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**Justice Issues Related to Homelessness in Canada**

# Policing Homelessness: The Report on the Research Project on the Regulation of Public Space and the Criminalization of Homelessness in Vancouver

**Strathcona Research Group/PHS Community Services Society**

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**Table of Contents**


List of Maps, Tables, and Charts iv

List of Acronyms Used in the Report v

Report Summary vi

1. Introduction 1

2. Key Issues 5
- 2.1 Regulation of Public Space 5
- 2.2 Homelessness and Public Space 6
- 2.3 Crime, Safety, and Violence 8

3. Homelessness in Vancouver 10
- 3.1 The Socio-demographics of Homelessness 10
- 3.2 The Squats 12
- 3.3 Fear of Street People 13
- 3.4 Resident Mobilization and Public Order 14

4. Methodology 16
- 4.1 Determining/confirming the study areas 16
- 4.2 Developing and testing the research instruments 17
- 4.3 Determining the sampling methods 18
- 4.4 Implementing the survey 21
- 4.5 Implementing the open-ended interviews 22
- 4.6 Collating and analysing the data 22

5. The Study Areas 24
- 5.1 Study Area 1: Commercial Drive 24
  - 5.1.1 General Background 24
  - 5.1.2 Social and Demographic Characteristics 26
  - 5.1.3 Changes in the Neighbourhood 28
  - 5.1.4 The Non-homelessness and Public Order 31
  - 5.1.5 Homelessness on Commercial Drive 33
- 5.2 Study Area 2: the West End 35
  - 5.2.1 General Background 35
  - 5.2.2 Social and Demographic Characteristics 36
  - 5.2.3 Changes in the Neighbourhood 38
  - 5.2.4 The Non-homeless and Public Order 40
  - 5.2.5 Homelessness in the West End 42

6. Findings 45
- 6.1 Public expectations of police and private security 45
- 6.2 Tension between police and homeless people 49
  - 6.2.1 Perceptions of Police Officers 49
  - 6.2.2 Perceptions of Homeless Respondents 52
- 6.3. Criminalization of the homeless 55
  - 6.3.1 Criminal Convictions 56
  - 6.3.2 Calls, Complaints and Disorder 56
  - 6.3.3 Victimization and Access to the Justice System 59
  - 6.3.4 Activities for Survival 62
- 6.4 The Role of the Provincial and Municipal Governments 64

6.4.1 Provincial Policies 64
6.4.2 The City of Vancouver 69
6.5 Collective action can reduce Criminalization 76
6.6 Social/demographic Differences in the Study Areas 79

7. Conclusion and Recommendations 84

References 89

Appendices
Appendix 1: Field Notes
Appendix 2: Letter to Vancouver Police Department
Appendix 3: Project Information for Participants
Appendix 4: Consent Form 1
Appendix 5: Consent Form 2
Appendix 6: Oath of Confidentiality
Appendix 7: Interview Form for Residents, Businesses, etc.
Appendix 8: Interview Form for Police and Security
Appendix 9: Interview Form for Community Police
Appendix 10: Survey Form for Homeless Respondents

List of Maps, Tables, and Charts

Map 1: The Study Areas 3
Map 2: Study Area 1: Commercial Drive 25
Map 3: Study Area 2: the West End 36

Table 4.1: Open-ended interview respondents 19
Table 4.2: Characteristics of the Homeless Survey Sample 21

Table 5.1: Population by Age -- Commercial Drive 24
Table 5.2: Housing Characteristics – Commercial Drive 26
Table 5.3: Education Characteristics – Commercial Drive 27
Table: 5.4: Labour Force by Selected Occupational Sector – Commercial Drive 27
Table 5.5: Income Characteristics – Commercial Drive 28
Table 5.6: Employment Income – Commercial Drive 29
Table 5.7: Household and Family Structures and Characteristics – Commercial Drive 30
Table 5.8: Population by Age – West End 35
Table 5.9: Income Characteristics – West End 37
Table 5.10: Housing Characteristics – West End 37
Table 5.11: Employment Income – West End 38
Table 5.12: Education Characteristics –West End 38
Table 5.13: Labour Force by Selected Occupational Sector – West End 39
Table 5.14: Household and Family Structures and Characteristics – West End 40

Table 6.1: Levels of Contact with Police in Past 2 years 52
Table 6.2: Levels of Contact with Private Security in Past 2 years 52
Table 6.3: How Institutions Deal with Homelessness as Reported by Homeless Respondents 53
Table 6.4 : Feelings of Vulnerability 54
Table 6.5: Most Recent Conviction 56
Table 6.6: Current Justice System Status 57
Table 6.7: Main types of victimization 59
Table 6.8: Who were victimizations were reported to? 60
Table 6.9: Income-Generating Activities of Homeless Respondents 62

Chart 6.1: Homeless Sample by Age 48
Chart 6.2: Length of Time Homeless 49
Chart 6.3: Sample by Ethnicity 50
Chart 6.4: Sample by Gender 50
Chart 6.5: Primary place where respondents have lived in past 2 years 51
Chart 6.6: Respondents with/out Income Assistance in past 2 years 63
Chart 6.7: Proportion of respondents panhandling in past 2 years 63
Chart 6.8: Proportion of Respondents Who Binned in the Past 2 years 64

**Acronyms used in body of report**

| | |
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| ATM | Automated Teller Machine |
| BCJRTF | British Columbia Justice Review Task Force |
| BIA | Business Improvement Association |
| CBC | Canadian Broadcasting Corporation |
| CBD | Central Business District |
| CDBA | Commercial Drive Business Association |
| CET | City-Wide Enforcement Team |
| CPC | Community Policing Centre |
| CPR | Canadian Pacific Railway |
| CMA | Census Metropolitan Area |
| DVBIA | Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association |
| DvBIA | Davie Village Business Improvement Association |
| GVRD | Greater Vancouver Regional District |
| GWCPC | Grandview Woodlands Community Policing Centre |
| ICBC | Insurance Corporation of British Columbia |
| MCAWS | Ministers of Community, Aboriginal, and Women's Services |
| MLA | Member of the Legislative Assembly |
| MHR | Minister of Human Resources |
| MP | Member of Parliament |
| NFA | No Fixed Address |
| NIMBY | Not In My Backyard |
| NIST | Neighborhood Integrated Services Team |
| SPSS | Statistical Program for the Social Sciences |
| SRO | Single Room Occupancy |
| TAP | Tenant Assistance Program |
| VPD | Vancouver Police Department |
| WECAN | West End Citizens Action Network |
| WENCC | West End Neighbourhood Coordinating Committee |

# Policing Homelessness: The Report of a Research Project on the Regulation of Public Space and the Criminalization of Homelessness in Vancouver

## Strathcona Research Group/PHS Community Services Society

## Report Summary

### 1. Introduction

This report documents the results of a research project that examines the relationship between the regulation of public space and the criminalization of homeless people in Vancouver. It focuses on 2 neighbourhoods mentioned, the West End and Commercial Drive, but its findings have relevance for the whole city and possibly beyond. One of the main goals of the Project is to understand the situation of homeless people in the street environment and other public spaces, where the homeless are compelled to live, and how that environment is shaped by their relations with police and other agents and systems of social control.

### 2. Key Issues

Municipal bylaws focusing on regulating the activities that are permitted in public space proliferated across the United States during the 1990s. Many of these laws were directed toward the activities of homeless people, enabling civic authorities, usually in the form of the police, to stop individuals from begging, sitting on sidewalks, camping inside city limits, urinating in public, lying on benches, and a host of other activities. In this decade, similar bylaws are increasingly being brought into force in major Canadian municipalities, or, in the case of Ontario and now British Columbia, by the Province, as authorities cite the need to promote order and public safety on city streets.

Discussion of this type of spatial regulation generally falls into 2 main categories. First, its supporters tend to draw on the 'broken windows' concept of crime prevention and see the street homeless as engaging in disorderly conduct that has the potential to lead to increasing criminal activity. Regulation of the types of conduct carried out by the homeless is thus considered a legitimate effort by the community to control and/or improve the urban environment. Second, those opposed to this type of spatial regulation view it as an attack upon the poor. The homeless, they argue, have little other choice but to conduct their lives in public space. Homelessness is the result of economic and political restructuring and the resort to legal remedies is an attempt to make the poor invisible.

### 3. Homelessness in Vancouver

Homelessness in Vancouver has doubled in the past 5 years, from between 300 and 600 in 1999 to between 600 and 1200 in 2004. It is also on the increase throughout the Lower Mainland region. About half of the people contacted during the 'walkabouts' by City staff and volunteers during their homeless counts were unable to get provincial income assistance. There has also been a disproportionate increase in the number of Aboriginal people who are homeless. The increase in homelessness has been noticed in many Vancouver neighbourhoods as a rise in the number of panhandlers, binners, squeegee people, open drug use, as well as people sleeping in doorway alcoves on streets and alleys, in parking lots, and in parks. In many instances, these have been taken as signs of increasing street disorder.

## 4. Methodology

The data on which this report is based was gathered primarily via 2 sets of interviews. One set includes 80 open-ended interviews that were conducted with members of resident/community groups, staff at community and social service agencies, businesspeople and business group representatives, Vancouver police officers, and municipal personnel. These interviews focused on the street situation in each of the 2 study areas and were conducted between May and June, although some were done in August and September of 2004. The second set of interviews took place through a survey of 196 homeless people in both neighbourhoods which queried them about their involvement with the justice system, interactions with police and private security guards, and victimization. These interviews were carried out from mid-May through August, 2004. The researchers also conducted a survey of census data, as well as media and civic reports, involving the 2 study areas in order to discern any possible social and demographic shifts that may be involved in the response of residents, businesses, and other agencies to the rising presence of the homeless and the street economy.

## 5. The Study Areas

The 2 Vancouver neighbourhoods that served as the study areas for this research have both experienced a significant rise in the presence of homeless people over the past 5 years or more. Study Area 1, the district around Commercial Drive, has been the site of ongoing conflict over public space and its regulation for much of the past decade. Much of this conflict has centred on panhandling, public drinking and drug use, and drug dealing on the streets and in the parks. Many non-homeless respondents told us that the neighbourhood has a long history of tolerance but that in recent years, the level of street activity and neighbourhood change, in the form of gentrification, has tested the patience of many residents and businesses, who have called for more police enforcement. Interestingly, analysis of census statistics shows only limited gentrification in the study area, which has had virtually no effect on the very low income of many of the neighbourhood's households. Street overpasses across a railroad gully, local parks, doorways of businesses, and alleyways provide areas for people to sleep. The area has a limited number of services for the homeless. However, homeless respondents like the neighbourhood and feel comfortable there.

Study Area 2, the West End, has also seen increasing conflict around public space, primarily over the past 3 years, as more and more people sleep and live in the parks and on the streets. To some extent, the rise in homelessness here is likely a result of its proximity to downtown Vancouver. The MLA for the area helped introduce the *Safe Streets Act* from Ontario, which has recently been enacted by the British Columbia government. It effectively bans squeegeeing and seeks to control panhandling. The West End has copious areas in which the homeless can sleep and a network of services that extends into the downtown area. As on Commercial Drive, non-homeless respondents cited the neighborhood's history of tolerance but attributed increasing antagonism toward the homeless to the latter's increasing numbers and gentrification, not just of the West End but of the whole downtown peninsula. Census data shows greater evidence of gentrification in this study area, as income and other indicators have increased.

## 6. Project Findings

The findings are organized according to 6 hypotheses about the criminalization of homelessness and the regulation of public space:

- ***6.1 The public has expectations that police and private security will 'solve' the issues raised by the increasing presence and activities of homeless people in public space.***

Interviews with residents, social service agencies, and businesses in both neighbourhoods suggest that there are 2 distinct groups in each one. One group advocates punitive measures, including more involvement of the police, courts, and prisons to confront what they see as

disorderly conduct in the streets. The second group opposes the use of police enforcement to deal with what it sees as a social problem. However, members of both groups cite the need for more affordable housing, drug and alcohol treatment, and other services. Most respondents told us that the situation could only be solved by the involvement of senior levels of government, and that police enforcement is best used to respond to threats to public or individual safety and should not be responsible for resolving conflicts caused by the use of public space by homeless people.

However, police express frustration at the pressure they feel is being exerted on them by both groups to solve the problems associated with homelessness. They often feel 'under siege' as a result of persistent complaints from some members of the public. Although they lament the lack of manpower and the leniency of the criminal justice system in their efforts to deal with street order, most police officers see homelessness and its associated issues as a social, rather than a law enforcement, problem. They also cite gentrification in both neighbourhoods as an issue in what they perceive as growing intolerance of street disorder. One of the main frustrations expressed by the police is that residents, business people, and others believe they have a 'magic wand' in dealing with problems generated by the homeless when in fact their 'hands are tied', and most often unless an actual offence has occurred the most they can do is to move people along.

- ***6.2 Demands for police intervention result in increasing tension between public police/private security agents and homeless people.***

Despite their admitted inability to deal effectively with homeless and the admission that the problem is a social and not a police one, more police officers than citizen's and business people were likely to say that more police, better and enforceable by-laws, and stiffer criminal justice sanctions were required to reduce the homeless/street problem. A prevailing theme in the police interviews is the difficulty in getting street people to utilize existing services, even if they need help and are referred by police. Police, as well as other respondents, told us that many people will often refuse to use shelters, even when informed about vacancies, because of inflexible rules and /or because of fears of violence and victimization. At the same time, many police respondents said they see little evidence of proactive help by formal services for people living on the street. A number of police respondents stated that many homeless/street people do not have the capacity to get themselves to social and or legal services and require more assistance than a simple referral can provide.

Police also feel that their interactions with the growing number of homeless people present increasing danger because of the escalating use of methamphetamine ('crystal meth') and the weapons that many homeless individuals carry for self-protection. Some police respondents told us that more homeless people now hide weapons on their person or in their baggage while sleeping as a defense against attacks by other street people and/or by people on drugs or by non-homeless people. Police unease in dealing with the homeless has been heightened by changes they have seen in the characteristics and demographics of the street population over the past five years. Several respondents argued that street people are now more violent because of drugs like crystal meth and/or are more brazen in their dealings with police and the public. Drugs and mental health problems are huge issues for police when dealing with homeless people.

Private security guards have a very different and a much more circumscribed perception of their role in the community and in their dealings with homeless people than do the public police. Private security is hired specifically to protect private property so most security guards see their primary responsibility as being to the businesses or institutions that pay them rather than to the wider community. However, private security is only a factor in the West End, where 35% of homeless respondents reported frequent contact with them. Eighty-three percent (83%) of homeless respondents on Commercial Drive reported very little contact with private security over the past 2 years.

More than half of the overall homeless sample said they had frequent contact with police over the past 2 years, although this was higher in the West End and somewhat lower on Commercial Drive. Homeless respondents reported that their contacts with police were mostly informal and friendly. Those reporting 'unfriendly' responses from the police totaled 29%. Notwithstanding this,

more than half of homeless respondents believed that the police dealt 'poorly' with the homeless. Interestingly, this opinion differed between neighbourhoods, with more than 2/3 of Commercial Drive homeless respondents echoing this, compared to slightly less than half of those in the West End. Similar proportions believed that the police care 'very little' or 'not at all' about the well-being of the homeless. However, when asked about their *own* personal experiences with police they are more positive. Generally, homeless respondents believe that community agencies treat them the best.

Feelings of vulnerability are an issue for many homeless respondents. Although large numbers – two-thirds –do not feel vulnerable during the day, the number decreases at night, when over half feel 'very 'or somewhat 'vulnerable'. Men and women reported different reasons for feelings of vulnerability. Women were more concerned about how the community treats them and about being judged, whereas men were more concerned about violence from drunken groups of non-homeless youth and the behaviour of police. Nearly two-thirds of homeless respondents also reported increasing conflict between homeless people over the past 2 years.

Most homeless respondents expressed some feeling of belonging in the communities where they were interviewed, with nearly three-quarters saying they felt 'part of the neighbourhood'. There were significant differences between the study areas, however. Eighty-one (81%) percent of Commercial Drive respondents felt 'part of neighbourhood' compared to only 68% of those in the West End.

- **6.3. *Increasing regulation and enforcement of public space will result in the criminalization of the homeless***

The report examines the criminalization of the homelessness in 2 related ways. First, the report examines the interaction between homeless respondents and the justice system. Most of the calls that come to police about the homeless are in the form of nuisance or annoyance calls rather than criminal offence calls. Annoyance calls have increased significantly in the past four years. While there is an increase in drug dealing, drug- related crime and in the use of methamphetamine, public disorder crimes and the enforcement of municipal by-laws such as those relating to panhandling have not increased in similar proportions – even though most homeless and non-homeless respondents would argue that there have been large and very noticeable increases in the number of street people in the West End. Police respondents told us that their calls have increased because of the increase in the number of private security personnel who frequently call on police—though private security respondents reported that they rarely called police. When non-homeless residents and businesses make complaints, both police and private security say that they have few options in dealing with the homeless, other than telling them to leave the space they are occupying.

Nearly three-quarters of the homeless respondents sampled said they had been convicted of a criminal offence. Of those, 54% said that their most recent conviction was more than 2 years ago. Thirty-one percent (31%) said they had a conviction within the past 6 months and 15% said 6 months to 2 years ago. Only 12% of homeless respondents said they had *not* been victimized in the past two years. Forty percent (40%) of those had been suffered victimization of their person, 35% 'person and property' and 24% 'property' victimization. As mentioned already, drunken gangs/violence/young people, drug users/dealers, police behaviour, and growing conflict between street people are the factors that dispose homeless people to feeling vulnerable to victimization. Police perceptions about victimization were similar to those expressed by homeless respondents–except, of course, the 'police behaviour' factor. Police believe that homeless people are mainly vulnerable to victimization by other homeless people but also mentioned that citizens constantly harass street people and some (especially those who come into downtown peninsula from outside areas) often actively abuse and assault them. However, they also say that few homeless people complain to police about victimization. One police officer put the dilemma for homeless in simple terms: 'no-one has friends on the street'.

Among service providers who were asked about victimization of the homeless and whether such incidents were ever reported, either to them or the police, the general consensus was that street

people are often victimized by the police, by other street people, by drug dealers, and occasionally by non-street involved citizens. The victimization by police often takes the form of threats, disrespect, and occasionally physical abuse. In the case of other street people, victimization is usually in the form of personal violence or property theft. The non-street involved citizen victimization (other than verbal abuse) occurs in the downtown and involves young males from out of the city coming out of bars drunk and attacking street people, sometimes quite viciously.

Of those who were victimized, 81% did not report the victimization, 13% reported to a police officer or a community policing center, 5% to another source and/or to more than one place; and 1% to staff of an agency. Of the 21 respondents who reported their victimization to police or a community policing center, 14% said the police/center were 'very responsive', 19% said 'somewhat' responsive and 67% said 'not' responsive. The numbers who reported to people/agencies other than the police are too small to be presented individually but, collectively, 33% said they were 'very responsive'; 25% said 'somewhat responsive'; 21% said 'not responsive'; and another 21% said they didn't know.

Of those who *did not* report their victimization and answered the question 'why not', 41% said it 'would do no good/wouldn't be taken seriously', 26% said they did not 'want to rat/could take care of self', 13% said it was 'too much of a hassle'; 10% said it was 'too dangerous/fear of retaliation', 5% said they 'distrusted police', and another 5% said they didn't know why or had another reason. Seventy percent (70%) of those who responded to a question about whether reporting depends on the identity of the victimizer said that they would not report the incident regardless of who had victimized them.

Not surprisingly, more than half of the homeless respondents felt that they have no access to the justice system. Most agency and resident respondents agreed, telling us that the most effective way for a homeless person to get access to the justice system is to be arrested. According to service providers, homeless people who are victimized tend to rely on each other for support, essentially creating street-families for group protection.

The second perspective on criminalization involves an examination of how the homeless respondents generate income. The data show that many of the most oft-used forms of income-generation are precisely those forms of conduct which are in the process of being criminalized. Binning and panhandling, which are practiced 'often' or 'sometimes' over the past 2 years by 66% and 56%, respectively, of respondents. Involvement in the drug trade came in 3rd place, with 15% saying they sell drugs 'often' and another 25% doing so 'sometimes'. Squeegeeing and sex work have the lowest participation rates in terms of income generating activities. Almost 87% of respondents 'rarely or never' engage in squeegeeing, while 91% are 'rarely or never' involved in the sex trade. However, of the 9% of respondents said they were involved in the sex trade, the difference between men and women is significant: one-quarter of the 37 female respondents reported occasional or frequent sex trade involvement in the past 2 years, compared to only 6% of males.

All of these activities are objects of some form of regulation, ranging from Criminal Code legislation to municipal by-laws. Squeegeeing and panhandling have now been constituted as provincial offenses. Binning is becoming an object of increasing focus as proposals for licensing of binners or locking garbage bins have been advanced. The problematic nature of such regulation is apparent when we look at the proportion of respondents who derive their income from employment and/or income assistance, as 84% of respondents have 'rarely or never' had steady employment over the past 2 years, while 43% told us that they 'rarely or never' have used income assistance over the same period. A further 19% said they only 'sometimes' used income assistance over the past 2 years. Thus, the majority of people in our homeless sample did not make steady use of social assistance over the past 2 years. Of this group, 2/3 said they had been in Vancouver for 2 years or more and a similar proportion reported being homeless for one year or more.

Moreover, not only did large numbers of respondents report involvement with informal income-generating activities, many reported total reliance on them. More than one-third (36%) of the total pool of respondents had neither income assistance nor steady employment over the past 2 years. And if the category is expanded to include those who used income assistance only 'sometimes', the proportion rises to more than half (53%) of all respondents with only partial or no access to assistance and no steady employment.

- ***6.4 The provincial and municipal governments play an active role in the criminalization of homeless people.***

Both the Provincial and Municipal governments play a role in the process of criminalization via the regulation of public space as well as other policies and programs that have a bearing on homelessness. At the provincial level, structural changes to the income assistance system and the provision of subsidized housing since 2001 have meant that the government has operated in a diminished capacity with regard to homelessness. In 2004 the MLA for the Vancouver-Burrard constituency (which includes the West End) introduced a private member's bill closely based on Ontario's *Safe Streets Act*, together with an Amendment to the Trespass Act that would enable private security guards to apprehend individuals and hold them for the police. Despite a fierce controversy over these measures, the government took them on and approved them as laws. They are now in effect.

This legislation had significant support from downtown business organizations, who organized the Safe Streets Coalition to support it. In fact, the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association told readers of its newsletter it had 'fostered' the idea in 2002, a year before the MLA started talking about the concept of a *Safe Streets Act*.

In addition to the *Safe Streets Act*, the Provincial government is involved in 2 other initiatives that may affect the status of homeless people in regards to the regulation of public space. The Street Crime Working Group of the BC Justice Review Task Force carries the mandate of 'defining the nature and magnitude of street crime and disorderly behaviour in Vancouver' and recommending solutions to the legal problems this carries. The Premier has also formed a Task Force on Homelessness, composed of himself, some cabinet ministers, and the Mayors of BC's largest urban areas (including Vancouver). Although the precise charge of the task force is unclear, it seems to be involved in assessing proposals to remedy homelessness.

The City opposed the Safe Streets legislation and the Mayor and other civic politicians blamed provincial government policies for the rise in homelessness and problems on the street. This view was reflected by virtually all the civic staff who were interviewed for this project, some of whom noted a relationship between the doubling of homelessness in the city between 2002 and 2004 and changes to the welfare system with regard to both income assistance and youth and family policy. Only 1 city staffer who was interviewed for this project expressed any support for more bylaw or criminal code regulation of conduct in public space. However, it should be noted that the Vancouver Police Department, which is a civic body, openly supported the bills.

Despite the Province's intervention, the City is the primary level of government with regard to homelessness, particularly in terms of issues of spatial regulation and public order, because it is the only government with agencies that deal directly with people at the street level. City police and staff, rather than those of the Province, have to both implement and deal with the consequences of the *Safe Streets Act*. Although even senior City management personnel take citizen complaints via letters, email, and telephone, street level issues surrounding homelessness are dealt with in 3 main ways: via the police; the Tenant Assistance Program; and the Neighbourhood Integrated Services Team. Civic action around homelessness has also included a panhandling control bylaw, an anti-camping bylaw, and, most recently, a process of community consultation framed by the notion of 'neighbourhood liveability'.

The Vancouver Police Department is often the first frontline agency that is called in to deal with issues around homelessness. However, the police also work with other civic departments and, more recently, with private sector agencies, around street order and street crime issues. Operation Cooperation involved the coordination of police efforts in the downtown over a 4-day

period with private security agents patrolling in the area. The project focused on capturing individuals who were seen engaging in stealing from cars, parking meters, and parking lots.

The main policing policy strategy that was mentioned by respondents, both police and non-police, was the Citywide Enforcement Team (CET) project that was implemented in 2003 to disrupt the street drug market in the Downtown Eastside by reallocating police personnel to that neighbourhood from other parts of the city. In particular, respondents argued that at least some of the open drug dealing and drug use, panhandling, and homelessness in our 2 study areas could be attributed to displacement from the Downtown Eastside as the result of more intensive enforcement. Data from the official evaluation of the CET indicates that some displacement likely occurred. However, preliminary analysis of data from our survey of homeless respondents indicates that relatively few people in either study area used services or were involved in activities in the Downtown Eastside.

Community Police Centres provide another important site for policing with regard to homelessness. CPC's are operated through partnerships of non-profit crime prevention societies and the police department. Each has a liaison officer attached to it and, among other things, CPC volunteers in some neighbourhoods (including our 2 study areas) patrol the streets and alleys, looking for suspicious activities and safety hazards which are then relayed to the police.

The second civic role in relation to homelessness involves a Relocation Officer in the Tenant Assistance Program, whose time is dedicated to working with homeless people. This staffer organizes and conducts the bi-annual counts of the homeless population across the city as well helping individuals find shelter and/or housing. Although the City funds non-profit organizations that work with homeless people, including outreach projects, this is the only civic staff position that deals directly with homeless people in this capacity. As a result, the Relocation Officer is probably the key street level point-person on this issue, receiving referrals, as well as complaints, from individuals, community groups, the police, and provincial agencies. Respondents among the police, service providers, and community groups told us over and over again that a vital instrument in confronting homelessness should be hiring '5 more' of the Relocation Officer.

The Relocation Officer also participates in the Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams (NIST) in neighbourhoods where homelessness is an issue. The NIST is the City's third street-level approach to homelessness, although its mandate is much broader. Twenty-two teams operate in Vancouver's 24 local planning areas. Each team combines representatives from the City departments that deal with regulatory, public realm, and social issues, and other levels of government may also be represented. In the case of homelessness, particularly where it intersects with the street scene around situations like panhandling, noise and garbage from binning, people sleeping in doorways, parking garages, and parks, public drug use and dealing, mental health, informal street markets, squatting, and petty crime, the NIST serves as the mechanism for coordinating action by appropriate agencies.

However, the City is limited in its ability to deal with many of these situations, or even with the generalized problems which they manifest. One manager argued that the civic jurisdiction is restricted to managing the issues associated with homelessness rather than directly tackling their causes and providing long-term solutions. Two examples of such management are the panhandling and camping by-laws. In 1998, citing business improvement associations as key actors in the concern about panhandling, City Council passed a by-law that sought to regulate panhandling. However, in response to a charter challenge to the by-law in 2001, the City Manager advised Council to repeal the panhandling by-law and replace it with 'provisions to control obstructive solicitation for donations' in the Street and Traffic by-law. Then, in 2003, in response to the various occupations of City land that were then underway, the present City Council passed a by-law prohibiting camping on civic properties.

In order to deal with a generalized anxiety about homelessness and street disorder, the Mayor of Vancouver organized a series of 'consultations' and forums in the winter of 2003 – 04, the theme of which was 'Neighbourhood Liveability and Safety'. Out of this process was developed recommendations designed to enhance street safety through increasing the number of police

constables and calling for increasing senior government funding for programs and housing, as well as more revenue sharing with municipalities and tighter regulation of methamphetamine, or 'crystal meth', the new street drug of choice. In particular, the Mayor recommended a community-level pilot project modeled on the NIST that would bring representatives from a variety of social categories, including businesses, service agencies, community organizations, and others, together to determine the key focii for improving local liveability and safety.

- ***6.5 Criminalization and incarceration of homeless people can be reduced via collective action.***

This recommendation for a local-level pilot project has been operationalized in the form of the West End Neighbourhood Coordinating Committee (WENCC). The project is intended to address the fact that even proponents of the *Safe Streets Act* have said that it is not the solution to homelessness and street disorder. There is a broad consensus among our interview respondents that both the federal and provincial governments are not doing their job. Police respondents at all levels were probably the clearest and most forceful about this issue. Although some people thought the City should be doing more as well, most believed that the municipal government is stymied by jurisdictional restrictions, as well as a lack of resources and support from the senior levels.

The City has thus convened a committee composed of representatives from a range of organizations, including resident and business groups, social-service agencies, the police, and civic staff to formulate solutions to the street situation in the West End. A key issue that remains unstated, at this juncture, is the status of the people who will be targeted through their involvement of the Committee's top 5 priorities for action. 'Homeless people' are the key priority, and the data gathered through this project shows that many of those we interviewed are involved in a range of activities that fall under some of the other priority areas with which the WENCC will concern itself. However, although 2 or 3 members of the Committee work with homeless people, there is otherwise no representation from among the ranks of the homeless, let alone *direct* representation. However, a number of respondents told us that direct engagement between the homeless and non-homeless, as well as the 'street' and non-street, communities are important as a means of developing a resolution to these issues.

- ***6.6 Social and demographic differences between neighbourhoods influence the public response to the presence of homeless people.***

Although the 2 study areas have some significant social and demographic distinctions, the key difference between the overall responses of each area to the presence of homeless people seems to be geographical. Because it is adjacent to downtown, some West End groups have developed close links with interests in this neighbouring district. Hence, some West End organizations were involved in the Safe Streets Coalition which formed, primarily by business groups, to promote the legislation. Another key difference is the socio-economic trajectory of each study area and where the homeless stand in relation to it. Overall, respondents in both neighbourhoods told us that their respective areas have historically been tolerant of difference, but that this tolerance is eroding under the twin pressures of increasing gentrification and increasing street poverty/ homelessness. However, only in the West End did this thesis hold. Although Study Area 1 has some indicators of gentrification, such as rising occupational status and educational attainment, its income indicators were essentially flat during the 1990s. Thus, the social contrast between the street homeless and the non-homeless population in Study Area 1 is perhaps less than it is in Study Area 2.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The City of Vancouver's Draft Homelessness Action Plan has forwarded more than 80 recommendations calling for, among other things, more and a greater variety of affordable housing, improved access to addiction and mental health services, and higher shelter assistance and minimum wage rates. The findings of this report echo these recommendations. The key step in resolving at least some, although not likely all, of the spatial conflict around the street economy in Vancouver is to begin dealing directly with homelessness—to provide the housing and support

services necessary to get people off of the street. However, until this actually happens, the findings show that there are a series of interim measures that can be taken to reduce criminalization and the intensifying regulation of the lives of the homeless.

- **Recommendation 1**: *The City should continue and expand its West End pilot neighbourhood project by engaging directly with the street homeless population in the area.* Although this is a long term process and needs to proceed from the bottom up, it is also possible to engage with people using a multi-level approach in which grass roots organizers seek to build an autonomous movement, while non-profit community service agencies and civic staff seek to work with people from the street. The development of the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users shows that an autonomous organization based at the street level is possible, although it has required infrastructural support from government and non-profit organizations. At the same time, there are a number of organizations both in the West End and the downtown area that work with homeless people and which provide points of entry for contact and engagement via meetings, forums, etc.

- **Recommendation 2**: *Outreach services should be expanded in both study areas, but also in other neighbourhoods where there is a significant presence of homeless people*. The City of Vancouver's Tenant Assistance Program currently provides one outreach worker who deals with homelessness and whose efforts cover the whole city. The BC Centre for Disease Control also operates a Street Nurse program that is active in both study areas as well as in other neighbourhoods. The City's Draft Homelessness Action Plan notes that 13 other targeted outreach program also operate in Vancouver (although it also notes that this number may be too low). However, the majority of these programs focus on youth. Our survey indicates that a significant proportion of the street homeless population falls into older age groups. In seeking to resolve neighbourhood conflict, it will be necessary to connect with all demographic groups of people who are on the street. Given the widespread concern over the intersection of homelessness and mental health issues, we would expect a greater level of resources devoted to mental health outreach. Nevertheless, outreach services should also provide universal access. One reason for the popularity of the City's single worker outreach program is that it takes all comers.

- **Recommendation 3**: *Design and fund programs in communities that integrate the homeless and non-homeless population*. The findings of this project show that a significant proportion, perhaps more than half, of the street homeless are living entirely outside of the formal economy. At the same time, evidence of the minimal reporting of victimization to any type of authority indicates that street homeless people put an extremely low level of trust in institutions or agencies, even though they also report using many services. This leads to the formation of a subcultural situation in which people living on the street are effectively segregated from other sectors of the community, except as clients of services or as objects of fear, anger, and/or enforcement. A key mechanism in seeking to deal with the street scene and 'street people' is to provide alternative forms of interaction and a means of earning a livelihood.

  Spatial conflict can develop because of fears and mutual assumptions that particular groups hold about each other. At the same time, services targeted at particular population groups tend to isolate those groups, at least in the programming context. In order to ease spatial conflicts, it is necessary to promote dialogue. This can only happen by bringing together people from varying groups and positions. Integrated programs can have a range of design, from small single events that are based on invitations, to wide community events such as health or other types of fairs, to ongoing programs like youth drop-ins.

- **Recommendation 4:** *Develop programs that will help people living on the street generate income*. If squeegeeing, panhandling, and binning are deemed unacceptable, then people who are on the street need to have alternative means of earning a living that permit them to remain autonomous. People on the street have chosen, for whatever reason, to maximize their autonomy at the expense of security. For many, that security, in the form of income assistance and housing, is not a realistic option given the difficulties in obtaining the former and its insufficient means of supporting the latter. A number of programs in Vancouver provide some

form of income generating activity for people who live on or near the street. Such projects are relatively limited in scope, given the size of the street population. They could easily be expanded or multiplied to cover other commercial areas of the city or other street populations. However, if such programs are to promote stability for people entering them from the street, then they will have to be coordinated with the Ministry of Human Resources in order to ensure that: (a) additional income for those on income assistance is not clawed back; and (b) those who are not using income assistance can get access to it as a means of increasing income and, hopefully, housing stability.

- **Recommendation 5:** *3 levels of government should jointly explore the provision of different types of housing for people living on the streets.* The street homeless population is diverse, and any effort to provide housing will require similarly diverse solutions. Supported and transitional housing options are now seen as crucial to ending homelessness; however, a range of other options may also be available as elements in a housing *continuum*. A number of our non-homeless respondents spoke of the need for what they called barrier-free shelters that are accessible 24 hours a day by individuals who are under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs and/or who may have behavioural problems. During the early 1970s, when large number of young people continued to arrive in Vancouver from other parts of Canada, the Federal government and the City organized a number of hostels. Although these were subject to attacks from opponents, they provided one means of housing people off the streets and affording them a level of individual autonomy.

# 1 Introduction

At the beginning of 1993, Vancouver's Safer City Task Force issued its final report. Convened by the City Council to examine a range of issues surrounding the perceived and actual safety of citizens, the committee had engaged in a variety of forums with different social groups and sectors and conducted a voluntary survey. Among its many findings, the report noted, was the 'growing phenomen[on]… of street people' who 'provoke feelings of frustration, helplessness, and anger in many citizens' (Safer City Task Force, 1993: 90). However, while there is 'an increasingly widely held view among the public' that 'street people threaten public safety', the task force cautioned that this 'perceived threat … is dwarfed by the extent of the threat to the personal safety of people … who[,] by circumstance or behaviour, are left to survive on the street … under adverse circumstances'(*ibid*: 90-91). The report's authors acknowledged both the validity of apprehensions over 'aggressive, professional panhandlers' and that fear of 'street people affects the use of public spaces and increases the general anxiety of people in Vancouver'. In response, they argued that not only are 'street people not responsible for the majority of crime in Vancouver', but that the situation will only be resolved when 'the underlying problems of poverty, addictions, mental illness, and unemployment are dealt with' (*ibid*: 91).

Fast forward to 2003, a decade later and 'street people' are once again a major issue in Vancouver. Letter writers denounce the presence of beggars in downtown streets to the editor of the Vancouver Sun (cf. Vancouver Sun, 2003; Fraser, 2003). Another newspaper reports that in the city's West End, an elementary school principal 'calls police about three times a week to remove vagrants sleeping on his school's grounds' (O'Conner, 1993: 11). The adjacent park and nearby Davie Street commercial strip had also become sites for overnight sleeping, drug use, and vending of used goods, prompting residents and merchants to call for increased policing (Thomas, 2004). On the other side of the city, the same newspaper reports that residents and businesses around the popular Commercial Drive, once designated by the *Utne Reader* as one of the 10 'trendiest' neighbourhoods in North America, were also upset about a series of violent incidents involving young people as well as the 'junkies, dealers, and aggressive panhandlers' near the corner of Broadway (Smedman, 2003). Meanwhile, Lorne Mayencourt, the member of the provincial legislature (MLA) for Vancouver-Burrard, the provincial constituency that includes the West End and the Central Business District, announced that he would introduce a private members bill based on Ontario's *Safe Streets Act* in order to "give police more power to arrest or move aggressive panhandlers and squeegee kids from busy public areas' (Howell, 2003a).

This report documents the results of a research project that has been centrally concerned with the range of issues involving 'street people' in Vancouver. It focuses on the two neighbourhoods mentioned above, the West End and Commercial Drive, but its findings have relevance for the whole city and possibly beyond. The term 'street people' is an explicit acknowledgment that some individuals live their lives in public space. Implicitly, it recognizes that those individuals are, for whatever reason, homeless. As the US legal philosopher Jeremy Waldron (1993) points out, the latter, inevitably, sets the former in motion. It has become a truism to note that not everyone who spends most of their waking hours in the streets, begging, using and dealing drugs,

scavenging through garbage for usable and saleable goods, standing in soup lines, and socializing parks and drop-in centres, is homeless. But it is almost impossible for the homeless, who also spend their sleeping hours in the streets and parks, to not do some of these things some of the time. To not have a home, argues Waldron, is to have no private space. The regulation of public space thus has an immediate and vital impact on how homeless people live on an everyday basis far more than it does for the non-homeless. Where homeless people go, how they get there, what they do, and how they get it done are all contingent on the manner in which public space is regulated and how that regulation is enforced.

In what follows, we examine this relationship between the presence of homeless people and conflict over public space in the West End and Commercial Drive areas of Vancouver, 2 neighbourhoods where such conflict has been given a high profile over the past 5 years or more through a combination of community activism, police action, and media attention that has focused on what we call here the 'street scene' and the 'street economy'. The latter consists of panhandling or begging, binning or what is less prosaically called 'dumpster-diving', open drug dealing and drug use, vending of used goods in public places, (usually without a licence), squeegeeing, the sex trade, and petty theft. Although most of these activities are legal, they all fall within the rubric of the informal economy because they are neither taxed nor traceable. They are subsistence activities and the people who engage in them are poor.[1]

The street scene is a corollary to the street economy, involving the general socializing and other associative activities that accompany it, as well as, for many people, the necessity of sleeping outside in doorways, alleys, alcoves, parking garages, and parks or in squats that are usually abandoned buildings that belong to others.

As already noted, not everyone who is involved wholly or partially in the street economy or the street scene is homeless. Likewise, not everyone who is homeless is necessarily involved in the street economy/scene in whole or in part. Certainly there are some homeless people who subsist wholly on income assistance and charity meals, while others seek out employment, often through temporary labour agencies that pay slightly more than half of what they charge employers. However, as our research shows, most homeless people in both neighbourhoods under study derive at least some part of their livelihood from the street and a substantial proportion derive their entire income this manner.

The presence of a street scene and its attendant economic activities in Vancouver neighbourhoods has commonly been taken as a index of growing social disorder. For the past 20 years, residents in one neighbourhood after another have banded together to try to push out sex trade workers and drug users. The police have been instrumental in this process, responding

[1] The informal economy denotes a vast range of activity and relationships. Much of the research into the informal economy has emphasized informal employment relations and a significant body of research indicates that people with skills and employment are more likely to be involved in informal activities than those will few skills and no employment (Williams and Windebank, 1998). This is clearly not the situation in the case of the street economy. While it is true that higher echelons of the drug trade or the sex trade can make much money, those at the street level may make enough to get by, but are hardly affluent (cf. Waterson, 1993, Bourgois, 1995).

Map 1: The Study Areas


to demands for action by stepping up enforcement and increasing personnel allocation to problem areas. For the most part, panhandling, binning, and vending were rarely associated with these activities. The 1990s, however, saw the gradual appearance of increasing numbers of beggars, binners, and, most recently, sidewalk markets comprised of unlicensed venders selling used goods. In the 2 neighbourhoods, which are the foci of this study the rise of such informal activities was also accompanied by the emergence of street drug markets.

The data on which this report is based was gathered primarily via 2 sets of interviews. One set includes 80 open-ended interviews that were conducted with members of resident/community groups, staff at community and social service agencies, business people and business group representatives, Vancouver police, and municipal personnel. These interviews focused on the street situation in each of the 2 study areas. The second set of interviews involved a survey of 196 homeless people in the two neighbourhoods. This segment of the study investigated involvement with the justice system, interactions with police and private security guards, and victimization as reported by the homeless. To supplement these data sets, the researchers conducted a survey of census data as well as media and civic reports involving the 2 study areas in order to discern any possible social and demographic shifts that could affect the responses of residents, businesses, and other agencies to the rising presence of the homeless and the street economy.

The rest of the report is divided into 6 sections. Sections 2 and 3 examine the issues involved with homelessness and the regulation of public space. The former looks at the literature from a Canadian perspective, while the latter zeroes in on Vancouver, the recent

history of homelessness and responses to the street scene. Section 4 details the research methodology. Section 5 provides a profile of the 2 study areas, offering a brief overview of each neighbourhood's socio-historical development, demographic status as of the 2001 census, recent street order issues, and the situation of the homeless.

Section 6 presents the findings of the research and is divided into 6 subsections based on a series of hypotheses that framed the original research design. These include:

- the public has expectations that police and private security will 'solve' the issues raised by the increasing presence and activities of homeless people in public space;
- demands for police intervention result in increasing tension between public police/private security agents and homeless people;
- increasing regulation and enforcement of public space will result in the criminalization of the homeless;
- the provincial and municipal governments play an active role in the criminalization of homeless people;
- criminalization and incarceration of homeless people can be reduced via collective action;
- social and demographic differences between neighbourhoods influence the public response to the presence of homeless people.

Section 7 concludes the report with four recommendations that aim to alleviate conflict over public space by suggesting avenues for programs that engage with homeless people living on the street. The draft Homelessness Action Plan that is now under consideration by the City of Vancouver provides a wide range of recommendations about housing, income, and services. Should a significant number the recommendations of the Action Plan be implemented at some time in the future, the results and suggestions from this report will be moot. However, in the interim our findings offer practical ideas of how to bring together a range of people at the neighbourhood level to deal with public space issues, as well as suggestions as to possible programs that may be useful in helping people to leave the street.

# 2 Key Issues

One of the main goals of this Project is to understand the situation of homeless people in the street environment and other public spaces where the homeless are compelled to live, and how that environment is shaped by their relations with police and other agents and systems of social control. Much of the interaction between the homeless and non-homeless is informal in nature. However, as homelessness has increased and larger numbers of people have been engaged in everyday living and income-generating activities in the streets, alleys, and parks of large cities, some sectors, groups, and many individuals have sought to formalize the relations between the homeless and non-homeless via intensifying the regulation of public space.

## 2.1 Regulation of Public Space

Municipal bylaws focusing, in particular, on the kinds of activities that are permitted in public space proliferated across the United States during the 1990s. Many of these laws were directed, at least tangentially, toward the activities of homeless people (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2003). Such regulations enable civic authorities, usually in the form of the police, to stop individuals from begging, sitting on sidewalks, camping inside city limits, urinating in public, lying on benches, and a host of other activities. In this decade, similar bylaws are increasingly being brought into force in major Canadian municipalities, or, in the case of Ontario and now British Columbia, by the Province, as authorities cite the need to promote order and public safety on city streets (Hermer and Mosher, 2002).

This has happened despite the fact that "crime rates are dropping, the economy is booming and Canada is once again, according to the United Nations, one of the 'best countries' in the world. Yet fear of crime is a crippling, 'top of the mind' concern, and the new millennium is witnessing the sharpest distinction between the living conditions of the rich and poor since the Great Depression" (Martin, 2002:91). During the 1980s and 1990s, Vancouver saw the highest growth of the low income population of any Canadian CMA at the same time that the income of low income families declined while that of the highest income families rose (Heisz and McLeod, 2003). Canadian literature on the relation between homelessness and public space is scant, but the surfeit of letters to newspaper editors complaining about beggars, squeegeers, and drug users, combined with ongoing efforts to legislate public order, makes it plain that people living on the streets are objects of the fear of crime.

The rise of municipal and provincial regulation of behaviour in public space in Canada has coincided with an increased presence of homeless people in the streets, parks, parking lots, alleyways, and abandoned sites of Canadian cities. Hargrave (1999) notes that the number of homeless people in Canada began to spiral upward in the 1980s while the composition of the homeless population has changed from 'derelict' older men to predominately young men, with teenagers, women and children increasing in numbers. The Golden Report (Golden, 1999) on homelessness in Toronto reported that, in 1996, 26,000 people used the shelter system and that thirty-three percent of single men and as many as 75% of single women in shelters and hostels suffered from mental illness. Spousal abuse was the main cause of homelessness for 27% of the women in the shelter system. The Aboriginal homeless population represented about 15% of the total homelessness population. Some 37,000 primary applicants were on the subsidized housing waiting list representing over 100,000 people, of which 31,000 were children. Homelessness in Toronto was increasing rapidly.[2] At the same time, homelessness is increasingly characterized by subgroups that require not only decent housing but a variety of social support, medical and counseling (including legal) services (Hargrave, 1999). For example, while the majority of the homeless

[2] Some critics argued that the report seriously under-estimated the number of women in the homeless population. (Pickett, 1999).

population is composed of adults, a growing proportion is constituted of youth fleeing from their homes or rejected by their families (Hagan and McCarthy, 1998).

Homelessness is not peculiar to large Eastern cities. Calgary is witnessing a growing number of homeless people who are facing issues of crime, safety and violence, access to health care services, affordable housing, and inadequate financial resources (City of Calgary, 2001). Likewise, the increase in Vancouver's homeless population over the past several years is examined in detail in Section 3 of this report.

**2.2 Homelessness and Public Space**

The effort to regulate public space via municipal or provincial enforcement has followed in the wake of the popularity of community-oriented policing, which, in the form practiced, is similar to 'broken windows' or 'order-maintenance' policing. The exponents of 'broken windows' posit an intrinsic relationship between physical and social disorder on the one hand, and urban decay on the other (Wilson and Kelling, 1982; Skogan, 1990; Kelling and Coles, 1996). This relationship operates through a chain reaction in which indications of physical and social disorder (such as unrepaired broken windows, uncollected garbage and litter, graffiti, public drinking, rowdiness, and public urination) that are not immediately repaired lead the criminally disposed to believe that nobody cares about what is happening in the vicinity, thus increasing their boldness. As this disorder increasingly generates crime, more disorder is tolerated, residents begin to move and businesses fail or flee as their customers leave the area or refuse to go there.

Broken windows introduces a key theoretical innovation that justifies the call for police intervention to maintain or restore public order on city streets by reconfiguring "our notion of what constitutes 'crime' and rethinking how we determine the relative seriousness of particular types of crime" (Kelling and Coles, 1996:27). Disorder enters the realm of serious crime when the context in which it occurs causes people to fear for their safety in public places, thus instituting a vicious cycle of decline. Hence, reduction of disorder via police or community intervention can reduce the fear of crime and restore to health those areas that have been ravaged by the chain reaction outlined above.

Despite its widespread popularity, this theory of crime prevention has not been without its detractors. A key criticism has been that the legislation and policing action it has inspired targets the poor and particularly the homeless (cf. L. Gibson, 2004; Harcourt, 2001; Mitchell, 2003).

However, Kelling and Coles (1996) argue that such opponents are missing the point. First, they note that calls for order and police intervention often come from poor, working class neighbourhoods. Second, they contend that poverty and homelessness must be separated from the activities that characterize disorder. Order-maintenance policing targets particular kinds of behaviour, not particular kinds of people.

In this context, Kelling and Coles (1996) maintain that the relationship between homelessness and disorder can only be properly understood and dealt with if homeless people are categorized according to their circumstances and "the truly homeless," that is, "the genuinely poor" and those who are "seriously mentally ill and addicted," are separated from "those for whom living on the streets and hustling, including criminality, has become a lifestyle."

Ellickson (2001) concurs with this view. In a landmark article, he situates contemporary urban street disorder and the homelessness with which it is associated within a context framed by the decline of skid row. The latter is itself treated as a result of permissive legislation and legal judgments in the US that obviated the ability of municipal governments there to regulate public behaviour. In response to the tide of "misbehavior" that has subsequently swept across urban public space, Ellickson (2001) agrees with Kelling and Coles (1996) that the regulation of conduct

does not target particular status groups such as the poor and homeless.

For the critics of broken windows policing, however, this is precisely the point. In the absence of a broader social commitment to affordable housing, they argue, homeless people are essentially forced to conduct acts in public space that the non-homeless would normally perform in private. By seeking to prohibit the performance of certain kinds of necessary activities in public space, when a not insignificant sector of the population has nowhere else to carry them out, the types of public space regulations in question effectively outlaw particular kinds of people (Waldron, 1993). Ellickson (2001) responds to this dilemma inherent in broken windows policing by advocating the division of urban space into zones with differential levels of tolerance for "misbehaviour," essentially calling for a return to the type of skid row districts where police exercised considerable discretionary authority in dealing with nuisance conduct.

Such a solution, however, goes to the heart of the critics' argument, which maintains that these kinds of restrictions on public space promote the stigmatization of their targets by excluding them from particular sites and types of place (Mitchell, 2003; Takahashi, 1998). Harcourt (2001) takes this a step farther, asserting that targeted legislation and policing operates as a self-fulfilling prophecy by effectively transforming individuals who were once considered to be social nuisances into social menaces, worthy of exclusion. The effect, if not the intention, is to render the homeless, if not invisible, then as marginal as possible (Mitchell, 2003).

Ontario's *Safe Streets Act* represents an attempt to enact broken windows-type legislation by enabling stricter enforcement of the kinds of activities often conducted by marginalized and homeless individuals in public spaces in that province. The atmosphere in which the legislation was passed and implemented is illustrated by the *Toronto Sun* in 1996 in its depiction of squeegee youth as "herds of locusts who have made it almost impossible for ordinary taxpayers to drive downtown without having their cars descended upon" (cited in O'Grady and Bright, 2002:23). The end result of such polemic agitation by media, police and politicians was the *Safe Streets Act* legislation, which severely curtailed the practice and the earnings of squeegee kids. As O'Grady and Bright note "there is good reason to believe that many ex-squeegee cleaners continue to be homeless but are surviving with one less economic alternative" (2002:37). Thus, the struggle for public road space between motorists and the squeegee kids was resolved in favor of the former through enhanced law enforcement -- yet without the creation of more acceptable economic and housing alternatives for the latter.

In exploring private and public realms in relation to the homeless, Mosher (2002:45-46) notes in relation to private space that:

> "*the homeless have no space to which they can control access; rather they constantly brush up against the private property claims of others, which are used to exclude them and to deny then shelter, warmth and comfort. And without a home, many private functions associated with home (sleeping, bathing, eating) must be performed in public places, visible to anyone who cares to look*".

But the public space occupied by the homeless out of necessity has not been hospitable either. Activities such as begging or panhandling are seen as intrusive and invasive because they first, "run[…] against the dominant message of public discourse" which involves very little open interaction with strangers and, second, "we are unaccustomed to engaging in any sort of verbal exchange with those who are not friends, family or co-workers" (Moon 2002:75). Legislation like the Ontario *Safe Streets Act* and generalized citizen, business and police hostility in the 'prime space' forces the homeless to either move themselves along to more accepting environs (which Ruddick, 2002, describes as 'marginal spaces') or to be forcibly moved along by public police and

private security officers. Anti-homeless legislation, then, is centrally concerned with contesting and controlling space.

Blomley and Collins (2001) examine the rise of anti-panhandling by-laws in the context of efforts to promote the revitalization of downtown commercial zones. They situate panhandlers and efforts to control their activities at the juncture of 3 intertwined processes in central cities: rising income disparities; increasing numbers of middle income and professional households; and the fragmentation of labour and housing markets. The panhandler, who functions to render poverty and marginality visible for all to see, is maleficent to the image of the 'vibrant' downtown designed for advanced services, tourism, and high-end consumption (Blomley and Collins, 2000; Blomley and Collins, 2001). Gordon (forthcoming) goes even farther, arguing that anti-homeless laws are about more than central-city commercial revitalization. Legislation like the *Safe Streets Act*s, as well as municipal by-laws, function like the vagrancy laws that were struck down in the 1960s and 1970s, serving as tools of labour discipline by targeting and sanctioning the most 'non-productive' strata of labour force. Wacquant, in turn, (2001) locates such processes within the wider context of what he calls 'the penalisation of poverty' that involves increasing surveillance and regulation of the urban poor.

**2.3 Crime, safety and violence**

Broken windows legislation and policing represent efforts to respond to generalized public fear of crime by targeting, if not particular groups, particular types of conduct which are often engaged in by members of particular groups. However, turning from the fear of crime to actual crimes and victimization reveals a more complex relationship between crime and safety, on the one hand, and, on the other, marginalization and homelessness.

Street crime and street safety are perhaps the key issues involved in the increasing regulation of public space in ways that directly affect people who are homeless in US and Canadian cities. The relationship between crime and safety, on the one hand, and, on the other, marginalization and homelessness, is complex. Two of the most striking findings from La Prairie's (1995) research on native people in the inner cores of four Canadian cities was that the most marginalized individuals in these areas had both the greatest involvement as offenders in the criminal justice system and were the most seriously and frequently violently victimized. Disturbingly, this seriously victimized group rarely reported its victimization to police. In addition, fully 96% of the most socially and economically marginalized males and 85% of the females in that study had been charged with an offence. This group also reported the most frequent and the longest periods of detention in correctional institutions.

These findings are supported by recent research into a mobile population, including many homeless individuals, in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Griffiths (2002) found that only 27% of the respondents in his sample had not been incarcerated at some point in their lives. These findings from Aboriginal-focused research were supported in the 1993 *Street Health Survey* of the general Toronto street population (Ambrosio et al., 1993).

Homeless people also have serious concerns about their personal safely while on the street. The number of victimizations reported by this group in the LaPrairie (1995) and the more recent Downtown Eastside research (Griffiths, 2002) justifies this concern. In the research on the mobile population there, 75% of respondents had been victimized in the past year. Of those who had been victimized, there were approximately 3.4 victimizations per person, and nearly half of the total incidents involved Person as compared to Property victimization (Griffiths, 2002). By contrast, the risk of violent victimization remains low for the general population in Canada, with only 5% of the population reporting victimization in 1999 (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2001).

Police treatment of powerless people (often equated with racial minorities such as blacks

and Aboriginals but increasingly including homeless and street people) has drawn academic and media interest (Bayley, 1995; Stenning, 1993) as well as being identified as an issue in special street studies such as the *Street Health Study* in Toronto (Ambrosio et al. 1993). Although some research indicates that a person's demeanor is often more significant in determining police action than social status as measured by race, gender or social class, others suggest that the quantity (over-policing) and quality of law enforcement reflects the underlying pattern of social stratification in society. The harassment that homeless people experience at the hands of both public police and private security, while largely anecdotal, is both a daily issue for them and a grievance that most homeless people feel unable to address or confront through official channels, such as police complaint processes (La Prairie, 1995).

A consensus has emerged from existing research that homeless youth are more likely to be involved in crime than similarly aged youth who live in more secure and stable environments. And the more disadvantaged and desperate street youth and other homeless people become, the more likely it is that they will be attracted to criminal activity (O'Grady and Green, 2003). In their study of street youth in Toronto and Vancouver – two Canadian cities with high numbers of street youth -- Hagan and McCarthy (1998:114) note that "street youth have an especially high risk of conflict with legal authorities, in part because they have limited access to private space and spend much of their time in public places". The authors go on to note that the public spaces inhabited by street youth are often "economically contaminated" as they are characterized by crime and a disproportionate police presence and that police are often see them as suspicious and in need of surveillance.

Research carried out on the streets of Toronto when squeegee cleaning was legal demonstrated that squeegee cleaners regularly experienced negative encounters with police and it was common for these youth to report that they were frequently stopped and harassed by police while working on the streets (O'Grady and Greene, 2003). From a crime standpoint, that kind of police surveillance may even be counter-productive. Hagan and McCarthy found that the effects of being on the street were compounded by being officially labeled and known as criminal. Those with backgrounds of parental abuse were particularly sensitive to the stigmatizing effects of police sanctions and had a high risk of intensifying their involvement in crime subsequent to their contacts with and sanctions by police (1998).

Why has homelessness become such a high profile issue in Vancouver over the past three to four years? Part of the answer to this question lies in the increase in homelessness in the city and surrounding region. Another piece of the answer is to be found in the question of public order and the fear from some people in particular neighbourhoods that homelessness and activities associated with it are indicators of increasing disorder.

**3.1 The socio-demographics of homelessness.**

The City of Vancouver's Tenant Assistance Program (TAP) has organized counts of homeless people within the City's boundaries and has participated in a broader regional homeless count. In 2001, the Director of the Housing Centre supplied Vancouver City Council with an estimate of 300 to 600 people sleeping outside, depending on the weather and the time of year (City of Vancouver, 2001b). This was based primarily on a series of 27 'walkabouts' conducted with TAP staff and volunteers from 1998 to 2001, in conjunction with site visits by staff in response to calls from citizens, the Census count of homeless people, and

contacts with community agencies.[3] The number of people 'sleeping rough' matched that of people in shelters; therefore, the total number of homeless people in the City fluctuated between 600 and 1200 people in 2001.

This report presented some interesting findings. People sleeping outside at that time ranged in age from 19 to 70, while the report states that "most people who live outside year round are between 25 and 45", the "vast majority" of whom "are male", although "there are some younger women and a few women over 40", most women were associated with a male companion. Only a small number of people under 19 were found, and one-fifth of those counted were Aboriginal. Summertime brought an increase in young people living on the street. The report also notes that, in contrast to Toronto, no families were found living outside. City staff considered that 2/3 of the people they contacted were addicted to drugs and/or alcohol. Drug use was often part of the life of younger couples and/or younger men. If the latter were not with a woman, they often belonged to a group of friends or lived on their own, sometimes in a vehicle. Men over 40 tended to fall into 2 categories, the first of which constituted of mentally ill and isolated individuals while the second was comprised of heavy drinkers.

The City report distinguishes between 'people who stay in shelters and those who live on the streets'. The former usually consider themselves homeless and want to find a place to live, while people in the latter group see the street as their home, having become used to living outdoors. The difference between chronic versus episodic homelessness provides another means of classifying homeless people, although the report notes that episodic homelessness can transmute into chronic homelessness over time.

Early the following year, a 'snapshot survey' of the regional homeless population was conducted through a count of people staying in shelters and those living on the street in 45 outdoor locations (Eberle Planning and Research, et al, 2002). Over 24 hours, an estimated 1181 to 1260 homeless people were counted in the municipalities of the Lower Mainland. Interestingly, the number of people living on the street was actually greater in suburban locations than in the central city. While 29% of people who were living outside were counted in Vancouver, another 35% lived in the South Fraser Region. However, 60% of the region's homeless population were counted in Vancouver. The majority of the homeless people who were counted in the central city were thus in shelters while the majority of suburban homeless were living on the street. The report notes that 70% the 623 shelter beds in the region were then located in Vancouver.

The regional demographic profile of homeless people in early 2002 differed in important ways from that of Vancouver's homeless population. At the regional level, young adults did not form the bulk of the street homeless. Unlike City of Vancouver's count of people living outside, the regional count found that 28% of those living on the street were under 19 years old. Another 27% were between the ages of 35 and 44. Moreover, 39% of people living on the street were women, compared to the minimal numbers reported by City staff. Overall Aboriginal homelessness in the region was reported to be 17% while 27% of those on the street were Aboriginal, significantly more than reported by the

[3] The counting method was derived from the manual published by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Interagency Council on the Homeless. The report states that staff believe this to be the first application in Canada of the specified counting method.

City 5 months earlier. Convergent with the City report, people living on the street also tended to be homeless for a longer period than those in shelters. Forty-four percent of the former had been without a home for more than 6 months, compared to only 24% of the latter.

Thirteen months after the regional report, the City of Vancouver's Housing Centre Director presented another report on shelterlessness in Vancouver to council, based on 25 walkabouts conducted over the 1½ years from Spring 2001 to Autumn 2003. This report confirmed the demographic differences between the street homeless population of Vancouver and that of the Lower Mainland region that were evident in a comparison of the 2 earlier documents. Many of the characteristics of Vancouver's street population in Autumn 2003 were the same as they had been 2½ years earlier. However, there were some important changes, such as the upward shift in the proportion of Aboriginal people from 1/5 to 1/4 of those living on the street. As well, counters found even less teenagers and a "sharp increase in the number of young adults, 19 to 29 … the age group most vulnerable to methamphetamine addiction when shelterless". The walkabouts also located a surprising number of people who were employed, often in day-labour jobs, but not making enough money to secure a place to live. Half of those contacted told counters that they were unable to get income assistance. In contrast, people in shelters seem better able to get assistance "because they receive attention, they are more likely to return quickly to tenancy in indoor housing" (City of Vancouver, 2004b).

The City's 2004 report also confirmed something else that was new and had already been reported at the regional level. The previous Autumn the Greater Vancouver Regional Homelessness Steering Committee received a report based on research conducted during the Summer stating that homelessness in the region was spiraling upward, primarily due to "changes to welfare and rising housing costs" (Bula, 2003b). While the previous Lower Mainland count had estimated a regional homeless population of around 1200 people, of which 500 were living on the streets, City staff were reporting a street population that ranged from 500 to 1200 in Vancouver *alone* (City of Vancouver, 2004b).

However, the simple demographics of homelessness cannot, on their own, explain its position on Vancouver's public agenda. It is not only the increasing number of homeless people that has propelled it to the centre of interest, but also the response of the non-homeless to the presence of the homeless in the city. As we will see in Section 6 of the report, the presence of the homeless, manifested in the street scene and street economy (particularly in panhandling but also binning, drug dealing, sleeping in parks and doorways, and simply 'hanging around') have widely been interpreted as signs of an incipient (even imminent) break-down of public order which, in turn, heralds 'neighbourhood decline'. Of course, not all panhandlers, binners, drug dealers and users (perhaps especially dealers) are homeless. However, the issue of homelessness has increasingly subsumed these issues. Moreover, in response to the heightened presence of such activities, or at least perceptions of an increase, non-homeless residents and businesses in various parts of the city have called for more and stricter police enforcement and even new laws and bylaws, all of which, if and when implemented, directly affect the ways that homeless people living on the street are able to conduct their lives.

### 3.2 The Squats

Although the presence and activities of homeless people have been seen as

problematic by the non-homeless across the GVRD, the conflict generated around competing uses of public space has been most intense in Vancouver itself. This conflict was brought into clear focus through a series of widely publicized political protests against homelessness that started in 2002. In the Autumn of that year, housing activists occupied the old Woodward's department store building which had been empty for nearly a decade, during which time it had been a focus of demands for housing in a neighbourhood where a large number of people lived in SRO hotels. Although police quickly evicted the occupants, a camp-out immediately developed around the building and lasted for more than 3 months (Vidaver, 2004), highlighting the increasing level of homelessness in Vancouver. What surprised many people, including both police and activists, was that the encampment around the building acted as a magnet for the homeless, drawing in over 100 people at its height. The camp-out ended in the wake of a municipal election in which the civic opposition party was overwhelmingly elected, partly on the strength of public sympathy for campers.

The following summer, homeless advocates warned that they would be setting up encampments. Toward the end of summer, tents were set-up in a park that was dedicated to war veterans, blocking a slated renovation that was supposed to be completed in time for the upcoming Remembrance Day. The public and media response, although not totally unsympathetic, drove the people in the encampment to seek out new locations. Under pressure, the group fragmented and two separate camps emerged from the original (Bula. 2003a; Ramsay, 2003).

Despite the sympathy that was garnered from the original Woodward's camp-out, these ensuing 'tent cities' provoked furious controversy. The Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) for the Vancouver-Burrard constituency (which includes much of the downtown peninsula though not the areas of the 2 encampments) publicly chastised the City for allowing people to squat on civic land. The MLA linked the campers to panhandling, 'intimidation' and 'threat[s] to law abiding citizens', comparing the situation at one of the encampments to the West End's Nelson Park (see section 5.2), where, in his view, "urban campers … discard used needles, pile up mounds of garbage and scare parents of school children at … an elementary school"' (Beatty, 2003; Carrig, 2003a).

The public response to the situation was mixed, judging by letters to the editors of major Vancouver newspapers. One writer argued that "the word is out that you can sleep anywhere and do anything (i.e. commit crime) and the [Vancouver] police and city officials will not do anything. We have to stop putting up with these people" (Strumpski, 2003). Another argued that "address[ing] the problem and clean[ing] it up" would require authorities to "send the hobos, derelicts, druggies and anti-socials back on the road" (Maki, 2003). The residents' association in a high rise condominium complex adjacent to one of the encampments seems to agree. "If we want to become Bum City instead of Hollywood North, then we're well on our way,"' said the group's chairperson (Hunter, 2003).

Other letter-writers, however, supported the contention of most Vancouver City Councilors that the encampments were a result of rising homelessness caused by the restructuring of the provincial welfare system that was making income assistance increasingly inaccessible (Bohn, 2003). However, the City quickly passed an anti-camping bylaw that prohibited the erection of any type of structure on City land without express permission, while City staff and police worked to find housing for many of those people who were involved in the two

encampments. As the Autumn weather became wetter and the numbers of participants dwindled, police and sanitation workers moved in to take out the remaining campers and dispose of the tents and other materials. The bylaw was again deployed by the police the following Spring to prevent protestors against homelessness and poverty from initiating another encampment using prefabricated structures (CBC, 2004a).

Early in the following year, shortly before the City's most recent homelessness report was released, the Vancouver Sun ran a 7-part educational series about homelessness that sought to explain why the region "is facing a homelessness problem on a scale never before seen" and to humanize the homeless for its reader by telling the stories of people in shelters and on the streets (Bula and Skelton, 2004). However, by that point, the conflict over the encampment had provided the channel through which the link between homelessness and public disorder had been forged. During the encampments, the Vancouver Board of Trade (2003) had released a report on property crime that claimed the city had the second highest rate of property crime in North America, exceeded only by Miami, Florida. The report also explicitly linked the situation to, among other things, homelessness. In responding to news of the report, one newspaper reader painted a picture of a city out of control:

> "*We have a city characterized by squatters taking over public parks, vagrants asking for handouts throughout downtown and the West End, squeegee people continually trying to wash my windshield in the rain and now the distinction of being a haven for property criminals"* (Mazur, 2003).

The following Spring, in a letter protesting the attempt to organize another encampment, a writer decried the "drugs, crime and the harassment that homelessness brings" (Wong, 2004).

### 3.3 Fear of Street People

The encampments thus crystallized an inchoate anxiety about public order, bringing homelessness and activities like panhandling together with fears of crime and images of disarray. Throughout the 1990s, particularly in the second half of the decade, the Downtown Eastside had been the primary symbol of disorder as the rhetorical coupling of the drug market (and related diseases) with the accelerating disinvestment of the area's buildings and their subsequent deterioration evoked concern about neighbourhood 'decline' and 'urban decay' (Sommers, 2001; Sommers and Blomley, 2002). Although both open drug dealing and panhandling appeared in other parts of the city, including Commercial Drive and the Downtown/West End zone, they were seen as a kind of 'spill-over' effect, the result of pressure placed on the Downtown Eastside by gentrification or police enforcement (cf. Anonymous, ND, 2004; Davies, 1996; Weikle, 1998; Mulgrew, 1999). The figure of the drug addict was widely seen to be the main carrier of social disorder. To the extent that homelessness was seen as problem of public order, it was also bound up with drug use and, through that, to the Downtown Eastside (see Colebourn, 1997, Vancouver Board of Trade, 2003).

As we saw in Section 1, 'street people' and the street economy had already been tagged as significant problems in the early 1990s. Panhandling, in particular, simmered as an issue over the course of the decade. By 1998, the City passed a bylaw regulating where, how, and when individuals were allowed to beg for money (Zillich, 1998; Smith, 1998; see Section 6.4 for more details on the City's panhandling regulations). Prior to this, merchant groups in the downtown area

took the initiative in seeking to monitor and control it by hiring security guards to patrol the streets (Bailey, 1997; McCarthy, 1998). Aesthetics seemed to play a crucial role in this intervention, as one VPD Inspector emphasized in voicing support for the move: '"These [street] people look quite scary. Law-abiding citizens and business owners get quite frightened about seeing these people on the street"' (quoted in Bailey, 1997). A couple of Florida tourists expressed their dismay at the situation in similar terms, writing a letter to the editor to tell Vancouverites that their

> *"once beautiful city has now turned into a city of despair, with panhandler and runaway teenagers at every corner. I cannot recall ever seeing the scenes of filth and hopelessness that I witnessed in Vancouver. … Where are the police to patrol these areas?"* (Myers and Myers, 2000).

But, even more than this apparent unsightliness, the presence of street people was potentially deadly, "spread[ing] its tentacles like a cancer through the body politic" (McCarthy, 1998: 1). While such a trope provides dramatic effect to a newspaper essay, it also serves to delineate the difference between 'us', the potential victims of this scourge, and 'them', who are described as "runaway kids and …panhandlers [who] crash after a night's partying [in] parks, doorways and squats" (McCarthy, 1998:1). Not only are panhandling street people unattractive and dangerous, they are also, apparently, homeless - although this seems to be taken for granted. What seems to be a more urgent concern is the relationship between panhandling, drug use, and petty crime. "I believe that the majority of panhandlers are substance abusers" declared a VPD Inspector, who would later become the security chief for the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association. Moreover, he argued, the class of people to whom they belong (the 'street people') are also responsible for the 15,000 thefts from autos that were then taking place in Vancouver's downtown core. "Street people are now breaking into cars for 'chump change', a nickel or a dime" (quoted in McCarthy, 1998: 4).

### 3.4 Resident Mobilization and Public Order

The implied linkage between homelessness, drug use, and criminal activities would become more explicit through the anger of those opposed to the 2003 encampments. In the meantime, however, concerns about public disorder were increasingly being addressed via neighbourhood mobilization. Prior to the early 1980s, resident organizing in Vancouver had been focused mainly on issues of property development, park space, and housing issues. But something changed in the early 1980s. A group of West End residents organized to lobby against the presence of the sex-trade in that neighbourhood, focusing on both the government and sex-trade workers and customers. Their campaign provided a model that would be emulated throughout the city, mainly in the eastside, where the street economy increasingly gravitated, following its (at least partial) expulsion from the West End and downtown (see Section 5.2). Each time the police responded to resident mobilization with intensified enforcement, the focus of the street drug and sex-trades would shift to another area where residents would then mobilize to force them out (cf. Griffin, 2000; Link, 2000)

The role of the VPD in these neighbourhood mobilizations changed during the 1990s as the police moved from responding to citizen mobilizations over perceptions of public disorder to active involvement in them. This change was facilitated by the formation and

evolution of community policing offices or centres (CPCs), as they are now known, over the course of the decade. What is important to note at this point is that in both study areas, the local CPCs have been involved in public order issues. Indeed, the Grandview Woodlands CPC initiated an anti-disorder campaign in the late 1990s. The involvement of the CPCs marked a change in the nature of resident mobilization. First, it provided an institutional framework that channeled those mobilizations and transformed them into police actions. Second, for the first time, such mobilizations were directed toward non-sex trade activities. Until the intervention by the Grandview Woodlands CPC (explored in Section 5.1), most resident activism around public order was focused on confronting sex-trade workers and customers. Although drug use and dealing was often bound up with these situations, it was primarily the presence of the sex trade that provided the catalyst and target for resident mobilization.

However, efforts to regulate the street scene via policing-type actions have not gone unchallenged. During the late 1980s, when residents sought to remove the sex-trade from the residential area around East Broadway (just west of the southern part of Study Area 1; see Map 2 on pg 25 for detail) they were met by protestors who argued they were supporting the rights of the sex-trade workers. A decade later, when some residents mobilized in an effort to push out sex trade workers from the area east of the northern end of Study Area 1, another group formed to seek non-confrontational ways of resolving sex trade issues on a long term basis. And, in Study Area 1 itself, the Grandview Woodlands CPC has been opposed by the public on a number of issues, including the location of its office in Grandview Park. Thus, although anxiety about public order has generated momentum toward the criminalization of homelessness, there is also vocal opposition to this process. As Section 6 shows, such opposition is as widespread and deep-rooted as its nemesis.

# 4 Methodology

The research was conducted using 3 primary forms of data collection. First, an open-ended interview process was implemented with respondents from resident/community groups, social service agencies, business organizations, private security guards, religious groups, the Vancouver Police Department, and the City of Vancouver. Interviews started in May, 2004 and continued through September. The majority of the open-ended interviews were completed by the end of June. Second, a team of surveyors carried out a questionnaire with homeless people starting in mid-May and continuing through August. Finally, the research team reviewed assorted documents concerning homelessness and public space regulation, beginning prior to commencement of the project and continuing throughout. Documentary research includes both the literature review and ongoing survey of the news media to understand the wider context in which the project was carried out, particularly how ongoing issues, policies, and debates affect the project's central focii.

The research process involved a number of key tasks, each of which will be explored in detail below. These include: determining/confirming the study areas; developing and testing the research instruments; determining the sampling methods; implementing the survey; conducting the open-ended interviews; and collating and analysing the data.

### 4.1 Determining/confirming the study areas

In the initial project proposal, the research team argued that a comparison of similar situations in two Vancouver neighbourhoods would help us to understand the social dynamics underlying differential responses to the presence of homeless people and the issues such a presence generates with regard to the use and regulation of public space. We proposed that the city's West End would be selected as one study area and the other would be determined in the first phase of the project. The West End seemed to be an appropriate choice because the relationship between homelessness, public order, and public space regulation had emerged as perhaps the central issue in the neighbourhood in the months prior to the project's conception. The area also has a wide range of actors involved in the issue.

We also suspected that Commercial Drive, on Vancouver's eastside, would provide another appropriate study area, because it has long been the site of ongoing conflict over public space (which had recently intensified). However, before finalizing this decision, the researchers explored alternative sites, including westside Fairview Slopes and eastside Mount Pleasant, both of which have seen increases in the presence of homeless people. When we met with the City staff person who is widely considered to be the frontline specialist in homelessness issues, she advised us that homelessness on Commercial Drive was primarily a daytime situation and that, based on a count she had conducted with community volunteers, any homeless people there slept elsewhere. She also suggested that many people who are active in the street scene there may not necessarily be homeless.

Ultimately, however, the researchers chose Commercial Drive as the comparison study area for two reasons. First, the intensity of conflict over public space around a broad range of public order issues meant that the situation was roughly similar to that of the West End. Second, the other areas had a smaller range of obvious actors who could address the issues from the standpoint of participants. However, as things turned out, Commercial Drive did have some drawbacks, including the reluctance of certain categories of non-homeless

respondents to be interviewed. This will be discussed in more detail below.

**Bounding the Study Areas**

Both the West End and the area surrounding Commercial Drive, known as Grandview-Woodlands, are recognized by the City of Vancouver as local planning areas and are usually referred to as neighbourhoods in both official and unofficial discourse. However, in both areas we decided to bound the study locales differently than the official local planning areas. In the case of the West End, we included the area south of Georgia Street and west of Burrard Street, which is part of Vancouver's Central Business District. Over the past decade, significant residential and park development has taken place in this area which has related it more closely to the West End, not only for people with housing but also for those without. Thus, in building the area-profiles in Section 5, we have included the census tract that covers the area northwest of the corner of Burrard and Georgia Streets (see Map 3 in section 5.2).

One problematic determination vis-à-vis the West End study area was whether to extend the boundaries east of Burrard Street into downtown. There are several good reasons for this inclusion, including the facilities and services that are located there and which are used by homeless people who live primarily in the West End. As well, the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association has become involved in public order issues in the West End. Ultimately, however, we decided to focus on the area west of Burrard because that is where public space issues have emerged most clearly centred around the conflict between 'street people' and the non-homeless. Drawing in even part of the downtown would introduce a range of other issues, such as late bar closings, that would make the analysis more difficult to focus. Despite the intention of this exclusion, it still should be noted that such issues are not absent from this report nor the data on which it is based.

For Commercial Drive, we have focused the study area more tightly around the street itself than the official boundaries of Grandview-Woodlands, and extended the area south of Broadway to 15th Avenue to include part of the Cedar Cottage neighbourhood (Map 2 in Section 5.1). While the main concern of the study is with the situation on the street and adjoining blocks, this bounding was propelled by the more practical reason that, for purposes of the neighbourhood profile, the census tracts to the east of those around Commercial are so large that the data they provide would obscure the socio-demographic situation in the immediate neighbourhood. At the same time, the official Grandview-Woodlands neighbourhood only goes as far south as Broadway; therefore, by including the entire official neighbourhood of Cedar Cottage, we would have encountered the same lack of clarity that arises by including the census tracts east of Commercial.[4]

**4.2 Developing and testing the research instruments**

In order to collect data, the research team developed five different questionnaires, four of which were designed for open-ended interviews: the first, for citizens groups, members of religious organizations, businesses, and social services agencies; the second, for police

[4] We also found that the use of census tract data was more useful for our purposes than the City's census-based neighbourhood-level data. The City no longer publishes the regular, comprehensive neighbourhood statistical updates, based on census data, known as Vancouver Local Areas. Instead, it has opted to issue a series of bulletins on a range of topics, as well as a mapping of quality-of-life indicators. However, the data these include are limited in scope and do not provide the details required to build the study area profiles we have included here.

and private security; the third, for community police constables; and the fourth, for government staff. The fifth questionnaire was designed for a survey of homeless people in the 2 study areas. Although it contained some open-ended questions, this questionnaire was intended to yield primarily quantitative data that was amenable to analysis via SPSS. The reason for this is that, while a range of research on homelessness has been based on ethnographic methods, using in-depth interviews and participant-observation, or policy analysis, quantitative research has focused primarily on questions like health or socio-economic need, which situate the condition of the homeless as their central problematic. Relatively little (if any) quantitative data has been generated concerning the relationships between homeless people and the non-homeless, including the various perceptions, activities, and issues involved in those relations.

The four open-ended interview questionnaires were based on what we referred to as the generic form that was administered to citizens, religious, business, and social service organizations. The development of this instrument was based on the 6 hypotheses (or thematic areas) that were outlined in the initial proposal, as well as the 4 sets of specific research questions related to these themes. Once the questionnaire was devised, it was tested on 2 respondents in each study area. The research team then met to discuss the results of these tests and the design was revised to decrease the amount of time required for completion, including the modification of some questions to improve the quality of information elicited during the interview and the elimination of others which did not yield useful data. The questionnaires for community police and government staff were distilled from this framework and were each tested once before being revised in the same manner as the template. However, we were unable to properly test the police and private security questionnaire due to the difficulties we experienced in securing cooperation from the Vancouver Police Department (VPD), as detailed below.

The survey questionnaire for homeless respondents was also designed in terms of the 6 thematic areas and the 4 sets of research questions, specifically those for homeless people. And, as with the other instruments, it was framed with consideration for eliciting data regarding the relations between groups of actors involved in public space issues. This questionnaire took the longest to develop. The 2 field assistants who eventually worked on implementing the survey participated in its development because both had ongoing connections to street activities in the different study areas. The survey was tested on 2 separate sets of respondents twice in each study area, and was assessed and revised after each test. Adjustments were made to accommodate for the length of time the survey took to administer, the clarity of the questions, the data each question generated, and their amenability to database input.

### 4.3 Determining the sampling methods

We approached the two samples somewhat differently than originally envisioned in the proposal.

**Open-ended interview sample**

In the case of the open-ended interviews, the researchers had anticipated that they would pre-arrange interviews based on a quota from already-identified categories, including:

- the Vancouver Police Department 20
- Private security agencies 20
- Citizens/business groups 20

- Local and provincial governments. 10

(Citizens and business groups were also to include social and community services agencies).

However, during both the tests and initial interviews, it became apparent that a snowball sampling method would be more effective and allow us to negotiate the social contours of the 2 neighbourhoods and the issue itself by plugging into existing social and organizational networks while simultaneously keeping within the planned sample size. Consequently, we made a point of asking each respondent if she or he knew others with whom we should talk. This yielded contacts with a range of people who represented both the various categories and the active organizations involved in public space and homelessness issues. As a result of this sampling method, we obtained the following samples for the open-ended interviews in the study areas:

*Table 4.1: Open-ended interview respondents*

| | West End | Commercial Drive |
|---|---|---|
| Community Groups | 5 | 3 |
| Social/Community Services | 13 | 7 |
| Religious Groups | 3 | 6 |
| Community Policing Centres | 7 | 2 |
| Business | 5 | 4 |
| Health Authority | 6 | 2 |
| VPD | 6 | 5 |
| Private Security | 5 | - |
| Total | 50 | 29 |
| Government | 7 | |
| Total Interviews: N= | 86 | |

Initially, we expected the sample would be composed of equal numbers of respondents from each study area. However, given the larger population living in the West End, as well as the greater number of services, citizens groups, health services, and business groups, etc., it seemed logical to select a larger portion of the overall sample from that neighbourhood. Also, we opted not to interview private security on Commercial Drive because its presence was minimal there compared to the West End (for example, while 35% of homeless respondents in the West End had frequent contact with private security, only 18% on Commercial reported the same level, and their contact often occurred in other parts of Vancouver).

Three caveats should be made in relation to the sample of open-ended interview respondents. First, the research team had difficulty in gaining cooperation from the VPD. As described in the first interim report, we decided to approach the police through the Commanders of the two relevant Districts, finding a different response in each case. One commander was receptive and open to discussion and the provision of information, while the other was very reluctant to become involved, expressing suspicion about our intentions and position in the community in relation to the police. The VPD had recently been subject to criticism from various quarters for its City-wide Enforcement Team (CET) project that applied concentrated policing resources to parts of the Downtown Eastside as a means of disrupting the street drug market there. Eventually we were able to persuade the second commander that we were sincere in pursuing an objective research project. However, connecting with street-level police officers proved to be more complicated. While we were able to connect with community police officers through the CPCs, direct contact with the officers and constables on regular street patrols proved more arduous. In one case, despite a clear request to speak with personnel who worked *within* a study

area, we were referred to others with an interest in the issue but who worked in the same district but *outside* of the relevant area. Eventually, we were able to use another connection to the VPD to secure cooperation from a number of police at street level. In retrospect, it would have worked more efficiently to approach the VPD in the development stages and request participation in an advisory capacity.

The second caveat about the sample is that while the snowball method facilitates respondent access by following networks, it can exclude those who are not part of the network or who are unknown its members. When requested, respondents gave us the names of everyone they could think of who would have an interest in the issue at hand, including those who disagreed with them. In this way, we were able to gain access to a range of views and opinions. The level to which the sample is representative, then, must always be closely interrogated.

A third caution regarding the sample is also in order here. As a locus of conflict, the issue with which this study is concerned is highly politicized and can be polarizing, which may explain the reluctance of some sections of the VPD to become involved. Although the conflicts around public space and homelessness seem to have a much higher profile in the West End, the situation has been ongoing and highly antagonistic around Commercial Drive as well. For example, the Community Police Centre, which is located in the old caretaker's field house in Grandview Park, has been set on fire several times. Indeed, the initial plan to locate it in the park at all was highly contentious and provoked a furious response from many in the community. At various points, plans by both resident groups and agencies to set up new services or facilities for low-income or homeless people in the neighbourhood have been subject to acrimonious challenge from homeowners and businesses. In this atmosphere, some potential respondents may have been unwilling to participate in the project. For example, although many interviewees referred us to the group of residents living around Victoria Park who had lobbied about the drinking and sleeping there, we were unable to arrange interviews with them despite a number of attempts. Likewise, some business people on the Drive were not interested in being interviewed. In contrast, we rarely encountered these problems in the West End.

**Homeless Survey sample**

The researchers originally proposed to conduct about half the surveys of homeless respondents by approaching individuals on the street, ascertaining their housing status, and then requesting an interview. We had anticipated that we would eventually need to start meeting people via agencies, particularly in the Commercial Drive study area as locating potential respondents on the street would become increasingly difficult. However, this did not prove to be the case. Indeed, the surveyors were able to substantially complete the desired sample of 200 respondents, falling short by only 4 surveys in the Commercial Drive area, entirely by soliciting people on the street. At various points, respondents referred others to the surveyors. As well, the field assistants' knowledge of the study areas was helpful in recruiting respondents. In order to avoid repeat respondents, the primary survey researcher worked in both neighbourhoods. The housing status of a potential respondent was determined through preliminary conversation prior to the interview request.

Only on Commercial Drive did it eventually become difficult for the researcher to locate respondents who had not completed the survey. This may have been due to what many people told

us is the seasonal nature of homelessness in the area, or possibly due to the effectiveness of the increased police attention which was ongoing during the survey period.[5] In contrast, it was sometimes necessary to retire from the West End after a few days of continuous work because people would start approaching the surveyors, asking (even demanding) to be interviewed.

The survey sampling method brings some limitations to the data. First, it is probably impossible to randomize the homeless population, since its size is only ever an estimate. Second, because the focus was on requesting interviews from people on the street during the day and early evening, sub-groups such as those who engage in day labour via temp agencies are likely under-represented. As well, because respondents were recruited on the street, rather than from shelters or other agencies, it is likely that people who are involved in the street scene and street economy are over-represented. Third, the structure of the survey, which required about an hour to complete, precluded the participation of some individuals with mental health issues, notably those who were delusional or suffering severe bi-polar symptoms. Given the presumed size of this group among the homeless population, it is almost certainly under-represented.

Despite these limitations, the sample provides us with a good cross-section of the people who made up the homeless street population in the 2 study areas during the summer of 2004. Given that the central research questions revolve around public space, public order, and the criminalization of homelessness, it is this group, rather than the homeless population in general, that must be the focus of our inquiry.

*Table 4.2: Characteristics of the Homeless Survey Sample*

| | West End | Commercial Drive | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| N = | 100 | 96 | 196 |
| Gender | | | |
| Male | 83 | 76 | 159 |
| Female | 17 | 20 | 37 |
| Ethnicity | | | |
| Aboriginal | 18 | 37 | 55 |
| Caucasian | 71 | 54 | 125 |
| Asian | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Other ethnicity | 9 | 4 | 13 |
| *Mean Age* | 35.2 yrs. | 32.8 yrs. | 34.4 yrs. |
| Level of Education | | | |
| High school or less | 62 | 59 | 121 |
| High school graduation | 21 | 19 | 40 |
| Post-secondary | 17 | 17 | 34 |
| Length of time in Vancouver | | | |
| <6 months | 3 | 13 | 16 |
| 6 to 12 months | 10 | 11 | 21 |
| 13 to 24 months | 7 | 4 | 11 |
| more than 2 years | 77 | 66 | 143 |

### 4.4 Implementing the survey

The survey team began working in mid-May. The original concept was to have two 2-person teams, one active in the West End and the other on Commercial Drive, each composed of a surveyor and a field assistants. The field assistants were selected for their knowledge of the street scenes in the respective areas. At the beginning, however, one of the surveyors had to withdraw due to a family situation. Rather than attempting to recruit and train a new surveyor, the research team decided that the remaining person would conduct the survey on both research sites. While this prolonged the

[5] The surveyor was able to arrange survey interviews with some of the people who he observed being 'jacked up' by the street patrols.

survey because the surveyor had to alternate study sites, it provided an effective way of minimizing repeat interviews.

The survey process was straightforward. The surveyor and field assistant worked together. They attended sites where homeless people were known to gather, and then approached individuals and engaged them in conversation. After a brief discussion to ascertain whether the individual was homeless (and getting a positive response), they would request that person's participation in the interview. A $20 stipend was available for each participant. This was not offered until after the surveyor and/or field assistant were satisfied that the individual was, indeed, homeless. In a few cases, participants were deemed to qualify if they had recently found housing but indicated they had previously spent time on the street. These constituted less than 2% of respondents. Generally, finding people who were homeless and willing to participate was not a problem. Rather, in the West End, the survey team decided to suspend the survey at one point because, as noted earlier, people were demanding to be interviewed. At that point, the survey moved to Commercial Drive for several days.

Finding potential respondents was easier at some locations than others. Thus, Nelson Park and the nearby corner of Davie and Bute Streets in Study Area 2 provided a large number of West End participants, as did the area around Grandview Park and near the intersection of Commercial Drive and Broadway in Study Area 1. However, surveyors encountered participants in a variety of places up and down Commercial Drive and in the West End. In the latter, participants were engaged along the seawall area, and at different points on Davie and Denman Streets, as well as at Burrard Skytrain station, which is several blocks away, but has foliage that attracts many people to spend time there on a hot summer day.

### 4.5 Implementing the open-ended interviews

Open-ended interviews were initiated almost immediately after the project started. Because public order had been a high-profile issue in the previous year or more, the research team had a list of names and organizations of people to contact. Some of these initial interviews also served as tests of the questionnaires which were subsequently revised. Using a snowball sample, we moved along the networks in both neighbourhoods and were able to connect with a wide variety of people. As noted already, some people were reluctant to be interviewed because, we suspect, this is such a volatile issue. The West End interviews were carried out by a 2-person team and were finished by the end of July. Most of the Commercial Drive interviews were conducted by one person and were done by the end of September, with a 6 week hiatus from the second half of July through August.

### 4.6 Collating and analysing the data

When the survey was completed in mid-September, the data was entered into an SPSS database to prepare it for analysis. In order to expedite entry, not all questions were included. For example, Question 11 on the homeless survey, a number of responses were included in the 'Other' category. Question 34, which asks about the location in which specific activities are carried out was also not entered into the database. This is too complicated for SPSS. We will be setting up an Access database for this question at a later date.

For the open-ended interview questionnaires of non-homeless individuals, responses from each category of respondent were summarized

on a question-by-question basis. The categories that are used for collation are public police, West End and Commercial Drive, private security, government, and citizens groups/community services, West End and Commercial, which include all the respondents who do not fit the other categories. However, for both research sites, we included Vancouver Coastal Health Authority staff in the citizens group/community services category because all the respondents we talked with are involved in delivering services, even those who are also administrators. In summarizing the questionnaires, we searched for diversity of responses as well as commonalities and contradictions within each category. The summaries were then examined in terms of the 6 theme areas that were outlined in the original proposal. These are that:

- The public has expectations that police and private security will 'solve' the issues raised by the increasing presence and activities of homeless people in public space.
- Demands for police intervention result in increasing tension between public police/private security agents and homeless people.
- Increasing regulation and enforcement of public space will result in the criminalization of the homeless.
- The provincial and municipal governments play an active role in the criminalization of homeless people.
- Criminalization and incarceration of homeless people can be reduced via collective action.
- Social and demographic differences between neighbourhoods influence the public response to the presence of homeless people.

An extensive analysis of these themes provides the central structure for Section 6 of this report.

# 5.1 Profile of Study Area 1: Commercial Drive

Commercial Drive is located about 2 kilometres east of the Central Business District, running from the industrial waterfront on Burrard Inlet south to East 15th Avenue. The street is the commercial core of a primarily residential neighbourhood with industrial activities on its northern and western sectors. A retail strip runs along approximately 2.5 kilometres from Venables Street to 14th Avenue (see Map 2, below). This area actually spans 2 of the City's official neighbourhoods, Grandview Woodlands, which goes from the waterfront to East Broadway, and Cedar Cottage, south of Broadway. Broadway also marks the boundary between 2 policing areas, Districts 1 and 2. The zone north of Hastings Street and the strip running along Clark Drive, the main truck route between the Port of Vancouver and the southern suburbs and the US border, on the west are entirely industrial and commercial. Between Hastings and Venables, industry and commerce give way to residential land, which reaches all the way to Broadway, the other main commercial strip. Residential land again predominates south of Broadway.

### 5.1.1 General Background

The area was first developed during the economic boom of the last decade of the 19h century as a working and middle class suburb. Commercial Drive provided part of the route of the inter-urban tram that went from downtown Vancouver to the region's then-other-metropolis, New Westminster, and the neighbourhood was built around it. The Canadian Pacific Railway, which determined so much of Vancouver's development, moved along the eastern waterfront into and out of downtown and, during World War I, the eastern end of False Creek was filled in for railway and industry. The area became increasingly tied to the waterfront, resource processing, and transportation activities that were located in both districts.

Between the world wars, people from non-Anglo Scottish European and Chinese immigrant communities slowly began to move eastward out of the adjacent East End (now called Strathcona) to the area around Commercial, a process that accelerated after 1945. Commercial Drive eventually became known as Vancouver's Little Italy, noted for its delicatessen and produce style grocery stores, restaurants, and many cafes. In the 1970s, Italian and other European families began moving out of the neighbourhood, while newer groups of immigrants began to move in. Although the street retained its reputation as Little Italy well into the 1980s, the population has grown more diverse and non-Europeans groups have increased in numbers.

Situated in Vancouver's eastern zone, the area has long been associated with the social and economic divide that contrasts the city's eastside from its westside. A key element of that differentiation has been a legacy of progressive political activism in East Vancouver derived partly from the immigrant heritage and partly from the economic linkages to the industrial districts, giving the labour movement a significant presence among the local population. For most of the post-World War II era, the area has been represented municipally, provincially, and federally by left-wing politicians and Commercial Drive has increasingly been at the heart of that tradition. Part of the incipient neighbourhood change of the 1970s involved an inward movement of university students, attracted partly by the cheap

*Table 5.1: Population by Age -- Commercial Drive*

| | 2001 | % | 1991 | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 18690 | 100 | 18600 | 100 |
| <20 | 3275 | 17 | 3760 | 20 |
| 20-34 | 5830 | 31 | 6425 | 35 |
| 34-64 | 7800 | 42 | 6445 | 35 |
| 65+ | 1795 | 10 | 1970 | 11 |

rents and cosmopolitan atmosphere, but also by the level of political activism, which they, in turn, helped to invigorate.

During the 1980s and into the 1990s, Commercial Drive developed a reputation as a bohemian and politically radical zone. As in other neighbourhoods, residents mobilized against real estate developments they opposed, and many were also involved in a host of activities from anti-nuclear campaigns, to environmental advocacy, to third world solidarity organizing. Writers, poets, musicians, academics, and political organizers socialized in the cafes and, after 1986, began a series of increasing liberalizations of liquor licensing in the bars and restaurants along Commercial. La Quena café was initiated as a Central American support project in 1984 and became a centre for organizing and debate on a range of issues until it closed in 1999. Many people incorporate this current of activism into their daily lives, taking a critical viewpoint on police activities in relation to the street scene. As numerous respondents told us, it is not uncommon for people to stop and, at a minimum, pointedly watch the police when they stop and question people on the street.

One theme that arose frequently during interviews with citizens, agencies, and police was the 'anarchists' who disrupt meetings and confront authorities. Shortly before the start of our research, a group of youths attended a public meeting on

Map 2: Study Area 1

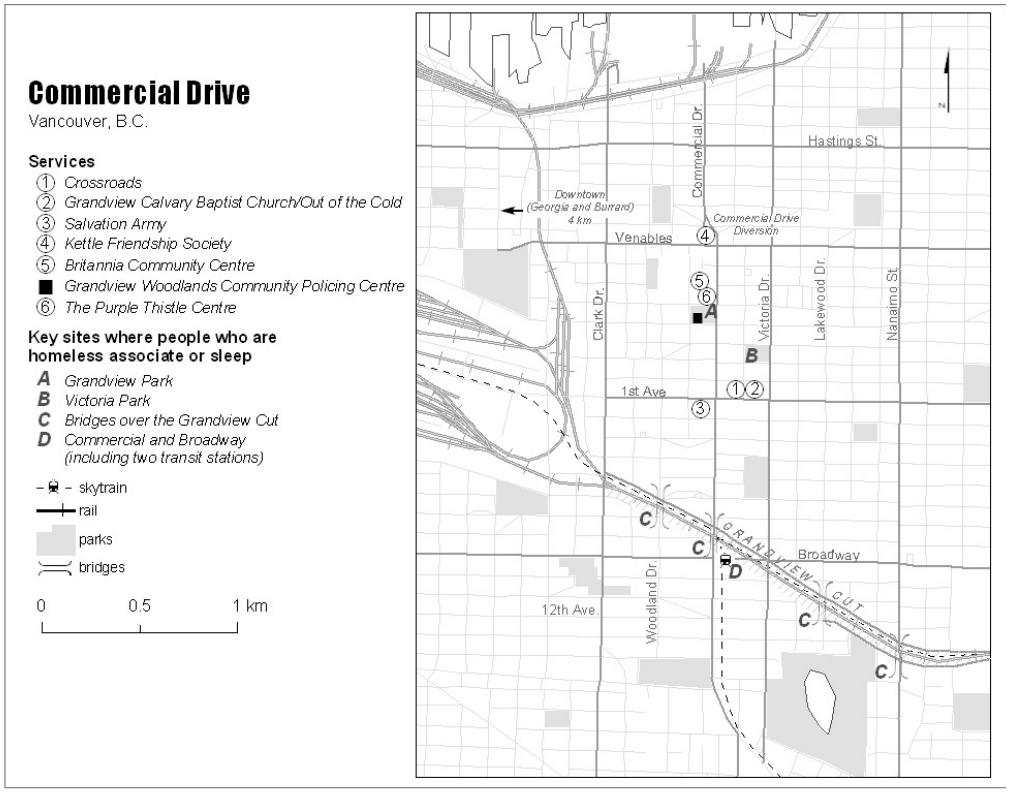


*Table 5.2: Housing Characteristics – Commercial Drive*

| | 2001 | 1991 |
|---|---|---|
| Total dwellings | 9575 | 8525 |
| Rented dwellings | 79% | 80% |
| Renters paying 30%+ on rent | 47% | 43% |
| Apartments | 75% | 72% |
| Single detached houses | 9% | 11% |
| Housing built prior to 1961 | 38% | 44% |
| Housing built 1961-1980 | 32% | 33% |
| Housing built 1981-1990 | 18% | 22% |
| Housing built 1991-2000 | 12% | NA |
| Dwellings in need of repairs | 44% | 37% |

safety in which a panel composed of an NDP MP, MLA, and left-wing City Councillor met with members of the BIA and CPC. The meeting became a shouting match as the youths told the panel that they were 'sell-outs'. Four years earlier, the relocation of the CPC into Grandview Park encountered fierce resistance and was treated by those opposing it as an entrenchment of police presence in the neighbourhood. The Grandview Woodlands Area Council, a residents group that started in the 1970s as a planning forum and continued, in the 1980s, to monitor development and other community issues, was also swept up in the conflict, as competing groups sought to control it.

Concurrently, the neighbourhood has also become a desirable place to live. As in the rest of Vancouver, the housing market is dynamic and prices have increased drastically. Houses now regularly sell for between $400 and $500 thousand and basement suite rents range from $650 to $1000 a month. In 1994, the *Utne Reader* named Commercial Drive as one of the 10 'trendiest' neighbourhoods in North America. More than one of our respondents complained about the disproportionate number of businesses on the Drive that cater to people from outside the neighbourhood rather than residents. By the early 1990s, the term 'gentrification' was becoming a common part of the local lexicon, as condominiums replaced many of the old houses in the neighbourhood. But, as the property market heated up in the nineties, these old houses, most of which were built around the turn-of-the-century, have become increasingly fashionable, and have either been sold as 'fixer-uppers' or renovated by developers prior to being marketed.

It is not only prospective homeowners, diners, and coffee-drinkers who are attracted to Commercial Drive. As fashionable as the area may be, it is also home to a large number of people with limited incomes. And, at the same time that the area was becoming fashionable, it was also becoming the site of a street scene which eventually propelled widespread concern about public order, safety, and 'neighbourhood decline'. The study area's population statistics provide a first step in examining these issues.

### 5.1.2 Social and Demographic Characteristics

In 2001, the total population of the area surrounding Commercial Drive was 18690 people. This population is generally young, 17% being 19 years of age or less, about the same proportion as for the whole city. Thirty-one percent of residents were under the age of 35. Only 10% were 65 or older. The 2001 census counted 9575 households in the study area. Almost 47% of them were one-person households. The vast majority of households, 79%, are renters, 47% of whom spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Interestingly, in an area that is known for its so-called character homes, the dominant form of housing is actually apartments in buildings under 5 storeys, while single detached houses comprise only 9% of the housing stock. Most of that stock was constructed prior to 1981. Thirty-eight percent (38%) was built before 1961 and an additional

32% was erected in the subsequent 20 years. Almost one-quarter of the existing stock was built before 1946. For more details see Table 5.2 above.

The population in and around what is colloquially known as 'the Drive' has one of Vancouver's lowest household incomes, with an annual median income in 2000 of just over $28 thousand, compared with a citywide median of $42 thousand (see table 5.4). Moreover, the average household income on the Drive was $36,000, compared to a citywide average of $58,000. Moreover, 37% of all households earned less than $20 thousand in 2000 and 52% less than $30 thousand. In other words, close to 40% of households living around Commercial Drive made less than half the city's median income. In contrast, only 5% of the area's households had income of $90 thousand or more, that is, about twice the citywide median. Forty-one percent of the area's population lived in households with income below the low income cut-off which is actually lower than half the Vancouver median. The median income for one person households was $18.5 thousand, less than half of that for two or more person households, which was $40 thousand.

This high level of poverty can be related to a number of factors. First, 29% of families are lone-parent families, while almost one quarter of all families are headed by a female lone-parent. The average income of the latter group was $25 thousand in 2000, nearly $20 thousand lower than the general family average, and $28 thousand for male headed lone-parent families. The median for this group was not available. However, given the statistical relationship between averages and medians, it is safe to infer that the majority of those single parent families have incomes close to or less than half the citywide median household income. A second factor involved in the level of poverty around the Drive is the level of educational attainment (see Table 5.3, above). Although nearly one-quarter of the population over 20 years old has a bachelor's degree or higher, another ¼ did not graduate from high school.

The third factor involved in the poverty level is employment and the occupational mix of people living in the district, both of which militate to some extent against higher incomes (see Table 5.4). Twenty-seven percent of labour force participants are employed in sales and service jobs, primarily in non-supervisory roles, while

*Table 5.3: Education Characteristics - Commercial Drive*

| Population 20 years and over… | 2001 % | 1991 % |
|---|---|---|
| Without high school completion | 25 | 36 |
| High school completion | 8 | 10 |
| University degree | 23 | 12 |
| Technical/trade or other certificate | 22 | 25 |

| *Table: 5.4: Labour Force by Selected Occupational Sector – Commercial Drive* | 2001 % | 1991 % |
|---|---|---|
| Sales and service | 27 | 26 |
| Clerical/secretarial/business | 15 | 20 |
| Management | 6 | 5 |
| Social sciences, education, gov't, religion | 12 | 7 |
| Arts, recreation, culture | 9 | 4 |
| Trades, processing, manufacturing | 15 | 20 |
| Natural and applied sciences/health care | 10 | 6 |
| Primary industries | 1 | 6 |

| *Table 5.5: Income Characteristics – Commercial Drive (cumulative percentages)* | 2000 | 1990 (constant2000$) | 1990 (real $) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Median Household Income | $28,000 | $27,000 | $21,476 |
| Average Household Income | $36,000 | $36.000 | $34,509 |
| % households making < $20k | 37 | N/A | 45 |
| % households making < $25k | N/A | 45 (1) | N/A |
| % households making < $30k | 52 | N/A | N/A |
| % households making < $40k | 64 | 69 (1) | N/A |
| % households making > $40k | 35 | N/A | N/A |
| % households making > $50k | 23 | N/A | 16 |
| % households making > $60k | 16 | 16 (1) | N/A |
| % households making > $80k | 7 | N/A | N/A |
| % households making > $100k | 4 | N/A | N/A |
| % pop. in low income households | 41 | N/A | N/A |

another 15% have clerical or secretarial jobs in the business and finance sectors. These are all low paid occupations. Only 6% of the local labour force is at management level. Twelve percent of employed adults work in social sciences, education, government, and religion and 10% work in natural and applied sciences or the health field, all of which are relatively highly paid occupations. A further 15% of the labour force is involved in trades and processing and manufacturing. It is worth noting, however, that the labour force participation rate is only 70%, with an unemployment rate of 9% among the population 15 years and over.

The final factor that may be implicated in the poverty level around Commercial Drive is the proportion of immigrants and visible minorities. Fifty percent of the population speaks a non-official language, a number which is consistent with the city as a whole. However, only 16% speak a non-official language at home. At the same time, only 34% of the population is classified as immigrants, lower than the whole city. But, of this group, 2/3 arrived since 1981, a period during which immigrants have become increasingly vulnerable to low income (Picot and Hou, 2003). Thirty-four percent (34%) of the population is classified as visible minorities, including the 10% which declares itself Aboriginal, one of the largest proportions in any census area in Canada.

### 5.1.3 Changes in the Neighbourhood

Respondents showed no consensus on changes affecting the neighbourhood, although they expressed some agreement that the situation has deteriorated over the past five years. For example, more than half believed that violence has become worse while slightly less than half thought that street safety at night had also worsened. Concurrently, two-thirds of respondents saw the street drug trade increasing, while half saw a rise in panhandling. However, despite this general perception of deterioration, barely one-quarter expressed the belief that crime in general had gotten worse. Most agreed that it had been more or less the same over the past five years, while some asserted that because of new policing resources dedicated to the area, the situation had improved. Many respondents saw structural issues of poverty and housing costs (both of which a majority believed to be getting worse) as being related to disturbances in the area, especially panhandling and drug dealing.

Many respondents distinguished between perception and reality when talking about crime and violence, arguing that many

people in the community believe that these marks are rising when they may have actually declined or stayed the same. A number of respondents also told us that the situation had markedly improved over the 3 to 6 months preceding the interviews because of what 1 person referred to as the "partnership" between the GWCPC, the CDBA, and the police, through which police resources were boosted and foot patrols were established.

What is thus perceived as general deterioration has had a number of consequences for neighbourhood life, according to respondents. The most generally felt of these has been a decrease in tolerance in what many respondents reported has long been a very tolerant local population (see also Smedman, 2003) and increasing tension between different groups in the community. Some of this is attributed to fear arising from feelings of insecurity; however, another widely cited reason for the decrease in tolerance and accompanying rise in social antagonism is the gentrification of the neighbourhood which has taken place in the wake of rising housing prices and rents.

Gentrification has been widely cited as a motor of change in the neighbourhood for more than a decade. However, given that so many of our respondents have assigned it prime importance in framing relations of tolerance and intolerance toward the street poor, it behoves us to take a closer look at the dynamics of neighbourhood change that make it up. Income, occupation, education levels, and homeownership are frequently used in various combinations as key aggregate indicators of gentrification. Interestingly, Study Area 1 exhibits changes in some but not all of these indicators, suggesting that gentrification, *per se*, is not necessarily a factor in what some respondents perceive as growing intolerance of the street scene and the poor. Indeed, as we will see shortly, it seems that this is more of a factor in the West End than it is on the Drive.

The two changes that might support the gentrification thesis are rising education levels and shifts in the occupational structure of the local labour force. Between 1991 and 2001, the proportion of people living in the study area who were over 15 years old and without high school graduation declined from 36% to 25%, while those with at least one university degree almost doubled, from 12% to 23%. This is reflected in the occupational mix found in the working population. The proportion of people classified as managers rose marginally, from 5% to 6%, but people involved in legal, teaching, and social science and government-related occupations increased from 7% to 12%. Employment in natural and applied sciences doubled, from 3% to 6% of the workforce. There also seems to be a significant decline in the proportion of people working in clerical and related occupations, from 20% to 15%. In any case, there seems to be clear evidence of occupational and educational upgrading. Industrial workers declined from 18% to 15% of the labour force between 1991 and 2001 while proportion of workers in primary industries fell dramatically from 6% to 1%. The reasons for these changes in the occupational mix are not clear. To some extent, it may be an artefact of definition change by Statistics Canada. In any case, although rising housing costs may be driving out lower paid workers, they have obviously not done so for all

| *Table 5.6: Commercial Drive Employment Income* | 2000 | 1990 (constant 2000 $) |
|---|---|---|
| Average employment income | $24,000 | n/a |
| % working full-time, full-year | 41 | n/a |
| Average employment income | $34,000 | $32,000 |
| % working part-time, part-year | 56 | n/a |
| Average employment income | $18,000 | $18,000 |

| ***Table 5.7: Household and Family Structures and Characteristics – Commercial Drive*** | 2001 | % | 1991 | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Households | 9575 | 100 | 8520 | 100 |
| Single Person Households | 4490 | 47 | 3560 | 42 |
| Non-family households | 5620 | 59 | 4615 | 54 |
| Family Households | 3950 | 41 | 3855 | 45 |
| Total Census Families | 4075 | 100 | 3980 | 100 |
| Families with children at home | 2465 | 60 | 2585 | 65 |
| Children living at home | 3990 | NA | 4325 | NA |
| Couples without children at home | 1615 | 40 | 1415 | 36 |
| Single parent families (%) | 1165 | 29 | 1105 | 28 |
| Female-headed single parent families (%) | 985 | 24 | 930 | 23 |

those in low-paying jobs.

Changes in the labour force have not translated into higher overall income in the community. Using constant 2000 dollars, the median household income in Study Area 1 shifted up only minimally over the 10 years from 1990 to 2000, from $27,000 to $28,000. Average income was static, hovering around $36 thousand in both 1990 and 2000.[6] Distribution of households by income bracket shifted somewhat, although not upward. The proportion of households with income of $60 thousand or more (again in constant 2000 dollars) was 16% in both 1990 and 2000. On the other hand, those with income under $20 thousand in 2000 formed 37% of households -- while in 1990, those with income less than $25 thousand constituted 45% of households.[7] In 1990, 69% of households brought in less than $42.5 thousand while in 2000, 64% earned less than $40 thousand. In both 1990 and 2000 approximately 80% of households in the area had incomes below the Vancouver average. Employment income rose by only 6% for full-time, full-year workers, from $32 to $34 thousand, while part-time, part-year workers earned virtually the same in 2000 ($18 thousand) as the $17.5 thousand they had made a decade earlier (see Table 5.6). And, although anecdotal evidence points to rising housing costs, this has not shifted the balance between renters and owners. Indeed, 1991's 80% of renter households slipped only marginally to 79% in 2001 while the proportion of tenants paying 30% or more of their income on rent increased from 43% to 47%.

Another cause oft-cited by respondents for the perceived decline in tolerance of the street scene is the number of families with children, who presumably have less patience with street scene activities. Again, however, the population dynamics show the reverse. The number of families in the study area increased only marginally between 1991 and 2001, from 3980 to 4075 – less than 100. Yet, the absolute number of children living at home dropped by 335, from 4325 to 3990 in the same period. The corollary of this was a rise in the number of couples without children at home that was accompanied by a small rise in the proportion of single parent families, from 28% to 29% of all families.

An interesting demographic development that may be related to the perception of decreasing tolerance is the shifting age pattern in the study area. The overall population number was static over a 10

[6] The average income in Grandview Woodlands, the official city neighbourhood was $39,000 in 2000, suggesting that the much of the population residential in the area east of Victoria Drive has substantially higher income than that within the study area.

[7] Because of the classification of households by income in the census, it is difficult to obtain exact comparisons using constant dollars without using custom data from Statistics Canada.

year period at around 18,600 people, but every age category but one saw a decline. The fall in the number of children living at home is part of a larger pattern of an overall decline in the number of people under 20 years, and a consequent drop in their proportion of the population from 20% to 17%. Likewise, the number and proportion of young adults (from 20 to 34 years of age) also fell in both number and proportion, from 6425, (or 35%) to 5830 (or 31%). The retirement age population also declined between 1991 and 2001 from 11% to 10%. The only group to increase in number and proportion was the middle aged population. People aged 35 to 64 increased in number from 6445 in 1991 to 7800 in 2001. This represents an increase of 7 percentage points, from 35% of the study area population to 42%.

Concurrently, the population became more stable, as the proportion of movers over 5 years dropped from 68% to 60% of the population aged 5 years and over, while non-movers rose from 33% to 40%. The proportion of non-movers at the one year mark also rose marginally from 70% to 73% between 1991 and 2001.

The socio-demographic picture that these numbers sketch out is of a population that in 2001 is older and somewhat more settled than it was a decade earlier. Although much of this population was also more educated and had higher occupational status than it had been during the earlier census, any income shifts that occurred as a result of this did not register in aggregate income statistics. Thus, the tendency to attribute increasing gentrification and more families with children as the reasons for lowered tolerance for the street scene does not hold under scrutiny. While it may be that there are gentrifiers and new families in the population who are less tolerant than other people, the dynamic driving conflict over public space does not appear to be a question of neighbourhood change at the aggregate level.

### 5.1.4 The Non-homelessness and Public Order

Like other parts of the City, the VPD's District 2, which includes part of study area 1, has seen an increase since 2001 in calls for what the VPD refer to as Person Annoying, the calls that police respondents told us are most commonly associated with homeless people. However, the Drive has been the site of an active street economy for more than a decade and an increasingly visible street scene for almost as long. Sex-trade workers began working in the industrial zone north of Hastings Street in the early 1990s and that area continues to function as a 'stroll'.

Farther south along Commercial, panhandling also emerged as an occupation in the early 1990s and by the second half of the decade, squeegeeing was done at 2 corners, 1st Avenue and Commercial and 1st Avenue and Victoria Drive. By then, concerns around public order started to be increasingly voiced by actors around Commercial Drive, although they were not focused at all on the sex trade, but rather on the situation around Grandview Park and 1st Avenue.

The area has had a long association with drug use and drug dealing from the lowest to the highest levels, although this was generally pursued indoors or in cafés. As the sex trade stroll was being established in the industrial zone north of Hastings Street, an active street scene, with both drug and sex trades, concurrently developed in the residential district north of Venables and east of Victoria Drive (which is not in the study area but is part of the official Grandview Woodlands neighbourhood). Some residents in this area responded with vigilante actions such as picketing active corners and targeting customers by noting and publicly distributing their licence plate numbers. The intensity of the drug scene in this area eventually faded. However, by the latter

half of the 1990s, a more public drug scene began to make itself apparent on the Drive, as did other elements of a street scene and economy, although the area around Commercial was not the only part of the city where this happened. Grandview Park became not only a favoured drug dealing locale but also a gathering place for youth, from both the neighbourhood and from other districts, and open marijuana consumption was very common.

In 1997 and 1998, the Grandview Woodlands Community Policing Centre (GWCPC), a non-profit society that operates in partnership with the Vancouver Police Department (VPD), sought to respond to the issues raised by the escalating street scene. Framing these issues in terms of the 'broken windows' theory and 'defensible space', the GWCPC pinpointed the 1st and Commercial intersection and Grandview Park itself as key sites for the street scene. Arguing that "the intersection" had been "appropriated by street people[,] causing other citizens of the community to use [it] with extreme caution," while the Park was taken over by drug dealers and users who were being displaced by gentrification in the Downtown Eastside, the GWCPC and the VPD developed strategies for dispersing those activities which it saw as problematic, including drug dealing, panhandling, and squeegeeing. In both instances, the GWCPC claimed success (VPD, 1999; VPD/GWCPC, ND).

Yet, 4 years later, the situation in the Park had again reached the point that the police were directly intervening, conducting sweeps to search for drugs (Potvin, 2002). Meanwhile, panhandling was also increasing and a new phenomenon, violent 'swarmings' by young people hanging out on the street was emerging (Carrigg, 2003b; Howell, 2003b; Smedman, 2003). Over the past 2 years, a sex trade stroll has developed on the southeastern edge of the study area, along Victoria Drive south of 10th Avenue. In October, 2003, just as this project was being conceived, one newspaper reporter asked whether "the Drive [will] slide down a slope made slippery by drugs, garbage, and apathy" (Smedman, 2003). In response, the GWCPC again worked with the police and a more recent institutional actor, the Commercial Drive Business Association (CDBA), to develop a strategy to cope with the situation. The police responded with an increased presence, including regular foot patrols along the street over the spring and summer during which this research was being conducted. The mutual involvement of these three organizations constituted what one respondent told us was a partnership. Thus, the police response involved attendance at CDBA board meetings to report on the progress of the strategy implementation.

As well as foot patrols, the partnership involved a sustained attack on the situation in Victoria Park, one block east of Commercial Drive and near a heavily-used government liquor store. People would use to park to socialize, drink, use drugs, and, occasionally, sleep at various hours of the day and night. A group of nearby residents formed the Victoria Park Partners to lobby for changes to the park that would, among other things, discourage this type of activity. Thus, the liquor store stopped selling single bottles of beer, and, perhaps more significantly, limited the number of empty bottles that people were allowed to return for deposit refunds. The store had functioned as a major bottle return depot for binners. Store management cited limited space to store the returned empties as the reason for this restriction. However, it is evident from our interviews that there is a widespread belief that pressure from local businesses and the non-homeless around Victoria Park was responsible for both of these changes.

### 5.1.5 Homelessness on Commercial Drive

The relationship between the street scene, the street economy, and homelessness is always complex and is especially so in this study area. For example, two police respondents told us that, from their perspective, homeless people living on the street were not responsible for crimes like break and enters. Rather, it was people who were NFA (i.e. no fixed address) -- homeless but sheltered in places like a friend's garage or sleeping on a friend's couch, who were involved in this type of activity. As well, homeless and other people with low incomes who sleep or live elsewhere in the city come to the Drive to socialize because they like the area. Non-homeless or non-street people in the study area are friendlier than other places, we were often told. Service providers also told us much the same thing, especially with regard to people who live in the Downtown Eastside.

In any case, very few homeless people were located during a 2003 count of the neighbourhood that was conducted by the City of Vancouver's Tenant Relocation Officer who works specifically on homelessness, in conjunction with local volunteers (including some from the GWCPC). This may be because the level of presence of homeless people in the neighbourhood seems to vary seasonally. Although this is the case with most areas, Commercial Drive seems to be particularly sensitive to seasonal shifts. A number of respondents told us that the area attracts youth from central Canada, especially Quebec, who arrive either before proceeding to pick fruit in the Okanagan or after having done so. However, the 18% of homeless respondents on Commercial Drive who reported spending most of their life in Ontario and/or Quebec is actually less than the 28% in the West End. In contrast, those Commercial Drive respondents who told us they have lived most of their life in BC, including the Lower Mainland, comprised 45% of the study area sample, compared to 42% for study area 2.

Key sites for homeless people and the street scene during the research included both Grandview and Victoria Parks, although a number of respondents noted that in the late spring people were also sleeping in doorways along Commercial Drive as well as in alcoves in alleys. The other important location is centred on the Commercial and Broadway area, around the two skytrain stations but also under the 4 bridges that span the Grandview Cut above the railroad tracks. One of this project's investigators accompanied a staff person from the City's Engineering Department to inspect the area underneath the Woodland Drive bridge over the railway line, where a large amount of debris had accumulated, presumably from the campers. This is a recurring problem for Engineering. The skytrain was cited by a few respondents as being responsible for a much higher volume of people (including homeless people) on Commercial Drive, particularly along the southern part of the study area. One person noted that the area around Broadway and Commercial has a number of cheap commercial services like dollar-a-slice pizza, a McDonalds, and a dollar store, that are useful for people who are homeless. The intersection's proximity to the Grandview Cut, which has both bridges and enough vegetation to screen people from passers-by on the street, also means that there is a sheltered place to sleep nearby.

As seen on Map 2 (above) Commercial Drive has a smaller network of services specifically available to homeless people than does the West End. This also the case with more generally available services that are accessible to people who are homeless. Three key sets of services are focused on the homeless population around the area. The largest and oldest of these, the Kettle Friendship Society,

operates a drop-in, cafeteria, housing, and advocacy service for people with mental health issues. However, people who do not fit that criterion can also use the Kettle's drop-in and cafeteria if they volunteer there. Some of the Kettle's clients are homeless, as are some of the non-clients who volunteer in return for cafeteria access.

The local Salvation Army mission also provides food service for low income people in the neighbourhood. Although its kitchen was undergoing renovation for much of the period of this project, the Care and Share program continued to produce breakfast each Tuesday morning. The Vineyard Church, which conducts its services at the Salvation Army mission, cooks chili which it distributes at Grandview Park once a week. Another church group also provides food once a week at the Park and at the Broadway transit station. The Grandview Calvary Baptist Church is also very active in the neighbourhood, sponsoring the Crossroads Community Project, a house that is used as a drop-in centre where people can take showers, do their laundry, or use a computer. Counselling is also available there. As well, the church operates Out of the Cold, offering a meal every Thursday night, which it couples with a sleep-over for 30 people in the late autumn, winter, and early spring.

A range of other services also exist in the area that may by used by people who are homeless. Vancouver Coastal Health Authority operates the North Community Health Clinic that offers a range of services including a needle exchange and a 'harm reduction room' that is staffed by a nurse. Staff at the clinic collaborate with a community needle exchange operation known as Peer 2 Peer, which distributes syringes to drug users on the street. Peer 2 Peer also cooperates with the Street Nurse who makes a weekly round of the area. A second community clinic on Commercial Drive, REACH, is operated by a non-profit society and includes youth-specific clinic. The Vancouver East Educational Enrichment Society operates 3 storefront employment programs on Commercial Drive, and sometimes gets homeless clients. East Side Family Place, a drop-in and resource centre, has helped homeless and marginally-housed families but generally does not work with people who are homeless. Farther north, on Hastings Street, are the offices the Urban Native Youth Association, which, among other programs, operates an outreach component. Also on Hastings is the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre.

Civic and public facilities are important in this part of the city. Britannia Community Centre includes a library and a public pool with showers and bathrooms. Located next to Britannia, Grandview Park also has public bathrooms. Farther south, the corner of Commercial and Broadway functions as a transit hub, with two skytrain stations and many buses. Thousands of people move through this hub every day and a range of commercial services are available. Even during the summer, as the police presence on Commercial increased, panhandlers worked here regularly and squeegee-ers often plied their trade.

Despite the relatively lower number of services on the Drive than in the West End, homeless respondents in the former study area reported using more services than did those in the latter. Overall, between ½ and ¾ of respondents reported using a variety of services from medial and mental health resources to food, drop-in, and multi-use programs. Comparatively, West End homeless respondents reporting service use ranged from a low of 39% to a high of 58%, depending on the type of resource. Commercial Drive respondents cited a larger number of different agencies used than did their counterparts in the West End.

# 5.2 Profile of Study Area 2: the West End

Vancouver's West End is located on the city's downtown peninsula, immediately adjacent to the Central Business District, on its eastern edge, and Stanley Park, to the west. The neighbourhood is bounded on the north by Coal Harbour and English Bay on the south. The eastern boundary, Burrard Street, is one of the main thoroughfares in the downtown peninsula, passing over the mouth of False Creek to Kitsilano on the city's oldest standing bridge. Burrard Street is also the site of the St. Paul's Hospital complex, which is a central place in the West End, drawing in thousands of staff and patients from across the core and inner city. Four other thoroughfares traverse the district. Georgia Street is the peninsula's main east-west corridor, connecting, to the northwest, through Stanley Park to the Lion's Gate bridge and the north shore of Burrard Inlet and, to the east, across the Georgia Viaduct with east Vancouver and, ultimately, the eastern suburbs and the north shore.

The other three main streets are more localized, but not locally-oriented, in nature. Robson Street runs from the eastern edge of the downtown through the West End to Stanley Park. Until the late 1980s, it was a small commercial strip with a few restaurants, hotels, and stores for local shoppers. Since then, however, it has become a higher-end retail strip, with 'boutique' hotels, restaurants, cafes, clothing stores, and jewelers oriented towards tourists and young people. Denman Street is another commercial strip which intersects with Robson near Stanley Park but is more local in nature, although it also attracts large numbers of people from outside the neighbourhood. Denman runs to the beach at English Bay, where it intersects with Davie Street, another commercial strip that runs from Stanley Park to the east side of the downtown. The businesses on Davie tend to be the most locally-oriented of the all main streets and include supermarkets, as well as smaller grocery stores, cafes, and restaurants.

### 5.2.1 General Background

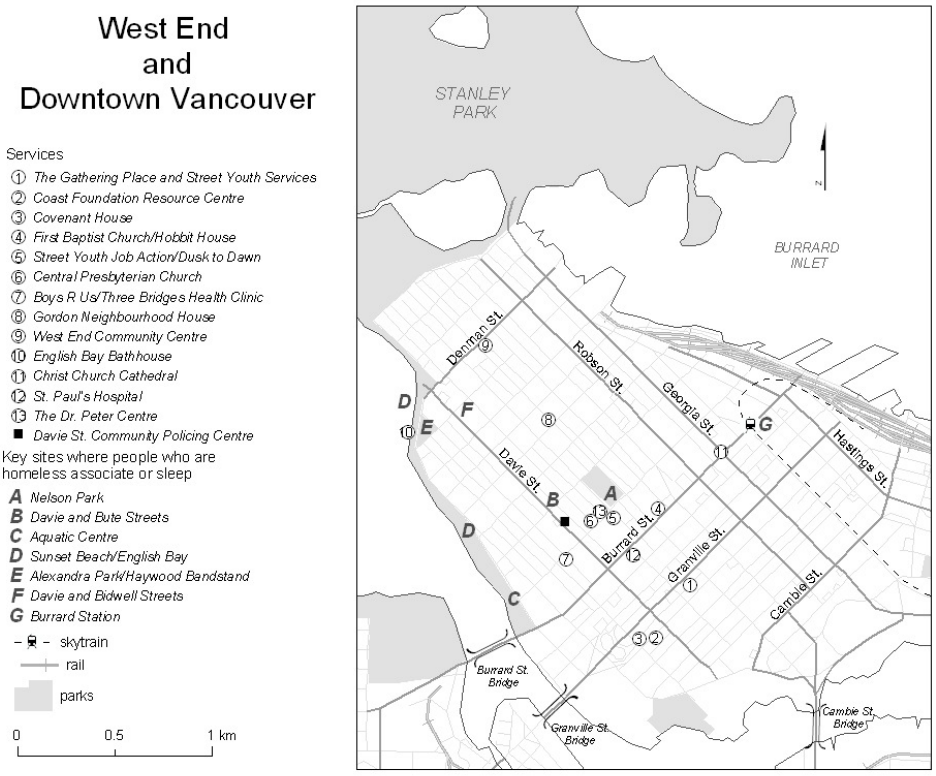
The area was initially developed in the 1890s as an upscale alternative to the city's original European settlement with large lots and houses (by the same people who first developed the residential area around Commercial Drive). Within the next two decades, however, the CPR opened up Shaughnessy, south of False Creek, as a rival upscale residential neighbourhood and the West End gradually lost its cachet. During the Great Depression, many of the large old houses were subdivided into rooms and small suites, and like the Kitsilano neighbourhood on the other side of the Burrard Bridge, the West End emerged as a working class district, with a large number of single people and the centre of bohemian culture that served as a northern outpost of the Beat scene of the 1950s and early 1960s.

In 1957, the City changed its zoning regulations to permit high density housing construction west of Burrard Street and in the early 1960s, the West End landscape began to change drastically, as houses were demolished to make way for apartment buildings that ranged from 3 story walk-ups to high-rise towers. This process continues through today. In some ways, this contrast with a city composed largely of houses only intensified the cultural marginality of the area, which by the 1960s (although probably earlier), had also become the centre of gay and lesbian life in Vancouver. However, this

*Table 5.8: Population by Age – West End*

| | 2001 | % | 1991 | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 42085 | 100 | 38920 | 100 |
| <20 | 2475 | 6 | 1955 | 5 |
| 20-34 | 16250 | 39 | 15520 | 40 |
| 34-64 | 18350 | 44 | 15440 | 40 |
| 65+ | 5010 | 12 | 6005 | 16 |

**Map 3: Study Area 2**




situation only began to be publicly acknowledged in the 1970s, as gay and lesbian-oriented clubs and bars began to proliferate, primarily in the downtown area, at the edge of what was then the warehousing and light-industrial zone east of Granville Street.

### 5.2.2 Social and Demographic Characteristics

With a population of 42,085 people in 2001, the West End study area is significantly larger than the area centred around Commercial Drive. This population also tended to be older than that of Study Area 1 (see Table 5.8). Only 6% of residents are under the age of 20, while 39% are between 20 and 34 years old and another 44% are 35 to 54 years old. Twelve percent (12%) of West Enders are 65 years or over. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of all households were renters in 2000 and 1/3 of them paid in excess of 30% of their income in rent (see Table 5.10). Like the other study area, this area is overwhelmingly apartments, except most buildings are more than 5 storeys high. The age of the housing stock reflects the transformation effected by the late 1950s change in zoning. Only slightly more than a quarter of the current housing stock was constructed before 1961, while 48% was built from 1961 to 1980. A further 25% was built from 1981 to 2001 (see Table 5.10, below for more details). Since the last census, the study area has also seen the addition of a significant number of high-end apartments south of Georgia Street, primarily near the Coal Harbour waterfront.

| *Table 5.9: Income Characteristics – West End (cumulative percentages)* | 2000 | 1990 (constant2000 $) | 1990 (real $) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Median Household Income | $36,000 | $26,000 | $21476 |
| Average Household Income | $46,000 | $42,000 | $34509 |
| % households making < $20k | 27 | n/a | 31 |
| % households making < $25k | n/a | 31 (1) | n/a |
| % households making < $30k | 40 | n/a | n/a |
| % households making < $40k | 45 | 29 | n/a |
| % households making > $40k | 46 | 39 (1) | n/a |
| % households making > $50k | 34 | n/a | 21 |
| % households making > $60k | 25 | 21 (1) | n/a |
| % households making > $80k | 14 | n/a | n/a |
| % households making > $100k | 4 | n/a | n/a |
| % pop. in low income households | 8 | n/a | n/a |

(1) approximation

The median income of West End households was $36 thousand in 2000, somewhat lower than that of the city (see Table 5.9). However, the overall pattern is not uniformly low. While 27% of households had incomes less than half of the citywide median and 13% had incomes between $20 and $29 thousand, 14% had incomes at least double the Vancouver median. Another 20% of West End households had income between $50 and $80 thousand. Household structure is key in this distribution. Twenty percent of two-person households brought in $100 thousand or more in 2000 and another 26% had income between $60 and 100 thousand. This compares with only 3% of one person households with income of at least $100 thousand and 10% between $60 and 100 thousand. The latter were preponderantly located at the bottom end of the income scale, with 35% bringing in less than $20 thousand (less than half of the city median). Almost 60% of all households are single-person and 2/3 had incomes in the bottom half of the median scale.

Income patterns and factors related to low income in Study Area 2 thus differ from those in Study Area 1. At 12%, the proportion of lone parent families in the West End is less than half that of Commercial Drive, although the actual numbers are similar (see Table 5.14). The population is also more highly educated (see Table 5.12, below). Eighteen percent of residents over 20 have only high school education, but only 10% have no completion. In contrast, nearly half have university education and 35% have at least one degree. Similarly, the neighbourhood's occupational structure points toward a somewhat more affluent situation (see Table 5.13, below). Fourteen percent (14%) of residents are in management occupations and another 15% are in natural and applied sciences and health. At the same time, however, the proportion of workers in lower paid occupations, although lower than Study Area 1, is still high at at 37%.

| *Table 5.10: Housing Characteristics – West End* | 2001 % | 1991 % |
|---|---|---|
| Total dwellings | 27605 | 26460 |
| Rented dwellings | 79 | 88 |
| Renters paying 30%+ on rent | 35 | 30 |
| Apartments | 99 | 99 |
| Single detached houses | na | na |
| Housing built prior to 1961 | 26 | 28 |
| Housing built 1961-1980 | 48 | 60 |
| Housing built 1981-1990 | 12 | 10 |
| Housing built 1991-2000 | 13 | na |
| Dwellings in need of repairs | 27 | 27 |

Nevertheless, the income workers made, whether from similar or dissimilar occupations, is significantly higher in the West End than in the Commercial Drive area (see Table 5.11). The average 2000 employment income in the former study area was $35 thousand, compared to the latter's $24 thousand.

*Table 5.11: Employment Income – West End*

| | 2000 | 1990 (constant2000 $) |
|---|---|---|
| Average employment income | $36,000 | n/a |
| % working full-time, full-year | 53 | n/a |
| Average employment income | $45,000 | $32,242 |
| % working part-time, part-year | 45 | n/a |
| Average employment income | $25,000 | $17,505 |

This difference can be accounted for not only by the occupational structure, but also by the intensity of employment. In the West End, more than half of workers were employed full-time for the full year. In contrast, of those in Study Area 1, only 41% worked full-time all year round. And for those in Study Area 2 who only worked part-time or part of the year, the average income, at more than $24 thousand, is 37% higher than those in similar situation living in Study Area 1, who averaged just under $18 thousand. Likewise, with similar labour force participation rates, the unemployment rate in Study Area 2 was only 5%, significantly lower than that of Commercial Drive.

The West End population has a smaller proportion of visible minorities (at 26%) than Commercial Drive. However, the share of residents who are immigrants is the same in both at 34%, and the proportion of people who speak a non-official language is almost the same, at 49%, though only 11% speak a non-official language at home. Also, like Study Area 1, the West End's immigrant population is dominated by arrivals in the 20 years prior to the 2001 census. But, in this population, 29% were very recent arrivals, having come to Canada only between 1996 and 2001, with an additional 15% arriving from 1991 to 1995.

### 5.2.3 Changes in the Neighbourhood

In most respects, the answers of West End respondents to our questions about changes in their neighbourhood were similar to those from Commercial Drive. However, although there was no consensus, respondents in Study Area 2 offered a broader agreement in their overall perception that the situation had deteriorated in the West End over the past 5 years. Two-thirds of respondents told us they think crime and violence have become worse, although only one-third told us they believed that street safety in the day was worse, and less than half thought street safety at night had become worse over that period. Respondents widely agreed that both panhandling and street drug use have worsened.

As in Study Area 1, many respondents distinguished between the perception and the reality of the situation. Although a majority felt that fear of crime had increased, particularly amongst the elderly, they had difficulty saying with any certainty that crime actually had increased. Several respondents pointed out that media representations of crime and homelessness in the West end are exaggerated, arguing that they fit neither the objective reality nor their personal experiences. Again as in Study Area 1, more respondents identified housing costs and poverty as worsening problems in the West End than identified crime, violence or street safety, during either the

*Table 5.12: Education Characteristics –West End*

| Population 20 years and over: | 2001 % | 1991 % |
|---|---|---|
| Without high school completion | 10 | 16 |
| High school completion | 8 | 11 |
| University degree | 35 | 20 |
| Technical/trade or other certificate | 26 | 30 |

| *Table 5.13: Labour Force by Selected Occupational Sector – West End* | 2001 % | 1991 % |
|---|---|---|
| Sales and service | 25 | 31 |
| Clerical/secretarial/business | 12 | 21 |
| Management | 14 | 5 |
| Social sciences, education, gov't, religion | 10 | 7 |
| Arts, recreation, culture | 8 | 4 |
| Trades, processing, manufacturing | 5 | 8 |
| Natural and applied sciences/health care | 14 | 8 |
| Primary industries | 1 | 1 |

day or night. Most respondents, even those who objected to the activities of street people, identified an underlying context to the situation, including poverty, lack of affordable housing, poor childhood experiences etc.

The 5 priorities for action determined by the City-convened West End Neighbourhood Coordinating Committee (see Section 6), fairly reflect the general consensus of answers given to the interview questions. The groups with representatives on the Committee were all among this project's interview sample. These priorities include homelessness, public drug dealing and use, property crime, traffic issues, and street activities like panhandling and vending. The inclusion of traffic in this list is interesting, as it reflects a level of concern about public order that goes beyond 'street people'. Although about half the respondents in Study Area 1 considered that the traffic situation had deteriorated in the past 5 years, more than two-thirds in Study Area 2 voiced similar concerns. At the same time, given the proportion of respondents who agreed that violence in the West End has worsened over the past 5 years, it is also noteworthy that this is *not* included in the list.

The tolerance level for street activities was also an issue that many respondents raised during interviews. Some told us that panhandling, drug use, and homelessness have always been present in the neighbourhood but that their rising intensity has eroded the previously high levels of acceptance and generosity toward the poor and homeless. As tension increases, people tend to be more guarded in their interactions on the street and respond out of fear rather than goodwill. Some believed that neighbourhood change, particularly gentrification of the West End and the residential redevelopment of the adjacent downtown, is bound up with this process by bringing in new, more affluent residents and causing others to move out as the housing stock becomes more unaffordable.

Based on census data, observations about gentrification here appear to have more of a case than in Study Area 1. With a population increase of about 3400 people between 1991 and 2001, the area's households saw a 38% rise in median income, from $26 thousand to over $36 thousand (measured in constant 2000 dollars). Average household income showed a smaller increase, from $42 thousand to nearly $46 thousand. One possible explanation for this very significant upward shift is occupational change over the decade. In 1991, the proportion of workers in natural and applied sciences grew from 4% to 11% of the labour force, while the share of legal, teaching, and social science and government-related jobs skyrocketed from 7% to 20%. Cultural and recreational occupations doubled from 4% to 8% of the West End workforce. Educational qualifications also changed in a similar direction, with the proportion of people

| *Table 5.14: Household and Family Structures and Characteristics – West End* | 2001 | % | 1991 | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Households | 27600 | 100 | 26410 | 100 |
| Single Person Households | 16355 | 59 | | |
| Non-family households | 19400 | 70 | | |
| Family Households | 8220 | 30 | | |
| Total Census Families | 8220 | 100 | 6310 | 100 |
| Families with children at home | 1115 | 14 | 1600 | 25 |
| Children living at home | 3100 | na | 2040 | na |
| Couples without children at home | 1375 | 17 | 4730 | 75 |
| Single parent families (%) | 980 | 12 | 830 | 13 |
| Female-headed single parent families (%) | 865 | 11 | 695 | 11 |

without high school completion dropping from 16% to 10% of adults. Those with a university degree, in contrast, grew from 20% to 35% of the population over 15 years old.

The phenomenal growth in average part-time employment income may be a result of these shifts. Although full-time, full year employment average moved only slight upward over the 10 years, the part time, part-year average, expressed in constant 2000 dollars, almost doubled from just under $17 thousand to more than $24 thousand per year. At the same time, the proportion of households with annual income over $60 thousand moved upward from less than 20% to 25%. Concurrently, a slight decline in the proportion of those with income of under $40 thousand was evident, from around 60% to only 55%.

Like Study Area 1, the proportion of non-movers at the one year mark increased over 10 years, from 65% of the population over one year to 71% while at 5 years, the proportion of non-movers rose slightly from 28% to 31%. However, the West End saw a small increase in the proportion of its population of 19 years or less, from 5% to 6%. Otherwise, however, its population shifts paralleled those in the other study area, with young adults from 20 to 34 dropping from 40% to 39% and middle aged adults growing from 40% to 44%.

Although the West End paralleled Commercial Drive in certain respects, it shows much more evidence of gentrification. Both areas saw an upward shift in occupational status and educational qualifications. Both saw similar changes in the age composition of their populations -- although in Commercial Drive the rise in the proportion of middle-aged people was more than double that of the West End. Both neighbourhoods also became more settled. However, only the West End saw a concomitant increase in indicators of household income. Unlike Commercial Drive, the average income of part-time, part year workers in the West End rose significantly, as did the median and average incomes of all households. Moreover, the proportion of higher income households increased while that of lower income households (i.e. under $40 thousand) decreased.

### 5.2.4 The Non-homeless and Public Order

As noted earlier, the West End has long been associated with alternative cultural scenes, which might be expected to have generated a higher-than-average level of acceptance for the type of street scene that is currently present in the area. However, if we look back only 20 years, we find that the West End also generated the first of several successive

neighbourhood vigilante movements in Vancouver. During the 1970s, both Davie Street, in the West End, and Granville Street, in the adjacent downtown, were sites of large street scenes in which drug dealing and the sex trade provided the central economic engines. Although much of this activity took place in the street, many, if not most, people lived in the large number of SRO hotels in downtown or the housekeeping rooms, apartment-hotels, and furnished suites scattered around the West End. In the West End, the sex trade, which included men as well as women workers, was centred on the intersections at Bute and Davie and Jervis and Davie, although it also extended west along Davie towards Stanley Park. Davie Street and the apartments, cafes, and restaurants of the West End were also the centre of a drug trade based on methamphetamine, then called 'speed', presently known as 'crystal meth'.

In the early 1980s, two inter-related groups, Concerned Residents of the West End and Shame the Johns began actively working to pressure the police and the City to remove the sex trade workers from the streets of the West End. The groups pioneered tactics such as picketing corners where sex trade workers were active, writing down license plate numbers of customers, and confronting both parties in the transaction. The groups also lobbied the City and other levels of government to take action on the sex trade. In 1984, the BC Attorney General asked for, and received, a BC Supreme Court injunction that named 13 women and 'persons unknown', prohibiting them from loitering in the area with the threat of contempt of court charges. This effectively pushed the sex trade off of not only the West End streets, but also Granville and West Georgia Streets. Although much of the drug trade followed the sex-trade, Granville Street continued to be a centre of the drug trade, until redevelopment and police pressure in the latter half of the decade eventually shifted it to the Downtown Eastside and other eastside neighbourhoods.

However, the moment at which the street scene of the 1970s and early 1980s was banished from the West End was also the moment at which a new social figure, the homeless youth, started to emerge. From 1970 on, the bottom end of the downtown housing market began to disappear as large numbers of SROs in the area were closed due to permit violations or lost through fires or redevelopment (The Housing Centre, 1995). Although certain sectors of the drug trade were pushed off Granville Street by the end of the 1980s, young people still frequented the area, living in the remaining SROs or squatting in vacant buildings. Open solicitation of soft drugs, which was common on the Granville Mall from the late 1970s through the 1980s, was increasingly replaced by panhandling all along the street, which began to extend along Robson as that street became increasingly fashionable.

The exact moment at which homelessness and street disorder were first articulated as problems in the West End is not clear. However, by 2003, businesses in the vicinity of Bute and Davie were complaining about vandalism, theft, and street vending (Thomas, 2003). One merchant attributed the increase to the police action in the city's Downtown Eastside, where extra enforcement measures (i.e. the CET) had been implemented to disrupt the street drug market and associated activities. Another argued that more police enforcement was needed to deal with the situation on Davie, adding that although "I know this is a social problem … the police need to push these people away and keep them moving" (Thomas, 2003). However, the VPD's Deputy Chief Constable rejected this claim "point[ing] out" to the media that places like "Commercial Drive and the West End … weren't problem-free before the crackdown" (Howell, 2003c). In any

case, the situation in nearby Nelson Park was such that by the autumn of 2003, residents' groups and the administration of the adjacent elementary school were calling for a joint Vancouver School Board – Vancouver Parks Board task force to examine the future of the park, citing the schools request the previous year to have the park bathrooms locked because they were being used as sites for drug injection (O'Connor, 2003). In response to these situations, the VPD instituted increased bicycle policing along Davie and Denman Streets, extending to Nelson and Alexandra Parks (Thomas, 2004b).

During the same year, a new residents group, the West End Citizens' Action Network (WECAN) was organized. Its website announced that:

> *"We are forming because we believe that it is essential for neighbourhood residents to band together to make our concerns and voices known to our elected officials and the police. We will demand of them strong measures to restore order, lawfulness and the sense of security that we have come to expect in our neighbourhood"* (WECAN, ND).

In particular, the group cited concerns over the low policing levels available to cope with what it saw as "rampant vagrancy in the streets, parks, lanes and doorways"; "an increasing concentration of drug users and dealers, many of whom hang out in your doorways and garages"; "an influx of visible criminal elements that deal in prostitution"; and "an influx of hooligan' elements who harass residents, and engage in destructive and sometimes violent behaviour". The group "join[ed] forces with MLA Lorne Mayencourt" (who would eventually sponsor the *Safe Streets Act*) and "the police department" (O'Connor, 2004). Although the group sought to organize volunteer street patrols around the 3 schools in the district, a move which MLA Mayencourt "compare[d] to the Shame the Johns campaign of the 1980s", too few people signed up and the concept was not implemented.

### 5.2.5 Homelessness in the West End

The West End offers abundant places to sleep for people who are homeless. Stanley Park, a large, forested area is immediately adjacent to the neighbourhood and is connected to a series of beaches and a seawall that circles False Creek, both of which are bounded by parks with fields and bushes. As well, 2 other parks, Nelson and Alexandra Parks provide sleeping opportunities -- the latter has a gazebo and is located close to the English Bay bath house, which has showers and bathrooms while the former has bathrooms in the park field house. The Vancouver Aquatic Centre, which is fringed with bushes, is located just off Sunset Beach next to the Burrard Bridge, under or near which many people sleep. The Centre also has showers and bathrooms, as well as a sauna, steam room, and swimming pool, the use of which requires payment. The parking garages of apartment buildings also provide places to sleep. However, property managers find ways to prevent this from occurring, such as the man we were told of who turns on the fire sprinklers in the buildings garage each morning.

A key difference between the two study areas is the level of service available to groups and individuals with low incomes. Looking at the maps (see Figure 3, above), it is clear that the West End/CBD is the site of an archipelago of services, mainly around St Paul's Hospital and Nelson Park. However, homeless and non-homeless respondents also cited a range of services in both the adjacent CBD and the West End that are farther afield. Indeed, about half the non-homeless respondents named resources

outside the West End (in the Downtown Eastside or CBD), such as the Gathering Place community centre and the Coast Foundation's resource centre for people with mental health issues, because they were unaware of any in the area west of Burrard. This may signify a limited awareness of the available services by people in the non-homeless population, but it also indicates the extent to which the study area (as defined for this project) and the city boundaries on which it is based are artificial constructs. In many respects, the West End and CBD are a contiguous zone and people on the street will go where they need to in order to access services.

For the most part, agencies do not specifically focus their services on the homeless but at a broader range of the low-income or vulnerable population -- although some, like the food services at Central Presbyterian and First Baptist Churches, Street Youth Services, Dusk to Dawn, and Street Youth Job Action, may be utilized primarily by homeless people. Gordon Neighbourhood House, which offers a range of programs for families and youth offers programs that are accessible to people on the street but funding constraints mean it is unable to offer directly focused programming. A small base of street-oriented outreach services also exists, through the West End Mental Health Team and the Street Nurse program which is operated by the BC Centre for Disease Control. The former tries to improve the continuum of care for patients by connecting them with primary-care providers while the latter focus their efforts on harm reduction and education about HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C. They also do some street testing and treatment. First Baptist Church has an outreach worker who does advocacy and follow-up work with people who use the once-a-week meal and shelter. The Vancouver Coastal Health Authority's Three Bridges Community Health Clinic, which provides health services for people who might otherwise be missed by the health care system, including core addiction services, has an adolescent outreach worker. On a more informal, completely voluntary basis, a woman who is universally-known as "Mom" runs her own informal outreach service by distributing food to people on the street and in alleys throughout the Granville Street, Yaletown, and West End areas on a regular basis.

Despite the clamour about the number of people living on the street and in the parks in the area, there are only 42 shelter beds in the West End and CBD south of Georgia Street. Covenant House operates a permanent youth shelter east of Granville while First Baptist Church offers a once-a-week sleep-over for 20 people in conjunction with its Tuesday night meal. The church also operates the adjoining Hobbit House, which provides a drop-in. Dusk to Dawn provides an all-night youth drop-in service, but sleeping is not permitted. It also provides showers, laundry, and meals, as do the Coast Foundation and the Gathering Place, although the latter charges a minimal cost for food. The Vancouver Parks Board is also an important service provider for people who are homeless. Not only, as we have seen, do its parks provide sites for people to sleep and hide their belongings, it also operates three facilities with showers and bathrooms: the Vancouver Aquatic Centre, the West End Community Centre, and the bath house at English Bay. The West End Community Centre also has a library that is accessible to homeless people.

In terms of service utilization, people who responded to the homeless survey in the West End reported using less resources than did those along Commercial Drive. The largest number of people reported using food services and drop-ins, while youth, health, and, non-specific services like community centres and showers/washrooms garnered the lowest

responses. At the same time, homeless people in the West End, as in Study Area 1, generally believe that agency staff respect them and believe, to a much higher degree than in the latter area, that agency staff are doing an excellent or good job of dealing with homelessness.

### 6.1 The public has expectations that police and private security will 'solve' the issues raised by the increasing presence and activities of homeless people in public space.

Our interviews suggest that individual residents, together with resident and business groups, fall into two quite distinct solitudes in relation to the increasing presence of homeless people on their streets and in their neighbourhoods. While some individuals, as well as resident and business groups, advocate punitive measures (including greater involvement of the police, courts, and prisons) to confront the street economy, the majority of people and groups interviewed in both locations simply want solutions that benefit both them and the homeless. When we asked what they think should be done to resolve the issues created by the presence of homeless people in public spaces in their neighbourhood, most respondents in both the West End and Commercial Drive cited the need for more affordable housing, more alcohol and drug treatment programs and more social services. Only a small minority of respondents wanted increased police enforcement, more laws, and changes to the *Criminal Code* to regulate behaviour in public spaces.

Most respondents felt that police are best used to respond to threats to public or individual safety and should be responsible for solving the conflicts that develop when homeless people are present in public spaces. Some residents think that there is already too much of an emphasis on police *enforcement*. They argue that governments (all three levels, but especially the provincial and municipal levels), community members, and local organizations and agencies (businesses, schools, churches, community centres) are best positioned to deal with and find solutions to the problem of homelessness. The police need to be part of what some respondents see as a grass-roots community dialogue on solutions in which they are involved in community work--providing a constant presence that engages with people, rather than simply enforcing by-laws.

While the majority of community respondents agreed that conditions had deteriorated in their neighbourhoods over the past 5 years vis-à-vis issues like crime, street drug use, housing costs, violence, poverty and safety, few saw homelessness as the cause of another problem that had worsened rather than the factor that had caused that deterioration. Although most respondents told us they thought that crime was either the same or worse over the past 5 years, most also made a point of distinguishing between perception and reality. Many felt that fear of crime had increased, especially among the elderly (this was emphasized in the West End), but had difficulty saying with any certainty that crime had actually increased. Respondents in both study areas pointed out that media representations of crime and homelessness were exaggerated, fitting neither the reality of the situation nor their personal experience.

Respondents rarely attributed negative neighbourhood change to inadequate policing resources or priorities. The primary cause of such changes was seen, in both study sites, as provincial and (to a lesser extent) federal government program restructuring. Specific reasons included the lack of affordable housing/social support, treatment programs, and mental health programs. Two other key reasons cited for the rise of the street economy in the 2 neighbourhoods were the prevalence of drugs and the appeal of Vancouver's temperate climate to young people. Since most respondents did not attribute the problem to the police or the criminal justice system, it is not surprising that they would not see police as the solution.

The relationship between police, residents, businesses, and homeless people is complex. Despite what seems to be a generally liberal attitude among residents and businesses toward homelessness and the street scene, the police with whom we talked expressed frustration at the pressure they feel is exerted on them by these groups to solve the problems associated with homelessness. Police often feel 'under siege' as a result of persistent complaints from some members of the public. Yet, though they lament the lack of manpower and the leniency of the criminal justice system in their efforts to deal with street order, most police officers see homelessness and its associated issues as a social, rather than a law enforcement, problem. Police (as well as many other) respondents told us that they see neighbourhood change in the form of gentrification as a key catalyst for increasing complaints about homeless people. There is a perception among many respondents in both study areas that new residents, particularly affluent property owners who are suddenly confronted with homeless people on their doorsteps, unrealistically expect police to solve the problem. A number of police respondents spoke of hearing the refrain "can't you do something?" They also feel that most of the people who complain don't care how the police 'do something' so long as they do it. Yet, in most cases, all they can do is to move people along and, hopefully, advise them where to go in order to avoid complaints.

Referring to the role of police in relation to homelessness, one officer told us:

> *"[We] always have a responsibility to enforce the Criminal Code. If homeless people are involved in criminal activities, we deal with them. I guess when homeless people are spread out contact is fairly limited. But when people get together, public pressure is a big issue. But that's the only time I've had to step in…..[We] have to first and foremost look after public security. [We] can't deal with the issues underlying homelessness. … We have to deal with other agencies and try to get help for people. A criminal sanction isn't the appropriate way to deal with homelessness"*.

But the imperative to respond to complaints and problems still exists for police. One officer area maintains that policing the homeless requires a new approach and considerable finesse:

> "*I think we are more intelligent, some of that resulted from Woodsquat.*[8] *It's not a policing issue. If you deal with it right, you can solve it, if you deal with it wrong, you end up with complaints. You need to understand why it's there. We should get a little more involved in that way. We can't be responsible for everything that goes wrong without having some say in the issue.*"

One of the main frustrations expressed by the police is that residents, business people, and others believe they have a

[8] The occupation and encampment at the Woodward's building, widely called Woodsquat, together with the 'tent city' encampments in city parks in the Summer and Autumn of 2003, have clearly influence the tactical and strategic thinking of police around homelessness issues and political activism associated with it. The encampments were mentioned by a number of police respondents in relation to inter-agency collaboration, the non-enforcement functions of the police and the problems that can arise from a 'concentration' of homeless people in a site or an area. They have also obviously influenced the VPD's insistence that it will not permit another encampment to take place. Hence, the rapid and overwhelming response to the Spring 2004, attempt to put up another encampment.

'magic wand' in dealing with problems generated by the homeless, when in fact their 'hands are tied' and most often unless an actual offence has occurred the most they can do is move people along. Sometimes business people go to the senior personnel in the department. This has happened, in particular, in relation to the concerns of Granville Street businesses, in the downtown core, with regards to an escalation of drug and other street issues resulting from displacement from the Downtown Eastside. One police respondent remarked that it is better to have problems contained in one area such as the Downtown Eastside rather than displacing them throughout the city where resources to deal with them are more scarce.

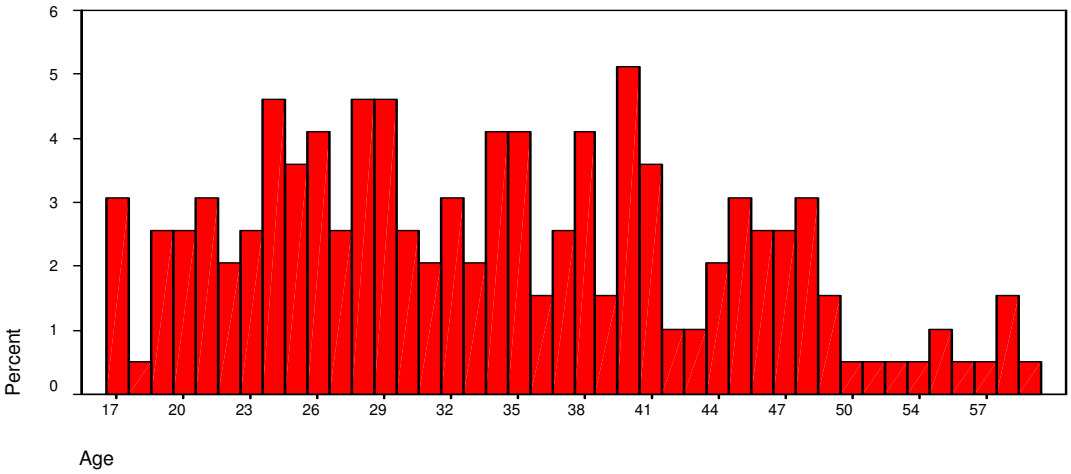
The bottom line for individual police officers and constables is that they have to operate within the parameters of the resources and mandates they have and are unable to deflect responsibility elsewhere for the kinds of calls and demands they get from the public and from their superiors. Individuals say they would like to see a solution, but money appears to be unavailable and/or the relevant authorities in senior levels of government are unwilling to spend it to reduce the problem. Police also feel that a lack of resources in other areas that complement public policing (such as fewer city by-law enforcement officers) puts even more onus on them to cover all such work in public spaces. In response to a question about what needs to be done to resolve the issues created by the presence of homeless people in public places in neighbourhoods one officer replied:

> "*Social services should be more intelligent and sensitive to people's needs.... [They] need to help people live in decent accommodations. Living on the street or in care is not acceptable. [We] need different police enforcement and need to be more sensitive to legitimate homelessness. By-law enforcement is a waste of time. Bylaws have to be useful. Police don't like dealing with useless bylaws. Good by-laws will help the homeless too*."

Private security guards have a very different (and a much more circumscribed) perception of their role in the community and in their dealings with homeless people than do the public police. Because private security is hired specifically to protect private property, most security guards see their primary responsibility as being to the businesses or institutions that pay them – rather than to the wider community. Police, on the other hand, regardless of their personal feelings about the homeless, are responsible to the entire community and do not have the luxury of defining their role more narrowly. For example, complaints about the Bute/Davie street open drug-market come to police, who have to go in and either charge or move people along; in addition, they may be left with the responsibility for calling city garbage trucks to clean up the mess left by the market. While complaints may initially come from the businesses near the corner, police are responsible to the neighbourhood for order maintenance and must ensure that both public and private spaces are protected. Several police respondents stated that the proliferation of private security, particularly in the West End, has resulted in more work for them. Lacking police authority, private security must call public police when they encounter situations with which they are not authorized or skilled enough to manage. Thus, although private security guards generally maintained they call the public police only as a last resort, a number of police attributed increased calls for service to private security.

Interestingly, despite their admitted inability to deal effectively with homeless and the admission that the problem is a social and not a police one, police officers

*Chart 6.1: Homeless Sample by Age (%)*




were likely than citizen's and business people to say that more police, better and enforceable by-laws and stiffer criminal justice sanctions were required to reduce the homeless/street problem. However, no private security officers felt that increased private security was any solution to homelessness, and were consistent with citizens and business people that governments on all three levels had the primary responsibility for solving the homelessness problem.

A prevailing theme in the police interviews is the difficulty of getting street people to utilize existing services, even if they need help and are referred by police. Police, as well as other respondents, told us that many people will often refuse to use shelters, even when informed about vacancies, because of inflexible rules and /or because of fears of violence and victimization. At the same time, many police respondents said they see little evidence of proactive help for people living on the street by formal services. A number of police respondents stated that many homeless/street people do not have the capacity to get themselves to social and or legal services and require more assistance than a simple referral can provide. However, the police do not have the resources to make these kinds of connections for people. As a result, street people either do not follow-up on referrals or do not believe it is worthwhile to even agree to follow-up. One respondent with several years of policing experience in another industrialized country, suggested that Canadians have a 'phobia' about 'institutionalization' that has contributed heavily to the relegation of large numbers of people with addiction and mental health problems to the street. Echoing the views of a large number of residents and service providers, another police respondent suggested that more people in a capacity similar to outreach personnel (such as the City's Tenant Relocation Officer) are needed to work directly with the homeless to help them negotiate the various processes that are set up by social service and physical and mental health agencies. The bottom line for most police respondents at all levels of management and operations, however, is that for any change are to occur, governments have to take the problem more seriously and provide the required funding and resources.

**6.2 Demands for police intervention result in increasing tension between public police/private security agents and homeless people.**

We explore this hypothesis from two perspectives, beginning with some observations by public police about policing the homeless population (including changes in the latter's characteristics and behaviour) and the preferences of the police in dealing with homeless people. We then report on the findings from interviews with homeless people about their contacts with and impressions about police and private security in the two neighbourhoods.

The notions of tension and conflict in this type of situation are multi-dimensional and often laden with contradictory elements. Issues of power and authority, resentment, anger, and frustration can play out in many different ways when there are such a large number of individuals and groups involved. For example, what may be a routine interaction from the point of view of a police constable can, for a homeless person, be an instance of harassment, even as the constable is frustrated at having to spend time and resources in such an activity. Meanwhile, the business person who called the police may be angry at the homeless person (and what he or she believes that person represents), while a passer-by may see the situation as one of either long overdue police enforcement or, conversely, as a misplaced effort to persecute the poor.

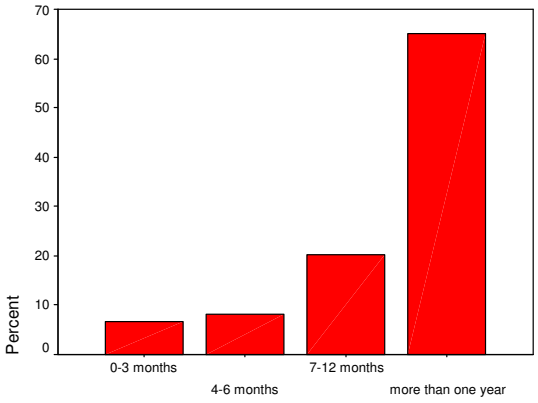



*Chart 6.2: Length of Time Homeless*

In order to understand these dynamics, we examine:

- perceptions of the level of contact between the two groups,
- changes in police perceptions about the homeless and frustrations in dealing with them,
- perceptions the homeless hold about the way police feel about them,
- perceptions of the homeless about whether other sectors are interested in their well-being,
- the level of conflict among homeless people, and
- the degree to which the homeless 'feel to be part of the neighbourhood'.

Taken together, we think that these provide indicators of the level of tension between the homeless and the non-homeless, particularly the police. At the same time, they also provide an index of the degree to which the homeless think they are accepted by the non-homeless.

**6.2.1 Perceptions of Police Officers**

Eighteen public police respondents were interviewed in the two research sites – 16 men and two women. The average age of the officers was mid to late 30's, the average time in policing was 14 years, and the majority of officers had worked only for the Vancouver Police Department. Respondents included 2 inspectors, 4 sergeants, and 12 constables.

In the course of the interviews, police respondents commented on the kinds of changes they have noticed in the two neighbourhoods since they began working there. In the West End, police noted that a large increase in the homeless, street and

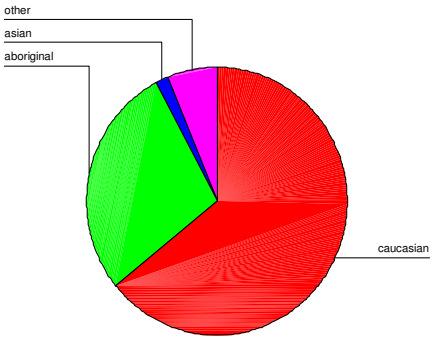
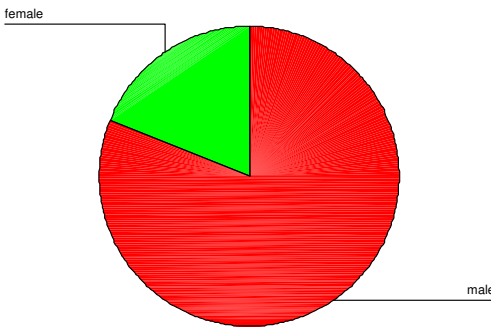



*Chart 6.3: Sample by ethnic background*

binner populations, as well as busier and more crowded streets.

The net effects, in their opinions, have been: a 'hardening' of public attitudes towards the homeless; a big increase in complaints to police about the activities of homeless and street people; an increase in noise; in the number of private security guard employed by businesses; more garbage, condoms and needles on neighbourhood streets, alleys, alcoves and doorways; and a general decline in the quality of the neighbourhoods. Respondents told us that the Commercial Drive area has undergone a 'tremendous transition' with the advent of chain stores, population change, displacement of people from the Downtown Eastside, an increase of youth in crisis, and drugs (the area has been the site of increasing drug dealing and even the opening of 'pot' cafes). Police believe that the net effect of these changes is a general deterioration in the neighbourhood. Some people have stopped using public spaces like Grandview Park, and many feel less safe on the streets because they see youth openly drinking and dealing drugs on the street and are aware of an increase in crime. Simultaneously, housing prices have dramatically increased.

*Chart 6.4: Sample by Gender*




Police also feel that their interactions with the growing number of homeless people are increasingly dangerous because of the escalating use of methamphetamine ('crystal meth') and the weapons that many homeless individuals carry for self-protection. Some police respondents told us that more homeless people now hide weapons on their person or in their baggage while sleeping as potential defences against attacks by other street people, by people on drugs and/or by non-homeless people. When the researchers accompanied a police patrol in the West End and downtown, a man sleeping on Granville Street was awakened and produced a knife from his shoulder bag in response to questioning about possession of a weapon. He told the police that he needed the knife for protection. When attempting to waken people, police say that it is important to keep in mind that they may carry baseball bats, knives, or other weapons.

Police unease in dealing with the homeless has been heightened by changes they have seen in the characteristics and demographics of the street population over the past five years. Several respondents argued that street people are more violent now because of drugs like crystal meth, and/or are more brazen in their dealings with police and the public. Drugs and mental health problems are huge issues for police when dealing with homeless people. One constable said that his first encounters with homeless people involved mostly older alcoholics. However, he pointed out that this group has now been replaced by a younger demographic who use illicit

drugs and may be very unhealthy, possibly having HIV/AIDS and/or Hepatitis C.

De-institutionalization of the mentally ill means that much of the street population has serious and identifiable mental health problems – most respondents estimated this at about 20%-25% and more than one police respondent offered observations such as: "shutting down Riverview was the biggest mistake ever made as it results in putting a mentally ill person beside a drug dealer in an SRO". However, most respondents agreed that even if people do not have mental health problems before they start living on the street they will develop them soon afterwards. There is considerable crossover between mental heath and drug addiction among the homeless population, so it is often difficult to determine if there is an overt and underlying mental health problem when dealing with a homeless person.

An increase in migration of the homeless to Vancouver and to certain neighbourhoods in the city is another change mentioned by several police officers. Both the West End and Commercial Drive are considered very diverse and tolerant neighbourhoods. One officer noted that the West End is popular for street people because of the high population density and good income level in the community and the level of tolerance for street people (although other respondents claim that the increasing number of homeless people and problems related to their presence is eroding that tolerance). Commercial Drive is also noted for its tolerant non-homeless population. These factors ostensibly attract street people from other areas of the city as well from other parts of the country (most notably young people from Quebec).

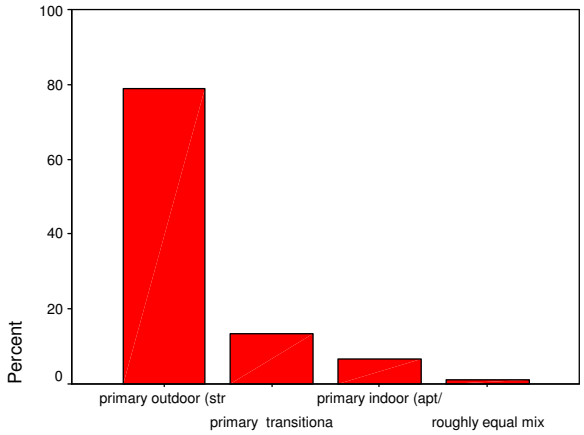



*Chart 6.5:Primary place respondents have lived in past 2yrs.*

Police cited the limited mandate of the police as major frustration dealing with the homeless population. As one respondent noted:

> "We're limited in what we can do. That's sometimes a source of frustration. Not an issue we can resolve ourselves. … Where'll we put homeless people who are causing problems? We end up shifting them to another area. We mediate the problem and have to deal with it -- but whether we can do anything about it. Most of us have a good rapport with homeless people. They understand our position. But where are they going to go?"

Public expectations of police which are impossible to meet because of the lack of resources, police strength, and laws, are an additional source of frustration. Because of cutbacks in policing resources, individual officers do not have time to spend time talking with homeless and trying to find solutions. Increasingly police are resentful that they have to do a job that they do not consider a legitimate police role:

> "What are our frustrations? Probably not what you think – lack of social infrastructure at 2 a.m. when you're trying to house somebody. All facilities are in the Downtown Eastside. But a lot of people have drug problems and we drag them right back there. Another frustration—

| *Table 6.1: Levels of Contact with Police in Past 2 years* | Total | West End | Commercial Drive |
|---|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % |
| Frequent Contact | 53 | 60 | 45 |
| Some Contact | 23 | 20 | 26 |
| No Contact | 20 | 14 | 25 |
| Contact Increased | 41 | 34 | 47 |
| Contacts Decreased | 31 | 34 | 27 |
| Contacts stayed the same | 27 | 25 | 28 |

addiction services need more money, we're just touching the surface. The squats took a huge amount of police resources but they were not really a police issue. They are a societal issue but the police wound up dealing with it because there aren't other resources."

### 6.2.2 Perceptions of Homeless Respondents

As we have noted, almost 2/3 of the homeless respondents have lived primarily on the street for the past 2 years (see Chart 6.5, above). As such, their experiences and perceptions are central elements in the relationship between homelessness and public order.

#### *6.2.2.1 Contacts with Police and Private Security*

Fifty-three percent (53%) of the homeless respondents had 'frequent' contact with police over the past two years and 23% had 'some' contact (see Table 6.1). Forty-one percent (41%) said their number of contacts with police had increased over the past two years, 27% said they had stayed the same, and 31% said their contacts had decreased. West End respondents were more likely to have had frequent contact with private security (35% to 18% for Commercial Drive; see Table 6.2). Conversely, 65% of Commercial Drive respondents had 'no contact' with private security compared to only 43% of those from the West End. A greater proportion of females reported an increase in contact with police over past two years.

Homeless respondents reported that their contacts with police were mostly informal and friendly. Fifty-nine percent (59%) said that the main outcome of their contact with police was 'friendly with informal measures', another 7% said it was 'friendly with formal measures' -- for a total of 63% 'friendly' responses. The 'unfriendly' responses totalled 29%; the formal measures 16% and the informal 79% (This is consistent with the way police describe their contacts with the homeless).

| *Table 6.2: Levels of Contact with Private Security in Past 2 years* | Total | West End | Commercial Drive |
|---|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % |
| Frequent Contact | 27 | 35 | 18 |
| Some Contact | 19 | 21 | 18 |
| No Contact | 54 | 43 | 65 |
| Contact Increased | 30 | 36 | 22 |
| Contacts Decreased | 18 | 15 | 22 |
| Contacts stayed the same | 46 | 42 | 41 |

*Table 6.3: How Institutions Deal with Homelessness as Reported by Homeless Respondents*

| Institution | Excellent/ Good % | Neutral % | Poorly % | Don't Know % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Community agencies | 46 | 26 | 12 | 16 |
| Community members | 30 | 39 | 27 | 4 |
| Local businesses | 12 | 37 | 45 | 5 |
| City gov't | 8 | 17 | 55 | 19 |
| MHR | 8 | 22 | 53 | 17 |
| Police | 7 | 31 | 56 | 5 |
| Private security | 5 | 28 | 47 | 18 |
| Federal gov't | 2 | 10 | 65 | 23 |
| Prov gov't | 1 | 9 | 69 | 21 |

When asked the question about how police deal with the homeless in a more general sense, some neighbourhood differences emerged. In Commercial Drive, 65% of respondents said police dealt 'poorly' with the homeless as compared to 48% of those from the West End. These responses are interesting because while the majority of homeless people perceive police as unfriendly in their dealings with the homeless population more generally, when asked about their *own* personal experiences with police they are more positive. Respondents from Commercial Drive were less positive about the degree to which police cared about the well being of the homeless. Twelve percent (12%) of West End respondents said police cared 'very much' about the well-being of the homeless compared to 2% from Commercial Drive. Conversely, 60% from Commercial Drive said police cared 'very little/not at all' about the homeless compared to 47% from the West End. Those who had been on the street between 7 and 12 months were the most negative about police and felt police were 'rarely or never' polite or respectful and that they treated the homeless poorly.

Respondents from Commercial Drive were more inclined to believe that the factors affecting how police treat the homeless are primarily the attitudes of the homeless themselves to police as well as their appearance and behaviour. West End respondents, however, felt that public pressure and scrutiny on police had more to do with the reasons police treat homeless as they do.

When asked how much agencies, governments, and the police cared about the homeless, respondents were clearly most positive about the community service agencies and community members—and least positive about provincial and federal governments (Table 6.3, above).

The responses to questions about those groups most interested in their well-being paralleled this. Most respondents believed that private security is the group least interested in their well-being, but the public police also did not score high marks for caring 'very much'. As a corollary, most homeless respondents felt that both police and private security cared 'very little' or 'not at all' for their well-being. As for the critical factors that determine how police view and treat the homeless, respondents believed that a "lack of understanding of homelessness"; "assumptions about criminality" and 'the appearance and behaviour of homeless people" are the most important factors at work. These were followed by the "attitude of the homeless to the police"; "public pressures/public scrutiny on police"; "individual personality of police"; "how police perceive their job/just doing job"; and "positive police education and

*Table 6.4 : Feelings of Vulnerability*

| % | Total | West End | Commercial |
|---|---|---|---|
| Daytime Vulnerability High | 11 | 11 | 10 |
| Daytime Vulnerability Somewhat | 22 | 20 | 25 |
| Daytime Vulnerability None | 67 | 69 | 65 |
| Night-time Vulnerability High | 21 | 21 | 21 |
| Night-time Vulnerability Somewhat | 34 | 35 | 33 |
| Night-time Vulnerability None | 45 | 44 | 46 |

awareness about the homeless", at a distant last.

Results for private security were quite different. Many fewer people responded because of less contact with private security The factor that received the highest score for private security was 'just doing job/how perceive job' so, clearly, respondents felt that security guards are much less judgmental and have fewer negative perceptions in their interactions with the homeless. Only 7% felt that private security 'think all homeless are criminal', 6% that 'appearance and behaviour of homeless', 5% that 'attitude of homeless' and 4% that 'education/awareness' were the factors that most affected how private security treat the homeless.

#### *6.2.2.2 Vulnerability on the Street/Conflict Between Street People*

Only 11% of homeless respondents felt 'very' vulnerable on the street during the day compared to 21% who felt 'very' vulnerable at night (see Table 6.4 above). Those who felt 'somewhat' vulnerable day and night comprised 22% and 34%, respectively. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of respondents did not feel vulnerable during the day, compared to the 45% who did not feel vulnerable at night (Table 6.4). No single factor stood out as a cause of vulnerability, although drunken gangs/violence/young people'; 'drug users/dealers'; 'judgmental communities'; 'police behaviour'; and 'personal characteristics of homeless such as being disabled and/or mentally ill' were the factors most often identified. Although there was no significant difference between the study areas in the proportions feeling vulnerable on street by day or night, for those who did feel vulnerable the factors were different for males and females. Females were more concerned about how the community treats them and about being judged, whereas males were more concerned about drunken gangs of non-homeless youth and the behaviour of police.

In terms of why homeless people do *not* feel vulnerable, 'knowing people on street/ other homeless not a threat' received the most responses, followed by 'can take care or self'; 'other'; 'never had problems'; and 'keep to self/rely on self'. People who had been on the street between 7 and 12 months tended to feel more vulnerable on the street during the day than did those who had been homeless a shorter or longer period of time. Sixty-four percent (64%) of respondents said that conflict between homeless people had 'increased' over the past two years; 24% that it had 'stayed the same'; 7% said it had 'decreased' and 5% 'didn't know'.

Despite feelings of vulnerability and increased conflict among street people nearly 3/4 of respondents felt 'part of the neighbourhood'. The reasons for this feeling varied. The largest proportion of those who reported such a feeling of belonging was 'knowing people,/being well-known/comfortable'; 'length of time in neighbourhood'; 'associations with people in the neighbourhood'; 'people in neighbourhood nice/kind/friendly'; and being 'part of homeless community'. For those who do not feel part of the neighbourhood, 25% said they were 'treated badly by people'; 17% that they were 'always moving around'; 13% that 'citizens don't care /don't like to see

homeless people'; 8% that they 'only know homeless people who aren't part of the neighbourhood'; 32% gave an 'other' response and 4% 'didn't know' why.

Feelings about being part of the neighbourhood differed significantly between the 2 study areas. Eighty-one (81%) percent of Commercial Drive respondents felt 'part of neighbourhood' compared to 68% of those in the West End. The reasons for this were 'know people/well-known/comfortable' (and 'people in neighbourhood nice, kind, friendly'. Ten (10%) of respondents in the West End felt they were treated badly by people as compared to only 2% in Commercial Drive. More Aboriginals than Caucasians felt part of the community because they know people and feel comfortable. Interestingly, those on the street between 4 and 6 months were less likely to feel a part of the neighbourhood than were those who had been homeless either a shorter or longer duration. People who had been on the street the longest did not necessarily feel more a part of the neighbourhood.

**6.3. Increasing regulation and enforcement of public space will result in the criminalization of the homeless.**

In assessing the criminalization of homelessness, it is important to distinguish between the involvement of homeless people in illegal activities, and the effort to regulate or impose criminal sanctions on activities that are often (but not exclusively) carried out by the homeless. In this section, we examine the former issue, together with its corollary, the victimization of homeless people and their ability to gain access to the justice system. As is clearly evident from the research, a large number of people on the street have a history of involvement with the justice system but very few feel as if they have any recourse to it when they have been victimized. Almost all our homeless respondents have been victimized in some way in the recent past but very, very few have actually reported it to any authority.

The second part of the criminalization equation, the regulation of previously un- or minimally-controlled types of activity is a process that can simultaneously be very public and conflict-ridden and also very subtle, even unseen except by the immediate participants. (As an example, during the research, as debate raged over the *Safe Streets Act* and the City's licensing inspectors urged businesses and property manager to lock their garbage bins, we received reports from both police and homeless people in the West End that the former were seizing the shopping carts that binners use to collect and haul their goods as a response to resident complaints about early morning noise and messes left in alleys.[9] Unlike the more high profile issues like the *Safe Streets Act*, this form of direct action by police was known only to its immediate participants.)

In approaching these 2 inter-related dimensions of criminalization, we have considered a number of different issues. Because of the difficulty in generating neighbourhood level incidence data from the VPD, we have relied on reports by police respondents about their complaints and contacts with the homeless and street people, and how homeless respondents reported the outcome of their contacts with police. We also asked homeless respondents about their criminal records, present criminal justice status and about

[9] While they are technically stolen property that belongs to supermarkets, shopping carts have long been used by people to haul various types of goods, including the personal possessions of some homeless people. They became an important tool of the binning trade with the expansion of beverage container recycling in the mid-1990s, which impelled a widening of scavenging activities among the poor in Vancouver.

*Table 6.5: Most Recent Conviction*

| *(within:)* | 3 months | 4–6 months | 7–12 months | 13–24 months | 24+ months | None Reported |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 15% | 7% | 5% | 6% | 40% | 28% |
| West End | 17% | 7% | 5% | 8% | 38% | 24% |
| Commercial Drive | 13% | 7% | 5% | 3% | 40% | 32% |

being victimized on the street. We asked homeless people about their personal victimization and also residents, service providers, and police about their perceptions of homeless victimization. In addition, we inquired about the degree to which the homeless, as well as the various groups who work with them, feel they have access to the justice system.

In terms of understanding the processes in which the regulation of the homeless is intensified, we asked about the activities in which homeless respondents engaged in order to make their livings. Many concerns about the perceived erosion of public order focus on the things that people do to generate money, such as squeegeeing, panhandling, and binning (already-illegal actions such as drug dealing and theft were also considered as sources of income). In this section, we profile the level of these activities among the sample of homeless respondents. In the subsequent sections, we will examine the larger institutional processes through which they are being regulated.

### 6.3.1 Criminal Convictions

Given that the central issue we are examining is the criminalization of the homeless, we began by asking homeless respondents about their previous experiences with the criminal justice system. The results are consistent with other research on the homeless population and reflect the general and profound disadvantage of this group.

Nearly three-quarters of the homeless respondents said they had been

convictedof a criminal offence(see Table 6.5). Of those that *had been* convicted, 54% said that their most recent conviction was more than two years ago. Thirty-one percent (31%) said within the past six months and 15% said six months to two years ago. Drugs, car (and other thefts), and assaults were the most frequently mentioned offences for which respondents were convicted. More males than females had older convictions (over 2 years ago) but this difference may reflect the fact that male respondents on the whole tended to be older than the females. Fewer Aboriginals than Caucasians had no offences in the past two years and more Aboriginal respondents had been convicted of two or more offences in the past. The mean number of offences for which respondents were convicted over the past two years was .94 and, while females, respondents from the West End, Aboriginal respondents, and those who had been homeless for more than one year had the highest means in their groups, the only statistically significant finding between the various groups was for 'those who had been homeless for more than one year'.

When we asked about their present status with the criminal justice system, 18% of the sample told us they were on probation, 9% on bail, 2% on parole, and 10% had outstanding charges (see Table 6.6, below). This number is noteworthy considering the frequency with which the issue of non-returnable warrants is cited by police, media, and politicians in relation to questions of street disorder. It seems that the majority of those who have arrived in BC to evade outstanding charges in other provinces are either not homeless or, if they are so, are reluctant to tell us about outstanding charges. Forty-eight percent (48%) of females had no criminal convictions compared to 23% of males but significantly more of the females than the males in the sample were on probation (30% to 15%).

### 6.3.2 Calls, Complaints and Disorder

Most of the calls that come to police about the homeless are in the form of nuisance or annoyance calls, rather than criminal

*Table 6.6: Current Justice System Status*

| | Total Sample | West End | Commercial Drive |
|---|---|---|---|
| On Probation | 18% | 19% | 16% |
| On Parole | 2% | 3% | 0% |
| On Bail | 9% | 7% | 11% |
| Outstanding Charges | 10% | 12% | 8% |

offence calls. Annoyance calls have increased significantly in the past four years. At the 21 July 2004 Vancouver Police Board meeting, it was reported that annoyance calls had increased three-fold from 2000 – 2004. These calls include drunk down, panhandler, squeegeeing, drug dealing/drug use, sleeping in alcove/doorways, and general nuisance. (noise calls are not included here because most do not refer to homeless or street people but to noisy parties). Some police respondents estimated that 20 to 30 calls a day are made from residents and businesses about homeless people sleeping in private and public spaces – some estimate these at 20-30 a day.

While there is an increase in drug dealing and drug- related crime (largely, some assert, as a result of displacement from the Downtown Eastside) and in the use of methamphetamine, public disorder crimes and the enforcement of municipal by-laws such as those relating to panhandling have not increased in similar proportions – even though most respondents would argue that there have been large and very noticeable increases in the number of street people in the West End. The areas where an increase in charging may occur are auto-related theft and drugs – but these offences are not necessarily committed by the homeless population.

By-law infractions like 'drinking in public'; 'urinating in public' and 'vending without a license' often result in police giving tickets (in the amounts of $30-$75) which the police claim are never paid but which, over time, build up to the point where a warrant is issued and offenders are brought to court. However, the courts do little even though some police officers would like to see conditions imposed, such as geographical restrictions (often referred to as 'no go's') that disallow people from entering specified areas. More serious incidents committed by street people such as 'possession of stolen property' result in charges—but again, police consider court sanctions to be weak. Many police, as well as many other types of respondents, see the end result as a revolving door of enforcement and release. This also applies to other, less serious situations. For example, when people are moved along from sites like the open drug-market, they leave temporarily only to return later.

A couple of police officers complained that, while the homeless are taking over the community, part of the problem is engendered by the residents themselves who give too much to panhandlers and put too many re-saleable items in the bins. Binners and panhandlers, these respondents argue, are doing much better income-wise than people realize and so long as the community continues to give so much away the problem will continue. They, and others, also believe that too many services in the West End contribute to the problem by attracting street people into the neighbourhood. One private security guard told us that the homeless live in a province of handouts and that the 'bleeding heart' environment and absence of strict sanctions against criminals have contributed to the West End's homelessness situation.

Most of policing in the West End and Commercial Drive is reactive because the large call load and the reduced number of officers prohibits proactive policing. 'Causing a disturbance' charges have not increased over the past several years and the most common offences involving the homeless population are assaults of various kinds, carrying weapons, and property offences. However, one long time VPD officer in the West End said that if it

is not an arrest situation he does his best to have a conversation with the street or homeless person about whom the complaint has been lodged or who is involved in the activity.

An increase in 911 calls has also come from the surveillance work of the Davie St. Community Policing Centre (CPC) foot and bicycle patrols. These patrols are responsible for covering the total WE area in each of their shifts (morning, afternoon and evening) and funding for them goes to the CPC from the province and ICBC. The patrols report auto-related crime and any untoward circumstances and situations either to the CPC Coordinator and/or to CPC volunteers who fill out incident forms for minor offences, or to the Community Police Liaison officer if a situation requires his or her presence, or for more serious matters, to the VPD through the use of 911.

Police report a huge increase in calls from the Downtown Ambassadors who are the only private security on the streets in the downtown core. However, they do not work in the West End. One officer said that the Downtown Ambassadors "are forever calling us." Police also receive calls from City Engineering officials requesting accompaniment to areas under bridges to move along the homeless living there so they can clean up the garbage, which is a health issue both for the non-homeless and the individuals living there. This occurs in both study sites, each of which contains bridges that provide shelter for people sleeping outside. However, an official from the city engineering department says that trying to deal with this issue by doing something about the homeless living in these conditions is a 'hot potato' that gets passed among the fire department (who express concerns about fires), the police, and the engineering department. These groups are all reluctant to deal with the problem primarily because they don't know what to do and have few resources available to them.

When asked the question about what they do when homeless people are causing problems one police respondent said simply "We end up shifting them to another area". Another took a broader perspective:

> "*I have a pretty balanced approach …….I believe in proactive work and try to push it., e.g., [if there's] a problem rooming house I try to involve city agencies, POP [problem oriented policing] Coordinator – a more comprehensive approach. Ten years ago getting the drugs were everything [but] now look at the environment. There has been big change in policing philosophy.*"

But, by and large, both police and private security have similar responses to dealing with the homeless; that is, moving people along. The main kind of problem reported by private security involves inebriated people coming into businesses and banks and/or creating a problem or being a nuisance when they return bottles and cans, although these situations tend to be rare. Residents sometimes come into businesses to complain to private security about the noise generated by street people. But in terms of using police, one private security guard in a large supermarket noted that he had only had to call 911 twice in the past six months. The preferred approach of private security is persuasion, politeness and respectfulness, de-escalating the problem, and like the police, moving people along.

When non-homeless residents and businesses make complaints, both police and private security say that they have few options in dealing with the homeless, other than telling them to leave the space they are occupying. While private security are aware of their limitations in exercising authority, they also believe that many homeless people are not aware of this

*Table 6.7: Main types of victimization – all respondents*

| | Robbery only | Theft only | Threats and Intimidation only | Mainly Person | Mainly Property | All types asked | All but Robbery | No Victimization |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Sample (%) | .5 | 5 | 4 | 32 | 15 | 24 | 7 | 12 |
| West End (%) | 0 | 7 | 3 | 28 | 18 | 28 | 3 | 13 |
| Commercial Drive(%) | 1 | 4 | 4 | 36 | 12 | 19 | 11 | 12 |

limitation and so do not challenge them when confronted. Police, on the other hand, feel that homeless people do know that private security have no authority and just ignore them. Whatever the actuality, the end result is that a large increase in private security in the West End over the last few years has meant more calls to the public police from them.

A major frustration expressed by many VPD members interviewed is the leniency of the criminal justice system, particularly of sentencing, which they believe makes their work much more difficult and produces less strenuous policing of the homeless and street people. Most police do not feel it is worth their time to try to enforce by-laws or lay charges (unless the offence is clear-cut and relatively serious) because it is often futile to put charges through court. Police claim there is not greater use of jails because there are no jails in which to put homeless people into and, even if there were, security concerns would simply be too onerous for corrections personnel to handle.

### 6.3.3 Victimization and Access to the Justice System

Not surprisingly, given the circumstances of the street, only 12% of the homeless respondents said they had *not* been victimized in the past two years. Thirty-six percent (36%) suffered mainly 'person' victimizations, an additional 12% mainly property victimizations, and 19% person and property victimizations (see Table 6.7, above). As mentioned already, drunken gangs/violence/young people, drug users/dealers, police behaviour, and growing conflict between street people are the factors that dispose homeless people to feeling vulnerable to victimization.

Police perceptions about victimization were similar to those expressed by homeless respondents – except, of course, the 'police behaviour' factor. Police believe that homeless people are mainly vulnerable to victimization by other homeless people but also mentioned that citizens constantly harass street people and some (especially those who come into downtown peninsula from outside areas) non-homeless often actively abuse and assault the homeless. However, they also say that few homeless people complain to police about victimization. One police officer put the dilemma for homeless in simple terms: 'No-one has friends on the street'.

Among service providers who were asked about victimization of the homeless and whether such incidents were ever reported, either to them or the police, the general consensus was that street people are often victimized by the police, by other street people, by drug dealers, and occasionally by citizens. The victimization by police often takes the form of threats, disrespect and occasionally physical abuse. In the case of other street people victimization can be personal violence or property theft. The primary type of citizen victimization (other than name calling) occurs in the Downtown South areas, as formerly stated, and involves young males from outside of the city coming out of bars drunk and attacking street people, sometimes quite viciously.

Despite both vulnerability and actual victimization, street people are said to be very reluctant to report what is done to them out of fear and distrust of authority, especially the police. Two Downtown Ambassadors told researchers that street people will report victimizations to them

*Table 6.8: Who were victimizations were reported to?*

| | CPC | Police | Agency Staff | Other | More than One Agency | No-one | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Sample (%) | 1 | 10 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 71 | 12 |
| West End (%) | 1 | 8 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 74 | 13 |
| Commercial Drive (%) | 1 | 12 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 69 | 11 |

but are unlikely to obtain legal services or go to the police, even when advised to do so. No other private security guards interviewed said that street people use them to report their victimizations. One VPD officer explained the lack of reporting by the homeless – particularly when the incident involves another street person – in the following way: "Street people are less willing to complain because they can't get away from each other on the street". Another said that victimizations occur between street people, but they also look out for one another and wouldn't see coming to the police to complain as an option. Street people often see reporting to police or another authority as 'ratting on each other'.

The findings from the homeless survey support the citizen and agency perceptions about a reluctance to report victimizations (See Table 6.8, below). Of those victimized, 71% did not report the victimization, 11% reported to a police officer or a community policing center, 4% to another source and/or to more than one place; and 1% to staff of an agency. Of the 21 respondents who reported their victimization to police or a community policing center, 14% said the police/center were 'very responsive', 19% said 'somewhat' responsive and 67% said 'not' responsive. The numbers who reported to people/agencies other than the police are too small to be presented individually but, collectively, 33% said they were 'very responsive'; 25% said 'somewhat responsive'; 21% said 'not responsive'; and another 21% said they 'don't know'.

Of those who *did not* report their victimization and answered the question 'why not', 41% said it 'would do no good/wouldn't be taken seriously', 26% said they did not 'want to rat/could take care of self', 13% said it was 'too much of a hassle'; 10% said it was 'too dangerous/fear of retaliation', 5% said they 'distrusted police', and another 5% said they didn't know why or had another reason. Seventy percent (70%) of those who responded to the question about whether reporting depends on the identity of the victimizer said that they would not report the incident regardless of who had victimized them.

Of the 185 people who responded to the question about whether they felt they had access to the justice system, 22% felt they had 'a lot' of access, 24% said 'some' (this is surprising given the reluctance to report victimizations) and 54% said 'none'. Only 38% of the total sample responded to questioning about how they got access. Of that group, 39% said they would go to the 'police or community policing center', 30% said 'other – finding referral point when needed/other connection', 23% said 'a legal aid lawyer' and 3% 'didn't know'. More people answered the question about why they feel they do not have access to the justice system. The highest proportion (54%) said it was because the police and justice system don't care about them or will think they deserved it, another 23% said it was because they have' no address/money/connections', 17% said it was because 'the justice process was too long and complicated' for them (6% gave another response or said they didn't know). West End homeless respondents felt they had more access to the justice system than those from Commercial Drive. Thirty percent (30%) of West Enders told us they have 'a lot' of access compared to only 13% from CD who said the same. Conversely, 62% of Commercial Drive respondents said they have no access to

the justice system, compared to 46% from the West End.

Several agency and resident respondents mentioned PIVOT as a resource that assists homeless people in getting access to the justice system. However, PIVOT does not operate in this capacity and although, the organization receives complaints, it does not have the resources to deal with them, choosing instead to focus on specific initiatives rather than individual situations. Reportedly, PIVOT will be undertaking a project in late 2004 related to homelessness.

Most agency and resident respondents acknowledged, using rather grim humour, that the most effective way for a homeless person to get access to the justice system is to be arrested. Respondents generally agreed that the justice system is biased, taking the complaints of homeless people less seriously than similar complaints from the non-homeless. Their clients who are homeless may vent to agency staff about police but don't go through any formal complaint process even though *pro bono* legal services are available at a number of agencies such as the Gathering Place. Many of these respondents said that vendors, binners, and other street people tend not to use CPCs because they fear police and intimidation and because all the volunteers are perceived as middle class. They also say that youth rarely complain about treatment by police because they find the formal complaint process too bureaucratic and intimidating. Many youth have personal experiences of being mistreated by police and fear that if they complain they will be harassed even further. One youth worker had only heard of 2 complaints laid by youth during 13 years in the field, neither of which went beyond initial stages. The VPD has a Victim Services Unit, but homeless/street people rarely, if ever, use it because they believe police have negative attitudes toward them. According to service providers, homeless people who are victimized tend to rely on each other for support, essentially creating gangs (or street families) for group protection.

The most compelling question, then, is why homeless people tend not to seek access to the justice system when victimized, even though our finding indicate that many feel they have at least some access to the justice system. Apart from subcultural street prohibitions against 'ratting', it seems that homeless people do not consider themselves citizens for purposes of reporting their victimization, even though the CPCs are set up to serve the needs of all community members. Homeless people come to police to complain about victimization much less frequently than other non-homeless citizens. The Davie Street CPC may get 20 or more calls per day from residents and businesses about the homeless, but rarely does it ever receive a complaint from the homeless about their victimization. The reluctance of the homeless to report such incidents puts them in a second-class citizen category that the majority of Canadians would consider untenable.[10]

[10] We were told of an incident in which a young Quebecoise was assaulted by a motorist while squeegeeing at the 1st Avenue and Victoria Drive intersection, near Commercial Drive. An angry driver jumped out of his car, grabbed the squeegee from the woman and smashed it against her face and head. Another motorist stopped to assist and directed the woman and her female companion to the Grandview Woodlands CPC in Grandview Park. When they arrived seeking assistance, the staff had serious difficulty persuading the woman to make a formal complaint.

### 6.3.4 Activities for Survival

How are people living on or near the street making a living? This issue is particularly cogent in the context of the debate about public order in Vancouver. Concerns about order have been expressed in terms of certain types of activities that, in the case of measures such as the *Safe Streets Act* or stricter control over access to garbage bins by City Engineering, have been targeted for more intensive regulation or prohibition. However, our data show that such activities are the same ones that many homeless people are using to making a living. The most frequent of these are binning and panhandling (see Table 6.9 and Charts 6.7 and 6.8), which are practiced 'often' or 'sometimes' over the past 2 years by 66% and 56%, respectively, of respondents. Involvement in the drug trade came in 3rd place, with 15% saying they sell drugs 'often' and another 26% doing so 'sometimes'. Squeegeeing and sex work have the lowest numbers for income generating activities. Eighty-six percent (86%) of respondents 'rarely or never' engage in squeegeeing, while 91% are 'rarely or never' involved in the sex trade. However, of the 9% of respondents who said they were involved in the sex trade the difference between men and women is significant. One-quarter of the 37 female respondents reported occasional or frequent sex trade involvement in the past 2 years, compared to only 6% of males.

All of these activities are objects of some form of regulation, ranging from criminal code legislation to municipal by-laws. Squeegeeing and panhandling have now been constituted as provincial offences. The problematic nature of regulation is apparent when we turn to the proportion of respondents who derive their income from employment and/or income assistance. In those cases, 84% of respondents have 'rarely or never' had steady employment over the past 2 years. And more than 43% told us that they 'rarely or never' have used income assistance over that period. A further 19% said they only 'sometimes' used income assistance over the past 2 years. Thus, the majority of people who participated in the homeless sample did not make steady use of social assistance over the past 2 years (see Chart 6.7). Of this group, 2/3 said they had been in Vancouver for 2 years or more and a similar proportion reported being homeless for one year or more.

*Table 6.9: Income-Generating Activities of Homeless Respondents*

| Activity | Often | Sometimes | Rarely/Never |
|---|---|---|---|
| Binning | 41% | 25% | 34% |
| Welfare | 38% | 19% | 43% |
| Other | 36% | 20% | 44% |
| Panhandling | 27% | 29% | 44% |
| Drug Selling | 15% | 26% | 58% |
| Theft | 8% | 17% | 75% |
| Squeegeeing | 7% | 6% | 86% |
| Employment | 3% | 13% | 84% |
| Sex Trade | 3% | 6% | 91% |

Clearly, a large number of people have minimal, if any, reliance on formal sources of income. Virtually none reported having no involvement in informal means of income-generation. And although 63% of respondents said they had derived some income over the past 2 years from 'other' sources (including Employment Insurance, band payments, and temporary employment, often called day labour), it is not only possible, but likely, that many of those who reported steady employment and other income from temporary employment received 'under-the-table' payment for their work.

There were some differences between the 2 study areas in terms of how homeless respondents have made their livings over the past 2 years. On Commercial Drive, ¾ of respondents panhandled 'often' or 'sometimes' and 54% engaged in binning (see Charts 6.6 and 6.7). The situation was reversed in the West End, where slightly more than 74% all West End respondents told us that they binned 'often' or 'sometimes' while just less than 50% reporting panhandling. Interestingly, more people on Commercial Drive reported illicit activities than did those in the West End, where public order and drugs have most recently been high profile issues. On the Drive, somewhat less that ½ reported selling drugs and one-quarter engaged in theft. In contrast, only 37% of West Enders told us they ever sold drugs, and only 15% did this 'often'. Twenty-five percent (25%) reported stealing 'often' or 'sometimes', the same proportion as on Commercial Drive.

Nine percent of CD respondents said they were involved in the sex trade 'often' or 'sometimes'. Men and women were equally represented in this group (4 each), although men reported somewhat less frequent involvement than women. Reported sex trade involvement among West End respondents was similarly low, at 9%, with 5 men and 4 women.

Respondents in the 2 neighbourhoods also showed some differences in terms of formal sources of income. Commercial Drive respondents were almost evenly balanced between those who received income assistance 'often' over the past 2 years and those who said they received it 'rarely or never' (41% to 38%) (see Chart 6.6). However, more West Enders (46%) 'rarely or never' used assistance, compared to the 35% who did so. Another 18% of West End respondents only 'sometimes' received assistance, as did 20% on the Drive. Thus, a majority of respondents did not make steady use of income assistance resources. Indeed, anecdotally, many told us that a lack of identification and address, combined with the bureaucratic procedures necessary to gain access, discouraged them from seeking those resources.

In other words, not only did large numbers of respondents report involvement with informal income-generating activities, many reported total reliance on them. More than 1/3 (36%) of respondents in both study areas had neither income assistance nor steady employment over the past 2 years. And if the category is expanded to include those who used income assistance only 'sometimes', the

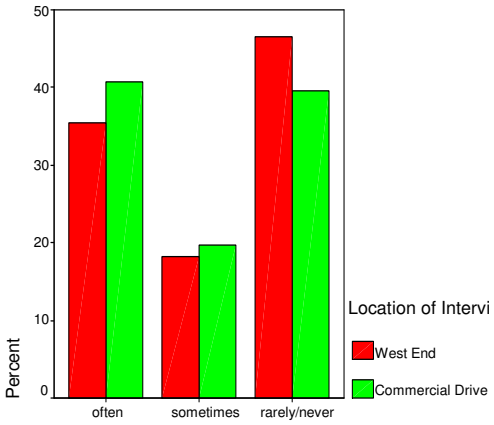



*Chart 6.6: Income Assistance in past 2 yrs*

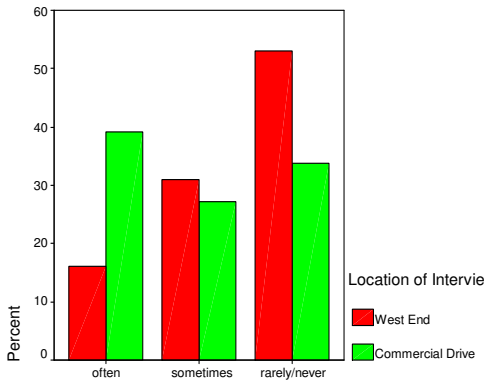



*Chart 6.7: Panhandling in past 2 years*

proportion rises to more than ½ (53%). The question that must be asked, then, is how are people making a living if they are entirely outside the formal economy.

Surprisingly, the figures for those people who reported no formal sources of income over the past 2 years (n=69) are broadly similar to those of the sample as a whole. Fifty-nine percent (59%) said they panhandled often or sometimes in the past 2 years, while 72% reported binning. More than 17% of those respondents with no formal support did squeegeeing. One-quarter also reported engaging in theft while 38% said they were involved in selling drugs 'often' or 'sometimes', compared to 25% and 46% of all respondents, respectively. Only 2 people who reported no formal sources of income over the 2 year period engaged in the sex trade.

These broad similarities hold when we look at combinations of survival strategies. Thus, 21% of respondents with only informal support (compared to 22% of all respondents) reported doing both binning and drug dealing, while 24.6% of those with only informal income combined drug dealing with panhandling. However, 43% of respondents with no formal income combined binning with panhandling while only 37% of all respondents reported doing so.

The proportion of people with no formal income who lived on the street seems to be somewhat higher, at 87% than for the sample as whole (at 80%). Although most of the people in the sample had been living on the street for a year or more, a subset of just under 1/3 were not only on the street but outside any formal economy and could perhaps be seen as living not only on, but perhaps even outside, the margins of society. And while many citizens comment on people arriving in Vancouver from outside the city, especially Quebec, there seems to be little correlation between region of origin and economic informality. The origins of those with no formal economic support were distributed more or less evenly among BC, Quebec and Ontario, and other regions, including outside Canada.

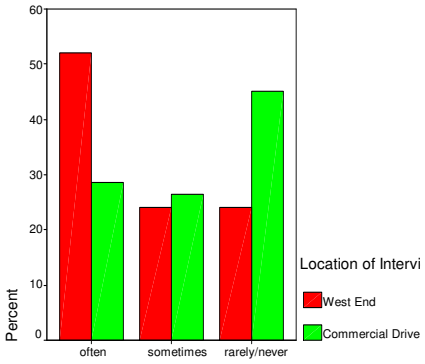



*Chart 6.8: Binning in the Past 2 years*

**6.4 The provincial and municipal governments play an active role in the criminalization of homeless people.**

The response of governments in Vancouver to growing unease about the situation with regard to homelessness and a range of associated activities is complex. While one government agency may be directly involved in criminalizing particular actions that are carried out by certain categories of people, another may be moving in the opposite direction. At the civic level, the resort to policing as a means of dealing with complaints about people who are homeless indicates a growing tendency toward criminalization. Yet, as we will show below, official City policy is attempting to do something quite the opposite and, as we have already noted, the police themselves are often unhappy about being called on to solve what they see as a social issue.

**6.4.1 Provincial Policies**

At the provincial level, structural changes to the income assistance system and the provision of subsidized housing since 2001 have meant that the government has operated in a diminished capacity with

regard to homelessness. However, provincial politicians have also chastised the City for tolerating panhandling and squatting. The Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General told the legislature that "the council in the city has to get a grip on the fact that there can't be a continuation of intimidation, and there can't be a continuation of the threat or discomfort of their law-abiding citizens to walk safely in their community". The MLA for Vancouver-Burrard has argued that City Councillors "are escaping every bit of responsibility on this issue … They have a bunch of bylaws there, including a panhandling bylaw, that they will not enforce" (Beatty, 2003: B1) Simultaneously, however, proponents of the Act argued that civic by-laws were ineffective for dealing with panhandlers and squeegeeists (Vancouver Sun, 2004; Thomas, 2004a; cf. Ladner, 2004).

In terms of the relationship between homelessness and public order, the Province has 3 key policies that will be discussed here. The first, the *Safe Streets Act* and accompanying legislation, has been highly controversial and will be examined in-depth. The other two, the Street Crime Committee of the Attorney-General's Justice Review Task Force and the recently formed Premier's Task Force on Homelessness will be looked at more briefly.

#### 6.4.1.1 The Safe Streets Act

This project coincided with a period of very public debate over the proposed *Safe Streets Act*, a private member's bill that was introduced in the legislature in June, 2004, by the MLA for the Vancouver-Burrard constituency. Emulating the Ontario statute of the same name on an almost word-for-word basis, the bill effectively bans squeegeeing and tightly regulates panhandling by forbidding the solicitation of money from people around ATM machines, pay telephones, public toilets, bus and taxi stops, on buses, and in cars as well as amending the Motor Vehicle Act to outlaw the offer of sale of any commodity or service to people in a vehicle. In addition, the bill sought to prohibit the disposal of used condoms, used injection apparatus, and broken glass, defined as 'dangerous things' (Mayencourt, 2004a). A companion bill containing an amendment to the Trespass Act proposed to enable security guards to apprehend individuals in 'quasi-public' sites like plazas of office buildings and hold them until the police arrive. The *Act* would deem that these individuals are apprehended by the police, essentially allowing private security guards to arrest people.

The MLA introduced the concept of the bills a year earlier, in the spring of 2003, following a series of meetings with different groups in his constituency. At the time, when questioned about a newspaper story outlining the idea, he stated that he was merely studying the possibility. "I can't predict what this thing is going to look like at the end of the day," he told a reporter (Perelle, 2003: 1). By the autumn, the MLA also introduced the prospect of a revision of the Trespass Act, in response to the 'tent city' campers who were then occupying 2 city parks (Beatty, 2003). Then, in the late winter of 2004, a group of business organizations centred in downtown Vancouver announced the formation of the Safe Streets Coalition to lobby for "provincial legislation .. to ensure all communities have the same laws and penalities" to deal with "aggressive begging, squeegee people, property crime, graffit and litter" (Vancouver Sun, 2004: B8). Although the Safe Streets Coalition included a variety of groups from around the city, the region, and even the province, the lead organization was the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association (DVBIA), the President of which was also the Coalition's chair (Vancouver Sun, 2004: B8). Admitting that the group had no detailed

research on the issue, she told the media that "we've learned anecdotally the public is finding access to public places being compromised" (Vancouver Sun, 2004: B8). Although the first public utterances about the *Safe Streets Act* were from the Vancouver-Burrard MLA, the DVBIA claimed it as an "initiative fostered by" itself in 2002 in order to "empower police to address any items of public disorder, from aggressive begging and squeegee nuisances, to hazardous materials, such as used needles and condoms" (DVBIA, 2004).

The 2 bills were introduced in the legislature the following May, an action that set off a firestorm of debate. One proponent, a City Councillor, argued that 'although panhandlers are not a major threat to our society … Aggressive panhandling is a major symbol of our society's inability to control anti-social behaviour of all types. … Without consequences for anti-social behaviour, civil society breaks down. And', perhaps even more important for the DVBIA, 'tourists go elsewhere' (Ladner, 2004).[11] The MLA sponsoring the bills said that the bills would send a message to panhandlers and squeegee people. '"What we're telling them,"' he announced, '"is the streets belong to people that pay for them, "' the implication seemingly being that the proposed legislation would ensure that the people who live on the streets understand that they do not 'pay for them' and therefore are only there under sufferance (News1130, 2004).

The MLA went on to say that the bills were necessary because '"My community has suffered awful, awful atrocities … and I just want these bills passed to give police the tools that they need"' (News1130, 2004). The metaphor of the law as a tool that enables the police to restore order has been widely used by its supporters, according to whom the existing Trespass Act apparently does not allow authorities to remove people from quasi-public spaces like parking lots or outdoor plazas while the City's own panhandling control bylaw is too "cumbersome and extremely difficult to use" (Ladner, 2004; Bridge, 2004:A2). Although police can issue tickets to those who violate the bylaw, if they wish to charge someone for refusing to move, according to the DVBIA's head of security, a recently retired VPD Inspector, a constable must take 2 hours to write a report which is then submitted to a prosecutor for review. If accepted, the constable must then find the person so-charged to serve him or her with an order to appear in court (Vancouver Sun, 2004; Thomas, 2004a). Both the new Act and the amendment would simplify this procedure by enabling the police to tailor their response to the situation upon receipt of a complaint, ranging from issuing a summons to making an arrest, as well as apply to the courts for geographical restrictions of recalcitrant individuals (Jones, 2004; CBC, 2004b).

In September, the government announced that it would sponsor the bills, shortly after the annual convention of the BC Union of Municipalities voted 3 to 1 in support of them. The Mayor of affluent, semi-rural Saanich on Vancouver Island, where few, if any, panhandlers and squeegeers could have been active, told the press that "It's a real barometer … We've been able to send a message to the province. It can't be ignored" (Beatty, 2004: A2). Two weeks later, the Attorney-General introduced a revised version of the bills in the legislature. They were quickly approved. Justifying the move, the Premier said, "People want to feel safe in their towns, they want to feel safe on their streets, the want to feel they can go to their ATMs and not be harassed" (Beatty and Bula, 2004: B4). A political columnist

[11] The writer, Peter Ladner is a City Councillor for the former ruling civic party, the Non-Partisan Association and the owner of the publication that printed thearticle from which this citation is taken.

speculated that the government had used the private member's bill as a 'trial balloon'. When it appeared to have significant support, the government then assumed sponsorship and rewrote it to presumably withstand constitutional challenges (Palmer, 2004).

The Provincial legislation somewhat modifed the private member's bill by defining as 5 metres the distance around those sites that contained 'captive audience[s]' and eliminating the offence for the 'disposal of dangerous things'. Nevertheless, the government's *Safe Streets Act* and its companion *Trespass Act Amendment* were substantially the same as their predecessors (Plante, 2004a, 2004b). However, the penalties for the *Safe Streets Act* turned out to be somewhat smaller than those of the Ontario model, which specified a first offence penalty of a $500 fine and, on subsequent convictions, fines of up to $1000 or 6 months in jail (Ontario, 1999). When the Provincial cabinet devised the penalties for violations of the Act (in January, 2005) it set fines at $86 for "captive audience solicitation" and $115 for "aggressive solicitation which *could* involve abusive or threatening behaviour" (BC Attorney General, 2005, emphasis added; Kines, 2005). The fines included a 'victim surcharge levy' ranging from $11 to $15. The government assured the public that nobody would go to jail for non-payment of fines, although the Attorney-General's website did note that judges could jail or otherwise penalize repeat offenders (BC Attorney General, 2005). Yet, the proponents of the *Ontario Safe Streets Act* made no bones that not only did they expect violators to go to jail, they wanted them off the streets (Gordon, *forthcoming*).

#### 6.4.1.2 The Justice Review Task Force –Street Crime Working Group[12]

The Justice Review Task Force is not strictly a Provincial policy process. Rather, it was initiated by the Law Society of British Columbia in 2002 in order to "identify a wide range of reform ideas and initiatives that may help … make the justice system more responsive, accessible and cost-effective" (BCJRTF, 2004). However, both the Deputy and Assistant Deputy Minister from the Attorney-General's Ministry are members of the Task Force. One of the Task Force's 4 Working Groups is focused on street crime. Its 14 members include a private practice lawyer, a VPD Inspector, and representatives of the Canadian Bar Association and the Federal Department of Justice. The other 10 members are from provincial government and affiliated agencies, including the Ministries of Child and Family Development and Attorney-General, as well as the BC Provincial Court, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority (an agency of the Province), and the tri-government Vancouver [urban development] Agreement office.

The mandate of the Street Crime Working Group involves 'defining the nature and magnitude of street crime and disorderly behaviour in Vancouver'. It has accomplished the first task by describing these phenomenon as 'crime and behaviour which' are not 'commercial crime, organized crime, environmental crime or other similar offences of a complex nature' and which 'are likely to affect people citizens directly in their daily lives. In seeking to define the 'magnitude' of 'street crime and disorderly behaviour' the Working Group is especially concerned with repeat offenders, the mentally ill, youth, Aboriginal people, and drug addicts. Its geographical focus is

[12] All information about this process is taken from BCJRTF, 2004.

downtown Vancouver and the Downtown Eastside in particular, from which the models it develops to deal with street crime could be diffused to other areas.

The Street Crime Working Group, through the recommendations of the Task Force for legal and justice system reform, has the potential to significantly affect the regulation of street life in Vancouver and the province. A June, 2004, discussion forum attended by over 90 people, including Working Group members, business groups, government and health agencies, police, service providers, and members of the legal profession, sought to explore options for reducing the criminalization of individuals from the aforementioned target groups. However, the momentum toward the criminalization of 'street people' can be seen in 2 sessions in particular, one that explicitly linked panhandling with violence and street crime and another that situated 'petty crime and anti-social behaviour' as the causes of the 'erosion of community'. Yet, even in these sessions, the notes indicate that some participants wanted to focus more on the remediating and underlying causes of the street scene than on prescribing legal solutions. Nevertheless, while the Street Crime Working Group has consulted with the public and various stakeholders and conducted its deliberations, the *Safe Streets Act* was debated and has now been enacted. The test of the Working Group will be whether the policies it recommends are more enduring and durable than those which have been implemented thus far.

#### 6.4.1.2 The Premier's Task Force on Homelessness

The September 2004 announcement that the government would take over sponsorship of the *Safe Streets Act* was part of a package of 3 measures that included remittance from the Province to municipal governments of additional revenue from traffic fines to be used for policing. The final part of the package was the formation of a task force composed of the Mayors' of Vancouver, Victoria, Kelowna and Surrey together with the Premier, the Ministers of Community, Aboriginal, and Women's Services (MCAWS), Human Resources (MHR), and Mental Health and Addiction Services. The purpose of the Task Force was "to establish the framework for an integrated program to tackle the challenge of mental illness, homelessness and addictions in BC communities" (British Columbia, 2004).

However, the precise role and responsibilities of the Task Force in dealing with homelessness are unclear. It seems that it has become a kind of gatekeeper for projects aiming to cope with homelessness. In October, a Vancouver Island newspaper reported that the Minister of Human Resources, a Task Force member, said that a Victoria group lobbying for funding for new shelters in that city would have to "forward its plans through the recently-struck premier's task force on homelessness" (Lavoie, 2004). Two months later, a joint Federal-Provincial press release announcing the provision of $84 million for four new social housing projects (the first in BC since the current government came into office in 2001), noted that any subsequent projects would be developed "in partnership with communities and the task force" (Canada/British Columbia, 2004).

However, aside from such press releases little information exists about the work, scope, and process of the Task Force. What is notable is the way that its formation, in conjunction with the *Safe Streets Act* and increased policing funding, has served as a means by which the Provincial government has constituted homelessness and housing as a safety issue. This may have some bearing on the impetus toward the criminalization of homelessness, on the one hand, and policies and practices designed to

ameliorate or eliminate homelessness, on the other.

### 6.4.2 The City of Vancouver

The *Safe Streets Act* was actively opposed by the City of Vancouver at the political level. As once City Councillor proclaimed that "The province should be a team player, but instead, they've unleashed that rabid cockroach on us" (Bula, 2004). It was unclear whether he was referring to the law or the MLA who first introduced it. Indeed, some civic politicians, including the Mayor, have blamed the provincial policy and program restructuring for the increase in homelessness in Vancouver since 2001 (Bohn, 2003). A second Councillor has argued that with "provincial cuts to income assistance, mental health treatment programs, addiction treatment and community policing … it's easy to see where the beggars are coming from – and why some are disturbingly aggressive" (Stevenson, 2004: A7). This view was reflected by virtually all the civic staff who were interviewed for this project, some of whom noted a relationship between the doubling of homelessness in the city between 2002 and 2004 and changes to the welfare system with regard to both income assistance and youth/ family policy. Only 1 city staffer who was interviewed for this project expressed any support for more bylaw or criminal code regulation of conduct in public space.

However, the Vancouver Police Department, which is a civic body, openly supported the bills, arguing that it will provide a 'tool' to help the police, a metaphor that has been used frequently by the *Act*'s proponents. Rejecting criticism of the bill as oppressive to the poor, the Chief Constable said that '"there's no organization that's done probably more in terms of, on the street, helping people that are really in need, than the Vancouver police"' (CBC, 2004b). However, even the police at the street level, as we have seen, are not happy about dealing with homeless people in terms of criminal law. A report presented to the Vancouver Police Board in August, 2004, that was based on research conducted by the City's Tenant Relocation Officer (see below) and a Police Constable, emphasized the low accessibility of the income assistance system to people on the street, as well as the lack of places for police to take or direct people toward when they are called upon to intervene in a situation.

In any case, despite the Province's intervention, the City is the primary level of government with regard to homelessness, particularly in terms of issues of spatial regulation and public order, because it is the only government with agencies that deal directly with people at the street level. City police and staff, rather than those of the Province, have to both implement and deal with the consequences of the *Safe Streets Act*.

#### 6.4.2.1 Civic Responses to Homelessness and the Street Scene

Civic staff who were interviewed for this project range from senior management to people on the 'frontline' who work directly with individuals and groups in the community, although even the management staff meet with community organizations. Homelessness has emerged as a major concern for the City not only because the municipal government is a key player in housing and social service provision, usually through funding and/or land, but also because civic staff, including senior management, and politicians regularly get calls or emails from residents, landlords, and businesses about particular elements or issues bound up with homelessness. These range from concerns about the health and the well-being of individuals to complaints about people sleeping in doorways or parks, 'loitering', panhandling, binners making noise and leaving garbage strewn about,

drug use and drug dealing. The City, or the Parks Board in the case of parks, is expected to do something about these situations. One civic staff person interviewed believes that the high complaint level is due to the close proximity of the municipal government compared to both senior levels, which are more remote from daily life and thus less accessible.

Although even senior City management personnel take citizen complaints via letters, email, and telephone, street level issues surrounding homelessness are dealt with in 3 main ways, via the police, the Tenant Assistance Program, and the Neighbourhood Integrated Services Team. Civic action around homelessness has also included a panhandling control bylaw, an anti-camping bylaw, and, most recently, a process of community consultation framed by the notion of 'neighbourhood liveability'. A pilot project in the West End that has been developed out of this latter process will be discussed in the below.

#### 6.4.2.1.1 Vancouver Police Department

In Vancouver, the police are a civic agency. However, they are officially governed by a 7-member Board, 5 members of which are appointed by the Provincial government. The Mayor of Vancouver is an automatic member and City Council appoints one other member. The Board hires the Chief Constable who is the senior administrative and management officer. The VPD divides the city into 4 patrol districts, each of which is headed by a Commander, usually with the rank of Inspector, with 1 or 2 support officers who are also Inspectors. At the street level, Sergeants are in charge of teams of Constables who work 11 hours shifts over a 4-day schedule.

According to police respondents, the District Commanders have a high level of autonomy in decision-making about policing within their areas. The Chief Constable sets priorities and broad goals and District level personnel pursue those in terms of the issues that prevail in each locale. The formulation of policing strategies to cope with issues around homelessness and public thus often take place at the District level. Commanders and their staff have at least some flexibility in responding to the concerns of residents and businesses. Both the implementation of additional bicycle patrols in the West End or foot patrols along Commercial Drive during the Spring and Summer, are examples of this flexibility in relation to demands for increased enforcement of street order during the Spring and Summer of 2004. Police also work with other City departments in the NISTs (see below) to deal with emerging and ongoing local issues. The latter is also an example of what a non-police respondent called a 'partnership' between the local BIA, the police, and the CPC.

The notion of partnerships between the police and private sector agencies has some relevance to the relation between public order and homelessness. In April of 2004, as this research project was being initiated, the VPD announced the results of a collaborative project called 'Operation Cooperation' (VPD, 2004). The department coordinated its efforts in the downtown over a 4-day period with private security agents patrolling in the downtown area. The project focused on capturing individuals who were seen engaging in stealing from cars, parking meters, and parking lots. The Insurance Corporation of BC was noted as a partner and Easy-Park, which manages City of Vancouver parking lots, contributed resources to the project. The implications of such a collaboration are important to consider here given, first, the already-discussed role of business groups, including the DVBIA in promoting the *Safe Streets Act* and Amendment to the Trespass Act and, second, the role of private security in policing homeless people and calling for

police service. The VPD declared that "due to the success of this unique Operation, there are plans to approach these and other community issues with similar dedicated projects" (VPD, 2004). Such a combination of forces holds the promise of a continuous web of surveillance in any area it is deployed even as the expansion of public order offences and 'tools' for dealing with disorder widens the potential scope of such public-private police collaboration.

Perhaps the main policing policy strategy that was raised by respondents, both police and non-police, was the Citywide Enforcement Team (CET) project that was implemented in 2003 to disrupt the street drug market in the Downtown Eastside by reallocating police personnel to that neighbourhood from other parts of the city. In particular, respondents argued that at least some of the open drug dealing and drug use, panhandling, and homelessness in our 2 study areas could be attributed to displacement from the Downtown Eastside as a result of more intensive enforcement. Data from the official evaluation of the CET indicates that some displacement did likely occur (Dandurand, et al, 2004). Incidents of drug trafficking and possession increased considerably in the West End, as did prostitution. Similarly, drug trafficking incidents rose tremendously in the area around Commercial and Broadway. North of Broadway, however, incidents of drug trafficking and use declined. In all three areas, both minor and serious incidents also declined over the study period. An appraisal of the project by medical researchers found that drugs were more difficult to get in the Downtown Eastside and saw this as evidence of displacement to other areas (Wood, et al, 2004).

However, neither the degree nor the ways in which the CET has affected street order and homelessness in the 2 study areas are clear. As we have seen, Commercial Drive has been the site of conflict over panhandling and drug dealing for several years, while the proximity of the West End to the downtown confounds any effort to isolate its relationship from the Downtown Eastside. The official CET evaluation cited a VPD officer arguing that the situation in the West End emerged independently from the Downtown Eastside (Dandurand, et al, 2004). Preliminary analysis of data from the survey of homeless respondents indicates that relatively few people in either study area used services or were involved in activities in the Downtown Eastside.

Street patrols are not the only vector of police presence in the 2 study areas. Community Police Centres provide another important site for policing.

Originally conceived of as vehicles for the VPD to link with minority communities, the concept rapidly spread through Vancouver, especially after the civic and provincial governments concluded an agreement in 1996 that provided cost-shared funding for non-profit societies to operate offices attended by VPD liaison constables (City of Vancouver, 2003). The vast majority of CPC's were neighbourhood-focused, providing an institutional channel through which local businesses and residents could mobilize around crime and safety issues. Simultaneously, and because of this, they also provided fora in which the VPD was able to engage directly with people in neighbourhoods for planning and programming. Among other things, CPC volunteers in some neighbourhoods, including our 2 study areas, patrol the streets and alleys, looking for suspicious activities and safety hazards which are then relayed to the police.

In 2003, the BC government terminated a funding arrangement that financed the CPCs, resulting in the closure of most of the 18 CPC's in Vancouver. Those that remained were more closely controlled by the VPD, although they retained a

relationship with the non-profit societies that had previously operated them (City of Vancouver, 2003; Howell, 2004). The Davie Street CPC, in the West End, and the GWCPC, on Commercial Drive, both continued to operate after the changes—with community volunteers, a membership, and elected boards. Undoubtedly, the relationship between the VPD and the non-profit societies involved in the CPC's has been rocky, as some of our informants told us. However, because the CPC's have involved an active police presence, particularly since 2003, they have been instrumental in the ability of some local groups, especially businesses, to lobby the VPD for action around issues. On Commercial Drive, where the GWCPC, the CDBA, and the VPD have formed what one respondent characterizes as a 'partnership', and in other neighbourhoods, community police constables have participated in community organizing against the indicators of disorder like the sex trade, panhandling, and squeegeeing, providing advice to residents and businesses as well as actively patrolling and dealing with those indicators. The types of neighbourhood mobilization that took place in the 1980s and early 1990s have largely been institutionalized in those districts where CPC's are active, so that community action takes place through an organizational infrastructure that brings the police together with elements of the community, in the form of the members of a non-profit society and those groups liaising with it. This may make police action around disorder issues more susceptible to negotiation, rather than lobbying.

#### 6.4.2.1.2 Tenant Assistance Program

The second civic role in relation to homelessness involves a Relocation Officer in the Tenant Assistance Program, whose time is dedicated to working with homeless people. This staffer organizes and conducts the bi-annual counts of the homeless population across the city as well helping individuals find shelter and/or housing. Although the City funds non-profit organizations that work with homeless people, including outreach projects, this is the only civic staff position that deals directly with homeless people in this capacity. As a result, the Relocation Officer is probably the key street level point-person on this issue, getting referrals, as well as complaints, from individuals, community groups, the police, and provincial agencies. Respondents among the police, service providers, and community groups told us over and over again that a vital instrument in confronting homelessness should be hiring '5 more' of the Relocation Officer.

An example of the Relocation Officer's work can be seen in the liaison that she facilitated between homeless people, 2 churches, and a west side community centre. On Saturday mornings, church members make breakfast for and watch over the belongings of homeless individuals using the facilities at the community centre. This process evolved after the Relocation Officer was approached by residents and church members about the growing number of people on the street in the area.

#### 6.4.2.1.3 Neighbourhood Integrated Services Team

The Relocation Officer also participates in the Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams (NIST) in neighbourhoods where homelessness is an issue. The NIST is the City's third street level approach to homelessness, although its mandate is much broader. Twenty-two teams operate in Vancouver's 24 local planning areas, usually referred to as neighbourhoods. Each team combines representatives from the City departments that deal with regulatory and public realm issues, and may include Police and Fire Departments, Engineering (which includes Sanitation and Streets), Permits and Licencing

(usually Property Use Inspectors, Planning, Social Planning, Housing, the Parks Board, Public Library, and other relevant areas, as required. Some teams also have representation from other government agencies like the Vancouver School Board, the provincial Ministry of Human Resources, the Liquor Licensing Control Board, the regional health authority's Environmental Health, or the federal Canada Customs and Revenue Agency.

The NIST is the forum at which City staff tackle any neighbourhood issue that crosses departmental boundaries. Issues are brought to a team's attention by direct citizen contact with the local NIST Liaison through referrals of issues or complaints from other City staff and departments, or from team members themselves. In the case of homelessness, particularly where it intersects with the street scene (around situations like panhandling, noise and garbage from binning, people sleeping in doorways, parking garages, and parks, public drug use and dealing, mental health, informal street markets, squatting, and petty crime) the NIST will serve as the mechanism for coordinating action by appropriate agencies. For example, in dealing with complaints about the burgeoning street market at the corner of Davie and Bute, City permit inspectors, the police, and sanitation collaborated to issue tickets to vendors and dispose of the goods they were selling.

Nevertheless, the City is limited in its ability to deal with many of these situations, or even with the generalized problems which they manifest. One manager argued that the civic jurisdiction is restricted in its action to managing the issues associated with homelessness rather than directly tackling their causes and providing long-term solutions. Speaking about dealing with Nelson Park in the West End, a planner noted that homeless people are often bounced back and forth between the park and the surrounding streets. When complaints from businesses along the nearby commercial strip lead the police to move them on, homeless people often move into the park. Then, in response to subsequent complaints from the non-homeless population around the park, Parks Board staff will turn on the sprinklers, moving the homeless back to the streets. Similarly, as noted already, the intensive community-police project that focused on the corner of Commercial Drive and 1st Avenue in 1998 only moved the street scene centred around that intersection. It then re-formed over the succeeding years along the length of the commercial strip until the police again allocated substantial resources to the area over the Spring and Summer of 2004.

#### 6.4.2.1.4 The Panhandling By-law

The City's response to homelessness has been driven, on the one hand, by contingency, and, on the other, by the goal of formulating a longer term solution. In 1998, citing business improvement associations as key actors in the concern about panhandling, City Council passed a by-law that sought to regulate panhandling (City of Vancouver, 1998a). The act of "beg[ing] for or … ask[ing] for money" within 10 metres the entrances of financial institutions, automated teller machines, bus stops and shelters, and liquor store entrances, as well as banning the request for money from motor vehicles that are parked, stopped at lights and signs or being loaded or unloaded. Moreover, the bylaw sought to end panhandling during the period from 'sunset to sunrise' and outlawed continued solicitation after the other party has declined (City of Vancouver, 1998b). Violators of the law could be liable for fines up to $2000. A mapping project conducted in the wake of the by-law's approval showed that, given the geographical restrictions it imposed, panhandling was effectively banned on key downtown streets (Blomley, personal

communication; Gibson, personal communication).

By 2001, however, in response to a charter challenge to the by-law, the City Manager advised Council to repeal the panhandling by-law and replace it with "provisions to control obstructive solicitation for donations" in a Street and Traffic by-law (City of Vancouver, 2001a). The new panhandling controls seek to restrict the impediment of pedestrian flow, harassment, and approaching people in groups of 3 or more. It maintains the prohibition on panhandling in certain areas by defining obstruction as "solicit[ing] on a street within 10 metres of (i) an entrance to a bank, credit union or trust company, or (ii) an automated teller machine" and from people in motor vehicles "in a manner which obstructs or impedes the convenient passage of any vehicular traffic" (City of Vancouver, 2004a). The by-law also includes provisions which have been used to clear away unlicensed sidewalk vendors and their goods, although these were already included prior to the panhandling controls.

#### 6.4.2.1.5 The Anti-Camping By-law

The current urgency around homelessness and the activities associated with it have their genesis in the so-called Woodwards squat and the encampments in city parks that followed it. In response, the present City Council passed a bylaw prohibiting, without express permission, the destruction or removal of any flora, dumping of waste, fire, and the assembly and occupation of any type of structure on city land and authorising the City Manager to remove those structures, as well as instituting fines up to $2000 for violations (City of Vancouver, 2003). This regulation is not enforced on a regular basis. For example, Stanley Park is well-known as a site where a number of people have set up encampments, some of which have been there for several years. However, the police used the bylaw as justification for using dozens of officers to prevent the establishment of an encampment organized by anti-homelessness activists in cooperation with homeless people in the Spring of 2004. (CBC, 2004a).

#### 6.4.2.1.6 Homelessness and 'Neighbourhood Liveability'

Although such actions did not necessarily achieve the immediate goals of their organizers, they did have the effect of propelling homelessness to the top of the social agenda in Vancouver. However, to some extent, this happened not because of the housing issue, *per se*, but because the encampments became emblematic of a more generalized anxiety about disorder. In order to deal with this development, the Mayor of Vancouver organized a series of 'consultations' and forums in the winter of 2003 – 04, the theme of which was 'Neighbourhood Liveability and Safety', that focused on homelessness and public order. As one civic staffer put it:

> "*because the Mayor brought people together, they had to work together on solutions. They couldn't just say it's somebody else's problem or leave it to government to deal with it.*"

Recommendations developed out of this process which were designed to enhance street safety by increasing the number of police constables and calling for increasing senior government funding for programs and housing, as well as more revenue sharing with municipalities and tighter regulation of methamphetamine, or 'crystal meth', the new street drug of choice.

In particular, the Mayor recommended a community-level pilot project modeled on the NIST that would bring representatives from a variety of social categories, including businesses, service agencies, community organizations, and others,

together to determine the key focii for improving local liveability and safety. The West End was selected as the area for the pilot, called the Neighbourhood Coordinated Response Program. A staff person was recruited from among City personnel to coordinate the pilot and preliminary meetings with participants have been held. At this point, however, it is difficult to tell, for several reasons, whether this type of process will challenge or reverse the tendencies that militate towards the criminalization of homelessness.

First, although the pilot project is the centrepiece of the report, the Mayor also notes "a strong demand for increased police presence on the street on foot or by bicycle rather than car…several groups urged stepped-up law enforcement [and] many called for closer ties between the police and the community" (p. 6). As noted earlier, a number of respondents argued that policing the street scene can only be effective if the police engage with people in what one referred to as a 'community work function'. Yet, simultaneously, police are frustrated with being called in to deal with the consequences of social issues.

Second, although the initial consultations included sessions with binners at United We Can,[13] in the Downtown Eastside, and youth at Dusk to Dawn, in the West End, there is no clear indication of how the pilot project will engage with people who are homeless. Despite the fact that the interviewers were told by staff affiliated with the pilot that outreach to people on the street is seen as a key element of the program, preliminary meetings only involved the non-homeless population of residents and staff in the West End. A number of respondents in both neighbourhoods were very clear that any 'solution' at the community level requires the presence of homeless people at the table. Indeed, some of the respondents from Commercial Drive drew on their own experiences, in attempting to relocate a small drop-in program, to argue that the best way to change recalcitrant attitudes among the non-homeless population is for them to have direct, personal contact with people who are homeless in a non-threatening environment where there is mutual engagement.

Third, as most respondents across all groups and research sites (including civic staff) pointed out, the federal government is key to dealing with the kinds of issues associated with homeless people on the streets. Said one planner:

> "*these aren't local issues. They go across the country. Having Vancouver set up housing, income support, and services won't solve the problem. We need a national strategy. There's all these regional and city strategies funded by HRDC. We need to push for a national strategy*."

The Liveable Neighbourhoods report acknowledges this situation, calling for more senior government funding and participation in housing programs, but also for reversal of provincial funding cuts to income assistance, mental health, and youth support programs. Although the City and local leaders in various sectors clearly wish to avoid accelerating the criminalization of homelessness, the momentum toward it may be unavoidable without additional resources from senior governments and a broader plan beyond the municipal and regional level. The

[13] United We Can is a social enterprise in the Downtown Eastside that started initially as a bottle and can return depot. As the provincial recycling regulations expanded to include almost all drink containers, the facility also expanded. It has various programs for binners and Downtown residents, including a low cost bicycle repair shop, a used computer outlet, and an education program. The organization also operates a street cleaning operation in partnership with the City and local business groups.

mobility of the people included in our sample of the homeless shows clearly that the situation is not merely local or regional in scope.

**6.5 Criminalization and incarceration of homeless people can be reduced via collective action.**

Although there is momentum building toward the criminalization of homelessness, at this point, it is a question of degree, rather than a foregone conclusion. Indeed, our interviews show that there is not only a considerable degree of resistance to this possibility but that people who are involved in the community have given serious thought to alternatives and are actively working on them. Even the main proponents of the *Safe Streets Act* have said they do not believe it is a solution to the situation they are attempting to address, but only one tool of many that are needed. Rebutting a critic of the proposed bill, the Chair of the Safe Streets Coalition and President of the DVBIA noted that "legislation does not promise a total solution nor is it a reason to ignore … poverty, addiction, and mental illness" (Thompson, 2004: C7). The DVBIA's head of security also sought to assure newspaper readers that "we want to change behaviour, not to criminalize it. … this legislation will not, cannot, be used to 'sweep the streets of people'" (Jones, 2004: A9).

This is also the case with many business owners and organization representatives who we talked with. Even those who were frustrated by what they perceived as a lack of action or will to act by the justice system (especially the courts) acknowledged that this was ultimately a social issue that had to be addressed by the government. They were not alone. There is a broad consensus among our interview respondents that both the federal and provincial governments are not doing their job. Police respondents at all levels were probably the clearest and most forceful about this issue. Although some people thought the City should be doing more as well, most believed that the municipal government is stymied by jurisdictional restrictions and a lack of resources and support from the senior levels. For many respondents, the combination of municipal services and community-based action was the appropriate site for dealing with homelessness issues because such issues are experienced immediately in communities and the municipality is the 'front line' of government. They see the jobs of the federal and provincial governments as being the provision of resources that will enable the others to do their work. Many respondents are sceptical that either level of government will, in the words of a police officer, 'step up to the plate', particularly in light of recent program cuts and restructuring which many believe have aggravated homelessness in the city.

At the same time, however, respondents are suspicious of traditional solutions, especially of what one called a 'bunch of stupid programs', by which she meant social services that promote what some see as dependence. A few, but not by any means all, police and business respondents indicated that a reduction of social services would be a desirable thing. However, for most of the police officers who were interviewed, the lack of some place or service to which they can take or refer people (rather than simply moving them on) is a problem. On the whole, the majority of respondents, including police and businesses, supported social services with caveats from some about the importance of avoiding dependence and promoting self-support among people who use services.

One respondent made the point that government-funded services tend to isolate the homeless, among others, from the wider community by targeting them for special management. What is needed, he

argued, is a different model of service that integrates people, bringing together the homeless and the poor with other sectors of the community. He cited a process in which his church-based organization had brought together some of the people who used the drop-in it operated for a dinner with some local residents who had opposed moving the drop-in to their street. Both groups learned to appreciate the situation of the other, although by that time, the issue itself had been resolved and the drop-in was staying put. Another respondent, who runs a youth centre, told us that he also tries to provide a service that integrates 'all different types of people' from 'university kids' to 'street punks' in order 'to bring people together to realize their potentialities'. What is important for both of these respondents, and others too, is that the non-homeless get to know the homeless people in the community so they are not just 'a type' (i.e., a panhandler, a binner, a drug user/dealer) but a person— with a 'name and a story'.

As already noted, the City of Vancouver has initiated a collective process to deal with issues around street order that will focus initially on the West End. This process was generated through the consultations on 'neighbourhood liveability and safety' which proceeded under the assumption that things like 'aggressive panhandling, homeless people sleeping in parks, [and] open drug dealing in city neighbourhoods, which are undermining our city's quality of life' are, in fact, 'the visible signs of a deteriorating social safety net' (Campbell, 2004:4). This is convergent with what we have found in our interviews. There is a broad-based perception among *all* sectors that program and funding restructuring by senior governments have contributed to the situation with regard to homelessness and the wider street scene. However, as noted by most respondents (and recognized in the report) the City has minimal jurisdiction and limited funding power over social and economic programs. As many respondents (including city staff) told us in different ways, civic power is essentially limited to managing a problem or set of problems and, when possible, moving them from neighbourhood to neighbourhood.

In recommending the testing of a neighbourhood based collective process, the report advises that 'provincial service providers' be integrated in to the process "as required to enhance access to youth, criminal justice, mental health and housing services" (Cambell, 2004: 9). This resembles the way the NISTs currently operate. The report also notes a "public demand for community involvement and integration of policing with city and other social services" (Campbell, 2004: 7). This echoes what some of our respondents told us about the need for the police to engage in what one calls 'the community work function'— in which the police get to know the people on the street and interact with them in non-coercive ways. In order to 'respond to street level issues' the report recommends that, not only City staff, but also provincial agencies and the police work with directly and in coordination with 'community leaders' from businesses, non-profit service providers, and citizens groups at the local level in the determination, planning and implementation of 'priority actions' (City of Vancouver, 2004c; Campbell: 8). As one senior manager told us, this is a way of trying to get all the different sides and positions to work together and come up with solutions that involve more than simply pushing people around the city via enforcement.

The first test of this approach was initiated in the Summer of 2004, as the research team was conducting surveys with homeless respondents in both study areas. The funding and organization were approved by City Council on 6 July and an organizing meeting of the West End

Neighbourhood Coordinating Committee (WENCC) was convened on 22 July. Non-statutory agency representation on the Committee includes members from 4 citizens' groups, including the community centre association and the secondary school's Parent Advisory Council, one church, the Community Policing Centre, 4 service providers, 2 business improvement associations, and United We Can, the organization that represents and provides services to binners. City staff on the Committee include the Commander of Policing District 1 and 2 senior managers, as well as a City Councillor. The Coordinator of the Vancouver Agreement, a tri-government 'urban development agreement' that has hitherto been concerned with the city's Downtown Eastside, also sits on the Committee.

The Committee's Terms of Reference designate it as the body "responsible for the implementation of 'on the ground' activities to improve neighbourhood safety and liveability" (City of Vancouver, 2004). At its July meeting, members identified the top 5 street-level liveability and safety concerns, including:

> "*homeless people .. transient and homeless people sleeping in doorways, alleys, foyers and other public and private spaces[;] public drug dealing and drug use … specific areas where these people congregate, those who suffer mental illness and those using specific drugs such as crystal meth[;] property crimes … vehicle and bicycle theft and vehicle break-ins and crimes against residences and businesses[;] unsafe traffic and pedestrian interaction … vehicle speeds, noise and a lack of priority for pedestrians[;] illegal street behaviours … street vending and threatening behaviour from panhandlers and others*" (WENCC, 2004).

These priorities were reaffirmed at the subsequent meeting in November, at which the Committee met with the newly hired Project Coordinator, whose role will be to organize and conduct research, communications, and public meetings for the Committee (Howell, 2004).

The Coordinator will proceed, he says, by '"try[ing] to clarify and identify why homeless people are out there … and try to link up with some solutions or strategies that's going to help alleviate that – and not only alleviate it, but help the people who need help"'. The key issue in this regard is the lack of coordination of information and services (Howell, 2004). In fact, the Committee itself made this clear in its July meeting when it asked for a change in the project's goal to explicitly state that it will "use the *existing* capacity of organizations", implying a focus on a reconfiguration of current, rather than the addition of new, resources. Whether this perspective will allow for an exploration of the continuum of care approach to the issue emphasized by many of our respondents, particularly those in the West End, remains to be seen. As the Mayor's report states, and as the inclusion in the project of the Federal and provincial governments via the Vancouver Agreement implies, the City expects that new resources must be brought to bear on the situation to effect significant change.

A key issue that remains unstated, at this juncture, is the status of the people who will be targeted through their involvement of the Committee's top 5 priorities for action. 'Homelessness people' are the key priority, and the data gathered through this project shows that many of those we interviewed are involved in a range of activities that fall under some of the other priority areas with which the WENCC will concern itself. However, although 2 or 3 members of the Committee work with homeless people, there is otherwise no representation from among the ranks of the homeless. Yet, a number of

respondents told us that direct engagement between the homeless and non-homeless, as well as the 'street' and non-street, communities are important as a means of developing a resolution to these issues. This will likely require the Committee to involve itself in activities that go beyond conventional models of community development, community meetings and local festivals, toward more innovative processes that bring together the sometimes-antagonistic sectors.

The potential for such engagement is clearly possible, not only from the non-homeless side, as evidenced through our interviews, but also from among the ranks of people who are homeless. Homeless people are often considered to exist outside the community and a substantial number of homeless survey respondents seem to believe that the non-homeless cared little about their well-being. This is especially so for the West End, where almost one third said they thought that people in the neighbourhood cared very little or not at all for the well-being of homeless people, compared to only 21% on Commercial Drive. However, 24% of West End respondents believe that people in the neighbourhood care very much about their well-being, as opposed to only one fifth on the Drive. Yet, despite such perceptions, a substantial number of homeless respondents told us that they felt that they were part of the neighbourhoods they were in (somewhat more on Commercial Drive at 81% than in the West End at 63%), indicating a relatively high degree of affinity. One third of all respondents cited their mutual knowledge of people in the neighbourhood or feeling of comfort in the area as a reason for this feeling of community, although again less in the West End (27%) than in Commercial Drive (41%).

The route to such an engagement will be important to consider. Although it seems likely that individuals or groups of homeless people can be drawn into a process through events or activities at locations such as Nelson Park, a large number of homeless respondents indicated significant mistrust of institutional agencies, including governments, as opposed to the kind of non-profit organizations that work with them. These groups will probably provide the best long-term means of involving homeless people in this process. However, it will be vital to not simply isolate them within the agencies but to actively work to bring non-homeless together with the homeless.

**6.6 Social and demographic differences between neighbourhoods influence the public response to the presence of homeless people.**

Does the neighbourhood make the difference when it comes to homelessness and community response? Have the responses been different from residents and organizations in the 2 study areas to the presence of homeless people and the street scenes with which they are associated?

Clearly the greatest differences between the 2 areas are physical – the population and the area of each. Study Area 1 is half the size of Study Area 2 with a total population that is just 44% of the latter's. However, the relationship of population to area yields some surprising similarities. Both districts have a significantly higher population density than does the city as whole, with the West End at 45% and Commercial Drive at 30% more than that of Vancouver.[14] Not surprisingly (under such conditions) apartments are the dominant form of housing in both places, although those in the West End are mainly 5 stories or more (highrises), while on Commercial Drive apartments are found

[14] If the industrial zone north of Hastings Street, which is sparsely populated, was excluded from this calculation, the population density of Commercial Drive would likely increase.

primarily in buildings under 5 stories, like low-rise walk-ups and sub-divided houses.

Both neighbourhoods are thus highly urban. However, their scales differ in important ways, partly as a result of the forms of dwelling available. Each study area is focused on a commercial strip, but where Commercial Drive has only one, which is intersected by four major east-west transportation arteries (2 streets and 2 transit lines), the West End has 3 interconnected strips, 2 of which extend to and provide continuous traffic flow into and out of the downtown area. The beaches and parks that fringe Study Area 2 also provide a destination for people from outside the neighbourhood. Although Commercial Drive seems to have a high volume of people arriving from other parts of the city, much of this is flow through from the transit stations and bus connections. Although the restaurants and specialty food stores may also attract people from outside the area, the level probably does not approach that of the West End.

The proximity to the downtown zone is also a key difference between the study areas. Commercial Drive is around 4 kilometres from downtown while the West End is immediately adjacent to and contiguous with it. This has important implications for the nature of the street scene and homelessness, which have long been associated with the nearby Granville Street strip. As noted, many West End respondents cited services for homeless people that were actually in the downtown core, and there is a flow between the 2 areas of both homeless and non-homeless people (although some of the former told us that the downtown is more violent than the West End). An illustration of the inter-relationship between the 2 areas is the membership of the DVBIA in the West End Neighbourhood Coordinating Committee.

By way of comparison, Commercial Drive is part of the larger area of East Vancouver that, as discussed in Section 5.1, has long been the lower income, working class, immigrant side of Vancouver's socio-geographical divide, the other side of which is the affluent, WASPish Westside. Despite the degree to which such representations are caricatures, Commercial Drive and its surrounding areas are frequently referred to as 'the inner city', the term that has been used for decades in the UK for the aging slum districts that were built during the nineteenth century, sometimes in the industrial revolution, and in the US to designate impoverished ghettos of black and/or Latino residents.

However, although the elementary school in the West End is classified as an Inner City School, based on indicators of family poverty, structure, and language, the term is rarely, if ever, applied to the surrounding area. Indeed, over the past 15 years, the image of the West End has undergone a degree of renovation in conjunction with the redevelopment of the downtown and the influx of almost 20,000 people over the 10 years between 1991 and 2001. Some of these newcomers live in the new, upscale condominium apartment buildings have been constructed along the Coal Harbour waterfront and West Georgia Street, which have been included in Study Area 2. And with Vancouver's emergence as a major global tourist destination, Robson Street, Stanley Park, and the West End's beaches have been transformed into important visitor sites.

In this respect, it is interesting to note the differential relationship to the gentrification that is widely assumed to be taking place in each neighbourhood. While the West End took an upward socio-economic trajectory over the 1990s, Commercial Drive was relatively static, despite the widespread renovation of houses, condominium apartment construction, and rise of housing prices and rents in the

latter half of the decade. What did change in the latter area was an increase in occupational status and education levels. The reasons are not clear why this shift did not result in a corresponding rise in either average or median income levels, but the lack of increase in average household earnings for part-time and/or temporary workers residing in the area (as well as the minimal shift for full-time year round workers) indicates that a significant number of working-age adults are employed in low-paying jobs. West End households, in contrast, saw an increase in both average and median income over the same 10 year period.

At least part of this change in the West End may be attributed to the phenomenal rise in average income for part-time, temporary workers living in Study Area 2. At the same time, the upper middle and upper income brackets for households also went up. Those households making more than $60 thousand per year, just under 50% more than the citywide median, increased from 21% to 25% compared to the much smaller base and increase in Commercial Drive from 16% to 18%. Those making $80 thousand or more comprised 14% and 7% of all households in Study Areas' 2 and 1 respectively.

This difference is especially evident when we compare the incomes of couple families between the 2 study areas. In 2000, 1/2 of all West End couples had incomes of more $60 thousand or more, compared to less than 1/3 in Study Area 1. Ten percent of non-family individuals in the West End had similar incomes, compared to only 4% in Commercial Drive. Similarly, the average income of female-headed lone parent families was significantly greater in Study Area 2 than Study Area 1, $41 thousand (almost on the citywide median) to $25 thousand. And, while the absolute number of families in the former area is almost double that of the latter, both the proportion and the number of single parent families living around the Drive are larger than those for the West End.

The corollary of this dissimilarity in income at the upper end of the scale is that while just under 1/3 of the West End's population lived in low income households in 2000, 41% of Commercial Drive residents did so. And while about 27% of West End households had incomes of less than half the citywide household median income, 37% of those in Study Area 2 were in the same category. For households making 75% of the citywide median, the figures are 40% and 52% respectively.

The key differences between the two study areas, then, are the physical structure and their relative proximity to downtown, together with the prevailing socio-economic conditions in each. Although both have significant populations at the lower end of the income scale, the West End is not only more affluent but increasingly so, while Commercial Drive, despite some changes in the social mix via education and occupation, has been largely stationary in terms of aggregate socio-economic indicators. Social and cooperative housing may play some role in this differentiation. Such housing constitutes one-quarter of the rental housing stock in Study Area 1. While the number of social and cooperative dwellings in the West End is about the same, they make up only 7% of all the rental housing stock there.

To what degree do these differences influence the reception of the homeless in each neighbourhood? At the merely physical level, the West End has a much greater capacity to receive homeless people. The parks and beaches do not only attract tourists—they also provide space and sometimes shelter for those with no hotel rooms and no other place to live. Study Area 1 also has more public toilet and bathing facilities available. Although Commercial Drive does have

similar sites, they are neither as extensive nor as plentiful. Yet, despite the greater physical capacity of the West End to receive homeless people, homeless respondents on Commercial Drive were more likely than those in the West End to feel a part of the neighbourhood and far less likely to feel they were treated badly by the non-homeless, as they reported in this study. Similarly, West End respondents were less likely than their Commercial Drive counterparts to believe that the non-homeless want to help them or care about their well-being and more likely to think that the non-homeless fear them.

This difference between the 2 study areas in terms of 'feelings of belonging' by homeless respondents is matched by some differences in respondents' perceptions of the factors affecting how the non-homeless see them. In both areas, the single biggest set of factors cited by the homeless in how they are perceived by the non-homeless involve a lack of understanding of their situation and/or simple fear. Many told us that these are the result of how the non-homeless have been raised. However, although respondents in both study areas cited their appearance and attitudes as bases by which the non-homeless made judgements about them (in fact a far greater proportion from Commercial Drive cited this), only West Enders believed that the erosion of public space via nuisance activities and noise was an additional factor.

Clearly then, there is more involved in local capacity to respond to homelessness than simply the physical elements of a neighbourhood. At the socio-economic level, a number of things come into play. In terms of both social and commercial services, the West End, with 4 commercial strips, a relatively large number of community services and a far larger population, again has a much greater capacity. As last Autumn's City report on people without shelter noted, "urban campers are most readily found near densely populated areas, fast food outlets, laundromats and liquor stores - the same areas which appeal to any single urban person" (City of Vancouver, 2004). Yet, a smaller proportion of homeless respondents in the West End than on Commercial Drive told us they used social or community services. This may be due to a larger absolute number of homeless people being in the West End.

Another important socio-economic element to consider is the relationships generated by the West End's proximity to downtown. Not only is the DVBIA represented on the WENCC, but the West End Citizen's Action Network and the 2 provincial associations of rental apartment owners and managers both belonged to the Safe Streets Coalition. The President of the West End Seniors Network was quoted in the press release originally announcing the formation of the coalition to press for the legislation, although the organization was not listed as a member. We thus see an intertwining of organizations and individuals across the 2 adjacent areas that frame the situation with regard to homelessness in terms of street disorder and calling for intensifying enforcement measures to deal with it. At the same time, the police are engaged in a collaborative relationship with private security organizations that operate in both areas. These types of connections and the issues around which they form can create a critical threshold which has the potential to push forward the momentum toward criminalization, as we see with the *Safe Street*s and *Trespass Acts*.

The situation on Commercial Drive is somewhat different. Although the local BIA has established a relationship with the VPD and the GWCPC, its goals have been more modest and perhaps less punitive. Nevertheless, as in the West End, the visible presence of homelessness and the associated street

economy has been taken as a sign of impending neighbourhood decline and used to spur people into action to demand intervention by police and public authorities. However, not all our non-homeless respondents supported this type of reaction and even those who did generally agreed that homelessness is a product of government policies, or, rather, the lack of them. But, while each study area had many respondents who did not support the deployment of punitive measures around public order issues, only on Commercial Drive has this been a locus of overt conflict.

To some extent, this difference can be traced to the recent cultural development of the 2 areas, in particular, Commercial Drive's situation as a centre for what some non-homeless respondents in Study Area 1 referred to as 'anarchists'. This can, in turn, be traced to the community's long historical association with political radicalism and the labour movement. A number of non-homeless respondents told us that they have frequently seen people overtly monitor police interactions with people on the street and over the past several years, and there have been vocal demonstrations against the presence of the community police office in Grandview Park. At the same time, as noted earlier, homeless people on Commercial Drive were less sanguine about the police than those in the West End, even though they were less likely to report an increase in police contact over the past 2 years.

But another, and perhaps related, factor in constituting Commercial Drive both as a site of conflict around public order issues and a place where homeless people possibly feel more welcomed, is the existence of a proportionately larger low income population. As we showed earlier, the homeless respondents on Commercial were also more likely to feel they were part of the neighbourhood. A range of factors are probably involved in this expression of belonging. However, the relatively smaller social distance between the homeless and much of the non-homeless population in the eastside study area suggests that the contrasts presented by the street population are less jarring than in the gentrifying West End. This has combined with the political radicalism of the area's population to produce, if not a proportionately smaller reaction, then overt support which, at times has emerged as opposition to regulatory projects directed at the street scene. Such projects have only had temporary effect, in any case.

To some extent, then, neighbourhood differences have been involved in the emergence of different responses to the presence of homeless people. Yet, the response in each neighbourhood has not been that different. Many people, including the police, have blamed senior levels of government and argued for better programs and better funding. At the same time, significant groups have sought to monitor and eradicate the growing street scenes. The key difference has been that the West End is located adjacent to, and some groups are allied with those in, the downtown area and have together been able to lobby for intensified legislation to regulate street activities, thus essentially expanding the definition of street crime. However, in neither place has the effect of such legislation yet been felt.

# 7 Conclusion and Recommendations

The City of Vancouver's Draft Homelessness Action Plan has forwarded more than 80 recommendations calling for, among other things, more and a greater variety of affordable housing, improved access to addiction and mental health services, and higher shelter assistance and minimum wage rates. This report echoes these recommendations. Although conflict over public space is not a new phenomenon in Vancouver, it has been growing in intensity over the past decade or more during the same time that the numbers of homeless have been on the rise. A key element in alleviating public space conflicts must be reducing the level of homelessness in the City. As virtually all our respondents agree, this involves not only government action, but *coordinated* government action that will directly involve communities.

The key step in resolving at least some, although not likely all, the spatial conflict around the street economy in Vancouver is to begin dealing directly with homelessness, to provide the housing and support necessary to get people off the street. However, until this actually happens, the findings show that there are a series of interim measures that can be taken to reduce criminalization and intensifying regulation of the lives of the homeless.

When we started on this project, one of our central concerns was the way in which homelessness is often conflated with the street economy and if it would be possible for us to distinguish between the two issues. As the findings show, there is indeed a relationship between them. Many homeless people are involved in the street economy. While most of them are not involved in illicit activities like the drug trade or theft, the most prevalent means of making a living among our respondents, panhandling and binning, are becoming more highly regulated and squeegeeing, although not as widely practiced, has been effectively banned by provincial legislation. The effects of such regulation on the street homeless population will not be immediately visible. However, over the medium-term, there will likely be a shift in both livelihood activities and the sites where these are carried out as police begin to enforce the provisions of the *Safe Streets Act,* especially those which circumscribe the locations where panhandling is allowed. Moreover, although not a majority, a significant proportion of homeless respondents told they have engaged in the drug trade and theft at some level. Increasing regulation of public space that expands and/or intensifies legal control on previously licit activities seems likely to increase this proportion. These types of changes thus hold the prospect of spatial conflicts emerging in new places.

Yet, even as some businesses and residents groups expressed anger about the perceived lack of enforcement over street economy activities, the police respondents themselves tended to express frustration at what most see as the waste of police resources needed to deal with calls about homeless people. As with other City personnel, they believe that senior governments need to be directly involved by providing the resources necessary to resolve what they consistently told us is a social, not a policing, issue. At the same time, the police must enforce the law and respond to calls. Yet many calls and enforcement issues involving the street economy arise as the result of a large and growing street homeless population which lives on and must make a living in the street.

Criminalizing homelessness, via punitive regulation of the activities through which

people on the street earn their livelihoods, relegates a whole sector of the community to outlaw status. Proponents of such regulation avow that this is not their goal. However, the effect of the *Safe Streets Act* in Ontario was to shut down a legal method of obtaining income for homeless and other poor people. However, criminalization is an evolving process. It can be, and, in Vancouver, is being contested. Opposition to criminalization among those groups who work directly with homeless people, as well as among some resident groups who argue in favour of more social services. Businesses and business associations tend to be more supportive of regulating public space in ways that will lead to criminalizing the activities of the homeless. However, this is not a universal sentiment among businesses. A number of business respondents explicitly rejected additional regulation of public space as a means of resolving street issues raised by the presence of homeless people.

However, since the movement toward criminalization began, it has gathered momentum. The involvement of at least one level of government in arresting that momentum is crucial to the development of alternatives. The City of Vancouver-sponsored pilot project in the West End, that brings together representatives from a range of organizations is an important step in this direction. However, it will be necessary to extend its reach by engaging directly with the people on the street who are seen by many in the community as the problem. Resolving the types of conflicts that lead to calls for criminalization require that all parties to an issue be involved in active dialogue.

**Recommendation 1**: *The City should continue and expand its West End pilot neighbourhood project by engaging directly with the street homeless population in the area.* **Although this is a long term process and needs to proceed from the bottom up, it is also possible to engage with people using a multi-level approach in which grass roots organizers seek to build an autonomous movement while non-profit community service agencies and civic staff also seek to work with people from the street. The development of the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users shows that an autonomous organization based at the street level is possible, although it has required infrastructural support from government and non-profit organizations. At the same time, there are a number of organizations both in the West End and the downtown that work with homeless people and which provide points of entry for contact and engagement via meetings, forums, etc.**

In seeking to engage with people, it is always important to not simply expect them to go into where you are, but to go out and meet them on their ground. Many respondents told us that more outreach is needed to deal with street level issues, to provide advocacy, counselling and other support for people on the street, and to link them to the services they need.

**Recommendation 2**: *Outreach services should be expanded in both study areas, but also in other neighbourhoods where there is a significant presence of homeless people*. **The City of Vancouver's Tenant Assistance Program currently provides one outreach worker who deals with homelessness but whose efforts cover the whole city. The BC Centre**

**for Disease Control also operates a Street Nurse program that is active in both study areas as well as in other neighbourhoods. The City's Draft Homelessness Action Plan notes that 13 other targeted outreach programs also operate in Vancouver (although it also notes that this number may be too low). However, the majority of these programs focus on youth. Our survey indicates that a significant proportion of the street homeless population falls into older age groups. In seeking to resolve neighbourhood conflict, it will be necessary to connect with all groups of people who are on the street. Given the widespread concern over the intersection of homelessness and mental health issues, we would expect a greater level of resources devoted to mental health outreach. Nevertheless, outreach services should also provide universal access. One reason for the popularity of the City's single worker outreach program is that it takes all comers.**

As long as people are shut out of 'the system', they have no stake in it. The escalation of the street scene over the past decade has been supported by the growth of an alternative economy of survival that is essentially outside 'the system'. Rising housing costs and changes that have made income assistance more difficult to obtain and worth less have effectively promoted the street economy as, if not a desirable, then as a viable alternative. The longer people are involved in the street economy, the more difficult it will be to re-engage them. Therefore, it is imperative that they have some kind of stake, whether this is accessible income assistance or other income-generating activities, some type of housing or a combination of these.

The findings of this project show that a significant proportion, perhaps more than half, of the street homeless are living entirely outside the formal economy. At the same time, evidence of the minimal reporting of victimization to any type of authority indicates that street homeless people put an extremely low level of trust in institutions or agencies, even though they also report using many services. This points to the formation of subcultural situation in which people living on the street are effectively segregated from other sectors of the community, except as clients of services or as objects of fear, anger, and/or enforcement. A key mechanism in seeking to deal with the street scene and 'street people' is to provide alternative forms of interaction and means of earning a livelihood.

**Recommendation 3**: *Design and fund programs in communities that integrate the homeless and non-homeless population*. **Spatial conflict can develop because of fears and mutual assumptions that particular groups hold about each other. At the same time, services targeted at particular population groups tend to isolate those groups, at least in the programming context. In order to ease spatial conflicts, it is necessary to promote dialogue. This can only happen by bringing together people from varying groups and positions. Integrated programs can have a range of design. For example, the Crossroads Community Program near Commercial Drive held a dinner with some of its 'guests' and residents who had opposed its attempt to relocate on their block. Although this was a one-time event, it shows that relationship between the homeless and non-homeless is possible. The Purple Thistle Centre, also not far from Commercial Drive, operates a youth drop-in that**

**involves a cross section of young people, from those on the street to those in college. For a number of years, the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority and its predecessor sponsored Health Fairs in the Downtown Eastside Strathcona neighbourhood which brought out large numbers of people in the community.**

**This type of community event, if organized through a consciously inclusionary strategy could successfully incorporate multiple sectors of the community. Another unique, community-based program is the Saturday shower and meals for homeless people that takes place at a westside community centre in which members of 2 churches both watch the possessions of homeless residents while the latter use the shower facilities at the centre and prepare breakfast for them at a nearby church. This program was developed in coordination with the City's Tenant Assistance Program.**

**Recommendation 4**: *Develop programs that will help people living on the street generate income*. **If squeegeeing, panhandling, and binning are deemed unacceptable, then people who are on the street need to have alternative means of earning a living that permit them to remain autonomous. People on the street have chosen, for whatever reason, to maximize their autonomy at the expense of security. For many, that security, in the form of income assistance and housing, is not a realistic option given the difficulties in obtaining the former and its insufficient means of supporting the latter. A number of programs in Vancouver provide some form of income generating activity for people who live on or near the street, including Pacific Community Resource Society's Street Youth Job Action, in the West End, the Kettle Friendship Society's SEED program on Commercial Drive, which it operates in conjunction with the Commercial Drive Business Association, and United We Can's street cleaning program in the Downtown Eastside, which is supported by the City of Vancouver.**

**These projects are relatively limited in scope, given the size of the street population. They could easily be expanded or multiplied to cover other commercial areas of the city or other street populations. However, if such programs are to promote stability for people entering them from the street, then they will have to be coordinated with the Ministry of Human Resources in order to ensure that: (a) additional income for those on income assistance is not clawed back; and (b) those who are not using income assistance can get access to it as a means of increasing income and, hopefully, housing stability.**

Housing is clearly the central dimension of this issue. Yet, relatively few of our homeless respondents , only 35%, mentioned affordable housing when they were asked what services and/or resource homeless people want or need. This is perhaps an index of the low level of expectations of people living on the street. However, it also opens up the discussion to the possibility of alternative forms of housing.

**Recommendation 5**: *The 3 levels of government should jointly explore the provision of different types of housing for people living on the streets.* **The street homeless population is diverse and any effort to provide housing will require diverse solutions. Supported**

**and transitional housing options are now seen as crucial to ending homelessness. However, a range of other options may also be available as elements in a housing continuum. A number of our non-homeless respondents spoke of the need for what they called barrier-free shelters that were accessible 24 hours a day by individuals who are under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs and/or who may have behavioural problems. Another respondent talked about working with youth who are highly mobile but who are increasingly priced out of the rental market when they are in the city, suggesting that houses could be purchased by government in an effort to provide temporary, collective rental homes for them. During the early 1970s, when large number of young people continued to arrive in Vancouver from other parts of Canada, the Federal government and the City organized a number of hostels. Although these were subject to attacks from opponents, they provided one means of housing people off the streets and affording them level of indivdual autonomy.**

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