What About Whalley?: Stigmatization and Redevelopment in Surrey City Centre

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Abstract

This paper analyzes redevelopment in Whalley, British Columbia, and how local stigmatizing discourses contribute to planning-led displacement in the newly designated area of Surrey City Centre. Using an exploratory case study methodology, this work explores the gaps between the lived realities of displacement and local planning priorities, laying a groundwork for future investigation. It identifies four main patterns in local discourse which contribute to stigmatization - those being blemished character, public safety, city-building, and altruistic displacement - and argues that local media, politicians, and planners utilize stigmatizing rhetoric to legitimize transformative planning interventions. Through a subsequent policy analysis, it is found that the priorities of local planning - namely beautification, private investment, and placemaking - serve to induce rapid gentrification in a bid to reshape Whalley's tarnished reputation, rather than address the needs of existing residents. In response, I consider how planners working with lower-income and vulnerable residents can better consider the role of stigmatization in their work, and use their positions to combat it.

Ce document analyse la réhabilitation à Whalley, en Colombie-Britannique, et comment les discours locaux stigmatisants contribuent au déplacement induit par la planification dans la nouvelle zone désignée du Surrey City Centre. En utilisant une méthodologie d'étude de cas exploratoire, ce travail examine les écarts entre les réalités vécues du déplacement et les priorités locales de planification, établissant ainsi une base pour des investigations futures. Il identifie quatre principaux motifs dans le discours local qui contribuent à la stigmatisation : le caractère dégradé, la sécurité publique, la construction-urbaine, et le déplacement altruiste. Il soutient que les médias locaux, les politiciens et les urbanistes utilisent la rhétorique stigmatisante pour légitimer les interventions de planification transformative. À travers une analyse politique, il est constaté que les priorités locales en matière de planification – à savoir l'embellissement, l'investissement privé, et la création de lieux – servent à induire une gentrification rapide dans le but de remodeler la réputation ternie de Whalley, plutôt que de répondre aux besoins des résidents existants. En réponse, j'examine comment les urbanistes travaillant avec des résidents vulnérables peuvent mieux considérer le rôle de la stigmatisation dans leur travail, et utiliser leurs positions pour y faire face.

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1. Introduction

As Canadian cities continue to grow in population, many low-density suburban cores are seeing rapid urbanization. In the Vancouver metropolitan region, the historically lower-income, medium-density neighbourhood of Whalley has been officially identified as a new 'Town Centre', and it is one among many suburban areas suddenly seeing rapid redevelopment and diversification of activities after decades of being seen as bedroom communities (City of Surrey, 2017). Stigmatization of the neighbourhood by local media and politicians have bolstered a pejorative public image as a den of criminals, addicts, the homeless, and the poor, serving to justify the crafting and implementation of the Surrey City Centre Plan, which looks to carve out an entirely new district in what was once considered downtown Whalley. While politicians, developers, and the business community have heavily supported the new plan as an innovative and ambitious approach to creating British Columbia's "second downtown" (Invest Surrey, 2023), it begs to question what role stigmatization has played in the development of the Surrey City Centre Plan, and how disparaging public discourse surrounding Whalley may influence local urban planning.

This project looks to investigate the role of stigmatization in the adoption of the Surrey City Centre Plan, asking the question: what does stigmatization look like in Whalley, and how does it influence formal planning policy? To answer this, this research project is broken down into three main phases. The first is a literature review, which provides an overview of debates and discussions surrounding stigmatization in urban planning, based on a scan of scholarly literature, as well as an overview of Whalley and its residents, based on primary and secondary sources. Second, a discourse analysis is carried out, demonstrating an intense presence of stigmatizing language in local media, as well as documenting the ways in which this rhetoric finds expression in narratives of local growth and development. Third is a policy analysis, in which the main thematic priorities in the Surrey City Centre Plan are cross-referenced with the findings of the discourse analysis, investigating the degree to which common stigmatizing language or stated public issues are carried over into formal planning policy.

Through my research, I conclude that not only is stigmatization heavily present in Whalley, but that it serves to legitimize a contemporary form of urban renewal, which looks to reshape the neighbourhood primarily for white collar residents and private capital. A failure on the part of planners to adequately address issues most often mentioned in stigmatizing discourse, including homelessness, poverty, or crime, suggests that public emphasis on these issues does not happen for their own sake, but in order to legitimize large-scale interventions prioritized by Surrey's government. Based on these findings, I call for planners to better consider the role of stigmatization in carrying out their mandate, and draw from the work of authors such as Stein (2019), Harvey (2009), Fainstein (2010; 2013), Slater (2021), and others to consider how the collaborative work of guiding urban development can combat stigmatizing narratives in vulnerable neighbourhoods.

1.2 Planning Narratives

Planners hold many responsibilities in their positions which go beyond simply advancing permits, bylaws, and other features of municipal bureaucracy. On a fundamental level, they are of course arbiters of local land use restrictions and other legislation. However, in doing so, planners also place themselves in a position of public relevance, both through the extent to which they represent members of the public and their constituents, as well as in the ways that their planning decisions impact those people. Planning something as seemingly apolitical as a new bike lane may often have political consequences for the neighbourhood; whose voices are being accounted for in the planning process, oftentimes by planners, ends up shaping neighbourhoods according to the needs expressed by those voices, at times at the expense of others. Planning, therefore, beyond being a job of technical problem solving, becomes one of influencing justice. As Raymond Geuss points out, we can invoke and reformulate Lenin's century-old adage on class struggle, and observe a foundational question of politics (and in turn urban planning): "who is doing what to whom, and for whose benefit?" (Geuss, 2008, p. 23).

In asking such questions of political justice, planning inevitably moves into the realm of narrative storytelling, with both the performing of planning duties as well as their critiques attempting to identify, understand, legitimize or delegitimize relevant planning interventions and the people and places they affect. This appears clear based on the rising prevalence of concepts like "placemaking" in contemporary urban planning: beyond courting approval from local residents for various infrastructure changes, cities now often approach neighbourhood planning on a more comprehensive scale, one which includes ample marketing and curated identities for the neighbourhood (Slater, 2021; Florida, 2001; Florida, 2003). Creating an attractive and recognizable image for a designated area can be seen as adding reason and legitimacy to various interventions, rather than approaching it on a case-by-case basis. However, while this may prove useful for the purposes of efficient city planning, transforming a place to be more attractive begs to question who defines that attractiveness in the first place, and who may not be included in that vision (Wainwright, 2017). Ensuring that planning remains an expression of an inclusive democratic process is a priority for planners who aim to use the profession towards socially just ends.

Narratives thus become an integral way of how we interpret planning interventions, and planners play a critical role in their crafting and deployment. Such is the case in Malmo, Sweden, where the local counter-narrative of anti-racism and pro-immigration sentiment from local residents and activists has created a unique and ardently left wing planning environment (Hansen, 2022). This, on the other hand, happened in response to widespread existing stigmatization of the neighbourhood in Swedish media as a centre for immigrant-caused crimes, demonstrating the importance of storytelling in building political - and thus planning - power, for the purpose of advocating both social justice and exclusion (Hansen, 2022). This trend holds throughout other cases of displacement, urban renewal, or attempted planning interventions, whether this be the demolition of social housing, redlining and racial banishment, or neighbourhood revitalization plans (August, 2014; Boughton, 2019; Jolivet, et al., 2019; Kornberg, 2016; Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1993).

As planners may find themselves limited in their capacities to properly combat existing processes of gentrification, discrimination, or social injustice (Fainstein, 2010; 2013), such cases may place a responsibility on planners to use their positions for the purposes of consciousness raising and the production of counter-narratives, rather than purely as justice-oriented mediators; as is discussed later in this paper, the symbolic power of social stigma (especially territorial stigma) plays an important role in shaping how planning departments effect urban change in different neighbourhoods (Wacquant, 2007), and is directly relevant to the considerations that planners must make when mediating urban change. This is especially clear in the case of Whalley where, as is shown in this paper, a history of stigmatization has had impacts on local planning priorities and suggests a renewed need for planners to produce salient counter-narratives, in order to ensure that vulnerable constituents are better accounted for in planning interventions.

1.3 Methods

This paper uses an exploratory case study methodology, drawing on data from two main elements: a discourse analysis of relevant local media, public releases and statements, and a policy analysis of the neighbourhood's most extensive and relevant urban plan, the Surrey City Centre Plan. The discourse analysis was used to understand the dynamics of local discourse in Whalley, which has been acknowledged by other academics to be problematic (Harron, 2007; Collins, et al., 2007), as well as to establish key themes in local discussions of the neighbourhood. The policy analysis offered insight as to what the City of Surrey's planning department prioritized in their interventions, and served as a valuable document for comparison with the findings of the discourse analysis. The findings of the two analyses are then synthesized in order to identify gaps and overlaps between local discourse and planning priorities. This paper also includes a literature review, which provides an overview of a number of relevant academic works relevant to debates and discussions surrounding stigmatization in planning, as well as providing an introduction to Whalley, its history, and its residents. Data was collected between January and July 2024.

1.3.1. Discourse Analysis

Numerous strategies were employed to identify relevant locally published media pieces. This includes keyword searches of the following sources: both the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University's online media archives, which provided relevant archived and digitized articles, the City of Surrey's website, the RCMP's website, and the websites of groups associated with the Surrey City Centre Plan such as Invest Surrey and the Surrey City Centre Business Improvement Association. Through these, I was able to identify a large amount of relevant news articles and media releases through using keywords such as "Whalley," "Surrey City Centre," "redevelopment," "revitalization," "investment," "poverty," "homelessness," and "crime." Through using Google, I was able to find notable local media and news sources which have historically covered Whalley, such as City News, the Surrey Now-Leader, Peace Arch News, the Vancouver Sun, as well as independent outlets such as The Volcano.

A total of 46 relevant published news items were retained for analysis, which involved manual encoding according to notable topics of discussion, and identifying various kinds of stigmatizing language that tended to reinforce an official narrative of why Whalley warrants being transformed. Coded articles were then grouped together into four larger themes based on identified topics. For example, articles which complained about the unsightliness of drug use in Whalley were paired with articles criticizing unemployed 'welfare bums,' under the umbrella of "blemishes of character." The discourse analysis ultimately groups my findings into four main categories of local stigmatizing discourse: blemishes of character, public safety, city-building, and altruistic displacement. Through these themes, I was able to establish an understanding of what stigmatization looks like in Whalley, providing necessary context for comparison with local planning priorities.

1.3.2. Policy Analysis

The policy analysis followed a similar strategy to the discourse analysis, aiming to identify relevant pieces of policy followed by a thematic coding strategy. After investigating a number of local plans available on the City of Surrey website, it was concluded that a focus on the Surrey City Centre Plan would be sufficient. This is a comprehensive neighbourhood plan for the newly created Surrey City Centre in Whalley, which covers everything from land use, specific institutional projects, a large amount of plan-specific bylaws, funding projections, and more. The plan states that it is a definitive piece of legislation for Surrey City Centre, and it was found through investigation that there are no other plans which address this area directly, though there are other plans that apply to the City of Surrey more broadly. A focus on the Surrey City Centre Plan looks at the same territory as the discourse analysis, and provides clearer insight into what the City is prioritizing for this area specifically. Exploration of Surrey City Centre-related websites and policy documents produced additional references.

After settling on the Surrey City Centre Plan, manual coding was undertaken to identify relevant keywords and concepts appearing throughout the plan. Similar to the discourse analysis, these points were then grouped together into significant themes - for example, plans for greening areas of Surrey City Centre were paired with designing for walkability, as both are identified by the city as important beautification efforts. The three relevant themes identified in the plan include: beautification, private investment, and placemaking. I also dedicate a section to relevant issues which are not explicitly addressed by the plan - namely homelessness, poverty, and crime. After completing the policy analysis, the results were then compared with the findings of the discourse analysis, aiming to identify a number of things including recurrent themes, points of emphasis, similar language, or relevant gaps. These were then synthesized and are discussed in the conclusion.

1.4. Research Limitations

It is important to acknowledge limitations and difficulties in performing this research, so as to better add context to what I present in this paper. The first difficulty was in identifying stigmatizing discourse. Stigmatization is defined early on in the literature review, making it easy

to describe in theory - however, defining it in practice can often rely on the judgement of the author. For example, it is a fact that Whalley sees higher crime rates than several other neighbourhoods in Surrey, and so a single article criticizing crime in Whalley likely does not in itself constitute stigmatization. As other academics have noted however (Collins, et al., 2007), there is a disproportionate amount of negative crime coverage in the area, especially when compared to certain other neighbourhoods in Surrey which have very similar crime rates. Consideration is thus taken for the context of certain articles, both negative or relatively neutral - one article is not representative of an entire discourse, though a seemingly neutral article should be contextualized. Ultimately, I acknowledge the role of the author in identifying stigmatizing material, though maintain that strong effort was made to ensure fair consideration and justification throughout the research process and in this paper.

The other largest difficulty, which is addressed in part in my conclusion, is the lack of obvious stigmatizing language in the Surrey City Centre Plan, and the lack of inclusion in the plan of many key topics in Whalley's stigmatization. Issues like homelessness, poverty, or crime were rarely mentioned or alluded to. This is important to note, as it required a closer reading of the Surrey City Centre Plan, and triangulation with previous findings, in order to develop an understanding of how the plan actually overlaps with the discourse analysis. This required informed evaluation on the part of myself, the researcher, to read between the lines and draw relevant conclusions. For example, the plan identifies 135a Street as a point of intervention, with plans for a new bike path, upzoning, new condos, and more; the policy does not acknowledge that 135a was the longtime former site of Whalley's largest homeless encampment. Through referring back to previous materials, such as those describing the clearing of the encampment, I was able to infer a relationship between the longtime stigmatization of the "Whalley Strip," and plans to fully redesign and develop the street. Sections of this paper then use informed inference in order to draw reliable conclusions, which are subsequently explained and justified. This does not undermine the relevance of the sources consulted nor the work being done, and instead is mentioned in order to add additional context to my research process. In fact, as authors such as Engle (2018) and Madanipour (2018) point out, the contents of official planning documents often offer indispensable insights as to the logic underpinning urban intervention strategies, allowing a better understanding for cross-reference with other existing materials and findings (i.e., there can be telling reasons as to why certain things are or are not emphasized in official documentation).

2. Literature Review

As urban planners operate amidst a severe housing crisis, rising homelessness, and low-density urban sprawl, they often find themselves the unfortunate arbiters of gentrification; as politicians push for faster paced, larger scaled development, new condo projects and urban infrastructure can often have the result of pushing out vulnerable residents to make space for new private capital. This has been widely recognized in neighbourhoods like Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, with authors like Tom Slater profiling the stigmatization and displacement of its longtime residents (Slater, 2021). However, much less has been said about Canada's suburbs, including one of its largest, Surrey, and nearly nothing has been said of the rapid changes occurring in its historical downtown (City of Surrey, 2017) of Whalley. Despite hosting the second largest homeless population in British Columbia (Harron, 2007), alongside being one of Canada's historically lowest income neighbourhoods and a centre for immigration (Hiebert, 1999), the neighbourhood of Whalley sees little academic investigation, with urban planning research on the area being especially sparse.

Accordingly, this section aims to do two things: firstly, to detail existing literature surrounding social stigmatization and urban planning, and secondly, to provide a historical and contextual overview of Whalley for those who are unfamiliar with the neighbourhood. Providing a clear overview of work on stigmatization and its relevance to urban planning will help with following the research being presented in this paper; likewise, for those unfamiliar with the neighbourhood of Whalley, an explanation of the area's modern history will prove crucial to contextualizing the many interventions that are investigated in section 4. Thus, before moving forward, we should begin with asking: if we want to investigate stigmatization, how can we define it?

2.1. Stigmatization

Stigmatization is a dynamic concept that may differ from a conventional understanding of the term. As such, it is important to better define it before proceeding into a discourse analysis. On a basic level, stigmatization refers to the process by which individuals or groups are labeled, discriminated against, or ostracized due to being perceived as deviant from the norm, or outright undesirable (Major & Eccleston, 2004). Stigmatization typically looks quite different depending on the context, with cultural values, politics, social power and more playing a defining role in shaping it (Waquant et al., 2014). While stigmatization can be based on a number of different reasons - for example, the way somebody looks, or the cultural practices they participate in - the resulting ostracization can typically lead to social exclusion, verbal harassment, and even formal discrimination (Richeson & Shelton, 2007; Harron, 2007). Stigma and urban planning therefore have a clear relevance to each other: if planning is to be understood as an exercise in power towards presumably positive ends, it behooves planners to understand the problems of stigmatization, and how it may manifest in ways which harm their fellow community members and constituents.

Discussions on the role of stigmatization in urban communities and its influence on gentrification are not new, with exploration of the issue dating back into the early 1960's. Current literature on

stigma in urban spaces can be traced back to early work by influential Canadian-American sociologist Erving Goffman. In particular, his 1963 book "Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity" provides some influential analyses of social stigma, and explores how societal perceptions (and subsequent interactions) shape the experiences of individuals who are being stigmatized. Of note is Goffman's categorical breakdown of stigma into three different types, with those being the following: physical deformities, blemishes of character, and tribal stigmas (Goffman, 1963). The first and last are relatively self-explanatory, with physical deformities including things like visible disabilities, and tribal stigmas including things like race, nationality, or religion. Blemishes of character on the other hand, would involve any behaviour considered morally unacceptable by others in society - this includes things like drug use or alcoholism, being homeless, or a person's sexuality. Contemporary research demonstrates that stigmas are intersecting, and have compounded effects on women, the poor, the disabled, and those with low-prestiege employment such as sex work (Lyon, et al, 2019). Of the three, blemished character becomes highly relevant in the case of a neighbourhood like Whalley, where there are higher concentrations of renters, social housing occupants, and homeless and low-income residents who may be subject to such forms of stigmatization. It also highlights the relationality of social stigmatization, defining stigma not merely as an attribute of an individual but a product of their social interactions and cultural norms (Kornberg, 2016).

While these forms of stigma often appear individualized, stigma can be applied to broader groups of people, and in many cases is used to justify wider-scale actions (Kornberg, 2016). This is especially true in the history of urban planning. For example, the social stigma of race plays a central role in planning policy decisions and development patterns (Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004), and has been historically used in North American planning to justify the redevelopment (or outright clearing) of racialized neighbourhoods, declaring them to be blighted, overly disinvested, and filled with vagrants or criminals (Jolivet, et al., 2021). Examples include the unfortunate razing of the predominantly black neighbourhood of Seneca Village in Manhattan, to make way for Central Park at the behest of the city's wealthy white residents. The area was very widely disparaged by wealthy white New Yorkers and media at the time, who referred to the residents as "squatters," "scoundrels," ""wretched," "debased," along with unfortunately many racially charged slurs (Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1993, p. 67).

In contemporary times, the stigma of blemished character is routinely used to justify the destruction of low-income housing, and is often applied to social housing projects. This includes Toronto's Regent Park: once among Canada's most sizeable social housing projects, Regent Park was eventually reduced to rubble and replaced with a high-density, mixed-use residential development, after years of arguments over the problems of concentrated poverty (August, 2014); residents were referred to as "troubled" and "dangerous," with the neighbourhood, composed entirely of social housing at the time, pointed to as an exercise in ghettoization (August, 2014; Hayes, 2016). This is despite, as August demonstrates, the many social benefits that lower-income residents enjoyed and the community bonds built between those living in Regent Park, with stigmatization being imposed on the neighbourhood from outside media and political forces (August, 2014). In both of these cases, and many more, we can see the clear connection between the stigmatization of an area's residents and their subsequent

displacement, with stigmatizing language being used to manufacture consent for redevelopment; as Martine August writes of Regent Park, “the joint effect of this stigmatizing rhetoric and the realities of physical deterioration (caused by state withdrawal and underfunding), has been to justify whatever intervention policy makers deem appropriate” (2014, p. 1330).

Work done by Robert Beauregard, such as in his book “Voices of Decline,” illustrates how the decline of many American downtowns in the late 20th century was not an isolated notion, but in fact one that was both politically and socially constructed in the wake of white flight. As his work shows, not only was the deterioration of downtown life greatly exaggerated in the media at the time, but the stigmatization that resulted had clear policy outcomes which often led to gentrification or urban renewal (Beauregard, 1993). John Boughton’s investigations into post-neoliberal Britain demonstrate similar conclusions, looking instead at the decline of British council housing. As he points out, by the time that Margaret Thatcher’s government began to defund and privatize council housing en masse in the 1980s, plenty of work had already been done in the media to criticize the people living in these communities as promoting “crime and antisocial behaviour,” with recurrent in-depth media profiles of disproportionate vandalism and criminal activity supposedly happening in what were labeled “dark, smelly, dank” social housing complexes (Boughton, 2019, p. 179). This became a feedback loop, in which negative portrayals led to more defunding, creating worse living conditions, which led to even more negative stigmatization; by the 1990s, these council houses were now routinely referred to in the media as “sink estates,” where “the behaviour of tenants is, first, under intense moral condemnation, and second, both cause and symptom of poor housing conditions and neighbourhood malaise” (Slater, 2021, p.150). Without the widespread stigmatization of residents and their lifestyles in the press, cases like these would be more difficult for policymakers to pass off to the public as necessary for a common good.

The relationship between stigmatization and planning policy is clear. As Slater points out, “sociologists, geographers, psychologists, and anthropologists have developed a substantial body of scholarship on the stigma attached to those experiencing, inter alia, unemployment; poverty; social assistance; homelessness; mental illness; racial, gender, and sexuality discrimination; HIV/AIDS; and single parenthood” (Slater, 2021, p. 140). However, as Slater further goes on to discuss, one thing that has been less investigated is the process through which places, rather than just people, become stigmatized: while academics continue to thoroughly explore discrimination based on race, disability, class, and gender, what happens when neighbourhoods themselves develop reputations which precede their own residents, and how does this affect the people living there? This is where the term territorial stigmatization becomes directly relevant.

2.2. Territorial Stigmatization

Territorial stigmatization is a term coined and popularized by author and sociologist Loïc Wacquant, which looks to develop an understanding of how not only residents of a neighbourhood become stigmatized, but how the actual reputation of the neighbourhood itself

can become “tarnished” and impact those living there in an independent fashion. Looking at the work of Goffman, Wacquant looked to develop an account of stigma “from above,” looking at how the identity and portrayal of a place can exert forms of power over people, the inverse of what he called Goffman’s analysis “from below” (or rather, taking it from an individual level to a macro one) (Kornberg, 2016). To do this, Wacquant draws from the work of Pierre Bourdieau and his concept of “symbolic power,” a relational understanding of how symbols and symbolism are expressive of concealed power relations - for example, a particular collective understanding of an object or concept is often the result of certain forces shaping our thoughts on it, and often reflects the interests of those with the power to shape (Wacquant et al., 2014). For understanding the role of stigma in planning, this is a novel and highly relevant realization: when the city crafts an image of a place or neighbourhood, this is typically the expression of a particular class or group who seeks to benefit from that image, rather than simply the result of transparent democratic will (Kornberg, 2016).

With this in mind, Wacquant then moves forward with applying this same concept of symbolic power in the city to Goffman’s theory of social stigma, arguing that not only can the residents of an area be stigmatized, but through the exercising of stigmatizing symbolic power, a place can actually become symbolically *defamed*, taking on a life and influence that functions independently of the individuals who live there and their habits, lifestyles, and lived realities (Wacquant, 2009); a neighbourhood may even gain such notoriety that it becomes associated with stigma by people on the other side of a country, who may not know anything else about its history or residents (Wacquant, 2007). We are thus left with a situation where “urban dwellers at the bottom of the class structure are discredited and devalued not simply because of their poverty, class position, ethnoracial origin, or religious affiliation, but also because of the places with which they are associated (Slater, 2021, p 140).

This analysis bridges an epistemological gap in planning literature and provides a useful tool for a critique of urban development and placemaking: on the one hand, the theory of territorial stigmatization accounts for the many ways in which individuals become scorned and disqualified by more powerful forces in society (as per Goffman), while on the other, accounting for the ways in which those stigmatizations grow beyond individuals and find themselves applied in broad stroke manners to entire territories. For Whalley, this later development could not be more relevant, considering not only the intense amount of media scrutiny that has historically surrounded the neighbourhood, but also the often vocal and direct involvement of the City of Surrey in the area. This has become exceptionally pronounced since the adoption of the 2017 Surrey City Centre Plan, to be explored further in section 4, which has seen the city carve out areas of Whalley historically vilified by media, and market it as a distinct new neighbourhood under the pretense of revitalization (Reid, 2017). This understanding of territorial stigmatization then, adds much needed context to the case of Whalley, with this review hopefully serving as a foundational enough explanation for the sections to come.

Territorial stigmatization then, and its defining role in gentrification and placemaking, has been observed and substantiated by a number of writers and academics. While it appears to be a well-founded and salient concept, it is worth pointing out that it in fact stands at odds with many

mainstream thinkers and arguments in the urban planning field, including well-known figures such as Richard Flordia. Florida is credited with popularizing pivotal concepts in placemaking, most notably attracting “the creative class” to disinvested neighbourhoods in order to revitalize them, and describing wealthy new creatives as a fundamental economic driver for 21st century cities (Florida, 2003). Further, he argues that in order to create economically successful cities, neighbourhoods should be reshaped in order to appeal to the sensibilities of prospective new residents, such as emphasizing walkability, density, a unique identity, and urban beauty, even suggesting a ‘bohemian index’ to measure a neighbourhood’s attractiveness to middle-class creatives (Florida, 2002). Writer Edward Glaeser makes similar arguments, advocating for increased new-build densification, and more favourable conditions for private development in order to encourage economic growth (2020; 2008), while urbanist Joel Kotkin similarly advocates for the importance of market-driven urban planning (Kurtin, 2024).

While the ideas of Florida and his contemporaries have seen practice in many cities, there has also been increased criticism of new urbanist placemaking ideals for their gentrifying and displacing effects; Florida himself has acknowledged as much (Wainwright, 2017). Despite this, major cities like Austin, San Francisco, Montreal, and Surrey have continued to pursue these types of policies. While market-led urbanism is often presented as an innovative, quick fix for urban woes, private-sector oriented placemaking can come with an inherent diminishment of existing communities in poorer neighbourhoods; rather than look to reshape and gentrify low-income neighbourhoods, and propagate narratives about them underperforming economically, urbanists and planners should pay closer critical attention to how the rhetoric of redevelopment can legitimize displacement (Slater, 2021; Harron, 2007). The theory of territorial stigmatization thus raises important concerns regarding mainstream approaches to urban planning and redevelopment, and offers insight as to how planners can pursue more equitable strategies.

2.3. From Whalley To Surrey City Centre

Having developed an understanding of what stigmatization indeed looks like, we can now turn our attention to Whalley itself. While the relevance of stigmatization to wider urban planning should now be clear, it becomes especially relevant considering the intensity of recent urban development occurring in Whalley within the last decade, particularly as an area long associated with homelessness, crime, and poverty (Gerszack, 2011). The redevelopment of Whalley may demonstrate a case in point on the harm of rapid gentrification, and the role that urban planners can play in its facilitation. While there is evidence and acknowledgement that Whalley is undergoing intense gentrification (Natrasony & Alexander, 2005; Jones & Ley, 2016; ytaruk, 2020; Adams, 2021), there appears to be few, if any definitive sources outlining the neighbourhood’s history and eventual redevelopment. Further, based on existing literature, there is reason to believe that the longtime stigmatization of Whalley and its residents has likely played an essential and symbolically defamatory role in the current gentrification underway in the neighbourhood. As such, a discussion of the history and redevelopment of the neighbourhood is in order.

The Whalley neighbourhood encompasses the most northern section of the City of Surrey, located directly south of the Fraser River across from New Westminster, British Columbia's historical capital. The exact boundaries can vary, and terminology can become fuzzy: while Whalley is now considered one of six official 'Town Centres' - the Surrey equivalent of a borough - the territory called Whalley often refers to the neighbourhood surrounding the historic Whalley's Corner, located on King George Boulevard and 108 Avenue, though the term 'Downtown Whalley' is typically used as well. However, as of 2017, the City of Surrey has decided to rebrand and separate this particular area from the surrounding neighbourhood, designating what was colloquially referred to as 'Whalley' or 'Downtown Whalley' as 'Surrey City Centre' (City of Surrey, 2017). Thus, officially, the term 'Whalley' now refers to the Town Centre entirely surrounding the enclave district of "Surrey City Centre," and not that enclave itself (though the latter term is not used in conventional conversation). In short, there is ambiguity surrounding the terminologies and boundaries in this study area. As such, for the sake of this paper, the area of focus will be the section of Whalley officially designated as Surrey City Centre, and for simplicity's sake, the terms Whalley, Downtown Whalley, and Surrey City Centre will be used interchangeably to refer to this same territory, unless otherwise specified. As is quickly apparent, even in just the naming of this territory, there is a story beginning to express itself; outlining a brief history of Whalley can thus better situate the many dramatic changes currently underway in the area and add context to the local situation.

Left: the Town Centre of Whalley highlighted within Surrey, with the boundaries of Surrey City Centre shown in white (from Surrey.ca); Right: Original boundaries of Surrey City Centre, with recent 2024 boundary extensions in red (from MapSurrey.ca).

Whalley is located in what is typically considered a stereotypical suburban city. Due to its strategic location, as well as its proximity to the Fraser River, it has historically been defined by its status as a bedroom community for Vancouver and New Westminster (City of Surrey, 2017),

serving as a gateway to expanding settlements south of the Fraser. This role only solidified with the 1923 construction of the Pacific Highway, which conveniently linked Surrey and Vancouver with cities along the Pacific US coast, as well as the Pattullo Bridge across the river in 1937 (Natrasony & Alexander, 2005). This is typically considered the beginning of Whalley's boom, as well as Surrey's more widely; as settlement in the area began to quickly grow and a distinct local character developed, the neighbourhood was renamed after Arthur Whalley, a local bootlegger and community leader who owned a gas station around which most of the town had formed (Surrey Historical Society, 2021). As early as the 1940s, Whalley's primary role was already as a suburban commuter town, with the majority of the areas residents settling to take advantage of lower land values and commuting to other cities north of the river; by the 1950s, Whalley had quickly become the most populated centre south of the Fraser River, with shopping malls, high schools and rapid single family home development by and large defining the neighbourhood (Surrey Historical Society, 2014).

While the mid 20th century saw Whalley's rise as the centre of commercial life in what was now Vancouver's largest suburb, the 1970s brought sudden new social changes and demographic shifts. While Whalley had in previous decades been comparable to what we now consider the stereotypical suburb - predominantly white, and comprised overwhelmingly of single family homes - the early 1970s saw the beginning of a very new trend, wherein non-white immigrants began to settle outside of Vancouver's urban core, with 1971 marking the first year in Canadian history where non-white immigrants outnumbered Europeans (Hiebert, 1999). Growing economic opportunities in the Lower Mainland, along with rising international recognition following the 1986 Vancouver World Expo, soon began attracting residents from different cultural backgrounds seeking employment in the Vancouver area; this included major spikes in the arrival of Asian residents such as Hongkongers and South Asians - particularly Sikh Indians - who by the 1990s represented over 90% of all immigration to the area (Hiebert, 1999). By the 2000s, Whalley had become known as a centre for the area's working class population, and has since found itself harbouring a high proportion of the Vancouver area's low-income census tracts (Ley & Lynch, 2020), along with high proportions of immigrants and immigrant owned businesses, many of which rely on historically cheaper rents and property values to get by (Teixeira, 2013).

Whalley's status as a centre for the Lower Mainland's working class formed an important part of the community's identity in the late 20th century, with the 70s being a pivotal time of collective resistance in the neighbourhood. As the area's population had begun to grow, the City of Surrey had hopes of industrializing large swathes of Whalley, especially in its north along the Fraser River, in order to attract new commercial investment. This was at odds with many of Whalley's lowest-income residents, who happened to be living in areas now slated for redevelopment (Walton, 2018), especially in the area of Bridgeview (a section located at the north section of what is now called Surrey City Centre). Anxieties over displacement worsened when the City, unable to convince residents to leave, decided to force them out through municipal austerity: enforcing what was explicitly described as "Third World conditions," Surrey began to withhold funding and maintenance for any major infrastructure in Bridgeview, including a refusal to build sidewalks, roads, or even sewage (which caused septic tanks to routinely overflow into the

street) (Zillich, 2018). Of Whalley at the time, one author recounts that “it was a working-class community that very much wanted to be part of the civic infrastructure, and wanted to enjoy the same kind of amenities that the rest of my schoolmates had… yet they seemed to be treated as though they were squatters by the local council” (Zillich, 2018). This culminated in a protracted years-long battle between the City and community members, with the city eventually buckling to pressure in 1977, and the community’s resistance being captured in the aptly titled 1976 documentary “Some People Have to Suffer” (Pinney, 1976). This period in Whalley’s history mirrors changes currently underway in the neighbourhood.

Moments like this have helped to define Whalley’s historical identity as a predominantly working class area. However, the idea of Whalley as a separate and unique community from the rest of Surrey is a more contemporary development: Surrey only created its original six Town Centres through a series of bylaws and area plans throughout the late 1980s and early 90s (City of Surrey, 2017). Until then, residents of Whalley were generally considered typical Surreyites, and the neighbourhood was simply thought of as one of a number of more affordable area for newcomers to settle in Surrey (Hiebert, 1999). Residents therefore, were not necessarily considered distinct from those in Guilford, Newton, or other nearby parts of the city for much of Whalley’s early history. Since the late 20th century, the area’s original working class communities have slowly disintegrated over decades of what has been called a “death by a thousand tiny cuts” (MacNair, 2014) as the area has become increasingly expensive, something which can perhaps be explained by the fact that Whalley’s sizable blue-collar character only really emerged less than two decades before the arrival of the SkyTrain (contrast this with communities in places like Manchester, cities which have been home to working class communities for several centuries) (Engels, 1969; Thompson, 1963). In recent times, working class community building has therefore been primarily centered around the area’s homeless and lowest-income residents, in response to ongoing state-led displacement, rather than on its original blue-collar populations (Whalley Street Council, 2021; CBC News, 2018; Brown, 2019). The contemporary understanding of Whalley as a distinct community is thus a relatively new development which began to form in 1990s, being seemingly imposed on the area from the outside, rather than resulting from within Whalley itself.

While the 70s saw immigration and rapid growth become a defining part of Whalley’s reputation, by the late 80s and early 90s the area was known as a safe haven for criminals, prostitutes, drug traffickers, gang activity and an array of other illicit activities (CBC News, 2016). This was largely a result of disinvestment in many parts of Whalley, such as in the Bridgeview case, alongside the beginnings of Metro Vancouver’s housing crisis; Whalley’s relative residential and commercial density also provided alternative living options for lower-income residents, renters, the homeless, and others who could not access the single-family homes that characterized the rest of Surrey (Hiebert, 1999). This reputation has persisted into the present day, and has been acknowledged in the press and from political actors, and local residents have regularly cited issues such as homelessness, poverty, crime and drug use as the most pressing daily issues in their lives (City News, 2019), including a 2006 survey in which 59% percent of Whalley businesses referred to the visible homeless population as their number one concern (Harron, 2007). Drug use, used needles, waste and property crimes have long been common sights

around the area, and media has often claimed that Whalley has developed an irresolvable "entrenched" problem of crime and homelessness (Sangha, 2017). The neighbourhood has further had a historically high concentration of employment services, outreach and support workers and transitional housing, as well as a larger proportion of chronically homeless people than the rest of Surrey; interviews with local unhoused and low-income residents suggest that this concentration of support is a major reason that they historically have resided there (Harron, 2007). For many years, Whalley represented the only place in Surrey with any form of drop-in centre, housing the majority of Surrey's shelter beds and eventually its first safe consumption site, which has seen over 300,000 visits from at least 5,533 users and 2,845 prevented drug poisonings (Simpson, 2022). Despite the connectedness of local homeless and low-income communities, stigmatization remains a source of stress, with Whalley residents ranking high in negative self-perception categories, and with low-income residents repeatedly citing hardships in their attempts to find housing and employment - including discriminatory "intent to rent" forms and abusive landlords (Harron, 2007). Pervasive stigmatization has been recognized in Whalley by academics, and has been blamed on aggressive media coverage on the neighbourhood (Collins et al., 2009), and such coverage has likely played a leading role in the more recent emergence of Whalley's distinct identity within Surrey at large.

While the area's negative reputation is likely disproportionate, a look at data does confirm the low-income character of the neighbourhood: the recent average income of Surrey City Centre was $58,761 per year, far below the Surrey-wide average of $93,586 (City of Surrey, 2016), while the average income for a family with children was around $80,853 - over $40,000 lower than the city average; based on poverty metrics laid out by Statistics Canada, the City of Surrey itself estimates that at least 25% of residents in Surrey City Centre to be officially low-income (Statistics Canada, 2017). While this alone is a sizeable percentage, census data for the neighbourhood's two tracts also shows 55% of residents paying 30% or more of their income on housing (see: Figure 1), a striking number considering that, as of 2021, 97% of all dwellings in the neighbourhood are apartments (see: Figure 2), and roughly two-thirds of people are renters (Statistics Canada, 2021). Thus, while the composition and cost of housing in the neighbourhood has historically represented an affordable alternative to pricey Vancouver, residents appear to remain financially precarious and vulnerable.

	Tenured Total	Owners	Renters	Renters %	30%+
2021	6865	2635	4230	62%	55%
2016	5320	1945	3370	63%	41%
2011	4455	1745	2710	61%	42%
2006	5310	2675	2630	50%	41%
2001	5140	2070	3070	60%	43%

Figure 1: Number and composition of dwellings by tenure type. "30%+" indicates the percentage of residents paying over 30% of their income towards housing expenses (Source: Statistics Canada).

	Total Dwellings	Single Detached	Semi-detached	Row House	Apt: Duplex	Apt: +5 Stories	Apt: -5 Stories	Other	Movable	Total Apt %
2021	6875	230	70	235	325	3670	2330	5	0	97%
2016	5305	230	80	225	355	2310	2095	5	0	96%
2006	5310	975	120	165	615	1470	1905	65	5	82%
2001	5170	1605	110	170	395	1310	1575	5	5	69%

Figure 2: Number and composition of dwellings by structural type in Surrey City Centre (Source: Statistics Canada). Note that structure type is not available in the short form 2011 census.

This last point applies equally to the neighbourhood's unhoused residents: official survey data points to at least 600 homeless residents across Surrey in 2017, including at least 173 members of Whalley's main encampment at the time (Krupp, 2019) - however, experts point out that these are conservative estimates, and that the actual numbers are likely much higher (Moman, 2023). Interviews with homeless residents reveal that the estimate of 173 is significantly lower than their understanding, and that the amount of homeless people in the neighbourhood numbered at least twice as much (Drury, 2018). Further, Surrey has seen a 65% increase in homelessness post-covid, meaning this number of homeless residents in the neighbourhood may have grown even larger since the 2017 headcount (Moman, 2023) - though there is reason to believe that police action has since displaced many of them. Data therefore demonstrates that not only is poverty a notable presence in Whalley, but that there is reason to believe aspects of it may be underestimated.

While homelessness, poverty, and crime took on a central role in the neighbourhoods identity, the 1990s saw a transformative new development which would catalyze rapid changes to the landscape of Downtown Whalley: the Skytrain. By 1994, the 24 km Expo Line was extended by 4 km to King George Station, providing a rapid transit connection to the broader Vancouver area for the first time ever - and while Whalley may have seemed like an unlikely candidate for transit access, the project in fact was part of a wider and notable shift in Translink's development pattern, seeing the agency prioritize expansion into lower income corridors with higher proportions of immigrants (Jones & Ley, 2016). The newly built Expo Line link played a pivotal role in shaping Whalley into an even more accessible urban centre, with easier access to other economic centres in the Lower Mainland quickly bringing renewed investor interest to the area (City of Surrey, 2017). With its central location, transit access, and lower property values compared to the rest of the Vancouver area, Whalley's perception as a disinvested neighbourhood suddenly appeared advantageous to investors: low demand in the area meant opportunity for real estate development with little pushback from the city government.

This transportation planning strategy - dubbed transit oriented development, wherein planning, development, and growth are organized around nodes of public transit - follows a pattern seen across several other cases in North America, where new transport infrastructure raises surrounding land values and injects new capital into the neighbourhood. As studies show, there is a growing voice in academic literature which has criticized this planning strategy as being a form of transit-induced gentrification (Dawkins & Moeckel, 2016; Jones & Ley, 2016), with both community activists and researchers raising concerns over the displacement of low-income groups which can follow such planning approaches (Padeiro, Louro, & da Costa, 2019). This is worth noting, as much of what transit oriented development aims to achieve overlaps with priorities set out in the Surrey City Centre Plan - for example, reducing automobile dependence and encouraging walkability, creating more "livable" and beautiful neighbourhoods, and achieving environmental goals like emissions reductions (Padeiro, Louro, & da Costa, 2019). As in the case of Whalley, transit oriented development strategies thus aim to reshape, or at least often revamp neighbourhoods (often times suburban ones) to be more in line with contemporary urbanist priorities, though there is debate over the extent to which TOD succeeds in serving the lower-income populations which would benefit from new transit projects (Dong, 2017).

As Whalley began to show potential for transformation, it was not just real estate investors who took interest in the area. As the new Skytrain extension was coming in, the City of Surrey was already expressing ambitions to fully redevelop Whalley, drafting a number of plans focused on urban design, livability, beautification and the creation of new development corridors which would feature large new institutional buildings. In 2008, the City of Surrey announced its intentions to move its city hall from its old home of Newton up north to Whalley. By 2013, not only had the “gaudy,” “palatial” new $97 million complex been completed, but it had also been accompanied by a brand new public square, library, a new campus for Surrey’s own Simon Fraser University and over $3 billion in new private sector investment (Diakiw, 2014). It also came with a new name: with Whalley having so long been synonymous with tent cities and shuttered storefronts, the area was now officially rebranded as Surrey City Centre. This culminated in the 15 year long creation of 2017’s revamped Surrey City Centre Plan, which was designed to serve as a full redesign of the area surrounding Whalley’s Corner into a more pedestrian friendly, greened, transit oriented development, lined with grand boulevards, Vancouver-style glass condos, major institutional buildings, corporate headquarters, as well as plans for a number of trendy new neighbourhoods modelled on areas like Yaletown. The goal of the plan, as stated by local politicians, is to help transform Whalley from an area perceived as ‘blighted,’ dangerous, and unattractive, into a serious post-suburban downtown centre south of the Fraser River (Boothby & Parmar, 2019; Rochon, 2010).

Whalley skyline in 2024 (from Surrey.ca).

Despite the explicit desire to transform Whalley’s identity, the neighbourhood has often been referred to as the cultural and social heart of Surrey, home to the vast majority of its festivals, celebrations, arts, harboring a diverse population and serving as a focal point for many of the city’s communities (Sangha, 2017; Johnston, 2019a; Zillich, 2024; City of Surrey, 2024a). As of 2024 however, redevelopment in Surrey City Centre continues to expand, and the city's recent activity suggests no slowdown in development. Considering the scale and speed of change in

the area, it is important to consider who these plans are being built for, what is being prioritized, and what is being left out. Furthermore, digging into the presence of stigmatization in Whalley, as will be explored further in section 3, reveals that much of the new development happening in Surrey City Centre has been predicated on the disparagement, disqualification, and in some cases outright vilification of residents and the neighbourhood. It thus raises questions not only as to the impact of the plan, but the conditions that allowed it to find political success in the first place.

2.4. Summary

It is clear from looking at the history of Whalley, as well as existing literature on the area's development, that the neighbourhood has long faced stigmatization, a difficulty that has followed it through from its roots as a small commuter suburb, to a developed commercial core, and into its past several decades as a disinvested community and centre for low-income residents, the homeless, and immigrants. Since the arrival of the SkyTrain in the early 90s, development and large-scale government investment has begun to increase, dramatically changing the urban fabric of Whalley from a traditionally suburban environment into one that increasingly resembles the downtowns of cities like Vancouver and Toronto. This is in line with patterns of transit oriented development, and subsequent transit-induced gentrification, that has been seen in other cities building new rail projects in low-income neighbourhoods and corridors (Jones & Ley, 2016). Transit access, a strategic location across the Fraser River from New Westminster, as well as the historical demographics of the area, has created an ideal foundation for real estate investment and development to occur.

The following research will show that the rise in development in Whalley has come alongside a history of stigmatization and a poor reputation as a neighbourhood for vagrants, the poor, the homeless, as well as criminals of various stripes. Much of the available literature on stigmatization and urban planning appears to mirror the reputation that Whalley has developed, with the work of writers like Goffman and Wacquant shedding light on the ways that the media and politicians can contribute to the symbolic defamation of a place and its residents. The insights offered by existing literature thus raise questions about what exactly stigmatization looks like in Whalley, how it is proliferating, who it targets, and how it compares to existing examples of territorial stigmatization. Further, as the area continues to be rapidly developed, it raises questions about the relationship between the stigmatization of a poor neighbourhood and its residents, and the planning policies that are currently being implemented in the area. With an understanding of Whalley's history up until now, as well as an idea of the debates and definitions surrounding urban stigmatization, we can now move to section 3 to better investigate stigmatizing discourse in Whalley, and unpack the role it plays in the ongoing redevelopment of Whalley into Surrey City Centre.

3. Discourse Analysis

Territorial stigmatization is most often perpetuated and enforced through media streams, and Whalley is no exception. While this phenomenon is clear to see in many official government releases, exploring the proliferation of stigmatizing discourse in unofficial local media can provide more unique insights as to its history and development, and help to provide context for a city's subsequent policy responses. Stigmatization is a relatively broad concept - that is to say, while stigmatization itself is a clearly identifiable phenomenon, it is a dynamic concept that can be encompassed by a range of different stigmatizing methods; while stigma is easy to point out, it comes in a wide variety. The purpose of this section is thus to provide a thorough overview of the existing media landscape in Whalley, and to identify key themes in discourse which highlight the stigmatization that scholars have noted is present in media coverage of the neighbourhood (Collins, et al, 2009).

Through an analysis of local grey literature over the last 30 years, especially local news, I have thus identified the following four major themes in the discursive stigmatization of Whalley, and have grouped my findings accordingly: blemishes of character, public safety, city building, and altruistic displacement. While the stigma surrounding a territory and its residents can be perpetuated in countless ways, these four revealed themselves to be the most relevant to understanding the situation in Whalley, and provide valuable insight into the teleology of stigmatization and gentrification in lower-income neighbourhoods. Based on my findings in this discourse analysis, it is clear that territorial stigmatization is not only widespread in Whalley, but has become an inseparable part of the politics and identity of the neighbourhood. As we will see later in section 4, the forms of stigmatization present in Whalley play a key role in influencing planning policy priorities and the treatment of vulnerable populations.

3.1. Blemishes of Character

Drawing from Goffman's original work on social stigma, the first clear theme identified in the discourse analysis is an emphasis on blemishes of character. This refers to stigmatizations of individuals and residents of the area based on their individual moral status, most commonly due to issues like homelessness, drug use, unemployment, or a criminal past. While Goffman does mention two other forms of discreditation (abominations of the body and tribal stigma), there is very little discourse in wider media that disqualifies the residents of Whalley and Surrey City Centre based on their being disabled or of another race or religion. This is not to say that such comments do not exist. However, commentary and discourse defining the residents of the area as lowly, dirty, or undignified tends to far outnumber media that refers to issues of ability or identity.

While blemishes of character tend to be closely associated with the politics of criminality, they are distinct in the sense that much of the discourse surrounding crime in Whalley discredits the territory based on matters of public safety, rather than on the moral transgressions of criminal behaviour. Articles aiming to illustrate the neighbourhood typically focus on otherwise mundane and harmless behaviours, colouring individuals as undesirable and lesser. For example, a 2015

profile of the neighbourhood expresses disapproval over local residents sleeping and cleaning themselves at a local library, bemoaning that “vagrants have been caught washing their hair and underwear in bathroom sinks” (Zytaruk, 2015). Similarly, it follows a team of Whalley police officers “walking the beat” of Surrey City Centre and fining homeless residents for bylaw violations, such as an elderly homeless man drinking concealed beer from a coffee cup: “How many warnings do you need?" [an officer] says to the man, and hands him a violation ticket for $230” (Zytaruk, 2015). The officers later state that it is the resident’s own fault, as “he chooses to stay in the cycle,” followed by his characterizing of two separate residents on their way to the welfare office as ungrateful, after alerting them of an oncoming bus: “he's got an extensive history of weapons" (Zytaruk, 2015)

A homeless encampment in Whalley (from CTV News).

This characterization is par for the course in many profiles of Whalley, placing moral blame on undesirable residents and legitimizing their displacement; in the words of one local, “when police or bylaw officers steal our belongings, they try to blame us by calling us 'disorderly' or 'aggressive,' or by saying we are moving too slowly or have too much stuff (Smith, 2021). According to City officials however, "areas where the dogs are fouling the pavements, where there's garbage and litter on the streets, that's contagious, and people act accordingly” (Goble, 2015). Articles discredit residents as part of “the Whalley of yesterday - the Whalley of homelessness, illness and addiction” (Goble, 2015), with interviews from the 2019 municipal election finding that “along with homelessness, opioid addiction, crime and poverty” were flagged as the area’s biggest issues by Surrey residents (City News, 2019); articles from mainstream local papers have referred to the homelessness in Whalley as “disgusting,” stating that “undesirable is putting it lightly… Fecal matter on the property. Used needles with blood still in them left all around the building. Prostitutes changing in their gazebo. People sneaking in and using drugs in the stairwells” (Reid, 2016). Articles like this often focus on the outrage of local residents at the uncleanliness and disorder that they associate with the homeless, drug users, and the poor. While experts widely agree that there is a lack of planning for homeless and

low-income residents in the area (Singh, 2016), the media has often chosen to promote the City's plans for moral rehabilitation instead:

> [Mayor] Watts seems particularly excited when she speaks of a recently opened "healing farm" in Cloverdale, one of Surrey's historic towns, where people are brought to escape the temptations of the street. They work on the vegetable plots, caring for horses or fixing fences, in an atmosphere reminiscent of the utopian treatment schemes in brick Victorian complexes at the turn of the 20th century. Fifteen people currently live and work at the Cloverdale farm, and Ms. Watts says more such second-chance facilities will be opened in the area (Rochon, 2010).

The stigmatizing of moral character is thus clearly present in Whalley, and can have consequences that extend even outside of the neighbourhood, per Waquant's observations. For example, in South Surrey, on the opposite side of the city, an emergency shelter during an extreme weather event led to widespread condemnation from angry residents, leading to the complete shuttering of the only shelter in the area. One resident was quoted as saying, "we don't want that type of stuff in our neighbourhood, send them back to Whalley where they belong!", with threats of physical violence being made against anybody who may seek to stay at the shelter (Conde, 2023). Similarly, in the aforementioned article profiling Whalley residents' anger with their homeless neighbours, one man asks "what's the next step if police won't do anything? Vigilantism?" (Reid, 2016). It is at this point where we see a clear transition from arguments of poor moral standing, into broader paranoia and discourse about the dangers that Whalley and its residents pose to public safety.

3.2. Public Safety

Themes of public safety and dangerous criminality are heavily featured in discourse surrounding Whalley and its residents. While this coverage often overlaps with the stigmatizing of moral character, it is distinct in that the coverage of crime in Whalley is less concerned with legality or agreeableness and instead emphasizes the need for public safety. While camping on private property or doing drugs on the street may be illegal, media does not typically describe incidents such as these as cause for serious danger to outsiders (though of course, associations of low-income and homeless groups with danger often form among other residents). Criminality is the one issue most commonly associated with Whalley, with the neighbourhood perceived and criticized as violent and unsafe - as one article puts it, "the City of Surrey is eager to re-brand the downtown core as 'City Centre', but to people in the area it's called Whalley. While it is home to the glossy new city hall and library, the neighbourhood has a reputation among Vancouverites and other Surrey residents for crime and poverty" (CBC, 2016). This reputation however, is expressed to be the fault of excessive gun violence and gang activity, rather than due to perceived moral deficiencies or unsightliness (Martins, 2020).

Articles widely cite crime as the main cause of Whalley's poor reputation, as well as the City of Surrey's overall, with news of crime in the area and tales of legendary criminals "terrorizing the streets of Whalley" commonly making headlines in local news (Cooper, 2014; Kelly, 2023;

Boynton, 2023; Zytaruk, 2021; Burns, 2023). Similarly, a common topic in local media follows the rise or fall of crime statistics in the neighbourhood, with crime numbers regularly making major headlines and sparking debates over police enforcement efforts (Zytaruk, 2024; Zytaruk, 2023; Bucholtz, 2019). The frequent publishing of crime statistics in Surrey media is considered so excessive that it has been uniquely blamed by politicians for feeding negative stereotypes of the city and turning residents against incumbent mayors and councilmembers - even those running explicit “tough on Whalley crime” campaigns (Dembicki, 2008). Additionally, a popular form of article from local papers is a “walkabout” or “tour” of Whalley, founded on an idea that the neighbourhood is so unsafe, residents of other neighbourhoods require an expert to safely relay information about the neighbourhood; one article from the Globe and Mail, titled “A Tour of Developing Whalley,” refers to the area as “a den of prostitution and addicts,” with photos of roads formerly occupied by seedy residents (Gerszack, 2011).

The constant discourse of crime and public safety in Whalley has led to policing being by far the most prevalent political issue in the city. Recent election and political coverage has often featured discussions exclusively about crime in the area, as well as the need for strong policing and crime reduction efforts: in a tight 2022 mayoral race, the top two candidates, Brenda Locke of Surrey Connect, and Doug McCallum of Safe Surrey Coalition, campaigned solely on whether or not to transition Surrey’s police force from RCMP to a municipally-run force, arguing over which would more efficiently lower crime and help bolster the city’s reputation (Buffam, 2024). As previously mentioned, crime ranks as the single largest issue among all of Surrey’s voters; however headlines tend to isolate crime reporting to Whalley and neighbouring Newton (the latter appearing more often in more recent headlines) (Diakiw, 2014). Leading politicians, especially Surrey’s mayors, are very often seen expressing tough-on-crime, pro-policing politics and engaging in anti-gang awareness campaigns; one recent new cycle claimed that children as young as 10 were being routinely lured from the streets of Surrey and into violent gangs, with one former mayor saying “it scares the daylights out of me” (Reid, 2018), and another stating “they're joining the gangs to become mules in the drug trade” (Johnston, 2019b). The City of Surrey itself has a website dedicated to explanations of Surrey gang culture for concerned parents, stating that “gang related violence and homicides erode feelings of safety for Surrey residents,” and sharing facts about the gang-related dangers of contemporary hip-hop music (Empower Surrey, 2021).

Crime and gang related activity are undoubtedly problematic in the neighbourhood. However, such overwhelming crime discourse in local media does have consequences for local residents, and has been noted as being exaggerated (Harron, 2007). Despite increasing pushback from local community members (CBC News, 2018), the stigmatization of Whalley as a dangerous territory continues to be used to legitimize pro-policing (and inevitably pro-gentrification) arguments in the news. When asked if recent gang activity justified bringing in a larger police presence to the area, McCallum had the following to say:

> "I've seen a lot of people in the community now, especially in South Surrey and Fraser Heights, that say to me very clearly at all the events I go to, 'Let's get it as fast as we can. We need it in here right now.' So the awareness of people in Surrey

> as far as the new police force is very evident, and what I get is we need to move a lot faster to get the officers into our community" (Mangione, 2019).

Here we see an explicit appeal to voters in wealthier areas of Surrey to bring in more police to a neighbourhood on the other side of the city, due to a fear of gang activity and crime bleeding over into perceived safer areas. Moreover, the connection between increased policing and gentrifying planning policies has been thoroughly documented (Fiolka, et al., 2022); as Kornberg (2016) observes, "once spaces instead of groups themselves become identified as dangerous, criminal, or disorderly, the social origins of the stigma are obfuscated" (p. 5), allowing policymakers and planners to pass 'colour-blind' policies which hurt vulnerable groups, while claiming to be broad and untargeted. It is likely no coincidence that tough-on-crime rhetoric has become such a mainstay of Surrey's local media and politics, at a time when the City see's ample opportunity to redevelop the neighbourhood.

Though the mainstream narrative seems more or less unanimous in its perception of Whalley as a no-good sanctuary for violent criminals, local residents live a different reality from that portrayed to South Surrey and Fraser Heights. Homeless and low-income residents instead argue that they settled in Whalley due to its safety compared to Vancouver, and believe that Whalley's crime discourse is hyperbolic:

> "That sort of stuff happens everywhere. It's just when it happens here they make it into this big deal. Like 'man in Surrey gets his head stomped in, again!' They like to put it out there because they like making everyone who's from here look like they're shitty. Everyone's gotta have someone to shit on, and I guess that's us" (CBC News, 2016).

3.3. City-Building

City-building is a phenomenon which refers to the goal of crafting a particular image for a city, with the intention of making a place seem more marketable and attractive, whether to prospective residents, specific social groups, or especially to private capital. This can take a number of forms depending on who is in charge and where it is taking place, though is becoming an especially common political mission for suburban municipalities: as formerly peripheral "bedroom communities" continue to see population growth, commercial activity is becoming increasingly centered in what would have previously been considered primarily residential suburbs (White, 2016). This has led to a new wave of reurbanization among suburban cities looking to reshape themselves according to changing land-use needs.

However, with pushes to redevelop and adapt suburban cities comes pervasive aspirational discourse surrounding what exactly a 'good' future city looks like, and the case of Whalley epitomizes this. Surrey is the second most populated municipality in British Columbia, with that population set to grow larger than Vancouver proper within the next decade, and is already the largest economic centre south of the Fraser River; articles and promotional material often refer to Surrey City Centre as Vancouver's "second downtown" (Invest Surrey, 2023), which has been

accompanied by a seeming consensus among politicians for the city to be taken seriously, to fulfill its role as a major player, or to live up to what is seen as its unmet potential. For example, at a 2024 donor luncheon, mayor Brenda Locke discussed her plan to turn Surrey City Centre into an attractive entertainment district, citing the need to “invest in big-city amenities, like major sporting and events facilities, entertainment and music venues,” claiming “there are still too many residents leaving the city for their entertainment” (Grochowski, 2024); previous mayors have touted the success of the area’s redevelopment by frequently appearing at demolition sites for infamous local landmarks, and participating in ceremonial “initial blows” with wrecking balls on well-known bars like The Flamingo Hotel, in which case “pyrotechnics and music accompanied the event” (CBC News, 2019). With The Flamingo being described by McCallum as a “symbol of the past,” the site’s developer said further of the project, “I saw land which wasn't being used… It gives me something to create out of nothing” (CBC News, 2019).

Surrey City Centre district in 2024 (from Surrey.ca).

While this type of language can appear positive, pointing to Surrey as a city of great opportunity, and one gearing up to create a vibrant urban life, it stands to question who is actually defining this future image of Surrey. In fact, the entire concept of Whalley as a place of ‘potential’ rests on the assumption that the Whalley which currently exists, as well as those who occupy the area, do not meet the standards of what the City deems to be a valuable, attractive, ‘good’ city, and that it is therefore a ‘blank slate.’ This thinking can become quickly problematic, when the aspirational language being used effectively dismisses existing community members from the conversation. For example, in the case of the Flamingo Hotel demolition, the article later notes that the luxury condo development being built - which it describes as the “Yaletown of Surrey” - will also see the demolition of a local homeless shelter (CBC, 2019). However, this fact takes a back seat to the detailing of the attractive new development projects happening on the site and in the area, with other articles referring to the project as “iconic,” “innovative,” and “critical to Whalley’s revitalization” (Reid, 2017). Further, the developer responsible was shortly after

heralded in local media as Surrey's "business person of the year" (Zillich, 2019). Articles and public releases from the City do not appear to mention any replacement for the demolished shelter.

This trend holds across much of the coverage of development in Whalley, with politicians and major figures equating new change with progress that moves the city 'past the old Whalley.' City-building language occasionally comes accompanied by open disparagement of Whalley, even from the city's own officials: in 2010, the lead architect for Surrey City Centre's redevelopment, Bing Thom, stated that "Surrey was known as the armpit of the Lower Mainland," with then-mayor Dianne Watts adding that the area "was often portrayed as Vancouver's big, ugly sister across the river" (Rochon, 2010). It is not surprising to see such critical language coming from Surrey's politicians, given the pervasive stigmatization the area already faces from the media. While open denigration of residents lays the foundation for displacement, investors and developers may be more hesitant to work in an area that is seen as having a reputation beyond fixing - reframing negative discourse about the neighbourhood through aspiration thus signals to certain demographics that the area is in fact as bad as its reputations portrays it as, but that this is not permanent.

What is significant about aspirational city-building language is that it allows actors, especially municipal politicians, to continue propagating disqualifying descriptions of Whalley and its residents, while masking it behind coded language. The new Surrey City Centre is not "disgusting," "dangerous" and "dilapidated," but instead has "untapped potential" and is a place of "opportunity" - framing the territory and its residences as unideal, though eagerly waiting to be changed. As one local businessman put it, Surrey City Centre aims to become "a new community rising out of the wounded community that exists right now… I don't believe that Whalley can heal unless physical changes are made that promote and facilitate an influx of new residents. It will be those new residents that form and reform this community" (Reid, 2017). Aspiration, in other words, often depends on disqualifying the neighbourhood and the community, in order to present a contrast for developers' and the city's future plans in Whalley. Developers, investors, architects, and other actors with intentions to heed the City's call for intervention may expect to be canonized as influential, important, and even altruistic figures, who are helping raise a disinvested neighbourhood back to its prime - with this latter point becoming an increasingly popular reframing of the issues and stigmatization facing Whalley residents.

3.4. Altruistic Displacement

The displacement and gentrification which affects many of Whalley's low-income residents is clear to see in both grey and academic literature, as has been earlier established in this section. Further, the involvement of local government, media, and development groups in this phenomenon appears quite clear, with these actors often expressing explicit hopes to rid the area of residents considered unsightly or encroaching on the economic potential of the neighbourhood. However, while this discourse is typically predicated on very blatantly stigmatizing language, as seen in accusations of blemished character and criminality, what is

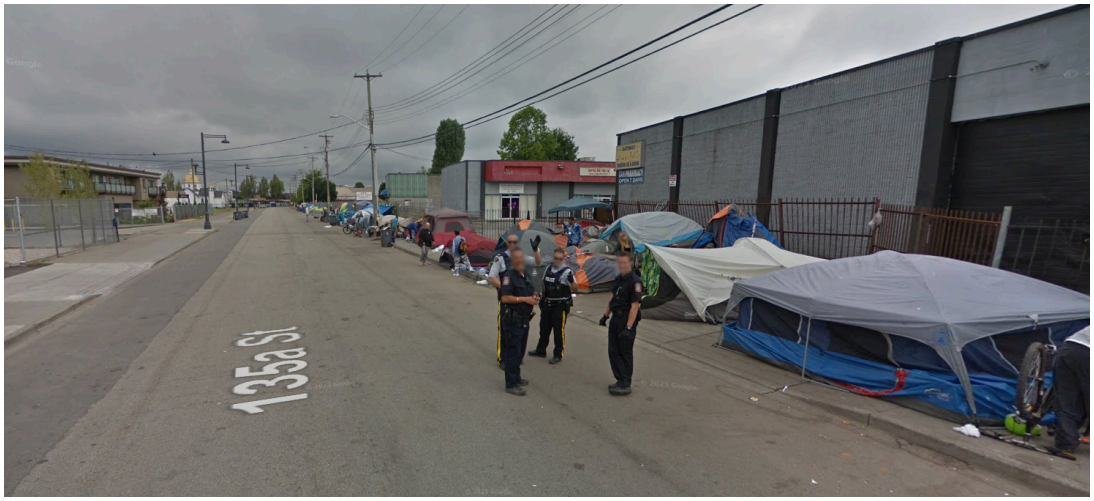
notable is how language is often used to spin the treatment of these people and major interventions in the neighbourhood as positives, laying the groundwork for the legitimizing of state-led violence.

As with the case of city-building, stigmatizing assumptions often lie at the foundation of the language used, being reframed to speak to a different audience (in the case of aspirational city-building, this includes developers, investors, and wealthier demographics) - however, a different trend has now emerged in Whalley's local media, which looks not to simply create an aspirational new image of a future Whalley, but instead looks to justify subsequent displacement that occurs in pursuit of a more attractive Surrey. I refer to this theme as "altruistic displacement," a pattern in local discourse in which politicians, media, and especially police aim to frame interventions not in terms of the economic potential and beautification of city-building, but instead as morally necessary and in fact humanitarian actions. This is significant, and represents a real-time contemporary development in the planning (or re-planning) of Whalley's Surrey City Centre: having laid the groundwork for gentrification through direct stigmatization, discourse can now encourage the public to take pity on those same residents, as they are displaced 'for their own good.'

An explicit example of altruistic displacement in Whalley is the 2018 clearing of the Whalley Strip, a concentrated encampment of low-income and homeless residents along the upper part of Surrey City Centre's King George Boulevard. Located along 135a Street, a site in what the City of Surrey was considering its new downtown, the Whalley Strip featured in much of the media and discourse surrounding the neighbourhood, and was often pointed to as an expression of the danger, poverty, and disorder publicly associated with the area (Reid, 2016). Local journalists and politicians long lamented the lack of decisive city responses to the growing number of homeless and other residents on the strip, while the city heavily ramped up police presence in the area in the years preceding the clearing; by 2016, bylaw officers were already patrolling the encampment every single day, handing out fines to residents as the Surrey RCMP secretly leased an abandoned building on the block to use as a base for their foot patrols of the area, in a bid "to send a symbolic message to the pushers and junkies in the area" (Reid, 2016). Citizens decried the intensifying presence of police, claiming that "they're picking on the homeless for no reason other than being homeless", while the City had repeatedly denied expanding social or health services to the strip (Saltman, 2016b).

By 2018, after many years of surveillance and occasional dispersal, plans were actively underway on the part of the City and Surrey RCMP to permanently clear the encampment. However, contrary to much of the commonly stigmatizing discourse and treatment that had been prevalent in the many years prior, language surrounding the Whalley Strip changed. Rather than describe the intervention as an attempt to simply clean up the area and expel encampment members (whether that be for reasons of public safety, economic benefits, or other reasons), much of the media immediately prior to and following the clearing employs humanitarian, socially conscious language. The "24/7, visible, coordinated presence of police, bylaws and social services" (Reid, 2016) that was previously pointed to as a strongarm approach to prevent encampment growth was now touted as a strategy to "help those in need in the area" (Diakiw,

2016). Further, rather than refer to residents as vagrants, or decry the proliferation of dangerous crime associated with the encampment, official media began to increasingly describe homeless residents as vulnerable and exploited, arguing that the reason so many problems were happening in these encampments was really because of local drug peddlers causing chaos among the homeless community; thus, dispersing this encampment and deconcentrating Whalley's homeless community would help those same residents by taking out from under the thumb of criminal drug dealers (Saltman, 2016b). Lastly, often highlighted in much of the official discourse surrounding the clearing were ambitious plans from the City to house residents who would be displaced, as well as the "compassionate" approach of the RCMP and City in dismantling the encampment and provide adequate outreach support (Surrey RCMP, 2019).



Whalley Strip in July of 2017 (from Google Maps).

Whalley Strip in April of 2023 (from Google Maps).

The portrayal of the Whalley Strip clearing as an altruistic displacement, intent on helping those who cannot help themselves, who were vulnerable to criminals and fentanyl usage, or who had fallen through the cracks of welfare bureaucracy, became the definitive narrative of the clearing. The RCMP for example, officially celebrated the event as a "stabilization of the area," announcing plans to expand their Whalley Strip strategy city-wide, "as part of a longer term

solution to address these community concerns in a collaborative manner that seeks to benefit the vulnerable population, residents, and businesses, and increase public safety for all" (Surrey RCMP, 2019); a city representative similarly stated that "it's better now that the individuals are staying in their homes and they're accessing the services they need, so we're very, very proud of what's happening" (Brown & Little, 2018).

This is not to criticize efforts or arguments in favour of more altruistic and humane treatment of low-income and homeless residents in Whalley, and in fact is quite the opposite. It is worth noting rather, the extent to which supportive language may be employed towards harmful ends, even if unintentional. While it is true that residents would, in theory, be safer with a roof over their head, with their own dedicated living spaces and nearby social support, later reports and witness testimonies demonstrate that this was far from what happened to those displaced: officials' celebrations of the clearing go starkly against what residents actually described about the displacement, and in many cases were outright dishonest. According to an investigation from The Volcano, a local independent outlet with connections to Surrey's homeless community, homeless counts cited by the city likely understated Surrey's homeless population by 40% (Krupp, 2019), and argue that despite the promoting of a new modular transitional housing plan to house displaced residents, the vast majority never ended up being accommodated. Residents who did not receive one of the 160 temporary modular rooms were instead told to seek out space in shelters; however Surrey shelters were all already full (Brown, 2019). Some residents who did move into modular housing were only provided with small rooms in old trailers, sometimes staffed by aggressive and intrusive employees, with one resident claiming that "staff enter your room anytime they want without warning… They can set arbitrary rules and punish you if you complain…It's not housing, it's warehousing" (Krupp, 2019). Further, residents widely claim that most of their belongings were destroyed in the clearing, and video footage from the Vancouver Sun shows social workers and police officers "swooping in" to throw people's belongings en masse in garbage bags (Vancouver Sun, 2016). Knowing that they would not be provided with alternative housing or space for their belongings, many encampment members allegedly resorted to living and hiding in bushes instead (Saltman, 2016a).

Evidence and first person testimony therefore suggests that the altruistic narrative displayed in local media surrounding the Whalley Strip clearing was, in many ways, not entirely accurate, and that there likely exists a gap between what was promised and what occurred. With so few residents receiving the housing promoted by the City, it is hard to say that the encampment succeeded in solving the Strip's homelessness problem, apart from shifting most residents elsewhere. Further, the reality faced by residents being policed often seems like a far cry from the supportive, empathetic nature of surveillance publicly described by the RCMP. On the approach to Whalley Strip residents, one advocate was cited as saying, "I'm not sure what the motivation behind it all is… There has to be a greater solution to this than moving people along like cattle, because they're not cattle, they're people in desperate need" (Saltman, 2016a). The true success then, was perhaps not in the delivering of genuine material support for residents of the Strip encampment, as much official discourse describes, but instead in using that positive and socially charged rhetoric to reframe public perception, drawing on the neighbourhood's history of stigmatization in order to legitimize intervention. It is likely no coincidence that only a

few short months after the clearance, the City announced and released its official Surrey City Centre Plan, with the Whalley Strip area set to see rapid upzoning and an injection of private capital (City of Surrey, 2017). Since the publishing of the plan, the City has published several media releases committing to keeping the street clear of any homeless residents, and promised to continue strategic RCMP expansion throughout Surrey to replicate the same approach; the site of the encampment has additionally been fitted with a large “no loitering” sign, and is the site of a new bike lane and 48 story condo (Brown & Little, 2018).

3.5. Summary

This discourse analysis set out to provide a thorough overview of stigmatization in Whalley’s local media, and to outline four key themes of territorial stigmatization in the neighbourhood. Based on the available evidence, and in line with the findings of other researchers, it appears to be clear that not only is stigmatization heavily present in local media coverage of the area, but that it has in fact become an ever present force in local politics and daily life. This is evident in the central role that politicians, including Surrey’s own mayors, appear to play in spreading negative language about the area and problematizing its inhabitants, as well as in the daily treatment of many of those who are part of stigmatized communities, especially homeless residents. The four themes identified here also tell a story in themselves: beginning with the stigmatization of individual residents in Whalley based on their blemished character, stigmatization has over time developed to a more macro level, with much of the stigmatization now being applied in broad strokes in the name of public safety. This territorial stigmatization has lead to an emphasis on city-building discourse which disparages the existing state of the neighbourhood and its residents in favour of a newer, more developed Surrey City Centre, eventually even culminating in a shift in stigmatizing discourse which identifies previously stigmatized groups as victims.

This has heavy implications for local planners. If it is true that stigmatizing rhetoric is this present in Whalley, and that it is already playing a significant role in the lives of local residents, then it begs to question how exactly planners are responding to these issues. If planners are aware of Whalley’s reputation as a low-income, criminal neighbourhood and a centre for the Lower Mainland’s homeless community, and work with politicians who often express negative opinions of the area in public, then what do their official plans have to say about this? Are current plans accounting for this explicitly, and if so, is it in a positive or negative way? Are they accounting for it at all? Ultimately, this requires an in-depth policy analysis. By cross-referencing the themes identified in this discourse analysis, with themes and priorities found in the area’s main and most recent urban plan, the Surrey City Centre Plan, we can develop a better understanding of how stigmatization impacts planning policies and thus the lives of those who are stigmatized. This is the focus of section 4.

4. Policy Analysis

As established in the previous discourse analysis, the City of Surrey has high aspirations for Whalley. What is further clear is just how much the rhetoric of stigmatization plays a part in defining and legitimizing state intervention into the neighbourhood. The question however, remains as to what exactly those interventions look like: with such heavy emphasis on issues such as homelessness, public safety, and crime in official discourse surrounding Whalley, what is it that the City would prefer to see instead? Further, is there a clear relationship between the issues that officials identify in Whalley's public discourse, and the policy prescriptions that they implement? By looking at official planning documents, we can develop a clearer understanding of this relationship, taking note of what official planning documents prioritize, and what is left out.

Released in 2018, the Surrey City Centre Plan (SCCP) carves out a major section of downtown Whalley as a brand new and separate zone, subject to rapid new development and selected to be Surrey's new downtown. This plan is the culmination of several decades of plans centered on the area, none of which being as comprehensive as the 2017 plan. Through analyzing the SCCP, I argue that the territorial stigmatization of Whalley, propagated by media and public officials, serves as little more than a legitimizing foundation for large-scale intervention; this is especially clear in the fact that most of the issues emphasized in stigmatizing discourse of the area hardly seem to explicitly find their way into official planning policy. Rather than the City planning for the homelessness, drug use, crime, and danger that they identify to the public, the SCCP seems hardly responsive to any of these apparent priorities, suggesting that the highlighting of these issues by officials and the media is instead instrumental towards separate goals, rather than priorities in themselves. Instead, I have identified three alternative priorities in Whalley for Surrey's planning department, those being: beautification, private investment, and placemaking. By examining these three priorities and exploring the language used by Surrey's planning department, we can better see the instrumental relationship between territorial stigmatization, and the Surrey planning department's downtown redevelopment aspirations.

4.1. Beautification

Beautification plays a central role in the Surrey City Centre Plan. This follows logically from the emphasis placed in public discourse on the unsightliness associated with the area and its residents, especially low-income and homeless communities; any accusation of unsightliness, 'disgusting' streets, or blemished character naturally implies some alternative, superior understanding of what is in fact a sightly city core, and so it is valuable to investigate what exactly that looks like for the City of Surrey and their planning department.

There are a number of beautification interventions emphasized in the SCCP, one notable example being green spaces. Green urbanism features prominently in much of the official promotional media for Surrey City Centre and is often celebrated in articles profiling the neighbourhood's new development goals. This often includes references to other, wealthier areas of the City, such as in a previously referenced article on the City's plans for Whalley:

> “While Surrey's beauty has been a secret to outsiders, Crescent Beach in its south is a tidal ocean beach as vast as some of the beaches on the west coast of Vancouver Island. There are two major rivers, the Nicomekl and the Serpentine, running directly through town. Amazingly, the city's creeks were never paved over, and they never suffered from toxic dumping” (Rochon, 2010).

Business and real estate outlets similarly laud the City of Surrey for its proximity to nature, suggesting that green urbanism plays an important part in the City’s self-image. It makes sense then, that green urbanism can be found within just the first few sentences of the SCCP, identifying it as among the most important planning priorities in Surrey City Centre. According to section 1.1 of the document, “downtown will be known for its green urban infrastructure of parks & plazas, greenways, and planted boulevards. Natural features including fish bearing creeks, riparian areas and spectacular views to the North Shore mountains will be enhanced and maintained” (City of Surrey, 2017, p 16). This is accurate to what is highlighted throughout the rest of the document, with plans for a number of green bike lanes, revamps of several existing public parks, new tree canopies and greening initiatives along King George Boulevard, the creation of nature reserves, and more (it is further notable that the plan consistently uses the word “safe” to refer to new green spaces, despite an otherwise lack of crime discourse in the document) (p. 138).

Walkability and pedestrian accessibility are also heavily emphasized in the plan. This follows earlier attempts at creating a more pedestrian-focused environment in Surrey City Centre, including 1993’s “Surrey City Centre Urban Design Concept,” 1994’s “Surrey Street Beautification Strategy,” and 2011’s “Surrey Walking Plan,” all of which focus on new design principles such as widening sidewalks, hiding utility wires underground, improving nearby landscaping, alongside proposed guidelines for the style and massing of buildings to encourage a “pleasant pedestrian environment” (City of Surrey, 2004). As with greenification, improving the pedestrian experience is often celebrated in media surrounding the neighbourhood, including coverage on new bike lanes, new streets and smaller block sizes, mixed use developments with ground floor commercial spaces, and more beautifully decorated boulevards, all of which are featured in the SCCP (City of Surrey, 2017). Walkability is presented as synonymous with a ‘big city,’ urban environment, and is seen as an essential element in transforming the city’s image; in the words of the plan itself, “Surrey City Centre is undergoing a bold transformation from a suburban town centre to a walkable, high density, transit-oriented downtown for the South of the Fraser area” (City of Surrey, 2017, p. 15). In fact, the city itself refers to its large city blocks and lack of cyclist infrastructure as “largely suburban in nature,” again suggesting city-building aspirations from Surrey’s planning department with an eye to creating what they consider a serious urban core (City of Surrey, 2017, p. 28). Despite the inclusion of major new pedestrian projects, such as the transformation of the six lane King George Highway into the six lane King George Boulevard, academic analysis of urban planning and design in Surrey City Centre have harshly criticized the planning department for their failure to achieve proper pedestrian safety and urban connectivity, with researchers going as far as to cite the Surrey City Centre Plan as an example of placeless and pedestrian-hostile redevelopment (Natrasony & Alexander, 2005).

Lastly, the promotion of public art plays a notably outsized role in the SCCP, with photos of proposed or existing public sculptures and art pieces presented throughout the plan. These are often accompanied with descriptions of the City's vision for a more beautiful and unique urban environment. The guiding principles section, for example, feature a photo of some presumably post-modern sculpture of a large fan stuck to a large stone monolith, nested in a park outside of a civic building, and accompanied by the phrase "Fostering a sense of place and identity in the City Centre creates a downtown that is unique, interesting and memorable" (City of Surrey, 2017, p. 21). There is an entire subsection in the plan dedicated to public art, including explanations of a "public art walk" which connects various public sculptures and murals together through a network of new private developments, a dedicated "linear sculpture park" situated around a newly built greenway, the important of public art integration in bus stops, and finally a map spread showing the locations for all future art installations and their place on the public art walk (p. 176). Overall, the words "public art" are mentioned a total of 92 times throughout the document.

The Surrey Urban Mission Society, pictured here next to a development site advertising Whalley as "Canada's first 15 minute city." Source: Google Maps, 2024.

4.2. Private Investment

Attracting private investment and new business activity is a primary focus of the SCCP. Even without delving into the plan itself, a quick glance at the web page for Surrey City Centre reveals a zeal for change: "Once a suburban town centre, this area has been the focus of significant development. It is transforming into a walkable, transit-oriented downtown core for business, culture and entertainment" (City of Surrey, 2023), while right below prominently featuring an entire section dedicated to The Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Association (DSBIA; previously known as the Whalley Business Improvement Association). Creating a central business district is clearly an essential priority for the city's planning department, and it is striking that nearly the entire site is dedicated to explaining how attractive the area is for prospective investors. This includes a large banner image featuring a skyscraper next to the words "BC's Emerging Downtown," a video which thanks developers for their role in changing the neighbourhood, with the rest of the home page dedicated to a bullet point list on why

readers should invest in Surrey City Centre (Surrey City Centre, 2024). In fact, the website itself is run jointly by the City of Surrey and the DSBIA, with nearly all of the website focused on investment and real estate development opportunities in the neighbourhood.

Considering the heavy emphasis placed on investment and real estate on all of the relevant websites for Surrey City Centre and the SCCP, it is no surprise to find that the plan itself also aims heavily to portray Whalley as an attractive area for new capital. The plan explicitly states so in its own introduction stating that the “transformation [of Whalley] largely stems from new public sector investment, which is renewing private sector development interest and helping to facilitate key land assemblies in the downtown” (City of Surrey, 2017, p. 11); the plan further states that “although development changes toward a higher density downtown began in the late 1990s, the development momentum in the City Centre did not fully emerge until over a decade later with the construction of key public sector developments” (p. 27). There are several cases throughout the document where planners explicitly state the goal of using planning interventions in order to primarily spur private investment. Even land use changes are described as being primarily for the purpose of inviting private capital, both on the part of developers and potential new businesses, with a section of the neighbourhood now dubbed “The Innovation District,” home to “Innovation Boulevard” (p. 93). A large amount of space additionally has been zoned to produce at least 10 million square feet of new office space in the last decade (p. 27). This last point is notable: despite the large-scale decline of office spaces in the last ten years, the plan includes several profiles of large new office developments which it hopes will attract large new private sector partners to occupy the neighbourhood (post-Covid media releases show no change in trajectory).

3D rendering of future skyscraper projects in Surrey City Centre (from Surrey City Development Corporation)

Interestingly, even the “Culture” section of the plan mostly presents existing and future amenities in terms of how much they will attract new money and business investment, with the goal of the cultural planning described as to “create an economic hub that draws investment and

entrepreneurs to build the local creative economy" (p. 186). As mentioned earlier, public art is disproportionately featured throughout the plan and cited as an example of urban beautification. However, there are also long sections dedicated to explaining how public art and artistic facilities will facilitate private sector development, including an entire page on what is called "Cultural Catalyst Projects." These are public art projects that "focus investment where it can have the most impact in supporting private investment and enhancing the vibrancy and economic wellbeing of the City Centre," with some cited examples being the SFU Theatre, a new $60 million Interactive Art Museum (Chan, 2022), "iconic public art," and a large new Performing Arts Centre, to be designed by aforementioned architect Bing Thom. All of these will be located within the City Centre along what is being called the Cultural Corridor, which is a loose association and proximity of artistic amenities designed "to create an economic hub that draws investment and entrepreneurs to build the local creative economy" (City of Surrey, 2017, p. 166). The plan further details various grant programs and cultural activities which will "employ local artists and have a positive impact on the development of Surrey's creative economy," alongside a section which describes various zoning changes made specifically to facilitate the construction of new combined studio-living spaces, as well as the future introduction of new art-related private sector density bonuses (p. 179).

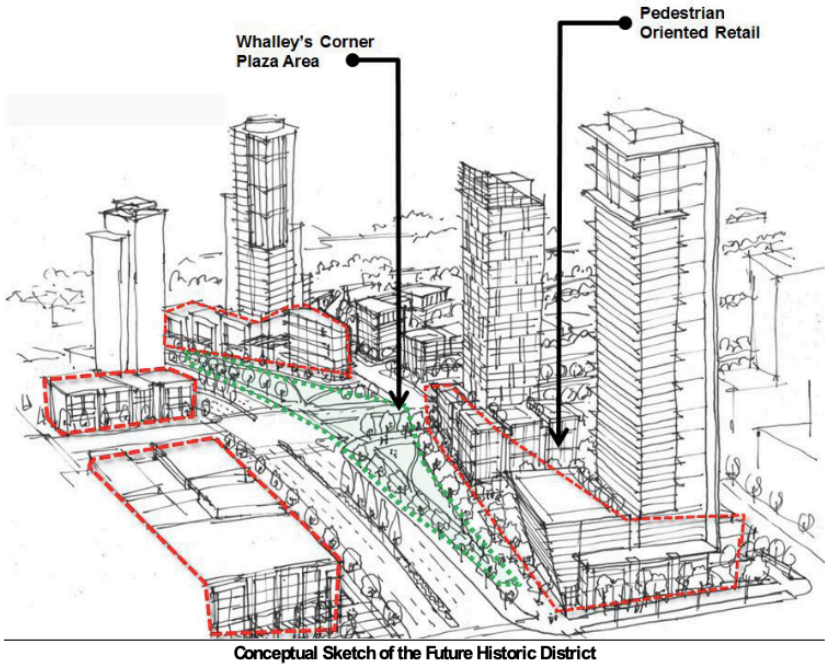
In targeting private sector investors, the "Design Objectives" section is similar. What is otherwise a mundane list of aesthetic requirements for things like store frontages and street signs still explicitly states that "guidelines will shape public and private sector development including buildings, streets, plazas and gathering spaces, into an environment that is vibrant, pedestrian-friendly and highly attractive to support investment" (p. 204). It is thus abundantly clear that, throughout the plan, a great amount of effort is put into consistently reiterating the City's commitment to working with private sector investors, with most projects being presented in terms of their contribution to thriving private commercial activity, development and investment in Surrey City Centre. The SCCP makes it further clear that planners, and the Surrey planning department, are particularly focused on using planning interventions as a means to attract private capital, and on choosing interventions based on what the planning department and council members believe investors will find enticing.

4.3. Placemaking

Placemaking overlaps with beautification, although it remains conceptually and technically distinct in the case of Whalley's redevelopment. While beautification strategies are certainly used as instruments of placemaking (for example, adding new green spaces or bike lanes certainly contributes a different sense of place), placemaking instead looks specifically to foster a particular image of a location, utilizing a variety of tools to carve out a unique identity and even new local culture. The Quartier des Spectacles redevelopment project in Montreal is an example of placemaking, wherein the City, developers, and police worked together to reshape the neighbourhood from a centre for gambling, strip clubs, and sex work into a 'legitimate' entertainment district (McKim, 2012; Loison & Fischler, 2016; Fiolka, et al, 2022). The SCCP represents a strong example of how placemaking can be used as a catalyst for city-wide change, having been a focus for Surrey's city council since the arrival of the SkyTrain in the early 90s, and has taken on an even more central role in recent years. In 2002, after feeling that

previous plans did not produce enough change in the area, Surrey launched a 15 year long reimagining of the original 1991 plan, with the city describing development up to this point as overly “sporadic” and having failed to “create a compact and identifiable City Centre” (City of Surrey, 2023). The latest plan, while remaining largely in line with the ambitions of earlier planning policies - for example emphasizing beautification - now officially carves out a specific boundary for what is to be known as Surrey City Centre, and is exceptionally more detailed in terms of its spatial and land use planning.

Through its placemaking attempts, the SCCP tends to treat Whalley as a blank slate for development. While the 1991 plan focused primarily on densifying in clusters around Surrey’s Skytrain stations and King George Boulevard specifically, a major component of the new plan is redesigning land use patterns outside of these zones, dividing the Surrey City Centre area into new “districts” or neighbourhoods. The plan currently calls for the creation of 11 new districts, including 6 mixed use and 5 residential districts, all with distinct new names, differing typologies and cultural or economic focuses - this includes a Medical District, a Historic District and a Downtown District, alongside new residential areas with names like The Forsyth, The Bailey, and The West Village (City of Surrey, 2017, p. 36). Some of these districts go as far as to provide strict aesthetic requirements for the types of buildings being constructed - for example, in the Historic District, the plan mandates that new construction must “include flat roof lines, vertically oriented windows, cantilevered overhangs, and clean and contemporary lines,” in a push to create “a pedestrian-oriented eclectic shopping experience with a continuous commercial and retail edge with pedestrian amenities. The historic, mid-century modern feel will be preserved and reinforced through small storefronts, building façade treatment and materials, public art, and signage” (p. 54). The historic district does not currently feature nearly any of these elements currently, despite calls to preserve and reinforce them - instead, it currently is occupied primarily by single family homes and mid rise apartments (most of which are occupied by some of Canada’s lowest income residents), as well as certain essential social services such as an employment centre, the Surrey Urban Mission, a soup kitchen and counselling services for drug users. This is to say that these districts do not in fact exist yet, at least not in the way that city planners describe them.



Concept sketch for the redevelopment of Whalley's "Historic District" (from the Surrey City Centre Plan).

Highlights for each new district as presented in a short bullet-point list on the side of every profile section, titled "key sites or components," next to a table demonstrating the maximum build out potential (i.e. maximum possible population) of each district. Almost all of these key components are aesthetic or economic in nature. For example, the residential district of West Village lists the following three key components: the "District Energy Centre & Public Art," a new "West Village Park," and "Public Art on Corner Plaza of Wave Tower" (p. 77). Other districts exclusively highlight large institutional buildings, including the Central Downtown district, which highlights many of the projects discussed in the city-building section of the previous section - the new City Hall, the Central Library, a large new Civic Plaza, a new Kwantlen Polytechnic University mixed use development, Simon Fraser University expansion sites, the massive Central City Mall, as well as three different locations for new public art installations; further, though currently home to just 2,740 people, the district is planned to accommodate up to 22,500 residents (p. 40).

Two things are notable about this. First, in nearly all of these new district plans, what is highlighted and emphasized is always new and attractive projects. This follows from what is emphasized in most of the City's media releases and much of the other grey literature already analyzed. Second, and perhaps even more notably, is what planners do not emphasize. For example, in colour coded three-dimensional diagrams of future visions of the districts, "existing buildings" are shown in orange and "future buildings" in white - however, the existing buildings solely include new condo developments completed within the last decade, and excludes any other existing buildings or services (p. 79). That is to say, the lack of reference to what currently exists in these future districts implies a view of these areas as obsolete in the face of superior new projects (except for in the case of historically significant signage or building frontages,

which are incorporated into new projects, art installations, and even bus stops). In the unique case of the Historic District, there is indeed reference to existing iconography and cultural heritage - however, none of what planners identify has ever even existed in the area, and appears to be invented for the sake of this plan. This method of placemaking in the SCCP thus raises a serious critical question: for whom is this plan actually planning?

4.4. Summary

This policy analysis had two aims. First, it looked to develop an understanding of key themes in the Surrey City Centre Plan, providing an overview of three key policy priorities throughout the document. The three most prevalent themes found in the plan - beautification, private investment, and placemaking - reveal a planning department and city council that are deeply interested in the aesthetic revitalization of the neighbourhood, with a heavy emphasis on attracting new, higher-income residents and businesses. Second, this policy analysis was done in order to cross-reference the many priorities that are clearly laid out in media coverage of Whalley, in order to evaluate the relationship between the two. To what degree have the concerns of homelessness, crime, poverty, and the many other stigmatized issues in the area actually found their way into official planning policy? This second point thus becomes perhaps the most telling aspect of the SCCP - for example, despite the heavy emphasis placed on the issue of homelessness in local media, as well as the widespread association of these individuals with crime, disorder, drug use, and more, the issue of homelessness does not find itself into the neighbourhood's plan at all. In fact, the words "homeless," "homelessness," or "unhoused" are mentioned only once, in a 101-word subsection which states that "the City Centre has non-market rental and social housing ranging from seniors facilities, housing to support people at risk of being homeless" (City of Surrey, 2017, p. 198). This goes similarly for issues like crime and poverty in that, despite the widespread stigmatization of Whalley on these grounds from local media, and the intensity of campaigning from local politicians on addressing these problems, they see no mention throughout the plan. Outside of some vague references to creating inclusive spaces for "vulnerable populations" (p. 182), on which the plan provides no details at all, there is essentially no reference to any of the problems that were found to be so heavily detailed in my discourse analysis.

So how, then, has stigmatization in Whalley influenced the Surrey City Centre Plan? If there is no mention of any of the issues or themes clearly identified in local discourse, what relevance does stigmatization have to subsequent planning policies? Based on the omission of themes identified in the discourse analysis, conclusions can be made. First, the plan is certainly targeted at a different audience, with emphasis on the aesthetic beauty, walkability, and overall pleasurable pedestrian and business experiences to be had in BC's future second downtown. Second, I would argue that the plan does not include questions of homelessness, poverty, and other issues, because these problems are likely not seen as part of the future of the neighbourhood. This much seems to be clear based not just on the treatment of certain vulnerable communities by police, politicians, and them media, but also through the emphasizing of priorities which are, in many cases, entirely inaccessible to low-income or vulnerable communities: expensive new condo towers, new university campuses, large new office complexes, large institutional buildings, and more. Were homeless and low-income

communities considered an important part of the future of Surrey City Centre, one would expect to see ample reference to the places and services that are needed and frequented by low-income community members, however they are entirely absent from the final plan despite sections dedicated to detailing priorities like the future of public art in the neighbourhood. The conclusion then, is that not only is this plan not written by or for these communities, but that the stigmatization that has surrounded Whalley in the media and from politicians, has mostly been for the purpose of legitimizing direct large-scale planning interventions of various sorts, none of which appear to be relevant to addressing the issues of poverty, homelessness, or even criminal activity; instead, the plan seemingly looks to ignore these problems in its bid to attract new investors and residents, with the end goal perhaps being a neighbourhood free of these issue entirely. This raises serious questions about the responsibilities of planners in permanently displacing and harming members of vulnerable communities, as well as a failure in planning overall to properly address the needs of existing residents.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The story of Whalley is one that appears to be common throughout the history of urban planning: from its rise as an important commercial centre, through to its economic decline and disinvestment, and finally culminating in the stigmatization of its citizens and the "revitalization" of the area, the changes that can be observed in Whalley in most ways seem not so different from the fate of many other low-income, racialized neighbourhoods across North America in the 21st century. Academic work surrounding the fate of Toronto's Regent Park neighbourhood demonstrate similar patterns of disinvestment, stigmatization, and eventually large-scale urban planning interventions (August, 2014; Hayes, 2016). Moreover, what has happened in Whalley since the 1990s is strikingly in line with the observations made by thinkers like Waquant (2007), Goffman (1963), and Slater (2021), with the stigmatization of the neighbourhood and its residents matching their descriptions and observations of disqualification, disparagement, and eventually banishment. In these ways, Whalley's transformation appears analogous to many of the more unfortunate aspects of planning history that academics today criticize.

Based on existing scholarly work, an in-depth discourse analysis, and an investigation of the main planning policy for the neighbourhood, I conclude that not only is stigmatization of Whalley heavily prevalent in local media, but in fact that stigmatization has clearly informed the priorities of the local planning department, alongside being used to justify widespread intervention and, in the case of certain vulnerable communities, displacement. The case of Whalley's transformation into Surrey City Centre presents a number of lessons in understanding the relationship between territorial stigmatization and urban planning, highlighting the centrality of Surrey's planning department in setting and implementing a gentrification agenda, and raises questions about the planning process behind the Surrey City Centre Plan overall. Based on the work done in this research project, there are a number of conclusions to draw about the redevelopment of this neighbourhood, and the role that stigmatization has played.

First, based on the findings highlighted in the discourse analysis, in particular the prevalence of four themes - blemishes of character, public safety, city-building, and altruistic displacement - it is notable that none of the issues that preoccupy local discourse from both media and politicians explicitly find their way into formal planning documents. While discursive themes were focused towards stigmatizing particular groups or highlighting certain issues - for example, raising alarm about the homeless, or criticizing low-income populations for attracting crime - hardly any of the issues found in the four discursive themes are outlined or addressed in the Surrey City Centre Plan at length. There does not appear to be any other relevant documentation from Surrey's planning department which thoroughly addresses these topics (though loose plans for addressing housing or homelessness do exist, such as the 2018 "Surrey Affordable Housing Strategy"). Thus, my findings show that little outwardly stigmatizing language was used in official planning documentation. Through careful examination of the documents however, as well as through triangulating my findings in local news media during my discourse analysis, it became clear that there were unstated relationships between areas of planning interest, and sites associated with stigma and banishment. In this sense, what is more telling of the Surrey City Centre Plan is not what is explicitly stated in the plan, but what is omitted: while media and politicians demonize the homeless, the poor, and make alarmist statements about local crime,

the Surrey City Centre Plan instead focuses on highlighting the potential of the neighbourhood, future beautification efforts, important institutional buildings, and incentives for incoming businesses; land use plans are heavily focused on the aesthetics of Surrey City Centre in a stated bid to improve the area's image (City of Surrey, 2017, p. 56; p. 210; p. 218).

This is significant to understanding the local development context, and is familiar to other examples gentrification. As authors such as Zukin (1988) have long pointed out, and as observed during my observations of local city-building rhetoric in section 3.3, the aspirational language used in cases like the Surrey City Centre Plan acts as a form of rhetorical erasure of existing uses and communities in the neighbourhood. For example, plans to fully redesign "Whalley's Corner" at 108 Avenue and King George Boulevard include public squares, bike lanes, condo towers with attractive ground-level retail, and a variety of public art (City of Surrey, 2017, p. 57); currently located at the site are essential services such as the Surrey Urban Mission Society, a soup kitchen, counselling services for drug users, various ethnic supermarkets, among other amenities accessed by low-income residents - though none of this is mentioned in the plan's description of the future Historic District. Similarly to be located in the Historic District is 135a Street, the site of the former Whalley Strip encampment, the history of which is not mentioned in the document, and which is slated to be redeveloped into a street of highrises, bike lanes, a green pathway, and eventually turned into a notable tourist site centered around St. Mary's Ukrainian Greek-Orthodox Church (p. 55). This pattern of erasure holds true for other notable sites throughout the plan, whether this be sites of transitional and social housing, low-income apartment complexes, or essential local services.

The lack of reference to homelessness, crime, and poverty, as well as a lack of any outwardly stigmatizing rhetoric, coupled with the inclusion of amenities targeted at higher-income future residents, thus suggests that the Surrey City Centre Plan simply is not targeted at addressing existing issues, but instead at dispersing them. That is to say, if the neighbourhood's many existing homeless residents were viewed as a relevant part of Surrey City Centre's future, there would presumably be sections dedicated to discussing social services, addictions support, supportive housing, and future facilities dedicated to these uses clearly identified in the same way that future office complexes are. The absence of such themes appears to suggest a future for the neighbourhood where realities like poverty and homelessness do not exist, or at least is secondary to the beautification efforts and new economic activity in the city. Ultimately, based on the stigmatizing language used in public-facing media, compared to the much more aspirational tone of the SCCP, I would argue that city planning documents are being designed to speak to a different group of people entirely; public stigmatization of the neighbourhood is likely done to create fervor and support among voters, while formal planning documents are aimed at potential investors, developers, and wealthier prospective residents looking to relocate to a new neighbourhood.

Second, based on my findings in this research project, it seems apparent that widespread, democratic community planning was not likely a key part of the Surrey City Centre Plan, and that if it was, the voices of wealthier residents, prospective investors, and the local business community shared an outsized voice compared to Whalley's vulnerable residents. While the process behind the adoption of the SCCP would require its own dedicated study and analysis, it

is safe to assume that if homeless and low-income residents were sufficiently included in the planning process, they would not have voted for their own social and transitional housing complexes to be destroyed and sold to luxury condo developers; in other words, those who are properly included in the planning process would not advocate for their own displacement. The result of the Surrey City Centre Plan is therefore concerning to planners who advocate for a more participatory approach to urban planning, and suggests that, despite widespread criticism of many undemocratic planning interventions in the 20th century, cases like Whalley may demonstrate a continued failure on the part of the planning profession to ensure just treatment and inclusion of vulnerable communities.

At the same time, while a more participatory approach to planning - for example, through the creation of strong community benefits agreements, protective bylaws for social, transitionary, or cooperative housing, directing development fees towards social housing construction, and a right to return for tenants displaced by development - would likely help in mitigating the displacement currently occurring in Whalley, it is important to note just how limited calls for increased community planning can be; it is equally important to acknowledge just how limited planners often are in their power for progressive intervention. This is has been noted by authors such as Stein (2019), who observes that, even in cases where progressive planners attempt to practice community-centered approaches, their efforts are often stymied by the investor class and landowners with a material interest in local gentrification; in these cases, placing too much responsibility on the power of planners risks planning discourse regressing into ineffective forms of hyper-localism (Stein, 2019). Thus, while it is fair to critique planning departments for contributing to gentrification and displacement, it is also fair to acknowledge that they often are bound to act on behalf of the politicians they work for, influenced by whatever interests happen to rule local politics, in a real estate system which prioritizes financialization. This echoes the work of Fainstein, who often writes of the failures of prevailing communicative approaches to planning, and the inability of planners to properly operate as justice-oriented facilitators (Fainstein, 2010), while further arguing that the sorts of transformative changes required to achieve many progressive planning goals are simply not tenable within the domain of planning itself (Fainstein, 2013).

These limitations have relevant consequences in the case of Whalley. On the one hand, a level of moderation must be clarified when attributing blame to the work and intentions of Surrey's planning department in the redevelopment of the neighbourhood; while it is clear that planners have produced interventions which are harming local residents, and that their plans are likely operating in tandem with long present stigmatization in Whalley, local planning may be more so the result of the interests of local politicians and their ruling coalitions (which, as mentioned at times in this paper, appear to overwhelmingly feature local business and real estate interest groups). It is unlikely that planners themselves are going out of their way to produce policies with the intention of harming residents. On the other hand, following from the work of authors like Stein and Fainstein, I would argue that, recognizing the restrictions placed on many planners, the case of Whalley demonstrates an obligation on the part of planners to challenge prevailing narratives of stigmatization, and shift local planning discourse from one that values the rhetoric of revitalization to a discourse which identifies planning as a site of social and economic justice. Authors are correct in criticizing the anti-revolutionary nature of such planning

strategies (Harvey & Potter, 2009), however in the case of such unchallenged stigmatization, such alternative voices should prove to be constructive in aiding visibility and challenging a “real estate-state” (Stein, 2019) paradigm. While it appears likely true that the planning process was not optimally democratic in the first place, increasing localism in planning alone will not suffice to tackle the issues of state and capital-induced banishment facing Whalley’s residents, without additional attempts to combat stigmatizing rhetoric, as well as building power among residents themselves.

Third, one observation of note in the Whalley case is just how little research is being done on the neighbourhood. Despite exhibiting so many of the signs of what effectively appears to be a contemporary urban renewal plan, there are nearly no academic works investigating the neighbourhod’s gentrification, the role of planners in ongoing changes and displacement, nor even the extreme prevalence of stigmatization in local media coverage (though this latter point has been observed by a handful of authors). This is rather unfortunate, as the few pieces of work done on this neighbourhood, as well as the work completed in this research project, demonstrate negative consequences for many existing communities in the area. For example, one study of neighbourhood self-perception found that not only do residents of Whalley view their own neighbourhood negatively, but that it even has impacts on their perception of their own well being and health; further, Whalley ranked worst in almost every category of self-perception, leading in 14 of 16 categories, a result which the writers note is exceptional even when compared to other low-income areas of the Lower Mainland (Collins, et al, 2009). As the study goes on to argue, this appears to be the cause of widespread, intense stigmatization of the neighbourhood in local media - as has been observed in this research project - and a culture of excessive crime reporting. Despite the demonstrated impact that stigmatization is having on residents of Whalley however, there appears to be little work being done on understanding local planning strategies, outside of critiques of the neighbourhood's placelessness and architectural monotony (Natrasony & Alexander, 2005; Ingram, 2023).

This lack of academic coverage of Whalley likely has material consequences for the visibility of those affected by the area’s redevelopment. Based on these existing observations on the area’s stigmatization, alongside a lack of comprehensive academic work Whalley, I would argue that a legitimizing force in the neighbourhood's redevelopment is simply a lack of public awareness about the displacement occurring in the area. Further, a lack of critical academic literature on the Surrey City Centre Plan leaves gaps in what could otherwise present a fruitful understanding of planners’ exact roles in the situation, something which would be helpful in addressing how Canadian planners can prevent similar cases from occurring elsewhere in the country - especially considering that Surrey has decided to replicate this planning strategy in other low-income neighbourhoods (City of Surrey, 2024b). With the amount of criticism aimed at Vancouversim in recent years, this celebration of Whalley’s urbanization strategy as one worth recreating seems even more misled, at least if planners would like to avoid the demonstrated pitfalls of unaffordability and class dispiarity associated with the former (Kataoka, 2009; Beasley & Bula, 2019). Interviews with planners and officials involved in the Surrey City Centre Plan, as well as with residents impacted by changes, would thus also contribute to a better understanding of the situation in Surrey City Centre.

Lastly, following these observations and recommendations, it is important to note that despite the critical tone of this paper, the goals which the Surrey City Centre Plan advocates for are, broadly speaking, quite attractive and likely needed interventions; there is no problem with new museums, bike lanes, new housing, offices, greenery, city halls, or public transit in the abstract, and in fact most of these things are essential for having a well functioning urban environment. There is certainly a reason that the style of transit oriented development that has been pursued in Whalley has become so popular since the late 1990s - as academics note, evidence does show a great number of benefits to encouraging walkability, less automobile dependence, urban density, among the myriad of others goals that the strategy hopes to achieve (Padeiro, Louro, & da Costa, 2019). This method of urban development has been implemented across North America, and has seen significant implementation in Canada (including in the rest of the Lower Mainland) (Jones & Ley, 2016) to the approval of many in the planning field, however is now facing increased scrutiny in the face of what community members and academics now point out is often a form of transit-induced gentrification (Dawkins & Moeckel, 2016). Based on trends observed in other cases then, there is reason to remain questioning of the Surrey City Centre Plan, despite the many attractive benefits it aims to introduce to Whalley.

This paper does not therefore aim to argue against these sorts of attractive interventions in themselves. What it does argue however, is that when such interventions result in the exclusion of existing community members, it raises questions about the motivations of city governments, planning departments, and the pain they may be causing, whether intentional or not. As for the focus on private investment, luxury condo developments, public art, and other amenities clearly aimed at wealthy residents, there is an obvious critique to be made regarding a failure to prioritize, and a failure to carry out a sufficient duty of care towards those who depend on the positive interventions of planners (even if attempts have been made). All of this considered, based on the scale and nature of what this paper has found to be occurring in Whalley, the neighbourhood's redevelopment provides valuable lessons for planners to draw from. It also demonstrates the influence that stigmatization can have on the planning process, as well as the core role it plays in legitimizing and inducing planning-led gentrification. For planners looking towards a more critical planning approach, this case serves to show how more care should be taken in addressing the stigmatization that Canada's vulnerable neighbourhoods remain surprisingly unprotected.

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