Title: *Common ground? Exploring community in suburban townhouse developments*

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Geographic focus: Surrey, BC, Canada and Langley, BC, Canada

Research Question/s:

1) To what extent do planners and developers support community and how do these efforts shape suburban townhouse developments?
2) What kind of community exists in suburban townhouse developments and to what extent do the physical and legal characteristics of these townhouse developments shape this community?

Significance

Townhouses have become an increasingly prevalent form of housing in many suburban areas and they differ form conventional suburban development patterns in both their physical and legal attributes. While townhouse developments are helping to advance some contemporary planning goals such as increased density, the potential impact of townhouses on two other planning interests - social interaction and sense of community - has not been investigated. This study helps fill that research gap.

Findings

Through three case studies of townhouse complexes in Surrey and Langley, British Columbia, the author found that both planners and developers value community, however they do so for different reasons. These differences are reflected in the physical and legal manifestations of townhouse developments. The author also found that social interaction and sense of community in the townhouse complexes he studied did not appear to be any different than in the region as a whole. However, there was variation in the levels of social interaction and sense of community among residents within the same complexes, suggesting that these developments allow residents who wish to participate in the community to be engaged while at the same time allowing residents who do not wish to participate in the community to be withdrawn. In addition, the population of the case study complexes appeared to be mostly composed of a homogeneous group of young families. While the homogeneity of the residents may have a positive impact on their sense of community, the fact that many residents were looking to move from those developments to single detached homes in the near future appeared to be having a negative impact on the sense of community.