

QUEERING VANCOUVER:

The Work of the LGBTQ Civic Advisory Committee, 2009-14

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THE PROPOSITION, SO OFTEN asserted, that Vancouver is an avant-garde paradise for people who identify as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and queer) merits careful examination.¹ What evidence is usually cited? Social movement historians confirm that the city was the site of the first LGBTQ organization – the Association for Social Knowledge (ASK) – that influenced national and regional social movements; that it developed a “thick,” active, and diverse associative structure of local gay, lesbian, and transgender rights and service groups; that it was the site of transformative protests or events; and that it is today well ensconced within Pacific Northwest and global social networks.² Its LGBTQ groups have achieved a distinctive record of groundbreaking struggles – even if there is as yet little agreement among social historians

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¹ Manon Tremblay, ed., *Queer Mobilizations: Social Movement Activism and Canadian Public Policy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 31. Like Tremblay, I use the term “queer” to designate all non-heterosexual people.

² For queer urban history of Vancouver, see Anne-Marie Bouthillette, “Queer and Gendered Housing: A Tale of Two Neighborhoods in Vancouver,” in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Spaces, Sites of Resistance*, ed. Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter, 213-33 (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997); Gordon Brent Ingram, “It’s a Time Warp: Commercial Drive Has Transformed from Women’s Places to Lesbian Feminist Places to a Queer Neighbourhood,” *Xtra West*, 26 November 1998; but, especially, Brent Ingram, “Building Queer Infrastructure: Trajectories of Activism and Organizational Development in Decolonizing Vancouver,” in Tremblay, *Queer Mobilizations*, 243; Jenny Lo and Theresa Healy, “Flagrantly Flaunting It? Contesting Perceptions of Locational Identity among Urban Vancouver Lesbians,” in *From Nowhere to Everywhere: Lesbian Geographies*, ed. Gill Valentine, 29-45 (London: Routledge, 2000). On Vancouver-Seattle links, see Gary Atkins, *Gay Seattle: Stories of Exile and Belonging* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003). Other interconnections are usefully explored by Christopher Douglas Herbert, “Out on the Slopes: Activism, Identity and Money in Whistler’s Gay Ski Week, 1992-2012,” *BC Studies* 181 (Spring 2014): 105-26.

that is as succinct as what Julie Podmore reports for Montreal's LGBT historical narrative.³

Despite recurrent incidents of homophobic harassment and homicide,⁴ for more than two decades Vancouver has promoted itself as a safe gay tourist destination,⁵ and it claims to offer a range of increasingly LGBTQ-friendly public spaces in which people can rendezvous and live autonomously.⁶ It is home to the national Q Hall of Fame, which is devoted to recognizing LGBTQ activism; to Qmunity, a queer community centre in Davie Village; and also to diverse and successful festivals (Gay Pride Week, the Queer Film Festival, and the multimedia, artist-run Queer Arts Festival, which is billed as one of the top five such events in the world). Such cultural amenities are usually harbingers of a cosmopolitan cultural milieu.

However, in Canada, LGBTQ mobilization in city politics is an under-investigated, poorly theorized field.⁷ The tendency to narrate "epic" protests or political battles, or to recognize the legacy of lesbian or gay community icons, often obscures the everyday banal work of effecting social change and inclusion. However, it is often in just these mundane processes that equality is constructed. It is therefore important to explore how LGBTQ citizens and groups have worked to shape public policy in Vancouver city politics not only at election time but also between elections.

There are several social movement case studies of policy changes precipitated by LGBTQ activists, but they are issue-specific and are often written from a constructivist or activist perspective rather than from an institutional perspective (i.e., from "inside" the political system). Given the importance of Vancouver's urban administrative machine in mediating social justice outcomes despite a hostile provincial government (as seen in Michael Brown's study of the city's response to the

³ Julie Podmore, "Gone 'Underground'? Lesbian Visibility and the Consolidation of Queer Space in Montréal," *Social and Cultural Geography* 7, 4 (2006): 595-625; and Julie Podmore, "From Contestation to Incorporation: LGBTQ Activism and Urban Politics in Montreal," in Tremblay, *Queer Mobilizations*, 187-207.

⁴ For case law on homophobia in Vancouver, consult Allyson M. Lunny, "Look: A Faggot! The Scopic Economies of Cruising, Queer Bashing and Law," *Social and Legal Studies* 22, 2 (2013): 231-45.

⁵ "Vancouver Tops for Gay Tourism," CBC News, 4 December 2006. See also Howard L. Hughes, *Pink Tourism: Holidays of Gay Men and Lesbians* (Cambridge, MA: CABI, 2006), 96. In 2002, the *Vancouver Observer* proclaimed Vancouver "a gay place to be."

⁶ Gay-friendly areas in the city include not only Davie Village and Commercial Drive but also South Granville, Main, Kerrisdale, and 4th Avenue.

⁷ Ingram, "Building Queer Infrastructure," 243.

AIDS crisis),⁸ and given the proven cyclical vulnerability of LGBTQ issues to right-wing populism (as seen in the battle over civic support for the Pride Parade under Toronto's mayor Rob Ford), this is regrettable. The concerted horizontal mobilization of multiple LGBTQ organizations or individuals is of particular importance as they seek to influence the city system between elections, set priorities among competing claims, design programs or initiatives to effect them, and win staff or council commitment. As a leading scholar of gay history Gordon Brent Brochu Ingram notes, studies of such practical everyday coalition building are largely absent from existing narratives.⁹

This article explores the origins and operations of Vancouver's LGBTQ Advisory Committee, which has reported to Vancouver City Council since 2009. It is one of only two such permanent committees in Canada and was established to perform just such horizontal deliberation across multiple LGBTQ interests as well as to broaden support for the gay community.¹⁰ Here I evaluate its influence on LGBTQ place-making and social and development policy mobilization between 2009 and 2014, when the Vision Vancouver party (led by Mayor Gregor Robertson) held the majority on council. The evolution of the committee over Vision Vancouver's first two terms in office, and its persistence into the third, reveals a good deal about the everyday negotiation of priorities in the LGBTQ community, the gaps between the rhetoric and the reality of queer inclusion, and the shifts in strategies and tactics for LGBT and queer citizens and their attempts to be accommodated by city governance.

QUEERING CITIES

City-specific LGBTQ histories have been rare but are becoming more common.¹¹ British urban scholar Phil Hubbard calls for more critical inquiry and sharper distinctions among gay history, queer history, and

⁸ Michael P. Brown, "The Work of City Politics: Citizenship through Employment in the Local Response to Aids," *Environment and Planning* 26, 6 (1994): 873-94; Michael P. Brown, *Replacing Citizenship: AIDS Activism and Radical Democracy* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1997).

⁹ Ingram, "Building Queer Infrastructure," 233.

¹⁰ Planners have only recently begun to recognize and address the specific needs and concerns of LGBT populations. Toronto established a similar advisory committee much earlier in 1999, but it was soon dissolved, a victim of amalgamation.

¹¹ Scholarship in the rest of Canada is growing: Nathaniel M. Lewis, "Ottawa's Le/the Village: Creating a Gaybourhood amidst the 'Death of the Village,'" *Geoforum* 49 (2013): 233-42; Tiffany Muller Myrdahl, "Queering Creative Cities," in *Queering Planning: Challenging Heteronormative Assumptions and Reframing Planning Practice*, ed. P. Doan, 157-67 (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2011); Catherine J. Nash, "Toronto's Gay Village (1969-1982): Plotting the Politics

the history of gays in order to help rethink the articulation, in cities, of plural gay cultures, political recognition, and cultural reproduction.¹² Canadian political scientist Miriam Smith argues that queering public policy at all levels of government,¹³ including the municipal, begins with calls for representative identity and demands that LGBTQ interests be included in policy processes, much as was the case with early feminist public policy strategy. As legal wins are achieved – British Columbians in same-sex relationships now have the same rights and responsibilities as do those in opposite-sex relationships – the institutional focus changes. Legal gains must be matched by partisan mobilization not only through social movement leadership and alliances but also by winning nominations and electoral representation, becoming continuously engaged in urban governance, changing attitudes, developing platforms, and garnering support for re-election. Advisory committee mechanisms in urban governance can be useful windows on political consensus building within LGBTQ communities and the relative effectiveness of mobilizing for majority accommodation.

The emerging literature on queer place-making suggests that spatial politics may shift from the gaybourhood in the central city to the city region in order to engage broader constituencies of allies. Language changes. The ghetto becomes a village and may vie for heritage district status. The name for the LG (lesbian and gay) constituency may broaden to recognize BTQ2+ (bisexual, transgendered, and two-spirited Indigenous queer people). Claims based on differences escalate to mitigate the worst social, economic, or physical marginalization experienced by LGBTQ citizens and to involve coordination across multiple jurisdictions. “Advances” are not one-directional: they must be refought issue by issue in each generation, with different spatial and political stratagems.¹⁴

of Gay Identity,” *Canadian Geographer* 50, 1 (2006): 1–16; Podmore, “Gone ‘Underground?’” 595–625.

¹² Phil Hubbard, “Review Essay: Queering the City: Homosociality and Homosexuality in the Modern Metropolis,” *Journal of Urban History* 33, 2 (2007): 310–19. Hubbard’s call is now being answered in Canada by Tremblay, *Queer Mobilizations*.

¹³ Miriam Smith, “Queering Public Policy: A Canadian Perspective,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, York University, Toronto, 1–3 June 2006.

¹⁴ In her liberal pluralist approach to the study of queer social history, Manon Tremblay argues for rereading Tom Warner’s *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002) and its dialectical assimilation-liberation approach to gay history in the context of new resource theory and closer attention to institutional tactics. For an excellent discussion of the practical politics of dialectical shifts between these two poles in claims by Toronto activists, see Catherine J. Nash, “Gay and Lesbian Political Mobilization in Urban Spaces: Toronto,” in Tremblay, *Queer Mobilizations*, 209–12. Herbert’s “Out on the Slopes” brings a similar pragmatist, strategic realism to its account of how commercially

New political analysis of the LGBTQ federal electorate in Canada confirms that it is a distinct, albeit understudied, constituency that splits voting preference among parties, yet can become deliberately single issue-focused on issues such as same-sex marriage. Consistent with US findings, the self-identified LGBTQ community in Canada is disproportionately male, young, and urban. Lesbian women and gay men vote differently on many issues. Canadian political scientists Andrea Perella, Steven Brown, and Barry Kay also find,¹⁵ in contrast to US studies, that Canadian LGBTQ do not earn more than the national median income (even when gender is controlled for). According to these authors, Canadian LGBTQs are a relatively new-issue public, the political character of which is still evolving in uncertain ways. It is important to understand that this LGBTQ public is pluralizing. But the academic and popular tendency to frame LGBTQ demands in liberal human rights-based terms – emphasizing non-discriminatory access to employment, health care, marriage or common law cohabitation, reproduction or adoption, and parenting – has ignored the municipal level of government and local politics. New theory from cultural geography exploring “the right to the city” promises to improve our understanding of how LGBTQ constituencies claim urban public space, services, and rights to direct political action, public assembly, and protest. Still, much remains to be known about how LGBTQ communities exercise their vote in the city political system or act on urban governance.¹⁶

In Vancouver, many gays and lesbians consciously subscribe to a political dynamic that demands recognition, representation, and redistribution of public monies for needed social services. They opt, in other words, for the risks of strategic essentialism in group identity politics. Strategic essentialism is a term that is often anathema in critical theory but that has a practical effect in its articulation of a clear-cut, almost ethnic subcultural identity (although many do not wish to be exclusively typed with this identity) and in its strategic targeting of certain ridings to influence the political system. Since 1984, the concentration of LGBTQ

driven identity politics acts to create queer space and to advance social justice causes, often contradictorily but necessarily.

¹⁵ Andrea M.L. Perella, Steven D. Brown, and Barry J. Kay, “Voting Behavior among the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Electorate,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 45, 1 (2012): 89–117.

¹⁶ While sufficient historical data on polling station turnout over time is not available, ballots in 2014 show strong voting in West End polling stations for incumbent Vision mayor Gregor Robertson. See <http://globalnews.ca/news/1671925/vancouver-election-results-2014-full-results-for-mayor-council-school-and-park-board/>. Public opinion polls are rare. See <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/the-true-north-lgbt-new-poll-reveals-landscape-of-gay-canada> (2012), which has too small a sample to report city results.

voters in Vancouver's West End has mobilized consistently and effectively for gay candidates and allies of the LGBTQ community.¹⁷ Two historic queer communities – the West End and Commercial Drive – have supported local allies and gay politicians in provincial and national elections at a success rate rarely matched. And they have done this across different parties.¹⁸ The list of LG leaders and allies is a long one, starting with the discreet bisexual MP Ron Basford (Vancouver Centre), who, in 1969, worked to decriminalize homosexual acts; and the powerful Progressive Conservative MP Pat Carney (Vancouver Centre), who, as early as 1980, introduced (albeit unsuccessfully) Bill C212 to prevent discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Liberal MP Hedy Fry, a gay ally, has represented Vancouver Centre since 1993. Recently retired NDP MP Libby Davies, elected from Vancouver-East (which contains the lesbian enclave in the Commercial Drive area), campaigned for affordable housing and LGBTQ access from her position as deputy party leader. Provincially, MLA Mabel Elmore (NDP), also representing Vancouver-East, has been similarly active on social justice issues. NDP MLA Spencer Chandra Herbert from Vancouver's West End was the first to press to get transgender rights explicitly recognized in BC human rights legislation (the Gender Identity and Expression Human Rights Recognition Act, 2011 [Bill M-207]), supported by the Trans Alliance Society.

At the city level, gay electoral politics began with the election in 1986 of Gordon Price, Vancouver's first openly gay councillor, who served six terms with the Non-Partisan Association (NPA).¹⁹ He was later joined by Alan Herbert of the NPA for one term (1996-99). Ellen Woodsworth of the Coalition of Progressive Electors (COPE) served two terms (2002-05,

¹⁷ For most of the 1980s, the right-wing Social Credit provincial government was impervious to calls for reform, and the gay constituency was driven to target federal or local politics by default until the 1990s, according to Ingram, "Building Queer Infrastructure." See also Richard Borbridge, "Sexuality and the City: Exploring Gaybourhoods and the Urban Village Form in Vancouver BC" (Master of City Planning thesis, University of Manitoba, 2007), 136.

¹⁸ Brian Burtch, Aynsley Pescitelli, and Rebecca Haskell, "LGBTQ Movements in Western Canada," in Tremblay, *Queer Mobilizations*, 142-62. They remind us not to forget the importance of other politicians, such as Jim Egan, Canada's first elected gay councillor (Comox-Strathcona's regional district board in 1981), who headlined the Supreme Court case that established non-discriminatory access to same-sex spousal benefits. On Hamilton, see: <http://thewalrus.ca/the-unrepentant-whore/>. For a critique of the still under-represented lesbian history in media or commemorative Vancouver Gay Archives, see <http://www.vancouverobserver.com/blogs/feminista/canada%C3%A2%E2%82%AC%E2%84%A2s-gay-and-lesbian-newspaper-poor-job-representing-ls-its-name>.

¹⁹ Coinciding in timing with the election of Montreal's first gay councillor, Raymond Blain. See Podmore, "From Contestation to Incorporation," 196.

2008-11) from her electoral base in the Commercial Drive area.²⁰ Gay councillor Tim Stevenson (2002-) from the West End has served five terms, most recently with Vision Vancouver, after having served in the provincial cabinet. These names recur in popular memory and the written record, but the list of LGBTQ politicians also includes those who ran for Vancouver City Council, some repeatedly, but failed to get elected as well as those who ran, some successfully, for the powerful Vancouver Park Board and the Vancouver School Board. Notable among this group is Jamie Lee Hamilton, the first transsexual activist to run for municipal office in Canada in 1996. Although unsuccessful (and although rejected by the NPA as a candidate for the Park Board in 2008, when she ran as an Independent candidate, and rejected again in 2014 by COPE), her candidacy precipitated discussion around sex work and LGBTQ issues in several elections.

This record of local electoral achievement is remarkable given the at-large (rather than ward-based) electoral system in Vancouver, which entails city-wide campaigning (and a concomitant increase in costs) and thus raises the importance, for candidates, of approval by and affiliation with one of the major civic parties. Invoking the LGBT collectivity as subject/object of political action is complex. It raises trusteeship issues by requiring LG candidates to convince the electorate that they can be trusted to represent the whole community by transcending narrow identity politics. It also requires skill in articulating LG interests and negotiating for consensus while being transparent about internal schisms.²¹ I explore these and other issues through conducting interviews with LGBTQ and other participants in civic politics as well as by offering an analysis of reports, council minutes, and local press coverage.

RESEARCH APPROACH

In 2011-12, our research team interviewed seven people, including several from the LGBTQ Advisory Committee (established by Vancouver City Council in 2009), local LGBTQ advocates and city planners, and at least one supporter from the principal municipal parties. All interviewees were members of the Vancouver LGBTQ or gender-variant community. Interviews focused on issues about city living, civic political involvement, how to effect and improve LGBTQ inclusion in city life, and perceptions

²⁰ Angelina Cantada, *Powerful Out Women (POW!) on the Campaign Trail* (Vancouver: Curly Tail Pictures, Inc., 2012).

²¹ Anne Phillips, "What's Wrong with Essentialism?" *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 11, 1 (2010): 111.

and assessments of the LGBTQ Advisory Committee's responsibility to advocate on behalf of the community in city planning. Interviews were completely open-ended, and protocols were approved by our university research ethics board. Participants were guaranteed full confidentiality, and their views were fact-checked against subsequent news reports, city council minutes, and the historical record. Anomalies, if any, were identified for analysis and interpretation. News archives, especially those of *Xtra!* and *West/Xtra* Vancouver, other local alternative media, city records, NGO websites, blogs, and other policy documents were consulted. We focused on the period from the inception to the end of the LGBTQ Advisory Committee's second term in 2014, our goal being to contribute to further study and analysis of the important LGBTQ issues facing Vision Vancouver's third term.

INCLUSION IN CITY GOVERNANCE: VANCOUVER'S LGBTQ ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Formal administrative accommodation of the gay and lesbian movement by the City of Vancouver began with the left-wing Coalition of Progressive Electors Council under Mayor Mike Harcourt. In 1981, Harcourt proclaimed 1 August to 7 August Gay Unity Week (later Pride Week) in recognition of the gay and lesbian community's contributions to Vancouver. In 1982, council banned discrimination on the basis of gender and sexual orientation in city ordinances. The city's Policy on Human Rights and Harassment prohibited discrimination along a "gender continuum," including impacts on transgendered persons, and it continues to be more affirmative than does the BC Human Rights Code. The city then developed an extensive equal opportunity program and set up the Hastings Institute for arm's-length diversity training; in this, Vancouver remains a leader among Canadian cities.²² These advances were not rolled back when the right-leaning NPA took power, between 1993 and 2002, and again from 2005 to 2008 under Mayor Sam Sullivan, but efforts to develop mechanisms to regularize LGBTQ input to council were stonewalled even in Mayor Larry Campbell's short COPE term, despite multiple efforts. Centre COPE (COPE Lite) members, including Stevenson, reformed in 2005 into Vision Vancouver, and then found an attractive progressive party leader in Gregor Robertson.

²² Kristen Good, *Municipalities and Multiculturalism: The Politics of Immigration in Toronto and Vancouver* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

In 2009, the centre-left Vision Vancouver party won a majority on council and promptly introduced the LGBTQ Advisory Committee to improve inclusivity in governance and administration. As a tool of urban governance, consultation had become a key part of the city's policy ensemble, whether ad hoc or continuously, in part to comply with the Official Community Plan requirements of provincial statutes. Consultation was elevated to a high art in Vancouver urban planning on housing and commercial development in particular,²³ but it also became a way to expand participatory, accountable governance in a time of declining turnout during municipal elections.

Councillors Ellen Woodsworth (COPE) and Tim Stevenson (Vision) pressed for the LGBTQ Advisory Committee's establishment at a propitious time, marked by the eighth anniversary of Aaron Webster's murder near a gay cruising area, a resurgence of gay-bashing incidents, a public dispute in the Abbotsford School District over its Social Justice 12 curriculum, and the impending 2010 Winter Olympics.²⁴ Twelve members were appointed. These included noted LGBTQ activist and Little Sister's bookstore co-owner Jim Deva; Drew Dennis, executive director and co-founder of Out On Screen, who would serve for three terms; and Fatima Jaffer, a coordinator of the Global Queer Research group at UBC's Liu Institute for Global Issues and an activist opposing homonationalism within Vancouver's queer community.²⁵

With a mandate to enhance the access of LGBTQ communities to city services, and by acting as a conduit for community feedback and a resource for staff on issue identification and policy development, the first advisory committee established subcommittees to tackle specific issues: homelessness and affordable housing (including social, market rental, and transitional housing); inclusive communities (to examine the interaction of race and gender and sexual orientation in marginalization);

²³ E. Brunet-Jailly, "Vancouver the Sustainable City," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 30, 4 (2008): 375-88. See also John Punter, *The Vancouver Achievement* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003). The LGBTQ committee joined similar committees for other equity-seeking groups, including those from women's groups, persons with disabilities, multicultural communities, and urban Aboriginal peoples, which have demonstrated various levels of activity.

²⁴ Richard J. Dalton Jr., "Is Gaybashing on the Rise?" *Daily Xtra*, 21 October 2009. See <http://dailyxtra.com/canada/news/gaybashing-the-rise>; Natasha Barsotti, "City's New Gay Advisory Committee Formed," *Daily Xtra*, 3 June 2009, <http://www.dailyxtra.com/vancouver/news-and-ideas/news/citys-new-gay-advisory-committee-formed-7511>.

²⁵ <http://www.ideas-idees.ca/blog/homonationalist-discourse-queer-organizing-and-media>. Another single-term advisory committee appointee was Ryan Clayton, who won the *Xtra West* Community Hero award in 2009 for his community service as a local activist, performer and star in Vancouver-based OutTV's new series *Tops and Bottoms*, and youth facilitator for Qmunity. He considered running for the School Board in 2011 but withdrew to return to his studies.

environment and sustainability; and creative capital and the growing economy.

Participants in this study acknowledge that the Olympics provided an opportunity to carry the Pride agenda onto the global stage. But they consistently stress the importance of efforts to enhance the safety of the local LGBTQ constituency and, to this end, the appointment of a staff liaison person from the social planning department. Combating violence against LGBTQ individuals became urgent when Statistics Canada enumerated forty-four incidents of homophobic crime in the city (the largest number in the country) in 2010. Interviewees noted that the community's security concerns led them to submit an advisory report to the Vancouver Police Department regarding its strategic plan and to recommend an increase in community policing in the Davie Village.

Interviewees also recalled that A Day Against Hate Crimes vigil in October 2010 (organized to coincide with a similar event in London, England) rallied local support and the interviewees coordinated a purple letter campaign. In the words of one committee member:

The purple letter campaign was a story-telling [initiative] where we collected letters from all over BC and delivered them to the minister of education to ask for provincial policy on sexual orientation and gender identity ... to affect all schools. Fifty of the sixty school districts do have an explicit policy and we were asking that they apply the best of those policies across the whole province ... That wrapped up on October twentieth [2011 with] ... the purple shirt spirit day.

We had a meeting with the minister of education, delivered the letters and had an amazing discussion with him about policy and about ... the issues of homophobia and discrimination in high schools. ... which [are] very very prominent, especially in BC. We talked a bit about suicide rates and the effect ... it has on communities. [I] walked away from there feeling very positive ... we had a lot of media attention, a lot of political attention, a lot of meetings in Victoria which was awesome. (Interview with committee member)

Although policy changes took time, by 2013 the campaign had led the BC Ministry of Education to revise and strengthen its program challenging homophobia in schools.²⁶

²⁶ Miriam Smith, "Questioning Heteronormativity: Lesbian and Gay Challenges to Education Practice in British Columbia," *Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural, and Political Protest* 3, 2 (2004): 131-45. See also http://www.sd41.bc.ca/budgets_policies/pdf/policies/545.pdf. Local controversies continued to break out. The Burnaby School District Board approved

With the Winter Olympics looming, LGBTQ advocates worked to convince the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Committee and Vancouver and Whistler municipalities that these games should include the first Pride House at an Olympic venue. Two were built, one at the small Qmunity offices at Bute and Davie streets in Vancouver (for event viewing) and the other at Whistler House at the Pan Pacific Village Centre in Whistler Village (where larger-scale parties were held).²⁷ Artwork that played with or subverted the normative relationship between heterosexuality and sports was featured at Whistler House, but actual appearances of competing Olympians were scarce. Organizers kept on hand information about seeking asylum in Canada for athletes from countries that outlawed homosexuality, but they promised not to actively promote or advise athletes to seek refugee status.²⁸

Committee support for gay tourism continued when Vancouver hosted the North American OutGames in July 2011, a scaled-down version of the World OutGames (first held in Montreal and leading to the Declaration on LGBTQ rights adopted by the United Nations in 2006). This event coincided with Pride Week and an LGBT human rights conference, and interviewees agreed that these things helped to consolidate Vancouver's image as a gay tourist-friendly city and to bolster the local economy.

Among other achievements of the first LGBTQ Advisory Committee were: the initiation of a one-minute silence on Remembrance Day for LGBTQ individuals in the armed forces who had lost their lives, the collection of statistics on housing affordability, and the production of a short video on transgendered issues (including genderless washrooms and access to public recreation time). Less progress was made on the creative

such a policy over objections from some parents. Councillor Tim Stevenson and Vancouver School Board chair Patti Bacchus demanded an apology from several School Board members, whom they alleged used a conservative right-wing US group opposed to same-sex marriage in a dispute over the contents of an anti-bullying booklet for teachers issued in 2011. See http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2011/12/18/anti-gay-vancouver-school_n_1156769.html. The dispute provoked an editorial change to the brochure but failed to stop the updating of the School Board's LGBTQ policy, which passed in June 2014 with a clear majority. The NPA subsequently censured two of its trustees, who were expelled from caucus prior to the 2014 election. The contribution of independent queer activist and educator Jane Bouie, a two-term School Board trustee, in opposing this right-wing onslaught must be especially acknowledged, according to our interviewees.

²⁷ Christopher Douglas Herbert reports that Ken Coolen (Vancouver Pride Society) and Dean Nelson (a hotelier from Whistler) invested close to \$100,000 to establish the first Pride House to represent the "Rainbow Nation." See Herbert, "Out on the Slopes," 119. Ironically, the global gesture was followed by a recession for Whistler Pride Week (since recouped).

²⁸ The Conservative government refused to release information on the sexual orientation of the twenty-two refugee claimants, citing privacy law. See "22 Refugee Claims Made after Vancouver Olympics," *CBC News*, British Columbia, 10 April 2010, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/22-refugee-claims-made-after-vancouver-olympics-1.964690>.

economy and environment/sustainability priorities. Yet the verdict overall was sufficiently positive that the Vision council quickly reinstated the LGBTQ Advisory Committee on its being re-elected in the fall of 2011.

Three members of the inaugural committee returned (Metha Brown, a peace activist, artist, and planning student; Drew Dennis [Out On Screen]; and Barb Snelgrove, inducted to the Q hall of fame in 2013, board member of the Pride Society, volunteer for many organizations, and reporter for OutTV). The nine other new appointees included youth workers, party entrepreneurs, financial advisors, a health worker, a staff member from Qmunity, veteran West End-based gay activist Dean Malone, other educators and creators,²⁹ and one noted NDP/labour political organizer (Ron Stipp) with direct links to the Vision campaign. Appointees were mostly under forty years of age and included more queers of colour than did the first committee.³⁰ The well-known lesbian city politician Ellen Woodsworth lost her COPE council seat, leaving Vision councillor Tim Stevenson as council liaison until 2014.

Capitalizing on what interviewees called “good” momentum, the second LGBTQ Advisory Committee supported successful efforts to have the Pride Parade designated an official city event subsidized by council. It also endorsed sending Councillor Tim Stevenson to lobby for Pride at the Sochi 2014 Olympic and Para-Olympic Games in order to extend Vancouver’s international reputation for tolerance. Prominent local developers Peter Wall and Bob Rennie covered the costs of this trip. In November 2014, the president of the International Olympic Committee recommended that the “Fundamental Principles of Olympism” be revised in line with Stevenson’s petition to preclude discrimination against sexual orientation.³¹

Once again, LGBTQ Advisory Committee subcommittees focused on housing and the creation of safe, healthy, and engaged communities, but new foci were added: Davie Village revitalization; communications/social media networking; and a trans*formations subcommittee that pushed for the creation of the Trans and Gender-Variant Inclusion Working

²⁹ Gwen Haworth’s biography is typical of the many accomplishments of appointees. Director of the documentary *She’s a Boy I Knew* (Outcast Films, 2007), she worked as an educator at Coastal Health and created four video installations for *Sex Talk in the City* (a groundbreaking exhibit at the Museum of Vancouver in 2014), while also serving on the trans*working group.

³⁰ Natasha Barsotti, “Vancouver’s Queer Committee Regains Full Slate,” *Daily Xtra*, 15 March 2012. See <http://dailyxtra.com/vancouver/news/vancouver-queer-committee-regains-full-slate>.

³¹ Brian Morton, “City Councillor Absolutely Thrilled with IOC’s Sexual Orientation Clause,” *Vancouver Sun*, 10 November 2014. For less triumphal accounts, see <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/brian-hutchinson-vancouver-right-wing-councillors-really-wish-deputy-mayors-trip-to-sochi-was-taxpayer-funded>.

Group and its inclusion on the Park Board. This working group was co-chaired by Metha Brown and Drew Dennis and included a third LGBTQ Advisory Committee member, Gwen Haworth.³² It held several town hall meetings, conducted live streaming of events, and surveyed more than two hundred trans-identified residents and allies. It made eighty recommendations in a logically consistent and progressive policy package, ranging from installation of universal signage on park washrooms and change rooms through increasing rental subsidies to community groups offering trans-specific programming, installing single change booths in gender-segregated rooms, training for staff, and the development of more gender options (including trans) to self-identify on city forms. As a result of that report, Vancouver became the first municipality in Canada to pass a building code that requires gender-neutral washrooms in public buildings. The code withstood a change in party affiliation of the Park Board and its chair after the 2014 election, and the working group won a Legacy of City Service Award for its contribution.³³

Although trans* local rights to public space and the promotion of Olympic LGBTQ rights received strong impetus from the second term of the LGBTQ Advisory Committee, the signal of its maturation and sophistication may be found in its aggressive use of social media and direct mediation/deliberation in consultations over revitalization and protection of Davie Village as well as its resistance to the so-called “decline of the gaybourhood” premise so widespread in North American urban studies.

³² See *Building a Path to Parks and Recreation for All: Reducing Barriers for Trans* and Gender Variant Community Members*. Report to the Vancouver Park Board by the Trans* and Gender Variant Inclusion Working Group, April 2014, <http://former.vancouver.ca/parks/board/2014/140428/documents/REPORT-TGVIWorkingGroupReport-2014-04-28.pdf>. It is important to acknowledge the contribution of Trevor Loke, the only elected Park Board commissioner who survived the fall 2014 election and who participated in the working group. Loke is gay and is known for suing British Columbia for approving the Christian faith-based Trinity Western University’s application to become a law school despite its banning same-sex intimacy in its code of conduct.

³³ CBC On the Coast News, “Vancouver Park Board Launches New Trans*Gender Variant Awareness Campaign,” 26 March 2015, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/vancouver-park-board-launches-new-trans-gender-variant-awareness-campaign-1.3011525> (viewed 25 June 2015). This regulatory change was retained even after the chair of the Park Board shifted to the NPA after the fall 2014 election. In fact, the Park Board rolled out an aggressive awareness campaign in 2015, endorsed by trans* spokespeople notwithstanding the loss of the Vision majority.

INTERVENTION IN PLACE-MAKING IN
DAVIE VILLAGE AND THE DRIVE

Since the 1970s, Vancouver has been known for two gay and lesbian-typed enclaves, but they have evolved quite differently. The neighbourhood plans of both the West End and “the Drive” came due for renewal during the LGBTQ Advisory Committee’s second mandate. With the defeat of Ellen Woodsworth in the municipal election, there was no Commercial Drive resident on the advisory committee. Moreover, the fortieth anniversary celebrations to commemorate the first national gay liberation action in Ottawa and Vancouver, and the increasing mobilization of LG rights claims, raised historical consciousness of gay and lesbian struggles and provided rhetorical resources for framing arguments for heritage revitalization. Tactical deployment of “protests,” the push for business improvement area associations, and alliances with *Xtra West* (the West End gay-focused newspaper) in staging pre-consultations for the LGBTQ Advisory Group all aided in advancing support for Davie Village planning – support that was not matched on the Drive.

Zoning between 1930 and 1950 had provided a large rental housing stock that drew gay men to Vancouver’s West End. By 1971, it had an active bar scene on Davie Street and was often described as the most densely populated square mile (2.6 square kilometres) in Canada, an arguable view rarely subjected to scrutiny against St. Jamestown in Toronto, for example, but nonetheless widely endorsed. What is clear is that planning requirements for new and redeveloped properties to retain a storefront character and sustain mixed use, within existing height limits, prevented extreme displacement by high rises and maintained diversified, pedestrian-accessible retail services.³⁴

The West End has not escaped social controversy since the 1970s. In that decade the Vancouver Police Department engaged in ferocious policing and the eviction of street prostitutes from Davie Street and neighbouring areas, which some argue pitted pro-development gays against sex workers.³⁵ Local vernacular mythmaking also identifies a “Fountainhead rebellion” when, in 1997, gay NPA councillors Gordon

³⁴ See Borbridge, “Sexuality and the City,” III and 134.

³⁵ Becki L. Ross, “Sex and (Evacuation from) the City: The Moral and Legal Regulation of Sex Workers in Vancouver’s West End, 1975-1985,” *Sexualities* 13, 2 (2010): 197-218; Becki L. Ross and Rachel Sullivan, “Tracing the Lines of Horizontal Hostility: How Sex Workers and Gay Activists Battled for Space, Voice and Belonging in Vancouver, 1975-1985,” *Sexualities* 15, 5-6 (2012): 604-21; Yolanda Cole, “Advocates Seek Vancouver Apology and Memorial for Displaced West End Sex Workers,” *Georgia Straight*, 11 July 2014, <http://www.straight.com/news/684651/advocates-seek-vancouver-apology-and-memorial-displaced-west-end-sex-workers>.

Price and Alan Herbert led a charge to “save the strip,” rallying more than two hundred people in support of the Fountainhead Pub, which opened in 2000 as the self-styled gateway to Davie Village. After the West End BIA (Business Improvement Association), a chapter of the BC Chamber of Commerce, was prevented from taking down the gaybourhood’s rainbow banners, the breakaway Davie Village BIA was formed to represent one of just four commercial streets in the West End. It is credited with fostering a more business-friendly climate, bringing a queer lens to retail issues by pushing for more sex-positive retail visibility, better licence terms and security, and by providing the leadership and legal and financial infrastructure to manufacture the images of the gay urban village.

Although some have argued that there has been little growth in LGBT infrastructure since 1997, developments have been somewhat obscured by the change from direct subsidy to indirect public-private partnership. In the late 1980s, the city began to extract a contribution towards public uses from developers seeking zoning changes in order to increase density. Dubbed a community amenity contribution (CAC), it has been channelled to agencies such as the Vancouver International Film Centre, which opened nearby on Seymour near Davie in 2005 and provided space to the trend-setting summer Queer Film Festival. It is also used to cross-subsidize access to publicly owned space for the Queer Performing Arts Festival.

As rental increases became untenable for all local residents,³⁶ in 2009, the Davie BIA, in partnership with *Xtra! West* (later renamed the *Daily Xtra*), organized a small, informal community visioning exercise on the future of Vancouver’s very gay “capital city” and enjoined “queers everywhere” to join the cause.³⁷ This initiative received little attention during the first term of the LGBTQ Advisory Committee but was picked up in the second term when the Davie subcommittee intervened to secure another wave of local community consultations.

Aiming to preserve Davie Village in its “established, historical purpose as a commercial and entertainment area that has served queer communities, our allies, West Enders and those who visit,” the Davie Village sub-

³⁶ By 2012, the West End Residents’ Association (WERA) had a list of seventeen rental buildings in which owners were evading the legislated rental increases with cosmetic enhancements, in some cases doubling rents, and in which vacancies were routinely under 1 percent. Stated WERA: “This is not a gay issue: it’s a class issue.” <http://www.dailyxtra.com/vancouver/news-and-ideas/news/the-gaybourhood-unravelling-8136>.

³⁷ Barb Snelgrove, Dean Malone, and Ron Stipp, *Davie Street Revitalization Report*. City of Vancouver Revitalization Report (June 2013), <http://www.scribd.com/doc/149021790/Street-Revitalization-Report-by-the-City-of-Vancouver-LGBTQ-Advisory-Committee>.

committee of the LGBTQ Advisory Committee consulted seven thousand people over eighteen months (the population of the neighbourhood is about forty-five thousand) and made thirty-three recommendations to City Council's West End Planning Team. Staff adopted most of these ideas with little revision and conveyed them to council, where they were incorporated into the West End Community Plan (WECF) passed on 7 March 2014.

Recommendations for improved and widened sidewalks in the Village; more outdoor patios, rooftop patios, and decorative lighting; improvements to the Heart of Davie Plaza; and more public art were standard elements of the planning repertoire. The subcommittee report allowed for new high-rise dwellings on Alberni and Davie Streets, and laneway infills. Most important, the plan was praised for recognizing Davie Village for the first time as a historic hub of central Vancouver.³⁸

Persuaded by the vision articulated in the WECF, city staff earmarked \$7 million from future CACS to improve and expand the Qmunity centre and designated other monies for the Gordon Neighbourhood House. To this point, Qmunity had been woefully underfunded compared to queer centres in other cities and inadequately housed in a small building with steep stairs that limited access for the disabled. Despite a stretched budget, the centre has provided free space to a variety of queer social issue groups, including the Vancouver Rainbow Refugee Committee.³⁹ Qmunity's policy advocacy also reflected growing concerns among LGBTQ participants about seniors who were either facing poor housing or re-closeting in inadequate long-term elder care. Qmunity ran a two-year consultation on "aging out," reaching out to thirty-four thousand members and, in its third term, setting the ground for action on the part of the LGBTQ Advisory Committee. Given the BC government's 2015 announcement that St. Paul's Hospital, the iconic battleground against AIDS, was to be relocated to the False Creek Flats area, there is greater need for the LGBTQ community to lobby for continued access to long-term care facilities for its aging members.

³⁸ Jeff Lee, "West End Could See Major Changes with New 30-Year Plan," *Vancouver Sun*, 30 November 2013, <http://www.vancouversun.com/business/West+could+major+changes+with+year+plan/9189586/story.html>.

³⁹ A recent study of sex orientation-based claims for refugee entry to Canada found unexplained differences in the regional rate of entry, with Vancouver behind. See R.S. Lidstone, "Refugee Queerings: Sexuality, Identity and Place" (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2006). See also CBC News, "Gay Russian Man Seeks Refugee Status in Vancouver," 11 August 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2013/08/11/maxim-zhurelev-gay-russian-refugee-vancouver_n_374121.html.

Consolidating the appeal of the WECP, and consistent with the heritage framing for revitalization, staff also reacted favourably to the community's suggestion that the proposed public square in Davie Village be named Jim Deva Plaza, after the former advisory committee member, noted LGBTQ activist, and co-owner of Little Sister's bookstore, who died in a tragic accident in September 2014.⁴⁰

Critics of the WECP – and there were many, mostly within the LGBTQ community – decried the nature of the CAC scheme, arguing that “secret deals” on amenity buy-offs could lead to a spot-by-spot rezoning approach that would ruin the area. They also argued that the proposed high-rise towers – which would cross-subsidize space for the two neighbourhood houses – would destroy the character of the West End and that any and all deals were subject to change at political whim. Other, more pragmatic or more knowledgeable critics, took less issue with the public-private form of the financing earmarked for Qmunity than with its inability to cover much-needed core operating funding.⁴¹ A member of the West End Neighbours group felt that council moved prematurely, before the implications of the complex plan could be fully known. Certainly plans for other neighbourhoods met a wave of public dissatisfaction, and the WECP was the only plan that Robertson's council was able to push through in the second administration. A Gay and Grey group (led by ex-NPA councillor Alan Herbert) presciently called for more public housing for seniors, something that had been overlooked in the WECP (and would become urgent given the relocation of St. Paul's Hospital announced after its release). This group also urged transparency in the public design process for the Qmunity Centre and pushed for recognition of the many significant historical accomplishments of the LGBT community beyond the tribute to Deva. Councillor Adrienne Carr of the Green Party opposed the WECP for its lack of attention to social housing, and she repeated the attack in the next election campaign, but without traction. Trans activist Jamie Lee Hamilton argued that consultation had been

⁴⁰ The plaza is still under consideration at the time of writing but has a strong probability of success.

⁴¹ This is not solely a civic responsibility, but BC premier Christy Clark's government has turned a deaf ear. Jeremy Hainsworth, “COPE Candidate Seeks City-Funded Centre like Toronto's 519,” *Daily Xtra*, 9 November 2014, <http://dailyxtra.com/vancouver/news/cope-candidate-seeks-city-funded-community-centre>; Natasha Barsotti, “Gregor's Vision Has Proven Queer-Friendly, But Some LGBT Voters Say Accomplishments Cosmetic,” *Daily Xtra*, 7 November 2014, <http://dailyxtra.com/vancouver/news/gregor%E2%80%99s-vision>.

insufficiently trans* inclusive, a view underlined by one of this study's participants:⁴²

Davie Street and the gay village ... might not necessarily mean that it's a safe space for ... lesbian women ... transfolks ... or two-spirited folk. So I think there's a big area for growth [for] places that are ... really welcoming and [where] you know you walk in and you don't feel stigma or discrimination or anything. (Interview with advocate)

In rebuttal, Dara Parker, Qmunity's executive director, argued: "We still have time to plan and tweak and make this [vision] more robust." Remember "how far we've come politically," she added in reference to the deliberations, insisting that the coalescing consensus would continue to unfold and averring: "That's incredible because we do have a very long history in this neighbourhood." She vowed to undertake substantial and transparent consultations for the next phase.

Other critics objected to the West End centrism. Preserving heritage in and revitalizing Davie Village threatened to extract a high social cost for other areas:

We have a long way to go to make the whole city safe ... I don't know that we've ever had an event [like the Dyke March and Pride in the Park] in South Vancouver or North ... South East or South West Vancouver.

[It] will take ... ongoing anti-homophobic actions by leaders [everywhere in Metro Vancouver] ... whether they are city councillors, or mayors, or doctors, or lawyers or whatever ... [B]ecause when times are troubled like this [referring to the recent worldwide economic crises and the rise of the Conservative government in Canada] there's a lot more racism and homophobia and sexism. So we have a lot more work to do [which must not be absorbed into this local tactical issue]. (Interview with committee member)

Certainly the LGBTQ Advisory Committee had not reached out directly to other cities in Metro Vancouver. Nor could it as an instrument of Vancouver City Council, especially given the hostility in other jurisdictions to any power hierarchy or dilution of local power. For all that, in their programming for youth, some local organizations (like Out On Screen), continue to expand regionally.

⁴² City of Vancouver, LGBTQ Committee, meeting minutes, 12 November 2009, and author's correspondence.

A few interviewees argued that focusing priorities on preserving historic space and a commercial tourist centre missed an opportunity to challenge a conservative attitude towards licensing adult enterprises⁴³ – part of a perennial push for more sex-positive public and private spaces (which are still widely regarded as inadequate in Vancouver).⁴⁴ Despite a significant number of lesbian- or gay-owned or marketed clubs (Priape, the Oasis, Queen’s Cross, the Pumpjack, the Fountainhead Pub, Numbers, the Cobalt, Club 560), the city lacks safe private clubs, a transgender bar, and a pansexual club. The burlesque, or exotic, dance scene cannot find sufficient venues, and the entertainment district on Granville Street is so aggressively heterosexual that queer performance artist Jen Sung (writer and well-known organizer for Out in Schools) labels it a no-go zone for queers and single women.

To quote an interviewee, Vancouver’s reputation as a “no-fun” city continues to be perpetuated, despite Pride tourist marketing:

A soft porn theatre and lesbian steam bath [outside of the Davie Village] are impossible because of these restrictions ... [U]nless you have [a] million dollars it’s almost impossible. [Laughs] So I think they need to look at what their licensing requires and maybe modernize them ... Why can’t there be private membership clubs that can serve the community outside of the West End? (Interview with entrepreneur from the community)⁴⁵

She further suggested that a new adult business association was needed to represent businesses serving not only cross-dressing communities but also sex workers, transgendered peoples, BDSM groups, and other alternative communities to help that sector take on more important and socially accepted roles in the city’s economy. Such calls have a strong local precedent: in the 1960s, ASK also pushed the boundary of sex positivity as a key part of its political agenda.⁴⁶

⁴³ Naiobh O’Connor, “Court Orders Closure of Vancouver Sex Shop,” *Vancouver Courier*, 8 August 2012. No Fountainhead-style demonstration took place.

⁴⁴ Reive Doig, “Oh Fun City! Vancouver’s Vibrant Alt-Sex Scene,” *Huffington Post British Columbia*, 1 July 2013. http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/reive-doig/vancouver-fetish-alt-sex-bdsm-kink_b_2407748.html. There were other increasingly popular events, like Whistler’s Lifestyle Weekend.

⁴⁵ *No Fun City* (Vancouver: Make Believe Media Inc., 2009), the documentary directed by Melissa James and Kate Kroll, further documents the effects of the spread of gentrification and tough liquor laws on silencing independent and alternative subcultural scenes.

⁴⁶ Ingram, Bouthillette, and Retter, *Queers in Space*, remind us that ASK wanted to lower the age of consent; promote discussions of drag, sadomasochism, and fetish; and liberalize access to sex-positive pornography and retail establishments.

The more telling critique comes from a comparison of the fate and political dynamic of the WECF with regard to the planning outcomes for the lesbian-typed enclave that, in her 1997 comparison of Vancouver's twin gaybourhoods, Anne-Marie Bouthillette refers to as "where counterculture and reconstructed family converge."⁴⁷

The Grandview-Woodland neighbourhood is home to the Drive, but it does not have a geographical focal point equivalent to Davie Village in the West End, and its lesbian citizens reject any kind of tourism branding. According to service workers interviewed, many queer youth from the Drive use the services of Qmunity in the West End, but their self-described lesbian lifestyles are more radical than are those of West End queers:

The famous West End bar scene ... is thought by many East End queers ... to be shallow, apolitical, capitalistic, expensive, exclusionary, trans-phobic, ableist, inaccessible, queer-phobic, totally homo-normative and male-dominated, with girls who want to look like the L Word version of what a lesbian is. (Interview with advocate)⁴⁸

Progressive feminist left coalition politics deeply inscribes lesbian politics on the Drive, but it is rarely marked on buildings or commemorated in other ways. The neighbourhood has been home to important feminist landmarks since the 1970s: the Status of Women Office (now closed), the Vancouver Women's Health Collective, and, until recently, the first such service organization of its kind, the Vancouver Lesbian Connection (at Commercial and Venables), which was shut down after state funding cuts and as a result of transsexual Susan A. Mamela winning an employment discrimination case against it before the BC Human Rights Tribunal.⁴⁹

The Grandview-Woodland neighbourhood is home to the largest cluster of artists in the city and is a well-known cultural centre for theatre and music, containing the Vancouver East Cultural Centre, or Cultch. The area's old industrial housing stock and public housing infrastructure is ideal for queer artists who are struggling against displacement. Right now the Drive represents an avant-garde haven, a place that encouraged one interviewee to comment: "To be queer and be an artist in Vancouver

⁴⁷ Amin Ghaziani, "Lesbian Geographies," *Context Org*, 23 February 2015. See also Amin Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014) for trends in the United States.

⁴⁸ Michelle Miller, "Queering the Scene," *Briarpatch Magazine*, 1 March 2009, <https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/queering-the-scene>.

⁴⁹ Human Rights Code R.S.B.C. 1996, C210, in the matter of a complaint before the BC Human Rights Tribunal, re *Susan Mamela v. the Vancouver Lesbian Connection*, 8 September 1999.

is very exciting. Long gone are the days of you being restricted to just another little drag show.” This remark is borne out by the expansion of queer arts events, curated exhibitions, and cultural production in such varied venues as the Vancouver Museum, along with OutTV, the first gay speciality television station in North America. Yet the process of gentrification poses a sharper threat of displacement on the Drive than does anything facing the West End.

Consultations for the Grandview-Woodland neighbourhood plan began, alongside those for the West End, in 2012, but they led to a different outcome. After extensive city-led focus groups, a large sample of online questionnaires, and issue papers on social sustainability and heritage, the Discussion Plan proposed to City Council included only one minor reference to LGBTQ needs or sexual orientation. When city planners came back with proposals for ten high-rise condos on Hastings at Commercial, and no protection for the heritage commercial block or other means to maintain housing affordability, a large outcry ensued. Council withdrew its plan and appointed a representative Citizens’ Assembly to break the deadlock.⁵⁰ No subcommittee of the LGBTQ Advisory Group targeted the Grandview-Woodland Neighbourhood Plan or held consultations. No lesbian organization/centre in the area was listed under current priorities for cross-subsidy by CAC. This led to legitimate questions about the disappearance of the lesbian space in Vancouver and the privilege of the white gay male in the city machine. Lesbian acknowledgment on the Drive remains threatened.⁵¹

Notwithstanding this asymmetrical outcome for the two historic LG neighbourhoods, the second LGBTQ Advisory Committee demonstrated a growing capacity to coordinate, diversify its agenda, and set priorities. Most important, the committee sought to engage First Nations/Aboriginal/Métis communities, who called successfully for the committee to be renamed LGBTQ2+.⁵² By 2014, Vancouver’s major civic parties were

⁵⁰ Jenny Peng, “Loyalty to Vision Remained in Grandview-Woodland,” *Vancouver Courier*, 16 November 2014, <http://www.vancourier.com/vancouver-votes/election-news/loyalty-to-vision-remained-in-grandview-woodland-1.1588548>.

⁵¹ Shifting lesbian place-making on Commercial Drive is much harder to discern over time than for Davie Village. While often formed out of economic necessity, security concerns, or different public housing needs due to a higher incidence of parenting, lesbian neighbourhoods often tend not to be about territorial space-making at all. As the geographer Linda McDowell acknowledges, “Lesbians show little desire to conquer territory or be visually obvious, whether due to lack of access to resources, need for a safe place for children, or risk of generalized violence.” See Linda McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

⁵² See the committee’s second term summary presented to council at <http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/council-of-councils-presentation-lgbtq-2014.pdf>.

aligned in their commitments to celebrate and support the diversity of all people in Vancouver and to assist LGBTQ+ and gender-variant persons. Vision Vancouver was re-elected but not without continuing doubts about its approach to neighbourhood development and loss of majorities on the Vancouver school and park boards.⁵³ The third era for the LGBTQ+ advisory committee begins.

CONCLUSIONS

BC-produced documentaries such as *Beyond Gay*,⁵⁴ which looks at Pride Parades around the world, suggest that the movement is being confronted with “post-gay” questions (similar to those faced by third wave feminism) about how to sustain momentum when formal equality is achieved, how to integrate postcolonial racial or Aboriginal challenges, and how to cope with the new lifestyle neoliberal identity politics, wherein identity is a mutable, floating signifier.⁵⁵ As some analysts suggest, place-based politics may decline among LGBTQ youth with new possibilities of expression in virtual space, or, conversely, it may fall victim to the same internal lack of a progressive left alliance (or to a lack of the capacity to argue for a social role for the state) that confounds mainstream politics.

Against such a backdrop, how may we read the record of the LGBTQ Advisory Committee in urban governance? The committee was unfairly dismissed by the Green Party during the last municipal election as “a select group of community members with political connections meeting in an echo chamber.”⁵⁶ Activists interviewed for this study understandably insist that such a view underestimates the autonomy and agency of the LGBTQ committee, the scope of its community consultations, and the complex partisan links of its members. It does disservice to the sheer size and scale of everyday work that was done to build consensus. Furthermore, it obscures the dual social/horizontal and development/vertical, or place-based, dialectic in the policy initiatives the advisory committee brought to realization.

⁵³ See <http://theyee.ca/Opinion/2014/11/18/Vancouver-Vote-Splitting/> for a cogent analysis of vote splitting.

⁵⁴ *Beyond Gay: The Politics of Pride*, dir. Bob Christie (Vancouver: Big Gay Movie/Transmission, 2009).

⁵⁵ Vancouver Pride Society, “Who’s Queer Now? A Conversation about Identity,” *Fountainhead*, 18 June 2014. <http://vancouverpride.ca/events/tonight-whos-queer-now-a-conversation-about-identity/>. The question still to be asked is: What’s queer now? A question that demands a conversation about interests and issues in consensus and coalition building.

⁵⁶ Natasha Barsotti, “Gregor’s Vision,” *Daily Xtra*, 7 November 2014, <http://www.dailyxtra.com/vancouver/news-and-ideas/news/gregor%E2%80%99s-vision-95539>.

In this appreciative view, the LGBTQ Advisory Committee has professionalized and, on the social agenda, can be seen to have made a difference in advancing coordinated anti-violence strategies in schools at the local and provincial ministry levels, in promoting queer rights at the Olympics, and in trailblazing trans* issues, including non-discriminatory, non-binary gender design for public recreational space. On the redistributive agenda, it has influenced the city to redirect public resources to the Pride Parade for ongoing operations and to use a public-private partnership mechanism to provide for capital expansion of Qmunity space, which, it is to be hoped, will find ways to augment operating and program funding. As implementation of the WECF evolves, it appears a permanent plaza may be installed on Davie in memory of the famed and well loved Jim Deva, surrounded by an LGBTQ historically themed outdoor museum. The advisory committee has broadened its constituency of nominees and appointees, with a wider cross-section of younger queers, visible minority groups, and new “creatives” active in multiple spheres of the public social/private commercial and creative sectors. Some appeared satisfied enough with their political initiation to consider a later run for office, while others moved back to other pursuits. Its work is clearly demanding, and many volunteers do not return; however, despite such volunteer changeover, the direction has been consistent. It is telling that the third renamed advisory committee is seeking to persuade and train more LGBTQ youth to step up to wider leadership. Finally, and more controversially, it selectively advanced the historic spatial politics of Davie Village while neglecting historic lesbian spaces in the Drive area.

Is this just yet another story of a neoliberal sell-out in a historic gay village? Like other scholars impatient with such broad-brush dismissal (Christopher Douglas Herbert’s tale of Whistler’s gay ski week among them), I think not. The WECF owes much to its origins in the Davie Village BIA and the influence of the *Daily Xtra*, for which the newsbeat has been central. Developers played a role in paying for Tim Stevenson’s Sochi mission, building on the global reputation anchored in the West End, but they also proposed and then withdrew a mooted community amenity benefit for Qmunity prior to the WECF. But developers have not been directly involved in the formulation of the WECF: the WECF was the outcome of autonomous community consultations and effective integration by city planning staff. Gentrification and displacement have affected some youth and lower-income queers but have been less consequential than in several other Vancouver neighbourhoods. The

West End continues to be less neoliberal in its formation (within a zone-protected rental area and the restrained redevelopment of larger towers than Yaletown, Coal Harbour, or Grandview-Woodland) and with lower incomes among immediate residents than BIAs based in another Canadian city suggest.⁵⁷ Resistance to displacement has also benefited from the work of a civic advisory group with responsibility for broader socio-cultural articulation across the city and for local territorial strategies at neighbourhood levels, balancing social/economic and local/regional needs. Yet political coordination will continue to be tested in the next phase of Qmunity's construction and in the redevelopment of the St. Paul's Hospital site.

Historians of other cities have been right to challenge the assumption of territorial identity politics in previous generations of the gay/lesbian movement.⁵⁸ They have tended to reject any logic of toleration or limitation to single-issue interest group accommodation, something resonant among this study's participants.⁵⁹ "For queers in Vancouver," stated one, "the desire is not to be ghettoized but to be accepted," and this sentiment was widely shared, especially among younger participants.⁶⁰

Support for LGBTQ inclusion has succeeded in avoiding wedge politics, despite local outbursts like the School Board imbroglio over the LGBTQ policy revisions.⁶¹ Contrary to theorists who suggest that the use of human rights discourse in advancing gay and lesbian inclusion can lead to conservative co-optation or left immobilism,⁶² Vancouver LGBTQ com-

⁵⁷ Contrast this with the Montreal analysis by Julie Podmore, in which the gay village BIA is strictly synonymous with neoliberal urban growth machines and queers are successively displaced, notwithstanding the vaunted Quebec social safety net. See Podmore, "From Contestation to Incorporation," 185-206.

⁵⁸ Petra L. Doan and Harrison Higgins, "The Demise of Queer Space? Resurgent Gentrification and the Assimilation of LGBT Neighbourhoods," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 31, 1 (2011): 6-25. See also Lewis, "Ottawa's Le/the Village"; and Helen Jarvis, Paula Kantor, and Jonathan Cloke, *Cities and Gender* (London: Routledge, 2009).

⁵⁹ Nash, "Toronto's Gay Village." See also Cathy J. Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers and Welfare Queens," in *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, ed. Donald E. Hall and Annamarie Jagose, 74-96 (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁶⁰ For a supportive and thoughtful review of this ambivalence towards identity-based politics, see Carol V.A. Quinn, "On My Reluctance to Defend a Queer Point of View," in *Queer Philosophy: Presentations of the Society for Lesbian and Gay Philosophy, 1998-2008*, ed. Raj Halwani, Carol V.A. Quinn, and Andy Wible, 381-89 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012).

⁶¹ The 2014 fall election shows the extent of bipartisan consensus on LG rights. The NPA expelled two School Board candidates for homophobic comments. NPA mayoralty candidate Kirk Lapointe confirmed the priorities of the Vision council but added a large conference to boost the city's reputation on international human rights. He said the NPA had a long history of being "intelligently inclusive" and ahead of its time. COPE, which has been shut out of council since 2011, has also championed LG rights.

⁶² Susan B. Boyd, "The Perils of Rights Discourse: A Response to Kitzinger and Wilkinson," *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 4, 1 (2004): 211-17; Smith, "Queering Public Policy."

munities have continued to reform the LGBTQ Advisory Committee and to engage in the body politic more widely, through different political means. Queer politics in Vancouver maintains an enduring, persistent grassroots energy that benefits from being insinuated into the advisory committee circuits of municipal power and that cannot be co-opted completely even while it undergoes a major generational shift.

Does LGBTQ recognition in urban governance amount to homonormative mainstreaming, a topic prominent in queer cultural studies today? Certainly, as queer experiences become more accepted, there is a struggle within the community to frame common political priorities and/or to shift the majority policy reflex from policing or tolerating to promoting sexual and gender expressions in urban space. Political experience of the LGBTQ2+ evolution from 2009 to 2014 (a short epoch, to be sure) suggests that, yes: political “outness” is still restrained, lesbian politicians are elected to City Council infrequently, and the city has not had a queer mayor.⁶³

At the time of writing, LGBTQ assimilation in Vancouver’s urban consultative planning process has not led to a breakdown or mass displacement, hollow gay tourist infrastructure, loss of visibility, or weaker community identification. Vancouver has achieved some well-deserved leadership status in queering its urban space, but this is substantially overlooked in the emerging global and national queer city literature. Vancouver has moved beyond the token acceptance of queer. It is going about the business of constructing what one participant termed a “good infrastructure for all citizens that is inclusive.”

The challenge remaining is to broaden both the coalitions and the targeted policy areas of engagement. Lesbian heritage sites need to be marked. Spreading LGBTQ awareness and political coordination to the suburbs (not all of which can claim, with Surrey, an active fifteen-year-old Pride Society) was a highly valued goal among participants interviewed for this research. The most urgent unresolved urban issues identified by interview participants continue to be affordable housing, the need for a new non-aligned gender health clinic, and programs and housing for an aging population.

⁶³ Vision Vancouver refused to reinstate Trish Kelly, a lesbian, as a candidate for the Park Board due to a satirical sex-positive online video about masturbation. See Carlito Pablo, “Vision Vancouver Won’t Return Trish Kelly to Its Election Slate for November,” *Georgia Straight*, 24 July 2014, <http://www.straight.com/news/694536/vision-vancouver-wont-return-trish-kelly-its-election-slate-november>. *Xtra* held a town hall debate on how openly sexual political candidates can be without compromising their electability.

A new LGBTQ community politics is emerging in Vancouver, as gay historian Gordon Brent Brochu Ingram acknowledges, centring on issues of locale, public space, design for facilities, service delivery at Qmunity, and other community centres across the region. There is much more at stake than just district revitalization, safety and security in public space, or festivals. The progressive, albeit financially limited, policy ensemble at the disposal of the city can scarcely offset the failure of other levels of government to re-examine their social disinvestment at a time of growing social inequality.

Vancouver has not yet achieved a fully queer urban space and inclusive governance – a goal that may be as infinitely elusive as it is politically perfectible. But it is getting there. As this study of the formation of the LGBTQ Advisory Committee suggests, the work of integrating queer citizenship in Vancouver continues for Vision Vancouver's third term and beyond. Further research is needed to probe LGBTQ public opinion to see if mobilization on issues of social justice trumps spatial infrastructure priorities or supports an alliance to push for further queering the boundaries of sex-positivity in new ways. Non-white queer scholarship, attention to Indigenous queer rights, and vigorous trans* activism are needed for cities to realize – if not the queer utopic promise – lively and liveable, more queer-friendly places.