

# **Resident Participation in Non-Profit Housing: A Case Study**

**by**

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partial fulfillment of the degree Master of Environmental Design  
(Planning)*

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research explores resident participation as it pertains to private not-for-profit housing organizations within civil society. The first part of the document establishes a context for the research, by looking at issues such as the rationale for assisted housing, the landlord-tenant relationship and alternative community development theory. An argument for fostering resident participation is then established, looking critically at historical and current examples. The study then focuses specifically on one case study - the Hillhurst Sunnyside Non-Profit Housing Association - an organization that is engaged in both housing provision and the empowerment of its residents. The findings from this part of the research were culled from archival analysis, interviews and a discussion group. The document concludes with a set of recommendations for how this organization can further enhance resident participation. The study concludes that, despite a lack of broad-based interest among residents in the organization, enhancing participation is still an important objective as a means of fostering citizenship skills.

**Key words:** resident participation, tenant participation, consumer participation, non-profit housing, social housing, Hillhurst Sunnyside, civil society, civic engagement, citizenship, democratization, empowerment

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# Glossary of Terms

## **Benevolent**

**Landlord:** A colloquial term referring to a landlord who is generally managing in the interest of their tenants (free of compulsion to do so by the state) rather than for profit. Non-profit housing is managed by benevolent landlords.

**Civil Society:** A public life space that is founded on the household and social relations (i.e. community) in contrast with the state or corporate domains. It is essentially all human interactivity within the public domain concerned with the common good rather than profit or professionalism. Agents within civil society are often referred to as 'third sector' organizations or 'non-governmental organizations' (NGOs). They are principally community-based and operate on a non-profit basis.

**CMHC:** Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. A federal crown corporation set up to encourage home-ownership and later to help provide social housing. Many private non-profit housing providers, including the HSNPHA, pay a CMHC mortgage and receive a small percentage back in the form of grants.

## **Community**

**Development:** Development geared toward benefiting communities through gaining access to the bases of power in society (the process of empowerment). (Friedmann, 1988) It is centered upon enhancing opportunities for the meaningful participation of community members in those decisions which affect their lives. It is also termed 'Alternative Community Development' in this paper to distinguish it from other conceptions of community development, which are variously centered on economic growth, health care, agricultural improvement, real estate development or other activities.

## Co-operative

Housing:	Housing that is owned, managed, operated, and sometimes built cooperatively (i.e. by those living in it), usually on a non-profit and non-speculative basis. It may have a subsidized component, although CMHC funding was eliminated for new cooperatives in 1991. e.g. Sunnyhill Co-operative
Core Need:	A subjective term referring to those living within a given jurisdiction who are paying more than a given percentage of their income on rent. In Alberta, those deemed to be in 'core need' are paying more than 30% of their gross income on rent. Most jurisdictions set core need at between 25% and 30%.
Discussion Group:	An open-ended, qualitative process involving interested stakeholders in the formation of ideas.
Floor:	A lower limit imposed on rent-levels. In February, 1997, HSNPHA eliminated floors and is thus fully RGI (referred to in Glossary).
Focus Group:	A closed-ended process involving a random (although sometimes strategic) sampling of the public in the evaluation of a product or phenomenon. Focus groups may be qualitative or quantitative.
HSCA:	The Hillhurst Sunnyside Community Association. The body in the Calgary community of Hillhurst Sunnyside charged with addressing community needs and concerns, running related programs, and representing the community's stance on issues affecting them to government and development interests.
HSNPHA:	The Hillhurst Sunnyside Non-Profit Housing Association. A private non-profit housing provider in the Hillhurst Sunnyside community. The HSNPHA was the direct result of an HSCA initiative to address an housing affordability crisis in the area. Part of <i>Chapter One</i> elaborates on the structure, function and history of the HSNPHA. It is the housing provider upon which, and for whom, this research is focused.



HUD:	The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development in the United States. HUD is the approximate American counterpart to CMHC.
Landlord (Lessor):	"One who holds title to and conveys the right to use and occupy a property under a lease agreement." ( <u>Terminology Bulletin</u> , 1981: 81)
LEM:	Low-End Market rent. A CMHC-determined rent level which is intended to be at or near the lower end of a local housing market. When CMHC appraises the market, it sets both a high and low determination of market rent. HSNPHA aims to have LEM at the low end.
Municipal	
Non-Profit Housing:	Social Housing subsidized and operated by an authority "at arm's length" from the municipality. Also called 'local housing authorities'. e.g. Calhome Properties
Private Non-Profit	
Housing (PNP):	In Canada, social housing is mortgaged and subsidized (or formerly subsidized) by CMHC or a Provincial equivalent and operated by a private not-for-profit corporation. In PNP housing, net benefits (economic rent) are derived by tenants rather than appropriated by the landlord. Private non-profit usually has a mix of market (LEM) and non-market (RGI) renters. PNPs fall into a broader category of 'non-governmental organizations' (NGOs), or 'third sector' agencies. e.g. HSNPHA, Inglewood NPHA
Public Housing:	Government-subsidized social housing (termed 'Council Housing' in the UK). Public housing projects are normally owned by a public authority such as a municipality and may be managed by a single landlord, local housing councils, or tenant cooperatives (TMCs).
RGI:	Rent Geared to Income. A rent level determined by an individual or family income. In the HSNPHA instance, RGI is charged at between 27% and 33% of gross income, depending on the property.

Self-help Housing:	This is a generic term used to describe various forms of tenant, co-owner or owner involvement or control, including sweat equity (resident-built housing), cooperatives, and TMCs.
Social Housing:	There are many definitions of social housing. Herein, however, social housing will refer to adequate medium or long-term housing for those in core need.
Tenant (Lessee):	"One who has the occupation or temporary possession of lands or [dwellings] of another," via a lease. (Ibid.: 154) In this document, the terms 'tenant' and 'resident' will be used interchangeably.
Tenant Council:	Also called tenant association or tenants' union. An organized body of tenants either within a building or complex, or across a geographical area such as a neighborhood or city. Tenant councils have a variety of possible functions, including collecting, filtering and voicing tenant grievances to the relevant authority or board, lobbying for legal amendments or housing policy changes, providing information to tenants and organizing social events.
TMC:	(Tenant Management Corporation) Sometimes called 'Tenant Co-operatives'. Incorporated, elected (usually) tenant-run boards who have delegated housing management responsibilities, usually in partnership with a public housing authority. TMCs are most common in the U.S.

## **Introduction**

This Master's Degree Project (MDP) explores resident participation as it pertains to private not-for-profit housing organizations. It focuses specifically on one case study - the Hillhurst Sunnyside Non-Profit Housing Association - an organization that is engaged in both housing provision and the empowerment of its residents. The document concludes with a set of recommendations for how this organization, as an agent within civil society, can further enhance this empowerment objective.

In the Introduction, the background and impetus for the research is discussed, outlining a set of 'hypotheses'. The methodology of the research is then described as a triangulation of participatory methods, interviews, and a literature and archival review.

In Chapter One, a series of background sections are included to help the reader better understand the larger context within which this study falls. A brief look at the rationale and history of social housing in Canada, private non-profit housing, the relationship both in law and in reality between landlord and tenant and the community of Hillhurst Sunnyside form this backdrop. Also, two other scene-setting subjects are worthy of more in-depth discussion. The first is the case study organization itself - the Hillhurst Sunnyside Non-profit Housing Association, with particular attention devoted to its history and legal and organizational structure. The final section explores the theory within which the research is nested, focusing in particular on an alternative community development theory which relates to non-profit housing's role within civil society.

Chapter Two introduces the concept of resident participation. First, the generic concept of participation is dissected to reveal various levels, uses and abuses and some challenging questions. Then, a look at the merits of participation are accounted from a broad social benefit perspective that weighs possible losses in efficiency against non-quantifiable gains in resident empowerment. A brief synopsis of the history of tenant participation in the past three decades follows, focusing critically on broad-based experiments in the United States

and United Kingdom. Highlights from the Canadian and Calgarian experiences conclude the chapter.

A narrowing of the research to the case study level begins in Chapter Three. The context of resident participation in community-based private non-profit housing is shown to be unique and particularly accommodating. The subject of cooperative housing is then critically examined, offering a number of instructive lessons with a surprisingly high degree of transferability to other private non-profit housing organizations. Next, the history of tenant participation within the Hillhurst Sunnyside Non-Profit Housing Association (HSNPHA), based on archival research and interviews, is documented. Following this is a snapshot of the organization today with reference to its efforts to encourage the empowerment of HSNPHA residents. The desire of tenants to participate and the barriers and drawbacks involved in both past and future attempts at enhancing resident participation are then explored and addressed. A very general look at the organizational evolution that HSNPHA might consider is then described.

Chapter Four is an expanded set of potential options available to the HSNPHA. An outline of the various possible forms of participation precedes a debunking of less applicable forms. Particular emphasis is given to the inappropriateness of a tenant council or tenant management corporation and to the pitfalls of tenant participants taking the 'narrow view'. The following section explores those options that should, in the author's opinion, be actively promoted and pursued. Specifically, they are expanding communication and organizational openness, enhancing and democratizing tenant representation and accountability in decision-making, fostering mutual support networks among tenants, augmenting language in the organization's literature, encouraging personalization of space, and encouraging the 'global view' among participant tenants. Twelve concrete recommendations for enhancing the empowerment objective follow. Finally, a concluding section relates the recommendations back to the theory.

## **Background and Impetus**

This research was spawned from both abstract, generic observations and specific concrete events. In particular, three ‘hypotheses’ have prompted the investigation into tenant participation in non-profit housing:

- 1) the goal of the HSNPHA, beyond housing provision, is to ‘empower’ tenants;
- 2) government cutbacks are forcing civil society organizations to be more self-sufficient; and
- 3) there is an emerging demand in society generally for the democratization of all institutions.

My first exposure to HSNPHA and to private non-profit housing generally (outside of co-operatives), came through an Environmental Design course - “Social Issues in Planning”, wherein the class conducted a research project for HSNPHA, focusing upon housing availability, affordability issues, and site selection and design possibilities for potential new developments (Abu-Dehays, et al., 1995).<sup>1</sup> That research did not intend to examine tenant participation issues in any depth, although Recommendation #11 of the report states the following:

Community participants [who included tenants themselves] also saw a need to give tenants greater responsibility and control over building management and maintenance, not only to reduce costs, but to achieve a greater sense of ownership and empowerment (p. 13).

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<sup>1</sup> This section is written less formally, referring to the researcher in the first person, as it serves to set the context for the MDP.

The Executive Director of HSNPHA (hereinafter referred to as the ED) subsequently extended an offer of support to students wishing to complete an MDP with the organization. I expressed to her an interest in investigating tenant participation within HSNPHA, which she agreed would be relevant and consistent with the organization's objectives. In addition, I moved into HSNPHA housing in November of 1996. This has enabled me to work as a tenant, stakeholder and community member (i.e. participant-observer), rather than as a 'disinterested' or 'impartial' observer.

In our early conversations and in a formal interview, the ED expressed a desire to see the increased involvement of tenants in decision-making. The HSNPHA intends to not merely provide housing for tenants, but to help empower them. Concurrently, CMHC funding restructuring means that community-based housing providers will have to be more self-sufficient in the future. Public participation in housing has long been seen as a particularly sound strategy in times of economic restraint (CMHC, 1979). The connection between organizational self-sufficiency and resident empowerment through participation is thus explored in this research, based on a theory of civil society and alternative community development.

Finally, the third impetus is my belief that there is an increasing demand in society generally (and perhaps globally) for more democratic modes of decision-making within institutions, whether in government, corporations or civil society. As Putnam (1995: 77) argues, "the concept of 'civil society' has played a central role in the recent global debate about the pre-conditions for democracy and democratization... In the established democracies, ironically, growing numbers of citizens are questioning the effectiveness of their public institutions at the very moment when liberal democracy has swept the battlefield." For instance, technocratic 'rational' planning has largely ignored the public (short of abstract formulations of a 'public good') and has sidestepped, and even devalued and discouraged, meaningful popular participation. But this "dictatorship of reason" (Saul, 1994) may be wearing thin as communities are demanding a greater say in decisions affecting them and citizens have begun to realize that science (including social science) is

unable to solve our social, economic and environmental problems.<sup>2</sup> What many citizens are farther from realizing is that technical, scientific language also serves to “immobilize, depoliticize and oppress” popular power (Forester, 1985: 204).<sup>3</sup> Freer flows of undistorted information, continual dialoguing and debate starting at the household level, critical thinking and self-evaluation are all means through which ‘citizenship skills’ can be developed. (Taylor, 1991; Friedmann, 1988; Habermas, 1979; Goodman, 1956)<sup>4</sup> Susskind and Elliot (1983: 3-34) have observed four trends leading to increased levels of resident participation in Western Europe:

- 1) *democratization* of choices involving resource allocation;
- 2) *decentralization* of service systems management;
- 3) *deprofessionalization* of bureaucratic judgements that affect the lives of residents; and
- 4) *demystification* of design and investment decisions.

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<sup>2</sup> The overwhelming rejection of the Charlottetown Accord in 1991, due in large part to the public’s contempt for ‘closed-door’ dealmaking and the recent rise in labour disputes (Dreier, 1995; also evidenced by local events) may be evidence of a nascent reclamation of citizen-based power. Even the rise of the Reform Party, which postures itself as ‘populist’ and ‘grassroots’, may be indicative of a popular rejection of rule by a traditional elite.

<sup>3</sup> These are Forester’s words, but his planning-specific argument is based on the assertions of Habermas and other proponents of ‘critical theory’.

<sup>4</sup> Saul (1994), Taylor (1991) and Friedmann (1988) describe the encroachment of technocracy and ideology upon the life space of citizens, which creates dependency and destroys *meaningful* individualism and civic engagement. Long before this, Paul Goodman, in Growing up Absurd (1956), lamented the imminent withering of democracy and conscious citizenship:

The good of General Motors and the nation are inseparable, says Secretary Wilson - even though the cars are demonstrably ruinous for the cities, ruinous for the young, etc. Madison Ave. and Hollywood not only debauch their audiences, but they pre-empt the means of communication, so nothing else can exist. ...That Americans can allow this kind of thing instead of demolishing it with the blow of the paw like a strong lion, is the psychology of missed revolutions. (p. 228)

Among the reasons for this loss of consciousness, Goodman asserts, are the aggrandization of freedom of speech by the corporate media, the domination of centralized, technocratic decision-making (in the spirit of Veblen, Geddes and Fuller), the conceptualization of social science as ‘laboratorial study’ rather than open-ended processes geared toward social change, the dominance of the managerial class (“tribes of middlemen”), the concentration of the labour movement upon wage gains rather than recapturing the means of production, and the abandonment of community scale democracy (the ‘town meeting’). In the same general vein, Habermas (1979) calls specifically for ‘undistorted’ communication about problems in the public domain. This call is perhaps more urgent now than it has ever been.

It is difficult to say whether such trends are occurring in North America fourteen years later. Although empirical evidence is sparse, intuition and casual observation tells me that these phenomena *are* occurring, albeit somewhat sporadically. It is well worth investigating further. Enhanced resident participation, argued herein and in Atlas & Shoshkes (1997) and Capek & Gilderbloom (1992), should be one key piece of the democratization process.

## **Methodology**

This research, with the exception of select empirical studies, was conducted in a qualitative manner. Qualitative research is most appropriate in this context as there is a process-based component and the indicators are based on perceptions, willingness and a situation-specific policy environment:

Quality refers to the what, how, where and when of a thing - its essence and ambiance. Qualitative research thus refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things. In contrast, quantitative research refers to counts and measures of things. (Berg, 1995: 3)

The research consisted of both non-participatory and participatory approaches. The non-participatory research employed three conventional methodologies - literature review, archival review and 'key informant' interviews. The literature review is fairly broad, spanning theory, housing and tenancy history, legislation, case studies of tenant participation and participatory methodological approaches. Although there is a wealth of current literature on community development and citizen participation in planning, the same cannot be said for material on tenant participation and organization.<sup>5</sup> The archival

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<sup>5</sup> The first period when literature on tenant participation and organization was written in abundance was during the late 1960's/early 1970's, accompanying an upsurge of community activism and citizens' rights movements. This material displayed an optimism, idealism, widespread creative energy and radical ambition. The second proliferation came in the late 1970's/early 1980's, when tenant participation had been experimented with in public housing. Perhaps owing to the fact that much of it came from institutional



review was HSNPHA-specific, and examined minutes of meetings, correspondence, legal documents, newsletters and newspaper articles. It is possible that there may be some bias in this information, since it comes primarily from the Board of Directors and since the 'archivists' and 'recorders' of meetings can potentially filter information. However, it is hoped that proper cross-referencing with interviews can provide a sufficient check for this potential bias.

The participatory portion of the project was a three-stage process:

1) *Exploratory Interviews*: Interviews were conducted with three groups: a) past and current board members and the current executive director, selected in accordance with their association with tenant participation; b) directors of other private non-profit housing providers, selected either because they are local or because they operate with significant levels of tenant participation; and c) tenants, selected randomly.<sup>6</sup> Twenty tenants (out of approximately 130), three board members, the current executive director, and three housing providers were interviewed. Eleven of the interviews were conducted in person, while the remainder were conducted via telephone. The tenant interviewees are anonymous, given the random representative sampling, while the other interviewees, where permission has been granted, are identified. Refer to Appendix B, which contains the interview questions, more detailed demographic information and synopsized tenant responses. Because the non-tenant interviews are not aggregated or anonymous, they are referred to explicitly by position (not name) within the text. Nor are they cited as “personal communications” because of this explicit mention, as it

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sources (e.g. CMHC, HUD, Scottish Council Housing, etc.), the tone during this era was more conservative, pessimistic and empiricized.

<sup>6</sup> The randomness, however, was constrained by a desire to obtain an accurate demographic sampling representative of the entire tenant body according to the variables of tenure (market vs. subsidized), dwelling type, gender, age and disability vs. nondisability (prioritized in that order). Appendix B gives the specific ratios for each of these variables. Tenant information was provided, in strict confidence, by the Executive Director, Bonnie Roe. The handling and disposal of this information is in full accordance with Environmental Design Ethics Committee standards.

would be redundant. Two housing providers who were interviewed did not wish to be explicitly referred to, as they felt that any *official* comments required the approval of their respective boards of directors;

2) *Discussion Group*: One eight-member discussion group meeting was held involving tenants only. The meeting occupied two hours on the evening of February 12, 1997 in the Senior's Room of Norfolk House. A paid note-taker documented the meeting by hand since a recording device was deemed by the researcher to hinder the candidness of the discussion. Two other group meetings were scheduled, but attendance was insufficient to have proper discussion. The discussion group further explored the prominent issues arising from the interview process and was focused on producing concrete ideas and suggestions. Attendance at the discussion group was voluntary and the results are thus biased in the direction of those who are most interested in the subject of tenant participation. This is unavoidable and does not devalue the research, since the interviews served as the representative sampling of tenant opinion. To help temper this bias, however, an added incentive was given to participants in the form of complimentary passes to a neighborhood cinema and a draw for a \$25 gift certificate to a nearby Italian restaurant. It is unlikely that the bias was affected, as the majority of those who attended mentioned that they would have come regardless of the incentives.

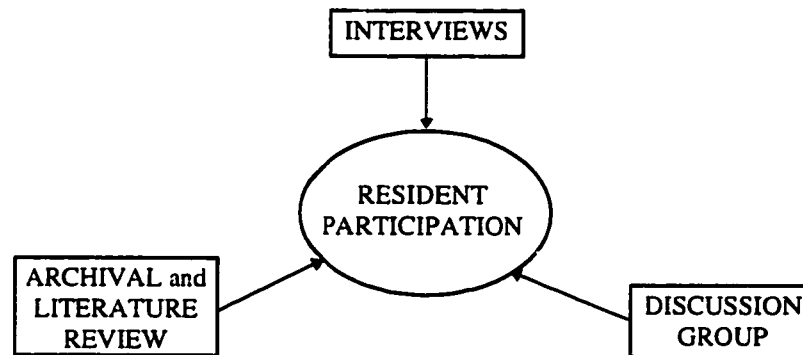
Although facilitated in essentially the same manner as a *focus* group, it is referred to as a *discussion* group for four reasons: The meeting was idea-oriented rather than focused on a prepared product, attendance was characterized by interested stakeholders rather than a random sampling of the general public, the process is open-ended (i.e. if participants want to continue to participate, the discussion group acts as a partial germinator for this) and the term 'discussion' implies just that (i.e. the term 'focus group' is not as self-evident in vernacular conversation). Parts of the discussion group

were intended to act as a *phenomenological depth* focus group. A phenomenological focus group is qualitative and intends to uncover participants' 'natural attitudes' about phenomena - i.e. the cultural mores and values through which people filter everyday knowledge (Snell, 1987). Refer to Appendix C for a list of discussion group questions and responses;

3) *Ratification of Recommendations*: Tenants who showed some level of interest in participation, including discussion group participants, those who expressed interest in the interviews and those who contacted the researcher in lieu of attending a discussion group, were given copies of a preliminary set of recommendations to review. They were asked to either ratify, amend or reject each recommendation and to provide additional feedback. The recommendations are based primarily on the findings stemming from the interview and discussion group process, and thus did not, for the most part, appear unusual or surprising to the ratifiers. Thirteen tenants responded to the preliminary recommendations, and their level of support is indicated after each specific recommendation in *Chapter Four*. The residents' 'stamp of approval' greatly enhances the legitimacy of the recommendations. This is internal validation. However, this portion of the research is also biased in favour of those most interested in participating. The remainder of the methodology section provides the rationale for this bias.

The specific qualitative technique employed in the research is '*triangulation*'. Originally used in cartography, navigation and military strategy, triangulation refers to the illumination of a certain reality using several lines of sight (Berg, 1995). A useful analogy is the determining of an earthquakes' epicentre using measurements from three seismic stations. The use of differing, although parallel, lines of research - most obviously archival (and, less directly, literature review), 'one-on-one' interviews and a discussion group - approach the same issues from three distinct viewpoints and three levels of dynamism (i.e. from static historical records, through candid interviews to a dynamic group setting). This is referred

to specifically as '*methodological triangulation*', i.e. the observing of phenomena from differing *points of reference* (Ibid.), and is illustrated in Figure 1.



*Figure 1 - Methodological Triangulation*

'*Data triangulation*', the observing of the same subject or phenomena in distinctly differing *settings*, is also used with respect to tenant analysis: The tenants involved in the research are observed in two settings - private personal interviews and group conversation. This is compared with experiences documented in the literature and board members' perceptions of the same phenomena.

It is crucial to recognize that there is a risk of community workers, be they planners, social workers or activists, subtly taking control of this kind of process, particularly if there is some ulterior goal involved (such as the production of an MDP). To avoid this pitfall, vigilance was taken to be candid about values, agendas and interests, to remember that involvement is a goal in itself and should not be taken as given in pursuit of another goal, and finally to recognize that people's skills need to be built-upon - participants are not just passive providers of input (unless, of course, that is all they wish to be).

This research, somewhat regrettably, is nearer to traditional participant observation and analysis (regardless of it being qualitative or quantitative) than it is to participant control, falling, for the most part, to the former side of the line. Participatory Action Research (PAR), as it is most commonly referred to, is the methodology that is centered upon participant control of the research process. This research, of course, does not purport to be

classified as PAR, although some of the approaches in a PAR researcher's toolkit are used.<sup>7</sup> In describing the methodology of *phenomenological depth* focus groups, Snell (1987: 3) describes the capturing of 'natural attitudes' in distinctly 'PAR-esq' terms:

For a researcher to describe this natural attitude, he/she must interact with people until the ability to take on their perspective is acquired; to see the world through their eyes, or to enter their 'head-space'.

In moving into HSNPHA housing, and thereby becoming a tenant, the researcher has been able to capture the tenants' 'natural attitudes' in a more meaningful and real way. However, the difficulty is that the research began in a conventional way: An hypothesis was formed and an independent investigation of the topic was commenced prior to the involvement of participants. This was done to permit uncertainty, thereby avoiding bias (i.e. even if no one showed an interest in participation, this would still be a finding). Therefore, the researcher is then a curious combination of observer and participant. However, as the research indicates, a significant number of residents *are* desirous of greater participation in the organization. The research has therefore moved toward a participant-centered, process-based form. The process will, no doubt, continue upon completion of the MDP. Put succinctly, the work "is distinguished from PAR in that it involves less training, less institutional development, less political change and less cost. It relies more heavily on the facilitator to analyze the data and write all the reports. The verification involves only the clients - those people in the community who have direct need of the results [HSNPHA] and who are paying for the project [Environmental Design, as public research]" (Ryan & Robinson, 1996: 4).

Also, the investigation of an issue such as tenant participation inevitably involves some level of power analysis. Like any other group who are in an innately inferior position vis-à-vis another group within a structural setting (e.g. employee vis-à-vis employer, students vis-à-vis faculty), there are both complementary interests and competing interests. They are

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<sup>7</sup> For a detailed description of the PAR process, refer to Fals-Borda and Rahman (1991). A clear distinction is drawn between PAR (community control) and community participation in Ryan and Robinson (1996).

making competing claims to a piece of some 'pie' (i.e. economic rent, decision-making power, etc.). This will be discussed in further depth in later sections, but it needs to be mentioned now, because it impacts the chosen methodology. The process that has been employed in this research is intended to be a non-adversarial 'self-help' approach to partitioning the 'pie', rather than a 'conflict' approach. The conflict approach, originally popularized by Saul Alinsky, has been employed with mixed reviews in numerous tenant-organization initiatives, particularly in U.S. inner cities.<sup>8</sup> Too often, this approach has devolved into a grandstanding opportunity for community activists and politicians rather than nurturing an empowering, creative, results-oriented process.<sup>9</sup> An account from a tenant's perspective in American public housing reads as a caution to community workers to let the tenants control their own community development (Croft & Beresford, 1988). The community workers in this particular case were responsible for inflaming the process, as they employed a conflict approach.

Having now looked at the background and methodology of the research, *Chapter One* will take a broad step back and outline the context. In order to understand resident participation in non-profit housing as a specific issue, it is essential to first scan a broader structural, historical and theoretical framework.

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<sup>8</sup> Refer to Alinsky (1971), which is his most well-developed (and final) description of this approach.

<sup>9</sup> A clear distinction is made between the self-help and conflict approaches to community development in Christenson & Robinson Jr. (1989).

## **CHAPTER 1 - Context**

### **Setting the Scene**

In order to have a greater understanding of the study itself, readers should first develop some familiarity with a series of broader topics. In order to proceed with a discussion on Resident Participation in Non-Profit Housing, some basic questions should be answered: Why should Canadians concern themselves with social housing? What is private, not-for-profit housing? What is the nature of the landlord-tenant relationship? What, and where, is Hillhurst Sunnyside?

### ***The Rationale and History of Social Housing in Canada***

Before examining the elements specific to this research, it is necessary to look at both the reason social housing exists in Canada and its brief history. In studying a relatively narrow topic such as resident participation in non-profit housing, it is easy to ignore some of the more foundational principles upon which the specific arguments are built. It cannot be assumed in this era that social housing is simply a given. It is a relatively recent phenomenon, and rests on a tenuous and much-debated philosophical framework. As such, it is particularly sensitive to political shifts. In fact, the current political will to address social housing issues seems to be at its lowest level in decades.

Later in this chapter, the term 'dominant society' will be used and explained as a reference point for this research. The dominant society is characterized by corporatism and patriarchy, two forces which undermine meaningful democratic decision-making and devalue human experience, wisdom and aspirations, save for those of a small elite. The ideology of private property and home ownership is part of this larger milieu, and has a particularly profound effect on non owner-occupant housing inhabitants (i.e. tenants and, to a lesser extent, 'co-owners' in co-operatives). The section "*Landlord and Tenant*" explores the effects of this ideology in greater

depth. Housing, in the dominant society, is not always perceived as a basic human need, and when it is, it is assumed that charity and benevolence can provide adequately (manifest in drop-in centres or shelters).<sup>1</sup> Peoples' inability to provide their own housing, it is argued, is a result of their own laziness or lack of self-motivation. Yet the system must rely upon the exploitation of the less enfranchised in order to function.

Although advocates of social housing do not necessarily reject the dominant system outright, they do reject many of its common assumptions, arguing that those who cannot afford to pay rent on the open market are in that position for a multiplicity of reasons, not because they are lazy. Further, they argue, it is imperative that society address the housing question in a way that promotes human dignity, self-worth and hope. How can citizens 'get a job', 'compete' or 'show initiative' when they are malnourished, poorly clothed, unable to maintain good personal hygiene, uneducated and, most relevant to this discussion, lacking shelter?<sup>2</sup> Housing is a basic human need because it provides warmth and shelter from the elements (which are critical for survival in Canada), a personal space that facilitates privacy and self expression, and a piece of the ground (or above ground) that one can take ownership of, even if one does not own it outright. Further, most social housing advocates believe that it is a public, i.e. state, responsibility to address this need.

In Canada, state involvement in social housing is a post-war phenomenon, although there were largely unproductive attempts in the latter half of the Great Depression embodied in the 1935 Dominion Housing Act and 1938 National Housing Act. Following the Second World War, an Emergency Shelter programme was implemented to house the influx of returning veterans. This

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<sup>1</sup> The irony of the charity approach is that it relies on people to act unselfishly, which is irrational from the perspective of *laissez faire* economic philosophy. How this moral contradiction has come to be so deeply embedded in the dominant discourse is a mystery of truly grand proportions. The more compassionate side of the dominant discourse - commonly referred to as the 'liberal' approach - is not as blatantly contradictory. Prevalent in North American housing policy, this view is embodied in a distinction between the mainstream 'market' and the residual 'social' (Bacher, 1993). The 'social' cognitively implies some degree of dysfunction of those provided for in the social or non-market realm (the proverbial 'safety net'), rather than indicating a systemic, structural problem.

<sup>2</sup> Not to mention insulted and slandered by the cavalier accusations leveled at them.



period marked the first large scale state assistance for low-income citizens (Hodge, 1986). Carroll (1989) identifies three post-war periods in Canadian housing policy. From 1945 to 1968, the emphasis was on suburban home ownership and the construction of public housing projects. The decade following saw a shift toward social reform and rational planning while 1978-88 saw reduced federal intervention and increased provincial involvement. The most recent decade has seen federal intervention decrease *along with* provincial involvement.

The CMHC was established in 1946 to “...foster community and university education programs, housing for the poor and programs of urban renewal” (Hodge, 1986: 100). The CMHC heavily favoured and promoted middle class single family home ownership via mortgage lending. It did not become actively involved in public housing provision until the 1950s, with projects that were intended to be mere stepping stones for low-income families (Rose, 1980). In 1964, provincially owned and operated non-profit housing projects were initiated with CMHC providing 90% of each project’s mortgage. This marked a shift in CMHC policy from a free market bias toward a redistributive focus, a trend that would reverse in the 1980s and 90s.

The 1967 Hellyer Report condemned large public housing projects, as they were seen to stigmatize low-income tenants and reinforce socio-economic stratification (Bacher, 1993). Concerns over negative effects on middle class property values resulting from these projects also contributed to the eventual shift away from centralized public housing, leading to the termination of public housing programs by 1978. Concomitantly, the National Housing Act was amended to encourage ‘third sector’ housing delivery via non-profit organizations and associations run at arms’ length from municipalities (Bacher, 1993). This policy decision angered private for-profit housing developers (Ibid.), who maintain that demand-side approaches such as rent supplements and direct forms of income assistance in a free market context are more beneficial to tenants because the housing supply is then less restricted (and, of course, the developers make more money) (Fallis, 1993). The Rent Supplement Program began in 1969, the Co-op Housing Program in 1971, Rural and Native Housing Program in 1974 and Urban Native and On-Reserve

Programs in 1978. The provinces assumed most of the responsibility for other housing programs, but these were geared primarily to seniors (Rose, 1980). Rising housing costs in the 1980s rendered many programs expensive and, combined with the emerging dominance of neo-conservative ideology, led to the demise of most state assistance.

The 1985 Nielsen Report recommended cost-sharing programs and specific targeting of funds to those households in core need. The report was ignored by the Mulroney Government and, ever since, the assistance has steadily eroded. In 1991 the CMHC Co-operative Housing Program was abandoned along with homeownership assistance programs in Alberta. Thus, the Canadian dream of home ownership is no longer plausible for many people, especially in the larger urban areas. The increasing poverty trend in the 1980s and 90s has intensified the need for social housing (Augustine, 1994; Bacher, 1993). Calgarians saw their first post-Great Depression food bank open in 1982. Homelessness in Calgary is continuing to rise, despite an otherwise rosy economic picture (Calgary Herald, 1997). Today there are 12 housing shelters and the largest number of homeless people since the Great Depression (Calgary, 1996). In fact, in the last four years alone the number of homeless people has risen by 38% and the number of shelters by 50% (Ibid.). Also, women, children and seniors are constituting ever larger proportions of the homeless (Ibid.; Calgary Herald, 1997). 105,000 Calgarians live below the poverty line, 10,000 of whom are deemed to be in a housing crisis. (Homeless Awareness Week Pamphlet, 1996) Approximately 1.2 million Canadians are now considered to be in core housing need, over and above the absolute homeless population (Augustine, 1994).<sup>3</sup> If one includes those failing to meet the National Occupancy Standard, the number swells to over 3 million (CMHC, 1988).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This figure is especially disquieting given that it comes from a governing Member of Parliament, *not* a social housing interest group.

<sup>4</sup> The National Occupancy standard, a measure established by CMHC, relates to housing suitability and adequacy, whereas core need refers to affordability. The aggregate 1985 figure for those in core housing need and/or below the National Occupancy Standard was 2.96 million. This number is likely considerably higher now, given a higher unemployment rate and cutbacks to housing assistance and other social programs.

Canada's non-market housing sector is among the most poorly developed of the industrialized nations (Hulchanski, 1988). Fifty-eight percent of Swedish housing, for instance, is in the non-profit sector. This has greatly reduced speculation and fluctuations in the housing market (Bacher, 1993). Countries such as Germany and Britain (12% and 8%, respectively) have a far higher proportion of social housing than Canada (4%) (Bailey, 1994).<sup>5</sup> CMHC has continued to honour prior housing agreements, although grant restructuring has posed an insurmountable financial hurdle for many private non-profit projects. Funding for new projects is virtually nil, as the 1993 budget pledged that no new increases in housing funding beyond existing projects will be permitted.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Private Non-Profit Housing***

Due to the failings of public housing and the partial dismantling of the welfare state, private non-profit (PNP) housing has gradually assumed a greater share of total social housing provision in Canada.<sup>7</sup> Non-profit housing is an example of a 'supply-side' approach to housing assistance for low income households (Fallis, 1993).<sup>8</sup> PNP housing is usually advantageous to public housing for the following reasons:

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<sup>5</sup> These figures do not include non-assisted residents of co-operatives and non-profit housing associations.

<sup>6</sup> The only exceptions are the Public Private Partnership Program, which gives limited start-up grant money to new projects, and on-reserve and off-reserve programs for Aboriginals.

<sup>7</sup> Housing co-operatives will be excluded under the discussion of PNPs, even though they do fall into the more general category of PNPs. However, virtually all of the successes described for PNPs generally also apply to co-ops. The co-op share of the social housing market may have actually declined with the abandonment of the CMHC program in 1990 (except, perhaps, in provinces where there are Provincially-subsidized co-op programs, such as in British Columbia). Manchee (1982) argues that PNPs actually offer greater security of tenure than co-ops, as tenants *can* be removed from co-ops by an agreement of the membership, unless the applicable co-operatives act states otherwise, whereas PNPs are bound to respect the eviction criteria in the applicable residential tenancies act at a minimum. In practise, however, Manchee's assertion seems tenuous.

<sup>8</sup> This approach is contrasted with 'demand-side' assistance, which is characterized by housing allowances, rent supplements or moneys paid directly to tenants in the private market. The supply-side approach, however, is more common in Canada. In Fallis' (1993) critique of the supply-side approach, he notes that non-profit housing lowers net benefits as income rises and that there is limited market entry opportunity (housing availability). Fallis argues that housing provision is the least efficient government policy choice. A more recent study, however, refutes this argument (Ekos Research Associates Inc., 1997). There is another counterargument though: Without going into elaborate detail in this chapter, tenant empowerment via the enhanced opportunity to participate in decision-making may mean that the PNP supply-side approach fosters net *social* benefits (a concept often overlooked by economists).

1) there is usually a mix of subsidized and market renters. Therefore, the social housing 'stigma' is avoided (as is 'ghettofication'), and there may be heightened awareness of social housing issues amongst market rent tenants, through experiential and informal learning. Further, PNP, unlike many public housing projects, does not lower property values;<sup>9</sup>

2) PNP is less costly for government, since there is usually a substantial market-level tenancy and because major decisions are made by volunteer Board Members, rather than a paid Public Housing Authority;

3) it is smaller scale and community-specific and is therefore more responsive and appropriate to fostering community development. The bureaucratic nature of larger, more centralized providers is characterized by heightened professionalized 'aloofness', increased inertia in response time and an inability to seek flexible solutions to problems. Also, since PNP operates within the realm of civil society, it better enables 'self-help' or 'self-empowerment' strategies; and

4) there is room for self-determination of housing policy (within funding constraints). For example, subsidized rents can be either fully rent-geared-to-income (RGI) or subsidies could be spread over more tenants, with the use of a rent floor.

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<sup>9</sup> An empirical Ontario study showed that PNP housing had no negative impact on property values. There was, however, a 'Not-In-My-Backyard' syndrome often present, due to lingering fears brought on by 'urban renewal'-era public housing projects. (Ekos Research Associates Inc., 1989)

PNPs may be federally (CMHC), provincially, privately, or internally subsidized, either exclusively or in some combination. The latter two sources are usually not as viable, since social housing is long-term and holds little 'glamour' for private contributors<sup>10</sup>, and since internal subsidies, although common in co-operatives, entail a broader separation of market and non-market renters (also, the current percentages of subsidized renters would have to drop significantly).

When asked in the discussion group what the purpose of PNP housing was, HSNPHA tenants stressed the importance of having a mixture of tenants in reducing stigma and fostering community, the enhanced affordability and the opportunity for residents to have a say in management and decision-making (Appendix C: C-4). Interestingly, of these three attributes, only affordability was mentioned as a reason for initially deciding to live in non-profit housing (by the interviewed tenants) (Appendix B: B-3 - B4). Other major reasons for choosing non-profit housing included location, dwelling unit characteristics, proximity to friends and family, previous involvement with the community association, the pet policy and the fulfillment of single parent needs.

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<sup>10</sup> One notable exception is the Ford Foundation in the U.S. who have contributed vast sums of assistance for innovative, often long-term housing projects. The U.S. is a comparatively seasoned veteran with regard to the reliance on private sector financing. Canada will have to look increasingly to the south for innovative non-governmental strategies. The bigger picture, though, makes one skeptical. The demand for housing provision far exceeds the housing supply, no matter how innovative it might be. Continued public assistance is necessary, as long as the public believe that housing is a basic need. This problem is somewhat akin to the practical needs vs. strategic interest dilemma in feminist discourse. If we accept that, because of the pre-eminence of neoconservative ideology, government rationalizing, downsizing and offloading of responsibility are sure trends in the near future, then we must respond on a micro level to address the practical need of affordable housing. But in the long term, it is unlikely that a non-governmental approach can cope with the ever-increasing numbers of people in need of affordable housing (again, the U.S. is evidence of this). Therefore, to fulfill the strategic interests of those less able to afford housing, it is imperative that political change occur. While fulfilling practical needs, housing providers must fight for a compassionate and tolerant state, focused on the collective common good.

## ***Landlord and Tenant***

Residential tenancies law governs the relationship between two actors - the tenant ("lessee") and the landlord ("lessor").<sup>11</sup> Knowledge of this law is not only crucial for understanding how the landlord-tenant relationship has evolved, but how it affects tenants today, who constitute an increasing percentage of Canadians. As mentioned previously, tenancy has not been the dominant form of housing tenure in Canada, and certainly not in Calgary, where tenants comprise only 38.7% of the population (Abu-Dehays, 1995). However, tenancy is on the rise as medium family income groups have experienced increasing difficulty purchasing their own home, home ownership assistance programs have been abandoned, the new home market caters to wealthy buyers of the 'baby boom' generation and Calgary MLS listings have risen steadily faster than inflation since the mid 1980's (Creelman, 1991; Calgary, 1989). Although the recent plunge in interest rates, combined with a local vacancy rate around 1%, is likely reversing this trend in the short term, the longer term trend will likely prevail as the income-gap grows between wealthy and non-wealthy Canadians.

On August 1, 1992, The Province of Alberta invoked the amended Residential Tenancies Act. For Albertans, this is the most recent statutory manifestation of a long and somewhat bizarre evolution of landlord-tenant law. This odyssey began in feudal, agrarian England before the law was subsequently massaged by both conservative propertied interests and reformist tenant interests. However, because of the inherent power differential between these interests (in favour of the former), and the resulting differences in their abilities to affect legal reform, the law of residential tenancies has been relatively inert with respect to change in society generally.

Both legal custom and doctrinal evolution reinforced the landlord's position in feudal times, while non-legal custom reinforced the tenant's. The former persisted into the capitalist industrial era (as it served the exploitive interests of the landed class) while the latter fell into submission

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<sup>11</sup> Much of this section is taken directly from Stauch (1996), an unpublished paper written for the class EVDS 637 - "Law and the Environment".

with the Enclosure of the Commons and the Industrial Revolution. In this sense, the law was consistent with the exploitive reality, but in an epistemological, moral and definitional sense it was divorced from the housing question and was thus both inappropriate and jurisprudentially irrelevant. Put simply, a relationship which was essentially agricultural, production-based and centred on property, was assumed to be indistinguishable from one that was urban, residential, and contract-based. Only within the last three decades has Canadian landlord-tenant law begun to move out of this exploitive mode. A number of factors contributed to eventual law reform in Canada and the U.S. in the 1970s. Among those factors were tenant organizing and the tenants' rights movement, the rise of sociological jurisprudence and new conceptions of legal morality, the application of economic theory and analysis and the comparative (and continuing) rise of tenancy as a tenure form.

The ideology of private property and home ownership became particularly acute after World War II in North America, when a large number of working class families were able to purchase their own homes. Consequently, tenancy continued to have secondary status as a tenure form. This was manifest in continued prejudice within the legal system and the anti-tenant bias in zoning, municipal building codes and income taxes (Dreier, 1982). Part of this was attributable to sheer demographics. In countries such as Canada, Australia and the U.S., where tenants comprise less than 40% of the housing market, tenants had considerably less protection than in countries such as Sweden, West Germany and Switzerland, where tenancy formed in excess of 60% of the marketplace (Ibid.). However, from the mid-sixties through to the early eighties, the baby boom generation (in their early twenties and living primarily as tenants) became a powerful demographic, and thus political, force (Foot, 1996).<sup>12</sup>

Three general objectives informed the tenants' rights movement - the improvement of dwelling conditions, implementation of rent control and the granting of security of tenure (Gulbrandsen and Torgersen, 1978). It was limply argued by conservative lawmakers that all of these

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<sup>12</sup> Foot (1996) made explicit reference to their successful push for rent control in all ten provinces.

objectives were attacks on the freedom of contract, since the terms of the contract should be freely agreed to by two parties. However, law reformers viewed landlord-tenant relations as a matter of public policy as much as private contract (Rafter, 1983), while the inclusion of the contractual relationship in residential tenancy discussions was novel in its own right. Because the relationship was originally feudal and agrarian, the law was focused on property rather than contract. Outside of the contract vs. property dispute, other economic issues have arisen, variously in support of either tenant or landlord. Yee (1989) argues, for instance, that due to the tenant's high transaction costs, landlords are in an inherently higher bargaining position. Thus, although the relationship may be legally mutual, it is still unequal.

The final force in the reform movement was moral theory and jurisprudence. Yee (1989) stresses Immanuel Kant's and John Rawls' epistemological notions of the equal distribution of welfare informing moral, and therefore legal, choices. Rawls' "veil of ignorance" theory holds that if a group of people were totally uncertain of their future, they would choose the moral system which would provide for their equal welfare. Lon Fuller (as cited in Balfour, 1991) adds another dimension with his discussion of the law having a "duty not to disappoint [the] reasonable expectations" of society. In combining these ideas, many contend that society 'reasonably' expects that housing is a basic commodity which should be made available to all, and that it should be both 'reasonably' habitable and provide 'reasonable' security of tenure (Yee, 1989). But even if this argument remains unconvincing, legal inquiry has at least been able to expose the ideology of home ownership. The relative legal (and many non-legal) advantages that home ownership has enjoyed over tenancy are politically-derived, and are not inherent to the form of tenure (Dreier, 1982). It has long been true that all land in Canada is ultimately held by the Sovereign. Therefore, in the wide sense, the tenant-landlord relationship is essentially the same as landowners vis-à-vis the state.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> One might wonder, in this light, why tenants can be evicted based on a fairly long list of reasons (that is to say, since there has been a list!), whereas the mortgagee can usually only be removed upon default of payment.



The Canadian law reforms since 1970 have moved in three directions (Balfour, 1991: 77-78):<sup>14</sup>

- 1) substantive obligations have been placed on landlords, many of which (such as the onus of repair of premises) have been transferred from tenants;
- 2) security of tenure has increased; and
- 3) procedures available to landlords to exert their rights have been limited (e.g. they are no longer permitted to waive the tenant's rights in a lease).

Nonetheless, feudal remnants still colour the law in some areas. For example, despite common law advancements indicating otherwise, the landlord in Alberta has no statutorily-derived obligation to maintain the premises during tenancy. They only have to ensure that the dwelling is 'habitable' at the start of tenancy (Alberta, 1990).

The two most recent studies on Alberta Residential Tenancies reform have recommended some interesting, but as yet unimplemented, measures, such as the creation of a Residential Tenancy Commission (an alternative dispute mechanism to litigation)<sup>15</sup>, the formal recognition and approval of tenant associations, the licensing of landlords and accessibility issues such as public education programs and simplification of the legal language (Alberta, 1995; Alberta, 1990).

This cursory discussion has thus far focused on the legal aspects of the landlord-tenant relationship, simply because it *is* a relationship defined by law. But is the law the only conduit through which residential tenancy issues can be addressed? There are actually four general categories of remedial action available to tenants (Flaum and Salzman, 1969: 8):

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<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting at this point that Alberta has generally lagged behind the other provinces in instituting these reforms. For instance, only under the 1992 amendments were criteria for evictions actually spelled out. Most provinces had made this reform in the 1970s.

<sup>15</sup> Arbitration is a potentially efficient and effective tool relative to litigation (Alberta, 1990; Rafter, 1983). However, it requires full legal (including constitutional) recognition and the power of enforcement if it is to be effective (Balfour, 1991). The current Landlord Tenant Advisory Boards in Alberta are only engaged in information provision and some unenforceable arbitration, and are created by Municipal By-Law.

- 1) mass protest (e.g. marches, rallies, picketing, sit-ins);
- 2) withholding of rent;
- 3) legal activity (e.g. board hearings, litigation, lobbying to improve legislation); and
- 4) organizing or forming a union.

All four imply varying degrees of adversity. Participation, however, need not come about through adversarial action. The remainder of this discussion, therefore, will focus not on tenant action but on tenant participation.

Certainly, the starting point for tenant participation in HSNPHA is *not* based on adversity. Three quarters (15) of those tenants interviewed by the researcher described the relationship between residents and management as either positive or very positive (Appendix B: B-5). The reasons for this positive response are, in order of frequency mentioned, the accommodating, approachable and caring nature of the management, managerial efficiency, unobtrusiveness, proactiveness, openness and the attempts by management to foster a sense of community.<sup>16</sup> Nearly the same percentage of respondents feel that this relationship had remained unchanged during their tenure in HSNPHA housing. For four residents the relationship is perceived to have worsened, while for two it is seen to have improved (a perception shared by the current Executive Director, who has been with the organization for eight years). A former tenant board member has observed that tenants are now selected on the basis of their ability to be a 'good tenant' (i.e. they pay their rent on time and do not disturb fellow tenants) whereas in the past they were admitted on the basis of their philosophical or ideological leanings. When asked what, if anything, could be done to improve this relationship, ideas included lowering the ED's workload, enhancing openness, communication and information provision, having more social events and activities and evaluating management through a voting process (Ibid.: B-6).

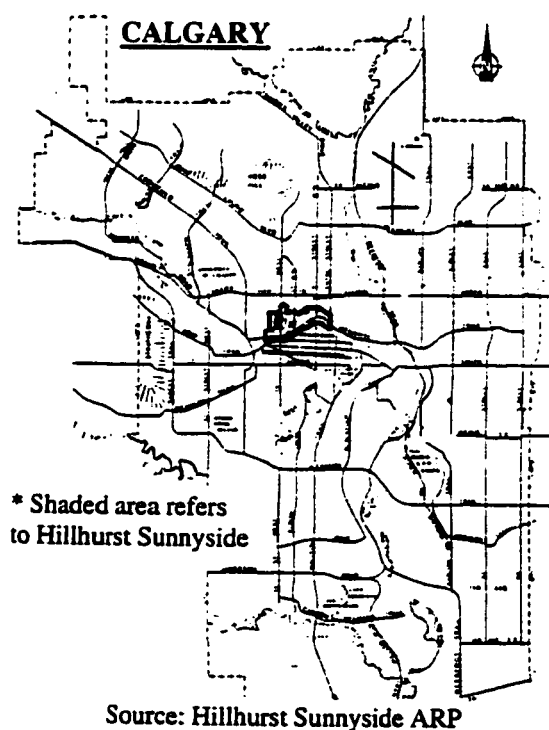
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<sup>16</sup> Ten percent of the interviewees perceived a negative landlord-tenant relationship, due to a flawed organizational philosophy, inaccessibility to management or to the board, a lack of an established grievance procedure, organization size, business-like management, outside control, a predominance of female personnel in management and autocratic decision-making (each of these last eight reasons were mentioned only once).

Is participation centered merely on improving the landlord-tenant relationship? If this is the case, given such a high degree of satisfaction, the research should stop right here. An observation repeated by some tenants is poignantly encapsulated by a board member and former tenant: "The interests of tenants are already well looked-after. A tenants' association would be redundant. It would just hold things up with issues such as tenants rights." It is from this departure point where the issue of tenant participation takes flight. The essence of participation is that it is a response to being "looked-after".

### ***Hillhurst Sunnyside***

Hillhurst Sunnyside is an inner city community located in the northwest quadrant of Calgary, Alberta, on the north bank (and thus 'sunny side') of the Bow River (Figure 2). Both Hillhurst and Sunnyside, formerly separate communities, and now eight decades old, were working class



***Figure 2: Location of Hillhurst Sunnyside***

districts with cottage-style single-family homes.<sup>17</sup> From the 1960's to the 1980's, many medium-density apartment complexes were also built, particularly in Sunnyside. More recently, Hillhurst Sunnyside has experienced a great deal of gentrification - middle and upper-middle class urbanites either purchasing speculatively or locating there permanently because of its trendy reputation (or both). The relation between these processes and the start of social housing in the area is explored in the next section. Despite gentrification, the community is still largely a community of renters. 77% of Sunnyside and 62.2% of Hillhurst dwellings are occupied by tenants, an anomaly in Calgary.

<sup>17</sup> In 1919, Sunnyside became the first community in Calgary to form a community association.

Hillhurst Sunnyside is probably best known for its unique pedestrian-oriented commercial strip, known as “Kensington” (a name that has come to replace ‘Hillhurst Sunnyside’ in the local vernacular, thus raising the ire of long-time residents, according to one interviewee).

## **The Hillhurst Sunnyside Non-Profit Housing Association**

The Hillhurst Sunnyside Non-Profit Housing Association (HSNPHA) is a private, not-for-profit housing provider:

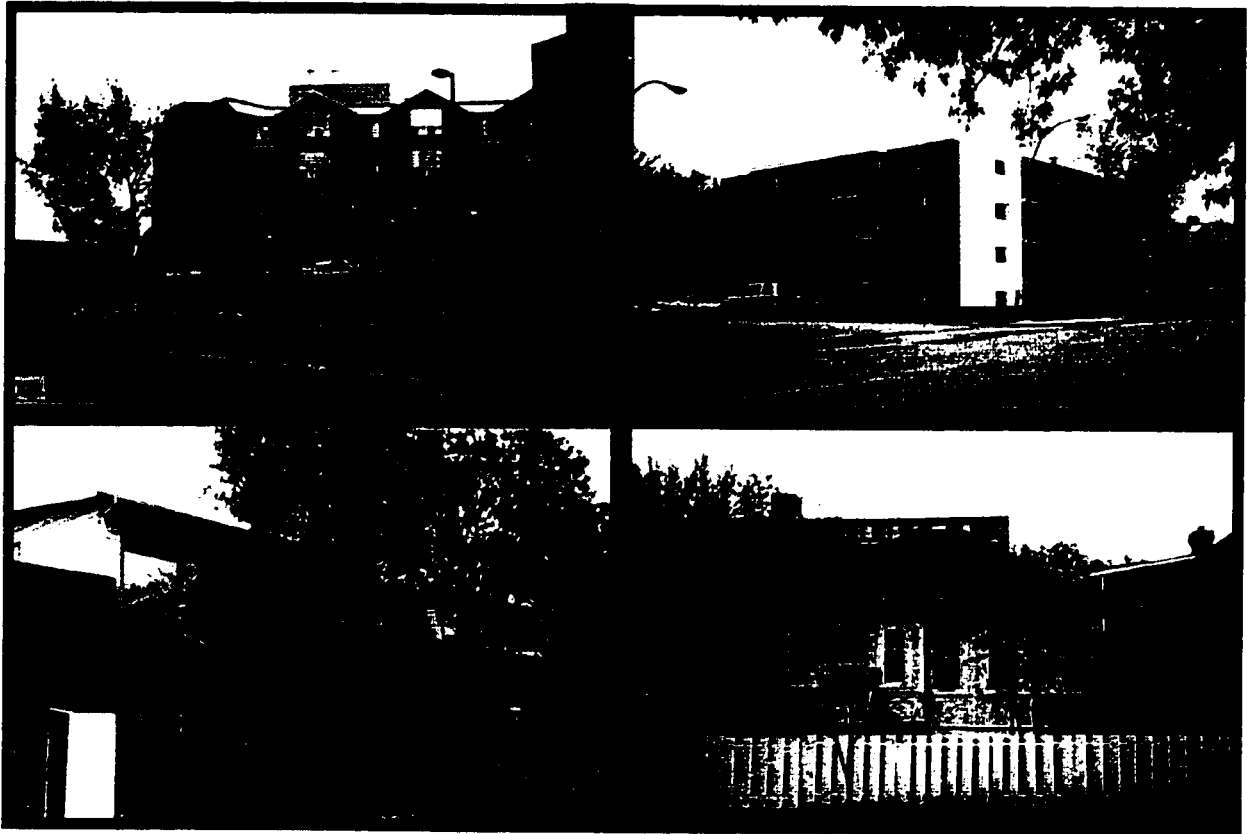
The primary function of the HSNPHA is to provide good, affordable rental housing to low, moderate and middle income households and, where possible, to those with special needs, so that people of all incomes can afford to live in Hillhurst Sunnyside (HSNPHA promotional brochure).

The HSNPHA owns and operates 118 units in eight buildings. There are two cottage-style single family homes, a duplex, six-plex (Flett Manor), stacked townhouse complex (Pemberton Terrace), two ‘four-story walk-up’ apartments (Bowen and Gayner Houses) and a newer medium density apartment (Norfolk House). Refer to Figure 3 which displays the range of housing types within HSNPHA. The HSNPHA acts as a benevolent landlord, renting a mixture of RGI subsidized rents and non-subsidized LEM rents. This mix reflects the first advantage of PNPs outlined in the previous section, as well as the objective of fostering ‘community’. Although seniors, single parents and families of low income are given priority in the subsidized units, and persons with disabilities are given priority in both non-subsidized and subsidized units, the Association will rent to singles and moderate income families also. The HSNPHA does not provide shelter or transitional housing. The social housing niche which it provides for are those people in core need (i.e. those spending more than 30% of their income on rent).<sup>18</sup> This market

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<sup>18</sup> The HSNPHA sets a variable standard (depending on the building, as they are all financed separately) between the high twenty and low thirty percentages, whereas 30% is the Alberta Government standard.

niche is, of course, significant and growing (Calgary Herald, 1997; Augustine, 1994; Bacher, 1993). HSNPHA is also one of very few housing providers (including for-profit landlords) in Calgary who allow pets.



*Figure 3 - Sampling of HSNPHA Properties (Clockwise from top left: Norfolk House, Bowen House, Norfolk Cottage and Pemberton Terrace)*

### ***Structure and Organization***

The HSNPHA was incorporated as a non-profit organization under the Societies Act of Alberta. The Application for Incorporation and the Association's Bylaws, along with subsequent amendments, form the "Articles and By-laws of the Society", which govern its structure and operation. The By-laws are included as Appendix A. The Association has an open membership of approximately thirty-five members (there can be a maximum of fifty). Memberships are

yearly and are sold for one dollar. The membership is an entitlement to vote at the annual general meeting in December and is open to anyone, including tenants. 1996 has boasted the highest number of tenant memberships to date. This may be at least partially explained by a letter of invitation given to every tenant from the Executive Director.

The membership nominates and elects a Board of Directors of between five to ten people at the annual general meeting. Within the Board, there is an executive consisting of a President, Past President, and Treasurer. A 51% majority is needed to constitute a quorum. The board is composed of between five to ten members. Criteria for being on the board, although not written into the Bylaws, include having either residency, former residency or place of work in the Hillhurst Sunnyside community, and a form of 'expertise' that is deemed helpful (by the Board itself) to the operation of the Association. From 1994 through 1996, two tenants served as Directors (constituting approximately 25% of the board).<sup>19</sup> Tenant Directors are recruited by the Executive Director. There is currently only one tenant, although a search for a second is being undertaken. Tenant Board members are normally not permitted to hold executive positions.

The directors are not remunerated for their services. However, the Executive Director, who is not a board member, also acts as the property manager for the Association, which is a full-time paid position. The Association also employs an assistant administrator, a caretaker, receptionist (who also works for the Community Association in Norfolk House), and various legal, accounting, architectural, maintenance and construction services when needed. The administrative staff carry out the day-to-day activities such as rent collection, maintenance and repair and tenant relations. The Board of Directors makes the longer term strategic and financial decisions. The directors do offer non-remunerated assistance when their respective skills are required, although out of pocket costs, within reason, are covered by the Association.

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<sup>19</sup> As of January, 1997, there is only one tenant serving on a seven member Board.

## ***History***

During the 1970s, Calgary experienced an OPEC-led, petroleum-driven economic boom. The price of land in the inner city was driven up to extraordinary levels as corporations expanded office space downtown and a burgeoning young population demanded rental accommodation. Between 1976 and 1982, Calgary's population increased by an average of 25,515 people annually, compared with 5,664 annually during the following six years. (Calgary, 1989) There seemed to be no end in sight, and the leap across the river into Hillhurst Sunnyside was already in full swing (much of Sunnyside was converted into medium density apartments during this era). The residents of Sunnyside mounted a successful effort to stop densification and to maintain the character of the community.

Speculative purchasing of land has driven up the property values in Hillhurst Sunnyside. This has resulted in many long-term community members having to move elsewhere. A community-specific affordability crisis was particularly evident in the late 1970s. Consequently, the Hillhurst Sunnyside Community Association (HSCA) began to explore ways to maintain affordable housing in the community in the face of this reality. The HSCA, at this time, was an activist organization.<sup>20</sup> The 1977 Hillhurst Sunnyside Design Brief strongly recommended that "co-operative and other forms of social housing projects... be investigated as a means of providing housing for the groups not served by the private market (Calgary, 1977).<sup>21</sup> The HSCA had established two general initiatives under the 'Hillhurst Sunnyside Housing Program' (HSCA, 1974):

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<sup>20</sup> The HSCA is most famed in this era for its opposition to the Northwest LRT routing in the early 1980s. Rallies, marches, guerrilla theatre, petitioning and litigation were all used, albeit ultimately unsuccessfully, to fight the proposal (Calgary Herald, 1994).

<sup>21</sup> The design brief employed an unusually high degree of community participation.

- 1) Rainbow and Sunnyhill Housing Co-operatives. Sunnyhill had begun operating by 1977. Rainbow Co-op never came to fruition; and
- 2) a non-profit housing arm of HSCA to provide affordable rental housing for seniors.

In 1974, the HSCA applied to form a society - the "Hillhurst Sunnyside Housing Association", to take advantage of housing assistance provided by the CMHC's Private Non-Profit Housing Program under Section 56.1 of the National Housing Act. However, apart from the development of Sunnyhill Co-op, the community-based non-profit housing initiative was delayed until 1980. A definitive study, undertaken in 1979 by the Hillhurst Sunnyside Housing Committee, which was struck with the goal of encouraging mixed-income housing in Hillhurst Sunnyside, concluded that a private non-profit housing association was preferable to municipal non-profit, HSCA-controlled, or co-operative housing.<sup>22</sup> The HSNPHA was promptly incorporated on August 25, 1980.

Since 1980, the HSNPHA has gradually acquired its current housing stock and developed Norfolk House in 1983 (which included two commercial tenants). Its mandate has extended beyond the Hillhurst Sunnyside community to becoming a general social housing provider. Also, the mix of subsidized vs. market renters has moved from 100% to around 40% subsidized. Although HSNPHA was spawned by the HSCA, it has developed quite independently. Development interests within HSCA, spurred by gentrification and speculative purchasing in the 1980s and 1990s, have often been at variance with HSNPHA.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the tension between Hillhurst and Sunnyside is made apparent with regard to Non-Profit Housing.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The Municipal Non-Profit route was not favoured because of the loss of community control. The 'HSCA-as-property-manager' option was seen as infeasible due to CMHC funding criteria. The co-operative housing path was rejected because of the perceived inflexibility of rents (housing charges) in response to fluctuating personal incomes.

<sup>23</sup> HSCA is a hotly contested community association. Throughout the past two decades, the leadership has alternated between community preservation and development interests.

<sup>24</sup> In soliciting community participants to engage in a discussion on housing, Environmental Design students observed that many Hillhurst residents demonstrated poor understanding and even outright hostility toward social housing in their community. This was a qualitative observation peripheral to the study and thus was not included in Abu Dehays, et al. (1995). Sunnyside residents, however, showed relatively strong support. Ironically, most of HSNPHA's units are in Sunnyside.



The future, however, appears highly uncertain. As CMHC has undertaken a restructuring of the assistance available to Non-Profits, a subject discussed in *Chapter Two*, a number of potential solutions are being considered. These include both immediate measures, such as leasing more space to commercial tenants and forging new alliances with other social service providers and long-term options, such as liquidating some of the existing properties and further reducing the percentage of subsidized tenants.

## Theory

The linking of theory and practise, or 'knowledge and action', is the essence of planning, or 'praxis' (Friedmann, 1987). The design of a land-use plan, streetscape, conservation plan or participatory strategy must be supported by a clearly articulated theory, because the planner is intervening in society with the goal of somehow 'making it better'. What, then, is the theoretical justification for tenant participation?

There is a dearth of theoretical literature on the study of housing, an observation echoed by the most recent study encountered: Jack Kemeny, in his work Housing and Social Theory (1992), laments both the lack of theory and the gap in housing-specific studies outside the traditional disciplines such as geography and sociology, and the newer discipline of Urban Studies:

...the social condition of housing studies takes place around empirical and policy issues in abstraction from theories of any kind... The end result of this subject-fixated approach is that abstracting 'housing' out of social structure and focusing upon it leads to a failure to integrate it into the wider social processes of which it is a part. Housing studies therefore tends to become a specialism, divorced from wider social issues. It becomes a

sterile and limited empirical focus, concentrating on analyzing the housing market and housing policy (Kemeny, 1992: 13).<sup>25</sup>

The study of tenants and tenants' movements is similarly sparse, even *within* the housing literature. The conceptualizing of tenants' roles as a social group has yet to be explored in great depth, despite housing being "...the most significant element of consumption in the urban system...[and that] most struggles outside the workplace are directly related to housing" (Capek and Gilderbloom, 1992: 5). The connection between housing provision, tenant social relations and political consciousness is poorly, if at all, understood (Duncan, 1981). However, Castells (1983) and Fisher and Kling (1989), maintain that tenants may be one of the most effective of the grassroots movements since they possess in common the dimension of *space*, a necessary requisite for political community-based consciousness. The spatial dimension of a community, also referred to as a 'community of propinquity', enables a commonality of 'life spaces' which in turn fosters shared experiences and bonds of mutual identification among tenants.

Like all forms of public intervention in market societies (including economic, environmental, urban, regional and social planning), housing provision and housing policy dates back to the industrial revolution. And, like planning generally, it was controlled exclusively by the state until recent decades, when 'third sector' or 'civil society' change agents began to assume an increasing piece of the social housing responsibility.<sup>26</sup> These non-governmental organizations (NGOs), for the most part, operate under a 'social mobilization' ethic, believing that citizen

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<sup>25</sup> Although Kemeny is deploring the specialization and narrow focus in which the study of housing is bound, his broader agenda is that he is still calling for a 'study of housing' - a specialization in itself. A cautionary note here is that interdisciplinary disciplines are still disciplines. The 'new' disciplines seek to create their own spheres of language and understanding which compartmentalize that 'new' area of knowledge into yet another 'area of expertise'.

<sup>26</sup> The function of state-centred planning may be divided into two streams - as preserver of private property and as promoter of 'public interest'. Much of the early planning interventions, made in the name of the 'public good', served private property interests. For instance, zoning served to exclude the poor from wealthy neighborhoods while building codes gave landlords a seemingly benign form of ammunition to evict tenants for housing upgrades (Bacher, 1993). Although civil society may also function as preserver of private property or the abstract public good, it is not bound to. Many argue that civil society alone can function in a truly participatory, democratic way. This is a view, examined from a legal perspective in McAuslin (1980) and from a Canadian perspective in Nazewich (1991).

empowerment is essential for an equitable (i.e. good) society. Put another way, the fostering of citizenship skills is necessary to promote and better the 'common good'. However, according to Friedmann (1987), the theory of social mobilization has two general streams of thought - change from within the system (evolution) and change from outside the system (revolution). The latter of the two streams lies outside the rubric of planning, although the theory is still instructive (Ibid.).<sup>27</sup>

One of the early debates regarding housing provision, which holds some remarkably current relevance, was the dialogue between Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the progenitor of social anarchism, and Friedrich Engels, the co-founder of historical materialism (Marxism). Proudhon advocated decentralized self-managing communities in all spheres of life so that the household becomes politicized and individual and collective interests no longer differ. Importantly, he believed that this ultimate state of social anarchy (liberty) would be achieved peacefully within the state-capitalist system, spawned by 'enlightened individuals' (Ibid.). Engels, although in agreement about the end state of society (i.e. classless and stateless), viciously attacked the Proudhonian view of housing provision in his seminal work The Housing Question, published as a series of articles in the *Leipziger Volksstadt* (1879). Engels asserted that the relationship between landlord and tenant is akin to that of a buyer and seller, not a worker and capitalist. He labeled the Proudhonian approach 'paternalistic', 'bourgeois' and 'philanthropic' and, somewhat ironically, criticized Proudhon's advocacy of universal home ownership.<sup>28</sup> The philanthropic and state-sanctioned home ownership approach, Engels argued, only serves to co-opt the disenfranchised into the capitalist system. The current Marxist critique of crown corporations and government-funded non-profit organizations (including CMHC and the Canadian Organization of Public Housing Tenants) holds that they fundamentally impede progress toward community

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<sup>27</sup> Friedmann's broad theoretical work examines all major streams of public planning historically, making a persuasive argument for social mobilization as a necessary planning approach for the future. One could argue that all social mobilization is essentially revolutionary, as it seeks to affect change in the dominant social reality. Friedmann, however, cites *violent* conflict as a defining feature of revolution. Planning, it is assumed in this research, *can* (and should) be overtly political and attempt to affect social change.

<sup>28</sup> A contemporary analysis of Engel's thesis can be found in Angotti (1977).

empowerment, because they 'neutralize', 'appease' and 'contain' meaningful social activism (Loney, 1977). Put another way, there is no room for third parties in an historical dialectic. For the purposes of advancing the ensuing argument, however, this dialectical point of view will be rejected. The remainder of this discussion will therefore focus on the 'within-system' stream of social mobilization.

Housing theory, like the Engels-Proudhon dialogue, focuses primarily on general provision issues, the role of the state and forms of tenure as they relate to culture and society. Some have also made a connection between housing and economic development (Simon, 1986).<sup>29</sup> The emphasis of the research herein, however, is also based on social relationships and organization within a given external context, and as such community development theory must be applied. Two outside respondents, when asked how participation can be fostered, noted that a community development approach is essential.

### ***Civil Society and Alternative Community Development***

This research is intended to fall principally under the theoretical rubric of 'alternative community development', as articulated by John Friedmann, an American planning theorist and policy analyst. However, other authors are also drawn from to develop the theory, both from within and outside planning literature. Both the environmental context and the participatory process of the research support this theory.<sup>30</sup> In his 1992 book, Empowerment: The Politics of Alternative Development, Friedmann asserts that "... alternative development is centered on people and their environment rather than production and profits" (p. 29). This is a development which seeks to

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<sup>29</sup> Simon (1986: 10) identifies three ways in which housing and economic development may be linked:

- 1) an individual may be part of the business of developing and/or managing housing;
- 2) the experience of being a housing consumer may develop skills useful in business;
- 3) the dwelling itself may be the locus of business activity - living in "the shop" appears to be a growing trend in our post-industrial society. [In fact, the current dominant mode of living, "away from the shop" is actually an historical anomaly.]

<sup>30</sup> The context is described in greater depth in the following section, while the methodology chapter addresses the process.

increase 'Gross National Happiness' rather than Gross National Product. He refers to this development being within the domain of *civil society* - a life space that is founded on the household and social relations (i.e. community) in contrast with the state or corporate domains:

And just as the paradigm in dominance approaches the question of economic growth from the perspective of the firm, which is the foundation of neoclassical economics, so an alternative development, based as it must be on the life spaces of civil society, approaches the question of an improvement in the conditions of life and livelihood from the perspective of the household. ...each household forms a polity and economy in miniature; it is the elementary unit of civil society (Ibid.: 31-32).<sup>31</sup>

Friedmann further argues that when the "voice" of a household merges with a political or social movement, both personal and collective improvement is realized. This is what Putnam (1995: 67) terms "social capital": "...social capital refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit." Alternative development "... argues for a decentralized, participatory mode of decision-making". (Friedmann, 1992: 35) Seizing the opportunity to make decisions affecting their own situations is the key to the positive development of the community. Further, agencies and organizations operating within the sphere of civil society can act as catalysts for this development, whether they be labour unions, advocacy groups, international NGOs or local

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<sup>31</sup> Recent housing theory has increasingly employed the term 'household' in favour of 'dwelling', implying that housing provision should go well beyond the static 'bricks and mortar' approach and conceptualize the household as a 'home' - a unit of social, economic and political interaction. This view is forwarded by Kemeny (1992) and Saunders and Williams (1988). Bourne (1981) also argues that housing is firmly embedded in our social, political and economic fabric:

"[Housing is of] immense psychological importance since it is an integral part of our definition of what is a desirable quality of life and social status. That is, from the use of housing flow a variety of services to the household - satisfaction, status, privacy, security and equity as well as shelter..."

Friedmann does not explore the dynamic of the household unit itself in great depth in arguing that the household is the elementary unit of civil society. However, he does warn that those structures, power relations, worldviews and value systems that are present *within* the household will be directly related to those promulgated in the public domain.

housing providers. Putnam (1996) argues strongly, albeit somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that even bowling leagues are emblematic of the civil society:

First, when you participate in a bowling league, interacting regularly with the same people week after week, you learn and practise what [Alexis] de Tocqueville called 'habits of the heart'. You learn the personal virtues and skills that are the prerequisites for a democracy. Listening, for example. Taking notes. Keeping minutes. Taking responsibility for your views. That's what is different about league bowling versus bowling alone... Second, ...[they] provide settings in which people can talk about their shared interests. These are settings quite different from, say, a talk show, where Ted from Toledo calls in and shares his prejudices with a nationwide audience. In that scenario, the rest of us don't know Ted, we don't know how to interpret what he says. But if Ted were in my bowling league, I'd understand him better, because I would interact with him regularly, and so I'd hold him accountable for his views (p. 4).

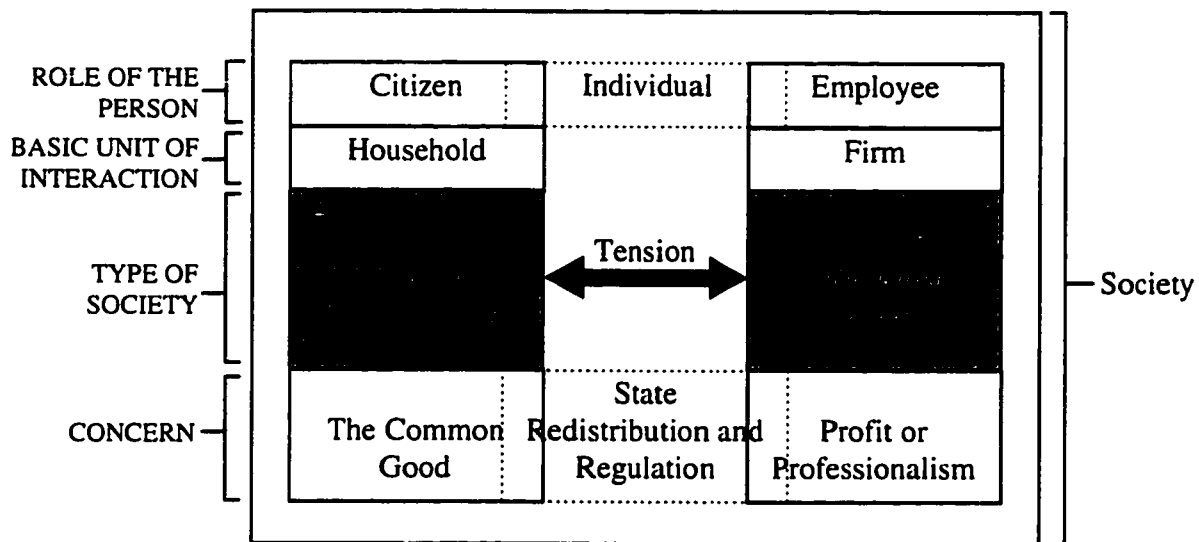
Others have described civil society as the "space between the individual and the state" (Dahrendorf, 1990), the "next economy" (Robinson and Ghostkeeper, 1987) or the "fourth generation" (Korten, 1990) where NGOs foster "loosely defined networks of people and organizations" merging into self-managing networks (Robinson, 1995). The values promulgated by the civil society include democracy, environmental sustainability, interdisciplinarity, collectivity, the promotion of self-efficacy, de-centralization, a non-profit mode of operation and a base of operation at the community level. Marcia Nozick (1989) argues that the new paradigm of planning should be based on the following principles:

...economic self-reliance, ecological and economic sustainability, development geared toward human needs, self-management and local control, and endogenous development (p. 64).

Figure 4 shows a visual depiction of where civil society exists in relation to the corporatist domain. The corporatist agenda, promoted by the dominant society (described in *The Rationale and History of Social Housing in Canada*) is characterized by either deification of the profit motive, far beyond what even Adam Smith would have advocated, or by specialization and exclusivity (Saul, 1994). Different professional domains, be they medicine, law, economics, urban planning, social housing provision or any other 'family compact' have internal languages and structures, like sophisticated fraternities, which are impenetrable to the 'general public'. Alternative development seeks to break down these fortresses through the promotion of interdisciplinarity, household and community dialogue, critical thinking, self-examination and the belief in the ability of non-elites to make important decisions. Taylor (1991), while not using the words 'civil society' or 'corporatism' identifies a tension that is central to this argument:

...the contemporary culture of authenticity ... encourages a purely personal understanding of self-fulfillment, thus making the various associations and communities in which the person enters purely instrumental in their significance. At the broader social level, this is antithetical to any strong commitment to a community. In particular, it makes political citizenship, with its sense of duty and allegiance to political society, more and more marginal.

Figure 4 shows this tension and anxiety between civil society, which is founded on citizenship and household interaction and concerned with the common good, and corporatist society, which is founded on the individual's conception of themselves as an employee (or employer) and concerned with either profit or professionalism.



*Figure 4 - Civil Society vs. Corporatist Society*

There is much disagreement, however, over how broad civil society's domain may be. Opinions range from the Marxist contention that it does not exist and is merely "a wolf in sheep's clothing" (i.e. it is a fraudulent representation of de facto state interests) (Gellner, 1994) to broad interpretations where it falls between and generously overlaps the private and state domains (Crouch and Marquand, 1995). The definition that *this* research will be premised on, stated in the glossary at the beginning of the document, is depicted in Figure 4. Based essentially on a model developed by Michael Robinson, this model attempts to incorporate the arguments of Saul (1994), Putnam (1993), Taylor (1991), Friedmann (1988) and others in a simplified form.<sup>32</sup> A more detailed exploration of this definition, as it relates to organizational theory, is given in "*Participation and Organizational Evolution*" in *Chapter Three*.

Many studies and particular examples throughout this report are about activity primarily in the state realm, as with public housing projects. However, they may still be instructive, as private non-profits are certainly not free of state control and influence. NGOs reliant on state-support

<sup>32</sup> Robinson constructed a similar model for discussion with the researcher - that is why there is no documented reference for this. Although the other authors mentioned in this statement make either little or no reference to each other, their central arguments are remarkably similar.



are often referred to as 'quasi-NGOs', or 'quangos'. A comparative case study of self-help housing in West Berlin and New York City illuminated the success of collaborative and tenant-control models in civil society (i.e. tenant co-operative and self-help projects). The study examined "... the politics of self-help housing as a concrete expression of a broader relationship between the capitalist state and new social movements" (Katz and Mayer, 1985: 14). The authors concluded that the issue of tenant involvement in decision-making is an area where the distinction is blurred between state and civil society:

...new arenas of struggle over self-help are being created in a battle over the forms of socialization and survival [which are] no longer characterized by the traditional division between state and civil society (Ibid.: 42).

Indeed, there is a blurring in the HSNPHA context, as CMHC is a crown corporation and is heavily relied-upon. Strictly 'self-help' non-profit housing is rare, with the notable exceptions of middle-class co-operatives and spontaneous 'shanty towns'. In this sense, HSNPHA is no different than many civil society organizations.<sup>33</sup>

Concepts like 'civil society', 'third sector', 'self-reliance' and 'self-help' have been gaining widespread support as service delivery of the welfare state has been exposed from the right as bureaucratized, expensive and inefficient and from the left as bureaucratized, unresponsive and disempowering. A study of non-profit housing agents in the U.S. noted that the community-based 'self-help' approach appeals to all political perspectives:

Conservatives hail these efforts as signs that voluntarism can work and that public intervention is unnecessary; liberals see the potential in the community-based movement for better allocating resources and enabling citizens to enter the mainstream of society,

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<sup>33</sup> HSNPHA overlaps into the corporate realm also, most obviously because they are partially dependent on commercial rent revenue. The overlap into both realms, although potentially enabling, is also fraught with inevitable tension. Dahrendorf (1990) argues that civil society is under increasing threat from both the state and the market economy.

thereby becoming more active participants in the democratic process; the left both lauds the empowerment and community control aspects of these efforts, while warning that they can divert community leaders from demanding more sweeping and systemic changes.<sup>34</sup>

Alternative community development is also heavily informed by feminist theory. In fact, many of the critiques leveled at the practise of planning have drawn on examples in the housing sector. Simon (1986) contends that, although PNP is the most empowering sector of housing, women are less likely to assume more powerful roles on Boards of Directors because PNPs are sometimes used as 'springboards' into the largely male for-profit sector, and because it is assumed that women are knowledgeable with regard to 'soft issues' (while financial analysis, assumed by the author to be a 'hard issue' requires male expertise).<sup>35</sup> In *Chapter Three*, the section entitled "Empowerment and Organizational Evolution" briefly examines the feminist critique of organizational hierarchy as inherently disempowering.

The *role* of the planner in alternative community development is facilitator and, at times, adult educator. Rod Nazewich, in "Reordering City Planning" sees the planner's role as 'emancipator':

Through the process of organization, examination of resources, establishing of goals and objectives, and developing strategies, communities can discover the extent of their own resources and practise their ability to reclaim a degree of control, whether economic, social or political, over their future. This increased freedom from the reliance and dependence upon outside forces is an essential measure of real 'development' and is a major goal of all local economic development (Nazewich, 1991: 125).

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<sup>34</sup> Some critics on the left warn that 'self-help' is seen as a palatable code word for privatization and de-regulation and can serve to absolve government from a responsibility to provide housing (which, incidentally, is a basic human need in Canada) (Kolodny, 1981).

<sup>35</sup> This research rejects the 'soft issue' vs. 'hard issue' dichotomy. The treatment of resident participation as a 'soft issue' is, no doubt, partially responsible for its low prioritization in many organizations.

## ***Non-Profit Housing and Community Development***

Friedmann refers to organizations within civil society acting as the catalysts for change and empowerment. He also recognizes the increasingly pre-eminent role of "...civil society [social movements] as a collective actor, working for political agendas outside the established framework of party politics" (Friedmann, 1992: 4). As Atlas and Shoshkes (1997: 1) argue, "...[our] strength resides in our families and communities, where the character and values of our citizens are formed. A new direction in public policy that transcends the old debate between government and market solutions is needed to place emphasis on [our] 'third sector' - the voluntary associations and institutions of community." Organizations intermediate between the state and the citizenry must provide information about the dominant social system and help facilitate collective citizen empowerment, aimed toward constructing a more democratic reality. Putnam (1995) also emphasizes the role of civil society organizations in facilitating citizen engagement in public life, which in turn positively influences the responsiveness and effectiveness of government, regardless of their stated ideology: "Members of associations are much more likely than nonmembers to participate in politics, to spend time with neighbors, to express social trust, and so on." (p. 73)

Non-profit housing, distinct as it is from both the private and government sectors, operates primarily within the realm of civil society. However, simply being non-profit does not by itself lead to social connectedness or civic engagement (Putnam, 1995). Most PNPs are actively engaged in not merely housing provision, but in the bettering of the socio-economic welfare of its inhabitants, through promoting empowerment opportunities (refer to *Chapter Three* for HSNPHA's efforts specifically).

The HSNPHA seems to view the tenant body as a community: The current Executive Director says this is evidenced through the consistently good condition of the units, established informal security systems, neighbour support, and a high degree of voluntarism within the Hillhurst

Sunnyside community. She believes there is 'community' evident on three scales - within the buildings, the tenant body as a whole and in the neighbourhood. Indeed, Friedmann's preferred definition of community is consistent with this: "The primary community, whether geographical or organizational, is the immediate space open to most people. It is the village, the neighbourhood, the town, the factory, the office, the school, the union's local, the parish, the sports club, the association..." (IDFA, as cited in Friedmann (1992: 5)). Community is defined in the Dictionary of Human Geography (1987) as "a group of interacting persons, occupying and sharing a limited territorial space for residence and for work, which functions to meet common needs generated in sharing this space and establishes characteristic forms of social interaction underpinned by shared values. Viewed both as a spatial-temporal and as a social system, community represents the smallest spatial system which encompasses the major features of everyday life in society" (Goodall, 1987). Certainly, tenants living in the same building collectively display some, but not all, of these features.

Lee (1991) asserts that, although communities are always a political entity at some level, a community must be able to identify itself as such in order to form a political consciousness. Perhaps the best definition of community, then, is a relative one. If one feels that one is part of a community, then *they* will best be able to define community - a definition that is meaningful to *them*. In HSNPHA, a slight majority of interviewed tenants did consider themselves, as tenants in the organization, to be a community (Appendix B: B-4). The most common reasons given for this belief were activities and events such as the summer picnic and Christmas Party, the friendliness and camaraderie of fellow tenants and the efforts of the Executive Director to try and foster a sense of community. Most noted that HSNPHA had a greater sense of community than other places they have lived. There was disagreement as to whether the tenant body or the Hillhurst Sunnyside community as a whole was more of a true community. Some also added that there was a sense of community *within* the building rather than between the properties. This view was echoed by tenant board members.

The interplay between civil society agents and community - advocacy fighting disenfranchisement, collective purpose struggling with organizational disengagement (from the corporate and state power axis) - is a complex one. However, there is a discernible undergirding agenda: To seek an alternative mode of human living and interaction from the dominant corporatist and patriarchal mode, which is an inherently inequitable, anti-community socio-economic structure.<sup>36</sup> Alternative development, in short, seeks to reclaim democracy.

The next chapter delves deeper into the subject of democratic reclamation by critically evaluating participation, first as a broad theme or idea and then as a concept applied to housing and tenancy. *Chapter One* has set the scene wherein the drama of participation will now unfold, replete, as many dramas are, with historical references, audience 'asides' and layers of intent (from the superficial to the profound).

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<sup>36</sup> This is an assertion that will not be explored further, as it is a subject worthy of its own thesis. The argument, however, is not new: The German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies described the character of urban industrial capitalist society as "Gesellschaft", an individualist social system dominated by ideological reason and the corporate/state dichotomy (or *partnership*, to be more succinct) (Tönnies, 1887). Boothroyd (1991) describes an alternative mode of organizing - "Post-Gesellschaft" - that stresses community and individual empowerment, while warning against the conformity and individual disempowerment that traditional community-based modes of organizing were characterized by ("Gemeinschaft"). Friedmann (1988) contrasts 'life space' (i.e. a bonded, territorial political community) with 'economic space' (i.e. open, unlimited, super-imposed and centred upon the firm). In order to reclaim 'life space' Friedmann argues, there must be "...an equalization among households of access to the bases of power (p. 102). "Poverty is not only a condition of low income. It is substantial inequality of access to the means for an autonomous life within the community." One must view all of this through the lens of patriarchy, which, in concert with corporatism, serves to withhold knowledge and power from most of humanity as a necessary pre-condition for preserving the dominant system. The system is reinforced by information manufacturers and filterers such as formal education curricula and the mass media (Gran, 1983).



## CHAPTER 2: Resident Participation

The role of the tenant in North America, as the section “*Landlord and Tenant*” in *Chapter One* alluded to, can be encapsulated in one word - *disenfranchisement*. The ideology of property ownership, which quite literally disenfranchised tenants by denying them the vote in the U.S. until 1861 (Dreier, 1982), relegates tenants to second class status through tax structures, home ownership incentives and lingering perceptions of ‘unsettledness’ and ‘transiency’. Lowered levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem inevitably result.<sup>1</sup> This is manifest in high levels of voter apathy, and an inability of tenants to envision themselves in ‘public forums’. (Capek and Gilderbloom, 1992)<sup>2</sup>

At the core of alternative community development is the goal of enhancing self-efficacy (Lee, 1991). This is what empowerment is for the individual. The connection between participation in decision-making and self-efficacy, from a psychology standpoint, is made explicit in Langer (1983) and Bandura (1978).<sup>3</sup> The degree of control over one’s personal (including spatial) environment is directly related to promoting a positive self-image (Langer, 1983). One’s environment must be “understandable, predictable and manageable” (Lee, 1991: 6). Bandura (1987) describes a tri-polar interdependence between self-perception (felt power, efficacy limits), behaviour (action taken to modify one’s conditions) and the environment (degree of support,

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<sup>1</sup> Lowered self-efficacy, as referred to in this discussion, does not refer to a personal affliction (as in the *clinical* social work sense) but rather a diminished view of oneself vis-à-vis the dominant society, a society which undervalues their ‘worth’. This is contrary to the assumptions of the panoply of pop psychology, ‘self-help’ and personal empowerment information on the market, which accept the system as not only unoppressive but accommodating - “all one has to do is believe in themselves.” The problem, rather (as in the *community* social work sense, and as applied, for instance, in O’Brien (1995)), is systemic and structural, and thus the road to empowerment must be intensely political.

<sup>2</sup> A U.S. Census Bureau study showed that voting and housing tenure bore a much closer relationship than race, gender, income, age or region. (Capek and Gilderbloom, 1992)

<sup>3</sup> Incidentally, the different, but complementary lines of argument employed in the planning, sociology, social work and psychology disciplines (among others) demonstrate how an *interdisciplinary* approach must be employed in order to effectively study and implement community development. A discussion about the need for participation without talking about self-efficacy, for instance, is necessarily limp as it misses an important foundational argument. Self-efficacy, in turn, can be a similarly shallow concept if one ignores the structural foundations of citizen disempowerment.

shared power, etc.). The three constitute a positive feedback loop that, if nurtured, empowers and builds capacity, or, if neglected, can spiral downward and serve to disempower.<sup>4</sup> In short, as Lee (1991: 15) concludes, "... power [is] the degree to which we are able to act to influence our environment." Taylor (1991: 50) adds that undergirding studies of gender and race relations is "...the premiss that denied recognition can be a form of oppression." Thus empowerment is the process of gaining such influence. But how is empowerment realized? The following discussion argues that empowerment is a direct result of meaningful participation.

## **Participation**

The participation of citizens in making the decisions that affect their lives, we are told, is the foundation of our society - it is called democracy. And yet, do we really believe this? Saul (1993: 584) is skeptical:

The constant base needed to supply values is the result of methodical participation. The individual gains his [or her] powers and responsibilities by being there. But we have no widespread belief in the value of participation. The rational system has made us fear standing out in any serious way. Participation produces, but is also the product of, practical values and common sense, not expertise and reason.

Indeed, it does seem as if society has forgotten what the essence of democracy is, or even how to argue over what that essence should be. Taylor (1991: 9-10) relates a similar argument to Alexis de Tocqueville, who, well over a century ago, warned of democratic societies succumbing to "soft despotism" - a system where the government is "mild and paternalistic" and upholds a facade of democracy through periodic elections, but where people ultimately feel disempowered:

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<sup>4</sup> The extreme state of this downward spiral, as termed by Bandura, is "post traumatic stress disorder". Victims of torture usually display such a condition. Bandura is not intending to imply that this process - reciprocal determinism - is Social Darwinist. In a reciprocal system, people *are* deeply affected by their social, political and economic environment, but the *access* to control over these factors is the more important factor than the environment *per se*.



The only defence against this, Tocqueville thinks, is a vigorous political culture in which participation is valued, at several levels of government and in voluntary associations as well. But the atomism of the individual militates against this. Once participation declines, once lateral associations that were its vehicles wither away, the individual citizen is left alone in the face of the vast bureaucratic state and feels, correctly, powerless. This demotivates the citizen even further, and the vicious cycle of soft despotism is joined.

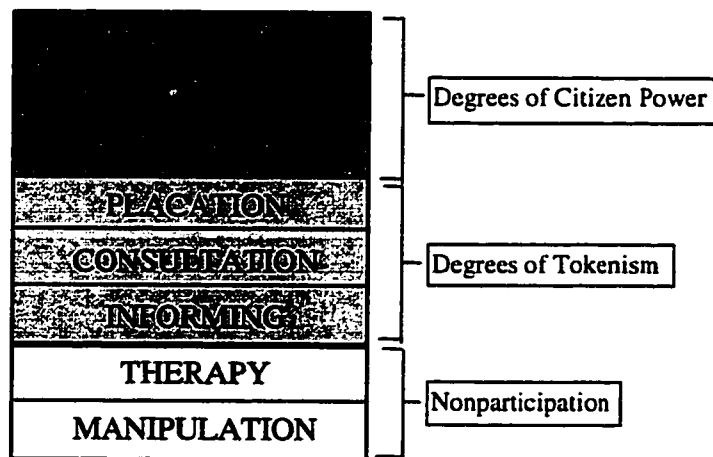
However, democracy is not yet dead. In fact, there are many who are again recognizing the value of participation, and rejecting the golden calf of reason. For instance, it is now becoming increasingly evident that popular participation is the cornerstone of effective community development projects of all kinds. The UN Economic and Social Council Resolution #1929 states that “Participation requires the voluntary and democratic involvement of people in a) contributing to the development effort; b) sharing equally in benefits derived therefrom; and c) decision-making in respect of setting goals, formulating policies and planning and implementing economic and social development programs” (As cited in Fenster (1993: 184)). The cornerstone of Atlas & Shoshkes’ (1997: 1) policy recommendations for rescuing social housing in North America are twofold - ‘citizen participation’ and ‘reciprocal responsibility’. “These policies promote democratic self-government by empowering citizens and strengthening communities... the operative philosophy must not only be government for the people, but of and by the people as well.”

Residents participating in the discussion group offered a number of definitions of tenant participation, including the following (Appendix C: C-4):

- the active involvement of tenants in management and social events;
- a return to community, by taking responsibility and having the opportunity to give back to the community; and

- having control over one's life. Contributing reduces the isolation of living in an apartment in the city.

Participation, however, is not a simple, straightforward concept. For instance, if abused, it can be manipulative and disempowering (Rahmena, 1993). In her landmark 1969 article, "A Ladder of Participation", Sherry Arnstein described levels of participation of an affected body vis-à-vis the decision-maker (Figure 5). These levels range from non-participation (which includes therapy and manipulation), through various forms of tokenism (including information-provision, consultation, and placation) and finally citizen power (partnership, delegated power and citizen control) (Arnstein, 1969). For a detailed description of these levels, refer to Appendix C. Since then, the concept of participation has become increasingly institutionalized, and there have been a number of studies relating to tenant participation specifically. Most of these are in the public housing realm, and are either European or American examples. However, they remain instructive.



*Figure 5 - "Eight Rungs on a Ladder of Citizen Participation" (Arnstein, 1969: 217)*

The Manager of Calhome Properties Ltd. dissected levels of participation in a slightly different way, based on a matrix (Figure 6). The *conservative* approach is governed by a customer service motive (i.e. service is more responsive when residents are involved). The Mulroney and Reagan

governments, for instance, employed this approach using the argument that cuts to social housing would necessarily encourage ownership and independence among tenants. The *liberal* approach is premised on tenant involvement in management producing administrative efficiency - a proposition which may not be true in practise. The *progressive*, or *radical*, approach stems from the community development philosophy of collective empowerment. This level, he argues, relates to class consciousness and politicization. Although this level is politicized, one could argue that it may not be based merely on class. Where a housing organization falls on this matrix, he maintains, is dependent upon the will and commitment of two players - the Board of Directors and the residents themselves. He further argues that any organization must be clear about what its objective is. This then informs what approach will be used and ultimately what level of participation will result.

		<i>Objective</i>	
		Customer Service	Administrative Efficiency
<i>Levels of Participation</i>	<i>Approach</i> ↘ Resident Participation	CONSERVATIVE	
	Resident Management		LIBERAL
	Resident Empowerment		PROGRESSIVE

Source: Interview with Dale Stamm, Manager of Cal-Home Properties

*Figure 6 - A Matrix of Resident Participation Levels, Objectives and Approaches*

The above matrix, along with Arnstein's Ladder, provide a fairly good introduction to the levels of participation, but one question remains unanswered: What is the *purpose* of resident participation? A CHMC report contends that the purpose is two-fold: First, to improve the condition of housing, and secondly to improve the economic conditions of tenants via skill development (CMHC, 1987). Resident participation leads to an improved understanding of

needs, a resident-centered ordering of priorities, an enhanced commitment to make improvements and a combining of larger community development strategies alongside housing provision (Fenster, 1993; CMHC, 1987). British architect John Turner, in working with self-help housing programs in Peru during the 1950's and 1960's, and later with the U.S. federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), stated the basic principle behind resident involvement and control in his seminal work Freedom to Build:

When dwellers control the major decisions and are free to make their own contribution to the design, construction or management of their housing, both the process and the environment produced stimulate individual and social well-being. When people have no control over, nor responsibility for, key decisions in the housing process, on the other hand, dwelling environments may instead become a barrier to personal fulfillment and a burden on the economy. (Turner, 1972: 241)

Participation as an abstract concept has long been embraced by countless institutions. However, it is a term which suffers from the same neglect or outright manipulation as its trendy compadres - 'community', 'sustainability', 'empowerment' and 'self-help', to name just a few. The *idea* of participation is often usurped by traditional professions and institutions, while the internalizing of what meaningful participation means and why it is important is often neglected because of what it implies with regard to power relations and deprofessionalization (Rahmena, 1993). A critique of the institutionalization of tenant participation in practise, and of the dollar-based evaluation of it is given in Kolodny (1981: 139):

Resident participation customarily has been seen as but a minor adjunct to housing policy - therapeutic for low-income households; a safety valve for landlord-tenant tensions; a way, perhaps, of humanizing the bureaucracy; a training ground for skills in democracy. The self-help activity, however, has potentially a much greater significance.

Kolodny argues further that there is usually increased satisfaction among residents, due to increased responsiveness and a greater sense of 'ownership' over one's dwelling. Jose Ospina, in

Housing Ourselves (1987), adds that popular control of housing leads to more 'appropriate' housing (with regard to both management and physical design), but also that participation strengthens community, thus permitting residents to have a greater say in the larger society. Ospina and Kolodny are extending their argument further than most advocates in this respect. The purpose of tenant participation as an incubator for more widespread, systemic social and political change is not as well documented in the literature. Fisher (1987) is highly critical of most tenant and community organizing efforts, including those of Saul Alinsky, the 'New Left', and many mainstream participatory approaches, because they are based only on material rewards and incentives rather than a mobilizing ideology. Even Friedmann (1987) argues that Alinsky, despite his radical conflict approach, was not interested in transformative change of society.

When exploring participation in a meaningful way, we must answer four deceptively simple questions: 'Why participation?', "When participation?", 'Who participation?', and 'How participation?' (Moser, 1989). More specifically, there are at least four pointed queries which must be addressed (Churchman, 1987: 292-293):

- 1) Representation vs. direct participation: Can anyone represent anyone else? Does one need to participate oneself in order to benefit?
- 2) Which is more important - the process of participation or its outcome/product?
- 3) Does mandated, government-inspired participation necessarily lead to co-optation and prevent radical change? Can residents obtain power in such a situation?
- 4) Are all aspects and levels of planning/decision-making appropriate for resident participation?

A fifth question should also be asked: To what degree does the degree of individualism vs. collectivism in a society generally foster or impede resident participation?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Churchman (1987) posits that because Israeli society values collectivity more than North Americans, the cultural milieu is more conducive to resident participation. Some tenants in HSNPHA have made a similar assertion, questioning whether lessons from even Vancouver or Edmonton can be applied to Calgary. Critics of this theory could argue that Calgary has a strong history of co-operative organizations and a reputation for generosity in times of

Although many of the previously cited authors have immersed themselves in the question of “Why participation?”, it is vital to note the responses of discussion group participants to the same query. Some of the benefits cited include the following (Appendix C: C-5):

- through better communication, problems are easier to work through;
- fosters a sense of ‘family’, ‘community’ and ‘neighborhood’. Encourages interaction and helps get rid of feelings of isolation;
- promotes comfort, trust, safety and security in the community;
- enables greater stability and consistency in the organization;
- promotes pride in one’s dwelling;
- enables an organization to go beyond simply being non-profit; and
- fosters positive changes, such as fundraising efforts, allowance of personal changes to the tenant’s unit (e.g. painting and flower boxes), allowance of pets and the implementation of needed amenities (e.g. bicycle racks).

## **The Economics of Empowerment**

The 1990s have been characterized by a pervasive ‘downsizing’ in social programs at both the Provincial and Federal levels. CMHC has not been immune from the cuts. As a result, they have in turn restructured their direct lending programme, which sets the mortgage rate for non-profits. Non-profit housing formerly received a bulk grant portion subsidizing the mortgage the amount of the difference between the real market payment and a payment of 2% of the interest rate

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dire need. While this *may* be true, it does not *necessarily* follow that Calgary is a hotbed of collectivism or social activism (nor is their evidence to bear this out).

(CMHC, 1986).<sup>6</sup> As of 1995, however, the grant portion has been eliminated in exchange for a lower-than-market rate, which amounts to a *de facto* major grant cutback (in excess of 80% for HSNPHA). Compounding the problem is CMHC's requirement that a mere 15% of tenants be subsidized in order to qualify for social housing funding. Approximately 40% of HSNPHA tenants are currently subsidized. The percentage of subsidized tenants or the amount of subsidy required are not factored into the funding formula. This move is emblematic of CMHC's previously mentioned decision to relinquish its role as a social housing promoter. HSNPHA is therefore looking at funding alternatives. It is already receiving commercial rents from businesses in the bottom floor of one of its properties. This will likely be expanded over the next year. Also, partnerships with other NGOs are also being forged.

But could resident involvement in management also help address this problem? Currently, the ED performs property management duties that *could* be 'subletted' to tenants. There is much debate, however, over whether resident participation can benefit an organization's bottom line. A CMHC-commissioned study identified five ways in which social housing costs can be reduced (Manchee, 1982: 2):

- 1) use of existing government projects and programs;
- 2) development of maintenance schedules;
- 3) budget and expenditure control;
- 4) expansion to achieve economies of scale; and
- 5) encouragement of tenant management and maintenance.

The only one of these measures which has not been implemented already, or is feasible in today's austere climate, is tenant management and maintenance. Tenant involvement increases economic efficiency *in theory* through acceptance of volunteer roles in maintenance and management, and

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<sup>6</sup> This policy report gives an example of explaining the funding formula comprehensibly. While not going into further detail about this formula (as it has been restructured anyway), it should be noted that CMHC provided start-up and repair and modification assistance as well as loan insurance to private lenders in addition to this.

through applying peer pressure on other tenants to minimize rent delinquency and property abuse (Kolodny, 1981). Morrison (1984) asserts that in projects where tenants organize to make improvements to their buildings, this approach has been cost-effective in comparison to non tenant-based efforts, particularly if buildings have not experienced significant deterioration. However, the current ED cautions that although there is room for tenant involvement in property management, it may actually be an added burden on management, due to training requirements.<sup>7</sup> Training is costly, both in time and money, in the short term. One study estimated training in property management skills (including either administration or maintenance skills) to average \$4,900 per person in 1985 U.S. Dollars (CMHC, 1987: 16).

Even though the economic efficiency argument is used in this discussion, it should remain a secondary one only. Even if efficiency is not gained, there is still an advantage to participatory decision-making. Tenant participation in administration was found to reduce efficiency in two major U.S. studies (Gulati, 1982; Queeley, 1981).<sup>8</sup> A later study, however, showed that, despite high start-up and training costs, the long-term operational costs in tenant-managed schemes were no higher than authority-managed sites (CMHC, 1987). Regardless, it can be said generally that democratic modes of decision-making are less efficient than more autocratic modes. However, caution must be taken at this point to not delve too deeply into an ideology that is counter to alternative development. Economic efficiency is but one measure of success, and can sometimes mask actual net social benefits. As Rigby (1982: 2) notes: "Any evaluation of tenant management which merely takes note of increases in costs must be judged myopic. Thus, tenant management represents not only a viable alternative form of managing distressed multifamily housing stock, but also a cost-effective one." All of the respondents representing other housing organizations felt that tenant participation was of net benefit, although two of the three noted that

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<sup>7</sup> The ED also notes the potential incompatibility of the employee/employer relationship with the lessee/lessor relationship. For example, if a tenant failed to perform maintenance duties satisfactorily, and is 'relieved' of these duties, it is unreasonable to expect him or her to still feel comfortable as a tenant.

<sup>8</sup> These studies assumed consistent control variables (i.e. static conditions). However, the current Canadian social housing situation is dynamic, thus it may be that tenant participation becomes an efficient solution at some CMHC funding threshold, or, alternatively, at some longer time threshold.



participation is likely not of net benefit if valued only in dollar terms. The Manager of Calhome Properties Ltd. contends that there are always, at a minimum, 'customer service' benefits derived from participation. He adds that there are usually positive externalities that benefit the larger community, such as enhanced safety and security. In summation then, economic and administrative efficiency must be weighed against the largely non-quantifiable gain of empowerment.<sup>9</sup>

Altas and Shoshkes (1997) maintain that resident participation does reap net *social* benefits. In fact, this very recent report issues a strong plea to both governments and community-based organizations to continue moving in this direction: "It is clear from our research that in the future programs must offer more, and require more, of beneficiaries. Only by doing so will residents develop a sense of ownership, responsibility, pride and participation that will foster close-knit relationships and community-organization building, which are vital components of the civil society" (p. 1).

## **Some Historical Highlights**

In *Chapter One, "Landlord and Tenant"* described the dominant status of landlords vis-à-vis tenants and the systemic discrimination that tenants have historically faced in North America. This section aims to give a brief sampling of the more recent efforts of tenants to reclaim their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

The infamous Harlem rent strikes of 1963/64 ushered in a decade-long period of unprecedented tenant activism. These were followed by strikes in St. Louis, Cleveland, Washington, Detroit

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<sup>9</sup> Capitalist notions, such as economic 'efficiency', have become commonplace terms that lie virtually outside the realm of questioning in Canada today. In order to fully appreciate the theory of alternative development, it is necessary to view capitalism for what it is - merely a theory which fuels ideology (including Marxist ideology, which accepts capitalism as a necessary 'thesis'), rather than a 'natural' mode of operation.

and Chicago (Flaum & Salzman, 1969). In 1969, students at the University of Michigan staged a massive rent strike, HUD made a concerted effort to increase the number of tenants on public housing boards, the National Tenants' Association was formed and the American Bar Association recommended radical legal reform (Ibid.). In 1968, the American Urban Coalition Task Force on Reconstruction and Community Development documented the history of the Tenant's Rights Movement and recommended the implementation of four programs to state housing authorities which would serve to equalize the landlord-tenant relationship. One of the programs was to encourage the establishment of "...Boards of Tenant Affairs for each project, which [would] allow tenants a voice in matters concerning their own housing" (Flaum & Salzman, 1969: 47). On the heels of the Task Force and the broader civil rights movement, the tenants' rights movement gained great momentum by the 1970s in most of the industrialized west before retreating into relative submission during the conservative backlash of the 1980s. The tenant movements occurred in three parallel realms - public housing, private housing and subsidized housing associations (Dreier, 1995). The activist fervour which characterized many of the 1970s movements is typified in the writings of Colin Ward, a British social anarchist and tenants' rights activist who wrote impassionedly about the follies of planned public housing and the post-feudal 'enclosure' of tenants, which he claimed was still alive and well (Ward, 1976). Ward also provided guides for tenant participation, organization, wresting of control from the state and the restructuring of tenure along Scandinavian co-operative lines (Ward, 1974). Peter Dreier (1995:1), speaking about the American experience, described the 1970s as an almost euphoric era: "The organizers, leaders, and activists shared a view that the fight for renter's rights was part of a larger democratization of our society." This belief, to some extent, still fuels the optimism, albeit muted optimism, of today's organizers.

Concurrently, HUD in the U.S. began to implement a policy of "consumer participation" in public housing projects. The impetus for the experiment came from the success of the St. Louis public housing tenants organization in the 1950s and 60s and their gradual assumption of management responsibilities. The manifestation of this was the National Tenant Management

Demonstration Program. An empirical analysis of 750 projects in 1982 concluded that, although administrative efficiency was not enhanced, "...tenant organizations can be effective in increasing the level of resources and services made available to tenants" (Gulati, 1982: 12). The study, however, observed that many of the projects viewed participation as an end in itself.<sup>10</sup> Another study found that administrative efficiency was not hampered either, and that resident satisfaction was improved despite even stricter management practises. The findings included the following:

Compared to traditional public housing management, tenant management produced such additional benefits as a) increased employment of residents, b) a sense of personal development among participants in the tenant management organization, and c) a greater overall satisfaction with the project management among residents... (Queeley, 1981: 6).

Later, longer-term studies of the same experience confirmed these observations and added that delinquency and crime rates were lowered, worker productivity of tenants involved in management increased and occupancy rates increased (CMHC, 1987). Others observe that it has also been effective in raising the morale of residents (O'Brien, 1995; Fuerst, 1988).

HUD's support of the program was crucial to most of the successful cases. Technical assistance was also stressed as a critical factor in the development of tenant management. The most thorough inclusion of tenants in the pilot projects was the Bromley-Heath IMC in Boston. Besides regular property management and administration responsibilities, the IMC was also responsible for accounting, legal and purchasing duties (Ibid.: 17). Most studies of this experience, including Fuerst (1988), Gulati (1982), Rigby (1982) and Queeley (1981) either applied empirical analyses, or showed concern for the lack of professional competence displayed among tenants, and thus had largely lukewarm reviews of the tenant participation experiment. However, these lenses of analyses reveal a technocratic bias which, as alluded to previously,

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<sup>10</sup> This is a characteristic typical of the "Consultation" rung of Arnstein's ladder. However, some argue that participation *can* be an end in itself (as well as a means) since the very process of participating is empowering (Fenster, 1993; Moser, 1989).

should make one skeptical if one is looking at tenant participation as a rejection of the professionalization of society and as garnering non-quantifiable benefits. There are currently over a hundred American public housing complexes employing tenant management (O'Brien, 1995).

A qualitative study of tenant participation in Scotland concluded that tenant participation, although desirable, is largely unachievable outside a co-operative housing situation (Goodlad, 1988). The principal reason for this is similar to the previously-cited study's observation of complacency surrounding the notion of "participation as an end in itself". It is unclear from the study, however, why it is asserted that co-operative housing alone enables participation. "*The Cooperative Question*" in *Chapter Three* explores this question further. Also, Goodlad (1988) maintains that because tenant participation is linked to political change, it is problematic. Tenant organizations are too often viewed by the provider as an adversary or opponent, a perception echoed by some residents in HSNPHA, even though the idea of participation is viewed as inherently good. Perhaps this is related to the inherently oppositional relationship of landlord and tenant or because of a general disdain in corporatist society for meaningful citizen participation. The author observed that there is often a defensive reaction on the part of the provider to legitimate tenant claims. The main problem with the notion of tenant participation, she asserts, is the assumption "... that the interests of tenants and landlords are mutually incompatible, or alternatively that they are always the same. The first view would lead to pessimistic conclusions about the prospects for achieving real gains for tenants through participation; the second view would be somewhat naive and a generally unsatisfactory starting point for participation" (Ibid.: 246). The study found that tenant participation did generally seem to better the living conditions of tenants, but this is to be expected since the betterment of living conditions is a goal that both the provider (as benevolent landlord) and the tenants have in common. Tenant organizations are inevitably partially complementary and partially in conflict with the objectives of the provider. There is consistently less evidence of success where an adversarial relationship was dominant. This is why a joint strategic planning exercise is deemed

crucial to the HSNPHA project. Where goals and objectives are consistent, this should be made clear. Where they are inconsistent, there must be dialogue and negotiation.

In the latter half of the 1990s resident participation is experiencing a renaissance, as participatory community development approaches are invoked to help manage the effects of government 'downsizing'. A recent study commissioned by the National Housing Institute in the U.S., targeted toward both community groups and government agencies encapsulates this revival, as it stresses that resident participation is essential to post-welfare state survival (Atlas & Shoshkes, 1997).

## **Tenant Participation in Canada**

The history of tenant participation in Canada is neither as comprehensive nor conflict-based as the American and British histories. The most heated period of tenant organization occurred at the end of World War II. Returning veterans were allowed by the Wartime Prices and Trade Board to evict tenants living in houses purchased by veterans. Within a three-month period, 15,000 - 20,000 Canadians had been served eviction notices, and many were rendered homeless. A Vancouver tenants' league of over 300 members prompted the local media to chastise landlords for evictions. The media responded by warning landlords that they were "agitating Communism" (Bacher, 1993: 174). The second significant period parallels the American and British experiences. In 1970, the Canadian Council on Social Development facilitated a workshop involving management and tenants. The workshop was a forum for the first serious discussion of tenant participation and management in public housing (CCSD, 1970). As the then Federal Minister Responsible for Housing, Robert Andras, stated, "...[the Government is] quite prepared to encourage [tenant organization and involvement in the management of public housing] as a matter of social justice, and we think in turn it will encourage a much healthier outlook and climate all round and remove a major cause of some of the difficulties" (Ibid.: 2).

In the social housing sphere, the most prominent tenant organization movement was the Canadian Organization of Public Housing Tenants (COPHT), formed in 1973 and financed by the Federal Government. COPHT chiefly served as an information provider, offering advice on how tenants in local projects can form an association. The advice was both legal and practical (COPHT, 1973).<sup>11</sup> The organization also served as a lobbyist. COPHT brought issues pertaining to high living densities, rent scales, rent arrears, length of leases, noise and maintenance to the attention of government (COPHT, 1974). COPHT also encouraged networking *between* tenant groups in order to strengthen the tenant-rights movement generally.

Prior to the formation of COPHT, a local organization - The Calgary Municipal Housing Tenants Association - was formed (in 1970). The mandate of this organization included offering a formal channel of communication between management and tenants, promoting tenant participation in community development, representing tenants with grievances in front of the Calgary Housing Authority and raising the profile of public housing tenants' rights generally (CMHTA, 1970). The organization has long been defunct, and it is unclear what the reasons for its lack of success were. Probably the most significant tenants' organization remaining in Canada is the Federation of Metro Toronto Tenants.

Tenant organization within the private non-profit context has also been attempted in a number of organizations. A recent study of six PNPs in Saskatchewan revealed that five of them had tenant associations who met regularly, but had no real power beyond planning social events (Bailey, 1993). Locally, tenant participation is similarly underdeveloped. Trinity Place Foundation of Alberta, for instance, has an internally-subsidized Tenants Association, although it plays no official role in the operation of the organization (Profile of Canadian Non-Profit Housing Organizations, 1991). Two other local PNPs - Inglewood Non-Profit Housing Association and Canative Housing Association - do not currently have any form of tenant participation, although

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<sup>11</sup> Information included how to form a constitution, aims and objectives, membership and networking, as well as information on COPHT itself.

the latter formerly had tenants on its board of directors. Calhome Properties Ltd. officially supports and encourages tenant participation, although the actual incidence of participation varies from project to project.<sup>12</sup> In fact, HSNPHA appears to be one of only two local housing providers (apart from co-operatives) to have encouraged tenant participation. The Elder Statesmen Group, who provide housing for seniors in Eau Claire and Albert Park, have 25% tenant board membership (although not on the executive) as well as a tenant association for social functions. The tenant participation experience within HSNPHA is discussed in *Chapter Three*. Elsewhere, examples of significant tenant participation on boards of directors include Entre Nous Femme Housing Foundation in Vancouver, with a majority tenant membership on the board, and Houselink Community Homes in Toronto, with 50% tenant representation. The Ottawa Housing Authority converted some of their projects into tenant-owned co-operatives. Tenant participation is also encouraged by the Canadian Housing Renewal Association (Executive Director's Report, 1993).

Tenants do have the right to organize into associations or councils in Alberta. Landlords cannot evict or harass tenants based on their involvement in such an association. However, the formation of such organizations has not been actively encouraged. Intimidation and ignorance of the law are still barriers to participation, particularly in the private for-profit sector. Landlords do not have to recognize these bodies, nor are they compelled to take their ideas or grievances into consideration. In 1990, Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs released a report evaluating the state of the landlord-tenant relationship in Alberta law. The report recommended that tenant associations be recognized and approved in legislation, *and* that landlords be required to recognize and openly discuss tenant issues with these associations (Alberta, 1990). However, the subsequent amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act failed to reflect these recommendations.

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<sup>12</sup> Within Calhomes, according to the Manager, participation ranges from non-participation to a *liberal*, customer-service oriented approach, where tenants are involved in some aspects of management and are encouraged to form formal organizations. However, there is little tenant involvement in larger scale or longer term decision-making. In the Manager's words, "the jury is still out on empowerment" (the *progressive* approach) (refer to Figure 6).

The discussion of resident participation in this chapter has gradually narrowed from a global context - a U.N. Resolution - to a local context - housing providers in Calgary. *Chapter Three* will narrow this focus further, by looking first at the climate of participation in private non-profit housing generally and then specifically at HSNPHA - the case study.



## **CHAPTER 3: Resident Participation and Non-Profit Housing - the Case Study**

This chapter looks at resident participation as it pertains to the case study - HSNPHA. Specifically, the chapter examines the context, comparability with co-operative housing, history of tenant participation within HSNPHA, desire of current tenants to participate, the barriers and drawbacks of participation, potential organizational evolution of HSNPHA and the degree to which the empowerment objective has already been fulfilled in the organization. In this chapter, as well as in *Chapter Four*, the methodology of triangulation will become more apparent. The analysis will float frequently between archival and literature review, board member and resident perceptions in the interview setting and resident perceptions in the group setting.

### **Context**

What role does the unique context of HSNPHA play in fostering or impeding tenant participation? HSNPHA, as has already been discussed, is a community-based private non-profit housing association. It is argued here that these descriptors serve to elevate HSNPHA to a level that more readily facilitates resident participation than other areas of the housing market. It was shown in *Chapter One - "Community Development and Non-Profit Housing"* that, since non-profit housing is a civil society agent, it is well positioned to foster empowerment *in theory*. This section will explore whether this is also true *in practise*.

In "Dilemmas of Community-Based Housing" (1987), Rachel Bratt provides an insightful examination of community-based non-profit housing in the U.S. Bratt describes four dilemmas that are inevitably encountered in such a context (p. 325-331):

- 1) private ownership and accumulation vs. social control and access;
- 2) local resident targeted vs. open access and/or occupancy according to need;
- 3) ability to maintain community and tenant orientation vs. need to act like a developer or landlord; and
- 4) need to provide services to original target group vs. potential for neighborhood change and redefinition of the organization's objectives and clientele.

On the first dilemma, Bratt is optimistic:

...community-based housing actually appears to offer some of the most important attributes of individual ownership, such as the feeling of control over one's immediate environment and a sense of security. For example, a community-based development can include tenants in management decisions, such as budgeting issues and determining repair and improvement priorities, and can foster a sense of shared ownership (p. 330).

She notes that in community-based non-profit housing, tenants have greater security of tenure than in a traditional rental situation. Also, although constrained by private goals and preferences, the providers of this form of housing tend to accept social justice objectives more readily than most landlords. The third dilemma, tenant orientation vs. landlord role, becomes intensified in times of funding cutbacks. The current Executive Director of HSNPHA laments the current necessity for non-profit housing providers to become more business-oriented, often at the expense of tenant interests. Bratt observes that this tension is universal:

Although a non-profit community-based group may be more likely to assume positions that are pro-tenant more frequently than for-profit owners, it is also clear that certain built-in conflicts between tenant and landlord are likely to persist no matter who the owner happens to be (Ibid.: 330).

In addressing the fourth dilemma, the need to provide services to the original target group in the face of neighbourhood change (most notably gentrification), Bratt suggests continued operation of the non-profit, assuming additional subsidy is available, or failing this, conversion to a limited equity co-operative with ownership targeted to existing tenants.

What impact does building size or configuration have on fostering or hindering resident participation? Morrison (1984) observed that buildings in fair physical condition and having between 17 and 34 units are the easiest in which to organize tenants. Both Bowen House and Gayner House, collectively boasting 56 of HSNPHA's 118 units fall into this category. Norfolk House, with 40 units, is slightly larger. Norfolk, however, is the one building with an intentional common area, but this area seems to be underutilized (Abu-Dehays, et al., 1995).

## **The Co-operative Question**

Co-operative housing has long been seen as a panacea from the point of view of planners, community associations and public housing critics. It has provided many Canadians with quality affordable housing while providing shelter from market fluctuations (pun not intended) and avoiding the stigma of many other forms of social housing. There are currently fourteen housing co-operatives in Calgary. Co-op housing was mentioned by tenants more than any other type of organization as one that HSNPHA could borrow or learn from (Appendix B: B-10). Though co-operative housing can provide some insightful lessons for non co-op PNPs, particularly with regard to democratization, it is not recommended that, contrary to a 1974 HSCA proposal, HSNPHA consider converting into a co-op. The reasons for this stem from the lack of funding Canadian co-operatives

are experiencing<sup>1</sup>, legal and logistical difficulties and from the largely trivial distinction between co-ops and other PNPs (albeit, in practise, a minority of PNPs).

Co-operatives are distinguishable from other forms of private non-profit housing for two primary reasons. First, they provide a form of tenure - 'co-ownership', which is intermediate between home ownership and outright tenancy (Communitas, 1982). However, co-ownership is in fact little different from tenancy in a PNP dwelling. Even the degree of state-dependence has been essentially the same (although PNPs, in some cases, may have substantially higher percentages of subsidized residents). Many argue that ownership is an important requisite for public participation (CMHC, 1979). Yet, if one accepts that the distinction between tenancy and co-ownership is trivial, then this assertion is weak, since co-ops do rely on the participation of their members (even if it is only a handful of members, as is often the case). This manner of control is the second, and the most significant, principal difference between co-operatives and other non-profits (Fallis, 1993). Some PNPs, however, such as *Entre Nous Femme* in Vancouver, have tenants constituting a majority of board members, a policy that is underscored by a commitment to the belief that stakeholders are best able to make the decisions affecting them. Tenant control in this manner, assuming democratic election of board members by tenants themselves, amounts to *de facto* co-ownership.<sup>2</sup> The ownership-participation connection may then more likely be a 'chicken and egg' relationship. Increased participation fosters ownership (or a greater sense of same), which in turn empowers residents to participate further.

Studies on women's volunteer involvement in co-operative housing revealed that there was a strong educative function where women not only developed management and

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<sup>1</sup> It should be reiterated that CMHC has abandoned the co-operative housing program. Funding for new co-operatives is unavailable, while existing co-operatives have been forced to either eliminate their subsidized component or to subsidize internally. It is unclear why this program was eliminated before others, given that it was widely deemed to be CMHC's most successful program (An observation made by instructor Terry Brooke in the course EVDB 683.36 - Development Finance).

<sup>2</sup> In PNP there is a distinction between the membership and the tenancy. In a co-operative, there is no distinction.

leadership skills, but also had enhanced self-confidence levels and were able to better bridge their private and public lives (Gerritsma, 1984; Farge, 1986).<sup>3</sup> These phenomena were made possible via a non-hierarchical and non-sexist co-operative structure. A prudent question to ponder at this point is whether a co-operative *structure* discourages sexism and hierarchy, or whether an anti-patriarchal and anti-hierarchical environment encourages co-operative living. If the latter is assumed to be true, tenancy-based PNPs can, in theory, achieve the same results as co-operatives in this respect.

### **Resident Participation Within HSNPHA**

The degree of tenant involvement within HSNPHA management and decision-making has been a function primarily of the receptivity and benevolence of the board, and in particular, the ED. In most instances, the impetus for the formation of tenants' organizations or councils has come from members of the board rather than tenants.<sup>4</sup>

HSCA's 1974 application for incorporation of the Hillhurst Sunnyside Housing Association stated the following objective: "...to enhance the quality of living conditions through the formation of a community housing corporation, a tenants' organizing body and a home maintenance program. The object of the society being also to master those goals by supporting, undertaking and encouraging participatory community action and development through its membership" (HSCA, 1974b). The language of this and

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<sup>3</sup> The bridging of private and public lives is a central tenet of social anarchism (a foundation upon which much of alternative community development theory is based), and is seen as a necessary requisite for democracy (Friedmann, 1987). As an example, values and modes of operation in the 'private' household realm with respect to the raising and nurturing of children, the manner of decision-making exercised, and the moral framework agreed-upon should all be manifest in the household members' 'public' lives as citizens making informed choices in the public domain. For instance, if we feel it is our responsibility to feed, cloth and house our children (as well as respect their life choices and involve them in household decisions), then it must also be our responsibility to ensure that *all* people are fed, clothed, housed, respected and involved in public decision-making. This example is not meant to sound paternalistic - it is intended to show that a consistency and meaningful connection between moral and practical decisions at the household and public levels is necessary for a society to function democratically.

<sup>4</sup> This statement, and much of this entire section, is based on recorded evidence from minutes of meetings, correspondences and interviews.

supporting documents strongly indicated a desire for resident involvement in planning and management, even making reference to the long-term goal of forming a co-operative (HSCA, 1974a).<sup>5</sup>

The Objects of the Society in the 1980 application and bylaws, however, made no reference to tenants: "The Objects of this society are to [obtain,] provide, [manage,] and maintain housing facilities and ancillary appurtenances to individuals and families of low income and senior citizens [and handicapped persons]."<sup>6</sup>

The first impetus for a tenants' organization came from an activist board member in 1981. A Tenant Council of seven people was formed following a well-attended general meeting. The organizer also made a request to the board to have one non-voting tenant member (nominated by the council). The council was provided with financial information for discussion and were in charge of screening and prioritizing tenant complaints. They also published an information newsletter - "The Sunnyhill News". The Tenant Council was invited to participate in the HSNPHA's planning process that year. The most significant manifestation of that involvement is the amendment to the Articles and Bylaws. To the aforementioned objective was added the following phrase: "...and to encourage tenant housing by the Society to actively become involved in the management and operation of their accommodation." In addition, a new objective was added: "b) through educational programs and social activities to provide an opportunity for tenants in Hillhurst Sunnyside to become aware of their rights and responsibilities as such." The other major initiative was the formation of a steering committee, whose mandate was to form "The Calgary Tenants Association", a city-wide organization that would lobby for changes in the Residential Tenancies Act and provide advocacy assistance for grievances. It is unclear, however, whether this organization ever came to be. The council endured for about a year, as evidenced by subsequent minutes of council meetings.

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<sup>5</sup> As this organization never came to be, it was only a theoretical precursor to the HSNPHA.

<sup>6</sup> Bracketed parts were added via amendment in 1986.

In 1983, the ED initiated and chaired a Tenant Council in Norfolk House only (principally a seniors' residence). The council was set up to allow views and opinions to be aired. Originally, the council lacked an action plan. The consensus within the five-member council was that participation was poor and complaints were petty (Minutes, 1983a). In the half a year following, however, the Tenant Council had become far more productive. They had developed formal means of contacting other tenants, established regular meetings, nominated a chair and secretary with set terms of office, organized social events, and lobbied (unsuccessfully) to have tenant representation on the Board of Directors (Minutes, 1983b). The council had regular monthly meetings until April of 1985, when they agreed to meet on a "need-to" basis. It was to be the last time the Tenant Council met. Despite not continuing, the council appears to have been successful in enhancing property maintenance, building security and social events.<sup>7</sup>

CMHC's attitude toward tenant involvement has been inconsistent. A 1982 study on social housing made the following recommendation:

...to encourage resident management of projects to the greatest extent. There is currently nothing in the program to meet this objective. The feeling seems to be that if you call it a 'co-op' then resident management will mysteriously appear, and if you don't, it's a lost cause anyway. Neither is true; section 56.1 [of the National Housing Act] should provide some incentives for resident management without making it mandatory (since it is sometimes inappropriate), but always seeking to maximize it (Manchee, 1982).

Despite this, CMHC continues to frown upon tenant participation in decision-making. This was first pointed out in a letter to the board from a director:

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<sup>7</sup> This conclusion is drawn from analysis of monthly council meetings through the two-year period.

Housing Association tenants cannot have voting privileges in the Association or on the Board of Directors. To have it otherwise would be a blatant conflict of interest and would violate our CMHC operating agreements.<sup>8</sup>

The By-laws were subsequently amended accordingly. The 'conflict of interest' refers to the belief that tenants in decision-making capacities will inevitably be self-serving and will not attend to the interests of the association collectively. According to the current ED, CMHC does not strictly enforce this stipulation unless a related problem arises. Co-operatives are viewed differently because every tenant (shareholder) has a vote. There is a limit to how many tenants could have voting privileges in the HSNPHA, given current By-laws.<sup>9</sup>

A board-administered survey distributed to tenants in the spring of 1988 indicated that there was interest in the formation of a Tenant Council. Thirty-two of fifty-four respondents expressed interest in attending Council meetings (HSNPHA, 1988). In 1990, a promotional pamphlet openly encouraged the formation of a Tenant Association (HSNPHA, 1990). However, there is no evidence archived until April, 1991 of a resurrected Tenant Council. At this time it was stated that "...the Tenant Council wishes to conduct itself in a holistic manner and in a spirit of co-operation (working *with* and not *against*) the HSNPHA. The Tenant Council would also like HSNPHA to be made aware of the concerns of tenants and to deal with them in a positive manner" (Minutes, 1991). Concurrently, the Board of Directors attempted to revisit the Mission Statement, adding the following:

Opportunity shall be provided for tenants to participate in the affairs of the Association with due recognition to the confidential nature of such involvement.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> (Name of director withheld). Letter to HSNPHA Board of Directors, Sept. 24, 1986. This is a legal observation and should not necessarily be construed as the director's personal opinion.

<sup>9</sup> Only the HSNPHA By-laws, not the Societies Act itself, limit the number of voting members.

<sup>10</sup> Proposal to change HSNPHA Mission Statement, April 22, 1991.



One of the initiators of this attempt, a board member and former tenant, resigned the following month. This experiment was, perhaps, the closest to a tenant-based organizing initiative in HSNPHA's history. Nonetheless, the council subsequently disbanded, although, again, the reasons are unclear, apart from the departure of the facilitator. A tenant and former board member who was also involved with this attempt said it was too idealistic - "in the classic socialist Hippy mode" - and that it did not get off the ground because it had no real power and nothing to do. The current ED, who was working with HSNPHA in a different capacity at the time, cites a lack of a clear mandate, the dominance of selfish interests and a complaint mode of discussion as further reasons for its failure.

The current ED has initiated some less ambitious attempts at involving tenants, through the creation of a Newsletter Committee, Recycling Committee, ad-hoc social committees and a temporary Building-Naming Committee, and has attempted to help foster a sense of community among residents, through the organization of a tenant picnic, Christmas party and the newsletter itself. Indeed, some tenants have commented that these efforts have led to an enhanced sense of community (Appendix B: B-4, B-11); . A spontaneous tenant-based initiative was manifest in a funding drive to purchase and install bicycle racks at Bowen House. The ED has also personally recruited tenant board members since 1993, preferring to have one subsidized and one non-subsidized member. She has further indicated that she would like to initiate a Tenant Council within the next year. By gradually increasing the opportunities for involvement through limited board membership and committee work, she is hoping that participating residents can acquire a more global view of the organization, rather than a self-interested one. Acquiring a global view was mentioned as vital by respondents in other organizations, and is described as critical in *Chapter Four*.

Six of the twenty tenants interviewed were currently or formerly involved in either the current committees, primarily in social events organizing, or in previous tenant councils (Appendix B: B-5). One other is intending to become involved. Their experience with

participating has been generally positive, due to support from the ED, the educational value and the feeling of being able to effect change. For the majority of those who have not participated, their perception of these various committees is unclear, although there are some concerns about a lack of communication regarding meetings, a lack of interest among tenants, lack of mandate and the lack of necessity for collective decision-making. The ED feels that the majority of these committees have not worked as well as hoped for, due to a lack of mandate (i.e. goals and objectives).

## **The Desire for Participation**

Flaum & Salzman (1969) identify four general areas of tenant grievances - poor maintenance, rent, inadequate security, and lack of tenant control. It seems, from communicating with tenants, that none of these issues are pressing in the HSNPHA context for most tenants. In fact, only the fourth issue - a lack of tenant control - was mentioned by any tenant in either the discussion group or the interviews.

Although the majority of interview respondents viewed greater tenant participation as an inherently good thing, this was not reflected on an individual level. When asked what their own personal level of interest was in participating in management or decision-making, eight responded 'low', seven 'moderate' and only three 'high' (Appendix B: B-8). Part of this lukewarm interest might relate to tenants feeling they have little to contribute to a participation effort. Almost half of the respondents felt they had nothing to contribute, while another four were unsure (Ibid.). Others felt they could contribute ideas, time, writing, editing and research and other miscellaneous skills. Curiously, despite stated low levels of personal interest, nearly three-quarters of the tenants expressed an interest in attending a discussion group (although actual attendance was lower than expected), while half showed interest in taking part in a strategic planning exercise (Ibid. B-10).

Participation is not likely to come about overnight or via an en masse organizing effort. For instance, some tenants pointed out that there is no pressing grievance issue around which to mobilize (Appendix B: B-12 - B-13), an observation that presupposes that participation is only necessary as a *reaction*, not a *proaction*. The current ED has observed, correctly, that participation is an incremental process. But, to help foster empowerment, and to ward against accusations of being paternalistic, the process should be incremental in accordance with the desire displayed by residents to participate. The difference between 'grooming' select tenants for fuller participation and facilitating and educating all residents who want to become involved must be recognized. The guiding principle of the organization, as one tenant and former board member pointed out, should be social justice, not simply Christian benevolence or volunteerism. In any organization, including housing co-ops, there is a core group of members with a higher participation rate and level of interest. And in HSNPHA, there *is* a small group of tenants who are keenly interested in participating more fully (perhaps between ten and fifteen). However, this core group should be continually trying to broaden the number of residents participating, and must be accountable to, and representative of, the tenant body as a whole. The desired involvement of these few tenants should be accommodated with the assumption that involvement can and should be continually sought among other tenants.

## **Barriers and Drawbacks**

Is resident participation unquestionably good? Can it occur with relative ease? The answer to the latter question is, of course, no. But there is some disagreement as to whether or not resident participation is irrefutably beneficial. Much of this disagreement stems from the confusion between what is a 'barrier', i.e. what are the concrete obstacles to achieving fuller participation, and what is a 'drawback', i.e. what is systemically wrong with the concept and purpose of participation.

Tenants in the interview and discussion group process cited the following potential drawbacks to participation (Appendix B: B-9; Appendix C: C-7): participants having too narrow, selfish or trivial a focus, a lack of time, interest or commitment to the process, a lack of an organizational mandate or purpose (assuming the creation of a tenant council or similar body), the dominance of a core group of volunteers, the promotion of an adversarial atmosphere between tenants and either management or the board, under or mis-representation and outside meddling or bullying. Three tenants did not foresee any possible drawbacks, maintaining that all ideas are valid and should be listened to.

Tenants also made some suggestions for avoiding or alleviating these drawbacks, including ensuring that tenant participation is representative, ensuring that those that are addressing tenant needs and interests are elected *by* tenants, developing a clear mandate and a global view and providing incentives to tenants who participate (Ibid.). Also, each of these drawbacks should be dealt with separately.<sup>11</sup> Lack of time, interest and commitment and under or mis-representation are in some ways systemic, but these are actually barriers rather than problems with participation itself. Having a narrow or selfish focus may be both a drawback and a barrier, but it will be argued in *Chapter Four* that this can be alleviated depending on the *form* participation takes. Similarly, having a lack of organizational mandate is not a problem if you have forms of participation that are alternative to an organization specifically geared toward tenants' issues. Outside meddling and bullying is the one barrier that necessitates such an organization. Intimidation generally, however, is an important concern and, although it can be combated through increased participation, is relative to the personalities involved. As *Chapter Two* revealed, some degree of adversity between management and tenants is inevitable. It would be naive to think otherwise. However, given freer flows of information and more open decision-making processes, mutual understanding between management, the board and tenants could go a long way toward minimizing the problem of adversity. One must not forget either that adversity *can* be constructive as one of

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<sup>11</sup> It is not the intention of the author to debunk tenant opinion but to start to illuminate opportunities for alleviating these drawbacks. These opportunities, most of which come directly from tenant responses, are described in *Chapter Four*.

several means of achieving enhanced participation. It may also be the only means available in some situations.

The barriers to participation mentioned by participants were, in order of frequency mentioned, lack of time, lack of interest or outright apathy, shyness, poor understanding of the issues and function of the organization, fear (of intimidation, eviction, etc.), transiency of tenants, a lack of leadership amongst tenants, the diverse demographic make-up of residents, selfishness, take-over of the process by a biased core group, lack of real power, lack of mandate and the desire among tenants for the preservation of their privacy and anonymity (Appendix B: B-7).<sup>12</sup> The ED added that a lack of training and the potentially disempowering critique of participants by non-participants are also barriers. The Manager of Calhome Properties Ltd. noted further that residents do not *expect* to remain in social housing for long periods of time, and thus a commitment to participate is seen by some tenants as an embarrassing admission of planned long term residency. In a mixed market/subsidized PNP situation, however, this long term residency is not nearly as stigmatizing. Some of these barriers, such as transiency, lack of time and selfishness are difficult to address without changing the larger society and/or personal behaviours. However, other barriers, such as poor understanding of issues, fear, lack of power and take-over by a core group could be addressed entirely within HSNPHA, as *Chapter Four* outlines.

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<sup>12</sup> Although the question pertaining to barriers to participation dealt with a tenants' organization specifically, a verbal amendment was made for the final 75% of interviewed tenants that made reference to participation generally.

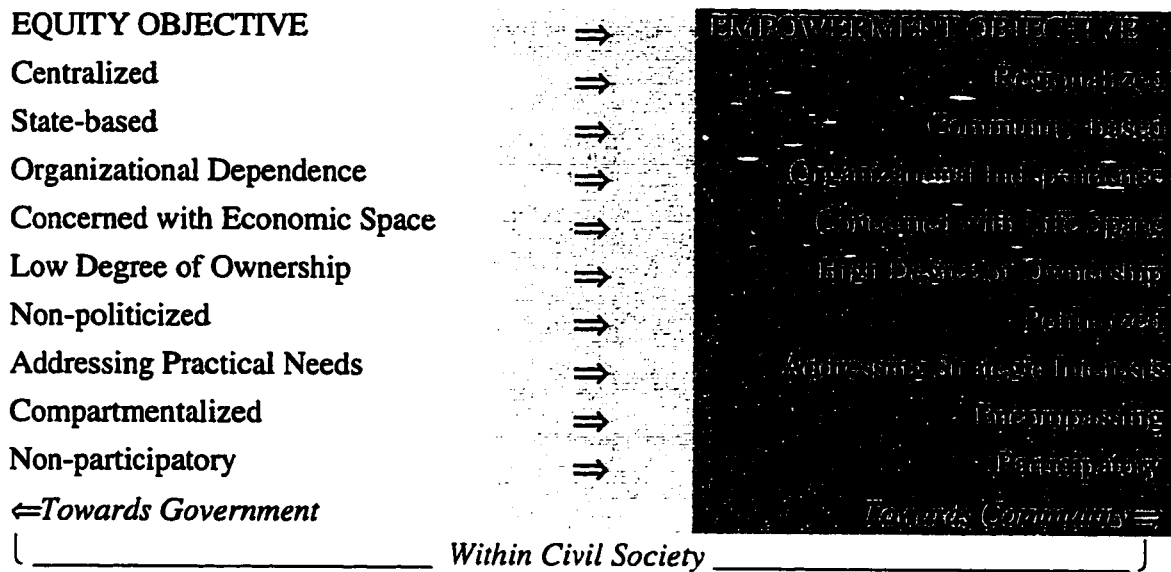
## **Participation and Organizational Evolution**

In *Chapter One*, the HSNPHA's role as an agent within civil society was explored. It was argued that civil society, in contrast to corporatist society, is centred on people as citizens and is concerned with the common good. The state, although concerned with varying conceptions of a 'public good', is principally concerned with regulation and redistribution of wealth. Agents within civil society serve to bridge the bureaucracy and aloofness of the state with the needs and aspirations of citizens through concrete two-way flows of information. Concomitantly, they must act as catalysts to empower citizens with the skills and knowledge needed to actively participate *as* citizens. As the organization becomes more deeply involved in encouraging participation, it evolves from a state-dependent, centralized body into a community-centred, emancipatory organization.

Figure 7 illustrates an 'ideal evolution' of an NGO. It may be somewhat idealistic with reference to social housing in the sense that it calls for financial independence of the organization. This is very difficult for non-profit housing providers, as housing requires large, continuous inputs of capital that may not be provided for sufficiently by, for instance, subsidy charges to non-subsidized renters, land trust equity, donations<sup>13</sup>, commercial rents, ventures or other alternative funding schemes. Discussion group participants also pondered the question of organizational self-reliance (Appendix C: C-7). They believe that self-reliance is at least a worthy goal, as it fosters pride within the organization and freedom from the funder's control, which in turn enables freedom *within* the organization. However, they expressed doubts about the willingness of tenants to assume the level of management responsibility needed for self-sufficiency. Still, the barriers to enhancing the *participatory* element are not nearly as significant.

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<sup>13</sup> Donations are particularly unlikely, since mixed-model housing (i.e. partially market level rents and partially subsidized) precludes the possibility of gaining charitable status.



Source: Adapted from Stauch (1995).

Figure 7 - The Ideal Evolution of an NGO

Much of Figure 7 simply reinforces the theoretical concepts discussed in *Chapter One*, such as life space versus economic space and state-based service provision versus community-based 'third sector' provision. Participation toward the equity stage is used to promote agreement and co-operation between the powerholders and citizens and to legitimate the actions of the service providers, whereas the empowerment objective is characterized by an equitable sharing of real power, heightened political awareness and the capacity-building of participants. Moser (1989) cautions that meaningful participation must be included at decision-making and planning stages and not merely in implementation and maintenance. Only *then*, she argues, is participation empowering.

To what extent should participation be structured? Many argue that true participation must be organic and spontaneous. An official structure which facilitates participation can readily succumb to ideological, technocratic and financial domination (Rahnema, 1993; Ospina, 1987). Illich (1978) warns that even the promotion of self-help can be professionalized. As discussed earlier, professionalism is dependent upon the holding of a monopoly of information. Housing provision, also discussed previously, has not

managed to escape this fundamental pitfall. But while structure can be a pitfall, a sensitive nurturing framework for participation can also serve as an important catalyst:

Official frameworks which are geared toward giving support to community self-organization can be valuable, as long as they are not used primarily as a way of manipulating the movement, or as long as the movement is strong enough to resist such manipulation... Professional services should be enabling. That is, they should help users to learn to make decisions, rather than mystifying and excluding them and making the decisions for them... This is a fundamental departure from the paternalistic methods of traditional housing provision, and is not likely to come easily to housing professionals (Ospina, 1987: 194).

Ospina further asserts that moving in this direction is more easily facilitated by community-based housing organizations which are secondary to the community organization rather than to government. Encouragingly, the HSNPHA, although somewhat beholden to a state-based preferential mortgagor, already fulfills this precondition.

Also, the organizational model that *best* facilitates the empowerment objective is a non-hierarchical one. Much of feminist discourse argues that hierarchical organizations are inherently disempowering, as they emblify patriarchy and impose a structure that devalues the knowledge and experiences of those in the lower rungs of the hierarchy simply because they *are* lower, and thus subordinate. Hierarchy is not, as many still believe, an unavoidable or inevitable form of organization (Iannello, 1992). Many unions and co-operatives are characterized by non-hierarchical forms of organization. Indeed, some corporate structures, particularly the Japanese, are radically less hierarchical than the expected norm (Ibid.). Hierarchy is also related to the previously discussed notions of civil society and democratization. Putnam (1993), in a study of contemporary and historical Italian regional governance systems, observed the following:



What best predicted good government... was choral societies, soccer clubs and co-operatives. In other words, some regions were characterized by a dense network of civic associations and an active civic engagement, whereas others were characterized by vertical patron-client relations of exploitation and dependence, not horizontal collaboration among equals... Social and political networks here are organized horizontally, not vertically. In these "civic" communities, democracy works. (p. 102-103)

A handful of PNPs, outside of co-operatives, have also experimented with non-hierarchical structures, particularly those geared toward providing housing for women. A significant dilemma in these scenarios is that non-hierarchical decision-making, being more democratic, can be less efficient and may be an added cost in financial terms (in the short term). Meeting time, decision-making inertia, conflict resolution and consensus-building are taxing, particularly when resources are scarce. Also, as one outside respondent noted, it is impossible to have a completely non-hierarchical structure in a tenancy-based tenure form, since there is inevitably some remnant, however shadowy, of a landlord - even if it is just the one who 'signs the cheques'. However, the objective itself, not merely as a symbol but as a concrete manifestation of democratization and as a model for societal change, is still a worthwhile pursuit.

In the HSNPHA context, as in many NGOs, the extent of hierarchy is not that marked. Some PNPs have a housing co-ordinator, whose duties are similar to the ED's, although a great amount of his or her time and effort is channeled into widespread consensus-building and dissemination of information to tenants. This may or may not be instructive, as the HSNPHA management have job descriptions which overlap with the HSCA. It is difficult to see how the added burden of continually building consensus among, and providing information to, tenants may be facilitated without the increased participation of tenants themselves. Thus, this report will not explore organizational evolution any further than this cursory discussion, but it should be recognized as a process that inevitably accompanies the empowerment objective.

## **HSNPHA and the Empowerment Objective**

The HSNPHA is far ahead of many other housing providers in terms of its desire to foster self-worth and dignity among tenants. Tenants who participated in the interview and discussion group processes were very satisfied living in HSNPHA housing (Appendix B: B-11 - B-14; Appendix C-4).<sup>14</sup> Also, over twice as many tenants believe that HSNPHA encourages resident participation than those believing it does not. As discussed earlier, the nature of PNP housing is itself more empowering than other forms of housing provision, as there are a mix of subsidized and market renters, thereby avoiding the stigma associated with other forms of affordable housing. A study of the U.S. experience of tenant participation in public housing projects made fifteen recommendations to Canadian organizations seeking to initiate their own experiments (CMHC, 1987: 9-11). HSNPHA already meets six of these, four of the others are contingent upon the tenants themselves, three only apply to the creation of TMCs, and two are entirely outside the control of HSNPHA.<sup>15</sup>

One of these outside variables - the external political atmosphere - seems to be a stumbling block that all players in HSNPHA should be cognizant of: many of the interviewed tenants felt that the external environment does not foster participation. Although some pointed out that an austere economic environment may encourage the mobilization of citizens by sheer necessity, many felt that individualism, rationalizing of social programs, hectic lifestyles and private property rights are promoted and adhered to in place of the public interest or the common good (which requires an emphasis on

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<sup>14</sup> The mean length of tenure for those interviewed was 5.6 years. Although one could argue that subsidized renters have less choice in the market and are thus less apt to move, there was little variance between market and non-market lengths of stay.

<sup>15</sup> Specifically, the seven criteria that HSNPHA currently meets are organizational and managerial stability, a parallel relationship with the community organization, an understanding of altruism vs. self-interest as a motivation to participate and a high visibility via newsletters, notices and meetings. The four that hinge primarily on tenants themselves are an emphasis on both rights and responsibilities, the need for ethical conduct and 'professionalism' amongst tenants, a gauging of potential opposition and an early manifestation of concrete results. However, HSNPHA management and board members should still heed these recommendations. The presence of program start-up funds and a favourable external political atmosphere are criteria which are largely outside of HSNPHA's control.

collective responsibility and decision-making by consensus). It is unclear to what extent the HSNPHA can isolate itself from this larger milieu. However, if it is assumed that tenant participation is a part of a larger process of democratization, then this factor must be considered.

The following is a list of steps taken by HSNPHA to date, which indicate a concerted move toward the empowerment objective. This list may also be instructive for other housing organizations:

- one to two tenant board members, trained through an informal mentorship program with existing board members;
- tenant committees (newsletter, recycling and various ad-hoc committees) and joint committees with tenant and non-tenant board members (e.g. rent review committee);
- social events (Christmas party, summer picnic), which help foster a sense of community;
- sale of memberships to tenants, so that they can have a vote at the AGM;
- notices and questionnaires (e.g. a survey was circulated in one of the buildings prior to the installation of a handicapped parking zone);
- liberal pet policy, which is *extremely* rare in Calgary;
- allowances for tenants to paint and install some fixtures with permission;
- superior general maintenance of buildings, which fosters dignity;
- superior response level and accessibility of management, particularly compared with the for-profit housing sector;
- mercy periods on late payment of rent and temporary ad-hoc work-in-lieu-of-payment arrangements;
- informing via the Newsletter, which shows proactive communication and helps foster camaraderie and community;

- links with HSCA, which heightens awareness of local issues and encourages tenants to become more involved in the Hillhurst Sunnyside community; and
- willingness to allow and encourage an MDP on this issue, which entails a critical evaluation of the organization.

The latter point is particularly important, since it indicates a kind of ‘open door’ through which a greater exploration of this objective can occur. In essence, HSNPHA has traveled considerably along the civil society path from equity toward empowerment. In doing so, it has opened up new doors of opportunity that allow for still further democratization.

Now that the climate for resident participation in the case study organization has been gauged, the next chapter attempts to offer some ideas for further democratization, and explores how the empowerment objective can be more fully realized within HSNPHA.

## **CHAPTER 4 - Participation Manifest**

There are innumerable ways residents can participate in the decision-making and management of the place in which they live. This chapter intends to look briefly at differing *levels* of involvement and to evaluate a number of *forms* of involvement with respect to their likely utility in the HSNPHA context. At the conclusion of the chapter is a concrete set of recommendations - the goal of the MDP from the outset. First, though, is a more thorough evaluation of the options HSNPHA have at their disposal - what they should avoid and what they should pursue.

### **Levels of Participation**

A curious discrepancy between the tenant interviews and discussion group occurred with regard to desired levels of resident participation.<sup>1</sup> Half of the interview respondents were satisfied with the current participation level in HSNPHA. Only four of fourteen were unsatisfied. However, the discussion group participants explored this question in greater depth. Sherry Arnstein's "Ladder of Citizen Participation" (1969) was used as a basis for the exercise. The facilitator described, in detail, the various levels of the ladder. Then, participants were asked to paste a blue dot on where they felt residents in HSNPHA stood on the ladder. Seven of the eight participants placed their dot either on the rung entitled "Consultation" or on the line between Consultation and the rung immediately above - "Placation".<sup>2</sup> Consultation is when citizen feedback is obtained via surveys, public hearings or neighbourhood meetings, but participation at this level may be merely 'window dressing'. Placation, according to Arnstein, is a level where citizens have real

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<sup>1</sup> To reiterate, tenant responses are included in Appendix A (interviews) and Appendix B (discussion group). However, the specific page number references, because they are so numerous, are excluded from this chapter in the interest of maintaining a flow to the text.

<sup>2</sup> It is unclear whether this result is tainted by the 'group think', or 'bandwagon', phenomenon, where people are more apt to agree than to isolate themselves. An ensuing exploration of the reasons given for choosing their locations revealed that this effect was likely negligible.

power, but are still vulnerable to manipulation and coercion: “Citizens now have some degree of influence, as they have members vested with decision-making authority. At this stage, however, the citizens constitute a small minority of the decision-makers, may be hand-picked, and may lack a constituency” (p. 220). Concrete examples she cites are one or two ‘citizens at large’ on community advisory committees or public housing boards. The reasons the tenants gave for choosing consultation and placation were that, although there is some participation in committees and on the board, any tenant council would not have any real power, the ED has a great deal of undue influence, there is insufficient communication about how decisions are made, and tenants themselves are unwilling to participate.

When asked where they felt residents *should* be on the ladder, seven of the eight placed their dot on “Partnership”, the level immediately above Placation. Partnership, as Arnstein describes it, is when “...power is redistributed through negotiation between citizens and powerholders” (p. 221). It is a sharing of planning and decision-making responsibilities, as in joint policy committees and equitably shared student-faculty planning and policy committees (such as some committees within the Faculty of Environmental Design). The reasons for choosing the partnership rung included the need for tenant decision-makers to be representative and accountable to tenants, the need to acquire a sense of ownership, the importance of a balanced look at issues (rather than unilateral decision-making by either tenants, management or the board) and the potential for education and skill development. These themes - *representation, accountability, balance, sense of ownership and education* - are all in concordance with the recommendations.

Arnstein’s Ladder helps expose participation as a complex, multi-layered concept. However, the Ladder itself is still a simplification. In actuality, as Cooper & Wyatt (1997) assert, a *range* of levels can be employed simultaneously. Characteristics of different rungs can form a more complete ‘composite rung’. For example, posting notices is a characteristic of the “Information” rung, which is quite low on the ladder. But often,

posting a notice is all that is required. At the same time, there may be “Delegated Power”, the second highest rung, in the form of a tenant-run newsletter. But despite these variances, the Ladder is still a useful tool. The transfer from “Placation” to “Partnership” should thus be seen as an important objective. In fact, the partnership ideal could be entrenched in the Mission Statement and the Objects of the Society. Visioning what ‘partnership’ is, and how it is manifest could shape the recommended strategic planning exercise.

## **Forms of Participation**

When asked in the interviews how they see tenants participating in the future of the HSNPHA, many tenants were unsure. Three respondents saw participation remaining essentially as it is now. Others envisioned general opportunities for feedback and direction-giving, open group meetings, a tenant council, equal representation on the board vis-à-vis non-tenants, support networks, a grievance committee and a committee geared toward screening new tenants. In an ensuing probe, asking how this participation might be enabled, tenants mentioned the intentional fostering of a sense of community, focus groups, the fostering of an environment which is ‘safe’ to participate in, a suggestion box, a facility improvement committee, resident volunteerism and lowered resident transiency.

As the discussion group was more idea-oriented, participants offered some very concrete suggestions. These ideas are listed below:

- enhancing the flow of information from the management and board to tenants;
- creating opportunities for feedback, such as informal weekly or monthly chats;
- electing a social co-ordinator for each building;
- encouraging volunteerism in property maintenance duties such as snow removal and garbage clean-up;

- although some say that volunteering in property maintenance should be anonymous, others believe that volunteer residents should be acknowledged through small incentives such as luncheons and achievement awards, or, if possible, rent credits;
- starting small-scale, and building volunteerism gradually, rather than expecting a large initial base of tenant support;
- setting initial expectations for participation low to help avoid being overwhelmed with the size of the participation project;
- setting up a resource directory for child, pet, plant and apartment care.
- matching single residents with tenant families for Christmas dinner; and
- encouraging continued and enhanced flexibility by management with regard to personalization of space issues such as pet allowance, interior painting and flower boxes on balconies.

Also, interviewed tenants identified a variety of specific management or decision-making roles that could be assumed by tenants. These were, in order of frequency mentioned, building maintenance, tenant relations, all aspects of decision-making, budgeting and financing, planning and long-term decision-making, building improvements, rent-related decisions, unit improvements and maintenance, organizing social events, and safety and security roles. Nearly a third of the respondents did not identify any specific possible roles.

The following sections evaluate the numerous forms of participation and their relative merits and shortcomings in regard to the HSNPHA context.



## **What to Avoid?**

### ***The Narrow View: Citizenship Forgotten***

Perhaps the most troublesome dilemma in any tenant participation effort is how to avoid the dominance of 'the narrow view'. Many people are more prone to participating simply because they want to affect change related to the bettering of their own personal living conditions. Residents may attend meetings demanding that their carpet be replaced, their sidewalk be shoveled more frequently, the traffic volume on the street be curtailed or voicing any other number of such grievances. While these concerns are certainly valid, tenants often participate based *only* on one such issue, and pay scant attention to the more global concerns affecting all tenants (although it may also be true that one such issue does indeed represent a global concern). Non-resident board members may also have the 'narrow view'. Although they do not bring property management issues to the table, they may well have personal agendas or non-altruistic motives. This, to some extent, could be chalked up to 'human nature'. People will, of course, be best prepared to talk about those issues that are nearest to them. Some of this phenomenon could also be explained by the dominant cultural milieu, which values and promotes individualism and the pre-eminence of the private domain. Some of it may simply be the result of a lack of information or appreciation for the complexity of the organization. The 'narrow view' may also be the result of a broader long-term lack of resident involvement, and may thus be partially systemic within the organization.

While it is unlikely that 'the narrow view' can ever be eliminated, nor is it desirable that it be eliminated (because of the inherent validity of individual concerns), it is imperative that any efforts to promote tenant participation must try to go beyond this. Concomitantly, management must avoid trivializing or marginalizing tenant issues by invoking the 'narrow view' argument. But before a set of potential solutions are offered, it is important to critically evaluate the two most commonly employed participation mechanisms - tenant management corporations and tenant councils.

### ***Tenant Management Corporations***

Tenant management corporations (TMCs) are legally-recognized tenant-run organizations in the U.S. who are involved in some or all aspects of residential management. TMCs embody the *delegated power* rung of Arnstein's Ladder. For instance, they may have exclusive control over building maintenance, tenant relations and rent collection while the housing authority might be in charge of mortgaging, financing and evictions (Arnstein, 1969). TMCs are more common in American public housing, and have arisen primarily as a result of government cutbacks (Atlas & Shoshkes, 1997).<sup>3</sup>

A TMC is not recommended for HSNPHA, at least in the short term, because of the need for initial broad-based support. One study recommended that there should be at least 40% support amongst tenants in order for a TMC to come to fruition (CMHC, 1987). Also, TMCs require their own income and expense budgets with stable and significant funding. Money available for TMCs is, not surprisingly, scarce. In fact, this lack of funding is the principal reason why tenant participation in *management* generally is de-emphasized, relative to participation in *decision-making*, in the recommendations.

There are, however, some low-cost ad-hoc ideas that could be attempted. At present, many tenants perform maintenance duties such as junk mail disposal and snow removal. These tenants could be rewarded some token of appreciation, such as a gift certificate, at the Christmas Party or picnic. In addition, a tenant and former board member suggested that "block captains" could volunteer in each property to do nightly checks of the building, making sure doors are locked, the laundry rooms are secure and lights are working. Residents could also hold a "landscaping day" where sections of underutilized land (perhaps even surplus parking spaces if the City agrees to it) are landscaped with

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<sup>3</sup> Former HUD Secretary (and U.S. Vice-Presidential candidate) Jack Kemp's "Hope" program advocated TMCs in the name of 'empowerment', but did not provide the requisite funds for skill development, capital improvements or compensation for work efforts. Consequently, the TMC initiatives of the 1980s and 90s have not been viewed as successful (Atlas & Shoshkes, 1997; Dreier, 1995; O'Brien, 1995).

perennials, trees, edible plants, etc. These kinds of ideas could be enkindled once increased participation is realized.

### ***Tenant Councils***

Tenant councils are, without a doubt, the most common form of tenant participation. Also called tenant associations, these organizations are usually either subsidiary bodies within a larger housing association or public housing complex, or geographically-based organizations in a largely private market. Their mandate may be internal to a particular building or complex, and may be geared toward bettering physical living conditions, hearing and addressing grievances or simply organizing social events. In *Chapter One* the history of tenant participation within HSNPHA was examined, revealing that numerous attempts at forming tenant councils have been made with varying degrees of success. All these attempts have had two characteristics in common: They were the result of the initiative of the ED or a board member and did not endure for longer than a year. One would have a persuasive argument, based on this largely failed history alone, that tenant councils are not a worthwhile endeavor. Although the ED intends to encourage the formation of a council in the future, she is also doubtful about its prospects, given the track record. But it is worth examining some of the reasons underlying this lack of success.

It seems, from the archival research, that three principal phenomena are responsible for the vulnerability of these organizations: The councils relied on the continued presence and support of the facilitator (who was either the ED or a board member), they lacked a clear mandate and most of them acted as an outlet for unit-related self-centered concerns (i.e. the concerns of only those who participated - 'the narrow view'). This is not to imply that the concerns were not valid, but rather that there was no over-arching motivation for continued participation once the concerns were dealt with. Other problems that may have been present were not evident in the minutes of meetings and various correspondences. The reliance on a non-tenant facilitator is a problem that seems

unique to this history, since both the reviewed literature and interviewed tenants either deal with or anticipate *tenant-facilitated* councils. However, the absence of a clear mandate is a problem that is well-corroborated in the literature. Also, the narrow view was, by far, the most commonly mentioned potential drawback cited by the interviewed tenants. Another problem with tenant councils, mentioned in both the literature and the interviews, is the increased propensity for adversity, or at least the perception of same, compared with more partnership-oriented forms of participation. Lack of time, lack of entrenched decision-making power, lack of interest (related often to a lack of a clear mandate and real power), and a lack of leadership and facilitation skills among tenants are also responsible for the mediocre history of tenant councils.

Despite this, almost half of the tenant interviewees did see a role for a tenants' organization within HSNPHA, primarily as a venue for presenting ideas and grievances. The mandate of such an organization, they felt, would be to improve accountability, oversee property maintenance, improve communication, provide a voice in decision-making, organize social events and act as a 'watchdog' vis-à-vis the board and management. Six other possible mandates were suggested but they were each mentioned only once. The Executive Director also saw a role for a tenant council in promoting community development, fostering pride and dignity of residents, some of whom are unable to live elsewhere, and taking a collective stand on social justice and tenants' rights issues generally. Those who opposed the idea of a tenants' organization cited essentially the same reasons as those outlined in "*Barriers and Drawbacks*" (Chapter Three). As the discussion on "*Democratizing Resident Representation and Accountability*" outlines, there may be some opportunity for a *de facto* tenant council composed of elected representatives. They would meet on an ad hoc basis and would have both real decision-making power and enhanced understanding of the issues as board members.

One area where tenant councils have clearly been successful is at the municipal-wide level as a lobbying force. Two of the tenants cited this form of organization as particularly constructive. Often, these are coalitions of smaller tenant councils who have

employed the conflict approach to illuminate often deplorable living conditions. The profile of tenants' rights has been dramatically raised by such organizations, but this, of course, requires taking 'the global view'.

## **What to Pursue?**

### ***'Glasnost': Citizenship Returned***

In 1985, Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev advocated a bold policy of governmental openness - 'Glasnost', which ultimately served as a catalyst for the inevitable overthrow of the totalitarian communist regime. Although this may seem like an absurd tangent, it is nonetheless instructive. *Institutional* 'Glasnost' is an essential step toward democratizing organizations. Openness, in the HSNPHA context, is fostered through the dissemination of information to residents, education about both the philosophy and day-to-day workings of the organization and providing an opportunity for feedback. The current ED pointed out that one role of the HSNPHA staff is to educate and inform. In order for tenants to *fully* participate, as one outside respondent noted, a tremendous amount of education is needed. For this respondent education and information was easily the most important element of sustained participation. These are crucial first steps toward moving up the "Ladder of Participation". In fact, in Connor (1993), '*education*' is the base rung of his revised ladder:

Proponents, actual or potential, governmental or corporate, cannot afford to have substantial proportions of their key constituencies ignorant of their objectives, activities, effects and plans (p. 251).

*'Information feedback'* and *'consultation'* form the next two rungs. Connor's ladder refers to the resolution of specific issues, whereas Arnstein's refers to general levels of decision-making power. The upper rungs are increasingly conflict-based until the top

rung, which is the ultimate resolution of the issue. Connor argues that effective two-way communication can often prevent the necessity for the adversarial upper rungs, because with freer flows of information, dilemmas can be resolved before they balloon into controversial issues.

The tenant newsletter - "House it Going" - is an excellent means of facilitating communication. Cooper & Wyatt (1997) emphasize the newsletter as a means of sustaining interest. They recommend the inclusion of a 'talkback' column to allow for resident feedback. Also, they recommend posters, fliers, public meetings, widespread use of 'slogans' (e.g. the mission statement), and petition circulation as communication strategies (Ibid.: 98). HSNPHA utilizes most of these strategies already, as evidenced in the majority of interviewed tenants feeling either somewhat or very familiar with its organization and operation. However the frequency of use of such devices could increase, as many tenants want to become more familiar.<sup>4</sup>

Some additional venues for providing information should also be added. An information booklet or pamphlet should be given to tenants at the time of signing their lease (or prior to this, if possible). The pamphlet should contain information about the structure, philosophy and function of the HSNPHA, as well as outlining opportunities for personalization of their dwelling unit and participation in decision-making. For instance, new tenants should be made aware of the option to purchase a membership in the association, and of the distinction between membership and tenancy. For existing tenants, the newsletter could contain segments of similar information to more fully enhance their familiarity.

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<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, despite tenants' high perceived familiarity, the current tenant board member has observed a low level of familiarity with HSNPHA's organization and operation in conversations with other tenants at social events.

The idea of 'screening' potential tenants prior to their admission into HSNPHA housing was discussed by a number of interviewees. The ED envisions more rigorous screening of future tenants in order to educate potential tenants. She points out that there are some people who do not want to live in the type of housing environment that HSNPHA provides. These people, naturally, should be made fully aware of the Association's function and mandate at the outset. A few respondents felt there should be a screening committee with tenant membership. Others warned that this could devolve into a venue for prejudice. Although screening is inherently prejudicial, whether done by committee or by an individual, an appeal process and clear mandate would help alleviate the negative effects of this problem. Screening, however, does not seem to be a pressing issue among most tenants and is therefore not recommended at this stage. In fact, many tenants remarked, for a variety of reasons, about how pleased they were with fellow tenants *as* tenants compared to other places they have lived.

Some housing organizations' board meetings are open to all residents. This, of course, signifies a high degree of openness. Tenants in HSNPHA seemed to be somewhat reluctant to have open board meetings. Two problems in particular stem from this - confidentiality of personal tenant information and the lengthening of discussions at meetings. However, the majority of issues discussed at these meetings, and the actions taken, are not privileged information and would greatly enhance the residents' understanding of, and appreciation for, complex issues such as mortgaging, renovations, lease agreements and the setting of rent levels. Therefore, it is recommended that, while open board meetings may not be immediately feasible, the newsletter contain summaries of the most recent board meetings. Sensitive information regarding individual tenants or outside parties must, of course, be excluded. In order to ensure objectivity, the Board itself could be given the opportunity to review each newsletter entry.

### ***Democratizing Tenant Representation and Accountability***

Recently, there have been either one or two tenant board members who are recruited by either the board of directors or the ED. Tenants *can* apply to be on the board, but there is no guarantee that their application will even be seen by the board. Clearly, this level of participation falls into the category of *placation*, which is, to HSNPHA's credit, over half way up Arnstein's Ladder. But how does the organization move toward the next level - *partnership*?

Tenant membership on the Board of Directors is a sensitive issue, but it must be confronted, as board membership is the only real, legally-entrenched means through which tenants can be involved in making important decisions (along with membership in the association). Although the current approach to selecting residents who are representative is based on having one subsidized and one non-subsidized resident, this mode of representation is problematic for two reasons. First, it negates the confidentiality of the non-subsidized tenant by exposing them *as being non-subsidized*, which is counter to one of the core values of non-profit housing. Second, the tenants participating in the discussion group did not make, nor did they wish to make, a distinction between non-subsidized and subsidized renters. The HSNPHA, they maintain, have successfully avoided segregating or distinguishing tenants based on this criterion. Although some felt that board members should be elected by, and accountable to, the entire tenant body, most felt that the principal basis of representation should be according to building. Therefore, it is suggested that the tenants be elected by residents in their respective buildings. It seems that, according to population and uniqueness of building-type, an appropriate way to delineate constituencies may be to have one tenant representing each of Norfolk, Bowen and Gayner Houses, as these each have between 20% and 34% of the total number of units in HSNPHA. One or two more residents could be elected from the remainder of the units, perhaps divided according to a representative for the two multi-family dwellings - Pemberton Terrace and Flett Manor, and another for the remaining low density units in Hillhurst. Each building has its own distinct set of issues and concerns.



It is unlikely, for instance, that a resident of the relatively maintenance-free and financially stable Gayner or Bowen Houses would have a solid understanding of the issues concerning the high maintenance Flett Manor or the financially troubled Norfolk House.

Resident board members should be elected at the Annual General Meeting *by* the tenants. They must be both representative of, and accountable to, their fellow residents. Tenants, not the broader community (of which the membership is open to currently), are the true stakeholders in the organization. This requires that tenants have the ability to vote as members of the association, which they *do* have already, although the maximum number of association members is fifty. In order to permit a vote for every tenant, or preferably every unit, the maximum membership should be increased to at least 118.<sup>5</sup> Most of the current memberships are held by tenants, but there are only about thirty-five current members. This indicates, as do the discussions with tenants, that not everyone is aware that tenancy and membership are distinct, and that membership confers a right to vote. Therefore, it is also recommended that tenants be encouraged to take out memberships. By law, one cannot, nor should they, be forced to be a member of a voluntary association. But if tenants are informed of this opportunity, and of the negligible cost of joining, membership would likely increase substantially.

While four or five tenant board members is likely a reasonable number, there does not seem to be a strong desire among tenants for *more* than 50% representation on the board. The ED warns that such a 'power flip' might jeopardize the security of the actual real estate. Concerns could be raised by CMHC if resident participants lack training or impede the decision-making process because of some of the aforementioned barriers and drawbacks. Of course, one should question why tenants would be presumed less capable of decision-making - it is illogical to presuppose that tenants would willingly jeopardize the existence of their own housing. Indeed, *any* new board member, whether tenant or

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<sup>5</sup> The Elder Statesman Group has an unlimited membership, although only about 10% of tenants are members. Tenant board members are nominated by fellow tenants and elected by the membership at large.

non-tenant, requires some training in order to familiarize themselves. The operating agreement would certainly need to be amended, in negotiation with CMHC, to remove the clause prohibiting tenant board membership. Some might argue that this is easier said than done. But if representation, accountability and proper training are assured, then HSNPHA has an argument for tenant board membership that is very difficult to refute. To this end, a CMHC representative should be invited to the strategic planning exercise to see the value of the empowerment objective.

Also, board membership could be increased incrementally, as one tenant and former board member suggested, rather than 'flooding' the board with new members. Board members, he maintains, usually require a year of training. An informal mentorship program, which essentially is in place already, should therefore be a priority. In the first year, perhaps, the newly elected board members could be 'associate' or 'shadow' members who attend meetings and sit on committees, but may not have voting privileges until a period of apprenticeship is completed. However, it is unclear what threat voting privileges would pose. The need for a training period is obvious, but there is little reason to 'groom' tenants to a level where they are 'ready' to vote intelligently. If tenants are democratically elected, they are, at least in theory, entrusted with the responsibility to make reasoned, carefully-considered decisions.

Tenant board members have the responsibility to be aware of the issues affecting their constituents. Therefore, it is recommended that board members meet with tenants in their respective buildings (or sets of buildings). They must make themselves available to tenants on an individual basis and they could also facilitate infrequent building meetings (perhaps bi-annually).

Also, tenant board members could, in the interest of efficiency, meet with each other to discuss tenant issues prior to bringing these to the board. This would eliminate redundancy of issues being placed before the board. They may even be able to deal with

certain issues directly. For instance, grievances could be heard by a joint committee involving tenant board members, the ED and/or the Administrative Assistant.

### ***Resident Support Networks***

Resident participation is not merely about decision-making or management. One of the pre-requisites to fuller participation, as fostered through community development, is the existence of a 'community'. Residents believe that at least some sense of community has been fostered successfully to date. Discussion group participants also believe that this fostering can and should continue.

One of the prime ways to foster community, according to participants, is to promote mutual support networks among tenants. Specifically, these may take the form of plant care, pet care, house-sitting or mail pick-up exchanges between residents. These could be facilitated via the newsletter, with a designated intermediate co-ordinator to ensure that both parties are registered and that the tenant's absence is not advertised publicly (not unlike a dating service). Also, such support networks enhance safety and security. Child care and barter trading may be other possible networks. The newsletter has already started a classified ads section.

### ***Language and Intent***

The By-Laws of the Association, will, of course, need to be amended in order to facilitate the changes described previously. However, the purpose of HSNPHA, as articulated in the Mission Statement and in the "Objects of the Society", should reflect the empowerment objective. It is recommended specifically that a statement regarding education and information objectives, along with the active promotion of tenant participation in decision-making, be added to the existing "Objects", as they were in 1981 (but were subsequently dropped).

The terms 'landlord' and 'tenant' are emblematic of a corporatist view of human relations. The first recommendation suggests changing the term 'tenant' to 'resident' in HSNPHA literature. It should be noted that some tenants disagree with this recommendation, since it was seen as either insignificant, or potentially detracting from the more substantive recommendations. But to others it is seen as a symbolic step. Language does have an important, and often unrecognized, effect on peoples' perceptions and actions. The term 'landlord' is seldom used in HSNPHA, as it describes an inherently superior rank with an added colouring of economic bias. It is also sexist, since women are not normally referred to as 'lords'. Although the term 'tenant' may not be as problematic in and of itself, it connotes an inferior position simply by being the antithesis of 'landlord', just as 'employee' is viewed in opposition to 'employer' in corporatist language. 'Resident', like 'citizen', is a term that applies to every member of society (although one could argue that the homeless population is still excluded from this language).

### ***Personalization of Space***

Tenants, of course, do not own the space in which they live. Ownership, as has already been discussed, seems to foster participation much more readily than rentership. However, there are steps that can be taken to capture a 'sense of ownership', such as decorating one's dwelling to suit one's personal tastes - the 'personalization of space'. This was a suggestion highlighted initially by a board member and former tenant. This element of control over a living space, even if it seems superficial, can still foster empowerment.

One specific way in which tenants can personalize their space is through painting their dwelling. This is already permitted (usually), as long as residents return the unit to its original colour. However, many tenants do not know that this is allowed. New residents should be made aware of this in the pamphlet or booklet. This may, understandably, be a contentious recommendation from management's standpoint, because painting can be a

potentially costly activity for HSNPHA (e.g. if paint is spilt on the carpet or dried paint drips need to be sanded). However, the security deposit does provide some insurance, while it is also likely that tenants who damage their suite through personalizing it are more apt to damage it anyway. Also, outside hanging flower baskets are usually permitted, despite the lease agreement stating otherwise. As long as baskets are securely installed, awareness should be similarly fostered. Residents could also organize a co-design and building improvement process, whereby they design and implement, in a participatory fashion, modifications to their building. For instance, residents in Bowen or Gayner houses may decide to paint the off-white stucco, metal balcony railings or baby blue panels in warmer or more festive colours, or they might try to raise funds to replace the orange Plexiglas in the stairwells.

### ***The Global View***

Although management have a close pulse on both specific tenant concerns and broader planning and financial issues, it is vital for both tenants and board members to move toward acquiring 'the global view', as *Chapter Three* pointed out. Having a richer understanding of another's position and of a given issue, helps give one an appreciation for the complexity of that dilemma. Acquiring the global view comes about through the opening of communication lines and the active encouragement of participation. Thus, the notion that residents cannot effectively participate because they are too fixated on private concerns is a problem that will not be addressed *until* participation is enhanced. The global view is a fruit of the participation tree.

A joint strategic planning exercise can be an integral part of fostering this global view. With proper strategic planning, potential conflict can be minimized while cohesion and mutual understanding can be fostered. Such an exercise should not only involve management, board members and tenants, but also representatives from CMHC and HSCA. The exercise could be structured upon reviewing the recommendations of this report, or looking at the issues with the concrete intent of simply changing the By-Laws

(or even just the “Objects of the Society”, since mere words, symbolic or otherwise, can themselves be disputed for hours on end). Residents generally support the idea of a strategic planning exercise, but they are leery of the time and resource constraints demanded by an out-of-town retreat (which was suggested as a possibility in the non-ratified recommendations). Another problem with this exercise is scheduling it at a time that would be convenient for everyone. Tenants, not surprisingly, have a vast array of employment and social schedules.

Cooper & Wyatt (1997) recommend the seeking of ‘common interests’ identifiable by all parties involved. In their own study, they observed that “the [tenant] group recognized the importance of establishing a professional working relationship with the local housing office which included briefing sessions prior to meetings, realistic suggestions on solutions, and good communication procedures” (Ibid.: 98-99).

Another aspect of the global view pertains to issues which are external to HSNPHA. As the ED and current tenant and board member recommended, a possible role for a tenants’ organization could be to illuminate social justice issues in the broader community, such as the inequalities of the landlord-tenant relationship and the crisis of homelessness. Indeed, participating tenants have, and will, become acutely aware of these social issues.

## Recommendations

These recommendations are directed toward the Hillhurst Sunnyside Non-Profit Housing Association (including board members, management and tenants). They have been amended and ratified by fourteen interested tenants, and have been presented to the Board of Directors for perusal. Following each recommendation is an indication of the level of support from tenants and the level of the time and resources needed to realize it. The recommendations, although culled from the previous discussion, will also be linked to earlier theoretical arguments in the concluding section.

***1. The references to 'tenant' in the language and literature of HSNPHA should be changed to 'resident'. The term 'tenant' is inevitably viewed in opposition to 'landlord' (a similarly outdated term). It indicates an inferior position and is thus an obstacle to empowerment.***

Support-9      Oppose-3      Unsure-2

This is more symbolic than substantial. Although it is not that crucial, it is easy to implement (apart from the actual lease agreement).

***2. Residents should be introduced to the philosophy (mission, goals, objects, strategic directions), structure, processes and opportunities for participation upon taking residence in HSNPHA housing. This could be enabled via a pamphlet or a small booklet. Also, future issues of "House it Going?" (the tenant newsletter) should contain similar educational articles.***

Support-12      Oppose-1      Unsure-1

This is moderately easy to implement, especially if some existing tenants volunteer to work on the booklet. This could be a great way to involve an apparent 'core' group of interested residents. The author would be willing to co-ordinate this.

***3. The "Objects of the Society" in the HSNPHA by-laws should be amended to include education and information-provision goals and a statement regarding the promotion of resident participation in management and decision-making.***

Support-12      Oppose-1      Unsure-1

This is easy to do, but requires Board ratification, of course. A 1981 amendment, described in the MDP, and which was subsequently dropped, contained this kind of statement.

***4. The tenants' newsletter should be produced consistently four times a year. It should contain a brief summary of the minutes of board meetings and should encourage feedback (e.g. a 'letters to the editor' section). Sensitive, confidential information about specific residents or outside parties should not be included in the summaries. However, the majority of issues discussed, and actions taken, need not be private information, and would greatly enhance the residents' understanding and appreciation for the complexity of many issues (e.g. CMHC grant restructuring and the responses to same). This also builds a knowledge base and 'safety valve' in the event that a future Board or management attempts to move in a reactionary direction.***

Support-9      Oppose-0      Unsure-5

Part of this requires the newsletter committee to be more vigilant, but Board approval would be required to publish the synopses (including continual approval of each synopsis).

***5. An apartment check, pet care, plant care and/or mail pick-up exchange program could be put in place, and operated through the newsletter, for when tenants are out of town. This could be managed through a coordinator to ensure privacy.***

Support-8      Oppose-1      Unsure-5

This is fully contingent upon tenant volunteerism, and is happening informally already.

***6. The HSNPHA by-laws should be amended to allow for membership of at least 118 (one member for each unit). Although residents cannot be, nor should they be, forced to take out memberships, they should be encouraged to become members of the Association upon talking residence. This ensures that HSNPHA is democratic with respect to residents - the stakeholders - rather than to members of the larger community.***

Support-11      Oppose-1      Unsure-2



Again, such a By-Law amendment requires board approval. The 'booklet' described in Recommendation #2 could explain the difference between tenancy and membership, etc. Tenants could simply be asked if they want to become members at the time the lease is signed (and renewed).

***7. Tenant membership on the Board of Directors should be increased.<sup>6</sup> It is unclear what that number should precisely be, but should be agreed upon by tenants and the board in the proper forum. A level of tenant membership is needed to ensure that tenants are adequately represented while allowing for outside assistance. An increased presence on the Board also acknowledges that non-profit housing is for the resident and gives more people the opportunity to participate in decision-making. Tenants should also be allowed to hold executive positions. If members are to have a specific constituency (i.e. apart from representing the tenants in general) they should be elected according to their dwelling (e.g. one member each from Norfolk, Bowen and Gayner Houses, and one or two from the remaining properties).***

Support-10      Oppose-1      Unsure-3

What number of seats on a ten-member board should tenants occupy? (Average of responses): 4.5

This recommendation is longer term, requires perhaps the most resources, and the implementation specifics need to be discussed further. However, as a gesture, an invitation to those who showed some interest in participating could be extended to them to attend board meetings as non-members until the next AGM

***8. Tenant board members must be able to serve a group of people (a constituency) and should thus be elected by tenants (this can be accomplished at the AGM assuming adoption of Recommendation 6). They should also be accountable to fellow tenants, which means they should have direct communication with them.***

Support-9      Oppose-1      Unsure-3      No Answer-1

This requires some campaigning on the part of interested tenants and a more lengthy AGM.

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<sup>6</sup> CMHC *officially* prohibits tenant board membership in HSNPHA, according to the operating agreement, as it is seen as a conflict of interest. The fear is that tenants will be self-serving and fail to address the collective good. Recommendations 6, 7 and 8, in combination, should remove this concern. If tenant board members are representative and accountable to fellow tenants, this is *not* a conflict of interest.

**9. If Recommendations 7 and 8 are adopted, each tenant representative should be encouraged to organize open meetings within their respective buildings (e.g. every six months). The representatives may also meet with each other outside of board meetings to deal with certain issues directly, or to organize them for presentation to the board. This level of organization is somewhat similar to a Tenants' Council but would have real decision-making power. They may also meet as a Grievance Committee together with the Executive Director and/or the Administrative Assistant, and may choose to promote tenants' issues in the broader community. A child care expense allowance could be given to single parents to help encourage their involvement.**

Support-6      Oppose-3      Unsure-4      No Answer-1

Again, the bulk of this recommendation requires the commitment of tenant participants.

**10. The AGM should be scheduled on a date other than the Christmas Party. The Christmas Party is an upbeat event, and thus both shortens the AGM and discourages people from asking critical comments or probing issues in meaningful depth. When people are waiting for a party, they are not likely to want to 'dampen the mood' or be responsible for dragging out discussions.**

Support-11      Oppose-0      Unsure-2      No Answer-1

This is very important. However, this requires one extra evening of commitment from both board members and tenants. Therefore, it would probably be best to move the AGM to a period other than Christmas.

**11. Residents are currently allowed to paint their dwellings the way they like, as long as they return the suite to its original colour upon moving out. Although some tenants are aware of this, all new residents should be informed of this option when they move in (through the information pamphlet or booklet).**

Support-12      Oppose-0      Unsure-2

This is the most popular recommendation. It *might* mean added maintenance costs, although residents who damage their suite (e.g. spill paint on the carpet) are probably apt to damage them anyway. As well, the security deposits do provide some insurance. Also, there are other possibilities in "Personalization of Space".

***12. A strategic planning exercise, involving residents, management, board members and possibly HSCA and CMHC representatives, should be organized. The exercise would encourage participants to look closely and critically at these recommendations (and/or successes or failures arising from adopting these recommendations) with the purpose of enhancing resident participation. It would also encourage co-operation and mutual understanding.***

Support-5      Oppose-3      Unsure-6

This requires a fair commitment of time (probably half a day minimum). It would also be a challenge to find a time that could maximize participation. This was the least popular recommendation, primarily because it originally mentioned the possibility of an out-of-town retreat, which is not a feasible option for many tenants. Nonetheless, it could be a very valuable exercise, particularly if some recommendations prove contentious. The exercise should only be held where and when the residents suggest.

## **Conclusion**

The recommendations, if adopted, are intended to be manifestations of a participation ethic and of an empowerment objective. Through the implementation of these, HSNPHA will more firmly ground itself within the milieu of civil society, which is founded upon citizenship and is concerned with the common good. In short, this is alternative community development.

The first recommendation, although seemingly innocuous (and even petty), calls for an abandonment of corporatist language in favour of language that is reflective of the civil society. Recommendations Two, Three and Four delve beyond the surface of the civil society argument, calling for openness and full information thereby helping to eliminate the disabling barriers to communication and understanding so characteristic of corporatist society, as well as eliminating what Habermas (1979) terms “distortions”. The fifth recommendation is intended to help foster social interaction and the furthering of a ‘sense of community’, which is essential to community development. Recommendations Six through Ten are explicitly intended to facilitate democratization. Civil society is based

on citizen control where decisions are made by citizens as stakeholders, not by elites. A strong level of citizen engagement in civil society organizations, such as HSNPHA, leads to a more democratic, responsive and effectively-governed society (Putnam, 1995). Recommendation Eleven relates to the importance of a 'sense of ownership', which is premised, as Lee (1991) and Langer (1983) argue, on the importance of people having some control over their immediate physical environment. The final recommendation reiterates the need for openness but also adds that planning is required to implement many of these ideas, as well as others that have yet to be articulated.

Again, the recommendations were developed in concert with a 'core group' of residents, and are reflective of their ideas and concerns as well as of the arguments culled from the literature. What remains inconclusive, however, is whether there is a broad-based willingness among tenants in HSNPHA to participate. The evidence herein points to the existence of: a) a 'core group' of very interested tenants; b) a larger group of tenants who expressed intrigue in the idea of participation but not personal willingness to participate; and c) another large group who expressed neither.

It is the contention of the author that the HSNPHA Board of Directors and management *facilitate and encourage* resident participation. This requires an internalization of their role vis-a-vis residents. This is implied, but not stated, in the recommendations. Regarding fellow residents, however, the author urges them to look critically at this document and engage in discussion and debate around these issues. It is the *process* of dialogue, not the *content* of the argument that is the key to developing citizenship skills, strengthening the civil society and reclaiming democracy.

## Epilogue

There are two general points that do not fit comfortably within the body of the document itself. The first argues that, though an MDP does not have to be a 'new' contribution to knowledge, this research *has* offered something new. The second point is a highly editorialized and emotional pondering.

This research may be considered a new contribution to urban discourse since it emphasizes participatory decision-making and management, especially with regard to tenancy in Canada. The concept of 'co-management' - participatory decision-making actively involving a stakeholder group - is now known and practised in numerous fields, particularly natural resource industries (such as forestry and fisheries), northern and Aboriginal development, management theory and international development. However, while public participation as a generic goal has been written about extensively, co-management is quite new to the urban context. There are examples, but, as this research indicates, they are relatively few and far between.

The other contribution made is in relating participation in a micro setting to a broader analysis of citizenship and democracy. Many a planner has lauded public consultation as a means to more effectively make interventions while avoiding public reproach. This is now gospel. However, as Arnstein and others made clear over a quarter of a century ago, it is not sufficient for citizens to merely have a say or give their input when asked. As stakeholders, citizens must become actively engaged in *making* those decisions that affect them. The future of democracy itself hangs in a balance. This is not an exaggeration. Nor is it sensationalizing. It is the author's contention that citizen participation, on a global scale, will likely move in one of two directions:

The first is a path of increasing disengagement from public life. Citizens will no longer be *citizens*, but rather autonomous individuals. The fortunate few will make the important decisions and control the nature and flow of information. Even ideology, facile and simplistic as it may be, will have melted into one unquestionable set of truths. The masses will be immersed in a sea of audio-visual stimuli and be unable to enter into a debate about anything beyond immediate, self-gratifying needs. The already “unconscious civilization”, as Saul terms it, will have slipped deep into a coma. Society, as Margaret Thatcher eagerly anticipates, will have disappeared. Democracy will be an historical bubble - a quaint attempt to create a utopia where the general population were thought to somehow know best. Those figures who had this curious faith in people will be (and are already today in dominant circles) relegated to the anarchist/utopian fringe - the descendents of eccentric dreamers such as Robert Owen and Charles Fourier. The irony, however, is that most of humanity, for most of history, also shared this belief. But in this first scenario, history is information and information is *delivered* via a medium controlled by ‘soft despots’ (to borrow Tocqueville’s phrase), who we revere as bastions of individualism.

The second path is a reclamation of citizen-based power. Engagement in public life will be unprecedented. Civil society organizations - from choral societies, community associations, amateur sports teams, and church groups to unions, co-operatives, international development NGOs and political parties - will flourish. The effectiveness of government, in accord with Putnam’s observations, will be similarly strong. The common good will take precedence over, or at least be appropriately balanced with, private interest. Citizens will then be able to extend their spheres of concern beyond the local community to the global level. Citizens will have developed ‘self-defense’ mechanisms which enable them to view information through a critical lense and to have taken public, de-centralized ownership of information-provision. The era of patronizing and disabling rhetoric will at last be dead.

In viewing the second scenario, one must wonder how we would travel from here to there when most signs - including globalization of the economy, the credo of competitiveness, oligopolization of industry (including the media), the increasing power of transnational corporations vis-à-vis nation states and phenomenal voter apathy - point in the opposite direction. Still, it is the author's contention, however naive, that we will take the second path. In pondering the first scenario, one cannot help but wonder if the impulses welled up inside of us - the impulses to create, to question, to communicate and to love - can ever be suppressed. The challenge for humanity then, is to reclaim our role as owners of our own destiny, not through focusing merely on ourselves, but by engaging in dialogue and debate. What better place to start than the dwelling in which we live?

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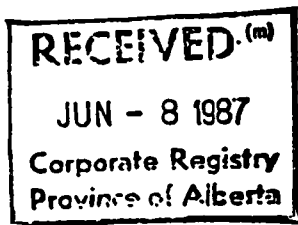
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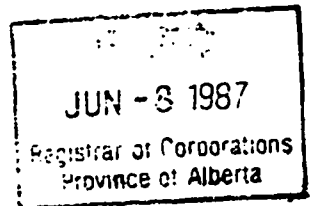
## **APPENDIX A**

### **By-Laws of the Hillhurst Sunnyside Non-Profit Housing Association**



**BY-LAWS**

**of**



**HILLHURST SUNNYSIDE NON-PROFIT HOUSING ASSOCIATION**

Interpretation

**ARTICLE I**

In these by-laws unless the context otherwise requires, words importing the singular number or the masculine gender include the plural number or the feminine gender, as the case may be, and vice versa, and references to persons include firms and corporations.

Members

**ARTICLE II**

1. The members of the society shall be the subscribers of the application and by-laws and such other persons as are admitted as members of the society.

2. All applications for membership shall be submitted to the board of directors and, upon approval by the board, the applicant shall become a member.

3. The number of members of the society shall be limited to 50 in number.

4. No person shall be a member of the society unless he is 18 years of age.

5. There shall be an annual fee of \$1.00 payable by members.

6. The secretary shall notify the members of the dues or fees at any time payable by them and, if any are not paid within thirty days of the date of notice, the members in default shall, at the discretion of the board, cease to be members of the society.

7. A member may withdraw from the society by tendering his or her resignation in writing to the secretary of the society or may be expelled from the society by a resolution of the members passed at a general meeting called for that purpose.

8. Upon the failure of any member to pay any annual membership fees, any subscription, or indebtedness due to the society, the directors may cause the name of that member to be removed from the register of members, but the member may be re-admitted to membership by the directors upon evidence as they may consider satisfactory.



## Dissolution of Society

### ARTICLE III

Upon the dissolution of the society and after the payment of all debts and liabilities, its remaining property shall be distributed or disposed of to charitable organizations which carry on their work solely in Canada.

## Meetings of Members

### ARTICLE IV

1. The annual general meeting shall be held within four months of the end of the fiscal year at a place within the Province and on a day to be fixed by the board of directors, and fourteen days' notice of the meeting shall be given to the members.

2. Other meetings of the members, whether general or special, may be convened by order of the directors for any time and at any place in Alberta upon giving twenty-one days' notice to the members.

## Notice of Meetings

### ARTICLE V

1. Whenever under the provisions of these by-laws of the society, notice is required to be given, it may be given either personally or telegraphed or by depositing same in a post office or a public letter box, in a prepaid, envelope addressed to the director, officer or member at his or their address as it appears on the books of the society.

2. A notice or other document so sent by post shall be deemed to have been received forty-eight hours after it was deposited in a post office or public letter box or, if telegraphed, shall be deemed to have been received one day after the notice was given to the telegraph company or its messenger.

3. No error or omission in giving notice of any annual general meeting, general meeting, or special meeting invalidates the meeting or makes void any proceedings taken, provided a resolution consented to in writing by all the members who would have been entitled to attend and vote at such meeting is obtained.

4. For the purpose of sending notice to any member, director, or officer for any meeting or otherwise, the address of any member, director or officer shall be his last address recorded on the books of the society.

## Quorum

### ARTICLE VI

A quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of members shall consist of not less than fifty-one percent (51%) of the current membership as recorded on the books of the society twenty-one days before the calling of the meeting.

## Adjournment of Meetings

### ARTICLE VII

Any meetings of the society or of the directors may be adjourned to any time and from time to time and business may be transacted at the adjourned meeting as might have been transacted at the original meeting from which the adjournment took place regard less of the quorum. No notice shall be required of any adjournment.

## Voting

### ARTICLE VIII

1. Every member in good standing is entitled to one vote.
2. Votes shall be given personally.

## Directors

### ARTICLE IX

1. The affairs of the society will be managed by a board of not less than five (5) nor more than ten (10) directors, each of whom at the time of his election and throughout his term of office shall be a member of the society.
2. The qualification for a director shall be coincident with qualification for membership in the society.
3. The directors will be elected to hold office until the first annual general meeting after their election or until their successors have been duly elected and qualified.
4. The election will be by a show of hands unless a ballot is demanded by any member.
5. The members of the society may, by resolution passed by at least two-thirds of the votes cast at a general meeting of which notice specifying the intention to pass the resolution has been given, remove any director before the expiration of his term of office, and may, by a majority of the votes cast at that meeting, elect any person in his stead for the remainder of his term.
6. A director ceases to be a director when he ceases to be a member of the society.

7. Vacancies on the board of directors may be filled by the directors from among the qualified members of the society, if they consider it necessary to do so and such nomination shall be ratified at the next general meeting. Otherwise the vacancy shall be filled at the next annual general meeting of the members at which the directors for the ensuing year are elected.

8. If the number of directors elected at the annual general meeting is less than ten the vacancy or vacancies shall be deemed to have occurred, which may be filled in the manner above provided.

9. The directors and officers shall serve as directors and officers without remuneration, and no director or officer shall directly or indirectly receive any profit from his position as director or officer; provided that a director or officer may be paid reasonable expenses incurred by him in the performance of his duties.

#### Powers of Directors

#### ARTICLE X

1. The directors of the society may administer the affairs of the society in all things and make or cause to be made for the society in its name, any kind of contract which the society may lawfully enter into and may exercise all other powers and do all other acts and things as the society is by its by-laws and The Societies Act authorized to do, including the acquisition by purchase, donation, devise or otherwise all kinds of real estate and personal property, and may sell, exchange, mortgage, lease, let, improve and develop real and personal property, and may erect and maintain buildings and improvements.

2. The board of directors may appoint agents and authorize the employment of other persons as they consider necessary to carry out the objects of the society.

3. These agents and employees will have authority and will perform duties as may be prescribed by the board. They are subject to removal by the board for cause and with notice.

4. In case of the absence or inability to act of any agent or employee of the society or for any reason that the board considers sufficient, the board may delegate all or any of the powers of that person or persons to any other person or persons subject to the board retaining its power of supervision.

5. The board of directors may borrow money in any manner and without limit to amount on the credit of the society as they consider necessary, and may cause to be executed mortgages, pledges of real and personal property and rights of the society, and may execute bills, notes, contracts, and other evidence of indebtedness, in favour of any person, firm, corporation or bank on terms as the lender may be willing to advance funds.

6. Debentures will not be issued without the sanction of a special resolution of the society.

#### Meetings of Directors

#### ARTICLE XI

1. A majority of the directors constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business.
2. The directors may hold their meetings at any place within the Province of Alberta.
3. No formal notice of meeting is necessary if all the directors are present, or if those absent have signified their consent to the meeting being held in their absence.
4. Directors' meetings may be formally called by the president or vice president or by the secretary on direction of the president or vice president, or by the secretary on direction in writing of three directors.
5. The statement of the secretary, vice president or president that notice has been given pursuant to Article XI (4) is conclusive evidence of the giving of notice.
6. The directors may appoint a day or days in any month or months for regular meetings at an hour to be named and for these regular meetings no notice need be sent.
7. A directors' meeting may also be held, without notice, immediately following the annual general meeting of the society.
8. The directors may consider or transact any business at any of their meetings.

#### Procedure of Meetings of Directors

#### ARTICLE XII

1. Questions arising at any meeting of directors will be decided by a majority of votes.
2. In case of an equality of votes, the chairman shall have the casting vote.
3. All votes at any meeting shall be taken by ballot if demanded by any director present but, if no demand be made, the vote shall be taken by a show of hands.

4. A declaration by the chairman that a resolution has been carried and an entry to that effect in the minutes is prima facie evidence of the fact without proof of the number or proportion of the votes recorded in favour of or against the resolution.

5. In the absence of the president his duties shall be performed by the vice president or other director as the board may from time to time appoint for the purpose.

6. A resolution in writing signed by all the directors personally is as valid as if it had been passed at a meeting of directors duly called and constituted.

#### Indemnification of Directors

#### ARTICLE XIII

The society agrees to indemnify every director of the society, his personal representatives, successors and assigns, from all costs, charges and expenses which he sustains or incurs in or about any action, suit or proceeding which is brought, commenced or prosecuted against him for or in respect of any act, deed, matter or thing made, done or permitted by him or any other director or directors in or about the execution of the duties of his office, except those costs, charges or expenses occasioned by his own willful neglect or default.

#### Officers

#### ARTICLE XIV

1. There shall be a president, a vice president, a secretary, a treasurer and other officers as the members may determine, such officers should be members of the board.

2. Officers will be elected by the directors on the first board election held after the annual general meeting.

3. The president will, ex officio, be chairman of all meetings of the members and the board of directors. In his absence, the vice president will be chairman of these meetings. In the absence of both, the chairman will be elected by the majority of those present at the meeting.

4. (1) The duties of all officers will be as the terms of their engagement call for or the members, by resolution, require of them.

(2) Officers may be removed in the same manner as directors according to the procedure described in section 5 of Article IX.

5. All cheques, bills of exchange or other orders for the payment of money, notes or other evidences of indebtedness issued in the name of the society, shall be signed by officers of the society in a manner determined by resolution of the directors.

### Appointment of Auditor

#### ARTICLE XV

1. The members may at each annual general meeting appoint an auditor to hold office until the next annual general meeting.
2. If an appointment of an auditor is not made at an annual general meeting, or the annual general meeting is not held, the directors may appoint an auditor of the society for the current fiscal year.
3. The directors may fill any casual vacancy in the office of auditor arising between annual general meetings.

### Duties of Auditor

#### ARTICLE XVI

1. The rights and duties of the auditor shall be as defined by the institute of Chartered Accountants of Alberta.

### Seal

#### ARTICLE XVII

1. The board of directors may adopt a seal which shall be the common seal of the society.
2. The secretary shall have custody of the seal.
3. The seal will be used for purposes determined by the directors.

### Alteration of Bylaws

#### ARTICLE XVIII

1. The by-laws of the society will not be altered or added to except by a special resolution of the society.
2. For all purposes of the society, "special resolution" means a resolution passed by a majority of not less than three-fourths of the members entitled to a vote as are present at a general meeting of which notice specifying the intention to propose the resolution as a special resolution has been duly given.

### Minute Book

#### ARTICLE XIX

1. The directors will ensure that all necessary books and records of the society required by the by-laws of the society or by any applicable statute or law are regularly and properly kept.
2. The secretary or other officer directed by the board of directors shall maintain, have charge of the minute book of the society and will record or cause to be recorded in it the minutes of proceedings of all meetings of members and directors.

3. The minute book will contain the following information:

(1) A copy of the objects of the society, and any special resolution altering the objects.

(2) A copy of the by-laws and any special resolution altering the by-laws.

(3) Copies of originals of all documents, registers and resolutions required by law.

(4) Copies of originals of all financial statements prepared by the auditor of the society.

(5) Copies of all other documents directed to be inserted into the minute book by the board of directors.

#### Accounting Records

#### ARTICLE XX

The accounting records shall be kept at any place in Alberta the directors think fit.

#### Fiscal Year

#### ARTICLE XXI

1. The fiscal year of the society will terminate on a day in each year to be fixed by the board of directors.

2. The financial statements of the society's affairs for presentation to the members at the annual general meeting will be made as of the society's fiscal year end.

#### Inspection of Documents

#### ARTICLE XXII

1. The directors shall determine whether and to what extent and at what times and places and under what conditions or regulations the accounts and books of the society or any of them shall be open to the inspection of members including directors.

2. No member, not being a director, has any right of inspecting any account or book or document of the society except as conferred by law or authorized by the directors.

DATED this .25<sup>th</sup> day of ..May.... 1986.

At a General Meeting of Hillhurst Sunnyside Non-Profit Housing Association duly convened and held at 1118 Kensington Road N.W., Calgary, Alberta at the hour of 7:30 o'clock in the evening, on the 5th day of December, 1985, the following Special Resolution was duly passed.

FILED

1986-2-4-86

SPECIAL RESOLUTION


Resolved as a Special Resolution, that the objects of the Society be changed to:

FEB 24 1986

1. The name of the society is HILLHURST SUNNYSIDE NON-PROFIT HOUSING ASSOCIATION.
2.
  - 1) The objects of this society are to obtain, provide, manage, and maintain housing facilities and ancillary appurtenances to individuals and families of low income, senior citizens, and handicapped persons;
  - 2) The society shall be carried on without the purpose of gain for its members and any profits or other accretions to the society shall be used in promoting its objects;
  - 3) No part of the income of the society may be payable to or otherwise available for the personal benefit of any member thereof;
  - 4) Upon the dissolution of the society and after the payment of all debts and liabilities, its remaining property shall be distributed or disposed of to charitable organizations which carry on their work solely in Canada.
3. The operations of the society are to be chiefly carried on in the City of Calgary, in the Province of Alberta.

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of the said special resolution as set forth in the Minutes of the said meeting and further said Special Resolution is now in full force and effect.

DATED at the City of Calgary, in the Province of Alberta, this 4th day of February, 1986.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Doug Hirsch, President HSNPHA



## **APPENDIX B**

### **Interview Questions and Synopsized Responses**

## **Interview Questions for Board Members**

NOTE: Brackets indicate questions asked only of current board members.

- 1) Could you describe your position and tenure on the Board of Directors?
- 2) Why did you decide to become involved in HSNPHA?
- 3) Do you feel that the HSNPHA tenants, on the whole, constitute a 'community'?  
(If yes) In what ways?
- 4) Do you recall any effort(s) related to the organization of tenants?  
What specific events transpired?  
What was/were the organization's mandate(s)?  
Was it (has it been) successful in achieving this mandate?  
Why/Why not? What were the barriers to achieving this?
- 4) Could you describe your perception of the relationship between tenants and management?  
Has this relationship changed?  
What could have improved this relationship?  
or What was done to improve this relationship?
- 5) [How do you see tenants participating in the future of HSNPHA?]
- 5) Do you believe the current climate (whether in the HSNPHA or society in general) allows for or encourages tenant participation?
- 6) Do you see a role for a tenant's organization?
- 7) What would be such an organization's mandate?
- 8) What role do you see the HSNPHA playing in the organization of such a body?
- 9) Is there a role for tenants in management and decision-making of the HSNPHA?  
What specific management roles may there be for tenants?  
(e.g. building maintenance and improvement, planning, administration, tenant-relations, etc.)  
What are some of the barriers to achieving this?
- 10) Are you familiar with any models that the HSNPHA could borrow or learn from?
- 11) Do you feel that the legislative and policy framework in Alberta is a barrier? CMHC? Please explain?
- 12) Would you be interested in participating in a strategic planning and visioning exercise?

## **Interview Questions for Other Organizations**

- 1) What is the mandate of your organization?
- 2) Could you briefly describe your organizational structure?
- 3) Are the tenants organized into an association, council or committee?  
What is the mandate of this organization?
- 4) Do tenants have a role in management or decision-making?  
What kind of role(s) do they play?
- 5) What kinds of barriers or problems have been encountered in the organization of tenants?

What can be done to avoid or overcome these barriers?

6) How would you describe the relationship between tenants and management in your organization?

7) Do you feel that greater tenant involvement and participation is a trend?

Is the current social, political or economic environment conducive to this? Please explain.

8) Would (has) greater tenant involvement be (been) of net benefit or net loss to your organization? Please explain.

### **Tenant Interview Questions and Aggregated Responses**

\* Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of separate responses.

\* Bracketed questions were not asked by the interviewer, but are included to frame the explanations offered by the respondent.

\* Synopsis does not include board member tenants.

**Number of tenants interviewed:** 20  
**Male/female split:** 7/13  
**Youth/senior split:** 14/6  
**Physically challenged:** 2  
**Dwelling type:**

Medium density apartment (Norfolk House):	7
Four story walk-up:	9
(Bowen House)	(4)
(Gayner House)	(5)
Multifamily low density:	3
(Pemberton Terrace)	(2)
(Flett Manor)	(1)
Single family/ duplex	1

#### **1) How long have you lived in HSNPHA housing?**

**Mean:** 5.6 years  
**Median:** 2.5, 3 years  
**Range:** 0.5 - 16 years

#### **2) Why did you decide to live in non-profit housing?**

Location	(10)
Building/unit characteristics	(6)
Affordability	(6)
Involvement in HSCA	(3)

Proximity to family/friends	(3)
Pet policy	(2)
Single parent needs	(2)
Ad in newspaper	(2)
Availability	(2)
Unsure	(1)

Other (one response each): Type of landlord/organization, maintenance, accepts children, community atmosphere

**3) How familiar are you with the organization and operation of HSNPHA?**

Somewhat	(9)	<b>Would you like to become more familiar?</b>
Very	(5)	
Not very	(4)	Yes (9)
Not at all	(2)	No (6)
		Unsure (5)

**4) Do you feel that the HSNPHA tenants, on the whole, constitute a 'community'?**

Yes	(11)	<b>[Moreso than elsewhere]</b>	<b>(12)</b>
No	(4)	<b>[Moreso than Hillhurst Sunnyside generally]</b>	<b>(2)</b>
Unsure	(5)	<b>[Less so than Hillhurst Sunnyside generally]</b>	<b>(2)</b>

**Reasons (yes):**

Activities/events	(4)
Friendliness/camaraderie of tenants	(4)
Executive Director's efforts	(3)

Other (one response each): Communal area in building, common safety concerns, commonality of people, mix of people

**Reasons (no):**

Privacy/lifestyles	(1)
Not fostered by HSNPHA	(1)

**Reasons (unsure):**

Depends on individual willingness	(2)
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**5) Are you serving, or have you served, on one or more of the tenant committees (e.g. newsletter, recycling, etc.)?**

No	(13)	<b>[Specifically]</b>	
Yes	(6)		
About to	(1)	Picnic/Christmas party organizing	(4)
		Past tenant councils	(2)
		Newsletter	(1)
		Recycling	(1)

**(If yes) Can you describe your experience on this committee?**

Positive	(4)
Unsure	(1)

**[Why positive?]:** ED support (2), learning value, feeling of being able to affect change

**(If no) What is your perception of these committees?**

Unsure	(9)
Positive	(4)
Negative	(1)

**[Why positive (or potentially positive)?]:** Proactive, significant representation

**[Why negative (or potentially negative)?]:** Uniformed regarding meetings (3), lack of interest, lack of mandate, no need for collective decision-making

**6) Could you describe your perception of the relationship between tenants and management?**

Positive	(9)
Very positive	(6)
Mixed	(3)
Negative	(2)

**[Why positive?]**

Accommodating/approachable/caring	(5)
Efficient	(3)
Unobtrusive	(2)
Proactive	(2)
Open	(2)
Sense of community fostered	(1)

**[Why negative?]**

Wrong philosophy (2)

Other (one response each): Inaccessibility to management, inaccessibility to board, lack of grievance policy/procedure, too big, business-like management, run by outsiders, too female, autocratic decision-making

**Has this relationship changed?**

Unchanged (14)

Worsened (4)

Improved (2)

**Could anything be done to improve this relationship?**

Lower Executive Director's workload (2)

Openness/communication/information (2)

More social events and activities (2)

Voting/evaluation of management (1)

**7) How do you see tenants participating in the future of the HSNPHA?**

Unsure (8)

Same as now (3)

Open group meetings (2)

Tenant council (2)

Equal board membership (vis-à-vis non-tenants) (2)

Do not see tenants participating (2)

Having opportunity to give feedback/direction (2)

Other (one response each): Support networks, grievance committee, screening committee

**Could you describe how this might be enabled?**

Fostering of 'a sense of community' (4)

Focus groups (2)

Other (one response each): Low transiency, suggestion box, facility improvement committee, volunteering, foster a 'safe' environment

**8) Do you see a role for a tenants' organization?**

Yes (9)

Unsure (6)

No (4)

Yes, but city-wide (2)

**[Why?]**

Venue for presenting ideas/grievances (5)

**[Why not?]**

Petty/narrow focus (2)  
 Lack of interest/time (2)  
 Lack of mandate/direction (2)  
 Adversarial (2)  
 Lack of community (2)  
 Transiency (1)

**9) What would be the mandate of such an organization?**

Improve accountability (3)  
 Property maintenance (3)  
 Improve communication (3)  
 Provide a voice in decision-making (3)  
 Organize social events (3)  
 Act as 'watchdog' (2)  
 Issue-oriented only (2)  
 Unsure (2)

Other (one response each): Improve tenant-landlord relationship, maintain standard of living, screen new tenants, safety and security, be representative to the board, have a political mandate external to HSNPHA

**10) What do you think are some of the barriers participation within the HSNPHA?**

Lack of time (7)  
 Unsure/ N/A (7)  
 Lack of interest/apathy (6)  
 Shyness (3)  
 Poor understanding/communication (3)  
 Fear (3)  
 Transiency (2)  
 Lack of leadership (2)  
 Diverse tenant demographics (2)

Other (one response each): Self-centred tenants, core group take-over, lack of real power, lack of mandate, desire for privacy/anonymity

**11) Are you satisfied with the level of tenant involvement in management?**

Yes (10)  
 Unsure (6)  
 No (4)

**[Why?]**

Satisfaction with current management (2)  
 Tenants on the board already (2)  
 Newsletter (1)

**[Why not?]**

Lack of tenant power on the board (2)  
 There is no real involvement currently (2)

**Would you like to see more?**

Unsure (9)  
 Yes (8)  
 No (3)

**10) What specific roles do you think tenants should have in management?**

Building maintenance (6)  
 Tenant relations (6)  
 Unsure (6)  
 All aspects of decision-making (5)  
 Budgetary/finance (4)  
 Planning/long-term decision-making (4)  
 Building improvements (3)  
 Rent-related decisions (2)  
 Other (one response each): Unit improvements/maintenance, organizing social events, safety and security

**13) How would you describe your own level of interest in participating in management or decision-making?**

Low (8)  
 Moderate (7)  
 High (3)  
 Not at all (1)  
 Formerly (1)

**14) What do you feel you might be able to contribute? (e.g. ideas, skills, information, time, etc.)**

Nothing (8)  
 Time (4)  
 Ideas (4)  
 Unsure (4)  
 Writing, editing and research (3)  
 Miscellaneous skills (2)  
 Photography (1)



Board experience (1)

**15) What are some of the potential drawbacks of tenant participation?**

Too narrow/selfish focus (7)  
Lack of time (3)  
Adversarial (3)  
Lack of mandate/clarity (3)  
No potential drawbacks (3)  
Lack of interest/commitment (2)  
Other (one response each): Outside meddling/bullying, under-representation or misrepresentation

**How could these be avoided or alleviated?**

Need a 'balanced'/representative group (3)  
Elections (3)  
Clear mandate (2)  
Incentives (2)  
Need a 'global' view (1)  
Efforts by tenants and mgmt. to involve everyone (1)

**16) Do you believe the current climate (whether in the HSNPHA or society in general) allows for or encourages tenant participation?**

**[HSNPHA?]**

Yes (8)  
Unsure (4)  
No (3)

**[Why?]**

Tenants are **asked** to participate (4)

**[Why not?]**

Perceived as a nuisance (1)  
Paternalism (1)

**[Society?]**

No (9)  
Unsure (5)  
Yes (4)

**[Why?]**

People **want** to participate (2)  
Fosters self-reliance (1)

People are more aware of issues (1)

**[Why not?]**

Individualism	(4)
Drop in social programs and funding	(2)
Busy lifestyles	(2)
Private property bias (anti-tenant)	(2)
Fear of losing anonymity	(1)
People are not encouraged to participate	(1)

**17) Would you be interested in participating in a two-hour tenants-only discussion group dealing with these topics?**

Yes (14)  
No (4)  
Unsure (2)

**16) Would you be interested in participating in a strategic planning and visioning exercise (which would include board members and tenants)?**

Yes (10)  
No (6)  
Unsure (4)

**17) Are you familiar with any organizations or agencies the HSNPHA could borrow or learn from?**

No (6)  
Housing co-operatives (4)  
Democratically-run organizations (3)  
'Rent-to-own' apartments/townhouses (2)  
Other (one response each): Library, Mustard Seed, Connections Housing, Calhones, CJSW Radio, Food bank, community child service delivery organizations (PAR process), alumni-run fraternity houses, Vancouver housing associations

## Additional Comments

\* In the interest of preserving anonymity, comments are not organized according to individual interview responses. Instead, they are randomly mixed.

- HSNPHA is much better than a private landlord. They *respect* tenants. They do not have a self-interested motive. This makes a big difference, because the tenant does not feel exploited.
- I have never had a better relationship with management. Normally, I would not expect to be asked to participate.
- It is good to feel like you're affecting change.
- Board meetings should be open to all tenants, or there should at least be progress reports. The tenant newsletter could be used for board progress reports.
- Participation can be nothing but positive. It builds a sense of community, sense of ownership, and fosters citizenship skills.
- It would take a big offer to leave this building.
- Tenant participation is a microcosm of larger participation - if you can't feel anything for your community, how can you feel anything for society.
- The board proceedings are secretive - like a 'closed shop'.
- The ED has a vision. The property is well maintained.
- Tenants should be offered a tour of the different apartments, etc.
- An absence of ownership discourages participation.
- The physical appearance of the buildings is excellent.
- Let those in charge run the place and I'll go about my business... if I have a grievance I'll take it to them.
- A Tenant's Council is an adversarial situation. This is the nature of the beast. But there should be board representation (50% tenants). They could be half market, half subsidized.
- For certain tenants, it would be helpful to participate more, but it might be as much a nuisance because so many people complain.
- At the Christmas Party, everybody is treated like kids. It may be fun for some, but not for me.
- Management does not ask anything from tenants... they *tell* them.
- The board needs to be democratic. Tenants need preparation to vote.
- The location is very convenient. Other tenants are also good, but the outside noise is a problem.
- They [HSNPHA] have tried to get people together. The ED has tried to get tenants to associate more. Peoples' interest has been awoken.
- It would be very nice to have a meeting of all tenants to present ideas, etc.
- Everybody has their own social life and circle of friends.
- There is a sense of participation here but it is not very strong. Some are really interested; others aren't.
- Things are still 'top-down'; it's still done the ED's way, but you can still make small decisions.
- There needs to be a policy for a grievance procedure. Tenants are not allowed to talk formally to board members. Right now, everything stops at the ED.
- The ED is very busy. She honestly does not have time to listen to tenants. People feel like they are shut out of the process, even though they just want to talk. Some seniors just want to talk. This comes with the territory if you are dealing with seniors.
- There needs to be screening of new tenants.
- Tenants should not form a majority on the board. Maybe 50%?
- We could have an Education Committee. This wouldn't take up too many resources. Just make the documents available to those who are interested.
- I would give management a 10 out of 10. They do an excellent job.

- 'Self-help' is not always the panacea it seems to be. For example, the drop-in centre is getting fuller. The financial aid still needs to be there. A segment of society will always need state aid.
- A society is measured by how it treats its weakest members.
- A policy and procedures manual is not easy to write, but there are excellent guidelines available.
- The ED does a good job, basically. But what happens if a really incompetent ED takes over?
- The HSNPHA goes in the direction the board decides it should go. Therefore it needs to be proactive... it needs some members with a vision. It isn't easy to get these types of people.
- I *do* think of this as my home. They should get behind this concept. When renovations are being done, tenants should have a say. Tenants should be able to make minor modifications.
- AGM should not be at Christmas.
- Sunnyside is like a little town, with its family and community atmosphere.
- Tenants really care for their properties here.
- A tenants' organization is a good idea. It would improve the bonding of people with the place they live. If we can make decisions, we can also care more.
- I don't know if I'm very good at making decisions, but I am interested.
- All a tenant can do is voice his/her opinion. People need to take the time. If they don't, it's their own fault.
- The government needs to get involved in rent control legislation. They must make conversion to condominiums harder.
- I would like to know about how management and the board works.
- The old Tenants' Council was just for Norfolk [House]. They were just seniors. Maybe this is why it failed. There might be less bitching if there was a broader perspective.
- A Grievance Committee, with tenants and non-tenants, could be struck. It needs to be 50/50. Could be elected at AGM.
- People want to protect their space in their apartments. This is called "defensive space"... people want to have their own space. There is a tendency among academics to romanticize 'community'.
- With the social situation the way it is [tenant participation] is a good idea. But is it an idea whose time is passed? Does it fit? Do people have the energy and time? People are living in larger homes, have more technology, have far more pressure and the unemployed are stigmatized. When people are so busy, how do they have time to contribute to community?
- As an owner you have a different attitude. Tenants feel transient, and subsidized tenants feel less empowered. In a co-op, you sign in for a longer period... you have an investment. It is good that we *can* get permission to decorate our units individually.
- We need some compelling issue that affects all the buildings. For example, the vacancy rate is low, so there may be a city-wide argument for rent control.
- There's a need for tenants to get involved in housing policy, but there is also a need for citizens to get involved in every policy. Nobody is listening to us - the citizens. Multinational firms control the government. There is a growing sense of helplessness (not apathy) - 'disenfranchisement'. There is also very little sense of history. For example, many people seem to forget the gains that organized labour brought to working people.
- Housing issues are not in the forefront right now. There is a lack of leadership and public pressure to change things.
- There should be a screening committee for choosing new tenants.
- I'm against a tenant screening committee. This is dangerous.
- A Grievance Committee would be good, but only if they are elected. It is only needed when the management is exploitive.
- [Having] tenants on the board is a good thing. There should be at least 2 if it is a ten member board. You could also have a board member from the co-op.
- These are good ideas in themselves, but would they work in Calgary?
- Low income people are intimidated by organizing. You need a skilled facilitator.

- Management is skilful in managing. They are doing a damn good job!
- In non-profit housing, how much weight should market values really carry?
- Why does rent go up as a building gets older?
- We've gone through 50 years of housing awareness, especially since the 60's. Society came to believe it was well-established and wasn't a problem. People seem to think that poverty issues are taken care of. People's consciousness is distorted by the success of previous generations.
- This project *could* spark interest in participating. Participation would mean that [HSNPHA] would be managed more effectively.
- Being a tenant in itself puts the tenant in an inferior position.
- A Tenants' organization was tried, and it didn't work. It turned out to be more like a union - adversarial. Why do you need one?
- But there's nothing wrong with being on the board - this is a good idea.
- I went to one AGM and it was really boring.
- We should think about sustainability. We should be a bastion of non-consumerism. For example, we could replace the hallway carpets with solid material such as ceramic tile.
- Ownership fosters community participation. Tenants do not *feel* like the common property is theirs. You pay for the box in which you live. It would be nice to have a yardsale or be able to wash your car with a hose.
- There could be a synopsis of board meetings in the Newsletter, with an explanation of how it affects tenants.
- When the low wattage kitchen lights were installed, nobody asked if we wanted them. When the timed vehicle plug-ins were put in, nobody asked.
- There is a very open invitation to get involved, but tenants are treated like patients.
- The bitching at any meeting needs to be kept to a minimum. It needs to be global and we would need to come away with something.
- A joint Rent Review Committee is a right step. Rent should not be set by the ED only.
- Tenants could be on a vacuuming rotation, or snow shovelling or mowing, for a slight reduction in rent.
- The people who would be most constructive are tied up with other stuff. [Participation] is low on peoples' priority lists (especially students).
- It would be nice if we could paint our suites to suit the tenant.
- The ideals of the HSNPHA have not been put into practise. We need a clear direction. I didn't know that Non-profit housing was any different than other kinds of housing for a long time.
- It's good to have tenants on the board. The *role* is not as important as the *opportunity*.
- Management do a really good job when it is needed.
- Tenants can make fair and reasoned decisions. For example, the installation of handicapped parking... people got together and discussed the pros and cons.
- People need to be drawn closer together and look out for each other. People cannot live in bubbles anymore.
- We need specific committees rather than a generic council... and they need a clear mandate.
- Decisions are made in an autocratic manner (non-consultation), although I *am* listened to when I ask something.
- After you know people, you support each other in a network. It hinges on the development of a community... it is a microcosm of the larger community.
- Orientation should be given to tenants when they come in. This would encourage a sense of community, and would open the door to new involvement. For example, I didn't know there were single family dwellings [in HSNPHA].
- Committee involvement is exhausting.

- We just need a democratic process. It may be idealistic, but decisions *need* to be made with tenants. I didn't know about the recycling committee when it was struck, [nor were we consulted] about the cycles on the block heater plug-ins.
- The tenants newsletter doesn't come out enough.
- It would be nice to get a Christmas card or a phone call every 6 months just checking up. Just something to let tenants know that HSNPHA cares. Notices are not enough.
- Tenants are very happy with the process as it is. The evidence is how long they stay.
- A communal kitchen could be set up. Perhaps with a "Meals on Wheels" type service.
- Even though I read the tenant agreement, how often do others? Is it taken for granted that someone's looking after them? For example, do people know that you can't hang things on the balcony?
- Tenants' newsletter should be merged with the 'Voice'. The newsletter should contain the results of board meetings.
- Tenants are not as friendly now. There used to be a potluck every month.
- Other organizations can learn from this one.
- It should be more like a co-op. I keep telling my friends I live in a co-op.
- The AGM is not just a party. It should not be at the same time as the Christmas Party.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Discussion Group Questions & Responses**

## Questions

\* The parentheses { } indicate directions for the facilitator.

1. What, in your opinion, is the purpose of non-profit housing?

{ supplementary } Are there any other goals/objectives? (empowerment?)

2. What is "Tenant Participation"?

3. In what ways does tenant participation benefit tenants (if at all)?

4. In 1969, Sherry Arnstein published a famous article entitled "A Ladder of Participation". I have drawn a simplified version of the ladder on the flipchart paper. The ladder is still used by neighborhood groups, student associations, organized labour, and other groups to gauge how involved they are in decision-making. As the stakeholder moves up the ladder, they gain a greater share of decision-making power. {Briefly explain each step as follows:}

***Non-Participation*** - Self explanatory; probably most characteristic of the private housing sector; may involve manipulation of citizens or the treating of citizens like "children" or "patients" (therapy).

***Informing*** - As Arnstein says "...can be the most important first step toward legitimate citizen participation"; e.g. tenant lease agreement, posted notices, newsletter.

***Consultation*** - People have the opportunity to give feedback, but participation may still be "window dressing" at this level; e.g. surveys, neighborhood meetings, public hearings.

***Placation*** - As Arnstein says, "Citizens now have some degree of influence, as they have members vested with decision-making authority. At this stage, however, the citizens constitute a small minority of the decision-makers, may be hand-picked, and may lack a constituency"; e.g. "citizens at large" on community advisory committees or public housing boards.

***Partnership*** - As Arnstein says, "...power is redistributed through negotiation between citizens and powerholders"; it is a sharing of planning and decision-making responsibilities; e.g. joint policy committees, shared student-faculty planning and policy committees (EVDS examples).

***Delegated Power*** - Citizens have control over some major plans or programs; e.g. TMCs in some public housing authorities in the U.S. may control building maintenance, tenant relations or rent collection, while the authority might control mortgaging and financing, evictions, etc.



***Citizen Control*** - Citizens are fully in charge of management and decision-making of an organization or community program; the citizens in a non-profit organization have a direct relationship with the funder; e.g. housing co-operatives.

Q: Where do you feel tenants in this organization currently stand on the ladder? Why?

Q: Where do you feel tenants should stand on the ladder? Why?

5. How can tenants most effectively increase their level of participation? {Mention the following examples if not mentioned by participants, if time permits}

- e.g.:
- Existing Venues (board member, AGM, social events, newsletter, etc.)
  - Tenants on the Board (what %?, how should they be elected?)
  - Tenants as Members of the Association
  - Tenant Council
  - Committee Work (grievance, selection, etc.)
  - Openness (e.g. reports of board meetings, open meetings, newsletter as a venue)
  - Education (via screening process, workshops, pamphlet/newsletter, etc.)
  - Changes to Bylaws (membership v. tenancy, entrenchment, via strategic planning workshop?)
  - Policies & Procedures Manual (via strategic planning workshop?)
  - TMC/Tenant Co-operative ('delegated power')

6. What (if any) are some of the drawbacks of tenant participation?

7. In your opinion, are subsidized tenants more or less inclined to participate? Why?

8. In the 1960's and 70's, tenant participation was all the rage in Britain, the U.S. and even Canada. Tenants' Associations and community activists pushed for radical changes in the way decisions were made in both the public and private housing markets. One of the results was a major reform of landlord-tenant law. Public housing providers also experimented with shared management structures. By the 1980's, however, the support for such ventures had dried up, while the politically conservative atmosphere stressed individual responsibility and thrift. Housing organizations, like many other agencies that rely on government support, are now told to be more "self-reliant". People on both the Right and the Left are increasingly using terms like "self-help", "self-reliance" and "empowerment".

Q: Is organizational "self-reliance" a good thing? Why?

{supplementary} How does "self-reliance" relate to the "empowerment" of individual tenants?

Q: Does the current political, economic or social climate in Alberta foster or hinder citizen participation in decision-making?

In what ways?

9. Before we finish this evening, are there any other things that you would like to add, or that you wish I would have asked?

### **Responses**

\* Each bullet indicates a response by a separate participant

#### ***1. The Purpose of Non-Profit Housing***

- to help people out
- to provide housing to people of diverse backgrounds; to foster diversity and a sense of community
- to provide an affordable rent with a sense of dignity
- it is non-labelling - there is no stigma attached to it; it is not falling apart
- there still is a stigma though - many people view it negatively from the outside
- people are not well informed about non-profit housing
- look at the words: "Non-Profit"
- provides affordable rent and is well-maintained; non-profit housing shows a regard for those in trouble in the market; the management is sensitive to this
- it gives an opportunity for people to have a say in things
- not to make money; the multitude of tenants are a community; non-profit housing adds to the richness of the community

#### ***2. What is tenant participation?***

- being actively involved in management
- social involvement and interaction; finding out information; volunteering
- having a feeling of community [agreed by most] and a small town feeling
- returning to the community by taking responsibility - 'paying back' (if you want to); it is good for improving the self-esteem
- having some control over one's life - contributing reduces the isolation of living in an apartment in the city
- being supportive; fostering friendship; doing favours for other tenants

### ***3. How participation benefits tenants***

- communication is improved
- problems are easier to work out
- creates a neighbourhood that might not exist otherwise
- tenants have a diversity of ages and backgrounds
- tenants do not feel as isolated
- sense of family
- builds comfort, trust, safety and security in the community
- better screening of tenants
- ensures stability and consistency; responsiveness
- tenants take pride in the appearance of the buildings
- I do not know my neighbours.
- there is a management dedication more than a non-profit dedication now
- [the ED] screens tenants - this makes sure that tenants 'fit in'
- management encourages interaction and makes things more comfortable for new people; they go beyond just being "non-profit"

#### ***4a. Comments re. tenants' current standing on Arnstein's ladder***

- sometimes it is Placation and sometimes Consultation
- there was a tenant group years ago, but it had no meaningful power - there was no aspect of the organization where you could say the final 'yes' or 'no' to anything; actions were still modified by the ED and the rest of the board
- I've worked Christmas parties, but nobody wants to bother [participating]
- there is delegated power with respect to social events
- [the ED] has a great deal of undue influence - her fingerprints are all over everything; tenants do not have real power or real responsibility
- someone always has to lead though
- the problem is us not knowing, or not knowing sufficiently; I'm not aware of who sits where, whose mandate is whose; there must be shared power among tenants

#### ***4b. Comments re. tenants' future standing on Arnstein's ladder***

- there must be a partnership between the board, management and tenants; powersharing is more desirable
- nothing will get done [re. participation] if tenants do not have responsibility; it's about rights *and* responsibilities
- but you cannot get responsibility without stressing that you *want* responsibility
- tenants need a sense of ownership - this results in better maintenance
- partnership is needed because, even though tenants have feelings, they need direction, no matter how much they want to be involved
- tenants need to develop skills, direction and education - they may not have the background
- especially in the technical maintenance areas
- what is the purpose of tenants participation? - It must follow that partnership is the ideal, or else it is just lip service

## ***5. Ways of increasing the level of participation***

- we need information; speak to people, don't order them
- at work we have a 'paycheck chat', where we voice our concerns, etc.; there could also be a tenant representative
- social co-ordinator for each building
- rewards attract volunteers (e.g. diplomas at the Christmas Party)
- luncheons for volunteers
- people need incentives to maintain 'volunteerism'
- subsidized renters can give back; need to set goals and time frames for giving back
- start small scale - you don't want to be overwhelmed by volunteers
- group effort (look at the United Way), without having people feel responsible for it all; there could be a resource directory for pet, plant and child care; at Christmas, singles could be matched with families
- yes, there could be a database for exchange; this would help develop a sense of community and it is realistic and informal; tenants should treat the building like it is their home
- management should not be a major role for tenants
- I try to make time to assist others when I can
- there are tenants who volunteer around the place (shovel snow, remove garbage); we should treat the place as our own; it should be informal and anonymous
- it is hurtful when there is internal vandalism
- I am able to put a flower box outside of my window; this kind of thing is good
- we could raise funds for a fence at our building - it would be safer for children
- it is generous of management to allow pets in the first place, but there could be a "maximum of two pets" policy
- tenants should be able to feel like [their unit] is their own house
- who decided on the bicycle racks? Why do we need them?
- why is the bicycle rack on the roof? [at Norfolk]
- there is a danger of policies being too rigid - they must evolve
- there is no need for a Policies and Procedures manual because the lease is the procedural manual - the rest is informal
- we should have guidelines though [for grievances, etc.]
- even a rough guideline; it could help to deal with something that is a problem, and how to go about resolving it
- a tenant representative may fill this role
- [the ED] is very personable
- yes, she is approachable, but she's getting busier
- but what if [the ED] changes? Should they have to learn and do on the fly?
- we need more information. What does our dollar go for? We need figures and facts (openness)
- there should be better communication with the membership
- there should be no limit to the number of members in the Association
- yes, we should make budget information available
- the statements are available at the AGM
- [the ED] could probably get the information out
- the information could be published in the Voice [HSCA Newsletter]

- maybe tenants could get information from tenant representatives who would attend board meetings
- the Christmas Party and the AGM should be on separate dates
- tenants bring up things all year - the board has to listen and respond to complaints, but the board meetings are still closed
- could have a concern and comment box, which would protect anonymity; there could be a monthly meeting for concerns
- that is not realistic - maybe one time a year; could have tenant representatives

#### ***6. Drawbacks of tenant participation***

- there are three people that will always participate - it is always the same bunch
- we need to ask tenants to help
- personal 'bitching' - it gets too trivial
- too many complaints to management
- too many demands and not enough help
- all ideas should be welcome
- if people don't see the results of participating, they'll stop; [some participants] can be overbearing and intimidating

#### ***7. Inclination of subsidized tenants to participate***

- this is absolutely personal - you cannot generalize
- management does an extremely good job of not segregating tenants - there is a comfort zone

#### ***8a. Is organizational 'self-reliance' a good thing?***

- self-reliance is positive - things get fixed promptly and there is faster action generally
- yes - otherwise the funders have more control
- government is too large - there is better feedback when an organization is small
- the average tenant is not as motivated as those that are here [at the discussion group]. The success of self-reliance depends on tenants' personalities ; the response to the interviewing will give a good sampling
- yes - it enables control
- in a non-profit organization, self-empowerment is more likely

#### ***8b. External climate: Does it foster or hinder participation?***

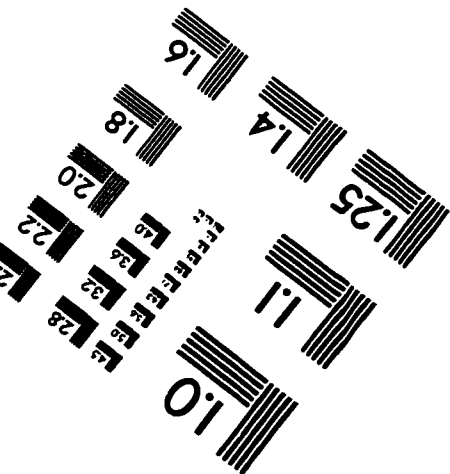
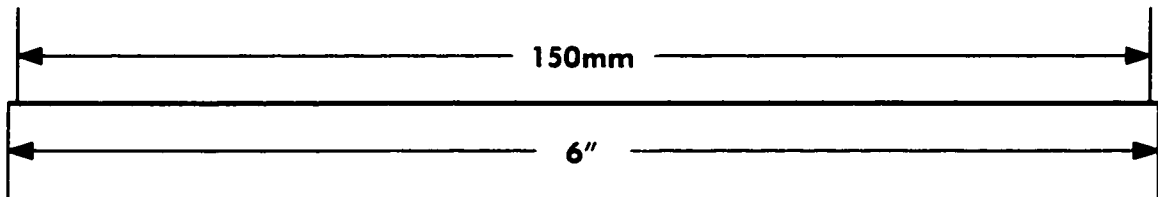
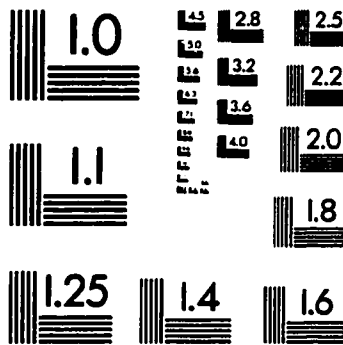
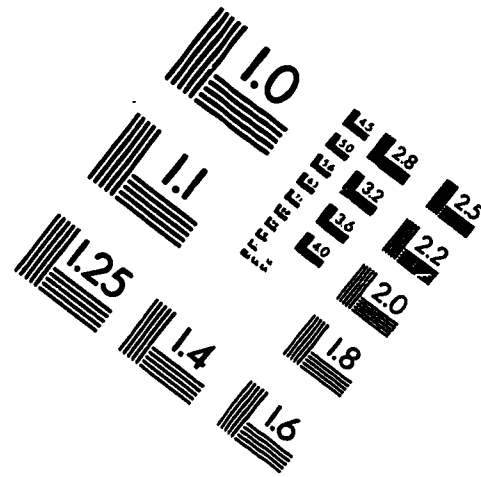
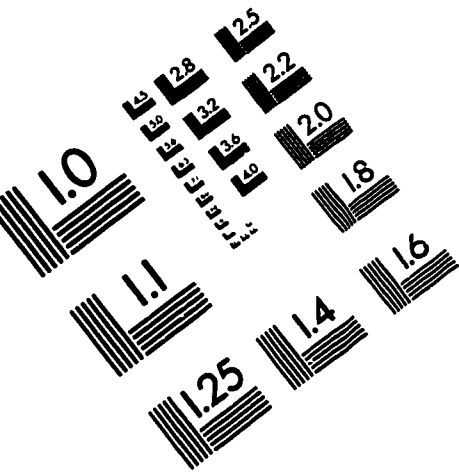
- it hinders it - the general sense in Alberta is focused on individuals, as opposed to looking out for others
- "buzzwords" are being used more and more
- there is a dichotomy between individual rights and corporate interests
- the cuts have forced people to think of more and better ideas and to care more
- but this can work both ways
- government is patronizing - like "Big Brother" who knows what's best
- it works both ways; there is a lot of mistrust, cynicism and a feeling of "what good is my vote"

***Other comments***

- Have they [the board] expressed that they will support the findings?



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