

**McCann, L.D. *Neighbourhoods in Transition: Processes of Land Use and Physical Change in Edmonton's Residential Areas.* Occasional Papers #2. Studies in Geography. Edmonton: The University of Alberta, 1975. Pp. xv, 144. Maps. \$3.00**

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are the clear street maps and the detailed 1971 census statistics of each of the twenty-two "neighbourhoods" within the city limits. These statistics should lead Broadfoot to look again for poor neighbourhoods. In the Strathcona area, for example, 53.4 per cent of the population earned less than \$4,000 per year (p. 449). On the other hand, the statistics confirm Broadfoot's impressions of mobility; over forty per cent of the population of the city had lived in their present dwelling for less than two years (p. 446).

While some of the information in The Vancouver Book is already out of date (the Information Canada Bookstore, for example, is no more) the book is a handy reference for greater Vancouver residents and especially for newcomers. The city of Vancouver, the provincial government and the private individuals, businesses and foundations who subsidized it deserve commendation. Davis merits great praise for having conceived the idea and carried it out so well. Future historians of Vancouver will find this well-indexed volume a treasure trove. And, should they want further information, there are selected lists of books, maps and theses relating to the city. Together, the Davis and Broadfoot volumes present a contrasting but almost comprehensive overview of Vancouver and its people.

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While studies of city growth, population trends, and urban renewal as well as reports on real estate and housing abound, little attention has been paid to the fundamental urban process of neighbourhood

transition. McCann sets out to redress this imbalance by examining changes in residential land uses and housing composition in Edmonton. The study is very ambitious as some 90,000 properties in the 1951 built up area are examined over the period 1941-71 at ten year intervals. The purpose is to identify some of the dimensions of residential change by finding out what transitional changes are occurring, where residential change is concentrated, whether there is a salient spatial and temporal pattern and if so what locational factors account for it.

Using simple land use proportions, McCann found that residential growth in Edmonton began with construction of single family houses in vacant lots but such construction gradually declined over time as conversion and redevelopment become more prevalent. Conversion is the structural alteration of an existing building to permit a higher density of occupancy, and redevelopment is the reuse of land through the demolition or removal of an existing building and the subsequent construction of a new one. The percentage of single family dwellings dropped in the 1950's from 90% to 79% of the dwellings and at the same time there was a noticeable emergence of upper storey, multiple family and basement conversions. The conversion rate, however, declined in the 1960's as apartment redevelopment was pronounced.

From the Edmonton residential transition process, McCann detects a temporal sequence to neighbourhood transition. Single family construction dominates the first stage which is then followed by conversion and finally redevelopment marks the terminal period. On the one hand, this temporal sequence contrasts sharply with the traditional Hoover-Vernon model of neighbourhood evolution which was devised by analysing various neighbourhoods in a single time frame. Redevelopment does not follow single house construction as Hoover and Vernon projected but it is preceded by a marked period of conversion. On the other hand, McCann's sequence is comparable to Andrew's model of residential development although McCann detects the inter-relatedness and co-existence of conversion and redevelopment. Therefore the stages of residential change are not as distinct from each other as

Andrew's idealized model suggests. Consequently, conversion and redevelopment interact through time and space to form a continuously unfolding residential landscape.

Spatially, conversion disperses concentrically and outwardly from the central business district or from other activity nodes. It begins in the largest, centrally located houses, spreading eventually to basement suites in the outer neighbourhoods. Residential change is so widespread in Edmonton that dwellings only twenty years old are subject to conversion pressures. Redevelopment begins spatially around the same nodes as conversion but diffuses sectorally and radially in a discontinuous fashion. Contrary to generally accepted notions, conversion in Edmonton was not associated with deterioration although it was related to the oldest houses closest to the central business districts which appears to indicate the importance of accessibility. Redevelopment occurs in prestigious areas where conversion is prevalent but not in areas where deterioration is evident. Lot size, the width of frontage, zoning regulations and age of existing buildings are all pertinent to apartment development. Whereas apartment development results in the waning of conversion in the same neighbourhood, conversion nevertheless continues to persist in other areas. Conversion and redevelopment are processes that continue simultaneously but the extent and rate of change varies in different neighbourhoods.

The author sets out to advance the theory of neighbourhood transition and to provide information for policy makers concerned about residential change. He provides only a descriptive model of neighbourhood transition and it is only partial because the sources of residential transition are only delineated and not systematically integrated to reveal their various implications for the spatial and temporal dimensions. Furthermore, conversion and redevelopment are complex behavioural processes involving many actors who manipulate the political, financial, and social aspects of the processes, but they are hardly analyzed to reveal the necessary conceptual and theoretical elements. McCann recognizes that many questions

remain unanswered, such as what factors trigger the changes from conversion to apartments and what range of conditions is necessary to create a demand for conversion and redevelopment. Because these and other questions remain unanswered, the study holds little immediate utility for policy makers. Policy makers are politicians who want to know how their constituents are involved in these residential processes and what implications changes will have on their welfare. Simple awareness of spatial and temporal dimensions is not going to convince them to make significant changes in housing and zoning policies.

McCann's inquiry provides useful insights into the neighbourhood transition process, particularly its temporal sequencing and spatial occurrences, but much work remains to be done on this complex behavioural process before studies like this one have major theoretical and practical import.

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Foster, Harold D., editor. Victoria: Physical Environment and Development. Victoria: University of Victoria, 1976. Western Geographical Series, Volume 12. Pp. xviii, 334. Maps, illustrations. \$4.00.

While the 'site and situation' approach in urban geographical study generally has been considered for some years to be passé, the upsurge of interest in environmental quality is having its effect in forcing a new look at the old problem of site. The physical geography of the city has become trendy. But part of the new look and new trend is to unite the questions of physical site conditions and processes with those of social origin, and in this a strong focus on their interaction, the traditional point of entry for geographical enquiry, is apparent. Thus the title of this book is self compounding in its meaning, for the volume is not only a study of Victoria's 'physical environment' and of Victoria's