especially in projects of 75 units+/hectare.

> *The intent of the guide is to address the key issues of site, building and unit design which relate to residential liveability for families with children.*[76]

3. Type of measure

Development Guide

4. Objectives

- To increase the number of housing units for families in Vancouver's central Area.
- To incite and challenge developers to incorporate design principles and think creatively to accommodate families
  > *The applicant is encouraged to consider creative approaches to accomplish the objectives stated for each guideline. Although quantitative standards are given in some cases, these are provided to assist applicants in their design as well as City staff in their evaluation.*[77]
- To complement Vancouver's regulatory system
  > *Guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the Zoning and Development By-law or an official development plan for new conditional approval residential developments, both market and non-market, of 75 and more units per hectare in density, which are designed specifically for families with children.*[78]

5. Description

The guidelines establish some of the ways developers can meet the needs of families living in high rises and address such things as unit design, location of family units within the building, play spaces at different levels and spaces for supervising children at play.

Each guideline is presented in three parts:
1. The objective which includes a short statement of the goal or intent;
2. The criteria which specifies specific desired standards;
3. The discussion, which provides additional considerations, supporting information, more detailed rationale, examples and suggested design solutions.

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[76] High Density Housing for Families with Children Guidelines p. 1
[77] ibid.
[78] ibid.

EXAMPLE:

> *Guidelines For Project Planning*
> **2.1 Site Selection**
> **2.1.1 Objective**: *Families with children should have reasonable and effective access to essential community services and recreational amenities.*
> **2.1.2 Criteria**: *Sites selected for family housing development should be within 0.8 km walking distance of an elementary school and its outdoor play area, a daycare centre, an after-school care facility, a community centre, and grocery shopping and within 0.4 km walking distance to a playground and a public transit stop. See second paragraph in Discussion. Effective access means a walking route, which is both safe (free from barriers such as the need to cross a major, unsignalled traffic arterial) and secure (having an environment suitable for elementary school children).*
> **2.1.3 Discussion:** *Maximum walking distances reflect experience with the physical capabilities of school-aged children and with acceptable travel times. These standards are based on situations with fairly level terrain; reasonable distances will be reduced where children must climb hills to reach their destination. The site selection process should recognize the need for flexibility and allow for trade-offs, given that some sites may be suitable for families without having all amenities within walking distance. Where the maximum distances are exceeded, the solution may involve providing additional on-site amenities such as additional outdoor and indoor play space. Consideration should be given to ensuring that key services and amenities* have sufficient capacity to serve the anticipated population of the new development.[79]

4. Results

Complementary to the public benefit negotiation process with developers, these guidelines ensure that a new community has amenities on-site to meet its resident's needs. "A lot of thought was put into making sure these new neighbourhoods would be welcoming for families".[80]

The guidelines have had a profound effect upon Central Area housing for families in Vancouver and have proved to be an inspiring document to many other cities considering inner urban family oriented housing initiatives (for example, Seattle, San Francisco). However, in the words of one planner in Vancouver 'the guidelines are long overdue for a review'.[81] Although planners make frequent reference to guidelines, their utilization to the full extent is not as significant as it could be because the context for their applicability has changed over time, due to evolving conditions. Thus, sometimes the "Family requirements" distil down to simply the requirement of 2 bedroom units, which was not their original intention.

EXAMPLE 1: Amenity provision may be inapplicable (such as building a school on certain developments or placing a school a certain distance from arterial roads) or stalled, as several funding sources are needed to make them operational, e.g. daycares. This is frustrating for families whose children must be transported to schools in other neighbourhoods until there is a sufficient school population to trigger the building of a school. On the other hand, one of the new downtown schools is built but the enrolment numbers are so high that some children are again bussed to another neighbourhood.

EXAMPLE 2: The guidelines have general objectives such as sight lines and maximum story locations for family units (3-4 stories as appropriate vertical distance). Vancouver's downtown south peninsula development (False Creek area) has evolved so much over the years that now it is predominantly high-rise development. In the newer high-rises 2 bedroom 'family' units are located everywhere on the site and thus families are settling on all floors of the high rises, not necessarily in ground area locations nor in clusters such as the guideline suggests. While the high-density guidelines did not anticipate families living above the 8th floor, it is generally now accepted as appropriate for meeting family thresholds.[82]

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[79] ibid.
[80] Cuthbert, 2007
[81] Whitlock, 2007
[82] One post occupancy survey in 2000-01 showed that they were indeed all over the place (Whitlock, 2007).

EXAMPLE 3: While the City has been successful in assuring a plethora of 2 bedroom housing units in Vancouver's Central Area and attracting families to move to or stay in the downtown, planners admit that there is a growing demand for <u>affordable three bedroom units</u>, especially as families change life stages from preschool aged to school aged children. Many of the market units specifically designed for families in Vancouver are not occupied by families because they are unaffordable-such as, for example, the 3 bedroom units in podium row houses. Indeed, planners in Vancouver have expressed the need to revise the guidelines to include encouraging a significant amount of affordable units with more than two bedrooms to accommodate a range of family sizes.

5. Next steps

Updating the guidelines (they are 15 years old) so that they may be even more helpful in Vancouver's current housing development context.

PROFILE: The Family Urban Neighbourhoods (FUN!) Initiative

1. Context

Seattle has been battling to retain families in its urban areas for years. Middle-income families with school-aged children are unable to find affordable housing or appropriate schooling facilities within the urban core and therefore choose the suburbs as the default option. *Seattle's Family Urban Neighbourhoods (FUN!) Initiative, Places and Spaces for Seattle Families and Children in Seattle's Center City* addresses the challenges of housing families in its most central urban neighbourhoods.

2. Stakes/issues

A state induced Smart Growth initiative has prompted the City Council to re-examine its prospective development (intense climate of growth over next few decades) and implement policies in a more holistic fashion, namely by mandating planning staff to look at ways to prevent sprawl by making the city more attractive to families, especially in the city centre, both affordability and amenity wise.

3. Type of measure

City centre initiative, draft report

4. Objectives

The report focuses primarily on the design aspects of family friendly neighbourhoods in order to

- *Increase awareness of existing resources and facilities that attract/meet the needs of family and youth;*
- *Show what is possible by highlighting some successful places and spaces (referring to criteria and/or examples that model what should be considered regarding open spaces; park typologies; water features etc.)*
- *Identify new areas of opportunity;*
- *Distil key elements of successful places in order to develop and apply family-friendly principles to future projects and activities;*
- *Serve as a launching pad for the development of more detailed guidelines and policies to serve families and youth in the Center City*

5. Description of the measure

The report includes:

(1) A discussion of the range and qualities of spaces and places that are important to making the Center City attractive and supportive to youth and families. The discussion is grouped into six themes, including schools; housing; open spaces; streetscapes and the public realm; interior public spaces; programmed activities and 'temporary' places. It cites areas of opportunity in Seattle's City Center worthwhile of particular attention. For example, a 22 acre post WW2 social housing development due for redevelopment, is handled in the following manner:

> *King County's preliminary proposal to develop the north section of the football stadium parking lot would add 950 units of much-needed housing in Pioneer Square along with a significant amount of retail space and a grocery store. The County has plans for at least 140 affordable units and family-friendly design features like townhouses with ground-floor access and gardens, rooftop and outdoor open space, a childcare facility, gym and fitness centre, and some three-bedroom rental units. **The City should strongly support this project as it moves through the development process and encourage family-friendly amenities where appropriate.**[83]*

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[83] Draft Report p.18

(2) A discussion regarding the potential complementarity of combining certain intervention tools and strategies (outlined below):

Strategies to foster family urban neighbourhoods must look at how housing and various nearby spaces and places can be integrated to complement one another. One approach may be to combine affordable family housing incentives (such as a priority bonus program) with Green Streets and other infrastructure improvement projects to specifically target promising developable areas.[84]

(3) A discussion regarding project and policy ideas and initiatives to explore including

- Consideration by design review boards, commissions, officials and staff of the needs of children and families
- Family-friendly policy directive or set of family design principles included within the design review evaluation process
- Family and youth design principles added to neighbourhood design guidelines
- Comprehensive Plan Updates refinement emphasizing the important role children play in creating vital urban neighbourhoods, so that they may address the needs for developing infrastructure to support families
- Family and youth-related standards and bonus incentives for family-oriented housing, services, and development in appropriate sections of the Seattle Municipal Code
- Seattle's Right-of-Way Improvement Manual to address family and youth needs, and to consider adding new language where appropriate to further encourage the use of streetscapes for youth and seeking additional opportunities to make downtown safer and more appealing to kids of all ages, including setting more robust standards for alternative street typologies that favour pedestrians and envision temporary street closures for family and youth-related events
- Proposed open space impact fee to fund open spaces in street right-of-ways as well as new parks, and include family and youth-friendliness among the criteria used to prioritize implementation
- Public awareness campaigns and support to be developed such as adopt a School; family-friendly public events; a families forum; a City "child advocate" staff position to coordinate/facilitate youth-related projects; an "event toolbox" for hosting family-friendly events; a FUN! Page on the City's website as a repository for family-friendly policies, events, and links relevant to families.

6. Results

Presented below are some of the current contexts and challenges.

Challenge # 1: Lack of appropriate public schooling choices

One of the fundamental pieces missing from the City Center and making it difficult to implement the FUN! Initiative strategy is the question of schools - there is only one elementary school in the downtown core and one alternative high school (see descriptions in report). Because families with school aged children have limited choice, often they are leaving the city once their children enter this stage of development. At the same time, installing a new school is problematic given financially burdened school boards and recent school closings in certain neighbourhoods. Additionally, school equity and race become issues of contention when speaking about implementing new schools in more advantaged and mostly white neighbourhoods as well as the sometimes pervasive attitude that the downtown receives the lion's share of city resources. Therefore, any initiative to retain families must address this imperative issue – the team is currently considering exploring different possibilities with the private sector and drawing on cultural and arts partnerships with minimal funding from the public school system.

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[84] ibid

Challenge #2: Competing resources within the housing portfolio

Seattle has a significant homeless problem. This past summer (2006) a regional collaboration plan was put into place, which represents a 10-year plan to stabilize homelessness. As a result, most housing policy emphasis is targeting the homeless and not necessarily affordable family housing.[85] Although there are a few affordable housing projects spotting the downtown area through neighbourhood revitalization initiatives, generally all density bonus monies collected are being utilized for creating housing to reduce the incidence of homelessness in Seattle.

Perhaps the single most important opportunity in the near future for any significant affordable housing development will be the *Yesler Terrace* redevelopment. *Yesler Terrace* is a 1940's public housing development of approximately 20 acres to be redeveloped as a mixed income project. The *Housing Authority* is slated to redevelop the site, and it will likely ask for bonus densities to build affordable housing, creating a mixed income development. The redevelopment was meant to be a HOPE VI project but given federal cutbacks it will most probably be funded locally.

7. Next steps

This initiative is at its very beginnings, spearheaded by a City Planner with working staff group of 5 or 6 people. The report is fundamentally geared as an education piece hoping to guide the public conversation on the subject matter. The report itself was produced by an intern with guidance from the team. The initiative has not yet incurred any consulting dollars; it is mainly a group effort within the city planning department at this stage.

IN terms of the Seattle Fun! Initiative process, the next step will be a series of internal focus groups with city government employees to refine the initial suggestions in the report. Thereafter, it will be presented to developers and architects and other stakeholders, with the hopes of eventually translating the results into policy recommendations.

In the words of Gary Johnson who heads the team,

> *It will take a long time to go to get tangible results, and we will need political permission to move forward with it. The true test will come when targeted policies are put to the council. The goal is to result in some smart growth policies via targeted families' policies.[86]*

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[85] Referred to in Seattle as 'workforce housing'. Seattle has no 'family housing' bonus incentives.

[86] Interviewed February 2007.

PROFILE: Schools, Families and Housing Initiative

1. Intervention context

In the last fifteen years Portland has experienced both a rapid escalation of land and single-family home prices in its 'better' neighbourhoods as well increased poverty concentration and homeownership decline in its less desirable neighbourhoods. This has resulted in a significant portion of middle-income families moving to the suburbs because they were unable to find the housing product to suit their needs in the city. Because Portland is divided into two school districts, there have been resulting inequities with regards to neighbourhood schools. Schools in sought after neighbourhoods that have few children and a declining student population are experiencing shutdowns, while schools in less desirable neighbourhoods with larger child populations and increasing student enrolment remain overcrowded and underfunded.

2. Stakes/issues

Historically, over 90% of students attended public school in Portland. In the words of the chief planner for this initiative, *"Portland's schools are an essential part of the health of our community".*[87]

3. Type of measure

The Schools, Families and Housing Initiative is a citywide strategy.

4. Objectives

This initiative involves several departments (planning, transportation...) and sets five target areas for intervention (see below). Its goal is to help ensure that Portland neighbourhoods are family friendly, with stable, attractive schools as cornerstones, by (1) focusing on critical intersections between trends in housing and within the public school system, (2) promoting innovative models for stabilizing schools and (3) generating renewed optimism and commitment in neighbourhood school communities. The following excerpt details the initiative:

> *No "one size fits all" solution will work, given the significant variation in circumstances in our neighborhoods and schools, so we'll tailor our solutions so that they are fitted to these specific circumstances. We propose to put our schools at the heart of a community development approach to making our neighborhoods family friendly. This means empowering resident experts: neighbors, parents, principals, teachers & students.*
>
> *For this grassroots empowerment to produce results, neighborhood visions need to be harnessed to sufficient horsepower to get things done. Our best work is done when governments work together efficiently and cooperatively, in partnership with the private sector. We intend to build on successes like New Columbia (recent mixed income redevelopment project), and seek new opportunities for partnerships between the City, the Housing Authority, and our public schools.*
>
> *We will be testing new ideas and new ways of doing business, and so we want to reward creative thinking and hard work. This initiative will bring a renewed energy to the ongoing project of supporting our schools, especially by targeting parents of elementary and pre-K children as our primary customers.[88]*

5. Description

The process is steered by a *Citizen Advisory Committee* and technical work groups, presented below are some of the retained ideas and some resource/budgetary commitments based on brainstorming efforts to date.[89]

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[87] Rogers, 2006
[88] Rogers, 2006
[89] Rogers, 2006

Housing:
- *Focus the bulk of housing dollars in neighbourhoods where they will do the most good for the health of the schools.*
- *Refine a model that would allow to replenish a home mortgage fund annually, relying upon a minimal city reserve ($200,000) to fund $2 million worth of second mortgages a year.*
- *Complement Planning's design competition with new site acquisitions (see profile).*
- *Provide temporary rent assistance focused on high mobility target areas, coupled with multilingual, multicultural outreach.*

Community Grants
Small grants to be distributed on a competitive basis to parents and neighbours who want to pursue specific programmatic goals designed to make their neighbourhood more family friendly and/or improve their schools. Potential examples include neighbourhood surveys, multilingual outreach, school nutrition improvement options and after school programs such as *Chess for Success*.

School Facilities Improvement
Modest funding, ideally on matching basis, to help with improvements that might range from retrofitting classrooms for preschools, to improving playgrounds or science labs, to helping to fund expansions of school facilities, safe routes to schools, food policy and energy efficiency work, parks acquisition of recreational easements, and storm water management.

Public engagement campaign and volunteer activities, including partnering with well-established Latino community organizations to emphasize connections to the Latino community, with the primary desire to help stabilize the overall enrolment base, potentially combined with intensive home ownership program.

6. Results
The initiative is in its early stages and evolving. The City council is very concerned about the state of the school system and the housing crisis and therefore the initiative has been well received.[90]

7. Next steps
This initiative is at its very beginnings; the hope is to build on the small successes of each intervention as well as the results of the design competition to move forward.[91]

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[90] Krishnan, 2007
[91] Cunningham, 2007

PROFILE: Living Spaces, Family Friendly Courtyard Housing design competition

1. Intervention context

Part of a greater initiative, The *Portland Schools, Families and Housing Initiative,* the design competition hopes to receive submissions for multi-family medium density residential infill development, in high density areas of the city where there is a lack of both single-family housing and space in the inner urban core.

2. Stakes/issues

Thinking about families and their needs is not usually a developers' priority, especially in infill development in high-density areas.

3. Type of measure

Design competition aimed at creating a guide and model.

4. Objectives

To catalogue the results of the competition in a glossy guidebook type to incite promoters/developers as well as the public to catalyze thinking about families and housing in a new way. This project is based partially on the success of a design competition held in Portland a few years ago called *Living smart* for narrow lot design. Hope to have a prototype model built as a result of competition.

5. Description

Baseline definition for family housing is 3 bedrooms and 1.5 bathrooms and adequate/useful storage spaces, and concern for having outdoor space right outside front door.[92]

The aim is to have medium density type housing design, 17-40 units/acre (approx. one unit every 1000-1500 sq feet). The housing will consist of stick-built housing: row house or townhouse types with useable space right outside the front door, as opposed to the traditional stacked flats in high density areas.

The competition will look at new housing types but also other things like shared common space. Organizers are hoping for innovative solutions to some of the traditional challenges that exist in high-density contexts. For example, they are hoping for design ideas that defy conventional open-space and infrastructure requirements, such as creating usable multifunctional outdoor space that could also accommodate storm water run-off needs.

The competition will be looking at two models for courtyard living: (a) the traditional green landscaped courtyard and (b) the *Dutch model* of differing paving types (importance of vehicular inclusion) to allow for shared use of hard surfaces- similar to *home zones* in UK- based on idea that 50-80% of children's play outdoors is done on hard surfaces.

6. Results

This design competition opens for entries in April 2007, judging to take place in August.

7. Next steps envisioned

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[92] In reference to Claire Cooper Marcus "Housing as if People Mattered» and promoted by "Children's Play Council".

Publishing the resulting catalogue guidebook based on results of the competition and hopes for a built model.

Individuals Interviewed

VANCOUVER
Rob Whitlock, Senior Policy Planner, Housing Center, City of Vancouver
Coralys Cuthbert, Social Planner, Social Planning Department, Community Services Group, City of Vancouver

TORONTO
Paul Bain, Senior Project Manager with the Official Plan team, Toronto

NEW YORK CITY
Neill Coleman, Assistant Commissioner for Communications, City of New York, Department of Housing Preservation and Development

SEATTLE
Gary Johnson Center City Strategy Coordinator, Seattle, Washington

PORTLAND
Uma Krishnan, Demographer, Citywide Policy Division, Bureau of Planning, City of Portland
Barbara Sack, Housing Specialist, Citywide Policy Division, Bureau of Planning, City of Portland
Bill Cunningham, Bureau of Planning, City of Portland

SAN FRANSISCO
Jill Fox, Communications Coordinator, Department of Children, Youth and Their Families, San Francisco,

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