

Cohousing; Problems and Prospects for Low-income Communities

By

Nadalene Renee Khan, B.E.D.

A Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF CITY PLANNING

Department of City Planning
Faculty of Architecture
University of Manitoba

© Nadalene Renee Khan, August 2006
The Faculty of Graduate Studies
500 University Centre, University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 2N2

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

COPYRIGHT PERMISSION

Cohousing; Problems and Prospects for Low-income Communities

by

Nadalene Renee Khan

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of
Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree**

Of

MASTER OF CITY PLANNING

Nadalene Renee Khan © 2006

Permission has been granted to the Library of the University of Manitoba to lend or sell copies of this thesis/practicum, to the National Library of Canada to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film, and to University Microfilms Inc. to publish an abstract of this thesis/practicum.

This reproduction or copy of this thesis has been made available by authority of the copyright owner solely for the purpose of private study and research, and may only be reproduced and copied as permitted by copyright laws or with express written authorization from the copyright owner.

“We have not merely a housing shortage but a broader set of unmet needs caused by the efforts of an entire society to fit into a housing pattern that reflects the dreams of the mid-nineteenth century better than the realities of the late twentieth century” (Hayden, Delores 2002:30).

ABSTRACT

Winnipeg's North End neighbourhoods are experiencing significant decline in decent affordable housing units. Societal changes, including a shift away from the traditional nuclear family and need for single detached housing units, contribute to a call for new housing models. As well, governments increasingly reduced role in the provision of social housing has left third sector parties and non-profit housing organizations challenged with the task to develop affordable housing projects for low-income communities.

This study explores non-profit housing organizations and the problems and prospects of developing cohousing projects for low-income communities. Cohousing is a relatively new housing typology that emerged from Denmark in the early 1970s. By working together and combining resources and energies, cohousing communities have the advantage of private homes and the convenience of shared services and amenities that enhance affordability by reducing household expenses.

In reference to a cohousing case study proposed by one local non-profit housing provider, this thesis a) identifies barriers and opportunities to developing cohousing projects; b) explores the role(s) cohousing models play or are positioned to play in low-income communities; and c) cultivates enhancement recommendations for non-profit housing groups interested in developing cohousing projects. The study includes findings from the proposed case study, a literature review and a series of qualitative interviews with case study and cohousing respondents. The literature review addresses related topics, such as the emergence of non-profit housing organizations in Canada, issues facing community-based non-profit housing organizations and cohousing projects in European and North American contexts.

Through the empirical findings, it was established that a) cohousing is as much a process as it is a new housing model; b) non-profit housing organizations best serve as facilitators to what should be a resident- or community-led cohousing process; and c) non-profit housing organizations require extensive internal and external supports to facilitate the planning and development of cohousing projects.

Overall findings reveal that non-profit housing organizations and low-income communities generally do not have the capacity nor the financial capital required to support collaborative cohousing planning processes and project costs associated with shared spaces and facilities. Consequently, this thesis argues for broader government support, additional resources and flexible funding for non-profit housing organizations to explore alternative housing models; facilitate the engagement of low-income communities in collaborative planning processes; and develop new housing models for changing housing needs.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother.
Everything that has led up to this moment and the future that lies ahead are thanks to you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to those who have contributed to this thesis. To begin, I would like to thank the North End Housing Project, for allowing me to document a snapshot of their endurance, commitment and pursuit of affordable housing for low-income communities.

To the members of my advisory committee, thank you. To Dr. Lawrie Deane, thank you for sharing with me your knowledge, persistence and enthusiasm for community development. To Dr. Sheri Blake, thank you for inspiring me, this thesis and my academic journey. You have influenced the professional I have become and aspire to be. To Dr. Rae Bridgman, thank you for your continued support and encouragement throughout this experience. You have been a memorable teacher, mentor and person.

Finally, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my friends and family. To my cheerleaders Mom, Dad, Angelique, Nathan and Auntie Jacquie, thank you for listening to me rant and rave, calming me with endless cups of tea and showering me with affection. Lastly to Charlton, thank you for caring for me and providing the love, encouragement and support I needed to complete this chapter of our life – on to the next!

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AHI	Affordable Housing Initiative
CBO	Community-based Organization
CD	Community Development
CDC	Community Development Corporation
CED	Community Economic Development
CEDA	Community Education Development Association
NA!	Neighbourhoods Alive!
NDA	Neighbourhood Development Assistance
NECRC	North End Community Renewal Corporation
NEHP	North End Housing Project
NHA	National Housing Act
WHHI	Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative

TERMINOLOGY

Affordable Housing as defined by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) is a household that spends no more than 30% of its income on shelter costs. Any amount beyond 30% reduces the household quality of life as other necessities are forgone (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 1999).

Low-income is defined as household total income at or below Winnipeg's low-income cut off (LICO). The LICO is a measurement of poverty calculated by Statistics Canada, which determines the average proportion of income spent on household necessities such as food, clothing and shelter (Silver, 1999).

Cohousing is defined as a type of collaborative housing in which residents actively participate in the design and operation of their own neighbourhoods. Cohousing residents are consciously committed to living as a community. The physical design of cohousing encourages both social contact and individual space. Private homes contain all the features of conventional homes, but residents also have access to common facilities such as open space, courtyards, a playground and a common house (<http://cohousing.org>, accessed June 30, 2005).

Community is defined as group of people who share common experiences, goals, language, heritage and culture. Community can also refer to the inhabitants of a specific geographic area, such as a rural village, and urban neighbourhood or an entire city (<http://www.gov.mb.ca/ia/programs/neighbourhoods/toolbox/ced.html>, accessed August 10, 2006).

Community Development is defined as the planned evolution of all aspects of community well-being (economic, social, environmental and cultural). It is a process whereby community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems (HRDC, Community Capacity-building: A Facilitated Workshop).

Community Economic Development is defined as a community-led process that combines social and economic development to foster the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of communities (<http://www.gov.mb.ca/ia/programs/neighbourhoods/toolbox/ced.html>, accessed August 10, 2006).

Community Capacity is defined as the interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well being of that community. It may operate through formal or informal social processes (Chaskin, 2001:7).

Cohousing Professional is defined as a business and/or individual who primarily serve cohousing groups. These professionals include developers, architects and other consultants that provide specialized services for cohousing communities, marketing, media relations and group process (<http://www.cohousing.org/glossary.aspx>, accessed May 7, 2006).

Cohousing Facilities are defined as facilities designed, managed and shared by a cohousing community (supplemental to private residences). Common facilities almost always include a common house, playground equipment, lawn and garden (<http://www.cohousing.org/glossary.aspx>, accessed May 7, 2006).

Common House is defined as a shared facility owned and managed by the cohousing community. The common house typically includes a common kitchen, dining area, sitting area, children's playroom, laundry room and also may contain a workshop, library/computer room, exercise room, crafts room and/or guest rooms (<http://www.cohousing.org/glossary.aspx>, accessed May 7, 2006).

Consensus is defined as a decision-making process by which an agreement is made by all members of a group, rather than a majority or a select group of representatives. To reach this agreement, the group goes through a non-hierarchical consensus process with assumptions, methods and results that differ from traditional parliamentary or majority voting procedures (<http://www.cohousing.org/glossary.aspx>, accessed May 7, 2006).

Group Process is defined as the behaviour, communication or decision-making process of people in groups. An individual with expertise in group process, such as a trained facilitator, can help a group toward accomplishing its goal by assessing how the group functions and intervening to alter the way individuals interact with each other (<http://www.cohousing.org/glossary.aspx>, accessed May 7, 2006).

Resident Management is defined by residents who manage their own cohousing communities, and also perform much of the work required to maintain the property. They participate in the preparation of shared meals, and meet regularly to solve problems and develop policies for the community (<http://www.cohousing.org/glossary.aspx>, accessed May 7, 2006).

Third Sector is defined as intermediary organizational forms located between the private, for-profit world and government. Third sector organizations may include non-profit organizations and cooperatives, private voluntary organizations and philanthropic and operating foundations (Anheier, H. and Seibel, W., 1990).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Chapter One: Introduction	1
1.1	Preamble	1
1.2	Problem; A Need for New Housing Typologies	2
1.3	Statement of Purpose and Research Questions	4
1.4	Research Methods	6
1.5	Assumptions and Limitations	7
1.6	Chapter Outline	9
2	Chapter Two: Research Methods	11
2.1	Background to the Case Study	11
2.2	Case Study Research	13
2.3	The Interview Method	16
2.4	Analysis of Interview Data	18
2.5	Interview Selection	19
3	Chapter Three: Literature Review	22
3.1	Theoretical Orientation	22
3.2	Overview	24
3.3	The Emergence of Non-Profit Housing in Canada	24
3.4	Community-based Non-Profit Housing Organizations	29
3.5	Capacity Building in Non-Profit Housing Sector	30
3.6	Cohousing Models	32
3.7	Cohousing and the Non-profit Sector	37
3.8	Cohousing and Neighbourhood Renewal	41
3.9	Cohousing Processes	43
3.10	Affordability Strategies for Cohousing	46
3.11	Literature Review Findings	49
4	Chapter Four: Local Context	52
4.1	Housing and Neighbourhood Renewal Initiatives	52
4.2	The North End Housing Project	55
4.3	The North Point Douglas Gateway Cohousing Project	57
5	Chapter Five: Results and Analysis	65
5.1	Analysis of the Interview Findings	65
5.2	Interview Findings from Case Study Respondents	67
5.3	Interview Findings from Cohousing Respondents	76
5.4	Response Analysis and Comparison	86
6	Chapter Six: Synthesis and Summary	89

6.1	Synthesis -----	89
6.2	Building Community -----	90
6.3	Cohousing for Low-income Communities -----	92
6.4	Engaging Non-profit Housing Organizations in Cohousing -----	94
6.5	Housing Policy Recommendations -----	99
6.6	Directions for Future Research -----	100
6.7	Summary -----	101
7	References -----	103
8	Appendices -----	107

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

North America continues to develop housing models that target the suburban nuclear family. However, changing demographics and work patterns have resulted in a growing number of individuals who are ill-housed (Franck and Ahrentzen, 1989). Urban inner city communities are particularly vulnerable to affordable housing dilemmas and weaker social ties. New housing models are required to address our changing lifestyles and to provide affordable housing options. Recently, some community-based non-profit housing organizations have begun to explore alternative housing models that provide affordable housing options and build a sense of shared community.

Cohousing is one option that provides a new perspective on Western society's concept of home, neighbourhood and community. "Cohousing offers the social and practical advantages of a closely knit neighbourhood within the context of twentieth century life" (McCamant and Durrett, 1994:38). However, selecting this housing model also means choosing and embracing a lifestyle because it incorporates shared spaces and communal facilities. While still emerging in North America, cohousing has been adopted primarily by moderate and higher income residents. This is often related to costly development and time-consuming collaborative cohousing planning processes, as cohousing is as much a process for developing housing as it is a new housing type.

This research was inspired by the need to explore alternative housing models for low-income communities. As non-profit housing organizations are the primary providers of affordable housing in Canada, it is imperative to investigate their role(s) in the provision of alternative housing models. Although cohousing projects are studied as alternative housing models, their relationship to community-based non-profit housing organizations and/or their potential impact within the context of low-income communities remains relatively unknown. This thesis attempts to bridge the gap in the literature on cohousing and the non-profit housing sector. It also aims to build a base from which to further explore cohousing as a plausible alternative housing model for low-income communities.

Finally, this thesis provides an overview of the present non-profit housing context; examines the problems and prospects of the cohousing model in low-income communities and explores the roles of non-profit housing organizations in cohousing.

1.2 Problem: A Need for New Housing Typologies

Over the last few decades, housing affordability in Canada has been stressed by a number of issues, particularly the devolution of the federal government's role in providing affordable housing. As a result, many Canadian inner cities have been affected and are facing affordable housing dilemmas and deteriorating neighbourhoods. The affordable housing that is provided generally develops on a partnership basis, with community groups or third sector organizations playing the lead role (Carter, 1997:612).

Winnipeg's inner-city communities, specifically the North End neighbourhoods have also experienced significant decline in decent affordable housing stock, commercial development and social cohesion, as well as problems related to high unemployment, crime, transience and substance abuse. While Winnipeg's housing is among the most affordable in Canada, many low-income households continue to pay excessive amounts of their income for housing.

“Over 50% of all households in the inner-city pay in excess of 25% of their income for housing. This proportion increases to almost 70% for Aboriginal households in the inner-city, and 80% of Aboriginal single parent households. The result of spending more than 25% of their income and in many cases 40% of their income on housing is ‘after shelter poverty’ for many low-income households. This leads to an increase in child poverty and a greater demand for social services” (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 2001:1).

Research by the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg indicates that Winnipeg is in crisis due to the lack of permanent low-income housing. New affordable housing unit development has not kept pace, and demand for subsidized units and lengthy waiting lists for social housing programs exacerbate the need for affordable housing solutions. The Social Planning Council estimates that approximately 1,180 new housing units would be required each year over the next five years in order to meet the City's needs (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1999).

Increasing housing costs, along with diverse lifestyles and family compositions call for a thorough examination of household and community needs. A model that presents affordable housing and a sense of shared community offers the potential to provide residents with a stable and holistic sense of home and neighbourhood.

In response to the dilemma, a number of non-profit housing organizations are broadening their mandate to extend beyond single detached housing provision. These projects aim to provide decent, safe affordable housing units, and build a sense of shared community through pro-active participatory planning and consensus-building processes. These projects may include lease-to-own units, housing cooperatives and community land trusts, among others. However, non-profits interested in developing alternative housing projects for low-income communities face a number of challenges that hinder project development, ability to generate community buy-in, coordinate pre-development collaborative planning processes, secure multi-faceted project financing, conduct on-going property management and sustain resident retention.

The number of households in need of affordable housing is on the rise, and the need to explore appropriate affordable housing solutions is urgent. The traditional apartment or single detached housing typology designed to accommodate nuclear families is no longer sufficient to meet the physical and social needs of our diverse society. The pressing need to develop new affordable housing typologies is inevitable and can no longer be ignored.

1.3 Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to explore the concept of cohousing as an option to address current housing needs and to identify the problems and prospects of cohousing for low-income communities through a cohousing case study proposed by one local non-profit housing provider. The focus of the research is to a) identify barriers and

opportunities to developing cohousing projects; b) explore the role(s) cohousing models play or are positioned to play in low-income neighbourhoods by building community and providing decent affordable housing; and c) cultivate enhancement recommendations for non-profit housing organizations interested in developing cohousing projects for low-income neighbourhoods.

As well, the study provides a rendering of one non-profit's brief experience with a proposed cohousing project. It highlights lessons for others embarking on cohousing projects and informs non-profit housing providers, community development workers, city planners and policy analysts in project planning and policy development. In essence, the study aims to 1) review the current non-profit housing context in Canada, including literature on alternative collaborative housing models such as cohousing; 2) highlight the perceived impact or role(s) cohousing models can play in building community and providing affordable housing to low-income communities; and 3) identify enhancement recommendations and internal and external capacity building supports to plan, develop and sustain cohousing communities.

The study is significant in that it addresses an existing gap in the literature on cohousing and contributes to affordable housing, community development and city planning literature, by exploring how non-profit housing organizations can engage in cohousing to meet the needs of low-income communities. In essence, the study focused on answering the following research questions:

1. How can cohousing models meet current housing needs and build a sense of community?

2. What are the barriers and opportunities of cohousing models in low-income communities?
3. What type of internal and external supports do non-profit housing organizations require to plan, develop and sustain a cohousing project?

1.4 Research Methods

The research methodology, outlined in Chapter 2, describes the proposed stages of research action and summation of events. In order to address the stated research questions, the study was framed within three distinct stages of research. The first stage of research included conducting a case study of the North End Housing Project's North Point Douglas Gateway Cohousing Project. The second stage of research included a literature review to address topics regarding the emergence of non-profit housing organizations in Canada, issues facing community-based non-profit housing organizations and cohousing projects in European and North American contexts.

Finally, the third stage of research employed the qualitative research method of interviewing, to explore cohousing as an appropriate model for low-income neighbourhoods. Key informants were selected based on their involvement in the case study and/or their participation in cohousing related organizations/projects. A total of eight key informant in-depth interviews were conducted with four North American cohousing representatives/residents residing in/or planning a cohousing community, one affordable housing project analyst involved in the case study, two staff members from the NEHP involved in the case study (Resident Outreach Coordinator and Project Coordinator, who was also in the process of establishing a private rural cohousing project) and one community development worker involved in the case study. Interview

data provided a framework to explore the perceived impact or role(s) cohousing models could play in building community and providing decent affordable housing for low-income communities. It also highlighted internal and external resources and supports non-profit housing organizations require to engage in cohousing processes.

1.5 Assumptions and Limitations

There are a number of personal assumptions and biases that must be acknowledged at the onset of this study. The most significant bias underlying this study is the belief that alternative housing models need to be explored in order to address our changing social context. Secondly, for the purpose of this study, housing is assumed to be a basic human right and include the concepts of shelter and home with emphasis placed on permanent rather than temporary housing. According to the Declaration of Human Rights, article 25 (1), housing is a basic human right. Therefore, adequate affordable housing should be available to all Canadian citizens (Davies, 1999). Adequate and affordable housing is also understood to be fundamental to individual and family well being. "Housing is not an autonomous phenomenon, and therefore, policy must respect these interrelationships between physical, socio-cultural, economic, regulatory and technological needs at many different scales, in order to be truly responsive to the 'match' between built environments and occupants needs" (Stefanovic, 1992: 156). Finally, it should be noted by the researcher that a community planners' role is to be a pro-active resource for the community and assist community groups in achieving collective goals and objectives.

Limitations to the study must also be highlighted. To begin, it would be inaccurate to consider this research an evaluation of cohousing. Instead, it is an investigation of the theoretical application of the model to a particular case study. The nature of this qualitative approach provides detailed, descriptive accounts and explores the concept of a cohousing model within one low-income community. As well, provincial and civic housing contexts vary by region and as a result, transferability of the research findings may be limited.

A second limitation to this study is the limited amount of literature on cohousing with a lesser amount specific to the application of the model in low-income communities. Literature derived from other non-profit housing organizations in North America is referenced, but is also limited because it is not context specific and is intended to serve as a building block to locally derived solutions.

Finally, the most limiting aspect of the research is that it is contingent upon the small sample of interviews conducted with cohousing representatives, NEHP staff and local community development workers. These factors exclude the views and perspectives of those residing in low-income communities, and they skew research findings to emphasize cohousing processes and the issues and needs facing non-profit housing organizations.

1.6 Chapter Outline

This thesis contains six chapters. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the research strategy. It discusses the proposed research methods, summation of events and re-orientation of the research strategy to generate, collate and analyze research data.

Chapter 3 presents findings from the literature review. This chapter highlights the role of collaborative planning theory in community planning activities. As well, it discusses the emergence of the non-profit housing sector in Canada and examines the issues facing community-based non-profit housing organizations and reviews cohousing models in European and North American contexts.

Chapter 4 provides information on the local Winnipeg context and highlights existing housing and community development activities in the North End. As well, it introduces the North End Housing Project and its proposed North Point Douglas Gateway Cohousing Project as a case study.

Chapter 5 analyzes the interview findings conducted with case study and cohousing respondents. This data analyzes the cohousing model and explores the role(s) of non-profit housing organizations in the cohousing process. It highlights the problems and prospects of the cohousing model for low-income communities.

Finally, Chapter 6 addresses the key research questions and provides conclusions and recommendations pertaining to Chapters 3 and 5 and relates it to the theoretical information provided throughout the thesis. Recommendations are provided in an effort to support the role of non-profits in the development of alternative housing models and to increase the effectiveness of non-profit housing organizations' role(s) in cohousing projects for low-income communities.



Chapter Two

RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Background to the Case Study

This research project began in the summer of 2005, when meetings were held with an Interim Manager at the North End Housing Project (NEHP) to discuss mutually beneficial affordable housing-related research projects. The Interim Manager identified that the NEHP had recently developed a proposal for an 11-unit affordable housing project to be built in Winnipeg's North Point Douglas neighbourhood. The project entitled the "North Point Douglas Gateway Cohousing Project" had also been submitted to provincial departments for capital project funding. Subsequently, it was agreed that the Gateway Cohousing Project would serve as a case study, to explore the problems and prospects of cohousing models developed by non-profit housing organizations in low-income communities.

A proposal was submitted to the thesis advisory committee and approved by ethics review in fall 2005. The proposal identified that 12 key informant interviews would be conducted, comprised of North American Cohousing organization representatives, case study and low-income residents of the North Point Douglas neighbourhood. As well, the study would include a focus group with interested case study respondents and local residents to explore resident housing needs, present the concept of cohousing and establish interest in the cohousing model.

In order to initiate research processes with the NEHP as a case study, a proposal addressing a specified list of criteria developed by the NEHP was required in conjunction with a copy of the University of Manitoba Ethics Approval. NEHP had developed the list of 10 criteria against which to evaluate and select research requests. Researchers are required to address these criteria for review by a NEHP research selection committee. NEHP's list of 10 criteria including the researchers' response (see Appendix 1) along with the University of Manitoba Ethics Approval forms (see Appendix 2) were submitted and approved in fall 2005.

Upon obtaining ethics approval, interviews with cohousing representatives began and meetings were held with a newly appointed Manager at the NEHP and existing North Point Douglas Gateway Cohousing Project Committee to discuss project partners, preliminary design plans and pre-development planning and cohousing processes. However in winter 2005, the NEHP project committee decided to steer away from the cohousing model, citing both internal and external factors, largely related to staffing, project delays and strict funding conditions. In consultation with the thesis supervisor, it was determined that the proposed interviews and focus group with low-income residents be negated as they would be solely beneficial to the researcher and therefore deemed unethical.

The focus of the study was subsequently re-directed to explore broader issues surrounding non-profit housing organizations, their role(s) in cohousing projects and the problems and prospects of cohousing for low-income communities with a case study of

the NEHP's proposed Gateway Cohousing Project. The following thesis presents an exploration of these findings.

2.2 Case Study Research

This thesis is qualitative in nature and focuses on the development of actions and strategies to a particular context. While the thesis topic embraces theoretical concepts and seeks to assist in the development of knowledge, it is inherently problem solving research surrounding alternative affordable housing models.

The primary research questions were developed to help address an existing gap identified in a preliminary review of affordable housing literature. As discussed in Chapter 1, the study focused on answering the following research questions:

1. How can cohousing models meet current housing needs and build a sense of community?
2. What are the barriers and opportunities of cohousing models in low-income communities?
3. What type of internal and external supports do non-profit housing organizations require to plan, develop and sustain a cohousing project?

In order to address the stated research questions, it was determined at the onset of the thesis that the selected research strategy would comprise a case study of the NEHP's proposed Gateway Cohousing Project. The single-case study design was selected, with the understanding that: 1) the researcher had little control over the cohousing process; 2) the researcher acknowledged that cohousing is never generic and cohousing models should be adapted to respond to the needs of individual communities; and 3) the

researcher desired additional information on the non-profit housing organization and organizational processes.

Of particular relevance to this thesis is a review of case study research conducted by Robert Yin (2003) and John Zeisel (1984). Yin (1991) notes that in general, case studies are the preferred method when researchers have little control over events and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context. "As a research strategy, the case study is used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political and related phenomena" (Yin, Robert 2003: 1). Zeisel (1984) adds to this work and notes that case study research involves a number of methods to describe and diagnose a single, internally complex process. He states that these methods include, but are not limited to, direct or participant observation, literature reviews, interviews and focus groups, which aim to target multiple sources of evidence. While case study research methods allow researchers to investigate real life events such as organizational processes, it is not without its criticisms.

Case studies have been the subject of criticism for many social scientists, who still believe that case studies are only a preliminary research strategy and cannot be used to describe or test propositions (Yin, 2003). However, it should be noted that case studies are not always intended to be generalized. Each case study must be studied individually. While inspiration can be derived from successful case studies, they must be individually situated.

In line with case study research methodology, the initial research design was to:

- Engage in the direct observation of cohousing planning processes by sitting in on the NEHP Gateway Cohousing Project committee meetings;
- Conduct an extensive literature review on the Canadian affordable housing context, the role(s) of non-profit housing providers and implementation of cohousing models in European and North American contexts;
- Carry out 12 in-depth interviews with 3 North American cohousing organization representatives and 9 case study participants; and
- Conduct a focus group with all interested interviewees and neighbourhood residents.

These methods and techniques were intended to build on each other and provide an opportunity to compare and contrast results to the research questions (i.e. problems and prospects of cohousing for low-income communities) from multiples sources and types of information.

However, as a result of organizational challenges and related project events discussed in Chapter 4, the NEHP decided to steer away from the cohousing model. This unforeseen challenge forced the researcher to adopt a certain degree of flexibility and re-orient the research methodology. In consultation with the advisory committee, it was determined that the research would be re-focused to adopt a broader qualitative research approach. The re-orientation of the research design was to include information collected during the initial case study research process (i.e. meetings with interim and newly appointed management staff, review of the Gateway Cohousing Project proposal and scan of the Gateway Cohousing Project Committee meeting notes and minutes) as well as;

- Conduct an extensive literature review on the Canadian affordable housing context, the role(s) of non-profit housing providers and implementation of cohousing models in European and North American contexts; and
- Carry out 8 qualitative interviews with 4 case study respondents and 4 North American cohousing organization representatives, to explore the perceived problems and prospects of cohousing as an appropriate model for low-income neighbourhoods.

Interview data was intended to provide a framework to explore the perceived impact or role cohousing models could play in building community and providing decent affordable housing for low-income communities. It was also anticipated that the interview findings would highlight internal and external resources and supports non-profit housing organizations required to engage in the cohousing process.

2.3 The Interview Method

Qualitative research acknowledges reality as constantly changing and dependent on the observer. It is based upon the premise that the context within which social phenomena occur influences and shapes situations. Chapman and McLean (1990) and Reinharz (1992) are referenced to provide an overview of the variables in qualitative research and inform interview methodology.

The goals of qualitative research are to search for explanations and the further discovery of new meanings. Chapman and McLean (1990) state that "A pre-requisite to understanding people and their actions is understanding the meanings that their

experiences have for them” (Chapman, McLean 1990: 130). In qualitative research, sample sizes are small, analysis is ongoing and results are geared to a particular situation or context and are not intended to be generalizable.

Qualitative research methods may include interviews and focus groups.

“Interview research explores people’s views of reality and allows the researcher to generate theory” (Reinharz, 1992:18). Qualitative interviews are aimed at understanding the meaning of people’s experiences from their own perspectives, as well as their relationship to their surrounding environments.

The qualitative interview method used throughout this study consisted of a two part interview question format (See Appendix 3). The first part of the interview was unique to each group. These pre-determined open-ended questions were designed to help clarify individual roles and provide a context for the remaining questions. It covered information on how/why the interviewee got involved with their stated organization; what their current role was within that organization; whether or not their organization aimed to provide affordable housing units and if so, whether or not their organization provided programs or community building activities for their residents, the community at large and whether they worked in partnership with other organizations to deliver these programs or services.

The second component of the interview was the same for all interviewees and was designed to address issues specific to cohousing. These pre-determined open-ended interview questions addressed individual positions, concerns and recommendations. It was anticipated that this type of interview method would reflect the unique and individual

perspectives of participating interviewees. Questions covered information on what the case study respondents thought a cohousing model could look like or entail; what role cohousing could play in low-income communities; the challenges and opportunities of developing a cohousing community; and how those challenges differed for low-income residents/neighbourhoods. The interview also explored questions on what internal and external supports were required to plan, develop and sustain a cohousing model in a low-income community; strategies non-profit housing developers should employ when initiating a cohousing project; and general discussion on whether they thought there was only one model of cohousing, or if they thought it was possible to pursue various degrees of collaboration in a cohousing model i.e. high degree of collaboration (3 shared meals a day) vs. low degree of collaboration (1 meal a week).

2.4 Analysis of Interview Data

Upon the completion of each interview, the interview data was collated, transcribed and analysed using a content analysis approach. Content analysis is described as the process of identifying, coding and categorizing primary patterns within the data (Patton, 1987, 1990). This entailed reviewing the data and highlighting similar ideas, issues or concepts; developing a classification system to establish high or low inference results; and concluding with a narrative write-up with illustrative quotes to support the analysis (Gillham, 2000). This approach was selected in order to highlight priority issues identified by each interviewee; search for similar themes and issues identified among

interviewees and interview groups (i.e. case study vs. cohousing respondents); and identify common themes in the literature.

This method of analysis contributes towards understanding the perceived issues surrounding cohousing models; explores the perceived impact of these models; and identifying perceived problems and prospects of the model for low-income communities. As well, it was anticipated that the interview feedback would provide recommendations on internal and external capacity building supports required to plan, develop and sustain cohousing communities.

It is the intent of this thesis to analyze the theoretical aspects of cohousing for low-income communities and the delivery of this housing model by community-based non-profit housing providers. As well, the research aims to identify inherent opportunities and constraints of the cohousing model as it relates to affordable housing strategies. Through the qualitative data, it was expected that practical experiences will give further indication of inherent opportunities and constraints of cohousing models developed for low-income communities by non-profit housing providers from a process perspective.

2.5 Interview Selection

All interviewees were recruited for the study via email or telephone solicitation and were provided with a letter of recruitment (see Appendix 4). Key informants were selected based on their involvement in the case study and/or their participation in cohousing related organizations/projects. A total of eight key informant in-depth interviews were conducted with four North American cohousing representatives/residents

residing in/or planning a cohousing community, one affordable housing analyst involved in the case study, two staff members from the NEHP involved in the case study (Resident Outreach Coordinator and Project Coordinator, who was also in the process of establishing a private rural cohousing project) and one local community development worker involved in the case study. Specifically, case study respondents were selected based on recommendations from NEHP management. Cohousing respondents were selected based on interview requests to the Canadian Cohousing Network and the Cohousing Association of the United States. Their participation was voluntary and no compensation was provided. Interviewees were asked pre-determined questions and were provided with a copy of the interview questions in advance. At the onset of the interview, all interviewees were asked to read and sign the interview consent form (see Appendix 5). The nature of the study and the subjects' participation was explained to them in writing and orally before they agreed to participate. A copy of the consent form was made available to the interviewee and kept on file by the interviewer. All of the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed with permission by the interviewees. No confidential records were consulted and all interviewees were notified when and where the research document would be available.

Considering there was a significant amount of qualitative data obtained from interviewees, there were a number of ethical issues that needed to be addressed. One ethical issue surrounding the involvement of human research subjects is the aspect of confidentiality. This issue was addressed by providing the interviewee with anonymity and assurance that no names would appear in the final document. As well, the interviewer

assured secure safekeeping and destruction of all recorded material upon the end of the study.

The following chapter enhances the identified research methods. As well, it aims to contextualize the study within current housing literature. The literature review provides a scan of Canadian housing policy, the impending affordable housing crisis and subsequent role of third sector/non-profit affordable housing providers. Finally, it presents background information on cohousing as an alternative affordable housing strategy.

Chapter Three

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Theoretical Orientation

This section of the thesis lays out the study's theoretical underpinnings. To begin, an overview of current collaborative and radical planning theories has been included, as they examine the roles, relationships and responsibilities of both planners and community members engaged in collaborative planning processes such as cohousing. Collaborative planning theories address the role of the planner engaged in collaborative community processes and foster the sharing of experiences and building of capacities. Radical planning, however, addresses the role of the planner as secondary to that of the local community members and focuses primarily upon community capacity-building. Healey (1997) and Innes (1995) are referenced to discuss collaborative planning and Sandercock (1995) (1998) is referenced to discuss radical (insurgent) planning.

Collaborative planning is based on a communicative mindset where the focus is on consensus-building practices (Healey, 1997). This approach can identify shared issues, cultivate processes to address those issues, develop partnerships and build capacities. As well, it implements communicative action theories and addresses behavioural approaches to learning. Communicative action theorists view planning as an “interactive, communicative activity, and depict planners as deeply embedded in the fabric of community, politics, and public decision making” (Innes, 1995:183). Communicative

theories about power, empowerment, and communicative action provide planners with insights about how to implement theory into practice. However, in order for community groups to adopt this theoretical approach, they must be receptive to the idea of implementing change through collective efforts.

Radical planning theory is based on an inclusive mindset and advocates for the participation of historically disenfranchised groups in planning practice. In essence, the goal of radical planning aims to “work for structural transformation of systemic inequalities and in the process, to empower those who have been systematically disempowered” (Sandercock, 1998:97). Radical planning places the role of the planner as an enabler of social change and aims to enhance community organizations and urban social movements. While both planning theories share similar principles, radical planning theory encourages inclusive participation in the planning process, acknowledges multiple ways of knowing and aims to foster community-implemented change.

As discussed, both collaborative and radical planning theories address community-based approaches to change. Burke (1979) reinforces this notion by stating that “the objective of planning is not to achieve a new nursery, water system or housing project, but an increased capacity for citizens to undertake other cooperative projects” (Burke, 1979:293).

Such planning theories provide a framework for non-profit housing organizations and related project partners to engage in collaborative cohousing processes. As well, they provide insights on how the planner can engage in collaborative planning processes and enhance community-building strategies.

3.2 Overview

An extensive review of the literature revealed a wealth of information on affordable housing, the non-profit housing sector and community-based non-profit housing organizations. However, there was a limited amount of material on cohousing models in a North American context, with a lesser amount related to the non-profit sector. Consequently, the thesis content is unique and aims to bridge an existing gap in the literature on cohousing and the non-profit housing sector. As a result of the identified gap in the literature, three broader categories have been selected to provide a context for the present study. These categories include the emergence of non-profit housing in Canada; community-based non-profit housing organizations; and European and North American cohousing models.

The scope of this literature review includes publications from academic journals, books, government documents, non-governmental organization documents, and other reports related to city planning and urban renewal, housing and family studies and social work and community development disciplines.

3.3 The Emergence of Non-profit Housing in Canada

The first section of the review centers on affordable housing policy and provides a review of the emergence of non-profit housing organizations in Canada as well as Manitoba's non-profit housing sector. Recent research highlighting issues related to this study include Carroll (1995) (2002), Carter (1996) and Banting (2000).

Carroll's work (1995) (2002) is particularly relevant to this study as it addresses Canadian housing policy and the emergence of non-profit housing organizations. Carroll (2002) categorizes housing policy since 1945 into five distinct phases: the economic development phase (1945-68), the social development phase (1968-1978), the financial restraint phase (1978-1986), the disentanglement phase (1986-1994), and the disengagement and privatization phase (1994-present).

The non-profit housing program emerged from the social development phase and was initially introduced as a means of overcoming the perceived shortcomings of the existing public housing program. Carroll (1995) notes that the Non-profit and Co-operative Housing Program was introduced in 1975 but not incorporated into the National Housing Act until 1978, and was intended to overcome the stigma associated with the very large government-managed public housing projects built during the 1960s.

"The non-profit program was designed to produce housing different from the public housing program in four distinct ways. The projects were to be: a) small and medium density; b) income integrated; c) developed and managed by community groups; and d) less expensive. The original program was intended to focus upon the rehabilitation of existing housing and projects were to be managed on a non-profit basis, in some cases by volunteers" (Carroll 1995:27).

Despite original program intentions, there were a number of problems in program implementation among both government and non-profit groups. High turnover in board membership, lack of additional resources and unskilled staff represent only a few of the many challenges facing non-profit groups. These issues, among others, created obstacles and what Carroll refers to as 'program drifts.' Carroll (1995) states that one way to deal

with these 'program drifts' is to focus on process. She emphasizes that making the process a goal in itself, rather than simply a means of achieving program goals, is a key element in the sustained planning and implementation of non-profit housing in Canada.

Tom Carter (1997) is also referenced to discuss non-profit housing groups and various processes implemented in the development of affordable housing delivery. Carter's work informs discussion around Canadian housing policy, the devolution of the federal governments' role in providing affordable housing and its creative aftermath. Carter describes the creative aftermath as a number of positive aspects that evolved out of the federal devolution, including a successful increase in the community's capacity to design and implement social programs with localized jurisdictions, while at the same time servicing individual community needs.

The non-profit and cooperative housing sectors which include municipal non-profits, cooperatives and community-based groups and organizations have become the major coordinators of the production and delivery of non market or affordable housing in Canada. This 'third' sector has grown in importance since changes to the National Housing Act in 1973 when the public housing program was replaced by non-profit housing. The government instead of delivering, owning and managing the social housing stock, decided to place the delivery and management responsibilities of assisted housing in the hands of the third sector (Carter, 1997).

While affordable housing providers consist of a diverse group of representatives, they continue to struggle in the face of reduced funding for affordable housing with no decline in demand for their product. "In addition to the lower level of production, other

characteristics of the affordable housing sector are becoming more significant. Greater importance is being placed on the partnerships among government, the private sector, and community groups to support affordable housing initiatives” (Carter, 1997: 628). The third sector has had to play a greater role in initiating projects and forging partnerships. They have also become successful in their ability to organize volunteers, build capacity, access private funding and link housing to other support services. Johnson and Ruddock (2000) add to this statement by noting that third sector organizations can be flexible and adaptable in delivering social policy programs as many tend to be broad in their mandates. They state that this sector leads the way in creating new and effective partnerships, partly out of necessity, but effectively nonetheless.

Although the positive aspects of this creative aftermath are noteworthy, they should not overshadow the need for sustained program funding from the public sector. Carter suggests that many affordable housing initiatives accommodate only a limited number of low-income households and that “Without a sustained program of housing support by the senior levels of government, many Canadian households may face deteriorating housing circumstances” (Carter, 1997: 629). Carter also acknowledges the growing need to research the third sector, specifically non-profit housing organizations considering their role as principle managers and directors of affordable housing provision in Canada.

Finally, Keith Banting (2000) is referenced to shed light on the role of the non-profit sector. His work addresses the multiple dimensions of the non-profit sector in Canada and provides an overview of the local Manitoba context. Banting claims that

recent interest in non-profit organizations in Canada has been driven by a number of changes in our political and social structure. He states that "The non-profit sector appears to be emerging as a chosen instrument of collective action in a new century. Government retrenchment in the 1990s has led to reductions in many community and social services, and a renewed interest in the potential role for non-profit organizations in filling the gaps in our social safety net" (Banting, 2000:2).

Banting also identifies the economic and social contributions of the non-profit sector.

"Moreover, in the most prominent contribution to current debate, 'Putman (1993, 1995a, 1995b) argues that a dense, vibrant community of civic associations (non-profits) builds networks and trust among citizens, and thereby enhances a society's capacity for collective action and represents a form of social capital' which, according to Putman, is every bit as important as financial capital or human capital. High levels of social capital, he insists, contribute both to strong economic performance and to effective democratic governance" (Banting, 2000:3).

As a result of economic, social and political changes, non-profits are now facing increasing roles and responsibilities. Banting (2000) stresses the need for additional research on the non-profit sector and suggests that it is virtually impossible to develop a comprehensive picture of their socio-economic contributions to Canadian society due to the lack of existing data on non-profit organizations in Canada.

3.4 Community-based Non-profit Housing Organizations

This section of the review highlights the role of housing in Community Development (CD), specifically community-based non-profit housing organizations. It also includes a review of community-based organizations (CBO) and place-based approaches to local housing needs. The literature is American in content, but includes principles that can be adapted to the Canadian context.

Of particular relevance to this study are researchers Green and Haines (2002). They contend that “Efforts to produce and renovate affordable housing are place based strategies in community development. Although the construction of affordable housing benefits individuals who may reside in those units, housing is tied to a particular community, a neighbourhood” (Green and Haines 2002:114).

CD that occurs in CBO’s, and community-based non-profit housing organizations, offer a number of advantages as opposed to outside organizations in delivering place-based programs. “Locally based organizations provide a) extensive knowledge of neighbourhood history and established partnerships, b) emphasis and commitment to place and c) greater resident control and participation” (Green and Haines 2002:113).

After investigating the relationship between affordable housing and CD, they conclude that “CBO’s because of their unique relationship with communities, can help establish networks that are part of a broader affordable housing strategy while addressing local housing concerns and providing information on affordable housing to a broad array

of actors and institutions” (Green and Haines 2002:113). Community-based non-profit housing organizations are also positioned to form strategic partnerships with local CBO’s, voluntary organizations, government bodies, financial institutions, and philanthropic organizations that make alternative affordable housing projects feasible.

3.5 Capacity Building in the Non-profit Housing Sector

As noted, the non-profit housing sector plays a critical role in the provision of affordable housing in Canada. These services provided by non-profits go well beyond shelter, as family life, community development and social mobility are often supplementary supports supported through this sector (Shlay, 1995). Non-profit housing organizations often collaborate with other CDC’s to establish community priorities, develop community housing plans and deliver related programming to respond to identified needs. In short, they help give a voice to the communities they serve that are often left out of the housing market.

Although community-based non-profits may be able to identify the needs of the local community, capacity and expertise represent a problem as many non-profits face performance challenges (Carter, 1997 and Skelton, 1998). While these organizations work to address the needs of the communities they serve, they often require internal and external supports to increase their capacity and address related organizational challenges, such as limited project funding, predevelopment project financing and organizational sustainability. Albeit reactive, local governments are beginning to recognize the need to

support organizations in a more comprehensive fashion, starting with a greater allocation of project funds (Goetz, 1993). However, project funding alone may not be flexible enough to adapt to the organizational challenges faced by non-profit's or to address the changing needs of the public they serve (Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, 2002).

In order to understand the importance of capacity-building in the non-profit housing sector, it is imperative to review the work of Glickman and Servon (1998). They point out that, although there is no universally acceptable definition of capacity-building, there is clearly a movement toward greater comprehensiveness. The importance of greater comprehensiveness in both CDC output and approach is noted through strong support of Stone (1996), Baker, Chaskin and Wynn (1996), Rich (1995), Ferguson and Stoutland (1996), Svirdoff and Ryan (1996) and other theorists who cite the need for a comprehensive community-building initiative (CCI) model; which combines housing with economic development and social welfare objectives to address the social, structural and economic aspects of community revitalization.

Glickman and Servon note that capacity is built internally and externally, and that it involves the development of both physical and financial assets of community organizations as well as the neighborhoods they serve (DTI, 2000). They contend that efforts to define capacity-building fail to account for the full array of capacity-building activities. As a result, they have divided the definition of capacity into five major capacity components: resource capacity (*defined as an organization's ability to increase, sustain and manage funding*); organizational capacity (*defined as internal functioning or*

management, size and skill of the organization); programmatic capacity (*defined as the provision or variety of resources delivered to the community*); networking capacity (*defined by established networks that help leverage funding and avoid duplication of services*), and political capacity (*defined by the ability to generate support for projects and involve residents in determining community needs*) (Glickman and Servon, 1998, 2003).

As discussed, community-based non-profit housing organizations play a critical role in the provision of affordable housing in Canada. As well, they often work collaboratively with CDC's and aim to address a more comprehensive approach to affordable housing, community development and neighbourhood renewal. However, capacity issues and funding constraints are seriously threatening the non-profit housing sector. The reality exists that many non-profit housing organizations require additional internal and external supports and financial resources to build their capacity and meet growing responsibilities. As discussed in the following section, these non-profits and the communities they serve require a high degree of organizational and community capacity in order to engage in lengthy and extensive cohousing processes.

3.6 Cohousing Models

This section of the review is centered on the emergence of cohousing models in both European and North American contexts. It provides an overview on the emergence of the cohousing model and includes a discussion on planning, developing and

maintaining a cohousing community. Specifically, it aims to address the role non-profit housing organizations have played in developing cohousing communities.

The term cohousing was developed by American architects Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett (1988), who studied Danish collaborative housing projects and promoted their development in North America. However, the concept of cohousing began in Denmark in 1964, when architect Jan Gudmand-Hoyer gathered a group of friends to discuss their need for alternative housing options that would provide a more supportive living environment. Their first attempt to develop a collaborative housing community on the outskirts of Copenhagen received broad support from city officials, but failed to get off the ground as a result of public opposition. However, in 1973, the first two resident owned cohousing communities Saettedammen (27 units) and Skraplanet (33 units) were completed (McCamant and Durrett, 1988). Although the original cohousing concept had sought a diverse mixture of resident ages and incomes, time, social and financial realities called for compromises in order to see projects built. In 1976, Tinggarden, the first rental cohousing community was completed by the architectural firm Vandkunsten, sponsored by the Danish Building Research Institute and built by a non-profit housing developer.

The Danish concept of “living community” translated from the Danish word “Bofoellesskaber” has spread quickly. These Danish cohousing projects pioneered new ideas of living collaboratively, and influenced many communities that have since followed. After three decades of cohousing development in Denmark, it is now a well established housing option and previous criticisms of the model as a high-priced housing option are no longer true.

Worldwide, there are now hundreds of cohousing communities, expanding from Denmark into the U.S, Canada, Australia, Sweden, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Belgium, Austria and elsewhere. To date, there are approximately 186 (organizing or established) cohousing communities in the United States and 19 (organizing or established) cohousing communities in Canada (www.cohousing.ca/www.cohousing.org, Accessed June 20, 2006).

Of particular relevance to this study are collaborative/cohousing housing researchers Franck and Ahrentzen (1989), Fromm (1991), McCamant and Durrett (1994), and Scotthanson and Scotthanson (2005).

Housing researchers Franck and Ahrentzen (1989) acknowledge the growing number of non-traditional households and their need to have a central role in the current housing debate. Their research explores the practical and economic advantages of new housing for new household types such as collective, cohousing and co-operative housing models among others. As well, they discuss new forms of housing dwellings that may or may not be conventional, but seek greater social contact through sharing and cooperation.

Franck and Ahrentzen (1989) define collective housing as “housing that features spaces and facilities for joint use by all residents who also maintain their own individual households” (Franck and Ahrentzen, 1989: 3). They clarify that shared housing is quite different from collective housing in that shared housing features spaces or facilities that are usually part of the private domain of individual households such as kitchens and bathrooms. Shared housing however differs from collective housing in the degree of autonomy and privacy of the occupants. Franck and Ahrentzen (1989) claim that in both

types of housing, sharing means the use of common facilities and may also include social interaction and coordination and cooperation of common tasks. They identify that with proper coordination there are a number of advantages to shared and collective housing. For example, cost-sharing lowers rent/mortgage payments; allows for additional amenities; encourages the sharing of household responsibilities; and provides social benefits, such as security and support and organized group activities.

Franck and Ahrentzen (1989) state that in order to secure appropriate dwellings for our varied needs, we need to challenge our traditional assumptions and increase pluralism and user control. They contend that the amount of developed alternative housing models and experiments declined after World War II, as a growing number of households moved towards single detached housing models and increased autonomy. They indicate that "While the single family house effectively answers a number of needs for many Americans – space, sanitation, security, status and privacy – today's demographics and household economics call into question the relevance of these cultural values, and in particular the means of achieving them for all households" (Franck and Ahrentzen, 1989: Introduction xii).

However, in Europe, the concept of collective habitation continues to be realized in Sweden (communal housing) and Denmark (cohousing) (Franck and Ahrentzen, 1989). Swedish communal housing is dominated by two separate models, which include the service approach and the tenant-management approach. The service approach was based on the social welfare philosophy that social and health services be integrated into the community. These projects are large-scale developments and range from 86-135

communal apartments (Franck and Ahrentzen, 1989). The tenant-management approach, on the other hand, is based on self-help and tenant organizations who assume some or all of the management tasks. They are much smaller in scale, comprised of 9-78 apartments and are centered on shared food service provision (Franck and Ahrentzen, 1989). While Swedish communal housing experiments and models appear to provide solutions to the problems of many modern households, they are difficult to contextualize in other locations due to their structural dependence on government subsidy and support for both capital and on-going costs.

Cohousing in Denmark, however, rose from a collective grassroots desire to combine the autonomy of private dwellings with the advantages of community living. "The developments vary in size, financing method, and ownership structure but share a consistent idea about how people can cooperate in a residential environment to create a stronger sense of community and to share common facilities" (Franck and Ahrentzen, 1989: 95). Cohousing developments may include: privately owned condominiums, limited-equity cooperatives, rentals owned by non-profit organizations, and a combination of private ownership and non-profit rentals units.

"Despite their diversity all cohousing developments consistently incorporate four characteristics including extensive common facilities, an intentional neighbourhood design, a participatory development process, and complete resident management" (Franck and Ahrentzen, 1989: 100).

In cohousing, common spaces are seen as an extension of the private residence. They are used by residents on a daily basis and can also be used by the surrounding community to host neighbourhood meetings and clubs. Intentional neighbourhood design

emphasizes design aspects that increase and/or encourage social interaction and include pedestrian friendly design and interior/exterior gathering spaces. Participatory design processes encourage residents to not only participate in the design development process of cohousing but to also initiate and control it. Residents may organize the group, write the program, hire an architect, choose the financing, participate in the design process and do some construction work and landscaping.

Franck and Ahrentzen's (1989) work highlights the need to explore alternative housing models to accommodate non-traditional households. They reference innovative housing typologies such as collective and cohousing models, while noting that scale and resident participation are key components.

3.7 Cohousing and the Non-Profit Housing Sector

Fromm's work (1991) is particularly noteworthy for this discussion, as it provides a thorough understanding of the diversity in European and North American cohousing models and types of ownership. While European governments are known for their progressive social policies and housing programs, North Americans continue to adopt social policies that target nuclear families and suburban developments. "The Danish government has a long history of concern for housing, not only providing capital but supporting new and innovative solutions to housing needs" (Fromm, 1991: 19). As a result of these policies and strong government support, Danish cohousing communities

have flourished. These communities have also expanded to include various types of ownership such as private, cooperative and non-profit.

The non-profit model is characterized by a non-profit organization that owns the property and rents or leases the units to the residents. These rental developments owned by the non-profit organizations are often designed with less involvement by future residents than the ownership models. Instead, the rental non-profit organizations select a certain number of interested people on the waiting list for non-profit rental housing to participate in the design process. "Although there are more restrictions in rental cohousing and less participation, tenants are happy to have this kind of alternative and find these communities more satisfying than traditional rentals. They have the benefits of the cohousing form: a central shared outdoor area, common facilities, and a design that emphasizes a sense of identity and mutual security" (Fromm, 1991: 41).

Fromm's research (1991) compares European models and highlights various types and scales of collaborative housing projects. She states that

"Dutch collaborative housing is typically larger and more urban than Danish cohousing. About 93% of the dwellings are rentals, owned by large independent non-profit organizations funded by the government. The remaining are resident owned, and their small number places them on the sidelines of the Dutch collaborative movement. (Fromm, 1991: 49).

She states that it is difficult to generalize Dutch projects because they are so diverse.

Dutch projects have a wide range of households, housing types, number of common kitchens and amount of common space. Almost half the tenants are single and a third are single parent families. Turnover rate is also much higher considering many of the

residents may be living in a transition period. However, she notes that “the smaller richer communities appear to function very smoothly, as do the higher-income rentals. The large lowest-income rental developments have more problems in organization and among residents because of financial difficulties and resident turnover” (Fromm, 1991: 57).

Overall, European case studies of collaborative communities demonstrate a high rate of success in providing affordable rental/ownership housing and establishing a sense of shared community. However, applying these models in a North American context has proven to be challenging and complex. As discussed, European developments (Denmark, Holland and Sweden) often receive direct government funding to support cohousing developments by subsidizing rental and cooperative projects through both capital and on-going costs. Lack of North American government support (of this magnitude), has required communities to rely on their own resources. As a result, North American cohousing projects have tended to be expensive and beyond the reach of those with low-incomes. “The few affordable projects that have been developed relied on loans and grants” (Fromm, 1991: 95). However, these private, public and philanthropic loans and grants are generally project specific, time-limited and may support specific objectives such as green building design or density bonuses for targeted areas. In North America, limited government funding and technical support make alternative housing models like cohousing difficult to finance and out of reach for those low-income communities most in need.

Recently, there has been a growing interest in non-profit cohousing development and management structures (Fromm, 1991). This is a result of the non-profits ability to

establish financing and maintain affordability. For example, a group of low-income or mixed income members could negotiate with a non-profit housing developer on the extent of the housing desired. The financing is then obtained through the developer from conventional and government grant and loan programs. The non-profit sponsor would likely require a guarantee that the units will remain affordable over time and the sponsor may then rent or lease the units and help manage the development. The units could then be turned into a leasing cooperative or cohousing model where tenant influence is stronger.

Fromm (1991) cautions that non-profit organizations tend to have their own agenda i.e. providing housing for low-income people; housing specific groups of people (handicapped, elderly, single parents); and/or upgrading a deteriorating neighbourhood. Any partnership group working in conjunction with a non-profit organization will need to understand and accept the non-profit's organizational goals and mandate. "In addition, public monies come with many constraints on who can be housed, as well as regulations governing costs, square footage, and amenities (which reduce the overall costs and the design options)" (Fromm, 1991: 182).

However, working in partnership with non-profit corporations can provide residents with some control over their development. For example, Fromm (1991) identifies that by establishing a management or leasing agreement with the non-profit, the tenant association can assume management responsibility, select new residents and oversee maintenance issues. A gradual transition to full ownership for residents is also a

possibility. As well, the non-profit can regain control of the entire development if the management performance or membership levels fall below expectations.

Fromm's (1991) work highlights cohousing communities developed by local non-profit organizations in both the European and North American housing contexts and identifies challenges and lessons learned for future projects. Key findings indicate cohousing projects built by non-profit organizations are not as successful with low-income residents because of high resident turnover and financial constraints associated with cohousing processes and meetings. As well, there appears to be less desire for low-income residents to aspire towards resident ownership and management structures of the cohousing development.

3.8 Cohousing and Neighbourhood Renewal

Low-income communities targeted for neighbourhood renewal are often characterized by a decline in decent affordable housing stock, commercial development and social cohesion. As well, these communities may experience problems related to high unemployment, crime, transience and substance abuse. This section of the thesis aims to illustrate how cohousing developments can contribute to neighbourhood renewal efforts in low-income communities by: 1) providing an alternative affordable housing model; 2) establishing a sense of shared community among the residents; and 3) fostering community cooperation and a long-term commitment to the area. Of particular relevance to this discussion is a review of the work conducted by Kathryn McCamant (1999).

McCamant (1999) illustrates how cohousing can transform low-income urban neighbourhoods and properties into vital residential communities. She states that the transformation is often a result of: 1) cohousing design considerations which encourage internal and external social interaction; 2) scale of development ranging in size from 8 to 40 households; and 3) cohousing processes and collaborative organizational structures that foster resident involvement and encourage positive impact on the surrounding community. As well, it is often this desired sense of community that attracts a diverse group of residents that strive to accommodate a diversity of incomes, ages, household types and cultural backgrounds. The increasing number of urban cohousing communities planned or under construction in North America demonstrates that cohousing offers an applicable model for diverse regions and socio-economic contexts

(<http://cohousing.org/resources/library/affordability.html>. Accessed June 30, 2005).

McCamant (1999) highlights three North American cohousing developments to demonstrate the positive impact cohousing projects have had on low-income communities and neighbourhood renewal initiatives. All three mixed-income housing projects are urban infill developments built in high-need low-income communities struggling with issues of poverty, safety and social cohesion. These projects include:

- Doyle Street Cohousing (Emeryville, California) completed in 1992, which routinely coordinates neighbourhood beautification and clean-up projects, hosts neighbourhood meetings in its common house and has helped catalyze broader neighbourhood revitalization initiatives including the development of a community school and adjacent live-work projects and office space;

- Southside Park Cohousing (Sacramento, California) completed in 1993 (in cooperation with a local Redevelopment Agency), which welcomes the surrounding residents to share their interior and exterior facilities, helped revitalize the surrounding neighbourhood i.e. stabilizing residential mobility rates, and works with neighbours to address local issues including stopping the liquor sales at the corner store; and
- Berkeley Cohousing (Berkeley, California) completed in 1996, which hosts numerous neighbourhood events, and regularly organizes community workshops and neighbourhood safety programs. It has also inspired an adjacent apartment complex, who is considering incorporating cohousing principals.

These three infill communities illustrate how cohousing models can help establish a sense of community, coordinate local enhancement projects and reinvigorate low-income neighbourhoods. As well, they provide a catalyst for neighbourhood investment and stability and aim to enhance stronger neighbourhood ties.

3.9 Cohousing Processes

McCamant and Durrett (1994) build on Fromm's (1991) work and are referenced to discuss the evolution of cohousing design, the mechanics of developing cohousing communities and specific design considerations. Their work focuses on the physical arrangements of the cohousing model and the supports required to sustain this way of

living. While emphasis is placed on the success of European cohousing communities, the authors highlight lessons learned from American experiences.

Today, collaborative housing models are diverse in ownership and physical composition. They may comprise urban high rise apartment units or rural semi-detached homes. However, the standard cohousing model is comprised of individual self contained/private units and at least one common house or shared facility space. The shared space typically includes a fully equipped kitchen and gathering space. These shared spaces may also include laundry facilities, play rooms and meeting or office space. Ideally, these communities are developed by the future residents who are actively engaged in the pre-development planning, design and management. These residents plan, develop and manage their communities through regular meetings, where they gather to discuss issues, develop policies and form committees.

McCamant and Durrett (1994) explain that when developing a cohousing project, a number of key questions need to be addressed. First, it is important to question what ingredients are required to transform housing and establish a sense of community. Research indicates that while condominiums and cooperatives provide a good source of information on shared ownership and governance, they do not create 'community'. Housing designed to promote social interaction is also not guaranteed to establish a sense of community. The design, with its provision for shared space, has some effects on a sense of community, but good design in and of itself does not create a strong community. Their work highlights the importance of community building, participatory planning and

pre-development design processes as key to establishing successful and sustainable cohousing communities.

Finally, Scotthanson and Scotthanson (2005) are referenced to discuss the patterns and methods that have led to successful cohousing communities in North America. They state that successful cohousing communities begin with the group formation process, continue through the development phase and end with conflict resolution processes once residents have moved in.

Scotthanson and Scotthanson (2005) provide a broader perspective about the process of building and creating a cohousing community. In addition to identifying the challenges in cohousing developments, the authors carve out clear guidelines and recommendations for the planning, developing and maintaining of a healthy cohousing community. These recommendations include conducting effective group processes within a consensus-building framework.

They state that cohousing developments vary in size, location, type of ownership, design and priorities, but share some of the same characteristics including:

- *Participatory process*: Future residents participate in the planning and design of their community. They are responsible as a group for most of the final design decisions.
- *Intentional neighbourhood design*: The physical design encourages a strong sense of community. With central pedestrian walkways or village greens, cars are generally relegated to the edge of the project, and sometimes underground parking structures.
- *Private homes and common facilities*: Communities are generally designed to include significant common facilities; however, all residents have their own private homes and kitchens. As an integral part of the community,

common areas are designed for daily use, to supplement private living areas.

- *Resident management*: Unlike typical condominium homeowners association, residents in cohousing usually manage their own community after move in, making decisions about common concerns at regular community meetings.
- *Non-hierarchical structure and decision making*: It is said that there are leadership roles, but not leaders in cohousing. Decisions are made together as a community, often using decision making models such as consensus (Scotthanson and Scotthanson, 2005).

Scotthanson and Scotthanson's (2005) work does not attempt to provide a complete explanation of the entire cohousing development process, but provides an overview that represents some of the major steps communities have gone through in developing a successful cohousing community. Their findings serve as an implementation guide to the cohousing process, not the product.

3.10 Affordability Strategies for Cohousing

The Cohousing Association of the United States notes that reduced living expenses result from living collaboratively. For example, optional community meals several times a week can save money, as can other practices such as energy-efficient design and building, or commonly owned equipment such as cooking utensils, computer hardware, or one lawnmower per neighbourhood. Driving expenses tend to be lower because many social activities occur in the neighbourhood and carpooling is common. Residents also often make group purchases of food and home maintenance items, and handle neighbourhood chores themselves instead of paying for outside labour.

Additionally, several families may share the costs for kids' play equipment and childcare. Residents typically pay homeowners' dues in cohousing, but community work-sharing can offset many costs (<http://www.cohousing.org/faq.aspx#faq13>, Accessed June 30, 2005).

As discussed, cohousing communities often also value diversity and attempt to include residents of various income levels in their cohousing projects. However, the literature review revealed no clear case studies or recommendations on how to develop exclusive cohousing units for lower income residents. In North American cohousing communities, affordability varies with only a few mixed income communities providing cohousing units to low-income residents. The reality is that while some cohousing projects incorporate approaches to maximize affordability, overall construction, consultation and financing are costly and as a result, cohousing units remain out of reach for low-income communities most in need of affordable housing alternatives unless subsidized.

The Cohousing Association of the United States website did reveal a fruitful article by author David Mandel on "Affordability Strategies for Cohousing" (<http://cohousing.org/resources/library/affordability.html>, accessed June 30, 2005). Mandel notes that although cohousing projects by non-profit developers designed exclusively for low-income residents was an unlikely trend, there are some signs of progress toward establishing common ground between cohousing and the non-profit development world. This is related to some cohousing communities who have found ways to channel funding from private and/or public sources and succeeded in creating

mixed income communities. Mandel's affordability strategies for cohousing are intended for a mixed income cohousing project and are summarized to include the following:

General Factors that can Foster Affordability in Cohousing Projects:

1. Intend to incorporate a high percentage of low-income members; the higher the proportion, the easier it will be to access sources of private, non-profit and government assistance;
2. Establish a core group of members who are themselves low-income; plan larger not smaller units; include a higher number of larger units; and build your project as densely as you can and as zoning allows;
3. Recruit members with professional skills and pick the right location.

Group Financing Strategies:

1. Assume as much of the financial risk as possible; therefore you don't require serious financial investment as a condition of membership;
2. Set prices to include settlement costs, optional upgrades and seek volume deals with lenders; and
3. Develop a strategy for appraisals and recruit effectively.

Design Construction Strategies:

1. Be willing to accept greater standardization, take full advantage of the clustered housing model; build according to current budget constraints, minimize the menu of optional upgrades; be willing to use less expensive materials and employ energy efficient design;
2. Give careful thought to the composition of the project development team; and
3. Do some of the work yourselves (incorporate a high degree of sweat equity).

Private Subsidies:

1. Internal subsidies could include materials or services donated in kind by professionals
2. Public subsidies/other could include land cost, grants from local, provincial and federal agencies, foundation grants and services from other community organizations.

Low Cost Loans:

1. Predevelopment financing; non-profits can take the lead;
2. Construction financing; conventional or program funded; and
3. Permanent financing; first time home buyers programs, program loans or second mortgages.

Other Ownership Forms:

1. Variants on private ownership can lower costs these can include shared ownership of units or land owned by a land trust;
2. Co-ops; especially limited equity; and
3. Rentals can create enhanced possibility of savings and greater eligibility for subsidies and tax credits or they can be mixed rental and ownership
(<http://cohousing.org/resources/library/affordability.html>. accessed June 30, 2005).

3.11 Literature Review Findings

The literature review revealed a number of issues regarding the current Canadian housing context, specifically the impact of housing policy changes on the emergence of the non-profit housing sector. It highlighted the multi-faceted roles of community-based non-profit housing organizations and included an examination of cohousing as an alternative affordable housing model for low-income communities. Findings support the claim that non-profit housing organizations are playing an emerging role in the provision of appropriate affordable housing units. As well, the findings highlight the current fiscal context and indicate greater need for public support and commitment to the research and development of alternative housing models. This includes increased internal and external capacity building supports to the non-profit housing sector to enable their participation and facilitation in the planning, development and sustainability of cohousing projects.

The literature review also revealed a number of gaps and areas requiring further inquiry. Specifically, the literature review revealed that there is a limited amount of text on cohousing and an even lesser amount on cohousing in the North American context. Much of the available material on cohousing is centered on independently developed cohousing projects with little discussion surrounding the roles of non-profit housing

organizations. Even when non-profits are discussed as cohousing developers, the target group is primarily middle to higher income residents with few affordable/rental cohousing models.

Overall, the literature review revealed that modest research has been conducted on the problems and prospects of cohousing as an alternative housing model for low-income communities, with an even lesser amount exploring the connection between non-profit housing organizations and cohousing projects. While European models are cited in order to highlight successful cohousing case studies and lessons learned, there is no particular cohousing prototype. Instead, there is a broad spectrum of approaches and locally based solutions. "Cohousing is never generic; each community is tailored to a specific group's requirements" (Fromm, 1991: 14).

Consequently, this study contends that the current housing crisis in Canada requires effective third sector parties and community-based non-profit housing organizations to explore alternative housing models to meet changing housing needs. As demonstrated in the European context, the cohousing model has been adapted by non-profit housing providers to respond to the identified needs of the communities served. However, North American housing policies and levels of funding support pose additional challenges to an already complex endeavour.

The following chapter provides an overview of the local housing context and identifies publicly funded initiatives designed to support affordable housing and neighbourhood renewal initiatives. In addition, it provides background information to the

selected case study and highlights the efforts of one non-profit to develop an affordable cohousing project.

Chapter Four

LOCAL CONTEXT

4.1 Housing and Neighbourhood Renewal Initiatives

This section of the thesis provides background information about the case study, local context and existing neighbourhood renewal and community building programs in Winnipeg generally and the North End neighbourhood specifically. The programs cited are government-funded and provide project-based funding to support community development and affordable housing initiatives. As well, these programs employ provincially adopted community economic development principles and foster community-based solutions to neighbourhood renewal. Project funding aims to rebuild inner-city low-income neighbourhoods and address related social issues such as safety, housing and neighbourhood well-being. Programs currently leading neighbourhood and housing renewal initiatives in Winnipeg include the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative (WHHI), the Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI) and the Neighbourhoods Alive! (NA!) initiative.

The WHHI, developed in 1999 is a tripartite partnership between the City of Winnipeg, the Province of Manitoba and the Government of Canada to help redevelop housing in designated inner-city neighbourhoods. Funding is provided to assist community and neighbourhood based groups with their housing development projects. Priority is given to projects that help increase capacity, revitalize housing in designated

inner-city neighbourhoods and address homelessness at the community level (Building Partnerships, Building Neighbourhoods, WHHI: 1996). In the context of this program, homelessness is defined as any person who does not have access to safe, adequate and affordable housing (Social Planning Council Winnipeg, 1999).

The Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI), developed in 2001 is a joint venture of the federal and provincial governments, developed to increase the supply of affordable rental units and new housing units available in Manitoba. This is achieved by supporting the development of new rental and homeowner units, offering a repair/conversion option, homebuyer down payment assistance and rent supplements. The Rent Supplement program helps low-income families, elderly and special needs households obtain affordable, adequate and suitable housing in the private rental sector and in non-profit affordable housing projects renovated or developed under the AHI. The provincial government enters into agreements with owners/operators of private rental stock that has been renovated or developed under the AHI, to subsidize a portion of the units in the rental property. The province subsidizes the difference between the approved market rental rate charged by the landlord and the rent-geared-to-income (RGI) paid by the qualifying tenant (http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/housing/ahi_rent_supplement.html, accessed June 2, 2006).

The Neighbourhoods Alive! (NA!) initiative was launched in 2000 by the Province of Manitoba. It is defined as a long-term, community-based, social and economic development strategy that recognizes that building healthy neighbourhoods requires more than an investment in bricks and mortar. NA! supports and encourages

community-driven revitalization efforts in designated high needs neighbourhoods in a number of key areas, including: housing and physical improvements by way of the Neighbourhood Housing Assistance (NHA) program delivered through the WHHI office; employment and training; education and recreation; and safety and crime prevention. In addition, NA! provides designated neighbourhoods with Neighbourhood Renewal Funds to fund projects that support neighbourhood capacity building, economic development, stability and well being. NA! also provides core funding through the Neighbourhood Development Assistance (NDA) to five Community Development Corporations; the Thompson Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation, Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation, Spence Neighbourhood Association, West Broadway Development Corporation and the North End Community Renewal Corporation to cover administrative costs and fund the development, coordination and implementation of housing and community renewal initiatives in low-income neighbourhoods.

In an attempt to stabilize the North End neighbourhood and address related social issues, a number of third sector parties, non-profit organizations and community development corporations (CDC's) including the North End Community Renewal Corporation (NECRC) and the North End Housing Project (NEHP) have emerged.

The NECRC was established in 1998 by a coalition of community and organizational leaders who created a community development plan to help the area's struggling population and economy. NECRC developed as a community organization and resource whose aim is to assist in the economic, social, and cultural renewal of the North End of Winnipeg. NECRC implements organizational goals and strategies according to

its Five Year Neighbourhood Renewal Plan. The plan strategically promotes cultural diversity, stimulates economic development, and improves employment opportunities, housing, and the safety and image of the community. A number of the plan's affordable housing initiatives have been carried out by related organizations such as the North End Housing Project (NEHP). NECRC works in direct partnership with the NEHP and has assisted them in the development, coordination and implementation of additional plans to scale up operations and increase capacity to deliver affordable housing in the North End.

4.2 The North End Housing Project (NEHP)

The NEHP was incorporated as a registered, charitable non-profit organization in 1999. It began as a project of the Community Education Development Association (CEDA). This partnership came about in response to the pressing need for affordable housing and neighbourhood renewal in the deteriorating North End neighbourhoods. The mission of NEHP is to contribute to achieving an all inclusive healthy community, primarily by developing or fostering accessible, affordable quality and sustainable housing that supports local needs and helps renew low-income neighbourhoods. NEHP is a primary non-profit housing organization developing affordable housing in Winnipeg's north end neighbourhoods.

NEHP acknowledges that it is often difficult for low-income communities to provide each other with social support and/or to collectively organize to address related community issues. As a result, strengthening and reinforcing the community and the local economy are integral components of NEHP's comprehensive approach. NEHP works to

build community infrastructure while also strengthening the community social fabric by creating opportunities for residents to interact and build social connections (Deane, 2006).

NEHP has adopted important programming incentives that combine housing and human service policy to successfully meet the needs of its various user groups. NEHP renovates and builds basic affordable housing units for low-income individuals and works closely with neighbourhood residents, associations and other community groups. Housing restoration work is undertaken almost entirely by local workers and where possible, subcontracting and material purchases are done locally to support community development/community economic development principles. As well, NEHP works in direct collaboration and has established comprehensive partnerships with all three levels of government to develop housing programs and partnerships that provide decent affordable housing, rebuild neighbourhoods in decline and improve the lives of residents.

To date, NEHP has developed 135 housing units including duplex and single detached housing units. Approximately 69 of these housing units have fallen under NEHP's Lease-with-option-to-purchase model. NEHP provides property management services for all units under a five-year tenancy arrangement prior to the units being eligible for purchase by the tenants. Out of the total lease-with-option-to-purchase housing units developed, only 2 households have assumed full ownership of their units and 28 households abandoned either the unit or the desire to purchase and have chosen to rent the units instead. The remaining 39 units will be required to make purchase decisions and be able to qualify for their mortgage between now and December 2007, as all of

NEHP's five year lease periods will have expired. As a result of this low level of rent-to-own transitions into homeownership, NEHP identified a need to explore alternative housing options beyond homeownership, to address the needs of their low-income clientele.

4.3 The North Point Douglas Gateway Cohousing Project

In 2004, NEHP began to explore alternative housing models that could provide affordable housing units and foster a sense of shared community amongst the residents. Cohousing is one option that was proposed by NEHP for an eleven unit housing complex for single parent females. The project (referred to as the Gateway Cohousing Project) was to be located in the North Point Douglas neighbourhood of Winnipeg's north end.

In order to identify how the project would be contextualized, it is imperative to provide a brief characterization of the selected neighbourhood. As noted in the following 2001 Statistics Canada data on the North Point Douglas Neighbourhood (<http://www.winnipeg.ca/Census/2001/Community%20Areas/Point%20Douglas%20Neighbourhood%20Cluster/Neighbourhoods/Point%20Douglas%20South/> accessed August 6, 2006), it is apparent that many residents in this high-need neighbourhood are facing shared challenges that relate to low levels of education, affordable housing, stable employment, and high levels of unemployment, poverty and residential mobility.

In North Point Douglas, residents with less than grade 9 education comprise 21.8% of the population as compared to 7.8% for the City of Winnipeg. Unemployment

rates for neighbourhood residents 25 years and older represent 18.8% compared to the city average of 4.6%. These figures contribute to the incidence of low-incomes in private households and represent almost 53.2% of the local population compared to 20.3% for the city as a whole. As well, the average family income in North Point Douglas in 2000 was \$36,400 compared to \$63,600 for the entire city.

Statistics on household composition in North Point Douglas illustrate that lone parents represent a noteworthy demographic with almost 46% of the population compared to 18.5% for the City of Winnipeg. Non-family households represent approximately 50.8% of the population compared to 35.3% for the city as a whole, and families with three or more children represent 27.8% of the population compared to the city at 17.4%.

Poor grade housing stock is yet another dilemma that residents must contend with as dwelling units constructed prior to 1946 comprise almost 59.5% compared to 20.3% for the city. Many of these dwellings are in need of major repair and the average value of a dwelling in North Point Douglas is only \$42,285 compared to \$100,525 for the city as a whole. Resident owned dwellings in this neighbourhood represent low levels of only 37.2% compared to 63.6% for the city. The few owner occupied households spending 30% or more of their household income on shelter represent 23.3% compared to 11.7% for the city. As well, the average owner payment is approximately \$595/month compared to \$752/month for the City of Winnipeg.

Of particular relevance to this thesis are the high rental/tenancy rates. Rental units in North Point Douglas comprise up to 62.8% compared to 36.4% for the city and tenant

occupied households spending 30% or more of household income on shelter represent 49.2% compared to 38% for the city. The average gross tenant rent in this neighbourhood is \$420/month compared to \$541/month for the city. Finally, mobility rates in the neighbourhood are also high as 21% of residents moved within Winnipeg (2000 – 2001) compared to only 11.6% for the city as a whole.

It is also imperative to acknowledge the area's growing Aboriginal population. In the North Point Douglas neighbourhood, Aboriginal people comprise approximately 38.5% of the population as compared to only 9.6% for the City of Winnipeg. Based on 1996 census, Winnipeg, Saskatoon and Regina demonstrated significantly high rates of Aboriginal poverty. In Winnipeg, Aboriginal people represented 17.6 percent of the city's poor (Carter, 2004: 7).

“The Aboriginal population is one of the most rapidly growing sectors of society and an increasing proportion of Aboriginal people live in urban centres. They are a young population with a high but declining birth rate. With one-third of the population under the age of 14 years, Aboriginal people represent a large proportion of the labour force of the future in many municipalities. Their general socio-economic characteristics highlight a high level of marginalization and poverty, dictating a need for a wide range of services” (Carter, 2004: 4)

Working collaboratively with Aboriginal populations is critical in order to identify housing needs, adopt culturally sensitive planning processes and develop appropriate housing solutions, while fostering a sense of community and sustaining residential stability. NEHP acknowledges this growing demographic and works to adopt an inclusive and culturally sensitive approach to all its organizational activities.

As a result of some of the identified socio-economic issues facing this high need low-income community, the NEHP developed a proposal for project funding assistance to the WHHI. A review of the proposal entitled the "North Point Douglas Gateway Cohousing Project" provided an overview of the initial project details. The project, designed by a local architect was intended to be a two-storey stacked townhouse design. Total project costs were estimated at approx. \$888,395. The original proposal or expression of interest for the cohousing project proposed both median market rate and below median market rate rental units. At the time, the current median market rents were set at (\$525/month) for a one bedroom unit and (\$665/month) for a two bedroom unit. NEHP proposed that their median market units would include:

- 3 studio units with approx. 400 sq. ft. (\$420/month); and
- 4 x 1 bedroom units with approx. 500 sq. ft. (\$530/month).

Below median market rate units would include:

- 2 x 2 bedroom units with approx. 650 sq. ft. (\$640/month); and
- 2 x 2 bedroom units at over 700 sq. ft. (\$640/month).

The plan also included cohousing features such as an exterior, central courtyard and gathering space, community kitchen and indoor meeting space/play area on the main level. Discussions with both NEHP's Interim and newly appointed Manager revealed that NEHP anticipated that the cohousing features would facilitate interaction amongst tenants, develop a sense of safety and belonging and stabilize residential mobility. In addition, it was assumed that as a sense of shared community developed, tenants would

cooperate in numerous life-enhancing and cost saving activities such as shared child care responsibilities, car pooling, bulk buying and community cooking, etc.

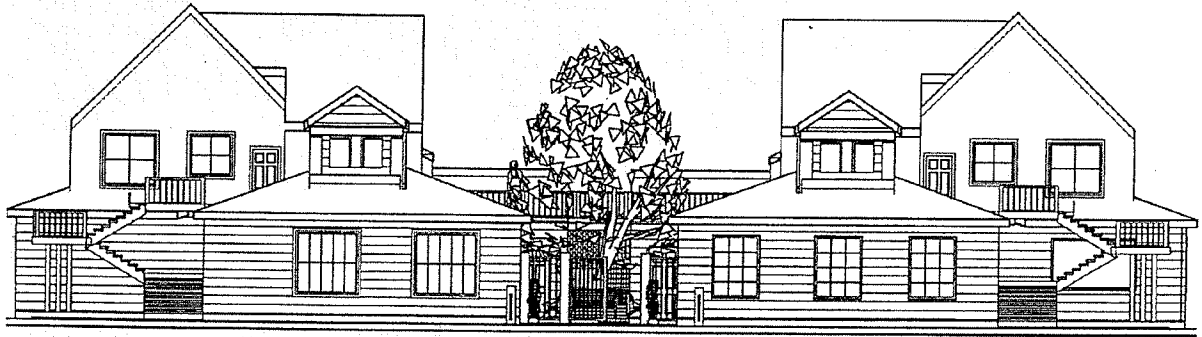


Figure 1) Front Elevation for the North Point Douglas Gateway Cohousing Project; designed by Ernie H.A. Walter Architect Inc. (North End Housing Project, 2004).

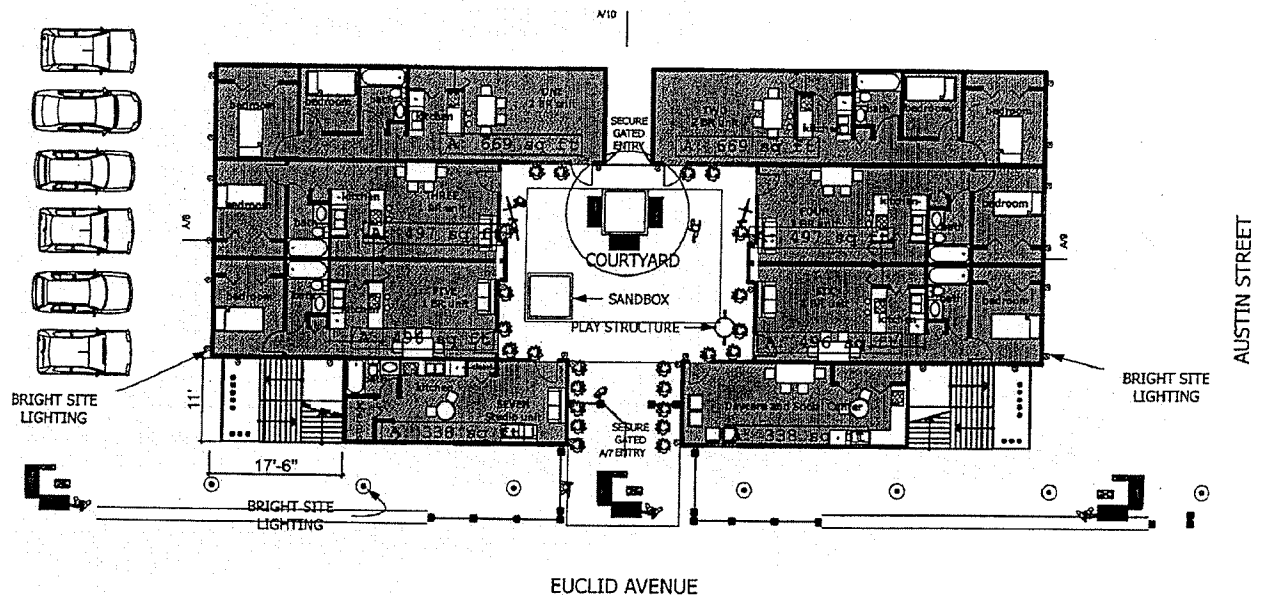


Figure 2) Level 1 Floor Plan for the North Point Douglas Gateway Cohousing Project; designed by Ernie H.A. Walter Architect Inc. (North End Housing Project, 2004).

A review of the Gateway Cohousing Project Committee minutes identified that NEHP had consulted with a number of community stakeholders which included the North End Community Renewal Corporation, the North Point Douglas Women's Centre and the Point Douglas Resident's Association, among others, to provide input into the conceptual design. These partner organizations were supportive of the project and saw it as an opportunity to contribute towards neighbourhood renewal, provide much needed quality affordable housing units and enhance community building activities in the high need neighbourhood of North Point Douglas. It was anticipated that these community partners would help NEHP identify potential tenants to be included in a the process of forming a Steering Committee or Tenants Association in order to provide input into overall design, cohousing features, establish tenant expectations, policies and procedures (i.e. tenant selection criteria) as the project unfolded.

Preliminary case study research findings also revealed that NEHP imagined that the cohousing model would provide a number of positive attributes that could benefit low-income communities by helping to stabilize residential mobility, fostering a sense of community, reducing overall household expenses through shared costs and providing opportunities for residents to become involved in skill building activities. Specifically, NEHP anticipated that over time residents would be encouraged to consider the lease-with-option-to-purchase model of a smaller apartment/cohousing unit compared to a single detached house.

However, the cohousing proposal revealed a number of challenges including funding restrictions to support the shared communal space and organizational challenges

in adopting a complex collaborative cohousing process. Secondly, by adopting a collaborative cohousing planning process involving multiple community partners, the project process experienced delays and internal and external organizational and related project challenges. Subsequently, NEHP steered away from the cohousing model and chose to adopt a less complicated standardized rental model in order to proceed more quickly in meeting affordable housing needs.

While the NEHP management acknowledge the theoretical benefits of the cohousing model, they identify that cohousing is a complex concept, time consuming process and challenging housing model for their targeted low-income communities and current organizational context. NEHP indicated that they steered away from the cohousing model as a result of a number of organizational capacity/project related issues not uncommon to community-based non-profit housing organizations, as noted in Chapter 3. Key issues identified encompassed staff turnover at the management level of NEHP, complex project financing and project funding constraints, strict timelines for development processes, inability of target users/residents to afford median market rental units, lack of coordination with project partner organizations often related to staff turnover at project partner organizations from the North Point Douglas Women's Centre and North End Community Renewal Corporation, lack of understanding/education about cohousing and its time-consuming collaborative planning processes, community building activities and participation strategies required to sustain cohousing processes. There was also a transition in neighbourhood priorities with local energies being re-directed towards

other pressing social issues such as the need to develop a new community hub and multi-use facility which consisted of a daycare, laundromat and community education centre.

As a result of NEHP's change in project focus, the initial research goals of conducting 12 interviews (with cohousing representatives/NEHP staff/community residents) and a focus group (community residents/potential cohousing residents) were reduced to 8 interviews (cohousing representatives/NEHP staff/project stakeholders). It was subsequently determined that the research would be refocused to address the broader problems and prospects of the cohousing model for low-income communities and develop enhancement recommendations for the NEHP and/or other non-profit housing organizations interested in planning, developing and sustaining a cohousing community. The following chapter provides a summary of the interview findings conducted with both case study and North American cohousing representatives on the broader problems and prospects of the cohousing model for low-income communities.

Chapter Five

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Analysis of the Interview Findings

This chapter of the thesis presents the findings from eight key informant in-depth interviews approximately 1.5 hours in length. Key informants were selected based on their involvement in the case study and/or their participation in cohousing related organizations/projects. Interviews were conducted with four North American cohousing representatives/residents residing in/or planning a cohousing community, one affordable housing project analyst involved in the case study, two staff members from the NEHP involved in the case study and one community development worker involved in the case study. Specifically, case study respondents were selected based on recommendations from NEHP management and cohousing respondents were selected based on requests to the Canadian Cohousing Network and the Cohousing Association of the United States.

The interview format provided rich data through which we can begin to understand the problems and prospects of the cohousing model for low-income communities and non-profit housing providers. The data identifies obstacles to cohousing project development; highlights challenges and opportunities of the cohousing model for low-income communities; and discusses recommendations to tailor cohousing planning processes to meet the needs of low-income communities.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the interview method consisted of a two part open-ended interview format. The interview schedule served as a guideline to ensure basic information was obtained from all the respondents. In most interviews the order of the questions was not strictly adhered to, and side issues were explored as they arose in the conversation. More specifically, the study focused on answering key research questions:

- 1) How can cohousing models meet current housing needs and build a sense of community?
- 2) What are the barriers and opportunities of developing cohousing models in low-income communities?
- 3) What type of internal and external supports do non-profit housing organizations require to plan, develop and sustain a cohousing project?

Through the interviews, the study solicited the views and experiences of individuals directly involved with the case study and individuals involved in the planning and development of a cohousing community. The study sought general views on the challenges and opportunities of cohousing for low-income communities and sought direct experiences or perceptions of such an endeavour.

When asked how they first got involved with or heard about cohousing, the majority of the respondents identified that it was through related interest in housing literature, community development journals, newspaper articles, internet and word of mouth. While most of the respondents had heard about cohousing, they were not equally familiar with the concept or principles of cohousing. As anticipated, there was a significant imbalance between the cohousing data obtained from cohousing respondents

and case study respondents. Whereas cohousing respondents had a wealth of knowledge and experience regarding cohousing planning, design and development processes, they were not familiar with affordable cohousing projects or the needs of low-income communities. The case study respondents, on the other hand, provided a thorough understanding of the challenges and issues facing low-income communities and local non-profit housing organizations but were predominately inexperienced with cohousing principles and processes such as collaborative pre-development planning, design and development.

As a result of a small interview sample size and varying degrees of experience/knowledge regarding cohousing, cohousing processes and the needs/issues facing low-income communities, the interview data is preliminary in nature and does not lend itself to support any definitive claims. Instead, it is intended to address a significant gap in the literature and serve as a foundation to further address the problems and prospects of the cohousing model for low-income communities.

5.2 Interview Findings from Case Study Respondents

Analysis of the case study interview data revealed a number of recurring themes and observations such as the need for additional education about cohousing/cohousing processes; acknowledgement of the needs of low-income communities; perceived benefits of the cohousing model; and related funding challenges. The following includes an analysis of the interview findings to support these themes and observations. Several accounts are included for illustration.

When asked what kind of programs or community building services NEHP provides to its residents, case study respondents noted that NEHP provides access to safe affordable housing, contributes to local community economic development initiatives, engages in neighbourhood revitalization, participates in training and renovation workshops, fosters affordable housing education and acts as a link to other social services and resources. Case study respondents noted that the NEHP is knowledgeable about affordable housing development and community building activities in low-income communities. However, they anticipated that even NEHP would experience a number of challenges to planning and developing a cohousing project. Respondents note that NEHP would likely need to enhance their internal capacities and seek external expertise in order to coordinate a cohousing project and meet the high needs of their targeted low-income communities.

Understanding Cohousing/Cohousing Processes

In preliminary discussions with case study respondents, it was apparent that NEHP did not adopt a cohousing process as defined in the literature review of Chapter 3. While the NEHP process included community stakeholder participation and feedback, it was not driven by the future residents of the proposed cohousing project and resulted in a top down approach to development. One local community development worker involved in the case study noted that early in the project's conception, there were few neighbourhood resident participants involved in the planning process. As stated,

“I guess the biggest drawback at the first Gateway Cohousing Project meetings was that the people who were involved in the concept were not necessarily the

ones that were to be residents of the cohousing project. So, as far as the cohousing model went, we were lacking that initial buy-in from people that would live there. The cohousing model we know doesn't work from the top down and that's basically where things went wrong. We were at the top and were trying to determine how we could drag people in off the street and explain cohousing to them and how it works and expect them to understand it, support it and want to live in it."

Interview findings support the idea that a cohousing project developed by a non-profit housing organization may result in a top-down approach to development, which goes against the nature of bottom-up collaborative cohousing principles. Community stakeholders may represent the needs of the community, but they cannot engage in the intimate nature of cohousing processes that are required to plan, develop and sustain healthy cohousing communities. Resident and community buy-in into the cohousing concept is critical. As noted by one NEHP staff involved in the case study

"Cohousing allows an opportunity to develop a unique sense of community. However, you need to educate people. Understanding how cohousing works and buying into the whole concept of cohousing is key and integral to the future of the project."

Perceived Challenges to Cohousing for Low-income/High Needs Communities

When asked what they thought the challenges and opportunities of developing a cohousing community were, and if they differed for low-income residents/neighbourhoods, case study respondents cited an extensive list of perceived challenges and only a small number of opportunities. The challenges cited relate to cohousing and the cohousing process as well as the need for additional education about

cohousing models, fostering community buy-in and initiation from the target resident/user group, time commitment of low-income communities to participate in such lengthy development process, and concern about neighbourhood displacement and gentrification. As well, social issues about who in the project would be subsidized and who would not be were viewed as potential problems to social cohesiveness. Also highlighted were funding and construction constraints and ongoing expenses related to the shared common space and rental subsidies. Several accounts related to these challenges are included for illustration.

A partner organization in the case study noted that the low-income communities that they dealt with had high needs and were likely unable to participate in such a lengthy and complex cohousing process. The local community development worker involved in the case study noted:

“Most of the people we wanted to help house would be incapable of purchasing shares in ownership. There were also some issues as to whether the people in our centre would actually be at a point in their lives where they could participate in such a complex process. We weren’t too sure that the cohousing model as we know it would work for us and the people we served.”

This claim was supported by another NEHP staff involved in the case study, who noted:

“Planning a cohousing project is a lengthy process and I think people are a little bit reluctant to commit or get involved until they can see that there’s actually something happening, something being built. So that’s the real challenge. It’s really hard getting people’s full participation in the planning aspect of it because they’d much rather see the project in place.”

Issues and concerns about neighbourhood gentrification regarding the mixed income cohousing project were also noted by case study respondents. As stated by one NEHP staff involved in the case study,

“I think that the integration of various socio-economic groups is a serious issue. There’s working poor and poor. There are different types of poor and categories of low-income people. Integrating these groups is one of many approaches to revitalization but it is not without its complications. The other problem that can arise is people don’t want people from outside of their community coming and living there. They seem to have the idea that cohousing will bring richer people from another part of town to live in this new block, which they are not thrilled with at all. I think NEHP made it clear that they’re not trying to bring in people to take over the block, but at the same time making them understand that low-income people alone could not financially support that building and the common space. You need people who can pay full rent and market rent in order for the rest of the block to be subsidized rent.”

Case study respondents also identified a number of socio-economic issues that they thought might impact the social cohesiveness of the mixed income cohousing project. As noted by one NEHP staff involved in the case study,

“You’ll have some people paying full market rent, which they might not be happy about when they find out others are being subsidized and then you’ll have subsidized people that may feel a little concerned about others indirectly supporting them. So there are those kinds of socio-economic issues. Also, if you’re dealing with a number of professionals as opposed to individuals who might be more accustomed to blue collar-type positions, it’s a different knowledge base that you’re bringing into that group setting, and also a different kind of understanding of participation and consensus building and a lot of technical terms that would likely be used in the cohousing process.”

As well, concerns about lifestyle choices of the mixed income residents were also noted by case study respondents. As noted by one NEHP staff involved in the case study,

“I think that in cohousing, some people might not want to have other people around their housing unit because they fear that others may not approve of their lifestyle and they don’t want people judging them. They may not want to interact with others, especially if there are class issues i.e. where you may have a single parent mum on Social Assistance, whose getting subsidized rent, living in cohousing with somebody that’s working full-time and paying full rent. It might be a little difficult for them to get over the social issues.”

Funding Challenges

The interview data revealed that affordable housing and project funding conditions may not always be consistent with cohousing processes and timelines. The lack of flexibility among project funders renders a challenging process and poses serious dilemmas to the future integrity of an affordable cohousing concept/project. As noted by one NEHP staff involved in the case study,

“Somebody who we contacted about cohousing basically said, you find the people who are going to live there before you even build it and they have a say in the building. But the reality is that the project funding has related timelines and working around a community’s schedule is time consuming and almost impossible to meet funding timelines.”

A second respondent; project officer involved in the case study supported this finding,

“There are very strict restrictions on what you have to do to get subsidies for low-income housing. Some of them are: you can’t pick the people ahead of time. So that’s a social one. You have to build it first and then you have to make things available on a lottery system to be sure you don’t discriminate. You also have to build on a strict budget. There are all kinds of other restrictions around financing.”

A third respondent; community development worker involved in the case study noted,

“I think the main thing is just trying to get funding to get the project off the ground. It’s not an easy process, especially getting funding from WHHI. They are very specific in that they will only fund residential units. Anything outside of that, then the proponent has to come up with a different source of funding. And that’s a big challenge because there aren’t that many places that NEHP can apply for funding for non residential spaces i.e. shared/common space.”

Internal and External Support

When asked what type of internal and external supports they thought were required to plan, develop and sustain a cohousing project in a low-income community, case study respondents noted that extensive facilitation would be required throughout the cohousing process. As noted by the project officer involved in the case study,

“Theoretically the model is utopic and poses a number of cost-saving and community-building supportive environments to help stabilize the lives of low-income individuals, but logistically it is an uphill challenge and would certainly require dealing with a non-profit developer and interim manager with other project co-coordinators helping low-income communities to organize their meetings and provide cohousing education. Cohousing projects for low-income community groups would require high degrees of specialization to get it off the ground and would likely need a number of facilitators to be involved in the process.”

When asked what type of internal and external supports and alternative processes a third party or non-profit housing organization like NEHP could consider, case study respondents identified a number of recommendations. As stated by one project officer involved in the case study,

“NEHP could step in and help coordinate funding to build the project. Then, they could help facilitate tenant relations with a Tenant or Building Coordinator, who could help the group establish a small tenant committee or board and finally, network with other community organizations to secure funding or offer services or programming to be delivered in the common space. Those are all opportunities for NEHP to participate, but they would likely need to build their own resources and organizational capacities in order to do this.”

A second respondent; NEHP staff involved in the case study suggested that,

“NEHP could adopt a unique type of cohousing model whereby they can foster or encourage the people who live in that development to stabilize their lives, provide resources to support organized activities and collective group processes (board, tenant committee) but to also introduce them to the other avenues of ownership/cooperatives and activities further down the road, they could manage or consider purchasing their units. It would be a very different model.”

Feedback concluded that a low-income community group would require a third party or non-profit housing organization to coordinate the appropriate resources and facilitate the planning and development process. However, it was also acknowledged that the third sector party or non-profit housing organization would also need to build internal capacities and seek external expertise, resources and supports. Case study respondents also highlighted a number of support activities that were largely related to a need for increased education about cohousing, building partnerships with existing housing groups working on cohousing projects and broader policy issues to coordinate funding conditions with alternative housing models. Recommended activities or areas of support include:

- Connecting with residents associations, community renewal corporations, governments and housing groups to organize housing education workshops/forums and presentations to educate the public on alternative housing models such as cohousing;

- Recruiting volunteer service organizations to provide resources and hands-on education on how to organize group processes and group decision making, governance, board membership, financial statements etc that would be required to establish a tenants association;
- Partnering with local, national and international collaborative organizations including cooperative organizations and cohousing networks to provide resources and project frameworks and guidelines i.e. the Canadian Cohousing Network could help connect one cohousing group with another sister cohousing group to provide coaching and logistical support; and
- Link up with housing lobby groups/housing organizations encouraging government bodies to explore the problems and prospects of alternative housing models and related funding need.

Perceived Benefits to Cohousing for Low-income Communities

When asked what role(s) they thought cohousing could play in low-income communities, overall feedback was supportive of the concept. However, there were concerns that the existing cohousing model would require significant alterations in order to address the needs of low-income communities. As noted by one NEHP staff involved in the case study,

“I find that cohousing definitely provides not only an affordable housing option which is critically needed in low-income communities, but it also provides the social structure and supports that single family dwellings do not. You get to create a community; you get to know your neighbours and their kids. You have activities together and it is your choice whether you want to participate or not, but the opportunities for skill building and relationship building are there. I think cohousing not only provides a lower cost to housing, but it also provides a supportive social setting for the residents, which I think is important.”

Overall, interview findings from the case study respondents reveal that they are cautious to support the concept of cohousing for low-income communities, and struggle to develop alternative solutions and modifications to the cohousing model to adapt it to

meet the high needs of low-income communities. While they identify the need for third party facilitation in the cohousing process, they are concerned that the spirit of cohousing as a grassroots effort would be lost. The following section will explore the broader issues of cohousing for low-income communities as identified by North American cohousing representatives.

5.3 Interview Findings from Cohousing Respondents

Interview findings from cohousing respondents are unique in that all cohousing respondents have had previous experience in the planning, development and implementation of cohousing projects and processes. The interview data also reveals a number of similar issues raised by case study respondents including: lack of understanding about the cohousing model, need for alternative affordable housing models to meet current housing needs facing low-income communities; strength of the cohousing model as a community building tool; and the technical and social challenges to planning, developing and sustaining cohousing communities. This section includes an analysis of the interview findings to support these themes and observations. Several accounts are included for illustration.

Education about Cohousing

Cohousing respondents unanimously noted that there was an urgent need to educate the public about cohousing as an alternative housing model. As stated by one cohousing respondent,

“I think that the first component that needs to be worked is the whole education component on cohousing and really clarifying to the public what cohousing is, and what it isn’t. Dispelling some of the myths about cohousing is critical. It is not a commune or a cult; it is a way of connecting with people and creating a sense of shared community.”

Cohousing as a Community Building Tool

When asked what kind of programs or community building cohousing communities provide to their residents beyond housing, cohousing respondents unanimously noted a ‘sense of community’. One cohousing respondent noted that,

“I think all of the cohousing communities with the idea of being almost a microcosm of the larger society including a mix of family structures and incomes whether its single parent family, couples, single people, older people, younger people, and kids are those that are the most successful. People really care about each other and look out for each other, and that it’s a very simple, natural way to interact with each other.”

They also noted that there were not always structured community building programs. As stated by one cohousing respondent,

“It’s all pretty spontaneous and a natural evolution. Of course, we have common meals a few times a week. Communities will have them anywhere from one to five evenings a week with a different number of people participating.”

A second cohousing respondent noted that,

“Cohousing targets residents who want closer ties with the people around them. A lot of time, people in our society won’t even know the person living next to them. It is clear that cohousing members want more than that. They feel that community life is important for their quality of life.”

When asked whether they were aware of any programs or services that cohousing communities provide to the community at large, respondents identified that the sharing of communal space with outside organizations was a key strategy to strengthen ties with the surrounding community and educate the community about the cohousing model. One cohousing respondent noted strong support for connecting with extended community groups.

“We want to have the community make use of our common house/shared space. Most cohousing communities do reach out to the larger community and common houses/spaces are often used for things like Boy Scout meetings or meditation groups. We create interactive communities that way. So, it’s never a question of isolating ourselves, it’s a question of having a close bonded community, but also reaching out to the outside neighbourhood and broader community.”

Perceived Challenges to Cohousing for Low-income/High Needs Communities

Overall, there appeared to be clearly identified challenges regarding cohousing for low-income communities. When asked about the challenges and opportunities of developing a cohousing community for low-income communities, cohousing respondents noted an exhaustive list of challenges and only a few areas of opportunity. As noted by one cohousing respondent,

“Cohousing takes a fair amount of time and a lot of meetings. So, it’s coming to terms with that, I think people are realizing that it does take that kind of work to do it. The fact that a lot of us are currently homeowners and are willing to put the equity in their homes is going to be a big part of our ability to move ahead. And as we mentioned, any cohousing development is a time-consuming process and a cohousing development being developed by an arm’s length, non-profit, makes that obstacle even more challenging. Any arm’s length relationship to the cohousing process is not really cohousing. You can have shared housing, shared facilities and it can look like cohousing on the outside, but unless people are really engaged, it’s not cohousing.”

Ownership models

The cohousing respondents had a difficult time assessing how cohousing models could benefit low-income communities or provide affordable rental/ownership housing units. However, they did note that while most cohousing projects were spearheaded to/by homeowners, there was often a desire to develop inclusive (mixed income/mixed ownership/ rental communities) and address the needs of participant cohousing members who had lower incomes. As stated by one cohousing interviewee

“We plan to develop a combination of ownership and rental units in our cohousing project. The people that are spearheading it are the homeowners. However, there is a desire to improve rental accommodation, as well. We’ll look at market rent or subsidize internally in order to address the needs of those people that we want to be part of the community.”

A second cohousing interviewee noted,

“In our community, there was an interest and a desire to offer one or two rental units to low-income residents. However, in all our research and all the work we’ve been doing, it seems building cohousing itself is such a challenge that we didn’t want to add another difficulty (affordable rental) to it. We didn’t quite think we had the energy, the drive to do that as much as we would have liked. It’s still a concept that many members would like to do. But the reality is that financially cohousing is so difficult to achieve that we don’t want to make it even more difficult because we’re afraid our cohousing project may not happen at all. And the final problem about people who are renters is that even if they have adequate time and finances to participate, generally speaking, they do not have the kind of investment, and I’m talking about emotional, economic, whatever, investment in their property that homeowners do.”

Affordability

Cohousing respondents identified that while cohousing offers an affordable option to save on household expenses through shared services, an affordable ownership or rental cohousing community adds additional challenges to an already complex undertaking. Specifically, the shared space in cohousing adds significant costs to the cohousing development. Whether large or small, shared spaces add additional short and long term costs to the development as they incur ongoing maintenance costs and generate little to no income or revenue.

As noted by one cohousing respondent,

“I’m a really big naysayer about cohousing for low-income communities. I think there are lots and lots of reasons why cohousing can’t work for low-income people at this time of their life. Specifically, there are two things that make this a challenge. One is the physical thing and the second is the financial thing. If you’re building market rate housing with expensive common facilities, or even if you’re building on a smaller scale, the fact that you have to put into your budget a shared room, house or area with facilities in it, even though they’re minimal - there is not going to be any ongoing income. In other words, unlike a house, or a unit, or a condo you can rent it or sell it. In cohousing, we have to pay/subsidize the common space because it is integral to the cohousing concept.”

Social Challenges

As discussed in the case study, low-income communities often have residents with high needs, who may be experiencing both financial and social issues restricting their ability to be part of a cohousing process. As noted by one cohousing respondent,

“There are serious problems to cohousing for people who are low-income. And that is that they often don’t have the time, energy and luxury, to sit around in

meetings that could take anywhere from two to four years when they are barely making ends meet. The kind of participation that's involved goes in the planning and also after you move there. So, there are real economic barriers. There are time and energy barriers. Also, you have to contend with the notion of the all American dream – which is ideally, a little house with a picket fence around it and no connection with neighbours. Many people strive for this notion of home.”

Community Partnerships

When cohousing respondents were asked if they worked in partnership with other organizations to deliver programs or build a sense of community, they noted that connecting with other community groups, resident associations were key to holistic neighbourhood integration/acceptance. A number of these partnerships often began at the early stages of pre-development planning and may have included community consultations, which were often used to reduce neighbourhood opposition to the project. However, community consultations were also used to increase the neighbourhoods understanding about cohousing. Cohousing respondents cited the following groups and organizations as common partners in the cohousing process:

- Cohousing/Cooperative/Collective organizations (local, national and international) to share experiences, resources and supports;
- Community Housing Groups/Housing Agencies/Housing Advocates to inform alternative housing/affordable housing policies and debates;
- Community Development Corporations and Neighbourhood resident organizations to help connect with existing community groups
- Municipal governments to explore zoning issues
- Provincial/Federal governments to explore funding opportunities
- Special interest groups to support funding for green building design/sustainable living
- Lawyers, planners, developers, designers, facilitators and mediators among others.

Perceived Opportunities to Cohousing for Low-income/High Needs Communities

Findings reveal consistent challenges to cohousing developments related to the planning and development process. However, the community building aspect of cohousing is applauded and suggested for use in other community building contexts. Creating informal opportunities to initiate collaboration and provide education on cohousing and others options to meet specific user needs has proven to be effective. In essence, establishing specific user needs and strategies to address those needs within a flexible framework is key. As noted by one cohousing respondent,

“There are a number of opportunities for cohousing to benefit low-income people or moderate income people. This is a result of us having learned a lot about cohousing, where we can take certain characteristics of cohousing and incorporate them to suit our needs. We can incorporate aspects of cohousing that we’ve learned is successful. What I think can work for low-income people, is for this study and future studies to try to take the current cohousing model and try to figure out how to tweak it a little bit and devise it to make it work for low-income people.”

Non-profit Development

While cohousing interviewees expressed mixed thoughts on the idea of cohousing for low-income communities, they encouraged non-profit housing organizations to adopt cohousing community building principles. As stated by one cohousing interviewee,

“You could actually start taking cohousing principles such as building a sense of shared community first before you move on to developing a cohousing community. You can make some kind of arrangement to take care of each other’s kids, a little babysitting co-op, etc. Arranging some social events and potlucks for your group to meet together. These are effective tools to do in a non cohousing group. Finding ways for the group to start feeling like a group while they’re working on the conceptual stage and maintain it during the design process and long after they’ve finally moved in.”

A second cohousing respondent stated,

“The most important thing that you can do that’s cohousing-like is finding a way to help people who are going to live there, get involved early in the process and sustain their participation in cohousing activities. This can be accomplished by giving them some sense of power that they can make some decisions that will affect the way they will live in the cohousing community. Sometimes it’s very, very simple stuff like they get to decide the paint colours for the units they are going to be living in. Or, they might want other things. The goal of cohousing is to strengthen the bond or sense of community that are presumably missing where they currently live. However, you have to be careful not to assume that their community needs are not met.”

Finally, a third cohousing respondent noted,

“So the earlier possible you can get the involvement of some future residents or from people who share similarities (income, family composition, lifestyle, etc.) to the future residents and find ways to talk to them and get them to feel like they’re participating in a way that makes them feel powerful. That’s the secret for the whole thing.”

When asked what internal and external supports they thought were required to plan, develop and sustain a cohousing model in a low-income community, cohousing respondents highlighted the need to establish resident buy-in into the concept of participating in a cohousing community. As noted by one cohousing respondent,

“When people move into cohousing, they know that they’re getting into a place that’s self-managed and self-contained. In our community, we actually have a participation agreement where people acknowledge that this community is managed and maintained by us. Maintenance involves physical maintenance and management is collecting the resident’s dues and dealing with the finances and the budget, and making decisions about how we’re going to structure the work. The language (in the participation agreement) says that I understand that this is a community that manages itself or maintains itself and I agree to do my share. It’s very vague. It doesn’t say I’ll work X number of hours a week. And, for legal reasons, the Participation Agreements, which is what they’re called and some other communities have them, are not legally binding. Signing them is voluntary.”

A second cohousing respondent noted that,

“Some Participation Agreements have people agreeing that they will not sell, rent or lease their unit to anybody unless they (new resident) want to participate in the cohousing model. However, not all communities have them.”

Cohousing respondents also identified a number of internal/external committees that help to plan, develop and maintain cohousing communities. As noted by one cohousing respondent,

“Our community building committee covers a lot of things. Their first task is welcoming new members and then integrating them into the group. Then there’s also fostering the building of our community. It could be organizing informal events, even though we go to meetings and see each other a lot in meetings, it’s kind of nice to also have more informal events to get to know each other on a different (more casual) level. The Community Building Committee is also responsible to establish a relationship with the existing or future neighbourhood.”

Additional committee recommendations include:

- Governance committee
- Research committee;
- Planning and funding committee;
- Development and design committee;
- Finance committee;
- Landscape or garden committee;
- Common house committee;
- Maintenance committee; and
- Small project/community connecting committee; among others.

Findings reveal that non-profit developers interested in cohousing projects need to work on a number of issues. These may include but are not limited to education about cohousing, project partnerships, flexible and diverse financing/ownership models (rent to own), draft by-laws and governance structure, management and maintenance

responsibilities, land costs, costs for the communal space, regular development processes, need to adapt to local government regulations and policy contexts, modify standardized units for personalized tastes, alternative financing models, and plans for sustainability (resident recruitment and retention). As noted by one cohousing respondent,

“I think there is a need for management staff from the non-profit housing organization/developer. In housing, it seems there’s tons of money available for building the housing, but there’s little money available for managing the housing. The misconception is that you’re going to build housing and you’re going to have low-income people residing there, but you are not going to have any problems and you’re not going to have any issues. You need somebody to help to make sure that it (housing) works well. I think that could be a significant investment.”

The Role of Non-profit Housing Organizations

When asked what strategies they would recommend non-profit housing developers employ when initiating a cohousing project, interviewees noted that education about cohousing communities and additional research was key. This included site visits to other cohousing communities, guest presenters or experienced cohousing developer presentations, visioning exercises, consensus building processes, planning sessions, formation of residents association, establishing committees and bylaws, creative financing, government funding, staff resources and resident participation. As noted by one cohousing respondent,

“Resident participation and commitment is key to a successful cohousing community. The earlier the better, the more the better, and the more well done, the better. It’s not just enough to sit around and write down lists of things people want or things you think people want.”

A second respondent noted that,

“You don’t have to have full-out cohousing in the traditional North American sense. There’s a lot of principles that we can take from cohousing and work into our own thing. Just to have that relationship building on a small incremental scale so that people living at least in the same complex or in proximity to each other have that opportunity to connect. I think especially when you’re renting, there’s an even greater need for that. The non-profit housing group/manager could facilitate this.”

5.4 Response Analysis and Comparison

The feedback from the cohousing respondents provided general views on the challenges and opportunities of developing a cohousing project. The feedback from the case study respondents on the other hand sought out direct experiences or perceptions of such an endeavour in a low-income community.

Analysis and comparison of the interview findings revealed a number of issues and concerns unique to each group. To begin, only case study respondents expressed concern about the potential impact a mixed-income cohousing project could have on a low-income community. These respondents were specifically concerned about neighbourhood gentrification, socio-economic issues and resident well-being i.e. lifestyle choices and subsidized vs. non-subsidized resident dynamics. A second key concern identified by case study respondents was the ability of the non-profit and low-income community to fund and sustain shared spaces or common facilities inherent in the cohousing model.

Cohousing respondents also raised a number of issues and concerns. To begin, cohousing respondents repeatedly expressed the inherent strength of cohousing as a community building tool. These respondents identified that the sharing of communal space with outside organizations was a key strategy to building connections with the

surrounding community. A second key issue noted by cohousing respondents, was the desire to include mixed-income residents in cohousing communities. Respondents cited examples of successfully integrated mixed-income cohousing communities to support this claim. A third key issue identified by cohousing respondents was the need for the cohousing group or non-profit to create informal opportunities for residents to participate in collaborative activities and establish a sense of shared community before they chose to pursue cohousing models.

Finally, a key concern identified by both case study and cohousing respondents was the need for third party facilitation/non-profit coordination to plan, develop and sustain cohousing projects in low-income communities. However, both case study and cohousing respondents also noted concerns about the level of organizational capacity required by the non-profit to undertake cohousing projects.

Both case study and cohousing interviewees identified that cohousing is as much a process as it is a housing model. They also noted that it is imperative for potential cohousing residents to be actively involved in cohousing activities/processes from the conceptual stage to post-development (after move-in) stage. As well, they acknowledged that the success of the cohousing project would be contingent on cohousing residents' ability and willingness to be actively engaged in cohousing activities i.e. participate in shared meals/board/committee work, which requires an equal amount of dedication.

Overall analysis reveals that while both groups may share support for alternative housing models, collaborative planning and design principles and establishing a stronger sense of community, they do not share the same development framework, individual and

collective capacities, methods of financing and degree of commitment or 'buy-in' required to undertake a lengthy and complex cohousing project.

Chapter Six

SYNTHESIS AND SUMMARY

6.1 Synthesis

In Winnipeg, there are thousands of people on waiting lists for assisted housing. In Canada, there are at least 96,000 people on assisted housing waiting lists, indicating that social housing and the private real estate market are not meeting the needs of Canadians (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 1999). As non-profit housing organizations are the primary providers of affordable housing in Canada, it is imperative to explore their role in the provision of alternative housing models.

This research is inspired by the need to explore alternative affordable housing models for low-income communities. It aims to provide an understanding of the present non-profit housing context; examine the problems and prospects of the cohousing model in a low-income community; and explore the role(s) non-profit housing organizations play or are positioned to play in cohousing projects. The thesis also attempts to bridge an existing gap in the literature on cohousing and the non-profit housing sector. As well, it aims to establish a literary foundation to further explore cohousing as a plausible alternative housing model for low-income communities.

The thesis argues that examining the problems and prospects of developing cohousing projects in low-income communities allows for a broader spectrum of housing alternatives to address a looming affordable housing crisis and reduce the number of ill

housed individuals. However, dwellings appropriate to our varied needs require action to challenge our traditional housing assumptions. It is the objective of this thesis to a) identify barriers and opportunities to developing cohousing projects; b) explore the role cohousing models play or are positioned to play in low-income communities; and c) cultivate enhancement recommendations for non-profit housing groups interested in developing cohousing projects for low-income communities. The following section focuses on answering the key research questions.

6.2 Building Community

The first research question asked how cohousing models can meet current housing needs and build a sense of community. This question was primarily addressed through the literature review findings, which revealed that cohousing models can be tailored to meet the housing needs of various user groups. There are a number of advantages to shared and collective housing such as cost sharing to lower rent/mortgage payments which allows for additional amenities, encourages the sharing of household responsibilities, and provides social benefits such as security and support and organized group activities. Cohousing arose from a collective grassroots desire to combine the autonomy of private dwellings with the advantages of community living. The developments vary in size, financing method, and ownership structure but share a consistent idea about how people can cooperate in a residential environment to create a stronger sense of community and to share common facilities. However, it was also determined that it was not the cohousing model itself, but the cohousing process that helped build a sense of community.

Research indicates that while condominiums and cooperatives provide a good source of information on shared ownership and governance, they do not create 'community'. Housing designed to promote social interaction is also not guaranteed to establish a sense of community. The design, with its provision for shared space, has some effects on a sense of community, but good design in and of itself does not create a strong community. McCamant and Durrett's (1994) and Scotthanson and Scotthanson's (2005) work identified in Chapter 3 highlights the importance of community building, participatory planning and pre-development design processes as key to establishing successful and sustainable cohousing communities. Empirical findings from cohousing respondents supported these cohousing processes citing that groups do not have to have cohousing models in place in order to create a sense of community, but can incorporate a number of cohousing principles to start building relationships on an incremental scale and provide people with opportunities to connect. Cohousing respondents also identified a number of casual activities such as dinner and babysitting clubs that could be initiated at the onset of any cohousing process to initiate collective community building activities.

The process of building cohousing communities can be long and arduous. It became evident over the course of the study that there was no right answer or perfect solution to making the cohousing process better. The cohousing process is one of evolution, and each group has its own culture and set of experiences. What is true for one group may not work for another. "Cohousing is never generic; each community is tailored to a specific group's requirements" (Fromm, 1991: 14). While it is easier to work from an already established model, each new community will have to experiment with

what works for them, discarding what is not viable, and adding ideas that are. Despite their diversity, all cohousing developments consistently incorporate four characteristics: extensive common facilities, an intentional neighbourhood design, a participatory development process, and resident management. Empirical findings from cohousing respondents support these four cohousing characteristics. However; they emphasized resident management and participation as key components to successful cohousing projects. Cohousing respondents highlighted the importance of resident involvement and committee participation in cohousing communities and cited the value of implementing voluntary participation agreements. As stated by one cohousing respondent "The language in the participation agreement says that I understand that this is a community that manages itself or maintains itself and I agree to do my share." These participation agreements enable residents to acknowledge a level of individual responsibility for the ongoing formal (management) or informal (maintenance/events) operations of the cohousing community and foster collaboration.

6.3 Cohousing for Low-income Communities

The second research question asked what the barriers and opportunities of cohousing models were in low-income communities. This question was addressed through the literature review and empirical findings. Overall findings support the theoretical benefits of the cohousing model, but reveal that cohousing is a complex concept, time consuming process and challenging housing model for low-income communities. While the interview findings from both cohousing and case study

respondents support cohousing as a plausible model for low-income communities, there a number of cautionary measures for initiating a cohousing development for low-income communities. These measures include:

- Lower pre-development and collaborative planning participation rates;
- Higher resident turnover rates and financial constraints associated with lengthy cohousing processes;
- Initial investment and ongoing costs associated with common space and shared facilities integral to the cohousing concept;
- Increased dependence on government subsidies;
- Reduced interest in residents who aspire towards resident ownership and management structures of the cohousing development; and
- Required third party facilitation to coordinate the appropriate resources and facilitate the planning and development process.

Cohousing communities often value diversity and attempt to include residents of various income levels in their projects. Cohousing respondents even highlight reduced living expenses as a result of living collaboratively. However, the literature review revealed no clear North American case studies or recommendations on how to develop cohousing units exclusively for lower income residents. In North American cohousing communities, affordability varies, with only a few mixed income communities providing cohousing units to low to moderate-income residents. The reality is that while some cohousing projects incorporate approaches to maximize affordability, overall construction, consultant and financing costs are expensive. As a result, cohousing units usually remain out of reach for low-income communities most in need of affordable housing alternatives unless subsidies are available.

Overall, findings reveal that attempts to contextualize cohousing for low-income residents' poses additional problems to an already complex undertaking. Both cohousing and case study respondents were cautious to support the implementation of cohousing models for low-income communities, and struggled to develop alternative solutions and modifications to the cohousing model to adapt it to meet the high needs of low-income communities. However, the role of the third sector or non-profit housing organization was identified as a critical resource in establishing cohousing projects for low-income communities. As well, it was acknowledged that the third sector or non-profit housing organization would need to build internal capacities and seek external expertise, resources and supports to make cohousing projects feasible.

6.4 Engaging Non-profit Housing Organizations in Cohousing

Finally, the third research question asked what type of internal and external supports do non-profit housing organizations require to plan, develop and sustain a cohousing project. This question was addressed through the literature review, empirical findings and theoretical information provided throughout the thesis. Overall findings identify that the non-profit cohousing model for low-income communities is characterized by a non-profit organization, which owns the property and rents or leases the units to the residents. These rental developments owned by the non-profit organizations are often designed with less involvement by future residents than the ownership models. Although there are more restrictions in rental cohousing and less participation, findings reveal that tenants are content to have this kind of alternative and

find these communities more satisfying than traditional rentals. They have the benefits of the cohousing form: a central shared outdoor area, common facilities, and a design that emphasizes a sense of community and mutual security.

The growing interest in non-profit cohousing development and management structures stems from the non-profits ability to establish financing and maintain affordability. Working in partnership with non-profit housing organizations can provide low-income residents with control over their cohousing development. By working with non-profit housing organizations, residents can also select the degree of desired involvement whereby residents can either;

- Establish a management or leasing agreement with the non-profit and have a tenant association assume management responsibility, select new residents and oversee maintenance issues and transition into a leasing cooperative or full ownership; or
- Relinquish responsibilities and the non-profit can regain control of the entire development if the management performance or membership levels fall below expectations.

However, non-profit organizations may tend to have their own agendas i.e. providing housing for low-income people, housing specific groups of people or upgrading a deteriorating neighbourhood. While these organizations work to address the needs of the communities they serve, they often require internal and external supports to increase their own capacity and address organizational challenges related to limited project funding, predevelopment project financing and organizational sustainability.

As discussed throughout this thesis, the non-profit housing sector has become the major providers of affordable housing to low-income groups. Non-profits often wear

many hats as organizations and act as developers, managers, counselors and advocates for low-income residents. Due to this fact, their efforts need to be supported and their capacity increased. In order for the capacity of the non-profit sector to increase, changes in government policy and funding supports and resources must be addressed. These program and policy changes include: support for the research and implementation of alternative housing typologies for low-income communities; increased funding for non-profit housing providers to engage the community in pre-development planning and collaborative planning processes; and increased funding for capital/on-going costs to support shared spaces. Also of value would be funding for training to enhance the non-profits ability to help increase the provision of low cost housing and to address the issues of poverty facing many low-income communities. Property maintenance is also required to avoid a cycle of rehabilitation and deterioration. This issue could be addressed by providing residents with training to preserve the condition of their units and reduce costly repairs. To summarize,

- Non-profits experience ongoing challenges related to funding that extend beyond capital grants and organizational capacity;
- Low income levels are a major issue affecting the ability of non-profit organizations to provide affordable housing to those in need. In addition, many communities are facing difficult conditions with increasing poverty, crime, safety and the need for social services;
- Non-profit housing organizations are facing obstacles preventing them from addressing the established need. The main obstacle that has been prevalent through this project has been the lack of resources and the growing demands being placed on the non-profit housing sector; and
- Non-profit housing groups require flexible funding to increase their capacity and address the needs of the communities they serve; and
- Community-based non-profits rely on grants and are accountable to the community through public consultation and lengthy participatory processes.

The empirical research findings conclude that cohousing models require extensive adaptations and flexibility to address the high needs of low-income communities. As well, it was identified that financial and organizational resources were a fundamental challenge to non-profit housing organizations role in cohousing. Through the empirical findings, it was established that 1) cohousing is as much a process as it is a new housing model; 2) non-profit housing organizations best serve as facilitators to what should be a resident or community led cohousing process and 3) non-profit housing organizations require extensive internal and external supports to facilitate the planning and development of cohousing projects.

Empirical findings also revealed that non-profit developers interested in cohousing projects need to address a number of issues. These may include, but are not limited to, increasing education/awareness about cohousing, forming project partnerships, securing flexible and diverse financing/ownership models (rent-to-own), drafting by-laws and governance structure (e.g., management and maintenance responsibilities), securing capital and ongoing costs relating to land, communal space and personalized units, adapting to local government regulations and policy contexts, coordinating alternative financing models, and developing plans for sustainability (resident recruitment and retention). In order to address these issues, empirical findings were used to establish the following list of internal and external resources.

Findings that highlight the external resources/connections to assist in the planning, development and sustainability of cohousing projects include establishing partnerships with:

- Cohousing/Cooperative/Collective organizations (local, national and international) to share experiences, resources and supports;
- Community Housing Groups/Housing Agencies/Housing Advocates to inform alternative housing/affordable housing policies and debates;
- Community Development Corporations and Neighbourhood resident organizations to help connect with existing community groups;
- Municipal governments to explore opportunities for vacated property, density bonuses and land and zoning issues;
- Provincial/Federal governments to explore capital funding opportunities, project development funds and on-going rental subsidies;
- Special interest groups to support funding for green building design/sustainable living; and
- Lawyers, planners, developers, designers, and mediators among others to facilitate the group and collaborative planning processes and management structures.

Findings that highlight the internal resources/committees to assist in the planning, development and sustainability of cohousing projects include:

- Governance Committee to oversee all cohousing processes and committees including resident recruitment;
- Research Committee to connect with other cohousing organizations and develop a tailored cohousing model to meet individual community needs;
- Community Outreach Committee to coordinate community building activities with cohousing residents and the surrounding neighbourhood;
- Development and Design Committee to liaise with related agencies and design professionals to coordinate collaborative design and planning sessions;
- Planning and Finance Committee to research and develop related proposals, submissions and permits for pre-development design approval and ongoing project financing;
- Common House Committee to coordinate common house activities and administer shared equipment and supplies;
- Maintenance Committee and Landscape/Garden Committee to oversee general maintenance of the property; and
- Small Project Committee among others to conduct additional activities or projects identified by the cohousing residents.

6.5 Housing Policy Recommendations

The primary concern throughout this thesis is that a growing number of low-income communities are ill-housed and in need of affordable housing. Cohousing is proposed as one option that has been successful in meeting the housing needs of low-income communities in European countries (Denmark, Sweden and Holland), and is often attributable to the level of fiscal support received. However, the trend in North America has been to offload the affordable housing crisis onto the third/non-profit housing sector. The non-profit housing sector, specifically community-based non-profit housing providers has demonstrated success in their ability to identify and address local housing needs. However, their supply does little to address the demand for their product and service. This is largely related to both internal and external capacity building supports as well as insufficient and rigidly controlled core operating and project based funding frameworks.

Recommendations to address such complexities are couched in the need to review current fiscal housing policy. In order for Canada to address the growing demand for affordable/appropriate housing units, the efforts of the non-profit sector must be supported. Broader policy recommendations that would allow programs to respond to the needs of this sector build on the literature and empirical findings throughout the thesis. These policy recommendations include: 1) the need for a national housing program to address the needs of housing providers and various income groups; 2) the need for strengthened partnerships between the national housing program, provincial housing

authorities and community-based non-profit housing providers to best address the needs of individual communities; 3) the need for increased funding towards core operating, capital costs and flexible project based funding frameworks (i.e. pre-development research, community consultations, capacity building etc.) from provincial and federal governments to support collaborative community planning processes, foster progressive/alternative housing models such as cohousing and strengthen the internal resources/committees required to sustain these projects.

6.6 Directions for Future Research

As with any research, this thesis provided some answers and raised more questions. Further research to examine alternative housing models, specifically cohousing for low-income communities is clearly needed. Efforts to discover more about the concept of cohousing for low-income communities and the particular needs (i.e. social, economic and cultural) of targeted low-income communities requires investigation. As well, research that can demonstrate the benefits of community-based housing solutions and the benefits of cohousing to individual well-being and sense of community are also required.

As discussed, community-based housing providers such as the NEHP are examples of approaches intended to give the residents of low-income communities a sense of control over the quality and quantity of affordable housing available in their community and improvement in their quality of life. Finally, additional research on the

planning, implementation and sustainability of cohousing models, role(s) of community-based non-profit housing providers and impact on the people they serve is urgently needed.

6.7 Summary

This study supports the finding that community-based non-profit housing organizations are playing an emerging role in the provision of affordable housing units. It highlights the current fiscal context and indicates greater need for public support and commitment to the research, development and implementation of alternative housing models. As well, it highlights internal and external capacity building supports to the non-profit sector to enable their participation in the planning, development and sustainability of cohousing projects. However, overall research findings reveal that non-profit housing organizations and low-income communities do not generally have the capacity nor the financial capital required to support extensive collaborative cohousing planning processes and project costs associated with shared spaces and facilities. Consequently, this thesis argues for broader government support, additional resources and flexible funding for non-profit housing organizations to explore alternative housing models, facilitate the engagement of low-income communities in collaborative planning processes and develop new housing models to meet changing housing needs.

Cohousing is built on the premise that something is missing from North American homes and neighbourhoods. Although interested in the idea of community, most North

Americans do not yet have access to viable housing alternatives other than single family dwellings, apartments and condos. Since cohousing is not yet available in mainstream North America, it is difficult for many people to fully comprehend how cohousing can meet current housing needs and build a sense of community. In many cases it is easier to deny that there is an alternative, than it is to realize that a better way may exist but is not a practical option at the present time. "To change housing traditions is always an arduous task, but change is nevertheless inevitable in the wake of emerging trends towards smaller families, new non family households, and new domestic demands" (Franck and Ahrentzen. 1989: 69).

Section VII:

REFERENCES

- Anheier, Helmut K., and Seibel, Wolfgang. 1990. *The Third Sector: Comparative Studies of Nonprofit Organizations*. New York: Walter de Gruyter Publishers.
- Banting, Keith. 2000. *The Non-profit Sector in Canada: Roles and Relationships*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Burke, Edmund, M. 1979. *A Participatory Approach to Urban Planning*. New York: Human Sciences Press.
- Canada. Canadian Home Builders Association. (1997). A.C.T. Affordability and Choice Today: Regulatory Reform Initiatives to Improve Housing. Case Study. *Planning Cohousing: Creating Communities and the Collaborative Housing Society*. Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, June.
- Canada. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. *Residential Intensification Case Studies: Cranberry Commons*. Ottawa: CMHC.
- Canada. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. *Research Highlights. Alternate Tenure Arrangements*. Ottawa: CMHC.
- Canada. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2001). *Research Highlights. Affordable Housing Solutions: Fifteen Successful Projects*. Ottawa: CMHC, June.
- Canadian Cohousing Network.
<http://cohousing.ca/>. Accessed June 30, 2005.
- Canadian Housing Renewal Association (CHRA). 2002. *Ideas that Work; Best Practices in Affordable Housing Management*. Retrieved July 2005, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.chra-achru.ca/>
- Carroll, Barbara Wake. 1995. Program Drift: The Rational Road to Policy Perversity. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*. 4:1, Pp. 21 – 41.
- Carroll, Barbara Wake. 2002. Housing Policy in the New Millennium: The Uncompassionate Landscape. *Urban Policy Issues: Canadian Perspectives*, 2nd Ed., Pp. 69-89.

- Carter, Tom. 1997. Current Practices for Procuring Affordable Housing: The Canadian Context. *Housing Policy Debate*. 8:3, Pp. 593 - 631.
- Carter, Tom and Polevychok, Chesya. 2004. *Literature Review on Issues and Needs of Aboriginal People*. Federation of Canadian Municipalities.
- Chapman, G., McLean, H. 1990. Qualitative Research in Home Economics. *Canadian Home Economics Journal*. 40:3, Pp. 129-134.
- Chaskin, Robert J., Brown, Prudence., Venkatesh, Sudhir and Vidal, Avis. 2001. *Building Community Capacity*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.
- Cohousing Association of the United States.
<http://cohousing.org/resources/library/affordability.html>. Accessed June 30, 2005.
- Davies, Libby. 1999. *Homelessness: An Un-Natural Disaster A Time To Act*. Library of Parliament April 9, 1999.
- Deane, Lawrence. 2006. *Under One Roof; Community Economic Development and Housing in the Inner City*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- Development Training Institute. 2000. *A Capacity-building Framework for CDC's*.
<http://www.dtinational.org/resources/articledisplay.asp?id=32>. Accessed May 5, 2005.
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) June 1999. *National Housing Options Paper: A Call for Action*. Retrieved June 2005, from the World Wide Web:
<http://fcm.ca/PDFs/Housing/nhpoeng.pdf>
- Franck, Karen. and Ahrentzen, Sherry. 1989. *New Households, New Housing*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Fromm, Dorit. 1991. *Collaborative Communities: Cohousing, Central Living and Other Forms of Housing with Shared Facilities*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Gillham, Bill. 2000. *The Research Interview*. New York: Continuum.
- Gittel, Ross and Vidal, Avis. 1998. *Community Organizing: Building Social Capital as a Development Strategy*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Glickman, Norman. and Servon, Lisa. 1998. More than Bricks and Sticks: Five Components of Community Development Corporation Capacity. *Housing Policy Debate* 9 (3): 497-539.

- Glickman, Norman. and Servon, Lisa. 2003. By the Numbers: Measuring Community Development Corporations Capacity. *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 22; 240-256.
- Goetz, Edward. 1993. *Shelter Burden: Local Politics and Progressive Housing Policy*. Temple University Press; Philadelphia.
- Government of Manitoba. Neighbourhoods Alive.
<http://www.gov.mb.ca/ia/programs/neighbourhoods/>. Accessed May 3, 2005.
- Government of Manitoba, Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative. *Building Partnerships, Building Neighbourhoods*.
- Green, Gary Paul and Haines, Anna. 2000. *Asset-building in Community Development*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Hayden, Delores. 2002. *Redesigning the American Dream*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Healey, Patsy. 1997. *Collaborative Planning: Shaping Places in Fragmented Societies*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Human Resource Development of Canada (HRDC). Community Capacity-building: A Facilitated Workshop. http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/epb/sid/cia/comm_deve/fac_gui.doc. Accessed May 3, 2005.
- Innes, J.E. 1995. Planning Theory's Emergent Paradigm: Communicative Action and Interactive Practice. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*. 14: 183.
- Johnson, Laura, C. and Ruddock, Allison. 2000. *Building Capacity: Enhancing Women's Economic Participation through Housing*. Status of Women Canada. http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/pubs/0662286154/200009_0662286154_2_e.html. Accessed May 3, 2005.
- McCamant, K. and Durrett, C. 1988. *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*. California: Ten Speed Press.
- McCamant, K. and Durrett, C. 1994. *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*. California: Ten Speed Press.
- North End Housing Project, 2004. Proposal for the North Point Douglas Gateway Cohousing Project.
- Patton, Michael Q. 1987. *How to Use Qualitative Methods in Evaluation*. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.

- Patton, Michael Q. 1990. *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods 2nd Edition*. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.
- Reinharz, S. 1992. *Feminist Methods in Social Research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sandercock, Leonie. 1995. Voices from the Borderlands: A Mediation on a Metaphor. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*. 14: 77-88.
- Sandercock, Leonie. 1998. *Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Multicultural Cities*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Scotthanson, C. and Scotthanson, K. 2005. *The Cohousing Handbook: Building a Place for Community*. British Columbia: New Society Publishers.
- Shlay, Anne. 1995. Housing in the Broader Context in the United States. *Housing Policy Debate* 6 (3): 695-720.
- Silver, Jim. (ed.) 2000. *Solutions that Work: Fighting Poverty in Winnipeg*. CCPA and Fernwood Publishing: Winnipeg.
- Skelton, Ian. 1998. The Shelter Shortage: *New Directions for Low-cost Housing Policy in Canada*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives; Manitoba.
- Skelton, Ian. 2000. Cooperative and Non-profit Housing in Winnipeg: Toward a Re-engagement of the Provision Infrastructure. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 9 (2): 177-196.
- Social Planning Council of Winnipeg. 2001. *A Community Plan on Homelessness and Housing in Winnipeg*.
- Stefanovic, I.L. 1992. The Experience of Place: Housing Quality from a Phenomenological Perspective. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*. 1:2. Pp. 145-161.
- Yin, Robert K. 2003. *Applications of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Zeisel, John. 1984. *Inquiry by Design: Tools for Environment-Behaviour Research*. California: Cambridge University Press.

Section VIII

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 North End Housing Project Research Criteria/Response
- Appendix 2 University of Manitoba Ethics Approval Certificate
- Appendix 3 Interview Questions
- Appendix 4 Letter of Recruitment
- Appendix 5 Informed Consent Form

APPENDIX 1

North End Housing Project Research Criteria

The list of 10 criteria developed by the North End Housing Project Research Committee is used to evaluate and approve all research requests.

1. That there are clear benefits for NEHP.

The study will provide direct contributions to the North End Housing Project by a) providing a summary of current collaborative/cohousing literature b) identifying internal and external supports required to plan, develop and sustain a cohousing model; and c) establish stakeholder feedback to assess housing need and the perceived impact or role cohousing models can play in low income communities. The study will also propose enhancement recommendations to increase cohousing projects effectiveness in low income communities.

2. That the research is in line with the goals and objectives of NEHP and advances them in some way.

The proposed research is in line with NEHP goals and objectives by contributing to affordable housing solutions (i.e. cohousing) and incorporating comprehensive community development strategies such as community building.

3. That there are minimal demands upon NEHP staff, participants, or volunteers.

NEHP staff will be invited to participate in the research process including interview and focus group consultations and final research analysis and dissemination. There will be approximately two NEHP staff members asked to participate in a half hour interview and subsequent focus group.

4. That funding for research is shared equitably with NEHP participants.

No funding has been received for this research project. However if funding is obtained, it will be shared equitably with NEHP participants.

5. That the research is respectful of social, cultural, religious and political values of participants.

This research project will be approached as both an academic assignment and a socio-cultural learning experience in which, the researcher will adopt an inclusive and respectful role with all participants.

6. That the research proposals and reports honestly represent the nature of the roles of subjects, researchers, and NEHP.

Honesty and accuracy are key elements that will be addressed throughout the study via consultative processes and shared documentation of information (where applicable).

7. That there be no perception of obligation or compulsion for anyone to participate in the study, to answer particular questions, or continue in a study after it has begun.

No person is required to participate in this study. Participation is voluntary and all participants may withdraw from the study at any time.

8. That research reports be shared with NEHP and participants for comment and correction before dissemination.

NEHP will be invited to review the research document for comment and correction before dissemination.

9. That all research projects obtain University Ethics Board approval, and that the ethics approval submission be shared with NEHP in advance.

A copy of the Ethics Board approval will be provided to the NEHP research selection committee as an addendum to the NEHP research request document.

10. That the researcher obtains written and informed consent from all participants as per Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board requirements.

All participants will be required to complete a consent form as per Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board requirements. A copy of this form will also be provided in the NEHP research request document.

APPENDIX 2

University of Manitoba Ethics Approval Certificate

22 September 2005

TO: **Nadalene Renee Khan**
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Wayne Taylor, Chair**
Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB)

Re: **Protocol #J2005:115**
"Collaborative Housing; Problems and Prospects for Low Income Communities"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

<p>Please note that, if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.</p>
--

APPENDIX 3

Interview Questions

All interviews will consist of two parts. The first part of the interview will include open-ended questions that will provide a unique context of the interviewee's position/relationship with the NEHP or cohousing community/organization. The second part of the interview will also include open-ended questions that will provide a context for understanding perceived challenges and opportunities of cohousing within low-income communities and enhancement recommendations to increase their effectiveness.

Part One (All interviewees except the cohousing representatives)

- 1) Can you tell me how you first got involved with NEHP and what your current role is with the organization?
- 2) How do you think NEHP has been able to meet the needs of families/individuals seeking affordable housing? Are there areas that need strengthening?
- 3) Beyond housing provision, what kind of programs or community building services does NEHP provide to its residents?
- 4) Are you aware of any programs or services that the NEHP provides to the community at large?
- 5) Do you know if the NEHP works in partnership with other organizations to deliver these programs or services? If so, could you name any?

Part Two (All interviewees except the cohousing representatives)

- 6) What does a good cohousing model look like or entail? What role do you think cohousing can play in low-income communities?
- 7) What are the challenges and opportunities of developing a cohousing community? Do you think they differ for low-income residents/neighbourhoods?
- 8) What internal and external supports do you think are required to plan, develop and sustain a cohousing model in a low-income community?
- 9) What strategies do you think non-profit housing developers should employ when initiating a cohousing project?
- 10) Do you think that there is only one model of cohousing, or do you think it is possible to pursue various degrees of cohousing? I.e. high degree of collaboration (3 shared meals a day) vs. low degree of collaboration (1 meal a week).

Part One (Cohousing Representatives Only)

- 1) Can you tell me how you first got involved with the cohousing movement and what your current role is within the (stated) organization?
- 2) How do you think cohousing has been successful in meeting the needs of families/individuals seeking affordable housing?
- 3) Beyond housing provision, what kind of programs or community building does cohousing provide to its residents?

- 4) Are you aware of any programs or services that cohousing communities provide to the community at large?
- 5) Do you know if cohousing communities work in partnership with other organizations to deliver these programs or build community? If so, could you name any?

Part Two (Cohousing Representatives Only)

- 6) What does a good cohousing model look like or entail? What role do you think cohousing can play in low-income communities?
- 7) What are the challenges and opportunities of developing a cohousing community? Do you think they differ for low-income residents/neighbourhoods?
- 8) What internal and external supports do you think are required to plan, develop and sustain a cohousing model in a low-income community?
- 9) What strategies would you recommend non-profit housing developers employ when initiating a cohousing project?
- 10) Do you think that there is only one model of cohousing, or do you think it is possible to pursue various degrees of cohousing? I.e. high degree of collaboration (3 shared meals a day) vs. low degree of collaboration (1 meal a week).

APPENDIX 4

Informed Consent Form

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I am a graduate student in the Department of City Planning at the University of Manitoba. As part of my Masters' thesis, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Rae Bridgman. I am inviting you to participate in my study. The purpose of the study is to examine the problems and prospects of cohousing models in low-income communities. Within this interview, you can expect to be asked personal questions regarding your perspective of cohousing models, low-income communities and the North End Housing Project's role in developing cohousing projects as well as concerns and enhancement recommendations.

The interview will be approximately half an hour in length, and will be tape recorded with your permission. All information obtained in this interview will be kept strictly confidential and stored in a safe, secure place. I will delete all files and erase all tapes when my thesis is completed. Furthermore, the results of this interview will be presented with anonymity, and no names will be shown in the final report.

This work will be published as a thesis and will be placed in the Architecture and Fine Arts Library at the University of Manitoba.

If you have any questions or concerns after this interview is completed, please contact me or contact my supervisor Dr. Bridgman at 474-7179 bridgman@cc.umanitoba.ca.

Thank you for giving your time to participate in this interview. Your responses are valuable to this research project and are greatly appreciated.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. Participation is voluntary and no compensation will be provided. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as

your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

This research has been approved by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature

Date

Please check one of the following boxes.

☐ Yes, I would like to review the research findings.

☐ No, I would not like to review the research findings.

APPENDIX 5

Letter of Recruitment

Nadalene Khan
58 Hansford Road
Winnipeg Manitoba
R2J 2J4
nadalene_khan@hotmail.com

August 30, 2006

Organization's Name
Street Address
City, Province, Postal Code

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am a graduate student in the Department of City Planning at the University of Manitoba. As part of my Masters' thesis, I am inviting you to participate in my study. The purpose of the study is to examine the problems and prospects of cohousing models in low-income communities.

Interviews will be approximately half an hour in length and can occur at a time and place that is convenient for you. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer. I will ensure complete anonymity and no names will appear in the final report. I will also request permission to audio tape the interview. During the interview, you can expect to be asked personal questions regarding your housing needs and concerns, perspectives on alternative housing models and non-profit housing providers and the North End Housing Project.

This research has been approved by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the Human Ethics Secretariat at (204) 474-7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. If after receiving this letter, you have questions about this study; please contact my thesis advisor Dr. Rae Bridgman at (204) 474-7179 or myself :

I look forward to meeting with you. Sincerely,

Nadalene Khan