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"Every city is allowed one"? Creating waterfront suburbias in the Vancouver region

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Abstract
Waterfront redevelopment in the Vancouver region, Canada, is occurring rapidly. While downtown waterfront redevelopments have long offered planning examples for global audiences, they also set reference points for post-industrial redevelopment regionally. Currently, competing land uses are generating an extremely contentious regional urban development setting. This paper uses a narrative approach and uniquely joins insights from suburban and waterfront studies to consider narratives that fuel ongoing regional suburban waterfront redevelopment. The paper first contextualizes suburban waterfront change in the Vancouver region, then analyzes a recent case, identifying four narratives that help justify waterfront transformation. The paper demonstrates how a few strategic plot lines can become powerful in generating waterfront development, thereby threatening stated planning goals for sustainability and affordability, among others. Such narratives also showcase signs of short-term thinking, as suburban cities appear to be "allowed one" waterfront development, a trajectory which can override planning commitments for sustainable urban futures.

Keywords: Suburbs; Waterfront; Redevelopment, narrative; Vancouver; Port Moody

Résumé
Le réaménagement du front de mer dans la région de Vancouver, au Canada, se déroule rapidement. Bien que les réaménagements du front de mer du centre-ville offrent depuis longtemps des exemples de planification pour un public mondial, ils sont également un point de référence pour le réaménagement post-industriel à l'échelle régionale. Actuellement, les utilisations concurrentes des terres génèrent un cadre de développement urbain régional extrêmement controversé. Cet article utilise une approche narrative et associe de manière unique les études sur les banlieues et les fronts de mer pour examiner les récits qui alimentent le réaménagement régional en cours des fronts de mer des banlieues. L'article contextualise d'abord le changement du front de mer suburbain dans la région de Vancouver. Ensuite, l'analyse se base sur une étude de cas récent en identifiant quatre récits qui aident à justifier la transformation du front de mer. L'article illustre comment quelques tracés stratégiques peuvent devenir un catalyseur pour générer le développement du front de mer, menaçant, entre autres, les objectifs de planification déclarés en matière de durabilité et d'être abordable. De tels récits présentent également des signes de réflexion à court terme, puisque les villes de banlieue semblent être allouées « qu'un seul » développement du front de mer, une trajectoire qui peut annuler les engagements de planification pour un avenir urbain durable.

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Introduction

The city of Vancouver, Canada, is famous for its waterfront redevelopments—one of a long list of cities that have been lauded in planning literature and practice for transforming waterfront land uses from industrial/manufacturing to primarily residential and recreational (Avni and Teschner 2019; Brownill 2013; Ley 1980; 2012). Vancouver's picturesque downtown waterfront, with shiny towers, parks, and waterfront pathways, has repeatedly been used in marketing and planning materials that have found global uptake (Ley 1980; 2012; Bruttomesso 2001; Lowry and McCann 2011). The rezoning and residential redevelopment of areas around False Creek, together with downtown high-rise development since the 1970s, paved the way for more intensive redevelopment of Vancouver's downtown core in the 1990s (Hutton 2011). Today, such downtown waterfront redevelopments are often consolidated in the idea of "Vancouverism," or, "an ensemble of planning and design innovations for high-density down-town living […] widely regarded as an antidote to suburban sprawl" (Peck, Siemiatycki, and Wyly 2014, 386). Significantly, however, while downtown waterfront redevelopments have long offered examples for the global audiences, they also set reference points for post-industrial redevelopment across the region's suburbs.

As Brownill notes, "it seems that no city is complete without a revitalized waterfront" (2013, 45). But increasingly it also seems that no *suburban city* can do without a revitalized waterfront either (Airas and Hall 2019). Municipalities surrounding Vancouver have recently seen (or are undergoing) significant land use and transportation changes on their industrial waterfronts that would be instantly recognizable to those familiar with the downtown Vancouver context (Hall 2012; Hall and Stern 2014; Airas, Hall, and Stern 2015). There is increasing pressure on municipalities to redevelop their suburban waterfronts, while at the same time there is a growing need in the region to protect industrial activities from residential, commercial, and recreational development pressures (Hall 2012). The regional planning body, Metro Vancouver, notes that the "Vancouver region is experiencing a critical shortage of industrial land," and that saving waterfront lands for industrial activities and services is crucial to supporting a sustainable and growing regional economy (Metro Vancouver 2019). While the waterfront land use changes throughout the region may seem mundane, the increasing pace and frequency of these developments creates a concern over related issues of gentrification, displacement, affordability, fragmentation and sustainability, among others.

The expanding fringes of large metropolitan areas increasingly support "ways of living that were traditionally seen as 'urban'" (Moos et al 2015, 85), and suburban municipalities often use waterfront redevelopments to attract investment capital and as an "antidote" to their industrial and suburban reputations (Wakefield 2007). Recent transformations on suburban waterfronts in the Vancouver region reflect this trend. Further, as Lees notes, rapidly changing inner and outer suburbs, such as the ones in the Vancouver region, need research attention (Lees 2014), and this paper works to answer this call. As Tzaninis and Boterman note, "The blurring of the urban and the suburban has been widely problematized" (2018, 46). The paper aligns with the idea that distinctions between inner city and suburb has become more complicated, and as Lees notes "suburbia itself has changed" (Lees 2014: 36). In the Vancouver region, suburban municipalities are being connected to downtown Vancouver through rapid transit, thus retaining their "suburban" status even as the lines between urban and suburban are increasingly blurred. In this paper, I consider downtown-suburban dynamics and waterfront redevelopment together, incorporating insights from suburban and waterfront studies. The paper first contextualizes suburban waterfront change in the Vancouver region, then analyzes the case of Flavelle in the city of Port Moody, identifying four different narratives that help justify waterfront change, before ending with a discussion and conclusion.

Contextualizing suburban waterfront change in the Vancouver region

Placing regional waterfront change

In order to follow regional waterfront change, attention needs to be paid to waterfront lands, suburban areas, and their evolving dynamics. In the Vancouver region, waterfronts have for thousands of years been used and occupied

by Indigenous peoples, while settlers only deemed the waterfronts desirable for urban industrial development from the late 19th century (Harris 2002). Indeed, waterfront industries are a relatively recent phenomenon in the region (Hall 2012, 224), as are the structural changes that have enabled the reimagining of formerly industrial waterfront sites. For example, the latter half of the 20th century saw the beginning of containerization, which had significant effects on shipping lines, port areas, and cities at large (Hall and Clark 2011; Shaw 2001b; Airas 2016). In many cases, urban port lands were seen to be "freed up" for non-industrial activities (Bruttomesso 2001, 40; Galland and Hansen 2012, 203). Changes to port logistics and industrial location on a regional scale saw port activity extending across metropolitan space (Notteboom and Rodrigue 2005). In this process, formerly industrial lands on the waterfront became tempting sites for recreational and residential redevelopment.

In the wake of containerization, numerous cities redeveloped their downtown waterfronts, setting up redevelopment "models" for others to follow. Many authors have been critical of such planning and development changes. Avni and Teschner (2019) note that waterfront redevelopment often raises significant questions and conflicts around land ownership, social and environmental justice, heritage, identity, culture, environment, ecology and resilience. Moreover, the waterfront literature has raised questions around post-industrial spaces of consumption (Ley 1980; Harvey 1989), gentrification (Bunce 2009; Davidson and Lees 2005), colonialism (Oakley and Johnson 2013), social and environmental sustainability (Hall 2012; Hall and Stern 2014), industrial heritage (Wakefield 2007; Airas, Hall and Stern 2015) and manufacturing and economic activity (Curran 2010; Curran and Hanson 2005). Such concerns also apply to the implementation and impacts of waterfront "models" throughout the Vancouver region.

However, while recent waterfront literature has worked to address such concerns, there has been less emphasis on waterfront redevelopments occurring outside the urban core. Suburbanism has been an important focus of recent urban research (Moos et al. 2015; Lees 2014; Keil 2017), and the Vancouver region offers an interesting case not only because of multiple waterfront redevelopments, but also because ideas of the suburban and urban have become mixed (Peck, Siemiatycki and Wyly 2014). This paper aims to contribute to recent literature by focusing on *both* changing waterfront sites and suburban regions. While these two planning-related literatures have frequently been looked at separately, considering their interconnections also allows for an understanding of the diverse forces that shape waterfront land uses in their historical and developmental context.

Waterfront redevelopment in the Vancouver region

Vancouver is located on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. In the colonial establishment of the city in 1886, Vancouver was secured as the western terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and the Port of Vancouver became important in exporting resources such as timber, agricultural products, and minerals. Industrial employment was concentrated in lumber and pulp mills around False Creek and Burrard Inlet, and in sawmills and fish canneries along the Fraser River (Hutton 2011; Parnaby 2006). Such industries contributed significantly to Vancouver's growth in the subsequent years.

From the latter half of the 20th century, more attention started to be paid to managing regional growth. Through the 1970s, Vancouver remained the centre of the provincial resource sector, and downtown grew quickly, with production workers concentrating in central city neighbourhoods and inner suburban communities, and senior managers populating upscale neighbourhoods (Hutton 2011, 241; Ley and Hutton 1987, 416). At this point, regional growth management was increasingly on the agenda and competing land uses and commuting pressures, among other factors, characterized planning processes (Hutton 2011). Planning efforts in this vein included the rejection of freeways (Young 2001), creation of an Agricultural Land Reserve to protect farmland (Quastel, Moos, and Lynch 2012, 1069), and a "Liveable Region Plan" (1975), which included proposals for regional "town centres" to be situated in inner and outer suburban municipalities (Hutton 2011, 242–243).

However, Vancouver's role as a significant resource centre started to shift in the 1980s, when new growth driven by transnational immigration and investment started to occur, and when the EXPO 86 world's fair took place—an event that significantly shaped the downtown waterfront landscape (Hutton 2011, 243–244). Such growth influenced updated regional plans such as the 1996 "Livable Region Strategic Plan," which further drew on the 1975 idea of developing regional town centres (Hutton 2011, 244), and proposed "'compact,' 'complete' communities" in Vancouver and surrounding suburbs of Richmond, Coquitlam, and Surrey (Hutton 2011, 244). Such ideas are being realized in contemporary suburban waterfront development. For instance, the "River District" on the southern edge of the City of Vancouver is planned as a "complete" community (e.g. East Fraser Lands 2006, 7), while the Squamish "Oceanfront" is similarly envisioned as a "compact" and "complete community" (Squamish Oceanfront 2010, 30, 88).

Indeed, community planning discourses from the 1970s continue to guide suburban waterfront development in the region beyond downtown.

The 1990s saw the neoliberalization of planning and development in the region (Razin 2020, 7). As Mendez (2019) notes, Vancouver's economy went through a structural transformation which saw decreased "reliance on [the city's] function as the hub of British Columbia's resources economy" towards a more economically diversified metropolis with a global outlook (187). Globalization and sustainability were increasingly highlighted in 1990s planning (Razin 2020, 7), while megaevents, such as the 2010 Winter Olympics, further shaped regional growth and sustainable development goals (Laski 2009; Westerhoff 2016).

Vancouver has more recently been framed as the "poster child of urbanism in North America" and as a "model of contemporary city-making" (Berelowitz 2005, 1). The city's design and urban planning paradigm has even been given its own moniker: "Vancouverism" (Razin 2020, 7; Beasley 2019; Berelowitz 2005; Boddy 2004). Vancouverism is a complex place-based idea that encompasses "strategies of liveability, sustainability, and competitiveness with gracious beauty" (Beasley 2019, 8), and it is connected to the city's international, politically progressive, and environmentally conscious reputation (Rosol 2015, 258). Vancouver's downtown waterfront neighbourhoods such as Olympic Village, Granville Island, and Yaletown on False Creek, as well as Coal Harbour on Burrard Inlet are part of this image, and have been under the scrutiny of urban researchers for a long time (e.g. Ley 1980; 2012; Kear 2007; Eidelman 2018; Hall and Stern 2014). While such urban redevelopments have been critiqued (Hall and Stern 2014; Kear 2007; Dale and Newman 2009; McLean and Borén 2015), they are often referenced in waterfront studies alongside other famous developments in cities like Toronto, Boston, Baltimore, Chicago, London, Cape Town, Sydney, Hong Kong, among many others (Bunce and Desfor 2007; Brownill 2013; Brownill and O'Hara 2015; Desfor and Laidley 2011; Desfor et al 2011; Eidelman 2018; Lehrer and Laidley 2008; Shaw 2001a). They have even been copied elsewhere—for example, a replica of Vancouver's False Creek exists outside of Dubai (Boddy 2004, 18).

Vancouver's picturesque waterfront redevelopments make for an appealing planning vision, framed by ideals of sustainability and liveability (Beasley 2019, 8), and increasingly such redevelopments are desired beyond the urban core, inspiring residential redevelopment and shaping port and industrial activities across the region (Hall 2012; Hall and Stern 2014; Airas, Hall, and Stern 2015; Airas 2016; Airas and Hall 2019). While some waterfront research has paid attention to such suburban redevelopments (Wakefield 2007), and while recent research has looked at suburban waterfront cases in the Vancouver region, such as in Coquitlam (Hall and Stern 2014), New Westminster (Hall and Stern 2014; Airas, Hall, and Stern 2015) and Squamish (Airas and Hall 2019), there is still much more to be said about these rapidly developing suburban waterfront developments.

Governing waterfronts in the Vancouver region

Regional waterfront governance comes under the purview of the regional governing body, Metro Vancouver (hereafter Metro), formed in 2007 as a continuation of the former Greater Vancouver Regional District (Hutton 2011, 254). Metro consists of 21 municipalities and one electoral district, and is responsible for strategic land-use policies, regional parks, waste disposal and certain infrastructural policies, while a separate agency, Translink, is accountable for regional transportation (Hutton 2011, 238–239; Mendez 2019, 189; Metro Vancouver 2019). In the Metro region, planning decision-making powers are held by city councils (Razin 2020, 7).

The current regional growth strategy (Metro 2040 plan) addresses several challenges around growth, and it sets out a number of strategies and actions for Metro and member municipalities to follow (Metro Vancouver 2011, 6). The municipalities are, in principle, committed to following the goals of this plan, which aims to support a sustainable economy, protect the environment, and conserve industrial land (Metro Vancouver 2011). This is noteworthy considering waterfront change in the region. Some waterfront land use changes may require Metro Board approval for a zoning change, such as zoning for a "special study area," meaning that zoning decisions are often placed in the hands of the elected officials who sit on the board. Voices of, and presentations by, consultants, landowners, local businesses, Port of Vancouver, residents, and interest groups also play a key part in these decision-making processes. The Board thus has a chance to make decisions based their own political reasoning considering the region's future—which means that in some cases, the recommendations of urban planners on the "best" land use do not necessarily win the vote.

In recent years, it has become increasingly evident that similar discourses and visual imaginaries are being used to justify industrial to residential land use changes across numerous waterfront redevelopments in the Lower Mainland (Airas and Hall 2019). Though individual waterfront developments scattered across suburban locations

often seem disconnected, existing developments set a precedent and influence plans for future development across the region (e.g. Metro 2040). Waterfront changes also matter in relation to industrial relocation, port activities, real estate markets, transportation, environment, and sustainability (Airas and Hall 2019; Cheung 2015). As such, an analysis of suburban waterfront redevelopments further illuminates internal changes in the region and evolving downtown—suburban dynamics.

Suburban waterfront change

Using the case of Flavelle in the city of Port Moody, this paper aims to fill a lacuna in urban waterfront studies where the focus has mainly been on changes to urban core areas of cities (Airas 2016). In addition, the paper aims to advance an understanding of the complex suburban patterns of the Vancouver region (Peck, Siemiatycki, and Wyly 2014), thereby answering the call of Lees and others to interrogate how suburbia is changing (Lees 2014, 36; Keil 2017). Suburban waterfront redevelopments offer a unique case for examining how ways of living considered to be "urban" can increasingly be found outside of downtown (Moos et. al. 2015, 85).

To perform this analysis, the study employs a mixed methodology. Contextual background was gained from archival, government, and consulting documents, while semi-structured interviews were conducted with key figures and regional waterfront experts, including municipal planning and policy actors, planning consultants, residents, and environmentalists. In addition, multiple site visits were conducted at the study area to observe and analyze the ongoing change in relation to proposed plans and related documentation, since construction has not started at the time of writing. Insights were further contextualized using interviews with residents, planners, and developers from a recent multi-year research project focusing on changes along the region's waterfronts, particularly those along the Fraser River (Reclaiming the New Westminster waterfront, n.d.; Airas 2016). These interviews contained important knowledge of the lived experiences of those who have experienced waterfront change first-hand.

This paper uses narrative approaches such as those of Westerhoff (2016) and Ameel (2016) to understand how urban redevelopment plans and projects are imagined and put into practice. Ameel (2016) asserts that a focus on narratives could play a more significant role in planning research than has been the case so far. Power struggles around planning and policy can be understood in relation to storytelling, language, and related communication (Ameel 2016, 171). Applied here, this paper tracks narratives that drive and justify residential suburban waterfront development in a region that claims to be committed to the protection of industrial waterfront lands (Metro Vancouver 2011). A focus on planning narratives offers a deeper understanding of underlying assumptions around contemporary suburban waterfront development, including the roles of different actors (Westerhoff 2016, 4; Ameel 2016).

Suburban waterfront change: The case of Flavelle, Port Moody

The city of Port Moody is a historically industrial city of about 33,500 residents around 20km east of the City of Vancouver (Figure 1; City of Port Moody, n.d.; Statistics Canada 2016). Home to an aging "baby boomer" population, it has recently begun to attract younger couples as well (City of Port Moody 2014, 9). The Flavelle sawmill site, where waterfront development is slated to occur, is located on the south side of Burrard Inlet, which connects to the Pacific Ocean. To the south lies a set of railway tracks which separate the mill site from Port Moody's central district (Figure 2).

The history of Port Moody as a city stretches back to the late 19th century when colonial settlement began. Urban growth increased in the early 1900s, when the resource town became known for its deep-sea port, multiple sawmills, and oil refineries (City of Port Moody 2014). The Flavelle mill was established before the city was incorporated in 1913 (Port Moody Heritage Society 2012), and until recently, the site was in continuous industrial use. While the Flavelle mill faced some difficult times (Port Moody Heritage Society 2012), it was long a significant employer in Port Moody, including for many racialized immigrants, who were paid less than white workers and often made to work more unpleasant jobs (Orchard 1957; Port Moody Station Museum 2019).

Waterfront land uses in Port Moody have long been characterized by industries such as lumber, steel, and oil refining (Bartel 2021; City of Port Moody 2021a). The former mill site remains bounded by such uses. The waterfront to the west of the site is dominated by the Pacific Coast Terminals, a bulk terminal connected by rail to Vancouver which receives and stores sulphur and ethylene glycol from western Canada to be loaded onto ships (City of Port Moody 2021a). To the south of the site across the railway tracks is a chemical manufacturer (City of Port Moody,

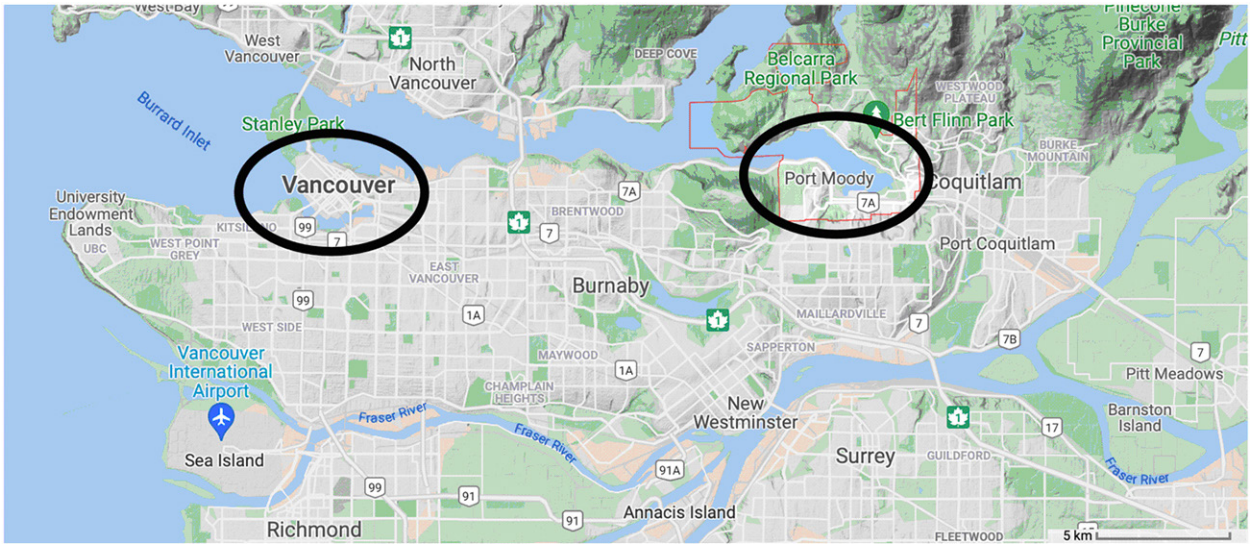

Figure 1
Port Moody location in relation to central Vancouver
Source: Google Maps 2022

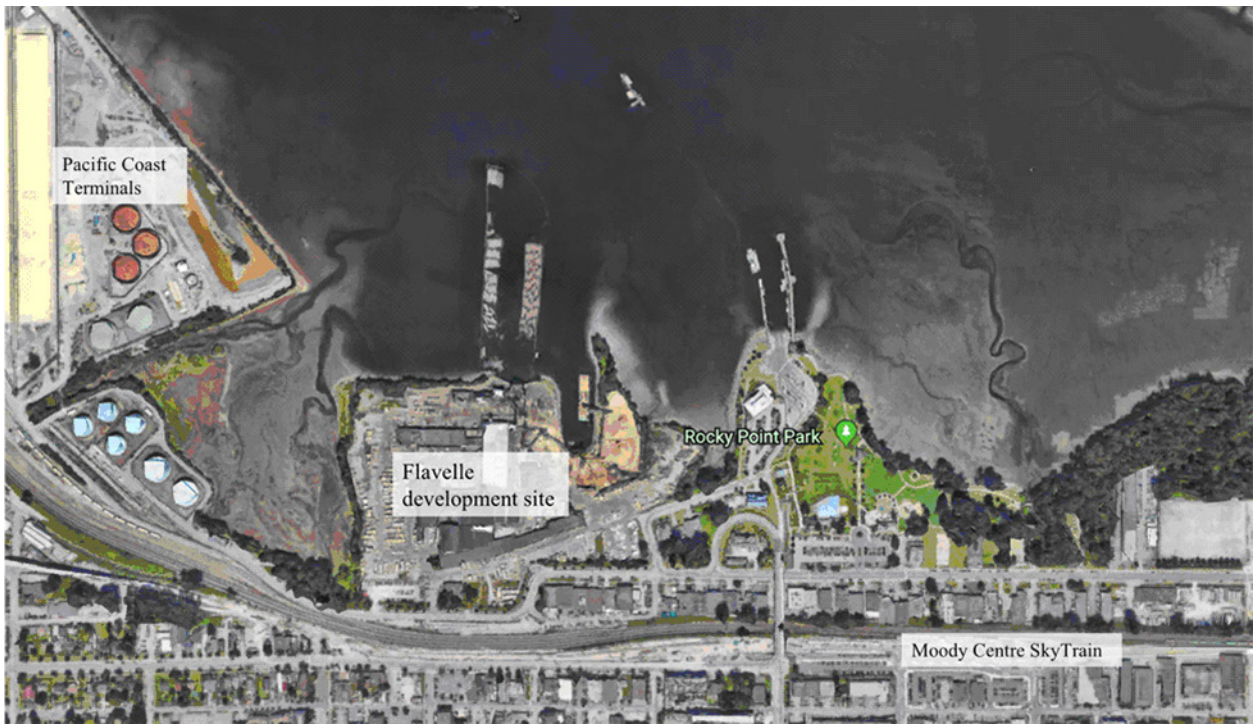

Figure 2
The Flavelle development site, Port Moody
Source: Google Earth

2021c). Northeast of the site, across Burrard Inlet, is the historic Ioco town and refinery site which was built by the Imperial Oil Company in the early 1900s. While the refinery closed in 1995 and the town was declared a heritage conservation area in 2002, petroleum industries remain along Burrard Inlet (City of Port Moody 2021b; 2021d). More recently, light industrial uses such as breweries have appeared adjacent to the new Moody Centre Skytrain station, while high density residential and commercial developments have emerged east of the site, closer to the Inlet Centre Skytrain station. Considering previous industrial activities on the sawmill site and in the city in general, new land uses represent a significant transformation.

Currently, the mill site and immediate surroundings are often referred to as Flavelle (after the former mill owner) in everyday language, but in the official community plan, the area is referred to as the "Oceanfront District" (City of Port Moody 2014, 90).

The mill site as change signifier: following regional waterfront examples

The mill has now been targeted as a site of significant waterfront redevelopment. Plans have been approved that will change this 34-acre property into a mixed-use residential site, similar to many other formerly industrial waterfronts in the Vancouver region (Flavelle Oceanfront Development 2016), including the "River District" in Vancouver (River District 2019a), "Osprey Village" in Pitt Meadows (City of Pitt Meadows 2009: 27; Martins 2011), Queensborough in New Westminster (City of New Westminster 2013), Fraser Mills in Coquitlam (Hall and Stern 2014), and "Oceanfront" in Squamish (District of Squamish 2018). A local planner explained the Flavelle development:

> [W]e've seen some really beautiful and fantastic examples of these waterfront communities popping up in Vancouver and North Vancouver, and this Flavelle site in Port Moody is another example of that happening and the owner of the property […] sees the redevelopment potential of that site as a residential community and the incredible financial return to come out of it […] (Planner, August 31, 2018).

The site owner approached the city to change the land use designation for the Port Moody property from industrial to other uses, but for this to occur, the site designation needed to change in the Port Moody Official Community Plan (City of Port Moody 2018). Furthermore, the mill site was considered a "special study area" according to the regional plan. In the case of Port Moody, "special study area" meant that in order for the land to be used for urban development, it "would [need to] undergo an amendment to the Regional Growth Strategy designation" (Aspen Enterprises 2019). In other words, the developer and site owner were dependent on a decision from Metro regarding the site to proceed with planning and change the site from industrial uses. A local planner explained that "re-designations of these kinds of lands [lead] to much more lucrative development opportunities" (Planner, August 31, 2018). The City of Port Moody had originally approached Metro Vancouver in 2014 with a proposal to change the Flavelle land use designation from "Industrial" to "General Urban" with removal of the Special Study Area overlay (Metro Vancouver 2014, 140). Among other reasons, Metro rejected this request since "no detailed area planning [had] been completed yet, nor [had] a development concept been proposed" (Metro Vancouver 2014, 144). Metro also noted that "it is difficult to evaluate the trade-off of this type of mixed-use with the loss of industrial land without more detail" (Metro Vancouver 2014, 144). In 2018, the City of Port Moody came back to Metro Vancouver with a similar, yet much more detailed proposal for land use change, making the case that their plan would align with Metro's regional goals around, for example, complete communities, sustainable economies, transportation, retention of industrial lands, among others, using photographic examples of waterfront developments from across the region to help justify this change (Metro Vancouver 2018b,d). This new argument was successful, and Metro approved Port Moody's request, after which the city enacted a rezoning change from Industrial to General Urban land use (Metro Vancouver 2018c). In 2019, after the rezoning, the value of the Flavelle property jumped by 114% from $24,904,600 CAD (2018) to $53,343,400 CAD (BC Assessment 2019).

Outside of the Metro planning process, the developer had been distributing supportive door knockers and engaging at local festivals since 2015, and the first Flavelle Oceanfront Development open house was held by the city on January 7, 2016 (Flavelle Oceanfront Development, n.d.). Here, the developer introduced their vision for the property, and from the early proposals, and within materials presented at early open houses, the developer framed the project as a "legacy project," and highlighted how the "community" development would provide connections, play spaces, homes, and employment to Port Moody (Flavelle Oceanfront Development 2016). The proposals also highlighted the soon-to-be opened Evergreen extension of the SkyTrain rapid transit system (Doering 2016), which would further connect the development, and Port Moody, to the rest of the Vancouver region. The SkyTrain station in Port Moody was opened the same year, in December 2016 (Doering 2016).

Importantly, examples of regional waterfront change were deployed in the negotiations around the development. Indeed, the first open house introduced the site using images of other waterfront redevelopments in the region, including those from downtown Vancouver (Olympic Village), North Vancouver (Lower Lonsdale) and New Westminster (Pier Park) (Flavelle Oceanfront Development 2016). Thus, the Port Moody "legacy project" was placed in relation to already established projects in the region, where formerly industrial waterfront sites are being

redeveloped into primarily residential real estate (Airas and Hall 2019). The Flavelle waterfront redevelopment was framed as unproblematic, and in line with local and regional aspirations.

Narrating waterfront change

After the positive decision by Metro, the Flavelle owner pushed ahead with development plans. However, there was opposition to the development by such entities as the Port of Vancouver, which asserted "the importance of protecting industrial land as a regional issue" (Metro Vancouver 2018d, 3). Metro's planning staff were also opposed and raised concerns that the proposal "did not address regional planning objectives meant to protect industrial land" (Metro Vancouver 2018d, 4). Metro warned that shrinking industrial availability could slow job growth, discourage business, and reduce availability of agricultural land (Metro Vancouver 2019). This staff recommendation followed the Metro regional growth strategy, which aims to protect the supply of industrial land (which is being threatened by mixed residential/commercial developments) and focus growth on urban centres (Metro Vancouver 2011; 2018b). Metro planning staff also concluded in early 2018 that the Flavelle site remains viable for industrial uses, despite desired land use changes (Metro Vancouver 2018b).

Furthermore, the City of Port Moody's own planning staff had raised concerns around density, potential land use, and traffic from the earliest proposals for the site (City of Port Moody 2017c). Related to these concerns from the city, there were also broader concerns around the transformation of industrial lands being articulated by politicians and the media, particularly around housing affordability, business relocation, local employment, and gentrification (see Cheung 2015; Gold 2017; McElroy 2018b). Despite all these concerns, the Flavelle development has now been approved. To further analyze the suburban waterfront development in the region, in the following sections, four narratives that helped justify the development in Port Moody are identified and traced: 1) transit accessibility; 2) redefining the city's image; 3) the argument that "Every city is allowed one"; and 4) waterfront "land rush".

Transit accessibility

SkyTrain is a rapid transit system that operates in the Metro region. It was first launched in 1985 in advance of EXPO 86, and the network has been growing since then to connect downtown and suburban locations (Translink 2021). A municipal planning and policy expert in Port Moody commented in an interview that "ever since SkyTrain came in, the demand and the interest in redevelopment […] has increased substantially" (September 18, 2018). This statement also applied more specifically to Flavelle, as proponents often referred to transit accessibility in redevelopment discussions. Indeed, from the earliest plans the site was presented in relation to the Skytrain rapid transit station that was opened nearby at the end of 2016. Information boards at the Flavelle open house in early 2016 showcased the proximity of the development to Moody Centre SkyTrain station and its connections to Downtown Vancouver and the larger region. In doing so, the project was positioned as a "transit-oriented development" (TOD), which consists of walking- and cycling-friendly high-density mixed-use development nearby to transit stops (Jones and Ley 2016; Translink 2020). In recent literature, TOD and related Skytrain development has been assessed critically, due to impacts of gentrification (Jones and Ley 2016).

However, even though SkyTrain was used to justify the development, there was ongoing confusion over whether the project qualified as a TOD, in particular due to the distance from the site to the station and whether the development fit within the radius of what could be considered TOD. For example, the Port Moody Master Transportation Plan notes that the city should "continue to encourage Transit Oriented Development within 400 metres of Evergreen Extension SkyTrain stations" (City of Port Moody 2017a, 41). The Flavelle site does not fit within this radius of 400 metres. Nevertheless, in the City of Port Moody's presentation to the Metro board advocating for changes to the regional site designation, the Flavelle site was shown on a map as being inside of an 800-metre radius from the Skytrain station (Metro Vancouver 2018b). Furthermore, Port Moody's official community plan is inconsistent in its definition for TOD, and uses a flexible radius depending on which transit stop is being referred to. For example, for Inlet Centre SkyTrain station (furthest from Flavelle), TOD falls within "a 400 metre radius of […] [the] rapid transit station" (City of Port Moody 2014, 95). For Moody Centre SkyTrain station, the one closest to the Flavelle "Oceanfront district," TOD applied to "areas within 400–800 metres of rapid transit" (City of Port Moody 2014, 90). As a planner noted:

> Flavelle [developer and owner] was using the SkyTrain as an argument to build this kind of density [and] there is a number of TOD principles that come into play and but they [the developer] used an 800 meter circle […] [I]t's a different scale but they are using that and it just touches [the Flavelle] site so they say this is a transit oriented community (Planner, August 31, 2018).

SkyTrain was an asset that the developer, site owner and city were able to use to promote the development to the Metro board. When the Flavelle project was initially denied by the board in 2014, there was no SkyTrain station nearby, and proponents were unable to point to it as a benefit. However, in 2018, the city and the developer both highlighted SkyTrain as a positive aspect of the development proposal, and as one of the reasons for changing the site designation (Metro Vancouver 2018b). This fact, and the controversy surrounding these arguments, was also brought up in an interview with a planner:

> [T]hey [developer] were using SkyTrain as a marketing tool to suggest that this is a transit oriented community […] but city staff […] were arguing that no, you are not a transit oriented community, […] the same politicians that supported the Flavelle that has up to 38 story towers on the site were opposing the 26 story towers […] right around the transit station because the density was too high and traffic would be a big impact […] it was frustrating because the SkyTrain was being used as a negative on one project and positive on another for different reasons. (Planner, August 31, 2018).

Notably, city council also rejected recommendations from their own planning staff to scale back the density and number of residential units at the Flavelle site from 3,397 to 3,000 (Bartel 2017). In doing so, they showed their willingness to concentrate growth and create density in manner out of line with the city's policy "to concentrate its growth in specially designated transit-oriented development (TOD) areas" (Bartel 2017). Indeed, the TOD discussions were subjective—for example, one councillor noted that the Flavelle development was close enough to transit for them, stating that "It has to be walkable to transit, and I think this is definitely walkable" (Bartel 2017). Here, the councillor's personal reflection on distances became *a priori* in defending the development, while rendering the city's TOD policy irrelevant. It is also notable that the actual walking distances from the SkyTrain to the Flavelle site are much longer due to the road network, and transit accessibility looks and feels very different on the ground than it seems on a radius circle on a map. Overall, the TOD argument was markedly fluid, subjective and political, rather than standardized.

In sum, while transit-oriented development (TOD) is often noted to be a progressive response to suburban sprawl in the North American context, in the Vancouver region, TOD development has also been associated with increased property values, demographic changes, and gentrification (Jones and Ley 2016; Duncan 2011). In the case of Flavelle, plans followed the opening of the new Skytrain line in December 2016 (Doering 2016). Subsequently, the City of Port Moody held an open house at the Skytrain station near the Flavelle site to gather feedback to bolster their case to Metro Vancouver for the land use change. The developer and the city repeatedly referred to transit accessibility in open house materials and in presentations, and transit became a strong narrative to promote the land use change. The developer's open house presentation boards promoted Flavelle's location in relation to Evergreen line and the site's connectivity to downtown Vancouver and the region (Flavelle Oceanfront Development 2016), while the City of Port Moody and the developer used maps showing the proximity of the site to the transit line as part of presentations to support the land use change to Metro Vancouver (Metro Vancouver 2018b). Visuals and references to regional connectivity were used to support the development, while notions of transit accessibility were used to justify allowing a mix of residential, commercial, and light industrial uses. Ultimately, the narratives around transit-oriented development wielded by the developer and the City of Port Moody were convincing enough to Metro Vancouver that despite the confusion around what type of development might be considered "transit oriented," this confusion did not significantly affect the approval of the land use change.

Redefining the city's image

As Wakefield (2007) writes, many cities use waterfront redevelopments as a way to redefine the city's image in an attempt to attract investment capital. Whereas historically, industry was often considered as a source of community pride and progress, today it often has negative connotations which include ideas around pollution or backwardness. As a result, city planners and promoters often try to transform the city's image to a more positive one, often using

waterfront revitalization projects (Wakefield 2007). This narrative of the changing city image was also highly present in waterfront redevelopment discussions in Port Moody.

Since the early development proposals, the developer spoke about creating a "legacy project" for Port Moody, touting inclusive ideas around development that would support communities with options to live, work and play (Flavelle Oceanfront Development 2016). Echoing the developer, Port Moody's mayor championed the modern residential waterfront redevelopment and framed it in relation to the "industrial days" of the past and associated imaginaries of "smokestack mill town[s]" (Bartel 2018b). He also noted that: "Today's industry is high tech, and they need office space and glass fibre, not wood fibre and beehive burners, as the industries of the Past" (Bartel 2018b).

Despite these claims of industry being located in the past, it has not disappeared, and there is a huge demand for industrial waterfront land in the region (Cheung 2015). But the rush to get on board with rapid real estate development has become front of mind for most municipalities in the Vancouver region, including Port Moody (McElroy 2018a). This was particularly evident in the city-supported and developer-led marketing around the Flavelle redevelopment, which used existing examples of residential conversions of formerly industrial waterfronts in the Vancouver region (Flavelle Oceanfront Development 2016; Metro Vancouver 2018b). Regarding the marketing, a planner noted that:

> They [the developer] had a consulting team and they were saying this is our vision and look at these beautiful photos, right, […] it was more of a marketing approach that they were using all these wonderful success stories as a justification for moving this project forward. (Planner, August 31, 2018).

Other city officials believed that waterfront development would boost the city's image and future prospects. The majority of the Port Moody council members were in support, and voted in favor of, the rezoning of the Flavelle site (City of Port Moody 2017b; Bartel 2017). Most of the council found the development to be a particularly appealing opportunity for redefining the city's image, and as one of the councillors noted, the site has the potential to become the city's "signature development" (Bartel 2017), a sentiment that directly resonates with the developer's goal of creating a "legacy project" (Flavelle Oceanfront Development 2016). A local planning expert stated that municipalities often have a strong desire to implement residential waterfront developments because:

> it's new tax revenue, it cleans up former industrial areas, it allows cities to appear to be far more evolved and sophisticated by having wonderful waterfronts (Planning Expert, October 17, 2018)

The Port Moody mayor and council placed themselves in line with the developer's "legacy project" (Flavelle Oceanfront Development 2016) partially to change the city's image away from the "industries of the past" (Bartel 2018b), particularly sawmills and oil refineries, to a city full of residential real estate and investment opportunities. This is also in line with how a planning and policy expert described Port Moody's vision for the development:

> I think for Port Moody it's part of this vision of evolving from a mill town, industrial town, centered around the railway and waterfront industry to you know a more vibrant, dense, exciting area. […] I think it's this vision towards a cleaner, more urban, more modern kind of a vision for the future for the community (Municipal planning and policy expert, September 18, 2018).

The city was pursuing an image transformation, and residential real estate was positioned as the primary way to realize this vision. A municipal planning and policy expert stated in an interview that continued industrial use was not in the cards, noting that "[Port Moody] didn't have anyone coming forward expressing an interest in using it [for industrial purposes]." (September 18, 2018). In another interview, a local planner noted that there were very few options other than housing that were proposed to replace the mill.

The Flavelle mill ended work on site in fall 2020, and the sawmill owner noted that "disproportionately high municipal property taxes" were the reasons for the closure (Penner 2020). However, the owner pushed for the very rezoning that increased the land value, which in turn increased the tax bill. In 2019, the sawmill's taxes went up by half a million dollars, and the closure affected 70 employees (Bartel 2020). Regarding the future of the site, a local environmental expert noted in an interview, that "I think there's no question that whatever gets built there will be

residential," while another environmental expert noted in relation to the development in Port Moody that "we are driven here by maximizing profitability, not livability" (Interview, November 22, 2018).

The growth machine thesis by Harvey Molotch highlights the importance of urban land and the ways that "social, economic, and political forces" come together when members have similar interests (Molotch 1976, 309). The appeal of increasing the value of land in Port Moody was apparent in arguments made by local government and the developer. In the media the mayor of Port Moody made references to the transformation of the Flavelle site as a way of modernizing the city and placing "industrial days" in the past while accommodating modern "high tech" development (Bartel 2018b). Images of other regional waterfront developments, the new transit line, and residential towers, among other characteristics were used in promotion of the site by the developer and the city (e.g. Flavelle Oceanfront Development 2016; Metro Vancouver 2018b) to further merge together economic and cultural interests in the name of entrepreneurialism (Prytherch 2002). In this way, waterfront developments from across the region were framed as small "flagship" projects that would justify Port Moody's waterfront redevelopment and redefine the image of the city (Wood and Brock 2015; Boyle and Hughes 1994).

"Every city is allowed one"

The development in Port Moody could not go ahead without a change to the land designation, and the City of Port Moody and the developer/site owner needed to seek approval for this change from the Metro board. The most challenging aspect of the approval for the proponent was Metro's commitment to the protection of the industrial land supply in its regional growth strategy (Metro Vancouver 2011). Due to ongoing pressures to convert industrial lands, protecting the region's industrial lands is seen as a necessity. Metro has, through the regional federation, included regional land use designations in the regional growth strategy to protect industrial lands (Metro Vancouver 2015: 8). A planning consultant explained:

> Metro Vancouver is doing a lot of work on industrial land retention right now, it's a huge issue for them, and how they protect and intensify the use of industrial land that we do have because we are losing businesses out of the Lower Mainland […] It's cheaper for [companies] to […] put containers on railcars, send them to Calgary, stuff them, and […] stick them back on trains or transport trucks back out to Vancouver because they cannot afford to find the land here to do that (September 12, 2018).

Disappearance of industrial land has occurred across the Vancouver region as residential waterfronts are being developed in suburban municipalities such as New Westminster, Richmond, Fort Langley, Pitt Meadows, Squamish, Coquitlam and Delta (Airas and Hall 2019). Notably, Port Moody and the developer made references to these other suburban waterfront redevelopments in the region in order to justify the Flavelle project. As a local planner noted:

> [T]here were discussions around the table of every community has these iconic sites that they are entitled to redevelop, there was discussion around Metro's role in interfering in local aspirations and things like that so it's interesting the political dynamic that happens because they ignore the purpose of having an industrial designation in the regional growth strategy (August 31, 2018).

Further, when a developer representative made their case for Flavelle to the Metro board, they highlighted how other cities in the region have redeveloped their waterfronts:

> For Port Moody it comes down to this, how does a city balance its regional and municipal priorities, and other cities have had to do this as well […] This site however should be looked as something unique, and when you picture the future of Flavelle you also look at Lower Lonsdale, Westminster Quay, Fraser Mills, Steveston, Coal Harbour – each one of those is good for their cities and also good for the region (Metro Vancouver, 2018a).

The developer/landowner referred to local aspirations, what is good for each city, is also then good for the region. A local planner reflected:

> [T]he landowner was pointing to all sorts of examples that had already happened - 'why didn't you make a big deal about those lands, like Lonsdale was all industrial land on their waterfront, what's happening in Vancouver, Coal Harbour and Yaletown those are all industrial lands even False Creek Flats' (August 31, 2018).

Local politicians such as the Mayor of Port Moody also rooted for the development, defending the plan on their personal website and citing industrial changes in the core areas of New York (moving industrial activities away from Manhattan) and Vancouver (moving industrial activities away from False Creek) as justification for the transformation of Port Moody:

> ---In Vancouver, the traditional industrial lands around False Creek have all, with a couple minor exceptions, transitioned away from industrial use – you can look back even to the early 1980's to see False Creek as almost completely industrial uses. Port Moody is now part of the urban core of Metro Vancouver – the ideas of suburbs are fading as we all live/work/play across the region and the lower mainland increases in population density. With the rest of the regional vision in the RGS [*Regional Growth Strategy*], it makes it impractical to think we would maintain industrial operations in the core, where the delivery vehicles have a hard time accessing the businesses, and the land would be far better used for high density in the 'core' (Clay, 2017).

In this interpretation, Port Moody has become part of the core of Metro Vancouver, where mixed use waterfront development dominates across municipalities, and where industrial uses are pushed further away. The logic of offering a fair share of opportunities to municipalities influenced the decision-making process, even as the shortage of industrial land and the stipulations within Metro's growth strategy remains a concern for those on the Metro board. A local consultant explained how these contradictions played out:

> [A]mongst many reasons why the planning staff at Metro Vancouver were concerned is a precedent setting situation that if this was allowed to go out of industrial then everybody would be coming forward – you did it for those guys… (September 12, 2018).

A local planner explained further:

> …you know every city has local aspirations to achieve, this is just their turn, every city is allowed one, you know, one little approval kind of thing, yeah, so that's kind of the justification they are trying to find that soft approach and often that is held up in equal measure to all the technical reasons why this is a bad idea (August 31, 2018).

Balancing local aspirations and regional goals proved to be a strong narrative at the Metro level. As the region already had multiple examples of waterfront development where industrial uses have been converted to mixed-use residential (Airas and Hall 2019), it became increasingly difficult for elected officials to forbid the development in Port Moody. A local planning expert however warns that despite a general belief among local politicians that cities should be allowed to redevelop their waterfronts, changing land uses to exclusively residential and recreational use is not the way to plan for the future:

> We are a port city, a port region… [I]t makes sense in Vancouver to have urbanized the water's edge, but that shouldn't mean that we should be doing it along every inch of water's edge in the region. It makes sense here, doesn't mean it makes sense in Port Moody (October 17, 2018).

The same expert expanded, noting that:

> …everything affects everything else. […] We are going to have lovely walkable seawalls everywhere, and residential development and café's but we are also going to have a lot of logging trucks […] it's a short term financial choice for a municipality to say yes to these projects, there's a windfall for them but longer

> term, they may find that their residents have to drive further […] to get to work because we have taken the employment land (October 17, 2018).

Embedded in these political arguments around why "every city is allowed one" are considerations around the social and economic changes brought about by waterfront redevelopments. Municipal dreams of new housing and recreational options on the waterfront connect to associated imaginaries of new residents, lifestyles, culture, and consumption habits, all of which will ostensibly have positive impacts on the city (Lees 2014). These desires are also evident in marketing. For example, a developer in the municipality of New Westminster sells new residential real estate on a formerly industrial waterfront with the slogan: "The Peninsula is not only a place to live, but a way to live" (Aragon 2014). Similar messages exist in relation to other recent waterfront redevelopments elsewhere in the region (Flavelle Oceanfront Development 2016; Newport Beach 2019; River District 2019b). Indeed, waterfront redevelopments easily become associated with what Lees refers to as the "new" and "good/economic/property-owning" middle classes seen as attractive to policymakers and promoters (Lees 2014, 53).

Waterfront development proposals highlight certain publics and activities while "less-advantaged urban residents" are often implicitly excluded (Hall and Stern 2014, 593; Airas and Hall 2019). Developments are framed using promotional photos of new buildings, green and office spaces, and working age people with children, while people who don't belong to these categories are often left out. Promotional images support a false narrative where the waterfront would have almost been empty before the new residents (Airas and Hall 2019), despite the fact that in a place like Port Moody, residents of multiple ethnicities worked at and lived near the waterfront for over 100 years working in industrial operations. Regardless, new apartments and green spaces get depicted in marketing and promotion with young, healthy, primarily white families doing sports and entertainment activities, while traces of the cultural past seem to be quite marginal if existent at all. Municipal demands for the "one" unique, legacy waterfront are actually demands for the same kind of waterfront development seen in other cities, further feeding a trajectory of homogeneous urban development in the region.

Waterfront "land rush"

A final narrative relates to the shortage of waterfront land in the region. Arguments about the need for waterfront land are used by parties on different sides—by those that want to transform industrial uses into primarily housing, and by those seeking to highlight the importance of contemporary industrial and other activities along the water. Such arguments link closely to Li's (2014) idea of the "land rush," characterized by a "sudden, hyped interest in a resource because of its newly enhanced value, and the spectacular riches it promises to investors who get into the business early" (Li 2014, 595). The land rush is articulated from many different sides. For example, BC Business magazine noted concerns over skyrocketing property values and industrial lands becoming a "scarce commodity" (Gold 2017). Waterfronts have also been framed by Port Moody councillors as a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to enhance our shoreline" (Bartel 2018a). Consultants have also noted a shrinking supply of industrial waterfront land, noting that the Flavelle site is "[O]ne of the last waterfront redevelopment opportunities in the inlet. […] there's no other site like that in Port Moody and if you look down Burnaby, North Shore, and so on, there's nothing of that scale" (Planning consultant, September 12, 2018).

In addition, a municipal planning and policy expert, noted that Flavelle is "one of the last single-owner large development sites in Port Moody" and "the last piece really" stating that:

> [T]here is a pressure for land, there's limited land, so these sites that may in the past have been not really even on the radar like nobody even thinking about them as something […] there's just so much growth in the region that whereas before maybe pressure was on Vancouver it's now moving outward. People talk about they are just sort of discovering Port Moody […] (September 18, 2018).

Arguments for investment opportunities or industrial needs (see Metro Vancouver 2019) are put forward in relation to the limited land on the waterfront. Various developments in the region are framed as the "last" opportunity to live on the waterfront, as in this ad (Figure 3) along the Fraser River in Vancouver.

Figure 3
Advertising at the River District in Vancouver
Photo credit: Annika Airas

Framing a development opportunity as a "last chance" is a common thread. Waterfront lands are viewed as a shrinking commodity, and that view is further supported by newspaper headlines (Bartel 2018a), graphs, tables, statistics, and maps (Metro Vancouver 2015; 2019). Depending on the framing, the idea of the "last chance" can be used to benefit technical and social arguments in support of, or in opposition to, waterfront redevelopments. A local planner explained how the rush for waterfront redevelopment and the right to redevelop meets with the metropolitan region's urge to simultaneously deal with the shrinking supply of industrial waterfront land in the region:

> You can't stand there and say 'why didn't you deal with this [industrial land] 20 years ago', well, we are dealing with it now because we are recognizing that maybe we made some mistakes in the past […] again it is that qualitative thing why are you stopping now when it's my turn kind of thing. (August 31, 2018).

Significantly, the land rush narrative is used to create investment value in formerly industrial areas, and it is further reinforced by related narratives such as "every city is allowed one" and that of the changing city image.

Discussion and conclusion

Vancouver downtown waterfronts, such as those around False Creek, have been applauded in global urban planning and policy circles. But the "Vancouverist" waterfront model has also increasingly found regional uptake, as developments in South Vancouver, Pitt Meadows, New Westminster, Coquitlam, and Squamish indicate. Suburban waterfront developments in the Vancouver region, such as one planned for the City of Port Moody, typically envision a transformation from the "industrial days" of the past (Bartel 2018b) to more "modern" residential and recreational futures. This type of development idea is appealing to landowners, developers, city officials, and others, as it can help increase land values and tax revenues, among others. Peck, Siemiatycki, and Wyly argue that development models associated with Vancouverism encourage "repetition rather than innovation. […] This is not simply a matter of

repetitive condo development, but extends to the multi-dimensional (re)production of suburban spaces" (2014, 404). Applied here, while differences do exist among suburban waterfront redevelopments, ideas around developing formerly industrial sites gain power as preceding developments are used as justification for further reproducing similar suburban waterfront spaces. For instance, in the case of Port Moody, Flavelle became a "bankable skyline" (Peck, Siemiatycki, and Wyly 2014, 398) on the waterfront with the help of strong references to existing projects around the region (Flavelle Oceanfront Development 2016). At the same time, it set an example of how to push through a highly contested development. That said, while the development was promoted with ideas of creating a "legacy" project, the site's future remains to be seen. At the time of writing the sawmill has closed. Using selected narratives, the developer and the city got the upper hand with their modernizing vision for the site. However, uncertainties remain: as of the time of writing, there are no signs yet of any of the proposed developments on the Port Moody waterfront.

The Flavelle case is but one of a number of recent suburban waterfront developments in the Vancouver region. The development has been narrated using textual and visual references to, for example, technological and infrastructure investments in transit. The voices of local politicians and the land owner and developer further helped to narrate how the city's image could be redefined through waterfront change. Here, planning and consultancy documents, developer framings, and media outputs further aided as they communicated a visual imaginary of a waterfront area where mill operations were transformed into a "mill café" with associated public plazas and condo towers (City of Port Moody Oceanfront District 2018, 7). The contemporary setting where Metro's elected officials can vote in favour of changing land uses in regional plans (e.g. the case of "special study area") adds pressure in deciding which municipalities are "allowed to" implement waterfront changes. The transformations will undoubtedly bring economic profit to municipalities, landowners, and developer pockets, but can contrast with established municipal and regional planning goals. This setting further creates a situation where elected officials stand in "solidarity" considering the relative distribution and concentration of waterfront development assets. Further, the relationships between these identified factors, together with media outputs, planning and consultancy documents, political debates, developer materials, planning practices, and public discussions further feed narratives such as the "land rush," where the region's waterfronts are often framed as "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" (Bartel 2018a) to create a "legacy project" (Flavelle Oceanfront Development 2016).

The rush to develop leaves questions and concerns around long term suburban waterfront development in the Vancouver region. If more waterfronts are converted to similar uses, with similar aesthetics, services, and desired publics, it simultaneously means a development pattern that diminishes or even erases opportunities for other uses than recreation and residential real estate on these waterfront lands. For instance, racial and cultural histories and presence on the waterfront, related heritage and identities, industrial activities, employment opportunities, or any alternative uses other than a "bankable skyline" (Peck, Siemiatycki, and Wyly 2014, 398) are easily bypassed when the main focus is on narratives such as ones that supported the development in Port Moody. Further, the regional and local urban planning goals for sustainability and affordability (Metro Vancouver 2011; City of Port Moody 2014) can easily be challenged when contemporary patterns of waterfront development squeeze industrial operations to further locations at the same time as Metro is experiencing a critical shortage of industrial land (Metro Vancouver 2019). This adds to the possibility of longer transport distances and increased road traffic, while offering less industrial and employment opportunities in the region (Cheung 2015). New uses with coffee shops, waterfront walkways, and residential towers characterize waterfront plans, removing the chance of affordability for diverse publics living on the waterfront as, for example, only ~2% of the residential units at the Flavelle site are planned for rental (Bartel 2018c). Overall, the narratives that currently characterize the regional waterfront development conversation showcase signs of short term thinking for quick turnover, as more and more suburban cities want and seem to be "allowed one" waterfront development.

Contemporary ways of discussing land use conflicts and suburban waterfront redevelopments such as the one in Port Moody indicate that a few strategic plot lines can become powerful within redevelopment processes, which can influence outcomes in the built environment and region at large. As Ameel notes, "planning involves telling a story" (2016, 183) and following narrative elements can be particularly meaningful (Ameel 2016; Westerhoff 2016). In this paper, a narrative approach was used to unpack a specific story about waterfront redevelopment beyond the urban core. Agents/actors from the media, politicians, planning bodies, developers, and landowners, among others, guide the plot(s), and communicate metaphors, such as "legacy project" (Flavelle Oceanfront Development 2016) or a move from "smokestack mill town[s]" to "modern economy" (Bartel 2018b). These narratives are repeatedly used when describing the transformation of the waterfront planning area. However, in the process, the discussion easily reverts back

to these few selected aspects of urban waterfront development, while downplaying the many complexities involved in planning (see Ameel 2016). The questions related to region's land use and waterfronts are complex, however a few selected narratives can lead the way in making developments seem less complicated than they actually are.

Vancouver's picturesque downtown waterfronts are noted within international planning and policy circles. However, the narratives used to transform downtown areas are also being used to transform suburban waterfront areas across the region. This regional development is concerning, even beyond the Vancouver region, as it seems that waterfront development narratives, deployed through municipal and regional governance, planning, policy, and the media, can be used to override set commitments for sustainable urban futures. Following the development in Port Moody and considering it against the regional context—and even beyond the region—then leaves a question: What is the real price of narrating the "gracious beauty" (Beasley 2019, 8) on the (sub)urban waterfront? And who is the story for?

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