Canadian Planning and Policy
Aménagement et politique au Canada

Collective Capabilities Complete a Neighbourhood
Community-engaged research and planning in South Vancouver

Liza Bautista, Aphrodite Bouikidis, Prabhi Deol, Farina Fassihi, Caislin Firth [iD],
Meg Holden [iD], Mimi Rennie, Meridith Sones [iD] et Cherry Wong

Citer cet article

Résumé de l'article

Cet article défend la nécessité d'accorder de l'attention à l'agence et à la structure dans la planification de quartiers et de communautés complets, en s'appuyant sur la théorie des capacités collectives et en s'appuyant sur une approche de recherche engagée dans la communauté. Alors que la planification de communautés complètes propose de fournir une infrastructure sociale et physique plus complète aux résidents dans un contexte de croissance urbaine et de changement dans les villes canadiennes, les efforts contemporains tendent à négliger la nécessité de prêter attention à l'action des résidents. La logique et la raison d'être de la planification intégrale des communautés ont évolué par rapport aux origines de la planification des quartiers au Canada, comme nous le montrerons ici en nous appuyant sur le cas de Vancouver. L'application de la théorie des capacités collectives à la planification communautaire complète offre une voie à suivre qui n'est pas naïve face aux défis posés par une approche de la planification participative fondée sur la rationalité communicative. Nous démontrons le potentiel de cette approche à travers le cas de notre partenariat de recherche communautaire basé à la South Vancouver Neighborhood House. La recherche a mobilisé la recherche spatiale et statistique pour documenter l'étendue des inégalités et des besoins dans les quartiers de South Vancouver, ainsi que les capacités collectives des résidents travaillant dans le cadre de la maison de quartier pour fournir des services essentiels et réaliser une planification efficace du quartier.

Canadian Planning and Policy Journal

Revue aménagement et politique au Canada

CIP·ICU
Canadian Institute of Planners
Institut canadien des urbanistes

ACUPP
APUCU

Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canadä

Canadian Planning and Policy is a scholarly publication project undertaken by the Association of Canadian University Planning Programs and the Canadian Institute of Planners. *Canadian Planning and Policy* publishes manuscripts reflecting the scope and diversity of planning theory and practice in Canada. This publication has a goal to provide a forum for detailed peer-reviewed research on planning in Canada that invites reflection by practitioners, academics, and students. This publication is an open-access, digital, bilingual, peer-reviewed journal with a double-blind review process run by an editorial team of distinguished scholars.

Collective capabilities complete a neighbourhood: Community-engaged research and planning in South Vancouver

Liza Bautista [a], Aphrodite Bouikidis [b], Prabhi Deol [a], Farina Fassihi [b], Caislin Firth [c] (iD) , Meg Holden [b], Mimi Rennie [a], Meridith Sones [b] (iD), Cherry Wong [a]

[a] *South Vancouver Neighbourhood House,* [b] *Simon Fraser University,* [c] *University of Washington*

Abstract

This article argues for the need for attention to agency as well as structure in planning for complete neighbourhoods and communities, drawing upon collective capabilities theory and driven by a community-engaged research approach. While complete communities planning proposes to provide more fulsome social and physical infrastructure to residents in a context of urban growth and change in Canadian cities, contemporary efforts tend to neglect or disdain the agency and empowerment of residents. This logic and rationale for complete communities planning has shifted compared to the origins of neighbourhood planning in Canada, as will be exemplified here drawing upon the case of Vancouver. The application of the theory of collective capabilities in complete communities planning offers a path forward that is not naïve to the challenges posed by participatory planning and that views organizations other than the government as having collective capabilities to plan. We demonstrate the potential of this through the case of our community-engaged research partnership based at the South Vancouver Neighbourhood House. The project mobilized spatial and statistical research to document the extent of inequities and needs experienced in South Vancouver neighbourhoods as well as the collective capabilities of residents working through the neighbourhood house hub to provide essential services and do effective neighbourhood planning.

Résumé

Cet article défend la nécessité d'accorder de l'attention à l'agence et à la structure dans la planification de communautés et de collectivités autosuffisantes, en s'appuyant sur la théorie des capacités collectives et en s'appuyant sur une approche de recherche axée sur la participation des collectivités. Alors que la planification de collectivités autosuffisantes propose de fournir de l'infrastructure sociale et physique qui répond aux besoins complexes des résidents dans un contexte dynamique de forte croissance urbaine dans les villes canadiennes, ces efforts ont tendance à négliger la nécessité d'accorder une attention particulière à l'action menée par les résidents. La logique et la raison d'être de la planification intégrale des communautés ont évolué par rapport aux origines de la planification des quartiers au Canada, comme c'est le cas à Vancouver, présenté ici. L'application de la théorie des capacités collectives à la planification de collectivités autosuffisantes offre un cheminement qui conteste la confiance naïve d'une approche participative en termes de planification fondée sur la rationalité communicative. Nous démontrons le potentiel de cette approche à travers le cas de notre partenariat de recherche communautaire basé à la South Vancouver Neighbourhood House. Le projet a mobilisé la recherche spatiale et statistique pour documenter l'étendue des inégalités et des besoins dans les quartiers de South Vancouver, ainsi que les capacités collectives des résidents travaillant dans le cadre de la maison de quartier pour fournir des services essentiels et réaliser une planification efficace du quartier.

Keywords:

complete communities, complete neighbourhoods, community development, neighbourhood planning

Mots-clés:

collectivités complètes, quartiers complets, développement communautaire, aménagement de quartiers

Introduction

This article takes issue with the contradiction between two trends in Canadian community planning today: proactive efforts to plan for complete communities, on the one hand, and inaction on community engagement in planning, on the other. Complete communities planning promises to deliver the physical amenities and social infrastructure that neighbourhoods need to support a 15-minute lifestyle, in which members can meet most of their daily needs within a 15-minute walk from home. Planning for complete communities has the potential to make a welcome difference to the daily lives of people living in higher density neighbourhoods, across the socioeconomic spectrum (Hartt et al., 2022). However, complete communities planning falls short of this potential when it does not adequately factor equity into process and plan delivery, and negatively impacts neighbourhoods that are undergoing change without attracting new development (Homsy & Kang, 2022). At times of change in community planning in Canada, participatory planning theory has been relied on to address this problem; but not these days. Community engagement, whose position in planning practice has never been adequately resolved, is currently out of favour; some planners blame intensifying polarization, others the level of inequality, or distrust, or the loss of the sense of collective interests in rapidly changing cities. This article presents the view that recognizing and supporting the collective capabilities of neighbourhoods is a way to resolve this contradiction, through a case study of a lower income area of Vancouver. The community engaged research presented here offers a direction for planning theory and practice, not a recipe, but it does so with confidence that the alternative, relegating community members to the margins of planning under the guise of completing communities,

destabilizes community building potential when community members need the opposite.

This article presents community-engaged planning research conducted by a partnership of neighbourhood advocates and university-based researchers. The community engaged research recounted here sounds an alarm about neighbourhood inequities in the City of Vancouver and provides evidence of how collective capabilities function in the case of South Vancouver. It demonstrates research into the inequities experienced in South Vancouver and makes the case for the power and potential of neighbourhood collective capabilities to change this situation. Our research action partnership analyzed spatial and socioeconomic trends, documented the services provided and role played by the neighbourhood house, and organized advocacy to city council and staff as well as other public agencies. In sum, we mobilized collective capabilities to argue for complete neighbourhood planning that can meet equity, representation, and diversity goals in times of rapid and uneven urban change.

Context: Cycles of neighbourhoods and planning in Vancouver

The call for open and public participation in urban planning emerges from a commitment to the inclusion of nonexpert voices of the people most affected by a plan, at the basis of planning practice. In Canada, it was formally introduced via the Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP) of the 1970s, as a means for municipal governments and neighbourhood residents to work together to rehabilitate neighbourhoods before funding for slum clearance would be considered by the federal government. This was a responsive move to address the growing phenomenon of urban populism protesting freeways and other unwanted development, neighbourhood disinvestment and decline. The success of the NIP was to be assessed:

"in terms of the benefits resulting for residents of the neighbourhood and the way in which they regard its achievement of their community aspirations" (Axworthy & Epstein, 1974, p. 18).

The first neighbourhood house in Vancouver was established in 1938, but the neighbourhood house movement took off in the 1960s. Neighbourhood houses in Vancouver are an evolution of the British and American settlement house movement. The idea of the settlement house came from Protestant women in the emergent middle class, who mobilized to bridge inequality of living conditions and social exclusion in working class neighbourhoods by establishing spaces and social services in deprived areas. Starting in the 1960s, neighbourhood-focused advocacy in Vancouver played an essential role in directing planning outcomes –and the establishment of more neighbourhood houses. In 1971, the Militant Mothers of Raymur, a group of neighbourhood mothers demanding a safe route for their kids to get to school across active train tracks, blocked the passage of trains until the City agreed to build a pedestrian crossing. Following this, the neighbourhood organizers demanded the establishment of the Ray-Cam cooperative community centre, to hold space for continuing neighbourhood work. In a different working class neighbourhood around the same time, in 1978, one City planner, Nathan Edelson, took up a second role as founding director of the Little Mountain Neighbourhood House, recognizing the essential nature of neighbourhood-led effort to build bridges with City Hall, for social planning effort to be effective (Edelson, 2019).

The 1960s were also the time in Vancouver's history when social services became recognized as a core local government function. The City of Vancouver joined forces with United Community Services, the precursor to the United Way, in 1965-66, to identify 22 distinct local areas, which became Vancouver's formally recognized neighbourhoods. The City then adopted formal responsibility for social and neighbourhood planning, primarily through making grants for social services provision. This arrangement has meant that neighbourhood houses in Vancouver are run by paid staff rather than the traditional model "settler" –that is to say, not leisure class white people doing their part for the poor but professionals who are themselves members of the immigrant groups whose social inclusion the neighbourhood house seeks to advance. In South Vancouver, residents were engaged in local social planning through the formation of a "storefront information centre that quickly joined the NSA [Neighbourhood Services Association] as SVNH in 1975" (Lauer, Yan & Stebner, 2021, p. 55).

The work of SVNH, like that of other neighbourhood houses, sits outside of the direct control of local electoral politics and has typically been apolitical. Rather than advance social reform as a political platform, they have offered "resident engagement through community development with a planning approach toward social infrastructure creation" (Lauer, et al. 2021, p.31). Neighbourhood houses work directly with residents to provide a variety of services and supports such as health care, childcare, education, employment and settlement services. Neighbourhood houses, as a matter of design, are places where residents gather to meet their basic needs and where they come to effectively recognize and advocate for community needs. They are places where communities gather in social purpose space free of user fees or other restrictions. They foster community sentiment and are adaptable to community needs. Neighbourhood houses share a common purpose of local resident representation and social inclusion, a local place-based mandate and responsibility, and neighbourhood advocacy from within. Neighbourhood houses represent a means to amplify the reach of planning into communities, to

deepen listening to diverse community voices, and to improve the prospects of plan implementation.

In an interview-based study of neighbourhood houses in the Metro Vancouver region, Schmidtke (2021) found that not only do neighbourhood houses play a role in place-based change, they "have a profound effect on shaping the community and advocating on its behalf" (Schmidtke, 2021, p.88-89). Looking at fifteen neighbourhood houses in the City of Vancouver, Schmidtke (2021) characterized their relationship with City Hall as collaborative but affected by power imbalance, in that engagement takes place on the City's terms.

The City of Vancouver built a mantra of a City of Neighbourhoods into its comprehensive CityPlan in the 1990s. CityPlan was lauded by planners across Canada and internationally for its open, collaborative process, engaging over 20,000 Vancouverites, in different modes, venues and languages, to join together in long-term comprehensive planning (McAfee, 1997; Seelig & Seelig, 1997). CityPlan's first principle was that "the neighbourhood is the prime increment for change" (Beasley, 2019, p.58). Co-director (with Ann McAfee) of Planning at the time, Larry Beasley, reflected that CityPlan's effectiveness as a tool to guide neighbourhood growth and change did not require "a department of neighbourhoods or neighbourhood-based funding for community groups" (Beasley, 2019, p.107) because, in his view, "consumer preferences and public policy have closely mirrored one another so the government and the people have been in sync regarding how to organize their affairs" (Beasley, 2019, p. 108). The part of the CityPlan story that is less often told is that the work to "perfect the neighbourhood unit" did not ever extend much further than the downtown core. The City prioritized neighbourhood planning where rezoning and development activity were occurring (Punter, 2003).

Neighbourhoods that were not attractive for redevelopment did not attract planning; neighbourhoods with no plan, in turn, have no commitment from the city nor any tangible opportunity to apply either the principles or the specifics of CityPlan. The local planning mantra that "growth pays for growth" coalesced around this experience; but has no answer to the question of who pays for growth that occurs in the absence of redevelopment. For South Vancouver neighbourhoods that sit far from the city centre, population growth is being absorbed largely within the existing building stock. In this context, the City's "growth pays for growth" logic has exacerbated deficiencies and inequities and compounded exclusion from the potential and benefits of urban planning, over time.

The first attempt to supplant CityPlan with a new comprehensive plan, Vancouver Plan, was adopted in 2022. The completion of the neighbourhoods agenda remains a core vision: "Imagine a future where everyone in Vancouver has a home they can afford in a vibrant neighbourhood of their choice – one that offers convenient access to all their daily needs such as grocery stores, medical services, a library, neighbourhood house, and park within a short walk or roll from home" (COV, 2022, p. 22). The Plan vividly imagines a future in which all neighbourhoods are equitable, diverse, inclusive, resilient, and complete. To do this, the Plan makes the case that growth must be spread across the City, with a focus on increasing housing choice through city-wide densification. Aside from the downtown metro core and Oakridge redevelopment areas, the Plan avoids mentioning individual neighbourhoods. Interestingly, the only named neighbourhoods on VanPlan's map of city building blocks sit outside the City of Vancouver's planning jurisdiction, as points of reference only (see Figure 1). When the Plan lists "Our Strengths," neighbourhoods aren't named;
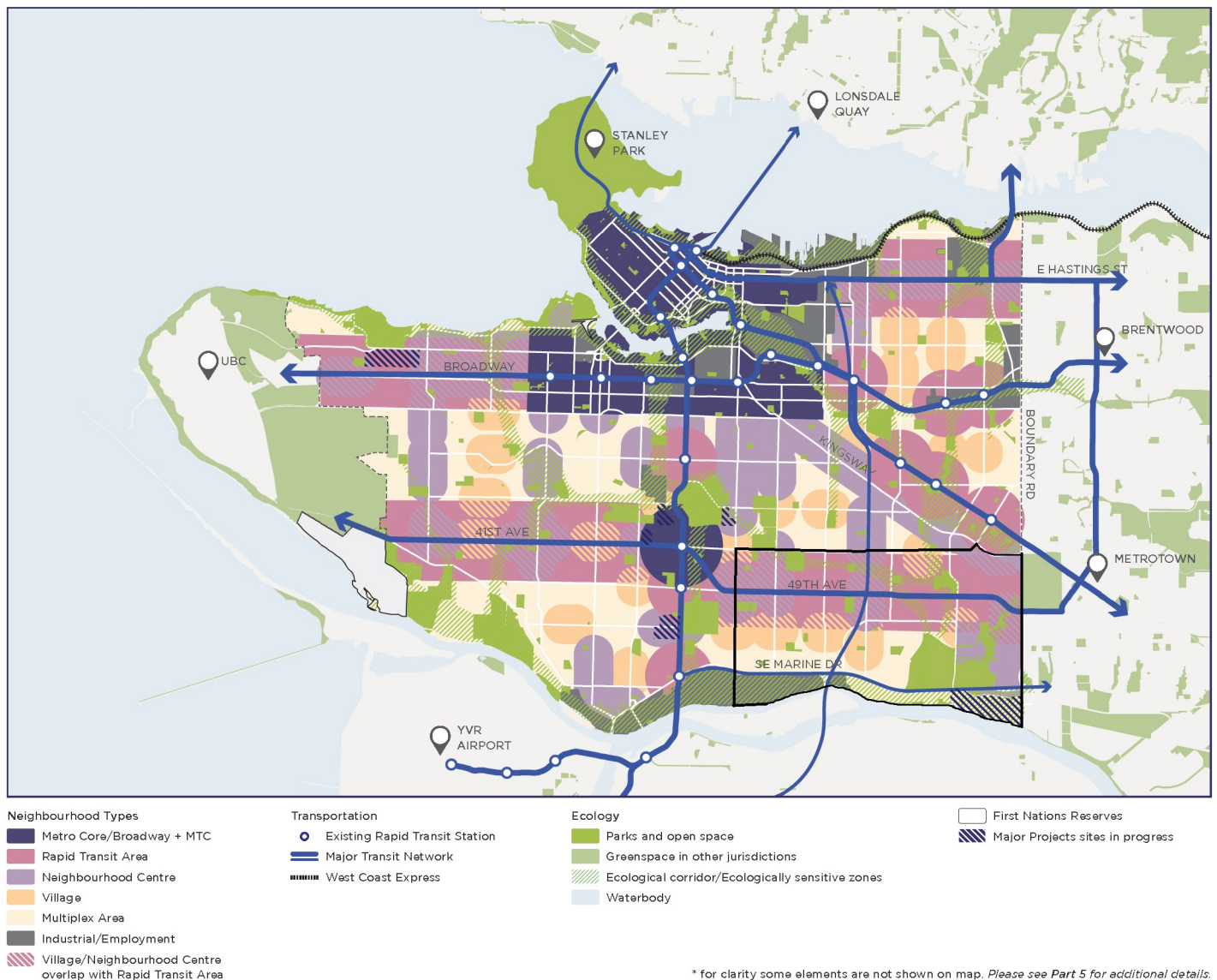
Figure 1. City building blocks, Map 3 in the Vancouver Plan (COV, 2022). Black box in southeast of city added by authors to show location of South Vancouver neighbourhoods. Used by permission.

instead, "underutilized neighbourhoods" appear as one of the city's main "Challenges." The Plan acknowledges a need for the development of future area plans to bring the vision to life, but is careful to make no promises about what areas will be planned at the neighbourhood-specific scale, when, and by what means.

This plan signals that demand for city-wide action to intensify land use to serve and pay for multiple

objectives has eclipsed demands for attention to the needs of existing neighbourhoods. This Plan gives the impression that the City of Vancouver considers it impossible to equitably deliver services, amenities and land-use intensification and recognize the claims of existing neighbourhoods to engage in planning their futures.

Vancouver Plan falls into a political economic trap that is, of course, common in growing cities. The

mechanics of financing complete communities by capturing surplus value from residential intensification means that the neighbourhoods being completed are nowhere near the neighbourhoods with the greatest need for social infrastructure, because they are not attracting new development. They also miss out on the process components needed to determine the infrastructure and services that a full socioeconomic spectrum of community members actually need. These omissions produce complete communities planning that intensifies wealth disparities, power and class differentiation, and missed opportunities for the functional social mixing upon which inclusive cities depend. This pernicious result for cities and communities has been widely analyzed and critiqued (Goossens et al., 2019; Hillier & van Looij, 1997; Janssen & Basta 2022; Laskey & Nicholls, 2007).

Literature Review: Complete communities, the collective capabilities approach, and participation in planning

The components of complete communities planning

Providing access to services, infrastructure and amenities is a core function of neighbourhood planning. Clarence Perry's neighbourhood unit, which quantified optimal population, dwelling unit, and certain infrastructure provision and management targets within a one-mile radius of a neighbourhood centre, is an idealistic early 20th century case in point (Johnson, 2002; Sturgeon et al., 2016). Planning concepts and prescriptive details for the specific components of complete neighbourhoods date back nearly one hundred years (Loo, 2019; Johnson, 2002; Sturgeon et al., 2016). In living memory of some North American planners, the embrace of planning for complete communities across Canada is rooted in the 1976 Livable Region Strategic Plan in Metro Vancouver (GVRD, 1976) while the reference point in the United States is the New Urbanist Movement's Ahwahnee Principles (Pivo, 2005). Today's trendy notions of complete and 15-minute neighbourhoods have come to encapsulate all of what neighbourhood-based planning means, for a high quality urban life (C40 Cities, 2021; Moreno et al., 2021; Mackness et al., 2023; Marchigiani & Bonfantini, 2022; Zhang et al., 2023). What counts as completeness in the contemporary vision is higher density housing, fine-grained planning for active and public transportation, small and frequent parks and green spaces, shops and services for daily life, and multipurpose community facilities (Grant, 2023).

Often neglected in this contemporary vision are the agency components of the structures that make up complete neighbourhoods. Although streets, public and open spaces, built form and facilities, and other components of physical and social infrastructure are essential structures of complete communities, questions remain about what this means for the roles neighbours can and should play. A recent systematic review provides strong evidence that social well-being, including social cohesion and trust, participation, and shared activities, among neighbours with diverse life circumstances and needs is not a synergistic property of a high-density neighbourhood (Nouri et al., 2022). Instead, the promise of quality of life in complete communities demands attention to collective capabilities at the neighbourhood scale. Without attention to collective capabilities at the neighbourhood scale, the complete communities agenda in planning –is incomplete.

Equity and agency in complete communities planning

Growing attention to equity in planning shines a light on the importance of both structure and agency in complete communities. Examining planning inequities across intersectional groups at the neighbourhood scale has been undertaken in several Canadian cities, including Toronto and Ottawa (City of Toronto, 2020; City of Ottawa, 2021). The

American Planning Association (2023) recently released the Equity in Zoning Policy Guide, which lays out specific ways in which the substantive rules and procedures of zoning, the selection and organization of the people charged with doing zoning, and the maps that put zoning in place, can be changed in order to better serve disadvantaged communities. Within such work is an acknowledgement of the implications of not only the measures by which inequities are understood, but also whom is empowered to address inequities, via what communicative and political means. The research presented here advances attention to the collective capabilities needed to articulate, communicate, advocate, and create channels for meaningful equity to be produced and reproduced in planning process and outcomes, over time.

In this way, the case examined here bears comparing to insurgent neighbourhood planning such as that documented by Laskey and Nicholls (2019) with the Charlevoix Village Association in Detroit. In this case, the village association recognized an insurgent planning approach as the only available alternative to relying on the planning department, when the planning department was not adequately responsive. The association created their own organic framework for neighbourhood planning beyond "the intellectual straightjacket and asymmetries of the planning establishment" (Laskey & Nicholls, 2019, p.350), introducing their own knowledge of their neighbourhood, galvanizing residents to engage in planning on terms of their choosing, and rejecting their position of marginalization from the formal powers to plan. The success of the association's initiative consisted not only of the planning actions obtained beyond ensuring that the "have-not residents feel heard," but included the disruption of planning process via the check they placed on the official work of planning from City Hall.

Collective capabilities and planning for social infrastructure

Prominent economist Amartya Sen and philosopher Martha Nussbaum are the initiators of the capabilities approach within human development, well-being, and social justice studies. Capabilities can be thought of as freedoms, opportunities or possibilities. As a framework for evaluating "what people are actually able to do and be" (Sen, 1999) and what opportunities, freedoms or obstacles exist to achieve the life that is valued, a capabilities approach considers individual choice and agency as well as structural or external factors and conditions. Distinct from the concept of capacities, which often refers to abilities and skills, capabilities are complex and reflect 'real' or 'effective' freedoms that people can act on and make a reality (Robeyns, 2018). Sen and particularly Nussbaum focused on capabilities at the individual scale, but the theory of collective capabilities has evolved as the idea has been applied to planning. Collective capabilities can be characterized as those freedoms that accrue to groups, distinct from individual capabilities (Schlosberg & Carruthers, 2010). These may include tangible and intangible opportunities and supports such as social reproduction, political inclusion, cultural recognition, and belonging and participation within a social network (D'Amato, 2020). Collective capabilities highlight the functionings generated at institutions like neighbourhood houses (Evans, 2002; Ibrahim, 2006; Stewart, 2013). They are recognized goals within grassroots and community development efforts (Beldak-Miquel et al., 2020; Janssen & Basta, 2022).

In their work on neighbourhood planning to improve public health, Mukhija and Takahashi (2022) argue that planners should apply a capabilities approach through maximizing changes to urban form that increase sharing of social spaces and amenities, as opposed to a strict emphasis on more new housing

units and private spaces. In a study of neighbourhood action in ten European cities, the work of neighbourhood organizations was critical to satisfying the basic human needs of deprived groups, improving social interaction internally and between local communities, and increasing the political capabilities of these local communities in the wider social and political domain (Moulaert et al., 2010). These findings are consistent with those of Baker and Mehmood (2015) that when community-based organizations operate alongside official urban governance channels, outcomes are more socially cohesive. Neighbourhood-led work at the intersection of social and physical infrastructure is critical to neighbourhood planning that supports collective capabilities and the basis for solidarity within diverse cities (See also: Simone, 2004).

Collective capabilities are implicitly recognized and valued in social planning in Canadian communities. For example, Vancouver's social infrastructure strategy, Spaces to Thrive, refers to something like collective capabilities when defining social infrastructure as "the places and spaces where people gather to connect, learn, and support one another." Notably, this strategy also commits City grant funding to support the social infrastructure work of neighbourhood houses and other non-government organizations. The strategy, however, is not classified as a planning document, and the source of the funds for social infrastructure is not core planning funds; the work of building collective capabilities is delineated and separated from the work of planning, in the City's social infrastructure strategy. We argue, however, that for social infrastructure to improve the collective capabilities of neighbourhoods, this work must be included in the work of complete communities planning and must include the spaces, organizations, and prosocial values critical to achieving complete communities goals.

Participatory planning beyond communicative action

Since the 1960s, neighbourhood-based urban planning has been bolstered by theories of participatory planning, ranging from communicative action to more overtly disruptive insurgency (Friedmann, 1987; Innes, 1995; Sandercock 1998). Arguments in support of participatory neighbourhood planning push back against the critique of parochialism: that inclusive, communicative planning practice tends not to transform but to reinforce existing relations of power, while further disenfranchising those who are already silenced (Hillier & van Looij, 1997). Without denying the existence of parochial, NIMBY, phenomena and the challenges these pose to participatory planning, the planning agency exercised by marginalized neighbourhoods may buck this trend (DeFilippis, Fisher & Schrage, 2010). Notably, champion of communicative action in planning Patsy Healey (2023) advanced a non-cynical solution space for participatory planning beyond communicative action. Healey (2023) builds empirical cases of socio-political transformations embedded in place-based communities working with the benefit of three types of resources: their own energies, their commitment to the future of their place-based community, and the ability to mobilize collective resources. To Healey, these experiments demonstrate the need for planning and other government agencies to recognize that the surest path of progress is not toward community independence from government support but toward mutual support of governments and community members in a spirit of community development.

Research Strategy and Methods

The research reported here addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the key demographic, socioeconomic and spatial characteristics of South Vancouver

neighbourhoods that inform the assessment of social infrastructure need?

2. How well do public funds allocated to South Vancouver deliver on these social infrastructure needs, and what are the equity implications of this allocation, informed by qualitative research with residents, including youth?

3. What does the story of SVNH's food hub, which emerged as a response to food insecurity during COVID-19 food bank closures, reveal about the collective capabilities of SVNH to meet critical neighbourhood needs?

4. What possibilities does the Reframing South Van knowledge mobilization and advocacy effort, offer for the design of a collective capabilities approach to complete community planning led by a neighbourhood house?

The research strategy undertaken and reported here is one of community-engaged research (CER). This CER approach allows us to address the above questions about social infrastructure and planning process in terms of community engagement in planning and collective capacity to plan. In community-engaged research (CER), the negotiation of multiple roles is a necessary and ongoing responsibility for inquiry and knowledge generation. As research and action partners, the authors bring diverse expertise, knowledge and positionality to the partnership and have played different roles throughout the three year partnership, including research design, data collection and analysis, review and testing, knowledge mobilization in different communities implicated in the work. Members of our partnership share an interest in CER in neighbourhood planning in South Vancouver neighbourhoods and supporting the capabilities of neighbourhoods to plan on terms of their own collective making. Generating knowledge through

CER "is predicated on building trust and ... often requires that we let go of our expectations and allow the unexpected to happen in ways that require patience, openness, humility and a sensitivity to what the community needs" (Mahoney et al., 2021,p.6). Each CER has a context-specific uniqueness in approach and methods, matching new knowledge generation with group capacity and political opportunities for impact.

The research pursued in this CER began with collaboration to analyze the extent of inequities experienced in South Vancouver and the challenges that South Vancouver residents face in having their collective needs addressed within contemporary planning processes. Based upon principles of relationship building and knowledge generation from a CER positionality, local researchers in urban planning, urban studies and public health engaged with community organizers at the SVNH over a three year period of open-ended research and advocacy partnership (see Figure 2). In keeping with the ongoing responsibility within a CER approach to connect research to action, we applied the results of this analysis to build collective capabilities in the community. Our story of collective capabilities stands upon the service leadership of the South Vancouver Neighbourhood House (SVNH).

The research, engagement, reporting and advocacy aspects of this CER work have operated at the pace of our relationships, negotiating each research question and data collection and interpretation puzzle, continuing through regular meetings to consider questions that arise, and wrapping the effort into an ongoing series of community events and advocacy initiatives.

The timeline of activities taken by this CER project appears in Figure 3. An initial effort of the partnership entailed neighbourhood equity research. Researchers Fassihi, Firth and Holden and SVNH
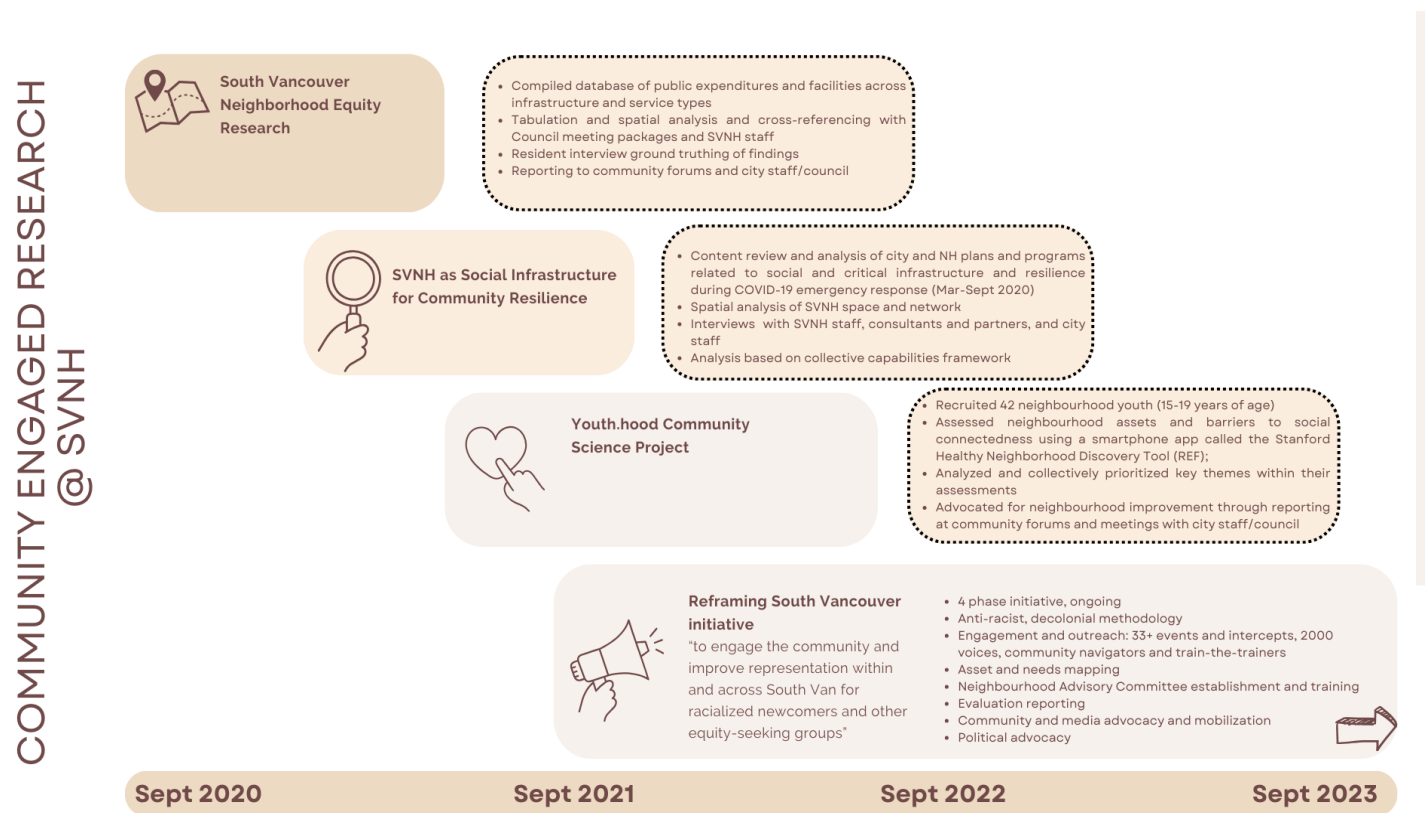
Figure 2. Timeline of Community-Engaged Research Strategies.

leaders investigated inequity and neighbourhood needs, in terms of community infrastructure and quality of life impacts. Our research questions investigated the extent of inequity via tabulation of neighbourhood demographic and socioeconomic data, followed by an intersectional analysis of spending from representative public programs. We compiled a database of expenditures and facilities across types that included development contributions[1], community grants[2] and partner contributions[3] (Holden, Firth & Fassihi, 2021). Data tabulation and spatial analysis validation required consultation of individual council meeting agendas as well as annual reports and capital plans. Identified gaps in service delivery were also validated by anecdotal and qualitative data collected while interviewing residents.

---

[1] Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) and Development Cost Levies (DCLs). Community Amenity Contributions are collected at the time of rezoning for new developments and are intended to pay for amenities for the occupants of the new development. Development Cost Levies are legislated amounts for the incremental costs of new physical infrastructure to serve new developments, but are allocated and spent citywide according to the annual capital plan.

[2] Direct Social Services, Organizational Capacity Building, Childcare Enhancement, and Greenest City Grants. Direct Social Services grants provide funding for programs that address inequity and mitigate conditions that create vulnerability for residents. Organizational Capacity Building grants are intended to improve the ability of non-profit organizations to deliver social services, address social issues and navigate change. The Child Care Enhancement Grant program aims to offset the cost of non-profit licensed, group childcare, preschool, school-aged care and occasional childcare programs that primarily serve low-income families. The Greenest City Fund supports projects that help achieve the City of Vancouver's Greenest City goals, including access to green space, walking, cycling and transit infrastructure, and increasing food assets, among others.

[3] BC Gaming, BC Child Care, Heritage Canada, Qmunity, eMentalHealth, MindMapBC, BC Settlement and Integration Services, Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Social Service Agencies of BC (AMSSA), Vancouver Coastal Health, other City of Vancouver.

Next, Bouikidis analyzed the SVNH urgent response to food insecurity using a collective capabilities framework. When the Greater Vancouver Food Bank (GVFB) was suddenly closed at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, access to food services was curtailed. In response, SVNH conducted logistical planning, shifted priorities and space allocations, and mobilized volunteers to ensure that residents had continuous access to food (Bouikidis, 2022). Our collective capabilities analysis documented the steps taken in policy, organizational and social context of this crisis, through an engaged and reflexive participatory approach.

The third project, led by Sones, sought to extend the study of neighbourhood inequities to understand the lived experiences of youth. Called Youth.hood, this participatory action research project engaged local youth in conducting neighbourhood assessments to identify environmental assets and barriers to social connectedness. Drawing on a community science framework known as Our Voice, Youth.hood recruited 42 youth (15-19 years of age) living or attending school in South Vancouver to: (1) Assess features of their neighbourhood physical and social environments that impact social connectedness using a smartphone app called the Stanford Healthy Neighbourhood Discovery Tool; (2) Analyze and collectively prioritize key themes within their neighbourhood assessments; and (3) Advocate for neighbourhood improvement through voicing their priorities and solutions to city planners, decision-makers, and community allies (Zha et al., 2022). Pairing photovoice and community mapping methods with workshops on civic literacy and design-thinking, South Van youth effectively co-created evidence and advocacy messages to address their priorities for neighbourhood improvement.

SVNH internalized and mobilized all of this work in a strategic advocacy and planning process called Reframing South Vancouver. In this initiative, SVNH demonstrated the positive feedback loop of collective capabilities and seriousness of intention to mobilize the power of evidence and analysis to serve community needs and attract the attention of those in power. This sequence of events is summarized in Table 1.

In this CER partnership, each member brought distinct strengths and resources to bear and, equally part of the process, invested time and energy in developing new skills to benefit the partnership. Neighbourhood house staff, for example, mobilized their place-based social networks to ensure that diverse neighbourhood histories and capabilities were taken into consideration in the research, to ensure that invitations were equitably distributed, on neighbourhood terms, and that they were more likely to get a positive response. Neighbourhood house staff also invested time in understanding some advanced tools of research, via, for example, attending a GIS workshop for community members offered by the university, speaking on a community-engaged research panel, and standing for nomination for a CER partner award (which they won!). Researchers, in addition to collecting and analyzing data and reporting on results, participated in community forums hosted by the neighbourhood house, learned about neighbourhood house protocol regarding when and how to start a meeting guided by the Indigenous land acknowledgement protocol of the SVNH Urban Indigenous Council, what food to serve, how to organize small group discussions to accommodate many neighbours in a tightly-programmed space, and how to celebrate and generate camaraderie along the way.

The CER partnership employed here asserted an additional level of accountability on both community and researcher partners, requiring flexibility to changing schedules and requests, clear and accessible communication, and humility and openness to addressing the power dynamics of our partnership.

Table 1. Timeline of key SVNH neighbourhood action planning and CER events, 2020-2023

2020	**Mar**	Community food bank at SVNH shut down due to COVID-19, leaving no food bank access in South Van; SVNH temporary weekly food distribution and food hamper delivery begins.
	Aug	Weekly food distribution ends to make space for resumption of child care; SVNH and Seniors Hub Council launch petition for more food security resources.
	Sept	SVNH and SFU researchers engage in CER partnership to produce report on inequities in neighbourhood expenditures and impacts on neighbourhood infrastructure, amenities and resident quality of life. Agreement to conduct research on food security response followed shortly after.
	Nov	SVNH designated as Regional Community Food Hub and Vancouver – Langara YMCA Food Hub open for long-term food security strategy.
	Dec	Research with SVNH staff and consultants and COV to understand social and critical infrastructure, emergency management and resilience during COVID-19 response.
2021	**Sept**	Reframing South Van phase 1 launched: "To engage the community and improve representation within and across South Vancouver for racialized newcomers and other equity-seeking groups." Evaluator hired to develop a logic model to guide the initiative.
	Sept	SVNH and SFU researchers launch the Youth.hood study to explore the experiences and impacts of neighbourhood social infrastructure inequities on social connectedness for youth.
2022	**June**	Reframing South Vancouver phase 2 launched: Outreach and Engagement sessions and needs mapping.
	Sept	SVNH Community Forum: South Vancouver Neighbourhoods for People.
	Oct	Reframing South Vancouver phase 3 launched: Neighbourhood Advisory Committee establishment with representation of six sub-areas and ongoing recruitment, get-togethers, idea exchanges, festival visibility, opening of new Southside Hub facility. Training sessions to help NAC members become community changemakers: Welcome and Team-Building; Introduction to the City of Vancouver; Public Spaces and Placemaking; Community Organizing and Campaigning.
2023	**April**	SVNH Evaluation report released: "SVNH is working to reframe how decision-makers at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels of government view South Vancouver." SVNH community forum to address and explain neighbourhood inequities to COV staff.
	May	Meeting with 3 City Councillors, leading to the drafting of a Motion: Addressing Historic Inequities by Improving Infrastructure and Access to Services across South Vancouver and Marpole neighbourhoods.

Table 1 (cont.).

2023	**June**	On June 28, 2023, the motion was presented to City of Vancouver Council: South Vancouver neighbours flood council chambers, over 30 speakers in favor, 0 opposed; supportive media coverage in Fairchild (Chinese), The Province, Vancouver Sun, City News, and Vancouver is Awesome; passes, with amendments and no budget allocation. Neighbourhood bus tour for COV councillors to show work and neighbourhood needs; Letter from Mayor of COV to Province seeking support on matters outside of City jurisdiction.
	Oct	Neighbourhood Forums at Sunset Community Centre and at SVNH; advocacy to local, provincial and federal levels of government.
	Dec	On Dec 13, 2023, Vancouver City Council approved a budget request of $161K to SVNH "to improve social infrastructure and elevate historically underrepresented voices of South Vancouver residents through a series of engagement activities," at the annual Community Services and Other Social Policy Grants finance meeting.

The research team held the privilege of academic titles and credentials, access to data and analytical language and tools, whereas the SVNH staff had the positionality as women of colour who—via their own experience or their neighbourhood work—had personal, emotional, and social connections to the research and outcomes. This provided the research with ongoing, two-way validity checks. Over time, our differences in privilege and perspective led to mutual admiration of the others' capabilities. The CER approach allowed our research to demonstrate, for example, that South Vancouver is comprised of a diversity of neighbourhoods, each manifesting its own strengths, priorities, and needs that change over time and come to a head during a crisis. Whereas the researchers had the conceptual and analytical tools to explain neighbourhood trends, planning politics and decision-making processes, neighbourhood house staff had different insight into these same trends, politics and processes related to "how to get things done at City Hall."

All this said, we also acknowledge that the CER partnership approach carries limitations. Concerns have been raised by the City of Vancouver that SVNH is not formally representative of residents of South Vancouver in the way legislatively specified for political representation. This is a valid critique, but no more valid than the critique of the failure of the existing system of formal representation of city residents when it comes to neighbourhood planning. The neighbourhood house is open to all, by design, and strives to offer barrier-free access to all of its programs and activities. By contrast, a large share of Vancouver residents, and non-citizens in particular, are shut out of formal political representation; nor does the City of Vancouver allocate staff functions to particular areas, unlike some cities whose structures facilitate neighbourhood-specific functions (e.g. a Department of Neighbourhoods). These factors make this concern a case of a pot calling a kettle black; however, the question of capture of a neighbourhood planning agenda by any group or interest, as well as the capacity of any group to carry out a full suite of responsibilities of a multifaceted initiative such as a neighbourhood plan, deserve careful attention and oversight. Since South Vancouver neighbourhoods have never had the benefit of a neighbourhood plan, there is nothing to suggest that the neighbourhood house is positioned any worse than the City to do this; and our analysis will show that there is considerable reason to believe its position is better.

Findings

South Vancouver's growth, diversity and inequities

South Vancouver is home to about 100,000 people, 15% of the city's population. Vancouver has an at-large council, and few elected officials call South Van home, at present or historically. The city's largest share of racialized (80%) residents live here, with many multi-generational households, a diverse range of languages and countries of origin. Many residents are newcomers, including refugees, temporary foreign workers, migrant workers, and international students; the city's largest share of immigrants (56%) lives in South Van. It has seen a higher rate of growth of seniors since 1996 than the rate of growth of seniors in Vancouver overall (COV, 2020). The population of the area has grown more than the case in most other areas of the city. Household size is larger, 2.7 persons per household compared to 2.2 citywide, while the neighbourhood experiences less redevelopment. Whereas the average household in South Vancouver was middle class in the 1980s, the majority of households now fall behind; with an average median family income of $79K in South Vancouver compared to $91K citywide. The area is hilly and large, a 20 minute drive from east to west, with fewer transit services and lower walkability. While more residents rely on public transit for their commute, the majority of commuters (53%) spend more than 30 minutes to get to work each day, compared to 44% citywide (MHMC, 2014).

Across South Vancouver, there are few social service hubs: three community centres, three libraries, and one neighbourhood house (SVNH). South Vancouver is not well served by health, recreation, childcare, education or settlement services. One community health centre serves the entire area. South Vancouver has a shortage of food assets and notably, three hubs providing free or low-cost food during the pandemic, out of 70 such hubs across the city (City of Vancouver, 2021). A recent stock-taking identified approximately 1,000 food assets citywide, only 83 of them in South Vancouver (Thurber, 2021, 22).

These features demonstrate some of the drivers of need for more and better planning in South Vancouver, as well as the outcomes of inequities in planning attention. These characteristics also underline the reduced access that South Vancouverites have to engagement in planning, due not only to the lack of formal opportunities and distance from City Hall, but also to the large numbers of people in vulnerable situations who tend to be neglected in public engagement, including via language and socioeconomic barriers.

Our neighbourhood equity analysis showed that South Vancouver residents confront challenges in accessing the services and resources they need for community development, health, and well-being that require geographical proximity to serve people in their everyday life and reach people during emergencies, and for connecting, learning and supporting one another. South Vancouver neighbourhoods are inequitably served by the City's infrastructure and amenity and neighbourhood planning processes to date, despite demonstrated need among demographic groups recognized as equity-seeking (Williams et al., 2022). SVNH does vital social service delivery work, including meeting the challenge of delivering food services during the COVID-19 shutdown and connecting with isolated residents in need of various supports. The Youth.hood project demonstrated the deficiencies of neighbourhood amenities through the eyes of young residents –and endorsed the capabilities of youth to take action in a collective way, by the same token.

Neighbourhood inequities in social infrastructure provision

Examining the question of equity from the perspective of allocation of public funds, we found

that the City of Vancouver spends substantially less on social infrastructure in South Vancouver than is the case elsewhere in the city. South Van receives fewer supports, in all the ways that the City funds social infrastructure: less than average for childcare, less than average in direct social spending, and in terms of Development Cost Levies (DCLs) and Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) spending, South Van received less per capita by a factor of ten, compared to the city average. This can be shown in terms of four key packages of spending in Figure 3 below; and in terms of investment resulting from redevelopment revenue, according to the three South Van neighbourhoods of Killarney, Victoria-Fraserview and Sunset, in Figure 4 below.

In spite of being home to nearly one quarter of the city's children and youth, only 14 of the city's 85 facilities that support under 36-month daycare and preschool services are in South Vancouver. Based on the level of public funding provided for each new space for childcare, before and after school care, less money is invested in daycare facilities in South Vancouver compared to citywide ($110.30 per child compared to $138.13 per child citywide).

South Vancouver has deficiencies in mobility due to its lack of safe, affordable, and convenient transport options, ultimately limiting the ability of residents to access education, employment, services and leisure. This includes limited sidewalks, bike lanes, bike and car share programs, rapid transit, and parking spaces. The Youth.hood project demonstrated the disproportionate impact of these transportation inequities on the capability of young people to connect and engage with their community. Youth may not be able to drive or access a car and require reliable public transit. In Youth.hood, the need for better active transportation and transit infrastructure to make it easier and safer to get around was among the most frequent neighbourhood needs voiced and mapped by youth—alongside better
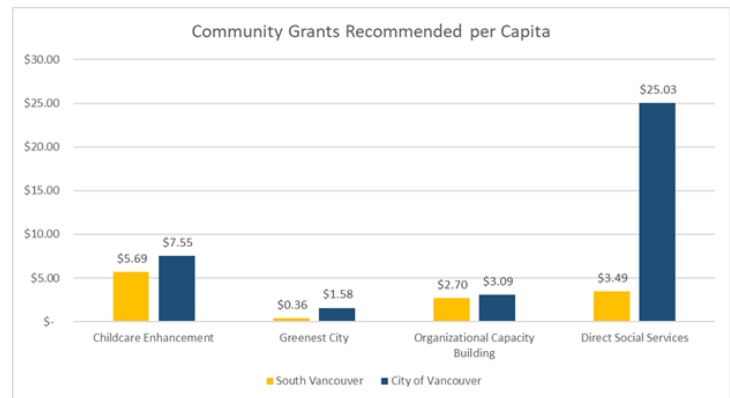

Figure 3. Community grants recommended per capita. *Source: (Holden, Fassihi & Firth, 2021)*
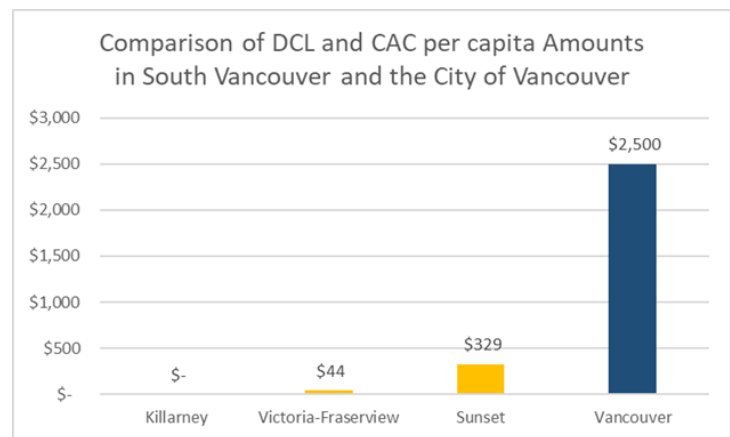
Figure 4. Comparison of DCL and CAC per capita amounts. *Source: (Holden, Fassihi & Firth, 2021)*

neighbourhood upkeep, more inclusive and inviting public spaces, and the importance of honouring and building on existing assets that support both social and cultural connectedness. These findings from Youth.hood demonstrate the links between the built infrastructure of complete communities—transportation, parks, libraries, food outlets, ball courts—and the capabilities to make use of these, which come from mediating factors like safety, inclusivity, affordability, comfort, and cleanliness.

Research into the City's own expenditure records as well as participatory research conducted with local youth underline that South Vancouver residents are offered less than residents who live elsewhere in the city receive in terms of physical and social

infrastructure. In simple terms, South Van residents experience inequity because they do not get their fair share of City resources. In spite of these inequities, South Van has demonstrated collective capabilities to ensure social service provision. An example in point occurred during the COVID-19 crisis, discussed next.

Demonstrating collective capabilities through food provision in a crisis

As one of the few reliable sources of essential services and community building in the neighbourhood, SVNH rose to the challenge of providing for needs across South Van, during the COVID-19 pandemic. During COVID-19 lockdowns, the City was unable to require nearby government-operated community centres to make their facilities available for essential food service provision. Food bank locations, community centres and most organizations and places of worship were suddenly closed. This drove a rapid increase in demand for food supports, both among those already experiencing vulnerabilities and inequities, and those who found themselves vulnerable to hunger for the first time. SVNH, as a non-government organization, turned much of its organizational capacity, staff time, and its main building to serve in an emergency response role, while maintaining regular services and community engagement. Volunteers, local organizations and donors reached out to SVNH to ask how they could help, because they trusted that SVNH would respond to expressed neighbourhood needs. Residents in need also reached out to SVNH, trusting that SVNH would care. In this way, SVNH was the hub for volunteers, partners, residents and others to meet the food needs of residents during this critical time. They did so because they saw no alternative – their community was their shared responsibility.

Staff, volunteers and partners provided emergency food distribution through a weekly food pickup, and frozen meal and food hamper delivery programs. SVNH played a crucial role in identifying and supporting people isolated at home, particularly racialized seniors, and following up with a range of additional resources and services related to food, settlement services, finding housing and employment, applying for government emergency relief funds and more. As a non-government organization with a network of staff, volunteers and members, and a physical facility with space and equipment like a kitchen, freezers, computers, furniture, and an address well-known to many in the neighbourhood, SVNH was in the unique position to help residents and coordinate partners. SVNH, its local partners and residents were willing to take action for emergency food provision but when their child care space was given permission from the health authority to reopen, they faced the difficult decision of having to halt the food distribution program due to shortage of space (Bouikidis, 2022). Along with key partners, SVNH turned to advocacy to find another space to use as a food distribution hub. The City did not play an official role in this search, although some informal help was provided to help SVNH operationalize a new food distribution hub, out of a shipping container –which continues to operate today.

City staff recognized SVNH and other community organizations as 'critical partners' in delivering services and basic needs during the pandemic and provided flexible funding for SVNH to take on this role. However, when the City published a report that outlined its experience of responding to the COVID-19 emergency after the first three months of the pandemic, the critical work of these partners did not receive a mention (COV, 2020). SVNH recognized the need to define a new kind of relationship with the City, discussed next.

Generating collective capabilities by reframing the neighbourhood

Building upon the results of the neighbourhood inequity, food security, and Youth.hood projects, SVNH launched the Reframing South Vancouver neighbourhood implementation planning process, funded by local and international foundations (SVNH, 2023). Reframing South Van has engaged 2000 neighbourhood residents in over one hundred events that included interviews, focus groups, and Neighbourhood Advisory Committee (NAC) meetings. On June 28th, 2023, they brought a motion to Vancouver City Council to address ongoing inequities by improving social infrastructure and access to services across South Vancouver (COV, 2023a). The motion sought recognition of the historic and ongoing inequities faced in South Vancouver and the dedication of funding to advance SVNH work to address this. The motion passed unanimously, an impressive political win for SVNH's first formal political maneuver. However, before it passed, council made amendments that deferred the staff and budget allocation request, and demurred on the recognition of this work as planning. Through subsequent continued advocacy, SVNH was successfully awarded an allocation of $161,000 from the Community Services and Other Social Policy Grants budget – not the planning budget –to continue Reframing South Vancouver through 2024. As such, the City recognized the inequities experienced in South Vancouver but declined to recognize the SVNH as possessing the collective capabilities to implement a neighbourhood plan to address these inequities.

Discussion

This CER brings to light the problems at the intersection of physical and social infrastructure deficiencies to meet community needs, and deficiencies of recognition of SVNH's agency and unique capabilities to garner their fair share of resources and planning attention; as well as recognition of the planning work they are positioned

to do as part of delivering on a complete communities agenda. While the City supports social infrastructure provision in neighbourhoods through grants and referrals, and tracks data for equity in these allocations, it also maintains a strict separation

Figure 5. Killarney Park in South Vancouver. Credit: *Meg Holden.*

between strategic priorities justified by data, and the allocation of core planning resources.

There is at least an error, if not an outright planning failure, in declining to recognize the ongoing efforts of SVNH as participatory neighbourhood planning that is essential to the City's ongoing project of making and servicing complete communities. Around the hub of a neighbourhood house, coalescing in a time of crisis, this CER partnership demonstrates the growth, development and deployment of collective capabilities by SNVH to identify its case for more and better social and physical infrastructure provision, to respond to urgent needs among the community's diverse households and groups, to balance priorities and mobilize a cycle of research, engagement, prioritization, and advocacy to make a meaningful, positive impact for existing residents in the face of an uncertain future.

Throughout this CER, a collective capabilities framework highlights the difference that neighbourhood-based institutions make to responding to and planning for neighbourhood needs, in spite of deficiencies and inequities in resources provided, and the ways in which contributions of neighbourhood work are relied upon but not recognized by City planners and planning processes as integral and essential parts of neighbourhood planning. Resourcing and provision of infrastructure are key to addressing inequities; however, the agency and process side of neighbourhood equity and completeness is overlooked by official planning processes (Mukhija & Takahashi, 2022).

The ability to conduct engaged planning research is itself an essential component of neighbourhood equity. A neighbourhood scale of detail and community-based access to data are necessary to reveal diverse experiences of equity and completeness. This includes access to public data, and appropriate recognition and incorporation of the unique skills, perspectives, and ethics that communities can bring to planning research. These ways include taking on the work of collecting and reporting neighbourhood data and an intersectional approach to understanding equity-based needs. The City recognizes this much in its data for equity strategy, designed to bolster the case and the implementation plan for the citywide equity framework, acknowledging that "data must also be conceptualized, collected, analyzed, and presented in an equitable way" (COV, 2023b). The experience of this CER team was that the mismatch between neighbourhood data needs and the organization, availability, data structures and access protocols at the City and with other public datasets complicated and hampered equity-seeking actions by the neighbourhood house. Our research filled certain gaps with different access points, data sets, and connections to community member perspectives and lived experiences to complete the picture of both need and capabilities (Walker & Derickson, 2022). Neighbourhood voices added breadth to our analysis and specificity to the advocacy priorities that emerged.

The significant emergency role played by SVNH to ensure food security during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the City's usual operations were suspended, illustrates that benefits of a mutually-respectful relationship flow both ways. The CER approach meant that the research team witnessed when the SVNH hit the limit of its capacity to continue to meet neighbourhood needs, during the COVID-19 emergency, and also how SVNH was able in spite of this to draw upon latent capabilities as a volunteer-based, neighbourhood hub to ensure food security, nonetheless. Yet, just as the City did not acknowledge the contributions of SVNH to mitigating food insecurity during the pandemic, the City has yet to meaningfully engage with SVNH as a neighbourhood planning partner, in spite of passing a council motion acknowledging the inequities in city infrastructure and service provision that South Van faces.

While underlining neighbourhood residents' experiences of inequity with verified public data and resident stories, documenting the neighbourhood's capabilities to respond to the needs created by inequities in times of crisis, and providing space and encouragement for residents to come together to express their shared interests, SVNH leaders, partners and residents have demonstrated its readiness and capabilities to do neighbourhood planning. Looking at neighbourhood house efforts as collective capabilities building in planning, in this way, demonstrates the real and growing gap between official planning processes in Vancouver and the work that existing neighbourhoods see as essential for their futures in the city. A city comprehensive

plan that promises complete communities is difficult to justify in terms of the public interest when existing neighbourhoods are increasingly disempowered and incapacitated to contribute to planning their own neighbourhood futures.

Conclusion

Approaches to neighbourhood planning have undergone cyclical shifts since the 1960s; Vancouver is a case in point. The facilitation of widescale participation, seen in the NIP of the 1970s and again in the CityPlan of the 1990s as prerequisite to legitimate neighbourhood planning, has been underlain by a trust in communicative rationality and shared interests across the population. Now, neighbourhood planning is a domain of distrust; the participation of existing neighbourhood residents is presumed to be a parochial barrier to ambitious and effective planning for neighbourhood change. This research points to the need for planners to take another look at what neighbourhood engagement in planning offers to planning for complete communities. In particular, our CER experience points to the prospect of neighbourhood planning that supports place-based collective capabilities.

The CER presented here also demonstrates the risky wager being taken toward complete neighbourhoods planning in the City of Vancouver, today. The 2022 Vancouver Plan takes a firm stand for the need for a citywide approach to planning, while key components of what makes neighbourhoods complete are syphoned off to new strategic policy areas centred on social infrastructure, as well as health and resilience (e.g. COV, 2021a and 2021b). This way, complete communities planning happens in a centralized vacuum where particular neighbourhood histories, attributes and capabilities are assumed to be hostile to the City's development agenda. The development agenda is substantial, with population growth from immigration at record levels,

home sale prices that have increased much faster than wages or inflation, and median rents increasing 30% in the past 5 years. Homelessness increased 33% between 2020 and 2023 as just the most extreme measure of the widespread housing and affordability crisis that lower and middle income people are facing in Vancouver (Metro Vancouver, 2023). The City aims to do something about these crises; but to take action that dismisses the collective capabilities for neighbourhood planning flies in the face of the fact that treating neighbourhoods as if they do not have and cannot develop collective capabilities promises to exacerbate existing inequalities.

Employing an action philosophy of collective capabilities, SVNH has been undertaking neighbourhood planning via the neighbourhood equity study, the food hub, the Reframing Vancouver and Youth.hood projects, and related initiatives that have combined research, advocacy, and engagement. The persuasive results emerging from these efforts demonstrate the inequities experienced by South Van, the collective capabilities of the neighbourhood house to lead neighbourhood planning and the value of a CER approach to reinventing neighbourhood planning, broadly. From a collective capabilities standpoint, no neighbourhood is complete without its neighbours, and we all live in neighbourhoods, and are (at least potential) neighbours. Nongovernment institutions such as neighbourhood houses can serve critical roles to foster and deploy collective capabilities at the same time as they work in partnership to deliver key neighbourhood planning objectives. The list of objectives for complete communities planning at the neighbourhood scale is long; while tangible components of social infrastructure are necessary, intangible, relational and human development dimensions are also needed. These other dimensions straddle community development, sustainability,

equity, diversity and inclusion, and social innovation values, and promise to make community opportunities and freedoms more available, as part of the process of neighbourhood change. Complete communities planning requires the neighbourhood leadership of communities with the collective capabilities to deliver all of these collective goods in the context of diverse and dynamic neighbourhoods.

Acknowledgements

About the Authors

Liza Bautista is Director of Neighbourhood Equity and Employment Programs, South Vancouver Neighbourhood House.

Aphrodite Bouikidis holds a Master of Urban Studies from Simon Fraser University and is interested in research related to collective capabilities, emergency and crisis management, and social infrastructure.

Prabhi Deol is a Community Navigator, Neighbourhood Equity and Representation, South Vancouver Neighbourhood House.

Farina Fassihi holds a Master of Urban Studies from Simon Fraser University and is interested in research related to community economic development and urban analysis.

Caislin Firth holds a PhD in epidemiology from the University of Washington. Her research interests lie in data science for public health, transportation and public policy.

Meg Holden is Professor of Urban Studies and Resources and Environmental Management at Simon Fraser University and is interested in neighbourhood planning and policy, social learning and pragmatic approaches to research.

Mimi Rennie is Executive Director of the South Vancouver Neighbourhood House.

Meridith Sones is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University and is interested in the design of healthy and equitable cities, with a particular focus on the impact of neighbourhood environments on social connectedness.

Cherry Wong is a Community Navigator, Neighbourhood Equity and Representation, South Vancouver Neighbourhood House.

References

American Planning Association. (2023). *Equity in Zoning Policy Guide*. Washington, DC: APA. https://planning.org/publications/document/9264386/

Axworthy, L. & Epstein, D. (1974). *Discussion paper on urban populism and urban policy-making*. Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies.

Baker, S. & Mehmood, A. (2015). Social innovation and the governance of sustainable places. *Local Environment* 20(3), 321-334.

Beasley, L. (2019). *Vancouverism*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Beldak-Miquel, S., Pellicer-Sifres, V., & Boni, A. (2020). Exploring the contribution of grassroots innovations to justice: using the capability approach to normatively address bottom-up sustainable transitions practices. *Sustainability* 12 (9): 3617. https://doi.10.3390/su12093617

Bouikidis, A. (2022). Community spaces as critical infrastructure: how the South Vancouver Neighbourhood House contributed to community resilience during the pandemic. *Master of Urban Studies thesis*. Vancouver: Simon Fraser University. https://summit.sfu.ca/item/35437

C40 Cities. (2021). *15-minute cities: How to create 'complete' neighbourhoods*. https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/15-minute-cities-How-to-create-complete-neighbourhoods?language=en_US

City of Ottawa. (2021). *The Ottawa Neighbourhood Equity Index*. Ottawa. https://neighbourhoodequity.ca/

City of Toronto. (2020). *Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy*. Toronto. https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2017/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-101394.pdf

City of Vancouver [City of Vancouver]. (2020). *COVID-19 today & tomorrow: Guide for planning how we adapt Vancouver*, June 26.

City of Vancouver. (2021a). *Equity Framework: Getting our house in order. Vancouver*, July 20. https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/equity-framework.pdf

City of Vancouver. (2021b). *Spaces to thrive: Vancouver social infrastructure strategy.* Vancouver. https://council.vancouver.ca/20211208/documents/cfsc1.pdf

City of Vancouver. (2022). *Vancouver Plan.* Vancouver. https://vancouverplan.ca/

City of Vancouver. (2023a). *Video: Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities - June 28, 2023.* Vancouver.

City of Vancouver. (2023b). *Data for equity.* Vancouver. https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/research-and-data-toward-a-healthy-city-for-all.aspx

D'Amato, C. (2020) Collectivist capabilitarianism. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities* 21(2), 105-120. http://doi.10.1080/19452829.2020.1732887

DeFilippis, J., Fisher, R., & Shragge, E. (2010). Contesting Community: the limits and potential of local organizing. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Edelson, N. (2019). *Jim Green Memorial Guest Lecture.* Vancouver. https://www.sfu.ca/vancity-office-community-engagement/library/2019/JimGreenMemorial2019.html

Evans, P. (2002). Collective capabilities, culture, and Amartya Sen's Development as Freedom. *Studies in Comparative International Development* 37(2), 54–60. https://doi:10.1007/BF02686261

Friedmann, J. (1987). *Planning in the Public Domain: from knowledge to action.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Goossens, C., Oosterlynck, S. & Bradt, L. (2019). Livable streets? Green gentrification and the displacement of longtime residents in Ghent, Belgium. *Urban Geography* 41 (4), 550-572. https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2019.1686307

Grant, J. (2023). Complete community : planning theory from practice. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 90 (2), 213-229. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2023.2207619

Greater Vancouver Regional District. (1976). *Livable Region Strategic Plan.* Burnaby.

Hartt, M., DeVertueil, G. & Potts, R. (2022). Age-unfriendly by design: built environment and social infrastructure deficits in Greater Melbourne. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 89(1), 31-44. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2022.2035247

Healey, P. (2023). *Caring for Place: Community development in rural England.* London: Routledge.

Hillier, J. & van Looij, T. (1997). Who speaks for the poor? *International Planning Studies* 2(1), 7-25.

Holden, M., Firth, C. & Fassihi, F. (2021). *South Vancouver and Marpole neighbourhood equity report.* Vancouver: South Vancouver Neighbourhood House. https://summit.sfu.ca/item/32344

Homsy, G.C. & Kang, K.E. (2022). Zoning incentives: exploring a market-based land use planning tool. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 89(1), 61-71. https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1080/01944363.2022.2050935

Ibrahim, S. S. (2006). From individual to collective capabilities: the capability approach as a conceptual framework for self-help. *Journal of Human Development* 7(3), 397-416.

Innes, J. (1995). Planning theory's emerging paradigm: communicative action and interactive practice. *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 14(3), 183-191.

Janssen, C. & Basta, C. (2022). Are good intentions enough? Evaluating social sustainability in urban development projects through the capability approach. *European Planning Studies* 32(2), 368-389. https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2022.2136936

Johnson D.L. (2002). Origin of the neighbourhood unit. *Planning Perspectives* 17(3), 227-245.

Laskey, A. & Nicholls, W. (2019). Jumping off the ladder: participation and insurgency in Detroit's urban planning. *JAPA* 85(3), 348-362. http://doi:10.1080/01944363.2019.1618729

Lauer, S., Yan, M.C., & Stebner, E. (2021). History of Vancouver neighbourhood houses and beyond. In Hulchanski, D., Yan, M.C. & Lauer, S. (eds) *Neighbourhood Houses.* Vancouver: UBC Press, p.29-65.

Loo, Tina. (2019). *Moved by the State: Forced relocation and making a good life in Postwar Canada.* Vancouver: UBC Press.

Mackness, K., White, I., & Barrett, P. (2023). 20-minute neighbourhoods: opportunities and challenges. In Filho, W.L. et al. (eds.) *Handbook of Sustainability Science in the Future.* Cham: Springer, p. 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68074-9_172-1

Mahoney, T., Grain, K., Fraser, P., & Wong, J. (2021). *Community Resource Handbook: A guide to community-engaged research.* Vancouver: SFU CERi. https://www.sfu.ca/ceri/resources/publications/community-resource-handbook.html

Marchigiani, E. & Bonfantini, B. (2022). Urban transition and the return of neighbourhood planning – questioning the proximity syndrome and the 15-Minute City. *Sustainability* 14(9), 5468. https://doi.org/10.3390/su14095468

Mayhew, B.W. (1967). Local areas of Vancouver. Vancouver: United Community Services of the Greater Vancouver Area.

McAfee, A. (1997). When theory meets practice –citizen participation in planning. *Plan Canada* 37(3), 18-22.

Metro Vancouver (2023). *Metro Vancouver Housing Data Book.* https://metrovancouver.org/services/regional-planning/Documents/metro-vancouver-housing-data-book-2023.pdf

Moreno, C., Allam, Z., Chabaud, D., Gal, C. & Pratlong, F. (2021). Introducing the "15-minute city": sustainability, resilience and place identity in future post-pandemic cities. *Smart Cities.* https://doi.10.3390/SMARTCITIES4010006

Moulaert, F., Swyngedouw, E., Martinelli, F. & Gonzalez, S. (2010). *Can neighbourhoods save the city? Community development and social innovation.* London: Routledge.

Mukhija, V., & Takahashi, L. M. (2022). Enhancing sharing capabilities: Housing and neighbourhood planning opportunities for improving health. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2022.2052157

My Health My Community [MHMC]. (2014). *Summary results by community & neighbourhood.* Vancouver: Vancouver Coastal Health, Fraser Health Authority, University of British Columbia. https://myhealthmycommunity.org/explore-results/results-by-community/

Nouri, MJ., Holden, M., Sones, M., Winters, M., & Mahmood, A. (2022). *Knowledge Synthesis for the Emerging Asocial Society: Social quality of life in high-density built environments.* Vancouver. https://summit.sfu.ca/item/35349

Pivo, G. (2005). Creating compact and complete communities: Seven propositions for success. *Practicing Planner (American Institute of Certified Planners).* https://www.u.arizona.edu/~gpivo/Practicing%20Planner%20Pub.pdf

Punter, J. (2003). *The Vancouver Achievement: urban planning and design.* Vancouver: UBC Press.

Robeyns, I. (2018). The capabilities approach. In S. Olsaretti (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Distributive Justice.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sandercock, L. (1998). *Towards Cosmopolis: planning for multicultural cities.* New York: Wiley.

Schlosberg, D., & Carruthers, D. (2010). Indigenous struggles, environmental justice, and community capabilities. *Global Environmental Politics,* 10(4), 12–35. https://doi.org/10.1162/GLEP_a_00029

Schmidtke, O. (2021). The eyes and ears of the community: engaging citizens and community advocacy. In Hulchanski, D., Yan, M.C. & Lauer, S. (eds.) *Neighbourhood Houses.* Vancouver: UBC Press.

Seelig, M. & Seelig, J. (1997). CityPlan: Participation or abdication? *Plan Canada* 37(3), 18-22.

Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom.* New York: Knopf.

Simone, A. (2004). People as infrastructure: Intersecting fragments in Johannesburg. *Public Culture,* 16(3), 407-429. https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-16-3-407

South Vancouver Neighbourhood House. (2023). *South Vancouver Neighbourhood House – Reframing South Vancouver Initiative Evaluation Report.* Vancouver: Level Up Planning Collaborative, Inc.

Stewart, F. (2013). Capabilities and human development: Beyond the individual – the critical role of social institutions and social competencies. In Malik, K. & Kugler, M. (eds.) *Human Progress and the Rising South,* 79–112. New York: UNDP.

Sturgeon, D., Holden, M. & Molina, A. (2016). What does neighbourhood theory mean for ecourbanism? *Articulo Journal of Urban Research* 14. https://doi.org/10.4000/articulo.3128

Thurber, S. (2021). *Exploring the creation of a local and equitable food hub in South Vancouver.* Vancouver: UBC Sustainability Scholars report. https://sustain.ubc.ca/about/resources/exploring-creation-local-and-equitable-food-hub-south-vancouver

Walker, R.H. & K.D. Derickson. (2022). Mapping prejudice: the limits and opportunities of data for anti-racist planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association* https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2022.2112743

Williams, P., Binet, A., Alhasan, D.M., Riley, N.M. & Jackson, C.L. (2022). Urban planning for health equity must employ an intersectionality framework. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 89(2), 167-174. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2022.2079550

Zha, C.C., Jansen, B., Banchoff, A., et al. (2022) Integrating Photovoice and Citizen Science: The Our Voice Initiative in Practice. *Health Promotion Practice* 23(2), 241-249. https://doi.org/10.1177/15248399211054784

Zhang, S., Zhen, F., Kong, Y., Lobsang, T. & Zou, S. (2023). Towards a 15-minute city: a network-based evaluation framework. *Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science* 50(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/23998083221118570