

Emerald Hills Urban Village

FOUNDATION RESEARCH BULLETIN

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EQUITY

1.0 Why is equity a key theme?

Equity describes the ideal of being fair to all people and treating them equally. Its aim is a fair distribution of resources within society to reduce the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged. This is hard to achieve because of many diverging interests. Development historically has separated different cultures, classes, and even age groups. This has resulted in the creation of distinctly different spaces within communities: wealthy areas with a lot of services and amenities, and poorer areas with insufficient services and amenities, or groups of older people being separated from younger generations and basic amenities.

In an effort to promote equity within a community it is important to consider broader design standards that will make the community more accessible to a wide range of people. Creating an accessible community involves drawing from citizens' input through the development life-cycle: from inception and design to construction and throughout operation.

Equitable design may also be able to draw from nearby facilities to create education and employment linkages. As an example, this may include promoting fair-trade retailers and local, small-scale commercial opportunities. This issue is explored in more detail in the "Economy" Foundation Research Bulletin.

Furthermore, design that fosters a sense of identity will help create a sense of place and stewardship for an inclusive, diverse community.

Sustainable community development will include a variety of housing in the same neighbourhood, and very often on the same street. A mix of housing types, both owned and rented, allows residents to live affordably in the same community throughout their lives. Good neighbourhood design fully recognizes current and future demographic trends, especially aging populations, empty nesters, single-parent families and smaller, non-traditional households. A mix of housing types also helps accommodate lower income residents (including students and fixed-income seniors), allowing access to local jobs, amenities and medical services. Traditionally, the majority of housing stock in many new municipalities is single-family detached. These dwellings are unsuitable for many residents, particularly those in the fast-growing over-fifty age demographic. To be fully successful, all housing must be integrated in the community and located within walking or transit distance to basic shops, services and support facilities.

2.0 Why is equity important to Emerald Hills Urban Village?

The August 2006 draft Municipal Development Plan (MDP) for Strathcona County identifies, in general terms, the values held by stakeholders within the community. One of the core aspects of the community vision is Social/ Community Sustainability. This has been outlined in the MDP as a community that is "...socially diverse and adaptable to changing lifestyles. [Where] individuals are provided with access to affordable housing, education, health care, essential goods, public amenities and services, so that their basic needs are met."¹

Additionally, the Strathcona² demographic profile indicates a highly educated, affluent population comprised mostly of families and couples. In 2001, Strathcona County's population had a 41% higher household income, had 8% less visible minorities, and had 10% more married couples than the province. Housing was also less affordable than the rest of the province, with both rental and housing ownership costs higher than the provincial average (16% and 11% higher, respectively). There was also significantly less rental property available in Strathcona County (8% of private households) in comparison to the provincial average (34% of private households). These pose challenges for ensuring that Strathcona remains a diverse, mixed community that attracts and sustains people from all walks of life.

The draft Municipal Development Plan aims to offset the above trends by "promoting sensitive intensification of existing neighbourhoods, not only to increase densities and therefore efficiencies in terms of delivering services, but also to provide a wider range of housing choices."³ The intention is to provide and make accessible all necessary housing types, land uses, programs and services to provide for a safe, healthy and sustainable community.⁴

This mix of housing types will allow for a more heterogeneous community to develop because it will provide various housing options that cater to all income levels (rental versus owning), all socio-cultural backgrounds (housing of various sizes), and housing that meets the needs of a growing senior population. The North American population between 55 and 70 years of age are projected to increase by 69% by 2015.⁵ As such demographic changes work their way through society, there will be demand for services, housing options and facilities that reflect these changes. Emerald Hills Urban Village needs to design a long-term plan for services and housing that will adapt and meet the demands of this growing segment of the population.

Emerald Hills has an opportunity to uphold the above-stated principles and values of the Municipality and community stakeholders in its impending development. By addressing issues of equity with strategic design methods, EHUV can become an equitable and culturally diverse community.

3.0 How can EHUV impact on this theme?

To promote equity within a community, it is important to consider broader design standards which can be created from the outset, in order to make the developing community more accessible to a wide range of people. There are several proven strategies available which can promote diversity and equity in Emerald Hills Urban Village. Such strategies include housing options, enhancing accessibility as well as land

¹ Strathcona County Draft Municipal Development Plan. Section 1:1.

² Statistics Canada. 2001.

³ Strathcona County Draft Municipal Development Plan. Section 3.1.

⁴ Ibid., Section 12.1.

⁵ Second Half Strategies. 2003.

use planning mechanisms that foster a sense of community identity, social interaction and social inclusiveness.

3.1 What strategies are relevant for EHUV?

Housing types



Fig. 1 Duplex.

Building form and design have implications for housing choice, allowing for diverse lifestyles and affordability ranges. One of the challenges with this design solution is to gain acceptance for denser building forms in a social context where single-detached housing is the norm. However, there are ways to incorporate multifamily housing in a way that the character of a street with single-family housing is generally maintained. Housing forms alternative to traditional detached single-family housing are more affordable for several reasons, including the reduced cost of land, building materials, and municipal infrastructure charges. Different sizes of homes and different configurations also allow for different family sizes and lifestyle choices for residents. Table 1 outlines a range of housing forms.⁶

Secondary suites



Fig. 2 Quattroplex.

Also known as accessory apartments, second units, granny flats, in-law suites and basement apartments, secondary suites are private, self-contained units located within an existing dwelling. Secondary suites have their own bathroom, kitchen, living and sleeping areas, but usually share laundry, storage space, parking and the yard. Secondary suites typically have lower rents than apartments, making them a more affordable choice for tenants. Another way secondary suites increase affordability is by providing rental income to first time homebuyers. Either designed into a building at the outset, or created through renovation, secondary suites are an easy way to increase density while maintaining the look and feel of single family housing from the street.

FlexHousing™



Fig. 3 Multiplex.

FlexHousing™ is a concept, trademarked by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), which provides residents with solutions for adapting their homes to suit their changing lifestyles. Any home can be a Flexhouse.⁷ FlexHousing™ is an approach to designing and building homes based on the principles of adaptability, accessibility and affordability. Table 2 explains and provides examples of these principles.⁸

Universal access

All buildings and public open spaces should be easily accessible to all members of the community. Although Universal Access standards address the needs of people with disabilities, it is a comprehensive concept that can benefit all users. Specific attention should be directed to the planning and design of: external areas, parking and pedestrian ways, stairs, ramps, lifts, signage, emergency exit routes, interior spaces and furnishings.⁹ Some specific guidelines include:¹⁰

⁶ Metropolitan Design Centre. 2005.

⁷ For more Flexhousing images and floor plans, see the CMHC website: http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/buho/flho/flho_005.cfm

⁸ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. 2006.

⁹ Sustainable Community Design.

¹⁰ Victoria Transport Policy Institute. 2005.

Table 1: Housing Options		
Housing Type	Definition	Design Details
Single Detached Bungalows Semi-detached	Detached or semi-detached building for a single dwelling unit.	- 1-2 units/building - 1-3 floors/building - Exterior entry - Net site density: up to 37.5 units/hectare; 15 units/acre
Duplexes and Triplexes (Fig. 1)	Two or three dwelling units in a detached building. Can house more people than single detached unit with little change in visual character.	- 2-3 units/building - 1-3 floors/building - Exterior entry - Net site density: 10-42.5 units/ha; 4-17 units/acre
Quattroplexes/ Multiplex (Figs. 2, 3)	Four or more dwelling units in a detached building, designed with massing and details to appear similar to a very large single detached house.	- 2-3 floors/building - Interior or exterior entry - Net site density: 25-60 units/ha; 10-24 units/acre
Side Attached/ Townhouse (Figs. 4, 5)	Multiple dwelling units arranged in rows, each with exterior ground floor access.	- 4-8 units/building - 1-3 floors/building - Exterior entry - Net site density: 30-87.5 units/ha; 2-35 units/acre
Stacked Townhouse	Combines side-attached units with apartments above or below. Can be used to achieve a mix of unit sizes, costs, and amenities.	- 8-12 units/building - 3-4 floors/building - Interior or exterior entry - Net site density: 62.5-100 units/ha; 25-40 units/acre
Small Apartments	Four to sixteen dwelling units per building.	- 4-16 units/building - 2-3 floors/building - Interior or exterior entry - Net site density: 37.5-170 units/ha; 15-68 units/acre
Low-Rise Apartments	Twelve or more dwelling units per building, up to four floors.	- 12-40 units/building - 3-4 floors/building - Interior entry - Net site density: 25-200 units/ha; 10-80 units/acre
Mid-Rise apartments (Fig. 6)	Five to eight floors of apartments.	- 60-240 units/building - 5-8 floors/building - Interior entry - Net site density: 65-370 units/ha; 26-148 /units/acre

Apartments over Commercial (Fig. 7)	Apartment units above a commercial space. Residential can also occupy part of ground floor.	- 25-100 units/building - 3-5 floors/building - Interior or exterior entry - Net site density: 65-210 units/ha; 26-84 units/acre
High-Rise Apartments	Rising at least eight stories on a small footprint, this type is characterized by interior access to units, and a limited range of unit types.	- 60-300 unit/building - 8+ floors/building - Interior entry - Site density: 150-750 units/ha; 60-300 units/acre

- Increased walkway widths;
- Smooth walking surfaces;
- Curb ramps for people using handcarts, scooters, baby strollers and bicycles, well as wheelchair users;

as

Principle	Definition	Examples
Adaptability	Adaptability means designing a home for a variety of possible arrangements.	1) Reinforcing bathroom walls during construction to allow for the installation of grab bars. 2) Installing modular kitchen counters and cabinets that can be adjusted vertically on brackets or that can have sections either inserted or removed below countertops.
Accessibility	Housing design that is user-friendly, where its features add convenience and practicality to the functions of a home.	1) Wider than usual doorways allow for greater access whether for moving furniture, carrying an armful of groceries or allowing mobility for a wheelchair or walker. 2) A bathtub with free space along its entire length provides for ease of access, not to mention being less awkward to clean. 3) On grade access provides a convenient and safe entrance to the home.
Affordability	The added features of the design allow for cost recovery over the long-term because pre-engineered features ensure easy and inexpensive change and renovation. It also avoids the significant costs of moving.	Buyers purchase a home that fir their immediate space requirements, with the option of adapting it later if their needs change.

- Automatic door openers;
- Ensure street furniture does not encroach on the clear path of travel in pedestrian areas.

Maximum Slope	Maximum Length	Maximum Height	Landings
> 2%	None	None	Not Required
Between 2-5%	None	None	Landings at 760mm elevation difference are desirable
5%	None	None	Every 9m
6.25%	12m	750mm	Every 9m
8.3%	9m	750mm	Every 9m
10%	1.5m	150mm	-
12.5%	0.6m	75mm	-

Alberta Transportation and Utilities has outlined detailed design guidelines for pedestrian accessibility. Table 3 describes the guidelines for sidewalk gradients.¹¹

Note: Sidewalks with gradients of 5% or steeper are generally considered to be ramps and therefore a minimum spacing of 9m between landings is suggested.

A commitment to “barrier free” design demonstrates an inclusive attitude, acknowledges interdependency of people within the community, and fosters a more integrated community.



Fig. 4 Townhouses.



Fig. 5 Rowhouses.



Fig. 6 Midrise.

Housing Tenures

The land use planning process and relevant regulatory and incentive mechanisms are very important components in producing a diverse community. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has outlined several land use planning and associated financial mechanisms to help promote an equitable mix of housing options. Table 4 outlines these mechanisms.¹²

4.0 What policies and/or programs will add value?

- Create partnerships between the Municipality, Developer, and NGOs and local community groups to ensure there is, and continues to be, an adequate mix of fully accessible and affordable housing units distributed and not segregated within the community, especially with respect to an aging demographic. Partnerships, especially with the local community help create an ongoing dialogue which can ensure existing policies such as the following continue to be met:

5.2 Encourage a mixture of housing types within all residential neighbourhoods to accommodate a broad range of housing needs, incomes and lifestyles.¹³

- Create a policy to review residential development standards to ensure that alternative building methods (eg. flexhousing and building form that adapts to aging and special needs) are incorporated at the initial

¹¹ Alberta Transportation and Utilities. 2000.

¹² Tomalty, R., et. al. 2000.

¹³ Strathcona County Municipal Development Plan. Draft 2. August 2006. p. 5.1.

Planning Mechanism	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Inclusionary Zoning	A condition placed on the approval of a development project for some special component, usually affordable housing. These units can only be sold to qualified recipients, at affordable prices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Significant potential to produce affordable housing, especially when mandatory. - Relatively inexpensive for municipalities to introduce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not popular with developers. -It is less effective in areas that are not 'high-growth'.
Linkage Programs	As a condition of development, fees are paid by developers into a municipal fund dedicated to the building of low and moderate-priced housing. Developers can build affordable housing in lieu of paying fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -They generate money for affordable housing programs in a short period of time. - They are often supported by residents in communities that are facing a housing shortage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commercial development may lose interest, in face of the fees. - May make some developments unprofitable.
Density Bonusing	Developers add more floor area or additional density, in exchange for the provision of community facilities or affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Can establish a substantial number of affordable units when applied to large projects. - Can create affordable housing through the private sector. -Can be used to increase densities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is limited to developers involved in higher density projects. - Needs approval from the community.
Alternative Development Standards	<i>Planning Standards</i> , such as, reduced setbacks and narrower lot sizes; <i>Engineering Standards</i> , such as, reduced road allowance and on-street parking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -These standards can reduce costs on a per dwelling unit basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The savings will not necessarily contribute to affordability, if they are not part of a larger planning framework.
Performance-based Planning	Zoning that is based on the impacts of the development, that are measured against predetermined standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More flexible than conventional zoning. - Allows for flexibility in land use and building which can lead to more innovative housing options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less predictable outcomes for developers. -May require legislative changes. - Will not necessarily lead to a diversity in housing.

planning and design stage of every new residential development.

- Create a policy to ensure that all residences are within a 5-minute walk to either accessible transit or basic amenities.
- Ensure "equity-based" community groups and services are easily accessible to all residents, and promote them through events within the community. (eg. Create a Residents' Association and enable it with effective decision-making power¹⁴)

¹⁴ One Planet Living. 2006. p. 35.



Fig. 7 Mixed use.

- Support local economic endeavors and businesses through specific policies, and ensure they are within walking and accessible transit distance from all residences.
- Build relationships between local agriculture and EHUV (eg. economic, educational, promoting stewardship and community participation).
- Create partnerships between the Municipality and community groups to create local events which encourage social interaction and understanding between all community members.
- Promote activities for all age groups, from mom and baby yoga, children and teens' groups to adult and seniors walking clubs; hold open community and stakeholder gatherings to explore ways to engage different segments of the population.¹⁵



Fig. 8 Flexhousing; with kitchen, below.



5.0 What other resources are available?

Foundation Research Bulletins:

#6: Well-Being, for more on quality of life.

#12: Culture, for more on community inclusiveness.

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Photo Credits

Figure 1: Sharon Folkes, Planner, City of Burnaby.

Figure 2: Allison Jones, Greater Vancouver Affordable Housing Forum, Vancouver City Planning Commission.

Figure 3: Ibid.

Figure 4: Ken Falk, Architect, Creek Side Architects.

Figure 5: Jennifer Little, Planner, Port Coquitlam.

Figure 6: Sharon Folkes.

Figure 7: Ibid.

Figure 8: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. 2006. "FlexHousing™ Features: A Room by Room Demonstration." <http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/buho/flho/images/75658362.jpg>

Contact Us

Design Centre for Sustainability

The University of British Columbia,
394-2357 Main Mall, V6T 1Z4
t. 604-822-5148, f. 604-822-2184
www.dcs.sala.ubc.ca