Arrested Development:  
A Deep Map Exploration of Community Building in Ontario and Spain  
by  
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RESIDENTS OF INCOMPLETE PLANNED COMMUNITIES SUFFER SOCIAL ISOLATION AND A SURPLUS OF FRAGMENTED INFRASTRUCTURE. BECAUSE THESE COMMUNITIES FAILED TO ACHIEVE POPULATION GOALS, AND LACK HISTORICAL LAYERS OF HABITATION THAT INSPIRE RESTORATION INVESTMENT, THEY ARE BRANDED AS "GHOST TOWNS" BY THE MEDIA. NONETHELESS, RESIDENTS PERCEIVE THE SUCCESS OF THEIR COMMUNITIES LARGELY IN RELATION TO THE MAINTENANCE OF PLANNED FEATURES LIKE PUBLIC PARKS. CRITICISM FROM THE MEDIA ALSO INSPIRES REACTIONARY COMMUNITY BONDING. THIS THESIS USED DEEP MAPPING TO TELL THE STORIES OF TOWNSEND, ONTARIO AND VADELUZ, SPAIN, TWO SIMILARLY DISREGARDED DEVELOPMENTS. A LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF UNSUCCESSFUL URBAN DESIGN INFORMED A HOLISTIC EXPLORATION OF LIFE IN THESE COMMUNITIES THROUGH ON-SITE OBSERVATION AND INFORMAL INTERVIEWS. THE DATA WAS ANALYZED FOR QUALITATIVE CORRELATIONS AND DETAILED NARRATIVES WERE PRODUCED. THIS STUDY PROVIDES DESIGNERS WITH A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF INCOMPLETE PLANNED COMMUNITIES, AND IDENTIFIES CHALLENGES THAT PLANNERS OF NEW COMMUNITIES WILL FACE.
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Chapter One

Introduction

As sociologist Carolyn Ellis asks, “Who would make a better subject than a researcher consumed by wanting to figure it all out?” (1991, p. 30). This study was driven by my desire to experience life in incomplete planned communities, and to discover whether they were as abandoned and devoid of culture as popular media depicts. The phenomenon of incomplete planned communities has become widespread in recent times, owing to disproportionate investment in real estate development, uncontrolled speculation and an excess of unprotected credit lending (Rodrique, 2014). For example, an independent forum of planners and scholars found that 25 per cent of urbanized lands surrounding the Spanish capital of Madrid are partially vacant (ArchLeague, 2013). Similarly, the website Nacionrotonda.com compared aerial images of Spanish cities pre- and post-real estate boom in an attempt to capture “a visual inventory of Spain's disastrous urban planning of the last 15 years” (Figure 1) (Álvarez, 2014).

Although Spain is a particularly salient example of the consequences of poor planning, failed development is a global issue. In the city of Zhengzhou, China, for example, a new residential district filled with rows of luxury apartments and office buildings sits mostly empty, as a result of the country’s speculative real estate market and the high price of housing. Reportedly, the average income earner in China cannot afford to live in the development, while wealthy individuals purchase entire blocks of apartments as investments without any plans to utilize the space (Watson & Young, 2013). Images of these incomplete towns demonstrate the ways in which economic collapse and poor planning have irrevocably altered the landscape.
Figure 1: Aerial images of Linares, Jaén in 2003 (top) and 2012 (bottom) (Álvarez, 2014).

Such was the case in Townsend, Ontario, conceived in the early 1970s in response to industrial growth along the shores of Lake Erie, and planned to accommodate 100,000 people by the year 2000. In the early 1980s, however, industry declined and construction stopped. With only 1,500 residents, Townsend became a reported “phantom town” (Marshall, 2009). Despite a lack of amenities, a strong sense of community exists, perhaps tracing back to its rural roots (‘Townsend retraced’, 2005). The second case study for this research is Valdeluz, in central Spain, built in 2004 during the European real estate boom. It was intended to be a bedroom community for 30,000 people along a high-speed rail line. However, the global economic
collapse of 2008 halted construction and Valdeluz became internationally infamous, owing to its visually striking incomplete infrastructure. In spite of criticism, citizens banded together to influence local government and implement amenities.

Although this is an increasingly common global issue, there is lack of empirical research available on the subject. This thesis used deep mapping in order to answer three research questions:

1. What are the causes and consequences of incomplete planned communities?
2. What is the lived experience of these incomplete developments? More specifically, how do residents construct a sense of community?
3. What is the future growth potential of the case studies and what can landscape architects and planners learn from failed development?

These questions were developed from a detailed literature review, and were answered through close examination of the two case studies, described above, using a variety of data collection techniques. In telling the stories of Townsend and Valdeluz, this thesis aims to add to the body of knowledge surrounding the environmental, financial and cultural costs associated with failed development.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

‘The city that never was’ is a contemporary monster... with two faces. Face number one is really ugly, because it is the result of bad planning, bad construction and neglect. However, face number two seems to be the beautiful one because it has sometimes been designed by star architects. In the end, this second phase can be uglier... because it is sometimes used by public clients as a green light for any kind of urban development. Face number one and face number two are different, but both, quite often, have led to failure, probably because both seem to pay more attention to the desires of real estate developers and politicians than to the final user needs, to the extent that these desires and needs can be completely at odds.

- Liàtzer Moix, 2013

Keynote Presentation, The City that Never Was: Urbanization After the Bubble

This thesis uses the term ‘incomplete planned communities’ to describe master-planned communities whose construction was stopped prematurely. This situation often results in a surplus of fragmented, unused infrastructure, and the social isolation of a small population of early residents who must find or create alternative methods of forming community bonds and securing amenities, such as transportation, health care and education. Media criticism tends to focus on the excess of wasted resources, rather than the factors leading to unsuccessful development and the distinct experience of life in these communities. This literature review assembles a wide range of research, from the origins and identities of planned communities to the economic conditions that may bring about their decline, and the ruin symbolism associated with failed development. Finally, the concept of community building is explored in order to establish a basis for the subsequent study.
As Mumford (1961) urges at the beginning of his work *The City in History*, “If we would lay a new foundation for urban life, we must understand the historic nature of the city, and distinguish between its original functions, those that have emerged from it, and those that may still be called forth” (p.3). The city to which Mumford refers, however, is not the type that gave rise to this thesis, but a spontaneous or ‘natural’ (Alexander, 1965) city. Mumford traces the inception of the city to a central meeting place inspired by unified symbolic reverence of “a site to which family or clan groups are drawn back, at seasonable intervals, because it concentrates in addition to any natural advantages it may have, certain ‘spiritual’ or supernatural powers, powers of higher potency… than the ordinary processes of life” (1961, p. 10). This spiritual and social gathering space is strengthened by repeated and shared used, eventually solidifying into civic institutions, most often the temple and palace. For Mumford, the city is not defined by population size or total area, but as “the center of a network of communications” (1961, p. 63). The natural city came into existence through the co-mingling of people, and their material goods and ideas, and it was in this same way that it expanded.

Not only were early cities built on human interaction, but their form was defined by the limits of communication (Mumford, 1961). This boundary was often delineated by a wall, providing protection to its inhabitants and power to the city’s ruling group. Within the city walls, other original elements like the house and the market also developed, becoming more complex as populations grew and more land was brought under cultivation. As Mumford writes, “The round of agriculture had tied men to their daily task: they were addicted to the commonplace and accustomed to their own littleness and short tether. In the city, even the humblest could vicariously participate in greatness and claim it for his own” (1961, p. 68). Outsiders were drawn
to “the magical attraction of the city” (Mumford, 1961, p. 68), to the new idea of a collective identity stemming from the city’s sacred and powerful core.

Lefebvre (1991) similarly argues in *The Production of Space* that there is no real city without a centre, whether the centre is symbolic, informational or judicial. This centrality, according to Lefebvre, develops a dialectical process in which it is in constant production through the opposing forces of gathering and dispersal, inclusion and exclusion. Thus the city is produced and reinforced through social interaction. In his urban study *The Design of Cities*, Bacon (1974) identified Venice as “the clearest example…of establishing a primary center of the city, and a system of subcenters which recall the dominant center” (p. 101) (Figures 2 & 3). For both Bacon and Lefebvre, Venice was not only formed through the physical process of building, but through its inhabitants’ imaginations and lived experience. As Bacon (1974) writes,

The citizen feels the pride of belonging. His identification with Piazza San Marco is an expression of the total civic life of his city, and with his daily life centering around the local square with its church, café, wellhead, and perhaps monument, he feels a reflection of the total civic magnificence of his own neighborhood. Or, conversely, as he identifies with the intimate square where his children play in his own community, he is able to move from this personal experience to an identification with the more difficult concept of the common life of the city as a whole (p. 101).

Confirming this poetic depiction is Lefebvre’s argument that social space is a social product, created equally through physical (perceived), mental (conceived), and social (lived) processes (1991). Each society produces its own unique social space as a result of these so-called
‘trialectics of space’ (Lefebvre, 1991). Lefebvre echoes Bacon’s description of the same city, explaining this unified theory of spatial production in further detail:

Venice is indeed a unique space, a true marvel. But is it a work of art? No, because it was not planned in advance. It was born of the sea, but gradually, and not, like Aphrodite, in an instant… The space of the settlement on the lagoon, encompassing swamps, shallows and outlets to the open sea, cannot be separated from a vaster space, that of a system of commercial exchange which was not yet worldwide but which took in the Mediterranean and the Orient… Beginning with the very first piles driven into the mud of the lagoon, every single site in the city had of course to be planned and realized by people – by political ‘chiefs’, by groups supporting them, and by those who performed the work of construction itself. Closely behind practical responses to the challenge of the sea (the port, navigable channels) came public gatherings, festivals, grandiose ceremonies (such as the marriage of the Doge and the sea) and architectural inventiveness. Here we can see the relationship between a place built by collective will and collective thought on the one hand, and the production forces of the period on the other. For this is a place that has been *laboured on* (1991, p. 76).

According to these authors, Venice, and by the same token all other natural cities, developed gradually, and its identity is the embodiment of the interaction between physical, mental and social forces.
Figure 2: Venice engraving (Bacon, 1974, p. 100).

Figure 3: Dominant and subdominant centres of Venice (Bacon, 1974, p. 102-103).
MASTER-PLANNED COMMUNITIES

Master-planned, or as architect Alexander (1965) has called them, ‘artificial’ communities, are large-scale, often phased developments with a mix of housing types, retail, open spaces, services, recreation facilities and employment opportunities (Ewing, 1991; Gwyther, 2005; Minnery & Bajracharya, 1999; Schmitz & Bookout, 1998). These projects are often headed by private developers on ‘greenfield’ sites, as a response to increased demand for housing in large urban areas (Bajracharya & Khan, 2010). The form of master-planned communities varies, as does length of time required to plan and implement design, based on urban planning trends and the number of stakeholders involved.

Some of the earliest examples of master-planned communities can be seen in the Garden City movement, put forward by Howard (1902) in the late 19th century. Howard argued that the solution to the overcrowding and disease associated with urban areas could be solved by the creation of a series of planned, self-sufficient communities, enveloped by areas of controlled industry and agriculture (a ‘greenbelt’) and clustered around a central city core (Figure 4). Each garden city consisted of a concentric plan of parkland and radial boulevards on a site of 2,400 hectares, able to accommodate a maximum of 32,000 people before a new garden city was needed. From this concept the garden cities of Letchworth and Welwyn in the County of Herfordshire, England, were built (Hall, 1998). These first examples were the inspiration for the New Towns movement that began after the Second World War.
The British New Towns movement was an extension of the Garden City movement, once again in response to the overcrowded and unsanitary conditions of the urban environments of the period (Osborn, 1943). The industrial revolution had brought manufacturing centres in close proximity to urban populations, in order to ensure a constant supply of labour. This, in turn, increased pollution and encouraged denser and more populated living conditions as rural workers arrived seeking employment. In reaction, wealthy individuals fled the congested city, causing uncontrolled growth in peripheral areas (Osborn, 1943). Inspired by the success of Letchworth Garden City, the ‘New Townsmen’, a group of town planners and scholars that included Howard, called for the government to address ‘the urban disease’ (Osborn, 1943) through the development of 100 new master-planned communities (Hall, 1998). After decades of unconstrained suburban expansion, the New Towns Committee was formed in 1945 and shortly thereafter, the New Towns Act was signed, resulting in a revolutionary period of urban planning (Hall, 1998).
The creation of new towns in the United Kingdom, 27 of which were built after 1946 (Hall, 1998), influenced the adoption of new town ideals worldwide. Some were developed under the direct guidance of British colonial governments, such as the new towns of Hong Kong, while others took time to be accepted and adapted by local governments. The City of Chandigarh, in Northern India, also known as “The City Beautiful” (Chandigarh Tourism, 2006), is particularly noted for its famous master-planner, Le Corbusier, as well as for being the first planned, post-independence city in India. Although the idea of the modern new town was not adopted in the United States and Canada until the 1960s and 1970s, the practice of building master-planned communities had been in place since the advent of European settlement, when parcels of land were granted to railway and manufacturing companies for the purpose of determining the location of urban centres (Bucovetsky & Greenwald, 1976). The acceptance of the new town model resulted in the creation of several master-planned communities, some of which include Greenbelt and Columbia, in Maryland (Alexander, 1965), and in Bramalea and Erin Mills, in southwestern Ontario.

Most recently, the New Urbanism movement in North America and the Urban Village movement in Europe grew in response to the rise of automobile dependence in city design. Critics of the new town model argued that urban planning after the Second World War had become increasingly focused on the physical separation of residential, commercial and industrial zones, driven by the middle class preference for low-density housing and automobile transportation (Gordon & Vipond, 2005). Both concepts arose concurrently in the 1980s, calling for a return to traditional neighbourhood design with a focus on walkability, the enhancement of the public realm and mixed-use zoning, the latter often used as a strategy for producing social diversity (Aldous, 1992; CNU, 2011; Grant & Perrott, 2009). Examples of new urban towns in
North America include Cornell Village in Markham, Ontario and Seaside, in Florida. Master-planned communities that follow New Urbanism or Urban Village ideals can also be found worldwide, for the most part in Australia, Germany and the United Kingdom.

As these communities have aged, scholars and design critics have assessed their advantages and disadvantages. While the movements were praised for their sustainable principles, they have not been entirely successful in practice. Some critics accuse New Urbanism of being a re-branding of suburban sprawl (Marshall, 1996), while planning scholars Grant and Perrott (2009), who examined the links between social dynamics and public policy in Markham, Ontario, challenged claims that New Urbanism could produce social diversity through the use of diverse housing types and densities. In addition, the movement has been accused of several ironies. Firstly, while new urban towns claim to enhance the public realm, some demonstrate an advancement of the private realm through access control and private appropriation of public space (Grant, 2006). For example, the public beach in Seaside is largely inaccessible to people not living in the community, because of its limited-access private overpasses. Secondly, although New Urbanism advocates urban form, its communities rarely achieve densities higher than the suburban level (Grant, 2006). As Grant adds,

New urban projects often advocate transit-oriented development, but in many cases developers build what local planners call ‘transit-ready’ projects. Some developments have ‘future bus stop’ signs, or boulevards designed to accommodate future rapid transit… Emulating urban conditions that generate high densities and facilitate mass transit use proves expensive in the contemporary context. Consequently, developers find it easier to produce attractive suburbs than new urban districts (2006, p. 167).
As will be discussed, this interpretation is particularly true for both Townsend and Valdeluz, where the implementation of transit systems was based on minimum population goals. Lastly, Grant accuses new urban planners of calling for democratic and participatory design while insisting on the need for expert judgement and “producing developments for elite consumers” (2006, p. 161). Public involvement is often very limited, owing to time restrictions and the valuation of professionally determined principles over the widely variable results of the democratic process. Moreover, a lack of government insistence on affordable housing leads to expensive and exclusive communities void of social and economic diversity (Grant, 2006). The circumstances of life in master-planned communities continue to be studied, especially in relation to the involvement of various stakeholders and the agency of residents.

**PLANNED COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS**

The development of master-planned communities involves the participation of numerous contributors. Most often, this is a combination of representatives from the private, public and community sectors, including real estate developers, urban planners, scientists, provincial and municipal governments and citizen groups (Bajracharya & Khan, 2010). The involvement and authority exercised by each of these parties varies, and may change as development progresses. Gwyther (2005) pointed out that master-planned communities focused on developer-led design, and social programs did not provide satisfactory connectivity, social support or community identity for residents in Sydney, Australia. Likewise, Bajracharya and Khan (2010) found that collaborative initiatives for community building suffered during the transition from developer to local council leadership, and argued the need for continuous professional input. In the Markham study conducted by Grant and Perrott (2009), it was determined that urban planning alone was not sufficient to maintain social and economic diversity. They argued that additional government
intervention in the way of investment in infrastructure, community programs and affordable housing was required to sustain ideals set up by planners and developers. By contrast, some master-planned communities may have privatised forms of governance in which residents are responsible for ensuring that standards of maintenance and security are met. Goodman and Douglas (2008) found that this arrangement created issues of exclusivity and isolation in new developments. Typically, the distribution and influence of stakeholders is largely dependent on economic conditions and financial support for the communities.

ECONOMIC CYCLES OF DEVELOPMENT

It is widely acknowledged that industrial development fluctuates in a capitalist economy (Burns & Mitchell, 1946). The system of technological innovation and market investment, followed by eventual saturation and economic decline as the market attempts to regulate excess, is a regular occurrence known as the business cycle (Figure 5) (Rodrigue, 2014).

Figure 5: Business cycle diagram (Econedlink.org, 2009).
Traditionally, it is the responsibility of a central bank to control the amplitude of expansion and recession in order to prevent depression conditions and ensure a positive growth trend. However, economist Rodrigue (2014) has argued that in recent times, global economic crises have been exaggerated by the interference of central banks, which provide too much credit and are unable to control repayment. As Rodrigue writes, “It could be argued that business cycles are being replaced by phases of booms and busts, which are still displaying a cyclic behavior, but subject to much more volatility… Instead of economic stability regulated by market forces, monetary intervention creates long term instability for the sake of short term stability” (2014). Rodrigue (2014) has put forward an updated diagram of the economic cycle, illustrating the boom and bust cycle that brought about development failure in Townsend and, to an even larger extent, Valdeluz (Figure 6).

![Diagram of speculative bubble](Rodrigue, 2014)

**Figure 6: Cycles of a speculative bubble** (Rodrigue, 2014).
Rodrigue’s analysis of a speculative bubble is divided into four stages: stealth, awareness, mania and blow-off (2014). The first stage is categorized by cautious private investment and gradual price increases, generally unnoticed by the larger population. The awareness phase occurs when the upward momentum is picked up by many more investors, encouraging institutional involvement and pushing prices even higher. It is towards the end of this phase that the media notices and reports on the boom’s benefit to the economy, provoking public excitement and bringing on a period of mania. As expectations grow far beyond actual price appreciation and historical trends, investments become improvident. “Everyone tries to jump in and new entrants have absolutely no understanding of the market,” Rodrigue writes, “Prices are simply bid up with all financial means possible, particularly leverage and debt” (2014). The less controlled the credit, the longer the bubble lasts, prompting some to argue that the situation may be sustainable. Meanwhile earlier, more cautious private investors extract themselves from the situation. When the bubble finally bursts, there is a common paradigm shift, followed by a brief period of denial. Confidence and expectations are lowered and it becomes increasingly difficult, especially for the late-comers—most often the general public—to sell rapidly depreciating assets. Rodrigue notes that “There is even the possibility that the valuation undershoots the long term mean, implying a significant buying opportunity. However, the general public at this point considers this sector as ‘the worst possible investment one can make’. This is the time when the smart money starts acquiring assets at low prices” (2014). This observation is particularly applicable to Valdeluz, as will be examined.

**RELATING TO RUINS**

The major difference between incomplete planned communities and thriving cities that have become ‘ghost towns’ is the sequence of economic growth and inhabitation. In 2012, urban
researchers in Berlin exhibited photographs of abandoned cities from around the world, depicting the once-densely populated coal mining town of Hashima, Japan, and the artificial settlement of Neft Dashlari, off the coast of Azerbaijan, which was built to accommodate rig workers upon discovery of a large oil deposit (Ferguson, 2012). The habitation of these sites is directly tied to industrialization, and their abandonment is typically caused by resource depletion, not to mention accidents or natural disasters. It is in these places that traces of life can be found; interrupted vignettes of domestic activity that reveal clues about that particular culture. By contrast, incomplete planned communities are a study in anticipation. The built environment that has been completed reveals clues about capitalist expectations and aesthetic and cultural ideals.

Jackson (1979) argues that ruins are a necessary step in the development of the human relationship with landscape, and that they “provide the incentive for restoration” (p.102). Ruins are, in a sense, the antithesis to the original landscape, and synthesis is achieved through their rejuvenation. Interestingly, Jackson wonders whether this cycle represents a religious or spiritual ritual for humans seeking redemption. In the case of the prematurely interrupted city, however, the ritual is incomplete. Furthermore, Armstrong (2006) explains how time differentiates ancient and modern ruins in an argument for the preservation of urban wastelands:

Voids and wastelands are latent with such possibilities, but their prevailing qualities are of recent time, containing uncomfortable memories of ultimately flawed dreams and visions. Vast derelict industrial landscapes resonate with messages of failure. That such huge landscapes, the visions of merely fifty years ago, should now be in ruins is frightening, possibly explaining why they are being erased so quickly in growing cities (p. 117).
Without historical layers to inspire restoration, or investment to erase evidence of bankruptcy, incomplete planned communities are stuck in time as a symbol of failure.

It seems strange, then, if modern ruins are so repugnant to society, that an obsession with ruin imagery has arisen. Valdeluz, Townsend, and many other supposed ghost towns have fallen victim to what some critics call ‘ruin porn’ (Millington, 2013). Leary (2011) observes that “So much ruin photography and ruin film aestheticizes poverty without inquiring of its origins, dramatizes spaces but never seeks out the people that inhabit and transform them, and romanticizes isolated acts of resistance without acknowledging the massive political and social forces aligned against the real transformation, and not just stubborn survival, of the city” (Guernicamag.com). For example, it is difficult to find images of Valdeluz and Townsend that include any of its inhabitants. Compelling shots of empty streets coated in sand and abandoned construction sites filled with ragged pieces of metal abound (Figure 7). On closer inspection, the media’s fascination with urban decay mirrors the human capacity to simultaneously fear and obsess over the concept of death (Kastenbaum, 2009). Modern ruins are a distasteful yet compelling mystery, observed at a distance through sensationalist media.

Figure 7: Typical media depictions of Valdeluz (Aurélien PIC, 2012).
Some depictions of incomplete planned communities, such as Corouge’s *Documentography* (2009), provide a more humanized perspective. Among the requisite ruin imagery, Corouge includes photographs of residents and a brief caption of their stories (Figure 8). Such images bring the issue back to the present, rather than reducing it to ideas of romantic decay or a mythic past (Millington, 2013).

**THE CHALLENGES OF PLANNING IDENTITY**

In the influential essay *A City is Not a Tree*, Alexander (1965) expounds upon the difference between natural and artificial cities, and identifies the essential ingredients that disappear when a city is contrived hierarchically. According to Alexander, the majority of artificial cities, or master-planned communities, are organized in tree-like structures so that “within this structure no piece of any unit is ever connected to other units, except through the medium of that unit as a whole” (1965, Part 2, p. 58). Alexander criticizes the garden city and new town designs for following this pattern (Figure 9). Natural cities, Alexander argues, are organized in a complex semi-lattice (Figure 10) that increases the potential for overlap: “… a tree based on 20 elements can contain at most 19 further subsets of the 20, while a semi-lattice based on the same 20
elements can contain more than one million different subsets” (1965, Part 1, p. 60). This argument recalls Mumford and Lefebvre’s assertion that communication is at the core of natural cities. Increasing complexity and overlap of the structure is both caused by, and enhances, social interaction.

Figure 9: Clustered neighbourhoods of Columbia new town, Maryland, in A City is not a Tree (Alexander, 1965).
Although new urban communities attempt to avoid hierarchical design and enhance overlap, Lefebvre’s third condition, the social element, is lacking. Soja (1996) reasons that the perceived (physical) and conceived (conceptual) designs of master-planned estates combine to bring about an imaginary third space of ‘community’ (social) into being. However, until these developments are inhabited, their social production of space is limited to decisions made by planners, developers and government authorities, rather than residents’ lived experience. Developers counteract this absence through marketing techniques. Advertisements for developments promote an increased sense of community, greater security, a closer relationship with nature, or a particular lifestyle; urban or resort, for example (Goodman & Douglas, 2008). Such concepts may be marketed in the form of amenities like recreational facilities and landscaped open spaces, or through design principles, as in the case of New Urbanism (Katz, 1994). As Walters and
Rosenblatt (2008) suggested in the study of a master-planned estate in Australia, the illusion of community put forward by developers through such interventions as nostalgic physical reminders and cyclical celebrations plays an important role in the establishment of residents’ sense of wellbeing and community.

COMMUNITY BUILDING IN PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS

The concept of a ‘sense of community’ is multi-dimensional and has proven difficult to define in practice. Part of this confusion is owing to the difficulty of defining ‘community’ itself, and the unique histories and natures of each community, which “militate against an easy comparability” (Puddifoot, 1995, p. 369). Gusfield (1975, in McMillan & Chavis, 1986) distinguished between two major factors contributing to the definition of community: territorial, concerned with a geographical location of neighbourhood, town, or city; and relational, addressing the quality of human relationship. Using these overlapping concepts, McMillan and Chavis (1986) outlined four criteria for defining a sense of community:

1. **Membership**: the feeling of belonging or of sharing a sense of personal relatedness.

2. **Influence**: a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group and of the group mattering to its members.

3. **Integration and fulfillment of needs**: the feeling that members’ needs will be met by the resources received through their membership in the group; and

4. **Shared emotional connection**: the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences (p. 9).

This broad guideline was used to explore the subjective experience of community in both Townsend and Valdeluz.
Although it has been argued that planned developments are incongruous with the idea of community building (Mumford, 1961; Schaeffer & Sclar, 1975), studies have shown that the physical arrangement and type of housing, along with the location of access paths and public spaces, have a strong impact on promoting or inhibiting social interaction and thus, may support the establishment of a sense of community (Talen, 1999). In addition, an increased sense of community has been shown to result from feelings of safety (Newman, 1972), and from greater use of public space and local amenities (Talen, 1999). Other factors not relating to physical form also contribute to an individual’s sense of community, such as gender and socioeconomic status; the presence or absence of children; employment status; monetary investment in the form of home or business ownership; and duration of residence (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Talen, 1999).

Extensive research has been conducted on the sense of community to be found in master-planned developments, especially in Australia and the United States, as discussed in the studies listed above. There is a lack of information, however, surrounding social bonding in incomplete developments. Promotions for both Townsend and Valdeluz focused on the idea that their built environments would create identity for the development and a sense of community for residents. The construction of Valdeluz, for example, was centered on expectations associated with a high-speed railway (Sanz, 2011). Advertisements promising “More time for you, more space to enjoy,” (Sanz, 2011, p.89) were based on the heightened concepts of time and space facilitated by the new form of transportation. However, when these developments failed to reach completion, identity formation could no longer rely on built form and the provision of amenities. Moreover, the image of community promoted by planners, developers and other stakeholders,
was prematurely discarded, leaving residents to establish their own civic norms and durable social networks.

**SUMMARY**

Master-planned communities differ from natural or self-evolving cities in that they are designed by a committee of various authorities and built in pre-determined phases. In recent times, real estate speculation and unprotected credit lending have brought about the failure of numerous planned communities worldwide. When this occurs, the illusion of community promoted by developers and the community-enabling environments envisioned by design teams do not fulfill their intended purpose. Residents of incomplete developments must create their own identity and sense of community through alternative methods.
Chapter Three

Methods

It was connections that deviled me. I was hunting a fact or image and not a thesis to hold my details together, and so I arrived at this question: should I just gather up items like creek pebbles into a bag and then let them rumble into their own pattern? Did I really want the reality of randomness? Answer: only if it would yield a landscape with figures... The least I hoped for was a topographic map of words that would open inch by inch to show its long miles.

- William Least Heat Moon
  PrairyErth, 1991, p. 15

The phenomenon of incomplete planned community was examined through two distinct case studies—Townsend, Ontario, Canada and Valdeluz, Guadalajara, Spain. In using myself as a source of data within an established framework of reflexive methods, in conjunction with primary and secondary sources, this study communicates a deeper understanding of two very different, but similarly disregarded, communities. The first step, like that of Moustakas’ heuristic inquiry process (1990), began with initial engagement of the research problem. I familiarized myself with incomplete planned communities by conducting an exploratory literature review and developing specific research questions. Next, I determined the methods with which I would collect and organize data. Ultimately, patterns and irregularities were identified and analyzed in order to produce two distinctive deep maps (Figure 11).
DEEP MAPPING ORIGINS

The idea of a ‘deep map’, coined by Heat Moon in *PrairyErth* (1991), was first used by earlier Great Plains author Stegner (1962) in his noteworthy work *Wolf Willow: A History, a Story, and a Memory of the Last Plains Frontier*. This method of non-fiction storytelling crosses a multitude of realms—physical, cultural, historical—in order to produce a narrative “in which many voices speak, many, often contradictory, histories are told, and many ideologies cross, coexist, and collide” (Campbell, 2000, p. 20). The layers of Townsend, Ontario and Valdeluz, Spain may seem shallow at first glance, having been conceived and discarded by developers
within a few short years. However, the histories and legacies of these sites extend beyond the construction site to historical landscape patterns and complex social tensions. According to Calder (2002), deep maps can function “in some ways as correctives to dominant cultural narratives in their repetition of the complexities of time and space and in their insistence on recognizing the many landmarks, cultural and natural, of [a place]” (p. 166). As “an inspector of the ordinary” (Heat Moon, 1991, p. 49), I used a combination of research methods in order to gather and analyze material in the creation of two deep maps that delve beneath the simplistic epithet of ‘ghost town’.

**LANDSCAPE BIOGRAPHY**

One method of refocusing the study of landscape towards a human perspective is to write its biography. Cultural geographer Samuels (1979) first proposed the idea of a ‘biography’ as a way of emphasizing the role of human agency in the formation of landscapes. The author argued that the conceptualization of landscape is inextricably linked with cultural transmission. Just as human history imprints itself on the land, so are individuals and societies shaped and bound together by place (Roymans, Gerritsen, Van Der Heijden, Bosma, & Kolen, 2009). Thus, in order to understand a landscape, one must understand the history of those who lived within and acted upon it (Samuels, 1979). While some landscape biographies focus on short-term development, others attempt to trace the human-landscape relationship from pre-history to present (Roymans et al., 2009)—from early settlement and cultivation patterns to ritual sites and present-day heritage conservation. Dutch researchers Roymans et al. (2009) used the method in the South Netherlands Project to argue its usefulness for future development. They found that the understanding of cultural narratives in the region was essential to the shaping of current heritage preservation approaches. Like deep maps, landscape biographies reveal the multi-layered nature
of landscapes (Roymans et al., 2009). However, they fall short of revealing the nuances of place by viewing the landscape from an objective perspective.

**PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE**

There is a broad range of social studies that emphasize the researcher’s voice as a way of knowing. These ways of inquiry, stemming from postmodernist and phenomenological philosophies, question the assumptions of traditional research methods by demonstrating that “[any] researcher can do no more than describe his or her personal experiences” (Neuman, 1994, in Wall, 2006, p. 147). Given the increasingly wide range of studies that use the self as subject—variously labeled by their authors as personal narratives, lived experience, reflexive ethnography, heuristic inquiry, and ethnographic autobiography, to name a few—it has been argued that they may all be included “under the broad rubric of autoethnography” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). The term “Autoethnography” has been in use for more than 30 years (Hayano, 1979), and refers to “highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experiences of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding” (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21). Autoethnographies have been identified as non-linear, complex methods that are considerably flexible with respect to methodology (Ellis, 2004; Moustakas, 1990). Although the process may change with each research project, autoethnography is characterized by rigorous investigation and a focus on the connectedness between the individual and society (Wall, 2006).

**COMBINING STRATEGIES AND CASE STUDY SELECTION**

During this inductive investigation, the frameworks described above were combined in order to achieve a product that is descriptive, interpretive and critical (Deming & Swaffield, 2011), exploring the experience of life in incomplete planned communities as well as the circumstances
and consequences surrounding their existence. The result of this research is a textual narrative supported by illustrations and photographs. The case studies of the investigation are wholly unique and were chosen in order to demonstrate the historical, geographical and cultural variation in incomplete planned communities. The findings from each case are not suitable for comparison or generalization. Rather, this study attempts to produce, “a full and thorough knowledge of the particular” (Stake, 1978, p. 6). As Stake (1978) argues, such idiosyncratic knowledge elicits “natural generalizations” in the reader, which “develop within a person as a product of experience. They derive from the tacit knowledge of how things are, why they are, how people feel about them, and how these things are likely to be later or in other places with which this person is familiar. They seldom take the form of predictions but lead regularly to expectation…” (p. 6). As such, the study adds to the humanistic understanding of incomplete planned communities and contributes to further explanatory explorations of the phenomenon.

**DATA COLLECTION**

In order to develop two distinctive deep maps, a combination of data collection techniques were undertaken. The diagram depicted below (Figure 12) illustrates the types of data collected, each of which contributed to the knowledge of one of four facets: historical, physical, social and phenomenological. These facets were not mutually exclusive, but provided a framework that informed the structure of the resulting narrative. The first facet, historical knowledge, was essential to my ability to interpret situations in the field, and was collected prior to beginning fieldwork, as well as subsequently in order to elucidate new information. During this preparatory stage, I also obtained approval from the University of Guelph’s Research Ethics Board (Certificate Number: 13SE026) for the purpose of conducting on-site interviews.
**HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE**

Initially, I familiarized myself with each of the chosen sites by conducting a survey of archival documents, interviews, maps and imagery. Following the landscape biography method of Roymans et al. (2009), I examined the following aspects of each community:

1) the use and layout of the landscape,

2) the representation and interpretation of the landscape, and

3) the identities of the individuals and communities inhabiting the landscape (p. 340).

Archival information for Townsend was obtained from the Archives of Ontario at York University, as well as through the work produced in the multi-media exhibition ‘Townsend Retraced’ (2005), which presented a unique view of the area through photography, poetry, audio clips and curated print material. Data for Valdeluz was collected from a variety of print and
online primary source material, including community newsletters, media reports and the blog (web log) ‘Diario de Valdeluz’ [‘Diary of Valdeluz’], which presents a chronological record of issues pertaining to the community (http://diariovaldeluz.blogspot.ca/).

**ENTERING THE FIELD**

Once equipped with the knowledge of how Townsend and Valdeluz were constructed externally, the next step was to experience both communities firsthand. Moustaka refers to this stage as the ‘acquisition’ period, during which data is collected in order to illuminate questions and themes that arose in the preparatory stage (1990). In October, 2013, I visited Townsend for a period of one week, during which time I resided with a local family. My investigation of Valdeluz took place over a period of one week in November, 2013, during which time I commuted by high-speed train from Madrid, arriving at approximately 7am each morning and departing at 11pm each evening. The discrepancy in the level of immersion is a result of varying degrees of familiarity with language and culture, and accommodation availability within the communities. As DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) write of this type of moderate participation,

> Many anthropologists, for example, will live in their own house among a group of people, or perhaps even in a larger community near the place being studied. They essentially “commute” to the field to question informants or to participate in only certain of the everyday activities of the community. Many of us in new research settings in which we are not fluent in the language begin at [this] level… (p. 23).

The disadvantages of not immersing oneself completely in the community will be subsequently discussed as a limitation.
**PHYSICAL KNOWLEDGE**

Upon arriving at each case study, I recorded my impressions of the site’s spatial qualities through maps, sketches and photographs. In walking through the developments, I used Zeisel’s (2006) technique of observing physical traces in order to generate questions about how residents interacted with their landscape. According to Zeisel (2006), this method is imageable, unobtrusive, easy to undertake and deals with long-lasting phenomena (p. 90), making it an appropriate first step for getting to know life in these communities. Observing such traces as eroded pathways (a by-product of use), and added play equipment or fencing (adaptations for use) revealed behaviours that were not directly observable (Zeisel, 2006). This type of physical observation also enabled a comparison with data collected in the previous stage, revealing transformations that have taken place since the developments’ initial construction.

**SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE**

While developing an idea of spatial quality, I also engaged in the social context of each community through participant observation. Developed in the field of anthropology, Bernard (2006, in DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011) describes participant observation as:

…immersing yourself in a culture and learning to remove yourself every day from that immersion so you can intellectualize what you’ve seen and heard, put it into perspective, and write about it convincingly. When it’s done right, participant observation turns fieldworkers into instruments of data collection and data analysis (p. 29).

In both Townsend and Valdeluz I introduced myself to the community through an active community member, or ‘sponsor’ (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011), who facilitated my meeting of other residents. Through this connection I visited local shops, community centres, churches and,
on occasion, residents’ homes, engaging in informal, open-ended interviews. These confidential interviews were conducted with the explicit permission of the interviewees, and were recorded with either a digital audio recorder (later transcribed) or through direct note-taking. The narrative of Townsend includes information collected from 31 interviewees, 17 of whom lived in Townsend but drove to work in other communities, three of whom lived and worked in the community, four employees who lived elsewhere, five former youth residents and two key informants. The story of Valdeluz drew from information provided by 17 interviewees, 10 of whom lived and worked in the community, six of whom lived in Valdeluz and worked outside the community, and one of whom worked in Valdeluz and lived in a nearby community.

In addition to conducting interviews, I attended community events and observed residents’ interactions with their environment. However, since my role as researcher was apparent, I could not make full advantage of the use of hand-drawn diagrams, maps and photographs (Zeisel, 2006). Instead, the majority of my interactions with residents were recorded in mental notes and images, transcribed in a journal at the end of each day (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011; Whyte & Whyte, 1984).

**HEURISTIC KNOWLEDGE**

This final aspect of the research may be seen as a mindset, rather than a method. While Moustakas (1990) has abstractly described the process of heuristic inquiry, he admits that it “has a path of its own. It is self-directed, self-motivated, and open to spontaneous shift” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 44). Through self-exploration and the exploration of others’ experiences, I aimed to understand life in the chosen communities. My own perceptions are apparent throughout the narrative, compiled from notes, photographs, maps and sketches created during
my visits to Townsend and Valdeluz. Autoethnographer Muncey (2005) suggests that the use of various approaches can “makeup a patchwork of feelings, experiences, emotions, and behaviors that portray a more complete view of… life. They are useful in constructing a meaningful whole that is consistent and coherent to contribute a truth to a world that needs to hear it” (p. 10). This final facet allowed me to relate to the opinions and issues expressed by residents, and to form a deeper understanding of lived experience in incomplete planned communities.

**ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS**

Upon returning from the field, the collected data was reorganized in order to find meaningful connections. As Moustakas writes of this ‘realization’ phase, “…it is here that a whole is assembled from the fragments and disparate elements that have been generated during the search for essence and meaning. The challenge is to examine all the collected data in creative combinations and recombinations, sifting and sorting… attempting to identify the overarching qualities that inhere in the data” (1990, p. 52). During this stage, the qualitative research software NVivo (QSR International, 2013) was used as an organization and analysis aid. This tool facilitated the transcribing of recorded interviews, the translation of various Spanish texts and the identification of various ‘nodes’ or themes across diverse forms of data (Figure 13).
LIMITATIONS

While this type of exploratory study involves focused attentiveness and intense comprehension of a subject, it is also characterized by spontaneity, subjectivity and “total disregard for conformity or congruence” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 47). Although these attributes enable a large degree of openness to unexpected pathways and sources of data, they also present a range of limitations.

1. *Time*. The most limiting factor involved in this study was its duration. It can be argued that a week spent in each community is not enough to fully immerse oneself, which in turn limits the amount of data collected from on-site observation and interviews. With more time, I might have been able to form deeper connections with residents, forming a bond that might have encouraged more openness on the part of interviewees (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). In addition, the amount of data was limited by the amount of time available for collection, transcription and translation. However, this time limitation may
also been seen as a focusing tool that encouraged distillation of themes and a refinement of meaning (Moustakas, 1990).

2. **Choice of sponsor.** The data was limited by my point of entrance into the field, determined by the person who facilitated my introduction to the community. Excluding interviews conducted by convenience sampling, the majority of people with whom I spoke were connected in some way to the sponsor. A different sponsor would have yielded a different set of interviewees and thus, a different perspective, directly leading into the following limitation.

3. **Subjectivity.** Despite dedicated pursuit of the phenomenon, the subjectivity inherent in the study may be seen as a limitation. The conclusions drawn from the search are my own, informed and limited by lived experiences and exposure to the subject. This personal interpretation, in addition to the use of case studies, works against the production of universal conclusions, theory building or generalizations (Stake, 1978). As Stake (1978) writes, “The case study… proliferates rather than narrows. One is left with more to pay attention to rather than less” (p. 7). As such, this study produces a subjective interpretation that inspires further research, rather than a prescriptive set of solutions.

4. **Oral history.** Participants’ memory and bias of the situation may have affected the results of the interview process.

5. **Habitation and Access.** It could be argued that owing to my accommodations within the community, my experience of Townsend was more accordant with that of residents and therefore, superior (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011) to my experience in Valdeluz. Although I arrived in Valdeluz very early in the morning and left late at night, my interpretation of the community was influenced by high-speed train commute. I did not wake up or go to
sleep in the community, and many interviewees expressed the opinion that the high-speed train was not used by Valdeluz residents. Accommodation within Valdeluz would have provided me with further tacit knowledge of residents’ lived experience.

6. **Language.** My understanding and interpretation of the situation in Valdeluz was limited by my comprehension of the Spanish language. Although I have studied Spanish for several years, I am neither bilingual nor fluent. This certainly prevented me from understanding colloquialisms and forming as profound a connection with residents in Valdeluz as with those in Townsend.

**SUMMARY**

This thesis utilizes the comprehensive method of deep mapping in order to distill meaning from the phenomenon of incomplete planned communities. Data pertaining to historical, physical, social and heuristic facets was collected and subsequently analyzed for irregularities and persistent themes. Ultimately, the synthesis of this data produced a deep map of each place, rich in detail and inseparable from cultural context. Although this inductive investigation resulted in a descriptive, interpretive and critical narrative, it was also limited by several factors, including length and depth of immersion, access and comprehension challenges, and the biases inherent in subjectivity.
Chapter Four

Townsend Analysis

The Town Line is the dividing line between our Walpole Township and Norfolk County to the west. Beyond this division, Walpole clay was left behind and lovely-growing sandy soil took its place. The curve to the right led to Uncle Emerson's home and strawberry fields. The road to the left curved past old trees down a hill to a bridge over Nanticoke Creek where there was an abundance of turtles. Beyond the bridge was another hill and at the top we could face right and see Uncle Bruce's little house which was in Woodhouse Township, Norfolk County. These were the country roads we knew best.

- M. A. Davidson, Retrospective

Landscape and Settlement

The topography of the Carolinian forest region was formed by the disappearance of the most recent great continental glacier (Blythe, Brown, & Judd, 1977). Lasting approximately 75,000 years, the Wisconsin Ice Sheet retreated northward around 11,000 years ago as the climate warmed, ploughing material out of valleys, making lake basins more elliptical and leaving behind debris that became undulant drumlins and moraines. The eastern portion of the historical Township of Townsend is composed of underlying limestone bedrock of Devonian age, covered by clay and silt plains, and varying in elevation from about 200 to 240 metres above sea level (Proctor et al, 1968).

Following the retreat of the Wisconsin glacier, the land re-vegetated quickly, initially as a boreal forest and shifting into a more diverse collection as southern species moved northwards. In particular, the region north of Lake Erie was covered in a mix of prairie grasses and islands of widely-spaced oak, maintained by naturally occurring fires (Bakowsky, 1996). In the cooler period beginning approximately 5000 years before the present time, hemlock and beech forests became dominant. However, around 1400 CE, just before the arrival of European settlers, these
late-successional species were replaced by sugar maple, oak and eastern white pine (Suffling, Evans, & Perera, 2003). Suffling et al. (2003) attribute this transition to the adoption of swiddening (cleared by burning) and shifting agriculture by Iroquoian groups in the area. Although sparse populations of hunter-gatherers had been present since shortly after the disappearance of the last glacier, the northward spread of corn, bean and squash crops from Central America encouraged agricultural expansion and a system of village relocation in order to avoid soil exhaustion. European settlers encountered this mixture of rotating crops and second-growth forest upon their arrival in the early 17th century.

Townsend New Town and its surroundings lie on an area of gentle relief that appealed to planners. The Township Official Plan of 1968 describes the only physical barriers to land development as the “stream courses, where they have cut their banks below the surrounding level of land” (Proctor et al., App. A, p. 1). The stream flow of Nanticoke Creek, which slows down to cradle Townsend New Town along its southwestern edge, is continuously fed by groundwater and varies considerably from 0.2 cubic metres per second during the low-flow period of late summer to more than 25 cubic metres per second during peak storm events (AMEC Earth and Environmental, 2008). The watershed begins just south of the hamlet of Scotland, Ontario, and empties at Lake Erie near the village of Nanticoke (Figure 14). Townsend is located approximately halfway along its 43 kilometre length.

The Nanticoke Creek drains into two physiographic regions: the Norfolk Sand Plain from the northeastern corner of the watershed, and the Haldimand Clay Plain from the remainder (Long Point Region Conservation Authority (LPRCA), 2005). The creek begins in the Sand Plain as a cold water system of higher quality, but temperatures and nutrient loads rise as the soil changes from sand to clay and it passes through Waterford and Townsend, each with their own
Water Quality Control Plant and resulting effluent. Nonetheless, the nutrient load contributed to Lake Erie by the Nanticoke Creek watershed is relatively low (LPRCA, 2005).

During Townsend’s early planning stages, the Nanticoke’s poor water quality and low levels of warm water fish were attributed to agricultural activities—mainly tobacco, peanut and rotating grains in the northern portion of the watershed, and livestock operations in the south (Ontario Ministry of Housing (OMH), 1977). Townsend New Town sits in hard clay and according to one poem about the area, is best for planting “whatever you can” (‘Townsend retraced’, 2005). As the resident explained, “the farmers made a lot of money when they sold the land, so they didn't think it was worth it to buy it back, especially since it's all clay. You can't grow much—corn, oats, soybeans… that's about it. I guess in terms of land use this community is probably pretty good”. The Nanticoke Creek and its hard clay bed had a strong impact on the early European settlement pattern, which became the template for Townsend New Town planning in the 1970s.

Figure 14: Nanticoke Creek Watershed.
LONG POINT SETTLEMENT

Howison, in his 1821 emigrant tourist guide *Sketches of Upper Canada*, paints an idyllic picture of the region:

The tract of country named Long Point is not characterized by a partial beauty or luxuriance. Nature has been equally bountiful to every part of it, and no one can attain a correct idea of its charms or form a just estimate of its advantages, unless he makes a journey through it. The land is so little overspread with timber, that if the brushwood is cleared away, it may be cropped without cutting down a single tree. The soil is indeed inferior, in point of strength and richness, to that in various other places; but these deficiencies are compensated for by its easy tillage, and the facility of clearing it. Long Point is abundantly watered by pure, transparent, and never-failing streams; the openness of the woods, and the dryness of the land, render the air mild, clear, and salubrious; fruit-trees of every kind bear abundantly, and soon arrive at maturity; the roads are always good; and Lake Erie affords a convenient water-communication with the other parts of the Province. Upon the whole, no other part of Upper Canada possesses so many natural advantages, or is so well suited to the ideas and tastes of Europeans, as Long Point; it being, I believe, one of the most alluring and desirable spots that a bountiful Providence has any where laid open for the benefit of man (in MacDonald, 2005, p. 29-31).

In reality, early European settlers faced challenges like any other pioneers, not limited to heavy clay soils, agriculture-hindering woodlands, and contentious land division.
The Loyalist settlement at Long Point encompassed the majority of today’s Norfolk County, including the historic townships of Townsend, Woodhouse, Charlottesville, Walsingham and Windham (Figure 15). The original survey of Townsend Township resulted in 14 concessions of 24 lots each, with eight broken lots to the north bordering on Six Nations land (Blythe et al., 1977). The entirety of this land was granted to Andrew Pierce under the policy of ‘settlement by associated companies’ (Bucovetsky & Greenwald, 1976). Pierce was tasked with bringing fifty families into the township within four years, or forfeit a bond of 18,000 British pounds (Blythe, 1977). Pierce delegated the responsibility of populating Townsend to Paul Averill, who introduced the Culvers, Kitchens, McCools, McMichaels, Bucks and other pioneer families to the area. Time ran out, however, and Averill had only convinced 17 families to settle, just northwest of the Townsend New Town site (Bucovetsky & Greenwald, 1976). It was because of Pierce’s failure that the township was opened for regular settlement in 1798.
Development was initially slow, owing to the fact that one lot in every seven was reserved for the Anglican Church, and a second was set aside for the use of the Crown (Blythe et al., 1977). A great deal of the remainder was granted to absentee Loyalists living in England. Poor transportation and was also blamed for the region’s stagnation. The remainder of the reserves were eventually occupied in the mid-1830s, largely by relatives of the first wave of settlers. More settlers arrived through the building of roads like the Hamilton-Port Dover Plank Road (now Highway 6) in 1843; mostly Anglo-Saxon Americans of British and German descent Bucovetsky & Greenwald, 1976). Additionally, the First World War brought an influx of Ukrainian and other Eastern European farmers into the area. In short, “the social context of the area was identical to any other section of rural Ontario” (Bucovetsky & Greenwald, 1976, p. 2). These early European settlers transformed the landscape into a pattern that is still recognizable throughout much of rural Southern Ontario.

THE RURAL PATTERN

The Townsend Community Plan described a lack of unique species and specialized habitat in the site area, owing to the fact that past agriculture had eliminated mature forests (OMH, 1977). The few remaining hardwood stands were dense canopies of white pine, oak and maple, just as European settlers would have found, and promptly chopped down, upon arrival (Blythe et al., 1977). Blythe et al. (1977) paint a vivid picture of the scene:

To the settler the forest was seen to be a malevolent omnipresent force to be fought at every turn. It prevented crops from being planted, hindered transportation, harboured hoards of mosquitoes and possibly Indians… Groups of settlers congregated to help each other in their task and the night sky was often aglow from the huge piles ("follers") of logs fired into blazing infernos… Thus, the forest was eventually vanquished and fields
of crops appeared throughout the countryside (p.2).

The clearing of those first fields began to set the historic landscape pattern, which would remain relatively unchanged for the next 150 years (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Aerial images of Townsend New Town site, pre-construction (TCDP Phase 1, 1976).
With the forests cleared and the land relatively flat, early settlers created pathways at will, with the understanding that such roads could be closed or altered at the discretion of the landowner (Blythe et al., 1977). In 1820, however, the rigid concession grid replaced these early desire lines and became the dominant network on which all other landscape elements would be based (Bucovetsky & Greenwald, 1976). Descriptions of the township’s early arrangement recall Jackson’s words of praise: “…the grid system is, in fact, one of the most ambitious schemes in history for the orderly creation of landscapes, of small communities… To talk about the grid means talking about fields and fences and roads and crossroads and school houses, and eventually it means talking about the grid in towns and cities” (1980, p. 116). The road pattern outlined legal boundaries and provided a link for communication and transportation, and was in turn reinforced by such elements as drainage ditches, fencing, hedgerows and evenly-spaced farmsteads (Bucovetsky & Greenwald, 1976).

However, there was an exception to the rigid grid. Sideroads were typically located every two lots in most Ontario counties, but in Townsend and nearby Walpole they were placed every six lots. The authors of the 1976 study Townsend Traces suggested that since the concession grid was only “allowed to vary when topographical conditions absolutely necessitate it”, it was the large number of watercourses in Townsend that impeded the pattern from stretching across the township (Bucovetsky & Greenwald, p.12). Thus, a map of the final concession roads reveals a grid with a distinct east-west bias. From the junction of major routes sprang natural commercial centres like Jarvis, which grew around the Hamilton Plank Road (now Highway 6) and Stage Road (now Highway 3) crossing. By the turn of the 20th century, the few larger villages of Villa Nova, Waterford and Jarvis, provided essential services like union schools, general stores, brickyards, post offices and blacksmiths, to the surrounding rural community. The remainder of
the area was scattered with single-family, detached homes and the occasional church and cemetery; the only recorded multiple housing unit appeared to be a converted railway station in the community of Renton (Proctor et al., 1968). As will be shown below, this historical settlement pattern is nearly indiscernible in the modern landscape of Townsend New Town.

**SEARCHING FOR HISTORY IN TOWNSEND NEW TOWN**

Just as the Nanticoke Creek drains into two distinct watersheds, the community of Townsend purposefully straddles the former boundary between Norfolk and Haldimand counties. County Line splits off from the telling but questionably-named Indian Line and heads southeast until it hits Townsend. From there it curves its way towards the creek and downward in an uncharacteristic ess to meet Highway 3. As I drove down this unremarkable rural road, I imagined that if it were level I might be able to see Lake Erie framed by row after row of ploughed golden field and tuft of roadside sumac. I came across Townsend suddenly (Figure 17), finding myself in a quiet suburb as familiar and formulaic as any in Guelph, Waterloo, Burlington, Kingston, or any other of the mid-sized southern Ontarian cities I have lived in or passed through. At first, I drove too far. The speed limit changed from 80 kilometres per hour to 50 and back to 80 again, and I realized I had already been and gone. On my second way through I went more slowly, turning down each street, and turning around again at any of a half-dozen dead-end streets—places where the asphalt ends and a metal barrier and bright yellow sign signal plans put on hold (Figure 18). Take away the barrier and sign, add a bench facing outwards and they might have designed it that way: a picture-framed view of Townsend’s heritage.
Figure 17: North entrance to Townsend at Stone Quarry Road (Concession 13) and County Line Road.

Figure 18: Dead end at Edenridge Drive.
One bright autumn day, when the wind was low and the smell of damp leaves and freshly mown grass filled the air, I went out in search of historical layers. The rural pattern was clearly visible as I drove around the township and towards the community. The narrow roads were unerringly straight, with edges that faded into gravel and grass, lined by a variety of fences (split rail, straight log and wire), woodlots and utility wires. Every now and then a long driveway would appear, leading off to a farmstead. Some of the houses in this area were constructed as early as 1845, but many have undergone renovations and accumulated additions. The houses “can be seen as signboards, propounding structural and stylistic motifs of Ontario vernacular architecture” (Bucovetsky & Greenwald, 1976, p. 15). The farmer’s asceticism was reflected in featureless clapboard buildings with rectangular floor plans, while wealthy country families lived in elaborate two-storey homes with decorative brick coursing, steeply-pitched centre gables and front-facing verandahs designed to see and be seen (McIllwraith, 1997).

Armed with a map of the township and the cultural heritage report *Townsend Traces* (Bucovetsky & Greenwald, 1976), I set out on foot along an exploratory transect to discover how the community’s planners had incorporated history into their design. The report was produced for the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation in anticipation of the development, and came complete with a diagram depicting every house, institution, vista and cemetery of historical merit. Each site was given a designation and recommendation for future use. “R1a” indicated architectural and historical significance, and was suitable for re-use as a public institution. “R1b” buildings were just as culturally significant, but better suited to private residences. Finally, “R2” sites were older buildings that had been renovated and adapted; integral to the historical pattern but without architectural significance. I concentrated on sites in the first phase of the development’s construction. The study recommended that “although planning approaches that
conserve heritage resources in the overall site context must be undertaken immediately, detailed design input to conserve individual elements of the historical landscape will be required in [this zone] right away” (Bcovetsky & Greenwald, 1976, p. 72).

My trek began to the northwest of the community, where the path by the creek narrows to a thin, muddy line, barely discernible beneath tangled branches (Figure 19). I knew from conversations I had the day before that this was a favourite trail of some Townsend New Town residents. One person who grew up here remembered it fondly: “If you just go down this road, and you keep going past the stop sign there's a little bridge at the bottom, and just before that there are two paths into the forest. I used to always go walking in there. There's a big rock at the end of one of them, I'd sit and smoke cigarettes that no one knew I had”. Another, who had moved to Townsend early in their career, told me about how it used to be a ski trail “back when we had things like that… it follows the creek, there’s a waterfall back in there, and if you want good exercise it’s a nice walk out to the next concession and back”. The Nanticoke runs faster and straighter here, rushing over a limestone weir and under the Concession 13 bridge. Just a few metres east the road becomes Stone Quarry, likely named for the aggregate activity that went on here during the development’s construction. I crossed the road and entered the edge of the woodlot bordering the creek, noticing how the path here had been widened and tread marks from heavy machinery sank deep into the wet ground. I would later discover that recent construction was the cause of these treads, but at the moment I was focused on finding number 71, a house of indeterminate form and recent age. In its place I found the Burnham Wood cul-de-sac, circled by five single-family homes. I reasoned that number 71, with its “R2” designation and featureless design, had perhaps not been considered important enough to preserve.
As I continued down Burnham Wood and turned right onto Edenridge Drive, I considered Townsend New Town’s street names and layout. Ravine Crescent, Bramble Court, Elmvale, Woodfield, Forest Park; these names recalled a woodland landscape that was destroyed at the
end of the 18th century. As such, their significance was likely a marketing strategy to lure urbanites to a country setting, rather than an incorporation of the region’s heritage.

The building that I did not find at number 48 was called the Anderson House, built around 1848. The “R1a” home followed the Ontario Cottage or Regency style, characterized by a single-storey square plan with a hipped roof—unique in the area because of its unsuitability for bedrooms (Bucovetsky & Greenwald, 1976). The report describes a well-preserved doorway, re-glazed windows and an interior with one of three functioning fireplaces. I stood on the small knoll where the house was meant to be, imagining myself on its sunny, south-facing verandah. The Nanticoke Creek would have wrapped around the yard and past what might have been the family cemetery (Bucovetsky & Greenwald, 1976). Today the cemetery is still there, right next to the Keith Richardson Parkway, but there is no mention of the Anderson name inside (Figures 20-22). Instead, a small green sign announces the Haldimand County Upper Cemetery, named after George Upper, a farmer and saw mill operator who donated land to the township in 1837. According to another plaque, the graves are associated with a schoolhouse recorded on the site in the 1851 Census of Townsend.

The cemetery is surrounded by a chain-link fence, installed by the Townsend Policing Committee to discourage teenage vandals. “We got after the municipality,” one resident told me, “and they put up a wire fence because there was a lot of vandalism going on, especially around Halloween time… for about two or three years we would just go sit in the cemetery, and then all the vandalism stopped. There were adults there, right? So kids weren’t going to hang out there and tear the place up”. Inside, the soft granite marble tombstones are embedded in a small maze of concrete walls, encouraging a sort of inward reflection as one wanders through. The simple epitaphs date from 1845 to 1873. A plaque proudly states that the “Ontario Land Corporation, in
co-operation with the City of Nanticoke, has restored the cemetery and the surviving stones as a memorial to those individuals who shaped the history and landscape of this area”. The cemetery is an historic element that Townsend residents valued enough to guard during the night, and it is also one of the only ones that the Townsend New Town planners elected to incorporate in their design.

Figure 20: Cemetery entrance.

Figure 21: Embedded marble tombstone.
Somehow I knew, as I continued along the path, that I would not find numbers 46 and 47, next two sites on the list. Number 47, a 20th century house "built with some pretension and with some unusual details" (Bucovetsky & Greenwald, 1976, p.43), was replaced by a cul-de-sac of houses only a few years younger than my map. In place of number 46 were the seniors’ centre parking lot and a utility kiosk. I followed the old Townline Road, which had been diverged and turned into the Keith Richardson Parkway. A gravel path crossed under the parkway and led to a wide, moss-covered bridge over the Nanticoke (Figure 23). The rush of cars overhead and the creek below drowned out birdsong from the nearby woodlot. From here, the road continued along its 1820 trajectory, turning only to avoid the winding Nanticoke once more (Figure 24). Today, the road acts as a back route between Jarvis and Townsend, especially useful for those living at the seniors’ complex and children riding their bicycles to the nearest corner store. Along the way are numbers 15 and 17, two late-19th century farmsteads, still standing in front of their fields.
Figure 23: Keith Richardson Parkway and old Townline Road crossing over the Nanticoke Creek.

Figure 24: Townline Road, view south of Townsend New Town.
Aside from the cemetery and this little bit of Townline Road, there was no palimpsest of historical activity in Townsend New Town. The rural pattern had been erased, and none of the interviewees with whom I spoke had heard of the Anderson House, or any of the other historical buildings on the site. Despite the cultural report’s recommendations, Townsend seemed to be, in the words of one resident, “a suburb dropped into the middle of the country!”.

SUMMARY

While the landscape of Southern Ontario has been continuously inhabited and altered since the retreat of the last ice sheet, first by aboriginal peoples and later by European settlers, the design of Townsend New Town did not incorporate these historical layers. A transect through the community revealed a superimposed suburban layout that included one carefully selected piece of history in the form of a cemetery. It was only by exploring the outskirts of the incomplete development that traces of historical landscape and uses could be found.
Industry and Politics

*On occasion when communities gather they might be so encouraged that their applause sounds like rain, the roof drummed, leaves ripples as though the whole house might soon drown.*

*In making way for more people there are projections, reports, rhetoric, public notices, and committee meetings and the majority concluded the same way without thunderous hand-clapping but a trickle of people and some hand-wringing.*

- Stefan Rose
  *Townsend Traces, 2005*

The diagram below illustrates an outline of events that precipitated Townsend New Town development (Figure 25). A discussion of the political motivations and economic conditions behind these key moments reveals that Townsend was the product of speculation and political ambition, rather than controlled growth in response to actual demand.

**RURAL ORIGINS**

The 1968 Township of Townsend Official Plan describes a quiet farming area. The region is described as “a rural municipality”, meaning that “the predominate use of land in the areas so designated shall be for agriculture” (Proctor et al., p. 9). The plan emphasized the preservation of agricultural land, in order to “ensure that the Townsend Planning Area will remain a rural, essentially non-urban area” (Proctor et al., p. 2). Not only did the authors not anticipate major development, but they actively discouraged it, aiming to guide urban growth toward existing centres, such as Waterford and Simcoe. In hindsight, the Plan’s descriptions were prophetic.
Figure 25: Townsend timeline of important events.

Population projections were based on past development patterns and population growth rates. Historically, Townsend’s economy was predominately agricultural, with small pockets of industrial fabrication and urban communities servicing the surrounding rural area. The Plan speculated that this lack of large-scale growth was caused by Lake Erie region’s distance from the Ontario’s main communication route, which includes major rail lines and Highway 401—
extensions of American routes from upper New York State (Proctor et al., 1968). In 1961, the Dominion Census recorded a population of 5,428 persons in the Townsend Planning Area, 57 per cent of which self-identified as farmers. At an average annual growth rate of 0.5 per cent, the 1968 Official Plan projected a population of 5,800 persons in 1976 and 6,100 persons in 1986 (Proctor et al., 1968). It was expected that the increase in urban population and decrease in agriculture would continue at a slow and steady pace. Following this prediction, the Township would have had a population of just over 7,000 people in 2014. Owing to extensive shuffling of political boundaries, demographic statistics on the Township of Townsend are no longer available. However, Norfolk County’s electoral Ward 7 roughly corresponds to the boundaries of the historic township and had a population of 6,458 eligible voters in their 2010 election (Norfolk County, 2010). An added 20 per cent to account for the under-19 age group—based on the County’s population distribution (McSweeney & Associates, 2011)—reveals that the 1968 Official Plan predictions were not far from accurate.

**ANTICIPATED GROWTH**

In the period between the end of the Second World War and the early 1970s, the global economy was booming. In Ontario, investments in infrastructure led to rapid economic growth and population increase. As the leading manufacturing province in Canada, owing to its abundant natural resources and access to American export markets, Ontario’s industry sector was particularly prosperous. While the 1968 Townsend Official Plan was being compiled, changes were taking place in nearby Nanticoke, along the north shore of Lake Erie (Figure 26). In the same year, Ontario Hydro began constructing a 4-million-kilowatt thermal generating station and Stelco (now U.S. Steel) acquired 6,600 acres of land for an industrial park to expand its milling and steel production (The Regional Municipality of Haldimand-Norfolk (RMHN), n.d.).
Shortly afterwards, the American oil company Texaco announced its plan to build a large refinery with a daily capacity of 95,000 barrels per day. It was estimated that these developments would result in a total of 3,075 new jobs and a projected population of 106,000 by 1981. By 2001, the population was expected to reach 180,000 (OMH, 1977).

Apprehensive of the changes these developments would bring, the Government of Ontario reassessed its plans for the region: “The original Official Plan…could not have foreseen the major industrial development which was to take place at Nanticoke. Consequently, the expectation that the former Townsend Planning Area [TPA] would remain a totally rural one must now be altered” (RMHN, n.d., p. 3). In February 1973, the government issued zoning orders for existing land in Haldimand and Norfolk counties with the aim of “preventing uncontrolled growth before the new regional plan came into effect” (RMHN, n.d., p. 2).
Townsend New Town, they hoped, would help by absorbing the majority of new residents (Figure 27).

During this era of investment, government policy began to favour public ownership (Ministry of Infrastructure, 2014). As a result of the urban population growth spurt, various ‘super-municipalities’ were created in order to control expansion and relieve the provincial government of growing local responsibility. Using the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto example created in 1953, the counties of Haldimand and Norfolk decided to amalgamate by an act of the legislature on January 1, 1974. Where County Line Road used to split the two, it would now join them and become the main street of Townsend New Town, their new administrative and commercial core. According to a brochure highlighting its merits, Townsend New Town would be a pioneer city with a diversity of housing types, an efficient transportation system, extensive social services and an aesthetic that complemented the surrounding rural area (OMH, 1977). In preparation, a Townsend Community Development Program (TCDP) was established in the planning wing of the Ministry of Housing and three sites were chosen as potential locations for a new urban core.
Figure 27: Strategic Plan for Townsend New Town (TCDP Phase 2, 1976).
In anticipation of a sale, a consortium of land developers from the private sector bought up land from farmers in the area. “They were offered a deal for their homes and land,” a key informant told me, “as long as they didn’t tell their neighbours. If they spoke they would have to take whatever the government offered later on. Those who held out longer sometimes received three times as much as those who sold at the very beginning. Some held off until the very end”. The situation was tense for farmers who had no interest in selling. According to one tale, a disgruntled landowner drove a suspicious surveyor off his land with a rifle, threatening to shoot if the trespasser returned. “He’d had another farm in Nanticoke that had been expropriated for the steel mill. He’d already been pushed out once and he wasn’t going to be pushed out again”. Ultimately, enough land in the TPA was acquired to begin the preparation of concept plans.

**START-UP CONTROVERSY**

When the final location for Townsend New Town was chosen, north-east of Simcoe and adjacent to Jarvis, private developers sold the plots they had acquired to the provincial government’s Ontario Land Corporation (OLC). The reasons for choosing the site were layered and some interviewees hinted at intemperate political motivations. “Anyway, it is where it is”, one resident said, “some of the people are still alive, so it’s best if I keep my mouth shut”. On the surface was the site’s proximity to the junction at Highways 3 and 6; the Nanticoke Creek’s potential for recreational development; and, hard clay soil impeding agriculture. Another early resident also explained that, “it was built as a bedroom community to keep industry away from the living area. The prevailing winds go west to east. You don't want to live downwind of heavy industry. That’s not attractive and it's not healthy”. Making the issue more immediate was a need for updated water and sewage facilities throughout the region. Reportedly, Jarvis had run out of water several times in recent years and the quality of water in Hagersville was very poor
Consequently, the Region planned to spend $9,100,000 on waterworks and $1,659,000 sewage works between 1977 and 1982. In light of the incoming population, Haldimand-Norfolk County and the Ministry of the Environment entered into an agreement to build a new water treatment plant and a distribution system to provide 3,000,000 gallons per day. The new trunk line from Lake Erie would serve not only Townsend, but Jarvis, Hagersville and the Stelco Industrial Park (TYNP, 1977). In addition, the Province pledged to install a $1.5 million sewage lagoon system for the first 5,000 Townsend residents (Simone, 1979). Indeed, some of the support for Townsend’s immediate construction came from nearby residents hoping for better services. They had been told by Deputy Minister of Housing and Chief Executive Officer of the Ontario Land Corporation, Robert McDonald that “There is little doubt that if Townsend were denied the region would not be able to afford to build such a treatment plant” (‘Townsend report’, n.d.). Townsend New Town not only provided an opportunity to control projected growth, but to address problems in the surrounding area.

Despite arguments for construction, however, there was backlash from citizens in existing centres. As one resident recalled, “There was a lot of animosity from surrounding communities when Townsend was first planned. They didn’t understand why the government wouldn’t add onto what they already had. Jarvis was on the old plank road with a history behind it…” But planners and councillors wanted to start from scratch, allowing Jarvis to be subsumed by the new town as a neighbourhood of up to 4,000 people. McDonald argued that small communities like Jarvis and Waterford would prefer to remain small. “If Townsend doesn’t happen,” he warned, “there will be chaos… The only reason we are here is to avoid chaos” (‘Ultimate need’, 1979). This opinion was reportedly met with groans from the audience during a presentation of the plans to local councillors and interested members of the public (Pearce, 1978).
**CHANGING ECONOMY**

In the early 1970s, while preparations for Townsend New Town were taking place, there was a shift in the global economy. The post-war economic boom, amplified by large U.S. military expenditures during the Vietnam War and subsequent crude oil restrictions caused prices to rise worldwide (Boivin, 2011). As a result of these pressures, global inflation dramatically increased. In contrast to previous recessions, this period of inflation coincided with high unemployment rates and economic stagnation, and was coined a time of “stagflation” by British Conservative politician Iain McCleod (Fisher, 1973). Ontario’s industrial sector suffered a decline in production and employment, and in mid-November, 1976, Stelco announced a delay in the start-up date of the Nanticoke steel mill from late 1978 to early 1980, owing to a reduced demand for steel (TCDP Phase 3, 1977). Consequently, population projections were questioned.

The 1977 financial analysis “Townsend: Yes, No, Perhaps” described the scene: “We are in the midst of a period of economic uncertainty which, as far as Haldimand-Norfolk Region is concerned, has slowed down the development taking place at Stelco... Townsend starting in 1978 and reaching a population of 20,000 in 1986. This just isn’t going to happen now…” (p. 14). Townsend New Town’s economic success was directly linked to population growth. Regional council and the general public understood that if the people did not arrive, or did not arrive quickly enough, Townsend would not prosper. Townsend planners, along with local and provincial government had to decide whether to proceed with Townsend in the face of economic uncertainty, or be “caught with our pants down at sometime in the future” (TYNP, 1977, p. 13). Ultimately, the report concluded that although further financial modelling was required, “It would be… foolish to assume that the economy will not, at some point, turn around and that no further development will take place at Nanticoke” (1977, p. 13).
According to the financial report, Port Dover, Simcoe and Caledonia were the only urban centres within a reasonable distance that could accommodate an influx of new residents. The author estimated an increased capacity of 13,000 to 16,000 people (TYNP, 1977). However, a closer reading revealed that with updated water and sewage services, the rural communities of Dunnville, Waterford, Delhi, and Port Rowan could accommodate a further 9,600 people. This meant that the surrounding region could have absorbed approximately 25,000 people before a new centre was needed. Considering the slower rate of migration, it would take much longer to reach this amount. Citizens and regional councillors felt that building Townsend prematurely would limit the growth potential of surrounding centres by attracting all choice commercial and industrial investment to the “preferred child” of the region (‘Ultimate need’, 1979). In addition, local councillors suspected that the benefits to be gained by building Townsend New Town were likely to be outweighed by the need to heavily subsidize infrastructure and service costs in order to attract potential residents. As an alternative, MPP Gordon Miller suggested that funds be directed instead towards the region’s more pressing needs, like improved transportation routes between existing centres, and that the Townsend site be kept in agricultural use until such a time as "an absolute need can be shown for development" (‘Miller opposes’, 1979).

The first of three planning reports, issued in March 1976, had the goal of completing housing for the first 5,000 Townsend residents by 1978 (TCDP Phase 1). For a region that had been mainly agricultural for the preceding 150 years, the rush to amend official plans and acquire approvals was overwhelming to many; doubly so, considering the recent political reorganization. According to the Ontario Municipal Board’s planning process, a planning committee could apply to the Minister for approval only after public meetings and consultation with relevant local councils. In extenuating circumstances, the Minister of Housing had the power to expedite the
process by applying directly to the Municipal Board without consulting local council (Hamill, 1976). A memo between the Ministry of Housing and the Director of Operations for the TCPD from acted as a friendly warning: “...such action by the Minister to expedite the consideration of an official plan amendment could be considered a very serious infringement on local government authority... it would seem highly unlikely and inappropriate... However, I thought you would wish to know that these provisions of the Planning Act are available should circumstance suggest the use of such expedients” (Hamill, 1976). Ultimately, the TCDP decided to follow regulation.

In August of 1977, following the completion of three Townsend New Town planning reports, an information session was held at the Norfolk County Fair. The public had not heard about Townsend for over a year and in the meantime, many people were convinced by Stelco’s announced deferral that development was unnecessary. Four hundred and ninety-eight people signed the event guestbook, and 107 responses were returned, many of which criticized Townsend’s timing and economic viability (‘Townsend Review Process’ (TRP), 1978). The report highlighted specific responses to represent overall public opinion. For example, a Waterford resident—one of the 25 people in favour of Townsend proceeding as scheduled—argued that, “it is absolutely essential that the development is started to accommodate the increasing population. Too often planning comes after the people arrive – this is an opportunity to reverse these occurrences” (TRP, 1978, p. 4). Conversely, a total of 27 people wanted Townsend delayed, and 13 wanted it deferred indefinitely. In the opinion of one attendee, “The ambitious but very expensive plans are impressive, but after looking carefully at the existing towns in the area of industrial development, it is obvious that they could have been enabled to embrace any expansion without the great expense of Townsend” (TRP, 1978, p. 5). Forty-two responses were neutral or made no mention about timing, which the Townsend planners
interpreted as votes in favour of proceeding (TRP, 1978).

Taxation for Townsend New Town’s construction was also high on the list of public concerns. In response to the Ministry of Housing’s request for input, a ‘Committee of Concerned Citizens for the Deferral of the New Townsend Townsite’ was formed in opposition to the project’s speed and cost, with a petition signed by 1,872 residents (TRP, 1978). As the financial report described, “There appears to be a great fear on the part of the taxpayer that in spite of all public statements to the contrary that somehow or other part of the cost of developing Townsend will be added to the taxpayers realty tax bill or water and sewer rates” (TYNP, 1977, p. 1). Instead, the increases in taxation seen over the 1974 to 1977 period were attributed to increases in the education levy from various school boards, and increases in water and sewer rates to pay for facility upgrades. Included in those facilities, of course, would be Townsend’s new $20 million water tower, $4 million of which would be paid by the Ministry of Environment (Simone, 1979). However, since the tower would benefit other communities, it was promoted as a communal cost with affordable service rates. According to Deputy Minister McDonald, the services were on a user-pay system, meaning that the province would accept the risk should Townsend growth not occur; “No houses, no users, no pay,” he said (Simone, 1979). When asked who would pay for the proposed $50 to $60 million upgrade to the treatment plant, McDonald said that a population of 40,000 would help finance the cost. Neither council members nor citizens believed these reassurances. Councillor Judd was particularly critical: “You have said that the municipalities can't provide low cost housing, well I don't think you can either. Unless of course it is paid for by the taxpayers… You spend our money, and it seems to flow like water. You say you're spending your money, but I say like hell you are” (‘Townsend report’, n.d.). Likewise, the Simcoe Reformer published a list of complaints in late 1978:
Adding to the aggravation is the knowledge that the provincial government, having expended $40 million of tax money on the Townsend site of 13,340 acres, seems determined to plough more public funds into the ground without regard for the realities of the situation. The installation of basic municipal services alone at Townsend will run into millions of dollars at a time when serviced land awaits housing development at other urban centres in the region (Pearce, 1978).

Despite promises from Premier William Davis and former Minister of Housing John Rhodes that planning would proceed slowly and only after further consultation with Regional Council (‘Miller opposes’, 1979), Townsend New Town planning was well underway.

In late 1978, Claude Bennett, the new Minister of Housing, announced a revised and controversial start-up date for the spring of 1980 (Pearce, 1978). He, along with Deputy Minister McDonald, sought approval from Regional Council within a month’s time. Local councillors felt slighted by the Province. Haldimand mayor Edith Fuller said, “I am concerned that the Province and regional government were supposed to work side by side and now we see that announcements have been made in the press without first asking the advice of this council. Is this to be the procedure in the future? I have lost my faith in the government…” (‘Townsend report’, n.d.). Not only had a start-up date been announced, but architectural plans were prepared without municipal consultation. Moreover, councillors protested that local consultants were “reportedly given no opportunity to tender for this work to be carried out in the region in which they live and conduct their business” (‘Miller opposes’, 1979). MPP Miller called the Minister’s credibility into question: "Your announcement of a go-ahead date of 1980 for the Townsend Site, closely following your appointment as Minister of Housing, left many individuals and officials in this area with the feeling that those who had the most to gain from the startup of the project had
given you a ‘snow job’”, implying his appointment was a form of flattery (‘Miller opposes’, 1979). Councillor Judd accused the Ministers’ presentation of containing “mostly window dressing”. Deputy Minister McDonald countered that “In the hour and five minutes that was allotted to me it would have been imprudent of me to try and give you all the details” (‘Miller opposes’, 1979).

The question of population growth rates was raised once again. It was argued that Stelco had pledged to hire around two thirds of its incoming 1,350 workers from the region, and that most of them would already live within driving distance to Nanticoke (‘Ultimate need’, 1979). Of the remaining employees, many would be transferred from Hamilton, and could conceivably choose to commute the 45 minute drive, or might favour a more established urban centre like Simcoe over a new one like Townsend. McDonald countered that more workers would arrive when the coke ovens began operating in 1982, and again in 1985, when the plant changed its steel processing method. "The population influx because of Nanticoke has not been felt as of yet… But once full time Stelco workers move in, they will plan on staying,” he said (‘Ultimate need’, 1979). The Simcoe Reformer dismissed the start-up date as “just another long-range statement of intent” (Pearce, 1978), but after years of discussion, the first Townsend homes were in place by the spring of 1980. With the government underwriting the risk of failure, planners decided to make a modest start to Townsend New Town construction.

**TOWNSEND NEW TOWN DEVELOPMENT**

Many iterations of Townsend New Town were drawn between its conception in the early 1970s and its debut nearly a decade later. The draft plan of the first stage of development was submitted on January 29, 1979, by the OLC with the help of town planning consultants John Bousfield Associates. The plan (Figure 28) depicts a subdivision with four neighbourhoods on
400 acres in the south-east quadrant of the 14,150-acre site. While this stage would have eventually included 1,600 units for 5,000 residents, the goal was to complete 298 units for just fewer than 1,000 people in the first year of construction (Bousfield, 1978). The Town Centre (Figure 29) would include a commercial plaza as well as a civic administrative building for the Region and the City of Nanticoke. Like a condominium, this building would be rented out to the two organizations with the option to purchase for the price of one dollar after 25 years. One early resident remembered the Town Centre feature as an initial attraction: “We were very excited, because we heard about the shopping mall that was coming. In the pictures they showed us, it had a glass floor—just imagine!” The three other neighbourhoods—Inglewood, Forest Park and Willow Glen—were mainly residential. The original housing mix was 52 per cent single detached houses on 12-metre lots, 33 per cent semi-detached homes on 9-metre lots and 15 per cent on-street townhouses on 7-metre lots. Also included were two adjacent school blocks—public and separate—three park blocks, two church blocks, and large tracts of open space alongside the Nanticoke Creek and in the southeastern portion of the site, next to an existing hardwood stand.
Figure 28: First Stage Development Plan for Townsend New Town (based on plan by Bousfield, 1978).
THE EARLY YEARS

From the outset, there was the question of what type of housing would be suitable for the new city. It was assumed that many industrial workers who migrated to Townsend would need affordable housing, as senior staff with higher incomes would already be established in urban centres and therefore, less willing to relocate. However, when weighed against aesthetic preference, planners found that people in the rural area did not like the idea of higher density. In the words of one respondent, “I do not… agree with lots 50 x 100 [feet]. People need space. Lots 70 x 100 [feet] would reduce friction amongst neighbours” (TRP, 1978, p. 8). This apprehension was understandable, considering that only one multiple-unit residence was recorded in the Official Plan of 1968 (Proctor et al.). Consequently, the number of townhomes included in the plan was limited, and it was decided that, “condominiums would not fit into the lifestyle of the
people living [in Townsend]” (Simone, 1979). Housing prices ranged from $38,950 to $55,000, the most expensive of which would be located in Inglewood, overlooking the valley. The homes would be built on a proposal call system, tendered in blocks to various builders, in order to ensure that prices were suited to the average wage of incoming workers. In light of increasing economic constraints, however, the affordability of housing was called into question, and accused of “encouraging a dissipation of growth at odds with the concept of a new town” (Hamill, 1976). Indeed, one current Townsend resident and former Stelco employee argued that, “it wasn’t affordable, and that’s probably why there weren’t many of us who came”.

By the end of the 1981-1982 fiscal year, Townsend’s eight builders had nearly completed 106 housing units and 51 families were in residence (Dunne, 1982). In addition, the first phase of the Town Centre was completed and the official openings of a pharmacy, a convenience store and a bank were scheduled for June of 1982. The OLC entered into a lease-purchase agreement with the Regional Municipality and completion of the administrative centre was scheduled for the spring of 1983. Moreover, recreational amenities were provided in the form of extensive parkland, tennis courts and playing fields, as well as the transformation of a nearby aggregate quarry into a public swimming pond operated by the City of Nanticoke (Dunne, 1982).

Despite these attractions, new residents were not appearing as quickly as had been forecast. As one early resident remembers,

We moved here… September 1983. These were supposed to be model homes but they were never finished. The builder apparently had some kind of problems and went under, so these houses sat empty for three years… They were trying to get rid of the homes, and we found out that they would give us a $3,000 grant to come live out here. We were very excited; this would be our first official home. They showed us the plans, and they said
that we would probably have new neighbours behind us in about ten years, so we adjusted to the idea. But we still have a field behind us!

By the time the second year of development came about, construction had slowed drastically. Approximately 40 of the 194 units scheduled for construction were completed (TCDP Phase 1, 1976). As one resident put, “We thought it was so strange when they put in that last street. It was almost like an afterthought. We thought they’d decided no one else was coming”.

Correspondence from the TCDP reveals a shift in responsibility from planners and stakeholders to the new development’s Residents Association. For example, when residents from Willow Glen requested an additional park because they did not like their children crossing roads to access Inglewood and Forest Park playgrounds, the TCDP’s response was hesitant:

We should provide the Willow Glen residents with a small “temporary parkette” but only if they really push us for it. Since OLC has already advised the Residents Association that we will not provide any playground equipment, such a parkette is only of real value to them if they themselves are prepared to buy the equipment for this parkette...In the meantime, we should take no further action on this matter and see what the Residents Association is going to do (Turner, 1983).

Where Townsend planners and the Province were once enthusiastic about providing residents with attractive amenities like ski trails, shopping malls with glass-floors, and an extensive park system, as development slowed they were reluctant to assume further responsibility and debt.

**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO FAILURE**

In the words of the former Governor of the Bank of Canada, Gordon Thiessen, “Because inflation creates uncertainty, it makes it much more difficult for households and businesses to
judge future prices and to make sound economic decisions. High inflation encourages speculation rather than productive investments. It raises interest rates. And, in the end, it exacerbates both the booms and the busts” (2001). Pressured by rising inflation and failing industry, the Provincial Government could not accurately predict the consequences of moving forward with Townsend New Town. In speculating about the development’s failure as an urban centre, respondents discussed the discrepancy between supply and demand. For example, the plan included two elementary schools, despite the fact that existing schools in the Region had “an alarmingly high number of vacant pupil places” (‘Miller opposes’, 1979). Likewise, the development’s industrial park would be in direct competition with industry at Nanticoke, and seemed to undermine Townsend’s original purpose of providing housing for Nanticoke employees. When the design was accused of being redundant, the TCDP argued that, “…people wouldn’t move into the region unless they could see the houses and roads and community college”, implying that pre-emptive construction was imperative in order to attract buyers (‘Townsend report’, n.d.). What had begun as preparation for a large incoming population transformed into a fixed scheme, dependent on rapid growth in order to justify expenditures.

There were many factors that contributed to the development’s discontinuation. The rate of growth was a common point of discussion. In the opinion of one resident, “They wanted to do this really fast... but it had to take time. People weren't showing up as fast as they wanted, because very few of us had down-payment money for a house back then. And right after they opened this, interest rates started to climb. 18 per cent on mortgages, and then 21 per cent. Nobody was buying houses back then!” Similarly, another interviewee asserted that “They had the basic things set up for expansion. If they would have just developed these unbuilt subdivisions, no doubt in my mind that they'd be full right now, but they wanted a quick
solution”. By contrast, some thought that construction was too late: “By the time Townsend was built they had switched over the machinery at Stelco. The new machines only needed about 1,600 people to run, whereas the old ones needed 10,000. People will follow where the jobs are, and they weren't here”. Transportation routes were another consideration. One interviewee speculated that a direct, major connection to Highways 401 and 403 would have ensured Townsend’s success. Another resident echoed the TCDP’s arguments, blaming a lack of amenities: “Why would you give up all the conveniences to have none? Why would you move to a community that has absolutely nothing? It’s the amenities that draw people—the ballparks, the big malls, all the conveniences of a big city. They did everything backwards”. Ultimately, these causes were intertwined. Factors like slow growth and poor transportation connections, viewed within the context of economic, social and political constraints of the time, combined to bring about a swift end to Townsend New Town. According to locals, just a few years after construction began, Townsend was already being referred to as ‘The city that wasn’t’.

SUMMARY

Planning for Townsend New Town was initiated in response to anticipated population growth, during a period of substantial investment in public infrastructure. Its location and the acquirement of land were controversial, for rural farmers as well as for residents in surrounding urban centres, who argued for expansion rather than new development. When industry slowed during an economic recession and population projections decreased, public and Regional criticism of Townsend increased. Despite these concerns, pressure from heavily-invested private developers and the Provincial Government pushed construction forward. Ultimately, only the first phase of the development was partially completed, leaving behind an interesting juxtaposition of suburban and rural landscapes.
Landscape Values

When you come in from the north, there's only that one house, so it's like you're driving in the country and all of a sudden there's Townsend, so I can understand how that's jarring. But when you come in from the other directions, there's a build-up of houses. You kind of know there's a community coming. I mean, if you drive around Ontario, there's lot of little communities that are stuck in little valleys, and they're not ghost towns!

- Current Townsend resident

In anticipation of a large incoming population, Townsend New Town’s housing was built at a much higher density than that of the historical Township of Townsend. This proximity was an adjustment for residents from smaller hamlets with larger lots: “The first time we came to Townsend I found this street very claustrophobic. That, to me, is the biggest drawback. Our first mission was to get blinds for the windows! There is no place on the ground floor of this house that you could stand and not be seen”. As another resident stated, “What I don’t understand is why they put the houses on such small lots. Who wants to move out here and not have a lot of land?” Residents identified the developments’ narrow residential streets as a challenge, and worried that fire trucks and other rescue vehicles might not be able to access their homes in case of emergency. Moreover, much of the land surrounding Townsend has reverted to agricultural use, meaning that some narrow concession roads must be shared with large combine harvesters. Residents’ preference for larger lots may stem from the fact that Townsend has become a rural community whose inhabitants display similar spatial preferences to those who objected to townhomes and condominiums in the 1970s. There was only one small apartment complex located in Townsend at the time this study took place. Although there were townhomes at the south end of the community, they were a part of the Parkview Meadows Retirement Village. This shortage of multiple-unit housing and rental units meant that there was somewhat of a lack
of economic hierarchy in the community.

The layout of Townsend’s houses and yards (Figure 30) were based on minimum standards determined during the first half of the 19th-century, when the rapid expansion of the suburbs created a need for development ordinances to control residential form. These guidelines, such as how far a house may be placed from the edge of the street, firmly established the visual appearance of suburban residential areas. According to Nassauer (1995), the lawn was not only a display of prestige, but a symbol of one’s “willingness to conform to a collective image” (in Henderson, Perkins, & Nelischer, 1998, p. 135). Likewise, Feagan and Ripmeester (1999) found that people who did not conform to the traditional lawn ideal were labelled “lazy”, “inconsiderate” and “disgraceful”. Conversely then, a well-kept lawn is traditionally imbued with ideas of good-neighbourliness, a sense of community, family values and a hardworking mentality. Supporting this idea, Townsend residents often linked the image of maintained property with aesthetic qualifiers like “pretty”, “beautiful” and “manicured”, displaying a mindset common amongst North American homeowners that has been in place since the mid-to-late 19th century.

Similarly, Townsend’s parkland aesthetic is rooted in 18th-century British landscape ideals, which established that sweeping vistas of short grass best displayed the mansions of upper-class society (Stewart & Davidson, 1999). In the 19th century, Olmsted and Vaux’s designs in Riverside, Illinois and for Central Park in New York City, further promoted the parkland model. Inspired by these and other influential designs, Townsend planners created a system of walkways and parks (Figure 31) following the natural drainage course of the Nanticoke Creek, allowing for recreational use alongside conservation and flood control (RMHN, n.d.). Conversations with current residents revealed an idyllic picture of Townsend in its prime, filled with fishing
excursions and ice skating on the retention pond, swimming lessons at the former aggregate quarry and baseball games at the ballpark. Many of these activities still took place, although recent construction and maintenance issues had put a stop to some.

During reflections about Townsend’s landscape, residents often expressed appreciation for its quiet atmosphere. In the words of one interviewee, “...you get the feel of living in a big city subdivision, but you’ve got the country right there too. You’ve got neighbours, but it’s peaceful”. For those employees from Stelco, Texaco and Esso who did move to Townsend, it was “perfect for sleeping through the day”. Ironically, although Townsend was envisioned as a large urban centre, the quiet, rural area it has become may be more suited to its original purpose. As one former Stelco employee commented, “Townsend was made for shift workers”.

Figure 30: Typical Townsend front yard.
While Townsend’s parks remain a favourite aspect of the community, their maintenance has been an ongoing debate since construction was put on indefinite hold. As one resident recalled, "The government gave up trying once they realized people weren't coming, and now the county has the responsibility, but they don't have the money. Even if things didn't get damaged, it would still cost too much money to maintain". Deliberately placed between Haldimand and Norfolk counties during their amalgamation, Townsend found itself in an awkward position when the counties decided to divide in 2001. It was eventually decided that the new boundary would wrap around the development and become Haldimand’s responsibility. However, this shuffling caused some residents to feel ignored by local government:
I think from time to time we get forgotten about by the municipality. When we were part of Norfolk, it was immaculate. Everything was manicured, everything looked good. If something was broken, light bulbs were out, they'd get on it right away… they even had their own fleet of lawnmowers, but when they left they took everything with them and for a good three or four months we didn't get any grass cut out here. And it's been kind of hit or miss ever since. Haldimand has never kept it up to the Norfolk standard. They do stuff, but we have to complain. I think we get passed around. We get put on the telephone tag list. 'Oh no, you've got to call this person, and then that person'. But our municipal representative doesn't even take our calls.

The services to which this resident was referring are needed to maintain the original design’s parkland aesthetic, which was an attraction for early residents to the community.

Figure 32: Townsend retention and recreation pond.
The image of a mowed green space depicted above (Figure 32) is an example of the emphasis placed on maintaining a visual landscape ideal rather than a functional one. This space, adjacent to the Children’s Aid and Mental Health administration buildings, is largely unused by employees and residents owing to limited access, but continues to be mowed in a specific pattern on a regular basis. Likewise, one of the main features of the development was the retention pond bordering the Regional administration buildings (Figure 33). Surrounded by decorative rope fencing and walking paths, the pond and adjacent plaza were a favourite spot for summer concerts, fishing excursions and recreational canoeing. Today, the reeds and shrubs along the edge of the pond are left to grow tall, and the municipality no longer cleans algae out of the water regularly. “It’s like a wetland or something, and it really wasn’t built as a wetland,” said one interviewee, “It was just allowed to become like that. I guess if you like that... some people do”. Maintained landscape, then, was judged to be good, while long grass and wetlands were the opposite.

Figure 33: Green space adjacent to Nanticoke Creek and CAS.
One active resident had the idea of fundraising money to “restore” the pond, suggesting that the government match whatever amount the community could raise. On second thought, however, the resident decided that “To fix that pond would be a disproportionate cost to the number of people who live here, and a lot of people [in the municipality] still feel we take up too much tax money because there's so much parkland around here that has to be maintained”.

According to some residents, there was an improvement to maintenance when Haldimand Mayor Marie Trainer came into office. At the request of Townsend’s Policing Committee, a group of concerned citizens who promote safety in the area, Mayor Trainer visited the community with an employee from the maintenance department. “They spent four hours with us—they walked all over Townsend, and they listened to us and made a list of everything we wanted done, and they hired people to do a lot of it over the next six months”. Much of the maintenance and repairs that were undertaken conformed to the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategy. CPTED, according to its mandate, designs and alters the built environment in an effort to reduce criminal incidence and fear of crime (2002). “There were things that lent themselves to vandalism,” said one resident, “like they let brush grow up around the bridges and the kids could hide in that. They had tunnels in there. Literally tunnels! So they cut all that down so the kids had nowhere to go”. The problem of aimless youth in Townsend was an issue that will be discussed in a subsequent section. As for maintenance, Mayor Trainer had the lights fixed around the pond and made an effort to give Townsend special attention when it came to emergency calls. “She took us on and looked after us,” said another resident about Mayor Trainer, “She tried to do what she could but there were a lot of cutbacks then. The government was loading a lot of things onto municipalities…But we definitely noticed a change”. Residents were more disparaging of the previous municipal representative, Lorraine
Bergstrand: “She didn't really realize Townsend was here. But she came out just before the next election campaign and suddenly discovered us”. The attention of local representation, or lack thereof, made a difference in how residents perceived Townsend’s landscape, and their sense of influence and ability to alter it. Even if Mayor Trainer could not make requested repairs owing to financial cutbacks, the concern she displayed made residents feel as if their opinions mattered, and helped to create a perceived improvement.

While some residents said that they would only call a municipal number to report maintenance issues, others assumed responsibility. For example, one neighbour took it upon themselves to mow a 10 metre strip of land between a row of backyards and an agricultural plot owned and rented out to farmers by the government (Figure 34). Twenty-eight years ago, the government stopped mowing the strip of land and, as the resident said, “it was getting all weedy and people started dumping garbage back there”. To discourage illegal dumping the resident began mowing the strip with a push mower, and when that became too physically demanding, they bought a tractor mower on a payment plan to complete the task. They also put up a sign that said “Please don’t dump here because the people of [this street] care about having a beautiful neighbourhood” (Figure 35). According to the resident,

For a while, someone would leave a bucket of gas on our front stoop just to say 'thank you' for cutting the grass. But that sort of dropped off. People have gotten used to us doing it, and they figure we always will. And that's fine. I've never asked for payment or anything. I just like to keep the town looking beautiful. I take very great pride in where I live, so it's just something I'll always do until I can't do it anymore.
Figure 34: Ten metre buffer maintained by Townsend resident.

Owing to the cost of gas, approximately an hour and a half was spent mowing this strip of land every two weeks. However, the alternative of using a low-maintenance alternative to grass was deemed too expensive. This example demonstrates Kaplan’s observation that lawn care promotes community interaction and that working with nature fills one with a sense of satisfaction (1973), even to the point of overriding personal monetary expense. For this resident, maintaining an orderly landscape was linked with beauty and good neighbourliness, and produced a sense of pride and ownership.

**ATTITUDE TOWARDS WILDLIFE**

Just as landscape appearance was evaluated in Townsend, so were different types of wildlife. Residents spoke fondly of bringing their children to the pond to search for turtles and
fox dens. Birds were also a well-loved group, and one resident had installed bird houses along the edge of a disused field in the hopes of attracting migrating species. According to the resident, bluebirds, “were nearly extinct from this area when we moved here 30 years ago. There was only one. But we fed them and attracted them and now we have lots visiting us! We brought them back”. Local photography enthusiasts have been known to track rarer visitors, like an albino bluebird, for as long as five years. Conversely, common urban mammals like skunks and racoons were deemed undesirable. Some residents called to complain to the municipality about long grass in the meadows surrounding the community, because it created a “habitat for all kinds of unwanted mammals”. According to residents, maintaining the parkland aesthetic was a part of both attracting and deterring various animal species.

Figure 35: Collection of signs and a birdfeeder at Townsend edge.
SAFETY

Maintenance in Townsend was not only linked with beauty and wildlife, but with the issue of safety. Three residents told me that they no longer walk in the parks at night because they felt unsafe without night lighting, although it was unclear whether this fear was of potentially harming oneself or of being harmed by others. Having walked back to my temporary residence in pitch dark, after a community event late one rainy evening, I can attest to the fear of slipping off the gravel edge of the road into a grassy ditch, or of close calls with passing tractor combines. In addition, grass was reportedly left to grow tall around fire hydrants causing some residents to worry that a fire truck would not be able to find them. While one neighbour said they try to trim it themselves, the garbage placed around the fire hydrant depicted below (Figure 36) indicated that others were less concerned.

Figure 36: Garbage left around a fire hydrant.
Some of the foot bridges crossing the Nanticoke Creek have rotted planks and pose a risk to pedestrians (Figure 37). One resident told a story of their dog falling through a hole in a bridge, and being terrified that a child would be next. “I couldn’t believe that nobody would fix this. I said ‘Where are the people who own this stuff? ‘Cause the kids play down there a lot. There are still a lot of people that go down there and fish’. This resident said that they put new planks over the rotten portion of the bridge to assuage their fears, although the planks were no longer there when I visited.

In the years since Mayor Trainer’s term ended, landscape maintenance has once again become a public grievance (Figure 38). Conversations with residents revealed a sense of resignation surrounding the issue. In the words of one interviewee: “… we've learned not to count on anything. We kind of hope things will happen, but you know, if it does, it does”. Many of the street lights had been burnt out for a long time. One resident had been calling the
municipal telephone number displayed on a particular street lamp for six years in order to have it repaired, and but had not had any success. Reportedly, birds nested in it and the resident was “waiting for it to catch fire”. The pond, which used to be lit by lamps in the evening, was now in total darkness. Admittedly, some of these lamps did not burn out but were broken by teenagers from Townsend and surrounding communities like Jarvis. They would, according to one interviewee, “...just destroy the place. They would take rocks to the lights, and we had a beautiful town clock that was destroyed. They took up all the brickwork around the pond... The government just said 'It costs so much money to keep replacing this stuff', and then they stopped replacing it. And now it's nothing. We don't get anything”.

“Nothing”, however, was not quite accurate. While I visited Townsend I observed a contracting crew repairing sidewalks and a pair of riding mowers noisily maintaining the grounds at the Children’s Aid Society (CAS), formerly the Regional administration centre for Haldimand-Norfolk. Residents’ perception of being completely ignored may stem from memories of the special attention Townsend received in its early years. Many of the residents who expressed dismay over a lack of municipal funding had been living in Townsend since the early 1980s, and remembered a time when government subsidies were put towards keeping Townsend attractive to potential newcomers. Today, repairs and maintenance are undertaken, but at a slower pace and to a lesser extent than in the past.
SUMMARY

The design of Townsend’s parkland and streetscape was centred on 18th and 19th century British and North American landscape ideals, and was an attractive draw for early residents to the development. These designs required extensive maintenance and became imbued with notions of beauty, decency, cleanliness and safety. In the past, attention and intervention from municipal authorities caused residents to feel less neglected and increased their sense of influence over their environment. In addition, some residents assumed responsibility for maintenance of public areas in order to convey the image of a community for which people care. However, in recent times there has been a lack of municipal concern and residents remained unsatisfied with the level of upkeep provided.
Transportation and Amenities

Townsend parkway would be the major thoroughfare and gateway to the area, linking Townsend with Highway 3 and Nanticoke industrial area. Running east-west, the Nanticoke Creek Parkway would connect the first stage of development with Highway 6 and Regional Road 55 to the east... Both major arteries would be two lanes wide. However, Townsend Parkway will cross the Nanticoke Creek on a four-lane bridge for future traffic volume.

- Nanticoke Times article (Simone, 1979)

Following extensive traffic assessments, noise impact studies and alignment alternatives, the TCDP determined a system of regional and town arterials for the new centre (Figure 39). Accordingly, it was decided that Townline Road, especially near the commercial and administrative Town Centre, would have to accommodate the highest traffic volume—a combination of in-bound trips from the Nanticoke Industrial area, as well as trips within the community—and would need to be realigned and widened significantly. Projecting an evening traffic flow of approximately 2000 vehicles, the committee recommended a 46-metre right-of-way that could eventually accommodate a maximum of six lanes, as well as a new route to provide a better connection with Highway 3 and, eventually, the Nanticoke industrial area (TDCP Phase 2, 1976). Town arterials, including the Nanticoke Parkway that would lead to Jarvis in the west and Simcoe in the east, would be 36 metres wide, with a maximum of four lanes. The wider rights-of-way, the report argued, were “recommended to provide some flexibility in the strategic plan to accommodate additional traffic or turning lanes, bicycleways, service easements and any unforeseen transport needs” (TCDP, Phase 3, p. 16). Exploration of Townsend in present times revealed that these lanes have become superfluous, convenient only to vehicles passing through rather than the community’s inhabitants. It was for this reason that stop signs were installed along the parkway at the northern Stone Quarry Road entrance and at
the main crossroads, in the hopes of discouraging hurried commuters from using Townsend as a high-speed shortcut. “Can you imagine if we got stoplights?” one resident asked ruefully, “That would really put us on the map”. Townsend’s juxtaposition between expansive highway and modest suburban development causes one to question the meaning of being prepared.

Figure 39: Map of Projected Lane Requirements for 100,000 population area (TCDP, Phase 3, 1977, 3.11b).
PUBLIC TRANSIT

According to Townsend planning reports, the most effective type of public transit was a fixed-route city bus that would eventually run for 18 hours per day at a minimum stop frequency of 15 minutes during peak times (TCDP, Phase 2, 1976). Moreover, the development’s residential collector system was laid out to facilitate public buses. There was also some consideration of a direct bus route from the initial Town Centre to the Nanticoke industrial site for shift workers. Although the plan did not recommend implementing either of these systems until a population of 20,000 had been reached, it suggested that private taxi and ‘dial-a-bus’ services be subsidized for youth and individuals with low-income for the 5,000 to 20,000 population level (TCDP, Phase 3, 1977). Likewise, the plan was confident that “regional bus services between Townsend, Simcoe and other major communities probably will be started as the population of the town and region grows” (TCDP, Phase 3, 1977, p. 35). Given that the population never reached 5,000, none of these systems were actualized, firmly establishing Townsend as a driving community.

Townsend’s current layout is small enough to be traversed on foot in fewer than ten minutes. Although an internal transit system would be extraneous, several residents remarked on the need for regional transit. As a former Townsend youth suggested, “It would have been great if there was a bus to Toronto, just once a week. I really think people would have used it”. Another asserted that they would take a daily bus to Simcoe, “Especially in the winter-time, I would take a bus rather than drive”. A regular regional service might reduce residents’ dependence on vehicles. In the words of one interviewee, “everyone goes to Simcoe every single day, and nobody carpools together, and it’s such a waste of gas!” For non-drivers, a bus to urban centres would provide increased access to resources and a greater sense of overall freedom.
Figure 40: Lack of pedestrian access along Keith Richardson Parkway bridge.

**PEDESTRIAN ROUTES**

Despite Townsend’s extensive recreational paths, pedestrian access along major roadways was limited by a lack of separated sidewalks and night-lighting. Between the Parkview Meadows Retirement Village, the CAS, the REACH organization and the Mental Health organization, one resident estimated that 300 people worked in Townsend. Those who lived in Townsend and worked at Parkview Meadows or the CAS had to cross the Nanticoke Creek, either along the Keith Richardson Parkway bridge or one of two footbridges. The Parkway, although wide enough for four lanes of traffic and a grassy median, was unfriendly to pedestrians with its narrow shoulder and incomplete sidewalk (Figure 40). Neither of the footbridges was illuminated in the evening, and the wooden planks on one of them had been rotting for some time. “I’m two blocks away and I drive,” one resident and Townsend employee mused, “I guess I could walk
when I start at six o’clock in the morning, but I don’t. And then of course it’s unsafe after dark. If it was wider and more lit up, I might walk”. Driving the short distance to work was partly a matter of convenience, but was perceived as safer than the roadway, or the dark and decaying footpaths. More recently, there was also the matter of a construction project blocking pedestrian access across the creek, which will be discussed in the section on future growth potential.

\textit{FROM BIG CITY PLANS TO RURAL REALITY}

It may seem obvious that today, Townsend New Town is not the urban centre it was meant to become, nor is it even a town, in the simplest definition of having a local government presence (OED, 2011). However, the development’s evolution precludes it from being a typical Southern Ontario ‘cross-roads’ village (McIlwraith, 1997). There is no main street lined with small commercial enterprises, surrounded by a residential area of multi-coloured brick housing vernacular. Townsend briefly hosted a variety of commercial efforts, including a convenience store, a bank that was reportedly only open on Thursday afternoons, and a drugstore that has been likened to a “Russian supply room” because it only had one of each item. However, these enterprises were largely subsidized by government funding and closed down or moved to more lucrative locations when Townsend’s population did not grow as quickly as expected. Likewise, Regional and Provincial Government departments chose not to renew their leases on their Town Centre offices.

\textit{ACCESS TO AMENITIES}

Discounting the small supply store at the retirement village, there were no commercial businesses located in Townsend. In the words of one interviewee, “once the government cut out funding, the town just wasn’t big enough to support a store by itself”. Residents defended this
lack of local amenities with several counterarguments. Firstly, the distance required to travel to another town for supplies was compared to traveling in inter-city traffic. In the words of one interviewee:

I’m ten minutes from Hagersville—there’s two grocery stores there. I’m fifteen minutes from Simcoe, and they’ve got all the big chains there. Both of them have hospitals. How close are your hospitals? We’re ten minutes from everything we need to survive. Whereas in Hamilton, depending on where you live you could be half an hour from the nearest gas station or grocery store because you have to drive through all that city, stop at stop lights and all that. We’re really not that isolated.

Moreover, a lack of commercial stores was seen as a worthwhile trade for an increased sense of community. “People are friendlier in small places because we help each other!” one resident argued, “If I run out of eggs or sugar or flour, I’ll go to my neighbour and say, ‘Can I borrow…?’ There’s an intermingling, and not the sense of fear you get in urban areas, where people are trying to protect themselves because they don’t know who their neighbours are”. The perception of an increased sense of community in rural areas will be discussed in the subsequent chapter. Lastly, residents reasoned that commercial amenities came with certain disadvantages. One interviewee recalled that “They used to have a store over in the plaza, but the only thing that created was a lot of litter and loitering teenagers... I don't look at a store as being a convenience. What do you really need so bad, that you can't pick up on your way home from work?”

Similarly, several residents expressed relief when rumours of a gas station being opened in Townsend did not come to fruition. “Gas is so much cheaper on the Indian Reserve,” one resident argued, “it’s only five or ten kilometres away, and this way we don’t get the traffic”. For individuals who are physically and legally able to drive a vehicle, access to amenities was not
perceived as a challenge, and may have even been preferable to the perception of an increased amount of traffic and litter, and a reduced sense of safety and community.

Despite various arguments against a commercial centre, several residents—especially more active individuals and those who did not have access to vehicles—expressed a desire for closer amenities. “We used to walk to Jarvis on a Sunday afternoon,” one resident remembered, “but it’s a bit of a stretch now at our age. It would be easier if we could just walk to the store and get some milk”. For those without the ability to drive, especially youth and seniors, a small store within walking distance would contribute to a sense of spatial freedom. In addition, former youth recalled earning pocket money by washing windows and mopping floors at Townsend’s short-lived general store: “I could bike there and earn some extra money. Someone would buy it and try to run it, but I would work maybe two weekends and then it would go under again”. A commercial business was not only seen as a convenience and an economic opportunity, but as space for social interaction. “You know what we really need?” one resident put forth, “A Tim Horton’s coffee place. A social place that people can gather, outside their home, for those who can’t drive. We really need a coffee place”. This idea was echoed by several interviewees, with the disclaimer that such a place might not be able to stay afloat on support from Townsend residents alone. “Unless people live or work in Townsend or they’re visiting,” said one interviewee, “no one stops here. They just drive right through”. The provision of amenities in Townsend, like public transportation, was based on minimum population levels that were never achieved.
SUMMARY

Townsend’s layout was designed to accommodate heavy traffic flow and various forms of public transportation. As such, it was largely unfriendly to pedestrian access. Residents who had access to vehicles were not bothered by the community’s lack of amenities within walking distance. However, those who did not own vehicles, like youth and older citizens, expressed a desire for commercial expansion and described a feeling of isolation living in Townsend.
Social Life

*The kids in Townsend are playing outside. You don't have that in the urban places. A lot more are inside. This is a safer place. For me, for the children. It's a sense of family, a sense of community. Everybody knows everybody.*

- *Current Townsend Resident*

Without a commercial or administrative core, Townsend can be likened to a rural development or community. Since the latter term connotes social bonding, neighbourhood attachment, and feelings of belonging and social responsibility (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Riger & Lavrakas, 1981), I set out to discover if, and how, current residents create a sense of community. I spoke with a range of people, including those who lived and worked in Townsend; those who lived in Townsend and commuted elsewhere; those who worked in Townsend and lived elsewhere; as well as individuals who grew up in Townsend. McMillan and Chavis’ four facets (1986) provided an appropriate lens through which community-making in Townsend was examined.

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

Accurate demographic data for Townsend was not available during the time of this study. Haldimand County (2006) estimated a population of 1,985 people living in the community in 2011, and projected a population of 2,410 in 2016. Given the type of housing available—for the most part single-detached homes on relatively large lots—and the presence of an expanding seniors’ complex, it was likely that the median age of residents was higher than the County’s 2001 estimate of 38 years of age (Haldimand County, 2006). However, in recent years the
lowered price of housing compared with surrounding urban centres had begun to attract younger individuals to the area.

**MEMBERSHIP**

According to McMillan and Chavis (1986), membership not only represents a feeling of belonging, but of a right to belong because one has invested oneself in order to become a member. Conversely, membership implies boundaries and the exclusion of those who are not members (McMillan & Chavis 1986). One of the most recurring motifs during conversations with locals was a distinction between “city people” and “country people”. I was assured that I would not find “city people” living in Townsend, because those who had wanted and expected it to grow had already left. In fact, all of the respondents with whom I spoke who had moved to Townsend in the early 1980s, had arrived knowing and preferring that it stay small. “We were going to have neighbours in our backyard,” one resident mused, “in those narrow little lots. I’m glad they didn’t come… They would have ruined my view”. Another resident who arrived in 1984, just three years after the first phase of houses were built, told me they would not have come if they thought the development was going to be successful. Several respondents praised Townsend for its quietness and lack of crowds. “There’s a relaxing, peaceful feeling here, and I think when you get to a certain age you need that”. The discrepancy in experience for different age groups is significant in Townsend, and will be discussed below.

Despite not wanting to live in a city, neither did some residents want Townsend to be defined as strictly rural. They worried that people might take social liberties that would not be acceptable in an urban setting, simply “because they’re in the country”. In his work on New England Puritans, Erikson (1966 in McMillan & Chavis, 1986) argued that social deviants are
used in order to reinforce group boundaries. To a lesser extent, Townsend residents reinforced boundaries by identifying deviant behaviour. There is the story of the woman who opened a ‘gag shop’ in her garage, filled with prank toys and items of a sexual nature. “The neighbours shut her down,” an interviewee recalled, “They didn’t want that in their neighbourhood… She was very offended and moved away”. There have also been incidents of transport truck and school bus drivers parking their vehicles in front of their homes along residential streets, obstructing traffic and pedestrian sight lines. “I don’t want to look out my window and see a bus. This is a community,” one resident explained, “and I could be sitting in the middle of a suburb in Hamilton. It’s the exact same thing”. Thus, membership in Townsend is shaped by a common view of its identity, investment in the identity’s continuity, and the creation of boundaries that reinforce this identity.

**INFLUENCE AND FULFILLMENT OF NEEDS**

Adult individuals in Townsend could become involved with the Townsend Community Church, the Lions’ Club, or the Policing Committee, all three of which experienced overlap in members and events. In the words of one resident, “you’re only as isolated as you want to be out here—you have to get involved”, suggesting that those who did not participate in the above programs were actively choosing solitude. This attitude supports McMillan and Chavis’ suggestion that “There is a significant positive relationship between cohesiveness and a community’s influence on its members to conform” (1986, p.12). Because of the small size of the community and the overlap of these groups, influence and social fulfillment were inherently linked. Those residents who did not become involved in one of the existing groups could be seen as outsiders, while those who did commonly expressed a sense of social fulfillment.
THE TOWNSEND COMMUNITY CHURCH

The Townsend Community Church (Figure 41) played a central role in both spiritual and social aspects of the community. Religiously, the institution is affiliated with the Church of God tradition. When the church was relocated to Townsend from Hartford, only a few Townsend families were in attendance. At the time of this study, there were more locals in the congregation, and even more who attended the church’s community events. In addition, the church provided a daycare program and school for young children from pre-school age to the second grade. “This church,” one resident said, “does a lot for the community. There are a lot of meals, fish fries, and twice a year there is a ‘Ladies Day Away’. They usually have around 180 ladies in the church, and they have a beautiful lunch. It’s always well attended”. During this study, I had the opportunity to attend a fish fry at the church. There were approximately 70 people in attendance; a mix of locals and visitors from nearby towns. Some were members of the church, while others were friends and neighbours. This was an opportunity for me to observe the community at a typical social event. I spoke with attendees about my research and in turn, they told me about life in Townsend.

Figure 41: Townsend Community Church.
Not only did the church facilitate social activity, in some cases it had become the defining geographical landmark of the development. The church’s increasing involvement since its arrival shaped the way in which some residents thought about their environment. In the words of one interviewee, “Personally, I think the church is strategically planned. It's at the four corners. You walk around the pond and when you get to the far side, what do you see? You see the church, and you see the cross. Is that a coincidence? I don't think so”.

For clarification, I asked, “What do you think they had in mind when they put it there?”

“Strength for the community,” the resident responded, “God is here. I don't think the planners even thought about it, but one day I'm walking around and I looked up and thought, 'Wow, that is strategically planned, with a higher calling’”. Having examined the original plans, I am certain that the designers did not set out to centralize the Townsend Community Church. However, in its present-day rural and religious context, this resident’s perception of Townsend was unexpectedly fitting.

**THE LIONS CLUB**

The Lions Club, located beside the sports fields at the northeast corner of the community, presented another opportunity for community-building in Townsend. The Lions Club describes itself as a secular service organization devoted to the betterment of local communities (2014). In Townsend, the organization contributed financially to community improvements, like the transformation of a deteriorating sports court into a skateboard park for youth (Figure 42). This project was both an aesthetic restoration as well as an attempt to address a lack of programming for young people in Townsend. Adult residents were proud of the results and said that the skate park was often in use, although I could not verify this. I visited the park on three separate occasions, twice during after-school hours and once during midday on a weekend, when I
suspected that it might be in use, but I did not observe any users. The time of year may have been a factor, as intermittent rainy weather and a drop in temperature might have discouraged potential users.

POLICING COMMITTEE AND YOUTH VANDALISM

Several of the people with whom I spoke were on, or had been involved with, Townsend’s Volunteer Policing Committee, a group of resident volunteers who work in conjunction with the Ontario Provincial Police and Crime Stoppers to in order to promote safety. Like the church, the Policing Committee often held community events at its outdoor pavilion, such as a family barbeque and fun fair. According to one resident, the group was “a good way to get to know people in the community”. Another said that belonging to the Policing Committee had given
them a sense of social fulfillment. The most cited of the group’s accomplishments was their handling of a spate of vandalism several years prior. “We went from $40,000 in vandalism costs one year to practically zero,” one interviewee recalled, “Just from foot patrols, interacting with the community, having bike rodeos, things like that”. It was generally acknowledged that the acts of vandalism were committed by teenagers from Townsend, as well as those who came from surrounding villages under the pretense of visiting their friends. As one person explained, “There was nothing for kids to do here… a lot of people came here from the city, so the kids were used to there being places to go and hang out. The core of Townsend didn’t have that yet, and of course it never developed”.

The Policing Committee’s solution was two-fold. Firstly, they attempted to discourage vandals by removing possible hideouts, conducting foot patrols and isolating so-called “ring leaders”. Visual obstructions like tall bushes were removed, and members patrolled the neighbourhood, especially around Halloween, so that they could notify police immediately if any vandalism took place. Their presence was seen to be an active deterrent to youth. “Most parents didn’t even realize that their kid had hooked up with a troublemaker,” one member said, “We spoke to the parents and eventually that one kid became isolated because none of his friends would hang around with him”. Secondly, the Policing Committee ran an education and awareness campaign, “encouraging parents to know where their kids were”. Although the Policing Committee also held an annual family day event with games for children, it was clear that the main focus of their vandalism prevention efforts was on discouraging vandals and, as one interviewee put it, “changing the mindset of parents”, rather than actively engaging youth through increased opportunity and resources. Thus, while adults satisfied social needs through the Policing Committee, resources for youth remained inadequate.
SHARED EMOTIONAL CONNECTION AND THE ALIENATION OF YOUTH

The final criterion for developing a sense of community is based on a shared emotional connection, which is linked with the idea of a shared history (McMillan & Chavis 1986). According to McMillan and Chavis, “It is not necessary that group members have participated in the history in order to share it, but they must identify with it” (1986, p. 13). Early Townsend residents recalled a feeling of camaraderie between the first few families who moved to the development, often referring to themselves as “the originals”. One resident described outdoor parties during which parents would gather on lawn chairs in an empty lot, sometimes bringing their corded telephones along with them to be able to monitor their children easily. At the time of this study there were no empty lots and many more families had arrived. However, conversations with residents revealed a common mindset of what Christie calls the romantic rural “idyll” (2012). As one interviewee remarked, “When you go for walks, you run into people you know. It’s sort of like a typical small town from the 1950s, where everybody knows everybody. I don’t know everybody, but I know a lot of people”. Another resident explained how before they moved to Townsend they thought “it was just another small town,” but after they arrived and developed relationships, “it expanded”. Linked with this was the perception that the development was made safer through familiarity. “If anybody strange comes into the neighbourhood,” said one interviewee, “we would know right away, because we all know each other”. In identifying with a shared history and forming relationships with neighbours, Townsend residents strengthened their sense of community and increased their perception of a safe environment.

By contrast, individuals who commuted to Townsend for work may not have experienced the same social fulfillment. Although they remarked on the development’s peacefulness and picturesque setting, they did not express emotional investment in the community. For one
employee, working in Townsend was an enjoyable convenience: “I love to work with the people here. It’s close by for me, but if work moved then I would move with it”. Another employee referred to a “work community”, describing team-building exercises and collaborations that took place between the CAS and R.E.A.C.H. organization. In the employee’s words, “…a community feel for Townsend is not something I experience through my work. Not to say it doesn’t exist. I love the informality of this place, and I find that smaller towns are just good for that social aspect… I get to tell a family that I know the therapist that will be working with them”. Although this individual acknowledged Townsend’s capacity for nourishing a sense of community, they could not personally identify with this knowledge.

Research has shown that the experience of youth living in rural areas is different from that of their urban counterparts, as well as from that of adults in the community (Christie, 2012). Owing to ethical limitations, I did not interview any minors during this study. However, I spoke with five individuals who grew up in Townsend, as well as parents who had raised or were raising their children in the area. Although the term “youth” is a fluid category, for the purposes of this study I considered it to describe individuals from pubescence to the age at which they left home for higher education or employment.

Rural communities are traditionally seen as “inclusive, closer to nature, and therefore ideal places for young people to grow up in” (Nairn, Panelli, & McCormack, 2003, p. 10). Indeed, the parents with whom I spoke voiced a common opinion that Townsend’s connections with nature gave their children ample opportunities for recreation, while its safe environment and close-knit community allowed them to monitor their children more easily than in an urban setting. Conversely, for youth in Townsend these ideals translated into limited opportunities, excessive constraint and boredom. A telling piece of a conversation I had with a former youth resident
demonstrated the juxtaposition between Townsend as a peaceful and promising environment to Townsend as a restriction:

- “I did love Townsend up to a certain age, when I was a kid. Up until high school I loved it, because I was always outside, riding my bike, trying to find new little paths in the forest. That was my favourite bit: just exploring the outdoors, uninhibited, by myself without a parent, because it was safe”.

- “And after that?” I asked the interviewee.

- “Oh, I hated it. I started to get a social life and I wanted to see my friends. I didn't have a car, I didn't have my license. I was stuck in Townsend all the time and, you know, going through those teenage emotions where you want to hang out with your friends, and I couldn't do it. It drove me nuts”.

A combination of dependence on parents for financial support and limited motility created a stifling environment that was a sharp contrast to childhood experiences. Adding to this sense of constraint is the feeling of being ‘othered’ (Shucksmith, 2004). According to Shucksmith (2004), youth are frequently marginalized by adults within their own communities. Denied access to their own space for social interaction, rural youth tend to feel like they are under constant surveillance. Out of boredom, as well as frustration from being “subjects of, and subject to, the power relations of public space” (Nairn et al., 2003, p. 11), youth may act out against their environment, as was the case with teenage vandals in Townsend.

As discussed above, there were a number of opportunities for adults in Townsend to pursue individual interests, fulfill spiritual and social needs and contribute to the community. Likewise, young children could attend the daycare program and primary school at the Townsend Community Church. There was a distinct gap, however, in programs geared towards youth living
in the community. The secondary schools available to Townsend teenagers had to be reached by school bus or car—sometimes a 40-minute journey. As evinced in the conversation above, youth may have developed friendships that they could not pursue outside of school owing to transportation restrictions. Furthermore, those who wished to join team sports or earn money at a part-time job relied on adults to convey them to other communities. As one former youth resident recalled, “my job in Simcoe was a big sacrifice for my parents, because I didn’t really make much money. By the time you paid for gas to drive there it wasn’t really worth it, but I liked it so they let me keep it”. Admittedly, the experience of youth in rural areas is not homogeneous (Nairn et al., 2003). Those who grew up in Townsend perceived their environment in diverse ways, none of which necessarily led to high-risk behaviours. Interestingly, when I questioned former youth about whether they felt a sense of community growing up in Townsend, they tended to refer to their parents’ relationships, rather than their own. “I didn’t have very many friends,” one interviewee recalled, “I knew a couple of the kids across the road and I’d play with them, mostly my mom’s friends kids, but no real sense of community… it’s more the landscape and peace and quiet that I miss now”.

Research has identified youth after-school programs as one of the contexts in which young people are likely to develop enhanced personal, social and academic skills, as well as increased wellbeing (Christie, 2012). When questioned about the lack of youth programming, Townsend adults tended to describe it as unwanted, unnecessary, or financially unfeasible. In the words of one interviewee, “Nowadays kids don’t go out anyway. They’ve got satellite games and they want to stay housebound”. According to residents, there are fewer teenagers and more families with small children living in the community. Added to this was the belief that the teenage population in Townsend was not large enough to justify formalized activities. “Besides,” another
adult resident said, “who’s going to run that? The government? It would be great, but nobody is going to run those programs”. Again, the focus was not on providing positive support systems for youth, but on impeding negative behaviour. There was the perception that the problem rested with parents and should be addressed accordingly, through prevention campaigns aimed at adults. In the words of one resident, “it all depends on how the kids are raised”. Conversely, all of the five former Townsend youth with whom I spoke expressed the opinion that they would have enjoyed participating in local skill-building programs as an opportunity to explore their interests, as well as a mechanism for meeting new friends.

In Townsend, there are several areas where such programs might be held, including the Townsend Community Church, the CAS building, the R.E.A.C.H and Mental Health Centre plaza, as well as in any one of the community’s extensive park areas. As one interviewee argued, “Half the time those regional buildings weren't even being used… they could have done something for kids, like a kids' club, because it was so hard to meet other kids”. Historically, Townsend youth have been marginalized by their community through the denial of spaces for social development. They do not have influence over their environment, nor do they experience a sense of social fulfillment within the community. By creating a formalized space for youth social interaction and implementing positive, skill-building programs, the Townsend community would be affirming the potential of its youth, giving them the resources and opportunity to develop into healthy, confident and productive individuals.

**RETURNING TO TOWNSEND**

Each of the five former Townsend youth with whom I spoke had returned to the community to live at some point after they left for work or school. The apartment building at the northeast
edge of the development—the only one of its type—was a popular place for transitional living. Three of the five former youth had resided there temporarily while searching for employment or paying off debt. While they did not want to move back in with their parents, Townsend was a familiar place and the apartment provided an intermediate solution. In the words of one former youth resident, “I think that loving Townsend is something that comes with age. Townsend is something that comes with age. Even now I say I love it and I miss it, but I would never live there”. Those former youth who chose to leave explained that although they felt nostalgia for Townsend, they preferred urban environments, access to public transportation and amenities within walking distance.

However, several adult interviewees were beginning to notice a shift in demographics. As one parent described, “some of our friends’ kids have bought homes and live here in Townsend…This is where they grew up and they’re starting to come back. My kids hated it when they were growing up and now they love it and they want to come out here and live their lives”. Part of this phenomenon may be explained by the number of related generations living in Townsend. Several interviewees spoke of parents who lived across the street and grandparents who lived at the seniors’ complex. “If my kids want to visit their grandparents,” a resident explained, “it’s an easy bike ride or a walk”. Proximity to family and familiarity with Townsend’s history and surroundings may have influenced an individual’s decision to remain in the community or move back after a time away.

Two of the former youth interviewees who returned to raise their families in Townsend admitted to taking part in vandalising the neighbourhood. “We were bored!” one exclaimed in a cheerful tone, “what did they expect us to do? I guess it was pretty bad for a while, but my family laughs about it now”. While former Townsend youth may not have experienced social
fulfillment while growing up, they developed their own shared history, perhaps as a result of being marginalized. McMillan and Chavis call this the shared valent hypothesis, reporting that “there appears to be a tremendous bonding among people who experience a crisis together” (1986, p. 14). “Townsend made us who we are,” another former youth said, “I don’t think I would change it for anything”. These same individuals began to express similar opinions about Townsend as did older adult residents, praising the community for its natural environment and apparent safety. In the words of one interviewee, “My son likes it so much here. He can just run and we don’t have to worry about the streets, about him being hit by a car… You just can’t get this type of backyard in a city”. As youth residents grew up and more opportunities became available to them, they became less marginalized and began to share in the adult community mindset. This shift in opinion supports the idea that “Townsend comes with age”.

AGING AND RETIREMENT

Townsend’s quiet atmosphere and extensive retirement complex made it an attractive destination for seniors. In fact, the nursing home at Parkview Meadows, a ‘Christian Retirement Village’, had a waiting list of approximately 70 people. The village is a collection of four facilities: Brookview, Valleyview, Southview and Gardenview. Ideally, residents would transfer from the independent living apartments at Brookview and Valleyview to assisted living at Southview, and eventually to long-term care at Gardenview. According to an employee, this was “so that residents could maintain their friendships”. However, because of space limitations, seniors are not able to make the appropriate transition to a long-term facility, putting extra pressure on staff at Southview to provide increased care.
The popularity of the seniors’ complex was the result of a combination of factors. According to an employee at Parkview Meadows, 50 per cent of residents came from within Townsend, while the other 50 per cent resided in the rural area surrounding the development. From a demographic perspective the country’s rural population is aging more quickly than the urban population (Statistics Canada, 2008). As the trend towards low birth rates, longer life expectancy, and an aging baby boom generation continues, the demand for senior care increases. From a cultural perspective, there is a noticeable presence of people of Dutch descent in the area. Reportedly, the senior’s complex was originally founded by the Dutch Reformed Church, making it a logical choice for much of the nearby senior population.

A sense of community was further enhanced by strong relationships between staff and patients, as well as through programmed activities for seniors. I spoke with two employees who had knowledge of the Dutch language, both of whom expressed the opinion that this ability facilitated communication with patients and contributed to a stronger sense of familiarity and community within the complex. Space limitations meant that seniors in the assisted living centre would remain there for a longer period of time so that, in the words of one employee, “we become their family and they know the staff... This is their home, and if they want to stay here in their last days, they can”. As non-profit facilities, Southview and Gardenview held many fundraising functions and encouraged residents to participate. Residents were also invited to events at the Townsend Community Church, allowing them to retain and strengthen their ties to the community at large.

For some Townsend residents, these retirement options played a role in their initial decision to move into the area: “When I first moved here I said I have two moves: ‘I'm moving to Townsend and when I'm old enough I'm moving to the seniors’ home’, and if they want to put a
funeral home on the end of Parkview Meadows they can do that!”. With current space limitations and limited access to amenities, however, the same residents are rethinking their plans:

I've been thinking the last year or two, if my vision went and I couldn't drive… I'm totally dependent on other people out here to get anywhere. If I lived in Hagersville… there are two drugstores, two supermarkets, a post office, a Tim's, a hospital, and it’s small enough that you can walk pretty much anywhere you want to go. Out here, I can walk around the pond and it's very nice, but if I want to get to the drugstore, I can't, I have to get somebody to take me.

Like Townsend youth, seniors without the ability to drive faced greater challenges with regards to accessing amenities. “If I’m reasonably healthy,” another resident argued, “how isolated do I want to be?” The small tuck shop within the seniors’ complex provided some necessities, but supplies and choice may be limited. In addition, a seniors’ bus transported residents to a shopping area in Simcoe every two weeks, but its infrequency was problematic. “It requires extra planning,” an employee explained, “You might have it in your mind—next week's the shopping trip. But then it's not 'til the following week. What do you do then?” Despite access limitations, Parkview Meadows planned to expand its facilities in order to satisfy demand. Reportedly, the retirement village put a bid on the adjacent agricultural field in the hopes of building new facilities. The request for 12 acres was countered with a seven acre limitation by the government, indicating that demand for retirement space will persist even after the centre’s expansion.

By contrast, there was less of a demand for leased condominiums because, as one interviewee said, “I'm not interested in buying anything if I'm 65. I want to sell my house, put the money in the bank, rent a place to live… I don't want to invest it in more real estate, and at the
moment there's really not much to rent in Townsend”. Thus, a combination of limited space, limited access and limited rental options was causing Townsend residents who were nearing retirement age to consider relocating to an urban centre. Townsend’s aging population will play a major role in the development’s future growth potential.

**SUMMARY**

Townsend’s community identity has become very similar to that of the surrounding rural areas, although several interviewees expressed a preference for what they alluded to as urban civilities, owing to the development’s suburban layout. While adult residents could find social fulfillment through several community organizations, there was a distinct lack of opportunity available to youth. This issue may be resolved as the children of the numerous young couples living in the community age. However, the expansion of the Parkview Meadows Retirement Village will also create additional demand for resources for seniors. At the time of this study, the resources and access options available to both youth and seniors were enough to make some question their decision to remain in the area.
Future Growth Potential

This town will never die because of the economy. I mean, there’s economic stress when the industries are on strike. We have a few people here from US Steel, and they may get laid off, but the town doesn’t go under because we don’t rely on industry or commercial businesses. When industry goes bad in places like Hamilton, there’s a ripple effect through the whole city. The businesses here are government businesses.

- Current Townsend resident

The term ‘ghost’ or ‘phantom town’, as Townsend was labelled in a Spacing Toronto magazine article in 2009 (Marshall), was an aggravation to some residents. Contrary to media reports current residents did not focus on what the development was meant to be. “Sure, it’s failed in their eyes,” one interviewee said, “But it’s not like any of the buildings are derelict or underutilized. We use everything we’ve got”. The last reminder of Townsend’s grand ambitions—a derelict billboard from the 1970s proclaiming it as a development “Designed with you in mind”—was finally removed from the edge of town a few years before this study was undertaken (Figure 43). Today, residents compare their community with other rural hamlets in Southern Ontario. One interviewee remarked, “The news came to do a story about us. They filmed during the day when everyone was at work, and made a big deal about us not having a post office. Who cares? Most little villages don’t, and Canada Post isn’t even putting new ones up, they’re putting in kiosks like ours. So we’re ahead of the game”.

Although there is no completely empty or unused infrastructure in Townsend, neither has its layout changed since the early 1980s. As a resident described, “There are two groups, really. There’s the group that likes Townsend the way it is, this size, and there are others who would like to see it grow, at least enough that we could have a store. Right now, a store won’t last if we don’t get a little more growth”. There were more obstacles to expansion in Townsend, however,
than resident disapproval. In 2006, a dispute erupted in nearby Caledonia between First Nations protesters and a non-native development corporation, who planned to build a residential subdivision on contested land. According to local knowledge, as the conflict escalated, the agricultural land adjacent to the north edge of Townsend was suspended in perpetuity by the Government of Ontario, as a show of sensitivity towards the Six Nations of the Grand River.

Although there were rumours of Townsend children finding arrowheads in the fields around their homes, the land there was not contested. Rather, in the words of one resident, “It had something to do with showing the Natives that we’re not going to sell off their land, or that we have land here that we can give you. So now it’s frozen, and we can’t develop on it… we’re basically landlocked”. Today, the land is owned by the Province and rented out to farmers for agricultural purposes, with no likelihood of being developed in the near future.

Figure 43: Original development billboard for Townsend, now removed (Marshall, 2009).
THE BYGONE ONTARIO LAND CORPORATION

The draft plan of the first phase of Townsend New Town labelled the land surrounding the development as “Additional Land Owned by the Applicant”, indicating reservation for future use. However, when people did not appear as quickly as was forecast, the government decided not to move forward with the project, and either sold or rented much of the land back to farmers. According to a key informant, during the interim these properties went into decline; “it was like having an absentee landlord”. Today, while many of the farms surrounding the community are in use, their ownership is not entirely clear to residents, which has caused some residents to become frustrated. Some interviewees were under the impression that the land was still owned by the OLC, although that particular body was disbanded in 1987. “If I had the money,” one resident said, “I’d be starting to build out here. I’d be looking up the Ontario Land Corporation and trying to buy this... as far as I know, nobody can reach them. We don’t know where they are or who they are!” In the same vein, another interviewee asserted that, “We need to open up the land so that more homes can be built... Because when they put houses up here, they sell right away. Maybe they didn’t get the turnout that they expected at first, but if you look at it in retrospect, everything's full. Why wouldn't they expand it?” Despite being “landlocked”, some residents believed that there was a definite demand for expansion in Townsend.

When asked what might draw newcomers to the area, long-time residents cited existing industries and Townsend’s serene atmosphere: “It’s quiet, it’s clean, it’s green, and it’s the same distance from here as it is from Simcoe to US Steel. What more could you ask for?”

Conversations with newer residents, however, revealed a slightly different motivation. “For us,” a newer resident said, “it was purely economics. I'm paying the same for hydro, heat, everything, as I was in Jarvis, but my house is twice the size. Why wouldn't I want to move here?”
Conversely, Townsend’s lowered mortgages were troublesome for those nearing retirement, who wished to sell their homes at a higher price.

**NEW CONSTRUCTION CONTROVERSY**

Even those who are supportive of expansion in Townsend were disparaging about the new construction taking place along the Nanticoke Creek (Figure 44). Some years ago, a local landowner and private developer bought the former Regional building and its surrounding land. Residents were initially in favour of plans that might improve part of the Town Centre, and spoke excitedly about increased maintenance and the possible addition of a coffee shop. Moreover, the developer bought new playground equipment for the Forest Park recreation area, in an apparent display of friendship and dedication to the community. However, when construction and began it became clear that the developer planned to build waterfront townhomes, effectively blocking public access to the creek (Figure 45), residents became distressed. “The plan is to destroy the trees around the pond,” said one interviewee, “It’s basically going to destroy what makes Townsend Townsend”. Although the developer would be encouraging growth, residents expressed the belief that the condominiums would be too expensive.

Employees at the offices in question, who commuted to work and said that they did not feel a sense of community in Townsend, asserted that they “came together for when it comes to being angry about the construction”. As one CAS employee explained, “It doesn't affect how we access work, but people are very bitter because it’s taken up therapy space that we use for the children”. Reportedly, a county meeting was held during which the developer requested a zoning change so that construction could take place within the existing floodplain. In the hopes of discouraging approval of this request, one resident wrote a letter to the county, along the following lines:
The argument is that the Nanticoke hasn’t flooded there in a hundred years. But look around you—every spring and summer now, we read in the papers that places that haven’t flooded in known history are flooding with these sudden rain storms because of climate change. Someday, the Nanticoke is going to flood and the people in those condos are going to come to me, the tax-payer, for help.

Instead, the resident suggested that the County “give the developer two acres for every acre under consideration, on some of these ‘dead end streets’, and leave the pond area alone”. Adding to the controversy is confusion over the exact limits of construction. At a Haldimand Ward 1 meeting held at the Townsend Community Church, some residents questioned the existence of building permits and demanded that a map of the developer and County’s respective property limits be produced. “The mayor promised to give us a map,” one attendee said, “but it’s almost a year ago now that we had that meeting, and we haven’t seen it yet”. Residents are aware that the Long Point Region Conservation Authority prohibits development within at least 15 metres of a stream valley, depending on the stability of the slope (LPRCA, 2013). However, the path bordering the Nanticoke Creek winds in and out of this boundary and has reportedly been the site of some conflict between the developer and residents. “There are a couple of places that are farther back and the developer gets very testy if you’re on it,” one interviewee asserted, “We were here walking these paths before that developer ever showed up, and just because the County decided to dump the property in a bad deal doesn’t mean they really own it”. Owing to years of perceived neglect by municipal and provincial authorities, residents claimed figurative ownership of Townsend public land and demanded to be involved in any potential development.
Figure 44: Current construction alongside Nanticoke Creek.

Figure 45: Pathway to creek blocked by construction.
By the time of this study, two years after digging began, construction had come to a standstill. Residents speculated about financial failure and legal complications—perhaps owing to their own formal objections. The site itself sat in a state of readiness, a muddy foundation partially dug and closed off from residents—now trespassers—with bright orange vinyl fencing. “What’s really sad,” one resident imparted, “is that people used to walk the paths on their lunch hour, cross the little bridge that goes over the crick and end up right in Townsend. Well, that’s torn out now, so if they want to come here they have to walk on the highway, which they won’t do. The developer has basically cut those people off from our community”. Moreover, interviewees worried that the unsupervised site may be a danger to curious children. Thus the only major construction that has taken place in Townsend in several years is largely opposed by residents.

**SUMMARY**

Although some interviewees expressed the desire to see Townsend expand and believed that there was a demand for additional housing, many residents opposed recent construction of condominiums on the basis of their location and anticipated cost. In addition, the land surrounding Townsend was, for the most part, restricted from further development owing to prior land conflict between the government and the Six Nations. Therefore, findings suggested that expansion of Townsend from the central core was unlikely to take place in the near future.
Chapter Five

Valdeluz Analysis

The best of the villages is the distance between them. The distance is cereal and oak, mountainous and hilly landscape. The Alcarria is a landscape. In almost every farmland is some lone oak. The oak tree is asocial and thoughtful, not given to gregariousness...

This tree is always seen in the middle of a field, alone, giving headaches to the farmers who have to get around it to plough, to sow, to reap. But no peasant ever cut down an oak because the oak is the tree that thinks while the wheat grows foolishly, while barley as yet knows nothing of life, while rye flirts with poppies.

- Alberto Olmos
  *La Alcarria en Tres Palabras, 1999*

Landscape and Settlement

The Alcarria is a natural region in central Spain that is predominately located in the province of Guadalajara, also extending over the provinces of Madrid and Cuenca (Figures 46 & 47). The names of the region offer insight into its geologic composition and settlement history. Many of these names are Spanish adaptations from the original Arabic, established during the Muslim occupation of Spain during the 8th century (García López, 2012). The word ‘Alcarria’ literally means ‘high land of sparse vegetation’ in Arabic, sometimes translated as ‘barren plateau’. The plateau slopes gently from north to south, although it remains relatively flat along its upper level. Likewise, the word ‘Guadalajara’ stems from the Arabic ‘Wadi-l-Hiyara’, signifying a ‘river of stones’. Attributed to a nearby fortress and river, the name is an apt description of the land’s geotic qualities. The Alcarria was formed by the upsurge of the Iberian System, a vast mountain range of smoothly undulating Mesozoic strata of limestone and gypsum, overlaid by sandstone. Deep rivers and cenotes, or natural sinkholes, run through this karst topography, carving
distinctive shapes into the landscape by dissolving its soluble bedrock. This landscape configuration has strongly influenced the biotic and anthropogenic patterns of the region.

Figure 46: Context map of Spain.

Figure 47: Extent of the geographic Alcarria region.
The translucent vegetative cover of the Alcarria is a result of its calcareous substrate, tempered by a Continental Mediterranean climate (García-Quintana, García-Hidalgo, Martín-Duque, Pedraza, González-Martin, 2004). The Continental qualification is used by Spanish scholars to represent inland Mediterranean regions with a high frequency of windy and relatively colder winter days. Esparto grass (*Macrochloa tenacissima*) and various lichens grow sparsely over the plateau, impeded by dense quartzite formations, active geologic processes like gullies and screes, and limited rainfall (García-Quintana et al., 2004). Diverse geology and arid conditions have limited the spread of vegetation so that the landscape’s colour is largely determined by its underlying soil composition. In Guadalajara and the surrounding area, orange, red and yellow lower hillsides, formed in the Upper Neogene period, contrast sharply with whitish limestone summits. These colours are further reflected in the buildings of every *pueblo*, or small Spanish town, depending on their location. As García-Quintana et al. (2004) write,

There are “black villages” in areas of Paleozoic slates of the Central System (e.g. Valverde de los Arroyos), “red towns” in areas of the Iberian Ranges, where the only noble rock for building was the Buntsandstein red sandstones (e.g. Sigüenza); “white villages” in areas with Jurassic calcareous strata (e.g. Anquela del Pedregal); and “ochre villages” adobe- or brick-built within the brown argillaceous areas in the Tertiary Tajo Basin (e.g. Pastrana)” (p. 420).

While architects are no longer limited to local material sources, this geologic aesthetic is mimicked by some modern buildings in the city of Guadalajara (García-Quintana et al., 2004).

The consistency and location of geologic formations throughout the landscape greatly shaped cultural uses and installations throughout the region. Amongst rocky outcroppings and within eroded valleys, patches of alpine coniferous forests, olive groves, and steppes of aromatic
plants and cereal grains could be found (Figures 48 & 49). The traditional distribution of dwelling and agriculture in the region is thus: “Villages are located on the margins of the valleys, toward half hillside, with more abundant and greater size vegetation in their suburbs. There is a major change of agricultural use on the hillside, at the same height that the village, which follows a more or less straight and horizontal line. Above that line, there are bushes and aromatic plants, and below cereal cropping” (García-Quintana et al., 2004, p. 431). In the Iberian valley bottoms, soft mudstones and gypsum allowed for extensive cultivation. Above the villages, where original oak forests were cut down for timber use, aromatic plants like rosemary, thyme, lavender, broom and gorse—“vegetation that can hardly be seen but the smell of which causes light-headedness” (Cela, 1966 in Henn, 2004 p. 74)—covered the hilltops. In these upper ranges where porous limestone could not be ploughed, villagers dedicated the land to livestock grazing and beehive operations. Consequently, the Alcarria is famous for both its lamb and honey products (Olmos, 1999).

Figure 48: Countryside north of Guadalajara City (García-Quintana et al., 2004).
PREHISTORIC BEGINNINGS

Guadalajara’s unique geographic conditions reinforce what Sans (2011) calls its “strong duality,” in which “85 per cent of the population lives on 10 per cent of the territory—the Henares River Corridor and a few surrounding areas” (p. 83) with the remainder living in small towns of low population density. The village of Yebes, of which Ciudad Valdeluz is a municipal outgrowth, is located 20km southeast of the City of Guadalajara. The community is bordered by a ravine and numerous streams, whose waters were traditionally rumoured to have medicinal properties (García López, 2012). Although the first documentary references to Yebes date from the 12th century, its configuration is reported to have been determined during the Iron Age, sometime between 1800 and 750 BCE. In the early 20th century, archaeologists found evidence of graves and distinctive Iron Age ceramics within half a kilometre of the existing village, indicating the presence of a Celtiberian, or pre-Roman, Celtic-speaking population. These finds
are supported by the knowledge that the Carpetani, akin to the Celtiberians, had occupied the central upland plain of the Iberian Peninsula since the 5th century BCE (García López, 2012).

Although Spanish scholars argue for the existence of a village since pre-historic times, no specific mention of Yebes was made until the Reconquista, the Christian re-conquest of the Iberian Peninsula between 718 and 1492 CE, following a long period of Islamic rule (García López, 2012). In 1432, Yebes was included in a list of villages gifted to Don Íñigo López de Mendoza by the king of Castilla, Juan II, for his services in the war. Thenceforth began the relationship between royalty and the region that has lasted until the present day, and which will be discussed in the section on Valdeluz’s development.

Following the Reconquista, the population of Yebes grew rapidly, from 59 houses in 1530 to 126 in 1591, with an estimated 500 inhabitants (García López, 2012). In the years that followed, the number of residents fluctuated, depending amount of arable land available and the effects of illness in the region. According to an agricultural report of the village from 1786, the lands around Yebes were devoted to the farming of vegetables, wheat, barley, oats, hemp, hemp seeds, wine grapes, and olives (García López, 2012). However, the rocky clay soil and arid weather conditions described above ensured that a high return on cultivation efforts was never guaranteed. On land that was unsuitable to cultivation, villagers bred small game in order to supplement their resources. This diversity of commodities, based on soil composition, resulted in a patchwork landscape that persists in the rural regions of Guadalajara to this day (Figure 50).
TRANSITION TO MODERNITY

Throughout the 19th century and 20th centuries, the majority of villages in the Alcarria underwent drastic depopulation as a result of a combination of events. In the early 1800s, Guadalajara experienced a subsistence crisis surrounding the production of grain, resulting in economic decline and eventual stagnation (Santiago Caballero, 2010). In 1804, the onset of
yellow fever put further pressure on Alcarrian villagers. Shortly afterwards, the Peninsular War, or Spanish War of Independence, began. Between 1808 and 1814, villages were looted and destroyed by Napoleonic troops and the prices of food staples increased dramatically. By the turn of the 20th century, the population of Yebe had been reduced to approximately 200 residents (García López, 2012). Despite a recovery in the agricultural sector, the population remained relatively stable, owing to the 1918 flu pandemic and the belated arrival of the industrial revolution in the 1950s, which led to the emigration of many farmers to urban centres.

The villages of the Alcarria have been described as “particularly resistant to the futile advances of modernity” (Olmos, 1999). When industrialization finally began to take hold during the early 20th century, the province of Guadalajara was in a marginal location from Spain’s major production centres—the textile mills of Catalonia and the metallurgical plants of the Basque provinces. The Spanish Civil War of the 1930s devastated the country’s economy, particularly the already volatile agricultural sector of the Alcarria (García López, 2012). Agrarian reforms, implemented during the latter half of the 19th century and throughout the social upheaval of the 20th century, aimed to redistribute land ownership from wealthy landowners to rural peasants. Ultimately, these reforms had the opposite effect in Central and Southern Spain. As Malefakis (1970) writes,

…liberal reforms were either irrelevant or actually prejudicial to the bulk of the rural population, since the existing social structure that the reforms modified was not one in which small cultivators were already in effective possession of the soil but one in which landless workers predominated. No land was transferred to this class, whose dependence on the large owners increased as the latter took over the disentailed properties… The escape to manufacturing available to the English field hand was lacking. Nor could the
increase in population be absorbed by more intensive agriculture because of the relative poverty of the Spanish earth, the lack of prosperous markets, and the failure of the large owners to exploit fully those market opportunities that did exist (p. 5).

The result of these reforms in rural areas was a long period of unemployment and poverty, and eventual civil rebellion. In the decades that followed, the adverse effects of the Civil War were exacerbated by the Franco regime’s policy of economic self-sufficiency. Isolated from the global economy, Spain was unable to produce sufficient resources for itself. Inflation rates rose and food shortages increased as a result of low productivity in the agricultural sector (Malefakis, 1970).

During this time, public improvements in the Alcarria were a challenge. For example, in 1935 the mayors of Guadalajara, Yebes and nearby Aranzueque solicited the Ministry of Public Works to include in their new National Highway Plan a direct link between the Sanatorium of Alcohete and Yebes, which would also connect to the existing Alcalá-Pastrana highway to the south (García López, 2012). According to the applicants, the only way to access the Sanatorium from Yebes was by way of a rough bridle path, impassable during the rainy season because of the accumulation of mud. Families transporting their deceased loved ones from the Sanatorium, “often had to stop halfway, abandoning them before they could reach the cemetery to give them a proper burial” (García López, 2012, p. 116). Although the mayors also stressed the importance this five-kilometre highway would have for commercial activity, possibly helping to alleviate agrarian unemployment, it took ten years for the project to be undertaken by Provincial Council (García López, 2012).
Camilo José Cela captured the character of the time in his 1948 travel guide *Viaje a la Alcarria* (*Journey to the Alcarria*). Traveling on foot and by donkey, Cela narrated his pilgrimage through Alcarrian villages and countryside during a time of hardship and uncertainty. The author’s series of detailed sketches, such as the following reflection shortly after leaving the City of Guadalajara, are still recognizable in some parts of the province:

A little farther on, the traveler sits down to eat in a gully, below an olive grove… Every now and then a bicycle or an official car goes down the highway. Some distance away, sitting in the shade of an olive tree, a shepherd is singing. The sheep are huddled together motionless, half-dead with the heat… The fields are green and well cared for, and the wild flowers—red poppies, white daisies, blue-flowered thistles, and the little golden buttons of the buttercups—grow along the edges of the highway outside the cultivated fields (Cela, 1964, p. 27-28).

Cela’s journey is a depiction of the relationship between the region’s inhabitants and the land they tended. Small details like the lack of electricity, food provisions and red wine, typically an affordable commodity in Spain, in the villages he visited reveal glimpses of the “precarious existence” of rural life in the Alcarria (Henn, 2004, p. 77).

Forty years later, Cela returned to the Alcarria in order to discover how the region might have changed. In the interim, the Francisco Franco’s dictatorship came to an end, Spain was beginning to rejoin the international community, and the country had undergone a period of economic growth and cultural adjustment. According to Henn, at the time of Cela’s second trip in 1985, Spain had become “a democratic country with a society that was relaxed and enjoying a prosperity that was a far cry from the hardship suffered by so many back in 1946” (2004, p.230). *Nuevo viaje a la Alcarria* (*New Journey to the Alcarria*) (Cela, 1986) chronicles a rural society
that has been westernized, both culturally and commercially, and comments on the benefits and disadvantages of the transformation. As Cela made his way through 1980s Guadalajara he disparaged the addition of six-lane highways, gigantic artificial reservoirs, nuclear power stations, housing developments and brightly coloured road signs and commercial billboards that could not mask the mediocrity lying beneath (1986 in Henn, 2004). Deserted villages whose inhabitants presumably left in search of employment were contrasted by prosperous towns, usually located next to new industrial centres, filled with modern comforts and tourist attractions. At one point in the return journey, Cela compares the new housing developments he observes to suburbs in Los Angeles (1986 in Henn, 2004). This observation recalls the sense of ‘placelessness’ or ‘non-place’ for which planned communities are often critiqued (Augé, 2008). The improved quality of life seemed to be balanced, according to Cela, by a noticeable loss of cultural landscape and identity (Henn, 2004).

**SEARCHING FOR HISTORY IN VALDELUZ**

At the time of Valdeluz’s construction in 2004, urban centres in the Alcarria had become even more modernized. From a national perspective, Spain was experiencing a property boom that will be discussed in further detail in the section on Valdeluz’s political and economic origins. Along with the industrialization of the 20th century came technological advancement that, in the words of García-Quintana et al. (2004), made the distinctive geologic components of the Alcarrian landscape “almost irrelevant” (p. 430). Villagers were no longer wholly dependent on the existence and location of arable land, nor was their infrastructure limited by the availability of local building materials. The Ciudad Valdeluz development was a striking contrast to the traditional *pueblos* of the region.
Firstly, the location of the development is atop a plateau, rather than mid-hillside as was customary in earlier times. As one resident exclaimed, “Real Alcarrians would have never built a town right here. It’s too windy! But who do you think owned the lands? Very curious”. The frequent high winds across the flat, relatively open land have caused some residents to nickname the development ‘Valdeviento’, playfully changing its suffix to ‘wind’ rather than ‘light’, or ‘luz’. The interviewee’s reference to land ownership will be discussed in a subsequent section. Secondly, although some of the buildings reflect the familiar light red colour of historical village architecture in their brick facades, their geometric and homologous construction produces an entirely different aesthetic (Figure 51). Nevertheless, some small acknowledgement of the past can be seen in the vegetation and signage installed throughout the development. As one approaches the Golf Course of Valdeluz to the west of the development, a sign explains the presence of ancient oak trees that line the stonedust road ahead:

The Municipality of Yebes is covered in oaks, a characteristic species of the Alcarria… the age of many of these individuals is estimated to be more than 500 years… The development of Valdeluz respected the location of these Fagaceae family trees. Before developing the area, a study of the species in the affected land was conducted, and the age of each exemplary specimen was identified. This safeguard for one of the most representative and environmentally valuable Spanish trees, has allowed the roots of the many oaks scattered across this Urban Action Plan [Plan de Actuación Urbanística] to be guarded in situ. In some cases even the street plan was modified to integrate them into squares and plazas and, insofar as possible, as trees in parks and gardens.

The oaks were indeed magnificent, but aside from their presence along the golf course pathway (Figure 52) and in a few empty lots on the outskirts of the development (Figure 53), these ancient
trees were not integrated to the extent that the sign indicated. In addition, many of the ancient oak and olive trees were not “guarded in situ”, but were transplanted to more preferable locations throughout the community (Figure 54). This may have caused damage to their roots and could explain the distressed specimens witnessed during this study (Figure 55). Like the signage describing ancient trees in the vicinity, another sign on the edge of the development pointed to the historic Sanatorium of Alcochete, mentioned above. Today, the facility is used as a rehabilitation centre for those with chronic mental illness and drug addictions. Its location adjacent to the development is noted, but it has not influenced design decisions, likely because of the sensitive nature of its current usage.

Figure 51: Valdeluz apartment complexes.
Figure 52: Oak trees along pathway to the Valdeluz Golf Course.

Figure 53: Solitary oak tree in empty lot at edge of development.
Figure 54: Transportation of olive tree (Diario de Valdeluz, 25 November 2011).

Figure 55: Decaying tree at northwestern roundabout entrance.
For some, the overall deviation from traditional Alcarrian form is an expression of the development’s modernity and its residents’ openness of mind. In the words of one resident, “All of the other little towns around here are all Spanish. Everyone is Spanish, and they are very narrow-minded and resistant to change. Valdeluz is different. We have Romanians, Nigerians, Colombians… we are different people coming together. Everything in Valdeluz is innovative and modern, and our streets show that”. In the repetitiveness of the apartment buildings and the symmetry of the boulevards, however, some part of Cela’s comparison of new Alcarrian housing developments to the suburbs of Los Angeles rings true. In attempting to be modern, the designers of Valdeluz gravitated towards a western development model that may be different from the historical aesthetic, but also lacks the latter’s distinctive regional character.

**SUMMARY**

The region of the Alcarria in central Spain was traditionally divided into a patchwork of uses based on its particular geologic composition. Although it has been inhabited since prehistoric times, it was particularly resistant to modernization in the first half of the 19th century owing to precarious agricultural production, the effects of widespread illness, and distance from industrial centres. Following the fall of the Franco regime, the region opened up to urbanization and tourism, but has been criticized for losing some of its cultural uniqueness. An examination of historical traces in the development of Ciudad Valdeluz revealed an overall lack of references to the region’s past. The non-traditional placement of the town atop a plateau, the use of standard, westernized architecture, and the sparing use or relocation of ancient vegetation combined to create an almost entirely modern urbanization, incongruous with its rural surrounds.
Political and Economic Motivations

We are the envy of Europe, and in a few years’ time we are going to be one of the top countries in the world.

José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, Prime Minister of Spain 2004 – 2008

19 December, 2005 (Marín)

Spaniards talk about a new set of landmarks, a kind of tourist anti-attraction... Anyone who wants to understand the challenges facing Spain – and by implication the rest of the eurozone – should visit one. Take the route I did, to a place called Valdeluz in Guadalajara. It’s easy enough: board the fancy high-speed train from central Madrid to Barcelona and get off half an hour later. If my experience is anything to go by, only a handful of passengers will spill out on to what is a nearly new station. And there, beyond the bored security guards and the metal railings is ... nothing. Another platform for cheap commuter trains, completed but never used, and then acres of red dust and weeds.

- Aditya Chakrabortty, Reporter for The Guardian

28 March, 2011

As with the Townsend narrative, a timeline of important events is outlined below (Figure 56). Owing to the direct influence of the national economy’s fluctuations on construction in Valdeluz, a timeline of the Spanish real estate bubble is included.

NATIONAL CONDITIONS

With the democratization of Spain and its global reintegration in the late 1970s came a period of economic and cultural expansion. Nonetheless, the country had incurred enormous debt during the Franco period and its gross domestic product (GDP) continued to lag behind the European average (Balfour, 2005). In 1986, in a bid to reduce national debt and the high rate of unemployment, Spain successfully applied to join the European Union, then operating as a trade organization known as the European Economic Community (EEC) (Closa and Heywood, 2004). Under the re-established constitutional monarchy, Spain managed to restructure and stimulate its
economy through increased trade with wealthier neighbouring countries, which increased infrastructure development and boosted its employment rate (Balfour, 2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>VALDELUZ</strong></th>
<th><strong>SPAIN</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>1998 High-speed train station placed near Yebes village.</td>
<td>1996 Real estate prices rise dramatically as property bubble that began in mid-1980s continues to grow.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011 Ministry of Development “expropriates” 109, 614 square metres of land surrounding train station to build new urban centre.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Land reclassified as ‘urban’ under Municipal Management Plan; to be jointly developed by landowner and real estate company Reyal Urbis Ltd.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005 / 2006 Neighbourhood Association of Valdeluz formed.</td>
<td>2008 Real estate bubble bursts; housing prices decline; unemployment rises.</td>
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<td>Summer 2008 Residential construction on Valdeluz stops.</td>
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<td>Banks take over ownership and reduce housing prices by up to 70 per cent.</td>
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<td>February 2011 Construction on San Jerónimo church begins, funded by municipality and community</td>
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<td>June 2011 President of Neighbourhood Association becomes Mayor of Yebes Municipality.</td>
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<td>Fall 2011 Construction of Valdeluz Sports Complex underway.</td>
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<td>February 2013 Reyal Urbis Ltd. declares voluntary bankruptcy</td>
<td>June 2012 Banking sector appeals to Eurozone for 100-billion euro bailout.</td>
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<td>November 2013 Municipality of Yebes reportedly one of the “richest” in Spain relative to its population size.</td>
<td>January 2014 Spain exits Eurozone bailout program.</td>
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**Figure 56: Timeline of key events in Valdeluz and Spain.**
Although recovery was halted during the global recession of the early 1990s, Spain’s economy resumed growth by the end of the decade. In 1999, the country became a member of the Eurozone, or Euro Area, by adopting the euro (€) as its sole currency and effectively tying itself to a single market of 18 European Union member states (Neal & García-Iglesias, 2013). As a result, interest rates decreased and property values began to rise. Small, unprotected Spanish banks, known as the cajas, facilitated the real estate market by offering low-interest, long-term mortgages—sometimes as long as 50 years—and reducing mortgage payments from personal income taxes by 15 per cent (Romero, Jiménes, & Villoria, 2012). With an unprecedented number of employed individuals able to afford purchasing a home, and an increased rate of immigration owing to a rapidly growing economy, the development of new apartments and houses accelerated at a record rate. Concentrating much of its newfound wealth in the construction sector, Spain entered a property boom, later referred to as a ‘speculative bubble’ based, not on housing demand, but on expectations of future price increases and profit (Romero et al., 2012).

According to one media report, by the time the real estate boom reached its peak, developers had bought enough land to fulfill the next 30 years of construction demand (Smyth & Mar, 2013). An estimated 6.5 million new housing units were approved throughout Spain between December 1995 and December 2007, over 800,000 of which were approved in 2006 alone (Romero et al., 2012). Along with this extensive amount of development came a large increase in supporting service employment. Reportedly, 8.1 million new jobs were created, approximately 20 per cent of which were in construction and 50 per cent of which involved low-skill production that supported development and its employees (Romero et al., 2012). In 2007, at the height of the
property boom, the country’s rate of unemployment had dropped to 7.93 per cent, and some communities were on the verge of full employment (European Central Bank, 2014).

VALDELUZ, OR ‘AVELANDIA’

Ciudad Valdeluz, in the province of Guadalajara, was one of dozens of housing developments planned and executed during the property boom of the late 1990s and early 2000s. According to Sanz (2011), the province of Guadalajara was particularly favoured location for the creation of new communities, owing to lower construction costs and an extensive amount of undeveloped land. With 9,500 units and a new high-speed train station, Valdeluz would be a bedroom community for Madrid—just 60 kilometres, or a 20-minute train ride, away (Chakraborty, 2011). While the addition of a new development was nothing unusual at the time, the choice of location is reportedly linked with political and economic motives. In 1998, a train station along the Madrid-Lleida line was unexpectedly placed near Yebes, which had fewer than 300 inhabitants at the time (Pascual, 2003). Shortly afterwards, it was revealed that the land in question, and thousands of surrounding acres, were owned by close relatives of former People’s Party (PP) leader and then President of Madrid, Esperanza Aguirre. As one Valdeluz resident explained ruefully, “Spain is owned by five hundred rich and powerful families. Every decision made in this country can be traced back to how one of them may benefit”. Although the illustrious family claimed that it did not know of the government’s plans to build a high-speed, or Alta Velocidad Española (AVE) station, it said that the decision inspired them to start a new community. The family’s own development corporation, Arverjal Ltd., entered into an agreement with the leading construction company Reyal Urbis Ltd (Pascual, 2003). With the new high-speed rail stop, and plans for Valdeluz underway, the value of the once-agricultural
property increased dramatically, from an estimated six million euros to over fifty million euros (Pascual, 2003; Hidalgo, 2008).

It became a joke among locals in surrounding communities to call the anticipated housing project ‘Avelandia’, a possible double-entendre simultaneously referencing its catalyst—the AVE station—and literally meaning “Bird Land” in Spanish, implying that the land was unsuitable for human habitation (Pascual, 2003). However, not everyone in the region was opposed to Ciudad Valdeluz. The Municipality of Yebes imagined the prosperity that the new development would bring to their small village. In the words of former mayor Aurelio Sánchez, “the future city has given hope to our people, who have been harassed by gradual depopulation… we are able to build a big city in our municipality that will generate many benefits” (Pascual, 2003). These benefits would stem from economic growth, as Reyal Urbis invested €1,123,000 in the new development (Ortíñ, 2011). In another apparent coincidence, one of the driving proponents of the Valdeluz project was the Municipality of Yebes’ official architect, who also happened to be the brother of PP deputy Luis de Grandes (Pascual, 2003). With a projected population of 30,000, Ciudad Valdeluz would turn Yebes into the second largest municipality in Guadalajara, after the capital. However, like the influential landlords of the development, the Yebes City Council claimed that “it was the central government that decided to build the city railway station… [We] had no idea of these plans” (Pascual, 2003). Thus, economic gains and political pressure brought about the planning and construction of a community in a location that, traditionally, would have remained uninhabited.
THE 2008 ECONOMIC RECESSION

The global financial crisis of 2008 was particularly problematic for Spain for a number of reasons. According to Romero et al. (2012), the Spanish crisis can be attributed to a series of factors:

(a) channelling copious national and international savings into real estate as an investment and as speculation, aided by adopting the euro, low interest rates, and tax breaks for homeownership;
(b) oversized banks that joined the speculative fever with little professionalism and regard for the consequences;
(c) the absence of appropriate governance mechanisms for supervision by the relevant monetary authority and at the territorial level (ineffective accountability mechanisms);
(d) very flexible and discretionary land-use legislation, plus a mayor’s monopoly in certain processes of decision making;
(e) a growing need for government revenue at local and regional levels; and
(f) low-quality government institutions at these levels (p. 467).

The country’s imbalanced economic portfolio, concentrated almost entirely in the construction sector, was supported by a high number of unprotected private loans issued by the cajas. When the property bubble burst, the national banks withdrew lending, causing building projects to come to a sudden halt and many development companies to go bankrupt (Smyth & Mar, 2013). Spanish banks requested bailouts from the government, and the government, in turn, asked for support from fellow Eurozone member states. In June of 2012, Spain’s banking sector appealed to its European neighbours for 100 billion euros in order to rescue its banking system (Toyer & Bremer, 2012). One journalist described the entire collapse as “a giant game of pass-the-parcel in
credit and real estate on which the clock was suddenly stopped, and an entire country got caught out” (Chakrabortty, 2011). The ineffective accountability described by Romero et al. (2012) was evident when, even as the crisis neared, prime minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero dismissed worried economists as "anti-patriotic", and declared that “very soon the Spanish economy would leapfrog France” (Chakrabortty, 2011).

The “flexible and discretionary land-use legislation” (Romero et al., 2012, p.467) accusation referred to the Francoist 1956 Land Law, which held effect throughout the greater part of the property boom until the establishment of a new Land Law in 2007. Romero et al. (2012) explain the three essential pillars of the former urban planning legislation as such:

(a) all land in the country was ‘classified’ by municipal plans as fit or unfit for building and urban development;

(b) most of the capital gains generated by land classification were rendered to the fortunate owners of the land regarded as fit for development and, from only the transition years in the 1970s onwards, just a small part of it (10% to 15%) was recovered by the public administration which took the decision on land use;

(c) and where a public administration needed to expropriate land for public use, the law required a calculation of its value that made it impossible in practice to expropriate land classified as fit for urban development (p. 471).

As the authors point out, this system “strongly encouraged speculation and political corruption” (Romero et al., 2012, p. 471), largely owing to a stipulation in the plan stating that rural land deemed “fit” would be valued as if it were already urbanized. Originally, this was used as a method to encourage landowners to assume construction costs in exchange for capital gains.
However, as Romero et al. (2012) write, “This absolutely irrational element favouring landowners’ interests made irrelevant the threat of expropriation whenever a landowner did not comply with the time limit to develop his or her land in accordance with the municipal plan… landowners held their plots without investing a cent in urbanizing works, waiting for an increase in land price” (p. 472). By contrast, local governments overestimated the amount of land needed for construction, concerned that they would not be able to control developments by private landowners. As Rullan and Artigues (2007) concluded, there was a tendency “to fit every demand and more, eventually leading all municipalities to plan for everyone to buy houses everywhere”. Thus, the planning legislation that guided construction during the real estate bubble favoured uncontrolled land speculation and development, encouraging urban sprawl and providing wealthy landowners, rather than public administration, with economic benefits and decision-making power.

Just as the rise in real estate investment had driven the rest of the economy upwards, the collapse of these ventures had a domino effect. Employment that supported the construction sector was no longer necessary, and more than 2 million jobs disappeared (Romero et al, 2012). By 2012, unemployment reached a record high of 26 per cent (European Central Bank, 2014; Smyth & Mar, 2013). The “development tsunami” (Gaj.a 2008, in Romero et al., 2012) had inflated housing prices to over 40 per cent at the peak of the bubble, and its sudden end left many homeowners stuck with half-century mortgages. At the end of 2009, there were a reported 1,342,435 finished residential properties for sale, and a further 1,213,575 homes still under construction or frozen (Abril, 2011). The cultural landscapes of Spain had been segmented through widespread, uncontrolled development, and were now covered in partially built, stagnant projects.
Like many developments started during the real estate boom, work halted on Valdeluz in the summer of 2008, when it was clear that the market would not soon recover. Ultimately, only 1,900 housing units were finished, leaving approximately 75 per cent of the planned city incomplete. Reyal Urbis withstood bankruptcy longer than most construction companies, reassuring homeowners and creditors that “The rate of construction will always adjust to the demand” (Abril, 2011). However, in order to renegotiate its €4.6 billion debt, the company began handing its assets over to various national banks like BBVA and Santander. In February of 2013, the president of the company, Rafael Santamaría—popularly called ‘el último mohicano’ [the last of the Mohicans]—finally declared voluntary bankruptcy (Ortín, 2012). Today, the apartment buildings in Valdeluz are owned by the banks, reflecting a pattern that is visible across all of Spain. While one consulting firm estimated that the banks had seized 200,000 properties, another stated that, “It's not easy to count how many have been transferred… Too many homes have been built. Today, the assets are worth less than the debt that they carry. And the financial system is the only one that can solve the problem by making sacrifices. To recover, losses must be borne” (Abril, 2011). In order to minimize economic damage, Spanish banks began selling homes for far less than their original value—a situation that had both financial and social implications for Valdeluz.

For those residents who purchased homes in Valdeluz before the crisis, the depreciation of housing values was harrowing. At the time of this study, many properties were worth as little as 30 to 40 per cent of their original value (Chakrabortty, 2011). A two-bedroom unit, which Reyal Urbis sold for €187,500 in 2008, sold for approximately €70,000 in 2011 (Ortín). Many residents faced mortgages that would be impossible to repay in their lifetime, and were unable to relocate.
without losing a considerable amount of personal equity (Chakrabortty, 2011). Furthermore, because the Spanish government did not accept mortgage loans as collateral, those unemployed residents who could not repay their loans had their properties seized and were left with immense debts. By contrast, the fall in housing prices was unexpectedly beneficial for younger people hoping to own their first home (Abril, 2011). Where low wages or unemployment may have prevented these individuals from entering the housing market during the property boom, they were now able to afford luxury condominiums worth far more than their actual value. This shift in purchasing power greatly affected the social dynamics of the development and will be discussed in the chapter on social life in Valdeluz.

**SUMMARY**

Ciudad Valdeluz was planned and implemented during a time of great investment in the Spanish real estate sector. Despite displaying classic speculative bubble characteristics, the construction boom grew unchecked, fed by unprotected investments and politicians’ unwillingness to admit failure. This imbalanced investment combined with outdated land laws to promote private over public interests and encourage uncontrolled sprawl in rural areas. When the bubble burst, construction on planned developments stopped and early residents were left with assets worth half their original value. By contrast, depreciating costs allowed individuals with lower incomes to purchase homes in incomplete developments, with the understanding that planned amenities and services were no longer guaranteed.
Ciudad Valdeluz Development

Hoy es el primer día de muchas cosas, de paisajes nuevos, más tranquilos, donde las prisas pasan de largo. Hoy es el día donde se crea una ciudad.

[Today is the first day of many things; of new, more peaceful landscapes, where stress is left behind. Today is the day a city is created.]

- Promotion for Ciudad Valdeluz (Sanz, 2011, p. 82)

SOMETHING FROM NOTHING

Ciudad Valdeluz was marketed by its developers as the first city in Spain to be “made from scratch” (Sanz, 2011, p. 84). A promotional video features a camera soaring over a fully-formed urban streetscape, filled with lush green parks and a complete range of services. “Around the AVE station in Guadalajara,” the video narrates, as a high-speed train glides across the screen, “Valdeluz is born” (http://www.ciudadvaldeluz.com, 2012). The main selling point of the development was its proximity to Madrid by way of inexpensive, high-speed commuter shuttles. In approximately twenty minutes, residents could escape the bustling capital to a city in the countryside with more affordable accommodations, a tranquil garden landscape and, as promoters advertised, "everything anyone could ever need" (Sanz, 2011, p. 90). As Sanz noted, “Ciudad Valdeluz was presented in publicity with an almost demiurgic character, a residential complex that planned to raise 9,500 homes from nothing… in a wasteland that had no kind of previous urbanization (2011, p. 82). The development represented not only a grand urbanization scheme, but an entirely new lifestyle (Sanz, 2011). Athletic residents would be able to take advantage of a sports complex, a golf course, a variety of recreational courts, as well as a system of bicycle paths running throughout the development. With an expected population of 30,000 residents, the plans also included a hospital, supermarkets, a large shopping centre and a range of schools. As one journalist warned early purchasers, however, “these services must be obtained in
Guadalajara for now... it is virtually impossible to live in the development without a car” (Rodríguez, 2007). Nearly a decade after the first housing unit was built, this warning continued to hold merit.

VALDELUZ IN PLAN

Figure 57: Ciudad Valdeluz Masterplan (based on plan by Enrique Bardají y Asociados Arquitectos, 2006).
Ciudad Valdeluz was to occupy a 490-hectare site, 331 hectares of which were located in the Municipality of Yebes, and 158 in that of Guadalajara, with the high-speed railway line separating the two areas (Hidalgo, 2008). The city was structured into four residential neighbourhoods, quadrisectioned by two perpendicular parks running the length and width of the development (Figure 57). In order to avoid associating with the image of a bedroom community or ‘weekend city’, each neighbourhood was encircled by a collection of small and medium-sized local businesses with the aim of “restoring the traditional ambience of the shopping street” (Sanz, 2011, p. 90). The plan was scheduled to be constructed in four phases, the first of which included 2,000 homes in the northeast quadrant of the site. The layout and form of residences was typical of newer developments in mid-sized Spanish cities, although very different from the previously described Alcarrian typology. As a local official explained, “We wanted to build at the human scale. That’s why the boulevards are wider and the apartments are no higher than five storeys”. Each living complex in Valdeluz, which consisted of detached, semi-detached or multiple-unit apartments with up four bedrooms, was concentrated inwards upon a central, shared courtyard. Within these courtyards were private pools, playgrounds, gardens, paddle tennis courts and lounging areas, closed off from outsiders by a tall gate and attending security guard (Figures 58-60). The influence of this multiple-nuclei layout on resident interaction will be discussed later.
Figure 58: Playground of inner courtyard in gated apartment complex.

Figure 59: Private pool and playground of inner courtyard in gated apartment complex.
Advertising for Valdeluz not only focused on its high-speed connections and commercial centre, but on its ecological merits. According to publicity, it was a city where “the balance between nature and urbanism is total,” and whose design was intended to “grow in harmony with the environment, without causing damage” (Sanz, 2011, p. 92). Elaborately designed parkland surrounded the first phase of residential development, the highlight of which was the Parque de la Paz [Peace Park], with its brightly coloured playgrounds, fenced dog parks, extensive walking paths and scenic artificial lake (Figures 61-63). Promoters for Valdeluz highlighted the use of recycled water for parkland and golf course irrigation and the preservation of existing vegetation through a “Save the Oak” campaign that attempted to transplant ancient trees out of the way of construction (Sanz, 2011). After construction was stopped, these landscaped elements of the original design became increasingly important to residents.
Figure 61: Brightly coloured playground in the Parque de la Paz.

Figure 62: Pedestrian bridge over public gathering space in the Parque de la Paz.
According to the original construction schedule, Ciudad Valdeluz would be able to accommodate the expected 30,000 new residents by 2011 (Diario de Valdeluz, 25 April 2008). With the goal of completing 2,500 homes in the first 14 months, developers hurriedly set about paving streets and digging foundations (Pascual, 2003). As one early resident recalled, “The cranes used to fill the horizon. Everywhere you looked, you saw them sticking up and spinning around”. Another interviewee, a local café owner, affirmed that their business was almost entirely supported by construction workers, who routinely stopped in for breakfast, a mid-morning break, the long Spanish lunch, and even after work. When building stopped, many wondered whether the 300 residents who had moved into the development would be able to support the few local businesses that had already opened (Abril, 2011; Hidalgo, 2008).
Valdeluz soon played host to national and international media reporters, focused on capturing quintessential images of waste and poor planning; the results of the Spanish real estate crisis. In the words of one Spanish journalist,

In Valdeluz City there are so few people that the only supermarket cannot hold perishable food. The cashiers are bored. The halls are gleaming, empty. They can shout "Holaaaaaa" in the yogurt section. Outside on the street, you can jump and run along sidewalks and driveways. You can make an illegal U-turn on its broad avenues. It's okay. There are no people. There are no cars. There is only one four by four belonging to a security company that shows that here, there is something to protect (Hidalgo, 2008).

Another reporter from a British newspaper argued that there were residents, but that “the development is so empty they look more like middle-aged squatters” (Chakrabortty, 2011). This criticism was sometimes reflective, commenting on the issue from a national or international perspective. For example, a photographic blog criticized planning laws, which required the installation of streetlights, sidewalks and paving before housing was built, resulting in what the author called, “The shortest bicycle lane in the world” (Figure 64) (6000km.org, 2009). More often, though, the media used words like “big scar”, “skeletons”, and “ghost town”, painting Valdeluz residents as the victims of supposedly “omniscient urban planners” (Abril, 2011). This scrutiny served to alienate residents and as will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, created a shared emotional connection between them.
Although the media focused on the visual aftermath of empty lots, unfinished buildings and construction debris, new homeowners were initially more hopeful. While residential development was put on hold, plans were still underway for the opening of an elementary school, a large shopping mall, a health centre and a sports complex. At the beginning of the crisis, perhaps in the hope of justifying their purchase, residents were confident that “sooner or later they would see their dream come true” (Diario de Valdeluz, 25 April, 2008). However, as property values continued to decline and construction timelines for promised amenities increased, some residents became less optimistic. “Valdeluz is a snake that bites its own tail,” one resident said, “people have stopped buying homes and then no stores open, and if stores are not open, no people will come” (Ortín, 2008). Although the municipality ensured regular garbage collection, water supply and landscape maintenance, the high-speed commuter shuttles to Madrid had not yet arrived, and residents had to travel to nearby Horche or Guadalajara for supplies. In the words of another early resident, “When we bought our apartment, Reyal promised us that at
the end of 2006 we would have pharmacies, schools, shopping centres… but there is nothing” (Ortín, 2008). In reality, amenities in Valdeluz increased gradually since the crisis began, albeit at a much slower pace than originally forecast. As more and more individuals took advantage of lowered housing prices, the population grew, and at the time of this study, there were approximately 3,000 people living in the development. Although they were still challenged by many issues, they were working to bring about the vision that bankrupt real estate companies could no longer deliver.

**SUMMARY**

Similar to many master-planned communities, Ciudad Valdeluz was scheduled to be built in several residential phases, with the promise of added improvements as development progressed. Marketers promoted the town’s modern amenities as well as its connections with nature, depicting a quiet, comfortable and convenient escape from overcrowded Madrid. However, construction stopped unexpectedly, leaving the development in a fragmented state. The media fixated on Valdeluz as a representation of the country’s uncontrolled real estate spending, effectively portraying early residents as people who had allowed themselves to be cheated. Despite this negative press, the population continued to grow owing to drastically reduced housing prices, which contributed to the securing of a number of amenities.
Transportation and Amenities

*I saw in a free newspaper, they were promoting these developments for their direct communication with Madrid via the AVE, a real scam... the big pitch was that it had acquired land at a regulated price and was selling it as if the houses were built with bullion gold instead of bricks. All thanks to the alliances between politicians and brick speculators. To my knowledge the AVE, with those prices, caters more to executives and tourism than transporting the middle class and workers to their jobs. They have never stolen so much from as many people and for such a long time.*

- Online commenter
  (Hidalgo, 2008)

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

During the time of this study, the high-speed train that ran along the edge of Valdeluz was rarely used by residents (Figures 65 & 66). The irony of the situation did not go unnoticed. In the words of one interviewee, “Valdeluz is only here because of the AVE. We were promised inexpensive shuttle trains [*lanzaderas*]—only two euros—that would take us to Atocha [a central station in Madrid] every half hour. Instead it costs a fortune and hardly ever stops. We drive, or some people take the bus”. The confusion of cause and consequence created a negative feedback loop, in which there were not enough passengers to justify a commuter train, and there were no commuter trains to attract new passengers. Owing to a lack of local demand, the only high-speed trains that stopped in Valdeluz were between long-distance destinations like Madrid and Barcelona, Pamplona, Logroño, or Zaragoza, making them infrequent and unsuitable to the schedules of working commuters. In September of 2008, Renfe Operadora, the company that runs the AVE, reported an average of only ten passengers per day using the Yebes-Valdeluz station (Ortín, 2008). Although the number increased to 87 passengers per day by September of 2009, it was still not enough to justify commuter trains (Ortín, 2011).
Figure 65: Guadalajara-Yebes AVE station in Valdeluz.

Figure 66: AVE station parking lot.
Residents, in turn, criticized the AVE’s intermittent schedule and high prices. The cost of a return trip to Madrid, in November 2013, was approximately €27.70 ($41.90 in Canadian dollars) (Renfe Operadora, 2014). One could also buy a BonoAVE Pass—a non-transferable pass valid for ten one-way journeys between the same two destinations—for a 20 to 35 per cent discount, depending on the date and time of travel. Adding to the issue of cost and infrequency was the distance to the train station. The station is a 20-minute walk from the centre of Valdeluz’s residential area, partially along a highway access ramp (Figures 67 & 68). A single taxi was available to Valdeluz residents, but for the majority of people, the inconveniences of using the high-speed trains were not worth the time saved.

Figure 67: Sign for Valdeluz alongside highway leading from AVE station to the development.
For some time, political candidates had been guaranteeing the launch of high-speed shuttles between Madrid and Valdeluz as part of their platform, but had never delivered on their pledge. In late 2009, Valdeluz residents initiated a manifesto to obtain the commuter trains that had been repeatedly promised to them by several local and regional politicians “without a trace of shame” (González, 2009). In the words of the then-President of the Valdeluz Neighbourhood Association, “The main problem that Valdeluz faces today is not the real estate crisis, but Renfe’s unfulfilled promise to integrate our station in the commuter shuttle network, which would guarantee high-speed at affordable prices. The recent opening of a school, a doctor’s office… make it clear that this is not a ghost town, but we do have a ghost station where trains do not stop” (González, 2009). One resident had the idea of allowing travelers from Valdeluz and Guadalajara to ride available trains at commuter prices: “Even if they just let us go up to the
café car, without adding new trains or changing schedules. Then we’ll really see if there are as few takers as Renfe says” (*Diario de Valdeluz*, 18 December, 2009). This suggestion implies that the problem was not a lack of demand, but a lack of suitable service. Ultimately, however, the provincial government decided that there was neither a need, nor a conceivable profit to be made from installing the shuttles (*Diario de Valdeluz*, 28 May, 2010).

Although the commuter system had yet to arrive in the region at the time of this study, the Yebes City Council and residents of Valdeluz had not stopped their efforts to promote its implementation. In the words of the current mayor, “This was going to be one of the first shuttle routes in Spain, and ten years later we are still waiting… It’s frustrating to see how our demands have fallen on deaf ears… But we will not cease working hard to claim what is owed to this province” (*Diario de Valdeluz*, January 3, 2014). Municipal council’s latest letter, sent to the Ministry of Development, Renfe Operadora, and the President of Castilla-La Mancha in early 2014, demanded that action be taken without delay, either to install the commuter shuttles as promised, or to implement a daily train to and from Madrid during rush hour at a half-price rate. Reportedly, similar systems have been put in place on the routes between Madrid and Zaragoza, and Barcelona and Girona, both much farther apart than the distance between Madrid and Valdeluz. The cost of a 50-ride commuter pass between Barcelona and Girona, for example, was €6.15 per ride, an approximate 44 per cent reduction from the rate in Guadalajara. As the mayor argued, “This is a remarkable unfairness. There are no valid excuses, what is lacking is the political will” (*Diario de Valdeluz*, January 3, 2014).

Alternative public transportation to Madrid could be found in Guadalajara, by way of a 56-minute commuter train for a return price of €3.30 ($5.00 Canadian), of which there were approximately 60 trips per day (Renfe Operadora, 2014). Although this option was much more
affordable and frequent than the AVE, Valdeluz residents had to travel by car, taxi or inter-city bus to Guadalajara. In November 2013, there were seven buses per day that ran between Guadalajara, Valdeluz and nearby Horche and Yebes, beginning at 6:45 am and running every two to three hours until 10:55 pm. It took fifteen minutes to reach the bus station in Guadalajara from the development, and another twenty to walk to the train station. This added commute time meant that those Valdeluz residents who worked in Madrid were much more likely to drive the 60 kilometres than to take public transit. Moreover, the reduction to only four inter-city buses per day on weekends meant that it was also easier for residents to travel by personal vehicle to visit Guadalajara for supplies or leisure activities. At the time, the cost of increasing the number of buses was too expensive for the city budget. In the words of one local official, “The bus between Guadalajara and here is the result of a 4-million-dollar subsidy. If citizens had to pay for it, it would be the same cost as taking a private taxi every day”. Consequently, although multiple types of public transit were available to people living in Valdeluz, the high cost of the AVE, the added commute time of the inter-city bus, and the limited frequency of both options resulted in a driving culture that was never envisioned for the modern urban development.

INCREASING POPULATION AND AMENITIES

As previously noted, the number of amenities available to Valdeluz residents increased along with its population. There were 382 registered residents in September of 2008, and in November of 2013 there were over 2,200, although the actual number is closer to 3,000 based on water consumption (Ortíñ, 2013). Moreover, the development accounted for approximately 80 per cent of the municipality’s total population, and the highest population growth in the province (Diario de Valdeluz, October 18, 2008; January 14, 2014). As one interviewee explained, “I moved here because it was cheaper. I could have a better quality of life here, with three
bedrooms, a garden, a swimming pool, close to the countryside… Where else would I be able to afford all of this?” Another resident, a café owner, noticed a gradual change: “I can see it in the number of people who come in for lunch. A café needs constant volume to be successful and after it burst, people didn’t go out as much anymore. But they’re starting to come back… there are many more people coming than when we first opened”. Along the development’s main commercial streets there were two cafés, a bank, a medical clinic, a dentist’s office, a pharmacy, and a range of convenience stores and other small businesses (Figures 69 & 70). A small grocery store and restaurant could be found to the south of the completed residential area, just a short walk through the Parque de la Paz. These businesses provided much-needed employment for residents in Valdeluz and nearby towns, and helped to concentrate economic growth locally, rather than redirecting it towards more established urban centres as the original plan intended.

Figure 69: Bank in Valdeluz.
Since December 1st, 2009, when the Yebes City Council assumed full control of all services in Valdeluz, many changes had taken place in the development (Diario de Valdeluz, December 1, 2009). The success of these projects could have been owing, in part, to a shift in governmental power in June of 2011, which will be discussed later in further detail. Some of the most popular improvements included the installation of urban food gardens, a library with over 3,000 books donated from the community, the opening of a local municipal office, and the construction of a large, publicly-operated sports complex that offered a variety of recreational and educational courses.

Despite the steadily increasing number of residents and amenities, however, there were issues surrounding registration in the development. Reportedly, a considerable number of residents did not declare Valdeluz as their principle address, owing to the benefits that could be garnered from claiming to live elsewhere. For example, according to one interviewee, residents...
of the autonomous community of Castilla-La Mancha, in which Guadalajara is located, had to pay for *in vitro* fertilization, while those in Madrid did not. As there were many young couples living in Valdeluz, a number of them could have misrepresented their residence in order to benefit from Madrid’s health care system. This affected the amount of services subsidized by the government, which were dependent on the number of registered residents. In the words of one local official, “In Yebes and Valdeluz we have 3,400 people, based on water consumption. Three hundred of those people live in Yebes, but there are only about 2,500 registered in Valdeluz. It doesn’t add up. And there are only 1,500 people registered for health services! If everyone registered, we might be able to build a hospital”. Urging residents to register was a constant campaign for City Council, communicated through bulletins posted throughout the development and online (Figure 71). The Council was convinced that this problem greatly affected the availability of medical services and education, two of the most prevalent issues in the community.

Figure 71: Online poster urging residents to register in the next electoral census (*Diario de Valdeluz*, November 24, 2010).
MEDICAL SERVICES

In November of 2013, a small medical clinic with one attending physician was available to residents from Monday to Friday, between the hours of 12:30pm and 2:30pm. In addition, a registered nurse could be consulted on Tuesdays for one hour in the afternoon, and on Friday mornings. The 125-square metre office was opened in May of 2008, jointly funded by the Yebe City Council and the Health Service of Castilla-La Mancha (Diario de Valdeluz, May 16, 2013). However, the clinic was much less comprehensive than the 2,300-square metre Health Centre originally planned for the town (Diario de Valdeluz, April 25, 2008). Reportedly, the City Council’s requests to meet with the Provincial Health Department in order to promote the construction of the Health Centre were repeatedly ignored (Diario de Valdeluz, February 3, 2013). As one local official said, “There are over five hundred children between the ages of zero and fourteen—that’s more than enough to have a paediatric clinic, at the very least”. In the interim, City Council undertook the responsibility of securing health care services, however limited, for the growing population.

EDUCATION

The educational complex located in the development, called the Light of Yebe School (Figure 72), was a particularly problematic issue between residents, the municipality and the provincial government. The first of four institutions planned for the development, Light of Yebe was built to accommodate approximately 1,800 students, from newborns to 18 years of age (Diario de Valdeluz, April 25, 2008). Still under construction, the school opened under private management in September of 2008 with 63 registered students (Diario de Valdeluz, November 2, 2010). However, by the following year the school was in a state of bankruptcy, struggling to pay its teachers’ salaries and finish construction on an indoor pool and sports complex that would
eventually be open to the public. Under threat of closure, parents, students and teachers took to the streets of Guadalajara, protesting the handling of the situation by both the municipal and provincial governments. Reportedly, the Yebes City Council had tendered and awarded the construction of the school despite concerns that enrolment would not be sufficient (*Diario de Valdeluz*, October 18, 2009). As a reparatory measure, an agreement was reached in which students from Yebes would be able to attend class for free, supported by funding from the regional government. However, the Government of Castilla-La Mancha rescinded the agreement in April of 2012, causing many parents to transfer their children to public schools in other towns. With a drastically reduced rate of enrolment, the school finally closed its doors in August of 2013 (*Diario de Valdeluz*, July 28, 2012).

![Image of the Yebes school yard and a stagnant construction site.](image)

**Figure 72:** Light of Yebes school yard and stagnant construction site.
Since the school’s closure, the Yebes City Council began promoting the opening of a public school in Valdeluz, in the same location as the privately run Light of Yebes. Owing to the high number of young children in the community, the town had successfully implemented *pequeteca* and *ludoteca* programs—didactic playrooms geared towards young children—at the local library. However, there existed a strong movement focused on reopening the primary and secondary school permanently, based on the argument that Yebes was one of the most populated Spanish municipalities without its own school (*Diario de Valdeluz*, January 24, 2014). As the motion put forward by a group of Yebes City councilors stated:

> Yebes currently has 558 school-aged children in different stages of Infant, Primary and Secondary Education. This figure continues to grow exponentially as many more families choose our town, attracted by enticing real estate offers, more and better municipal services and the quality of life enjoyed by residents… Article 27 of the Constitution recognizes the right of Spaniards to free education… The future of Yebes and Valdeluz cannot ultimately depend on the availability of places in other municipalities. (*Diario de Valdeluz*, July 28, 2012).

With more than 750 signatures obtained for this petition to the regional government, Yebes City Council and parents of school-aged children hoped to finally find a solution to the problem of education.

**ADAPTING EXPECTATIONS**

Since the halt in construction, residents had to adapt to new expectations and reassess their objectives. For instance, the 24-hour private security patrol provided by real estate developers was no longer present because ownership of Valdeluz was taken over by the municipality and
national banks. Although some residents expressed a desire for security to be reinstated, the goal was unrealizable according to Spanish law, which requires a town to have a population of at least 5,000 in order to provide a Guardia Urbana, or municipal level, police force. As one resident maintained, “We have all the services that are needed for three thousand people. You can’t expect to have the same services for thirty thousand when there are not that many people here”.

Such alterations in expectations are not only based on overall population size, but on demographics. While the largest age group in the community vacillated between 30 and 40 years of age, children between the ages of zero and nine years of age accounted for nearly 15 per cent of the population (Ayuntamiento de Yebes, n.d.). Moreover, the steady arrival of younger couples in the development meant that the number of newborns was growing. As such, the goal of obtaining a new health centre was shifted towards a more obtainable paediatric centre, as officials believed the need was easier to justify. For the same reason, the push to re-open the Light of Yebes School was greater than ever. As one resident predicted,

Eventually we will have to create a community centre for the teenagers as well. Right now, there isn’t anything for them to do in Valdeluz. And in Spain we call them the ‘ni-ni’ generation, meaning ‘ni trabajo, ni estudio’ [neither work nor study]. When they get bored, vandalism and drinking could become a problem. That’s why the new sports complex is so important. But we are only seven years old. It will come in time. Just like in 30 years, we will need to have a cemetery!

While walking through the unpopulated areas of the development, I noted instances of graffiti along unfinished walls and collections of empty beer bottles in secluded places (Figure 73). However, it was impossible to determine whether these were the beginnings of unrest to which this resident alluded.
SUMMARY

Since construction on Valdeluz came to an abrupt halt, residents struggled to secure amenities that were originally promised. The most controversial issue was the high-speed AVE train, arguably the reason for Valdeluz’s existence and a symbol of connectedness between the community and larger urban centres. Although residents had to adjust their expectations based on a reduced population, they had success with obtaining some health care services and education programs. At the time of this study, efforts were still underway to promote the installation of commuter shuttles, a larger and more accessible medical centre and a permanent public school.
Landscape Values

The traveler gets up, walks up and down the room, straightens a picture, smells some flowers. He stops before a map of the Iberian Peninsula, both hands in his trouser pockets, his brows almost imperceptibly drawn together. The traveler speaks slowly, very slowly, to himself under his breath: “Yes, the Alcarria. It should be a good place for walking. And then we’ll see; maybe I won’t go out again; it depends.

- Camilo José Cela
Viaje a la Alcarria, 1948, p. 29

When arriving by high-speed AVE train, the Valdeluz Golf Course is one of the first destinations a traveler may notice (Figure 74). As I walked along a bright red bicycle path at the edge of the community on a windy autumn morning (Figure 75), watching a maintenance worker rake leaves off the green, I thought about the discrepancy between the areas that Yebes City Council and Valdeluz residents had chosen to maintain, and those that had been left to grow naturally until population growth demanded otherwise. Although the municipal offices reportedly offered discounts to new residents on lessons at the golf course, the majority of users were from Madrid. As one interviewee said, “I’ve been to the restaurant up there, and I like to go for walks underneath the great oak trees, but I don’t golf and it’s not worth the money to me. I don’t think many people here have that kind of money”. Nonetheless, the golf course attracted enough business to keep its lawns immaculately maintained. The bright green, closely-clipped fairways were a strong contrast to the empty fields of brown and yellow scrubland in the adjacent outskirts of the development (Figures 76 & 77) and represented a vision that many residents have put on hold.
Figure 74: Valdeluz Golf Course.

Figure 75: Bicycle pathway and service kiosks along outskirts of Valdeluz.
Figure 76: Pathway near northeast entrance to Valdeluz.

Figure 77: Scrubland along southern edge of development.
Figure 78: Map of streets closed off to vehicle access.

**SELECTIVE MAINTENANCE**

In an effort to save money on lighting and landscape maintenance, as well as to prevent vehicular accidents, the Yebes City Council decided to close off a large number of unnecessary streets with cement barriers (Figure 78 & 79). This included the majority of streets south of the Parque de la Paz, as well as any smaller streets that did not provide direct access to the residential and commercial core. Pedestrians and bicyclists could still pass through freely, and many residents could be seen walking their dogs through this otherwise abandoned area (Figure
In the words of one interviewee, “My children love to go on an excursion through the closed off streets. They call it hiking, or sometimes an archaeological dig, and we have all kinds of fun”. Here, the sidewalks and lots were littered with construction debris—a broken shovel here, plastic wrappings there, and mounds of bricks and unused soil piled high above one’s head (Figures 81 & 82). There were playgrounds grown over with weeds, waiting to be included in future development and providing adventure for children in the interim (Figure 83). This area was on the outskirts of Valdeluz, both physically and figuratively, and was viewed as an exception to any progress made to the development’s core.

Figure 79: Street closed off to vehicle access in incomplete area of Valdeluz.
Figure 80: Streetlamps and roads of incomplete neighbourhoods viewed from a distance.

Figure 81: Construction debris and overgrown pathway.
Figure 82: Mounded soil in empty lots.

Figure 83: Unmaintained playground.
In contrast to these closed-off, unnamed streets, where planted trees were left to wither and dog feces could be seen scattered along sidewalks, Valdeluz’s main streets and parks were regularly maintained. The development boasted over 200,000 square metres of parkland, and it was not unusual to see outdoor labourers in neon green jumpsuits, cutting off the bottom branches of boulevard trees, raking multi-coloured mulch patterns or trimming hedges with electric clippers (Figures 84-86). Ubiquitous white signs, intended to encourage civic behaviour and improve relationships between neighbours (Diario de Valdeluz, April 2, 2013), reminded residents to pick up after their pets, not to litter, and to “Respect our parks and gardens” (Figure 87). These managed areas represented Valdeluz as it was meant to be, and the way residents would have liked to see it. In speaking of promoting ecological diversity, Nassauer (1995) argued for the use of signals that communicate human intention. While Valdeluz may not have had ecological diversity in mind, their maintenance efforts and signs followed the same logic as Nassauer (2011) described:

The look of the landscape reflects on those who are responsible for it. A place that looks neglected suggests that those who care for it are irresponsible or overwhelmed, and they probably are not desirable neighbors. Anticipating this normative response by others is a powerful motivation for conforming behavior. In addition, because an aesthetic response is immediate, it may be even more potent in affecting behavior. Sometimes the look of a well-cared-for landscape makes us feel good, and we may act to get or to share that good feeling, an aesthetic response (p. 321).

For Valdeluz public authorities, the importance of keeping up appearances, both for residents’ enjoyment and in order to display prosperity, was worth the cost of garden maintenance for the town, which totalled over €12,000 per month (Interview with public official). By contrast, areas
near the edge of town were not maintained because they were less visible to residents, who likely only saw them on occasional walks and as they drove by on their way to work.

Figure 84: Multi-coloured mulch patterns in the Parque de la Paz.

Figure 85: Pathway through the Parque de la Paz.
Figure 86: Maintenance workers blowing leaves from shrubs in the Parque de la Paz.

Figure 87: Sign reminding citizens to “Take care of our parks and gardens”.
LANDSCAPE PUBLICITY

When improvements were made in and around the core of Valdeluz, they were often announced on the development’s online blog, ‘Diario de Valdeluz’ ['Diary of Valdeluz']. This blog was operated by a Yebes City Councillor and former member of the Valdeluz Neighbourhood Association. It was interesting to note that prior to the municipal and provincial elections in May of 2011, which will be discussed later, the blog focused on maintenance deficiencies in Valdeluz, posting images of overgrown weeds, littered parks and improperly treated street trees under accusatory titles like “Dead trees”; “For shame”; and “This is how our parks look” (Diario de Valdeluz, June 22, 2008; July 15, 2009; May 30, 2010). Directly citing the maintenance agreement between City Council and a landscaping company, the author listed the contract requirements with the comment that, “…someone is not doing their job very well” (Diario de Valdeluz, May 24, 2010). Following the election, during which the President of the Valdeluz Neighbourhood Association was elected Mayor of Yebes, and the blog’s author became Councillor of Planning, Infrastructure, Transport and Environment, the blog began to feature landscape enhancements, rather than shortcomings. Given that the blog was read by many Valdeluz residents, the perceived improvement was extensive. However, whether this shift in perspective was entirely owing to improved maintenance or whether it was influenced by political rearrangement was difficult to determine.

In a post from July of 2011, the author and new City Councillor announced the award of a new maintenance contract over a period of four years for a total of €624,584, stating that: “The state in which we find our gardens is not optimal, and so we will work quickly to improve them. In this regard, special attention should be paid to the meadows and zones adjacent to the artificial lakes in Valdeluz, which are the most frequented places” (Diario de Valdeluz, July 15, 2011).
The statement also reassured residents that the new City Council would work to maximize irrigation efficiency and replace dead trees. Posts (Diario de Valdeluz) featuring annual flower plantings (October 25, 2011; April 19, 2013), Arbour Day celebrations (October 29, 2011; March 15, 2013) and the clearing of snowy sidewalks (January 23, 2013) were followed by enthusiastic comments from residents. “It’s clear that Valdeluz is improving a lot,” one resident posted, “With shuttles to Madrid, that would be the kicker” (Diario de Valdeluz, October 25, 2011). The opinion that Valdeluz was improving was echoed by interviewees in November 2013, one of whom praised the City’s maintenance practices: “Everything is so clean and beautiful. Valdeluz is respectful of the environment, and that makes me optimistic that we have a future. In twenty or thirty years, this will be the best place to live near Madrid”. In this way, landscape maintenance not only imbued residents with pride, but was linked with the image of a successful development.

**PARTICIPATORY LANDSCAPE PROJECTS**

At the time of this study, Valdeluz residents had become increasingly involved in certain aspects of the development’s landscape. In May of 2013, a public draw was held during which 18 of 42 applicants were chosen to take part in an urban gardening project (Figures 88 & 89). For a cost of €6.50 per month, winning applicants would have access and harvesting rights to a 36-square metre plot and would be responsible for maintaining the small piece of land (Diario de Valdeluz, May 3, 2013). In addition, City Council provided an intensive introductory horticulture course with attention to organic farming practices, in order to ensure that participants would know how to manage their new crops. While the remaining applicants were put on a waiting list, some banded together to share a plot, or invited their families to take part. In the words of one resident, “I moved here because I could afford it, and because I liked the quiet. I never imagined
I would be a gardener, but I love it. One of my neighbours is an expert and I’ve learned so much from him. I love to go out there on weekends and see what my garden has grown”.

Another participatory landscape activity was Arbour Day, on which residents gathered together to plant a variety of trees in a designated space. In March of 2013, the town celebrated its second annual event, planting nearly one hundred fruit trees near the Light of Yebes School (Figure 90). According to the Councillor for the Environment, it is “a day of festivities and coexistence… for responsible citizens committed to their environment” (*Diario de Valdeluz, March 15, 2013*). Interviewees who took part in the event displayed a sense of pride at the trees they had planted. In the words of one resident, “My children like to check on the tree we planted almost every day. If it looks dry then they want to bring a little pail of water on our evening walk so they can water it. Of course the irrigation takes care of that, but they act like it is their responsibility, and that’s good”. These activities promoted bonding between residents and encouraged a more personal connection with place that may not have been established from regularly maintained public parks.

Figure 88: Sign at garden entrance explaining numbered plot system and seasonal vegetables.
Figure 89: Residents harvesting vegetables from numbered urban garden plots.

Figure 90: Fruit trees planted by residents, near Light of Yebes School.
**SUMMARY**

Despite the unkempt and abandoned appearance of Valdeluz’s outskirts, residents derived hope from the maintenance of core parkland. They were also able to form deeper connections with the development’s landscape through community-led planting activities. These efforts, and their perceived benefits, were largely owing to a governmental shift, which placed Valdeluz residents in key positions on local council, and brought their maintenance concerns to the fore.
Social Life

Back then we were a handful of neighbours. Parque I and Villas de Valdeluz were the first creations and harboured just forty or fifty souls. Some of them were members of the first Neighbourhood Association that was formed over the internet... And since actions speak louder than words, we didn’t wait a minute to lay claim to the services that were promised to us. The list included everything from shuttle buses and transportation to the school, postal services, shops and a health centre. What an epic movie, we were 18 or 20 against the world, on streets that had yet to be paved.

- Vincente Guerrero, early Valdeluz resident,
Vecinos Newsletter (Ayuntamiento de Yebes, 2012, p.5)

As in the study of Townsend, I interpreted the social interaction observed in Valdeluz through McMillan and Chavis’ criteria for developing a sense of community (1986); namely, membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection.

MEMBERSHIP

For those who bought homes in Valdeluz before the Spanish real estate market crashed, the feeling of having invested part of oneself in the community and thus, having a right to belong (McMillan & Chavis, 1986), was evident. These residents, whose homes had depreciated in value and who may never repay their mortgages, expressed the sentiment of being “stuck”. By the same token, however, this hardship imbued early purchasers with a feeling of belonging, and they often referred to themselves as “pioneers” or “settlers” (Rodríguez, 2007). In the words of one interviewee, “When we first moved here there were only about a hundred of us. We were the ones who really wanted to live here, and we had to band together to make something good of it; to show that we’re not a ghost town”. Of the people who were interviewed, those who referred to themselves as pioneers were actively involved in some aspect of the community’s improvement efforts, be it through some form of political engagement, local business ownership, or community event organization. As McMillan noted, “working for membership will provide a
feeling that one has earned a place in the group and that, as a consequence of this personal investment, membership will be more meaningful and valuable” (1976 in McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 11).

Conversations with residents revealed three categories of social classes living in Valdeluz. Firstly, there were the “pioneers”, described above, who were the target market for the development’s real estate marketers. These were mid-to-upper income earners who purchased condominiums in the two to three hundred thousand euro range and, according to one interviewee, “live in the nicest condos in Valdeluz”. Following the market crash, as banks took over ownership of the development’s residential complexes and housing prices dropped, lower income earners began to arrive. These individuals were colloquially referred to as “mileuroistas”, generally meaning young professionals who earn a thousand euros per month—a low but common starting salary in post-crisis Spain. As one resident described, “They couldn’t have afforded a condo in Valdeluz before the crisis, but now they can. It’s their chance to make it on their own; to buy their first house or apartment. That’s why we have so many couples with young children. In my building alone I have eighteen new neighbours—all newborns!” Finally, there was an influx of low income earners who rent apartments in Valdeluz, typically having contract or temporary employment either in the development or in nearby Guadalajara and taking advantage of the lowered cost of living. The change in ownership from real estate developers to national banks, therefore, transformed and diversified the social layout of the community, potentially creating a range of needs that may not have been anticipated in the original plan.
McMillan and Chavis’ second condition, the bidirectional influence that a member may exert over a group and that the group exerts over that member (1986), was visible through the close examination of the community’s online blog. The blog was initially created by the Valdeluz Neighbourhood Association in November of 2006, in order to collect information of interest to Valdeluz residents (Diario de Valdeluz, November 3, 2006). As an extension, a Facebook group was created for the town, for which the announcement on the blog read: “For all who live or work in Valdeluz, to show the world that this city is not populated by ghosts, but by real human beings who need basic services such as transport, education and healthcare” (Diario de Valdeluz, October 7, 2009). As McMillan and Chavis (1986) note,

1. Members are more attracted to a community in which they feel that they are influential.

2. There is a significant positive relationship between cohesiveness and a community’s influence on its members to conform. Thus, both conformity and community influence on members indicate the strength of the bond.

3. The pressure for conformity and uniformity comes from the needs of the individual and the community for consensual validation. Thus, conformity serves as a force for closeness as well as an indicator of cohesiveness.

4. Influence of a member on the community and influence of the community on a member operate concurrently, and one might expect to see the force of both operating simultaneously in a tightly knit community (p. 12).

These online forums—the blog in particular—served as outlets for residents to discuss ongoing issues in the community, and to feel as if their opinions were valued. Member comments, in turn,
validated the group’s opinions and reinforced cohesiveness between the community and the individual.

As previously described, the blog’s perspective shifted when its author and their associated colleagues won the 2011 municipal election and became members of Yebes City Council. Reportedly, the president and various members of the Valdeluz Neighbourhood Association (now disbanded), were so disappointed with local council that they created a political party called 40 Compromisos [40 Commitments], ran for municipal office and won. This victory was unprecedented in Guadalajara, given the popularity and influence of the national PP and PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) (Rodríguez, 2007). When 40 Compromisos gained power, the tone of the online forum changed from disparaging to encouraging, a shift that did not go entirely unnoticed by the community. As one commenter wrote: “What’s happening that nobody questions the fact that [the President] is using the Valdeluz Neighbourhood Association as a political vehicle? ... It’s a well known secret” (Diario de Valdeluz, June 2, 2009). Since the election, the blog began focusing on ongoing public works, successful community events and the City Council’s efforts to obtain services that mattered to Valdeluz residents. However, despite widespread knowledge that the blog was biased towards the merits of the new government, resident comments were generally supportive, reflecting a continuation of mutual validation (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Nowhere was the power of mutual influence more evident than in the annual Children’s Council Meeting, conducted by the Yebes City Council. During this plenary, chaired by the mayor, hundreds of schoolchildren between the ages of 10 and 16 met with City Council to discuss and vote on relevant matters (Diario de Valdeluz, January 25, 2012). The children visited various municipal departments, presented their concerns in a public setting, and acted as
councillors themselves. As McMillan and Chavis (1986) note, “Participation in voluntary associations or in government programs yields a sharing of power that leads to greater ‘ownership’ of the community by the participants, greater satisfaction, and greater cohesion” (p. 12).

Furthermore, as the children’s sense of influence increased, Valdeluz as an environment became more responsive to their needs and ideas (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). For example, it was during one of these plenary sessions that a child suggested changing the signs at the northeast roundabout entrance from ‘Ciudad Valdeluz’ to ‘Cuida Valdeluz’. The significance of modifying word ‘ciudad’ [‘city’] to ‘cuida’ [‘care’] was two-fold. As one resident explained, “It’s a made-up word, really. Because it Spanish we have the word ‘ciudadanos’, which means ‘citizens’. And changing that to ‘cuida’ is a play on it, implying ‘cuidadanos’ or, ‘citizens who take care of their town’. And that was the idea of a child!”

Secondly, as the Mayor of Yebes explained to the local media, “We don’t want to it to be called ‘Ciudad Valdeluz’, because if there is a city, then there is a ghost city. If there is no city, then there is no ghost” (Ortí, 2013). As this reasoning goes, if there is no expectation for Valdeluz to be more than it currently is, then the focus shifts towards its successes, rather than its failures. Ultimately, the signs were changed and painted according to the two winning designs of a competition held for children in the town (Figure 91). From an early age, then, residents in Valdeluz were imbued with a sense of mattering and, in turn, developed a sense of concern for the community’s wellbeing.
INTEGRATION AND FULFILLMENT OF NEEDS

At the time of this study, Valdeluz had developed an active social life for residents of all ages, filled with organized bicycling excursions, book clubs, outdoor art exhibits in the Parque de la Paz, an astronomy club and a variety of recreational sports teams. In addition, there were a number of formalized spaces for social interaction, including the small public library, the new sports complex and a few coffee bars. The latter are an important aspect of Spanish social culture. That was perhaps the reason why, even in the early stages of recovery from the economic crash, the residents of Valdeluz could support three cafés, one of which turned into a restaurant and nightclub in the evening. These establishments were more than just eateries. As one resident said of a popular café in the community, "It's part of the spirit of Valdeluz. It's a meeting point; it's where this place comes alive”. The owner seconded this idea, saying "I know
80 per cent of my customers! I used to know them just to see them in the street, but now I know them personally, and when they come in they don't just want coffee and food, but they want to have a conversation… And it's always about politics! Politics are everywhere here and it's all anyone wants to talk about”. These gathering places provided opportunities for residents to socialize, as well as to discuss issues that mattered to them, further reinforcing the community bond.

While it was true that not all needs of the community or its individuals were met with regards to transportation, education and healthcare, what may have been more important was the existence of shared values, as described by McMillan and Chavis (1986). The authors argued that,

When people who share values come together, they find that they have similar needs, priorities, and goals, thus fostering the belief that in joining together they might be better able to satisfy these needs and obtain the reinforcement they seek. Shared values, then, provide the integrative force for cohesive communities… Groups with a sense of community work to find a way to fit people together so that people meet the needs of others while meeting their own needs (p. 13).

Before the 2011 municipal election, Valdeluz residents had begun to display anger towards Yebes City Council, accusing their representatives of existing only to collect taxes, without investing anything back into the community (Diario de Valdeluz, January 28, 2010). This widespread displeasure was confirmed when support for the 40 Commitments was great enough to help the small party overcome its national opponents. The new mayor, however, also happened to live in Valdeluz and had acted as President of their Neighbourhood Association for some time, regularly posting on the ‘Diario de Valdeluz’ blog. Therefore, when one of the
mayor’s first acts was to send a letter to Renfe Operadora and the Region, demanding implementation of the AVE shuttles, the response was overwhelmingly supportive. “Bravo!” one resident commented, “Hopefully we achieve progress in this regard. Valdeluz has been lacking someone who really cares for this city’s needs” (Diario de Valdeluz, June 22, 2011). Another shared their own story: “…almost four years traveling to Madrid, my wife in her car and me in mine... Guadalajara is here too! I support you!” (Diario de Valdeluz, June 22, 2011). These residents expressed the sentiment that the new mayor, as a Valdeluz resident, shared their needs and values and therefore, would be more motivated to achieve common goals.

**SHARED EMOTIONAL CONNECTION: OVERCOMING THE ‘GHOST TOWN’ TYPECAST**

As the first city in Spain to be “made from scratch” (Sanz, 2011) and the main creation of one of the largest Spanish real estate companies, Ciudad Ciudad Valdeluz’s failure quickly became known worldwide. The small development was featured in the Financial Times (Mulligan, 2010), Le Monde (Bozonnet, 2008), as well as on Swiss and German television (Böhnisch, 2010). As the mayor told one reporter, “Finnish and Japanese journalists have come, German private and public television ... the BBC has come, tomorrow is a Canadian, and French TV is making a documentary” (Ortin, 2013). Many Valdeluz residents were accustomed to seeing photographers and film crews wandering the development, or being asked probing questions about how they came to live there. The most salient example of this sensationalism was a visit by the makers of the television show Top Gear (Diario de Valdeluz, June 13, 2013). According to one resident, the British Broadcasting Corporation paid the town £5,000 to film a segment in the development, which involved closing off many streets for the purposes of racing expensive cars. Residents were at once excited and dismayed. As an interviewee explained, “We liked it because everyone loves that show and it was great to see ourselves on television, but then
it wasn’t us. It was empty streets and abandoned buildings and they made it look like no one lives here! I guess it would have been worth it if they crashed a car and we got the insurance money, but of course that didn’t happen”.

The experience of dealing with this outsider interest was revealed in one resident’s comment: “They come here expecting that if they’re nice to us and they pretend they care, then we’ll tell them our sad story, about how we bought into this place and we feel cheated. Well, sure, some of us feel cheated, but we do not want to be made to look like fools, and that’s what they do”. This sentiment was not only felt by early purchasers, but also by those who were still arriving in the community, fully cognizant of Valdeluz’s ghost town reputation. As McMillan and Chavis’ observe, “It is not necessary that group members have participated in the history in order to share it, but they must identify with it” (1986, p. 13). As new residents connected with established community members and invested time and money in the creation of a life in Valdeluz, the amount of emotional involvement increased and the sense of community was strengthened.

When I arrived in Valdeluz in November 2013, I was aware of the development’s media popularity and prepared for residents to potentially be uncommunicative. However, I discovered the opposite. Interviewees were open and responsive, eager to discuss ongoing events and projects in the community. As one resident confirmed, “People here have bonded over anger with the media, both in Spain and internationally. From that, we’ve developed a strong commitment to the future of Valdeluz. We have realized that we can construct our own identity”. This community bond can be likened to the nineteenth-century concept of *volkgeist*, or folk spirit (Bernard, 1973 in McMillan & Chavis 1986), creating a kind of spiritual connection stemming from shared experience and reinforcement of shared values. In 2012, Yebes City Council started
a campaign called “The Spirit of Valdeluz”, focused on generating positive media by highlighting those elements of the community for which they would like to be recognized. The media’s images of empty streets and skeletal buildings were countered with promotions for the brightly-coloured sports complex, the Observatory of Yebes—“one of the most important centers of astronomy study…of Europe” (Ortín, 2013)—and a series of local art and music festivals. Likewise, the name of the main street in Valdeluz was changed from Mar Moliner, originally named after the President of Reyal Urbis’ wife, to María Moliner, a famous philologist and author of the widely used Spanish Usage Dictionary (Ortín, 2013). Thus, from community bonding arose a desire to reappropriate and alter images portrayed by the media.

At the time of this study, these revisionist efforts were beginning to make an impression on local media. On November 25, 2013, the Spanish newspaper Cinco Dias revisited Valdeluz five years after they published their first report on the development. In fact, it was that first article that gave Valdeluz its “ghost town” label and sparked worldwide interest in the community. As the mayor of Valdeluz told the author, “Because of you I have not stopped talking to reporters every day” (Ortín, 2013). The new article, entitled ‘Valdeluz, de ciudad fantasma a ciudad esperanza’ ['Valdeluz, from ghost city to city of hope'] overlooks the ‘For Sale’ signs and abandoned streets described by the first article (Ortín, 2008) to highlight the development’s gardens and artificial lakes, “just as perfect as the golf course” (Ortín, 2013). It proceeds to enumerate the changes that have taken place in the community and the persevering attitude of its citizens and local leadership. Furthermore, the author speculates whether, from the sale of land involved in developing Valdeluz, the City of Yebes “is, in proportion to its population size…the richest in Spain” (Ortín, 2013). This article’s glorification of Valdeluz’s unlikely success is a clichéd underdog story that may attract even further attention from the media. Today, however,
residents welcome the chance to promote their community and surmount the title of “ghost town”.

**SUMMARY**

While early residents to the community derived membership from personal investment, newer residents could partake in this group through understanding and empathizing with the development’s history, thus creating a shared emotional connection. This connection was further strengthened in reaction to media scrutiny. In a display of community support, the leader of the local Neighbourhood Association became mayor of the municipality, and was able to bring Valdeluz resident concerns to the council’s attention. Furthermore, the influence of this new local government brought about a multitude of changes that have begun to attract positive attention from the local media.
Future Growth Potential

*We want to build something new, with positive feelings, and we are trying to do it in the worst time possible.*

- Current Valdeluz resident

Since the burst of the property bubble in 2008, the Spanish economy has recovered slowly, officially surfacing from the recession and showing slight growth in the last two quarters of 2013 (Frayer, 2014). In late January of 2014, Spain exited the international bailout program issued by the Eurozone in June 2012. The country will no longer have access to the offered $137 billion credit line, and will have to pay back the $56.6 billion it borrowed, with interest, over the next 15 years (Frayer, 2014). Moreover, in February of 2012 the ruling People’s Party passed a decree “requiring banks to speed up recognition of losses on real estate by boosting provisions set aside for land to 80 percent from 31 percent and for unfinished developments to 65 percent from 27 percent” (Smyth & Mar, 2013). Despite these modest accomplishments, analysts say that banks have become too reliant on bailout loans and are not reducing their debt as quickly as necessary. In addition, the rate of unemployment remained above 26 per cent as of February 2014, and economists fear that jobs will not return for some time (Frayer, 2014).

In Valdeluz, no residential construction has taken place since work stopped in 2008. At the time of this study, supply had finally adjusted to demand, as Rafael Santamaría previously claimed, and national bank apartment owners were focused on filling empty units. Many of the beige brick buildings in the residential core were plastered with large advertisements offering reduced financing rates and rental options. Still others were spray painted with the words ‘*Se alquila*’ [‘For rent’] and ‘*Se vende*’ [‘For sale’], listing telephone numbers and steeply reduced
prices, although it was impossible to determine the age of the signs, or whether they were posted by desperate homeowners or facetious passersby (Figure 92).

Recent building efforts have been focused on community improvement, such as the construction of the Valdeluz Centro Deportivo [Valdeluz Sports Centre] (Figure 93). Contrasting the image of a sea of cranes described by earlier residents, only one crane rises above the construction site at the anticipated San Jeronimo Church. Funding for the church was raised jointly by the municipality and community groups, who organized events like the Concurso de Pintxos, during which residents competed by entering Spanish appetizers (pintxos) into a contest and an admission price of 20 euros was charged (Diario de Valdeluz, 20 February, 2011). In November 2013, construction of the church and its surrounding landscape was well underway (Figures 94). The focus of expanding Valdeluz has shifted from completing residential units to building amenities that satisfy the needs of current residents. As one interviewee explained, “The streets are ready, the paths are ready, and everything is there for when the people show up. But now they will come in fifty or so years, and we understand that”.

Figure 92: ‘For rent’ sign spray painted on side of apartment building (Author).
Figure 93: Outdoor soccer field under construction at Valdeluz Sports Complex.

Figure 94: San Jeronimo Church under construction.
Chapter Six

Discussion

Although it is impossible and unadvisable to develop universal generalizations from the results of this study, the analyses above revealed a set of common themes that merit discussion. These points consist of factors contributing to failure, the design of transportation and open spaces, the influence of local government, and community bonding strategies. Lastly, the relevance to landscape architects and urban planners will be discussed.

HASTE AND INFLEXIBILITY

Despite the historical, geographical and cultural variance between Townsend and Valdeluz, their stories of conception and implementation are remarkably similar. Each development was planned in response to anticipated growth on ‘greenfield sites’ that facilitated rapid planning. However, upon further examination, their materialization was brought about by political pressure and economic motivation. While the causes of decline for these developments were dissimilar, each was faced with some opposition from the public and warnings from advisory authorities. In the case of Townsend, industrial stagnation, reductions in population projections, public complaints and financial advisement against the costs of building a new city were ignored by private developers and provincial officials, who had invested large amounts of money in the analysis and planning phases of the development. In Valdeluz, construction was pushed forward by both private and public stakeholders who stood to benefit economically.

In the rush to build entire communities, construction became unbalanced, as in the case of Valdeluz’s excess infrastructure and residential units. Conversely, Townsend failed to deliver sufficient infrastructure in the form of major connections and amenities. This discrepancy
suggests that the issue may not be with sequence of construction, but with rigid adherence to a predetermined plan. As Grant (2006) argued, such inflexibility demonstrates the consideration of expert judgment over public input, and the ultimate goal of securing profit over controlling urban sprawl and creating livable communities. In not responding to changing economic and social conditions, developers of Townsend and Valdeluz valued perceived and conceived ideals over Lefebvre’s third, and arguably most important factor, lived experience (1991). It is only through the unusual circumstances of failure that Valdeluz has been allowed to continue to develop organically, at a much slower pace, according to its current residents’ needs.

ACCESS CHALLENGES

Both Townsend and Valdeluz were built as “transit-ready” developments (Grant, 2006), reliant on attaining population minimums before public transportation could be implemented. This created a negative feedback loop in which population and amenities were interdependent and neither would arrive without the other. As such, residents in both communities relied heavily on personal vehicles. In the first case study, the majority of interviewees expressed the opinion that this was an acceptable exchange for the quiet rural community Townsend had become. Perhaps owing to Valdeluz’s more recent deceleration and the importance of the high-speed train to its existence, residents were more hopeful that public transportation would eventually improve. Ultimately, this will depend on population figures, as originally intended.

OPEN SPACE RELEVANCE AND REPRESENTATION

Maintenance of designed parkland and streetscapes was important to residents in both communities. Conversations revealed that this was not only an aesthetic preference but a representation of identity and in part, success. In Townsend, maintenance issues in the past
caused residents to feel neglected by the government, while carefully managed parkland was often cited as interviewees’ favourite aspect of the community. In some cases, residents assumed responsibility for maintaining public land in order to communicate stewardship, demonstrating Nassauer’s ‘cues to care’ (1995). As Nassauer writes, “Having evidence of care in the landscape suggests that people are involved with a place, and that those people are good neighbors who have personal pride, and adequate time or money to take care of things” (Nassauer, 2011, p. 322). Indeed, residents linked conceptions of maintained open spaces with raising children, family gatherings, good neighbourliness, tranquility and rural charm. Townsend’s landscape, as it was designed in the 1970s plan, has become part of its physical, mental and social identity.

In the case of Valdeluz, which was much more exposed to critical media attention, maintained open space and streetscapes were an important part of projecting prosperity. After a period of neglect by the municipal government and substantial complaint from residents, it became a priority to maintain public gardens and trees along main streets. In addition, residents became involved in urban gardening and tree planting projects, developing a connection with the development’s landscape. However, the majority of the site was closed off to vehicles and left to grow naturally until population growth demands further development. This area was discounted from residents’ conception of Valdeluz, although the municipality intended to follow the original design if the community were to expand.

**INFLUENCE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Townsend’s long-term stagnation may be partially owing to the absence of local government. Although the community was originally meant to accommodate municipal and regional offices, these authorities left in the early 1990s and residents expressed the sentiment that they were often neglected by their representatives. By contrast, the influence of local
government in Valdeluz was substantial. Owing to lowered housing prices, residents continued to arrive long after construction stopped, although amenities were no longer guaranteed. A Neighbourhood Association was formed to promote the needs of residents to local council. This group gained support through community newsletters and online forums, and was eventually elected to municipal office. Today, Valdeluz is the largest community in the municipality and its ongoing improvements have brought economic prosperity to the area.

COMMUNITY BONDING

The examination of Townsend and Valdeluz through the lens of McMillan and Chavis’ criteria for developing a sense of community (1986) revealed the ways in which residents built social ties despite limited resources and formal gathering spaces. In Townsend, feelings of membership and influence were obtained from participation in community organizations and events. There was a lack of opportunities for social fulfillment available to youth, which resulted in issues with vandalism. Although vandalism was no longer a problem at the time of this study, programming for local youth remained low, likely owing to current demographics. The seniors’ complex and its anticipated expansion made Townsend an attractive place for those nearing retirement. Despite the scarcity of activities available to youth, interviewees who were raised in Townsend expressed a fondness for the community, displaying the shared emotional connection of place described by McMillan and Chavis (1986). In fact, owing to this shared connection and the lowered price of housing, many former youth returned to begin families of their own.

In Valdeluz, membership and a shared emotional connection was established through personal and financial investment, as well as in reaction to media interrogation and criticism. Community newsletters, online groups and the Neighbourhood Association often declared a goal of disproving ‘ghost town’ allegations, and the projects they completed were used as evidence
towards this end. Residents’ sense of mattering and exerting influence was evident in the political reshuffling described above. Moreover, this achievement contributed to the feeling that individuals’ needs would be met through membership in various community groups. Overall, there was the sense that residents had to assume responsibility for continued development and the creation of a community identity. Owing to these efforts, along with changing economic conditions, Valdeluz’s identity was very different from the upscale bedroom community developers envisioned.
Chapter Seven

Conclusion

RELEVANCE TO LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

From a design standpoint, the deep maps produced from this study can be seen as in-depth post-occupancy evaluations and behaviour observations of two unsuccessful master-planned communities. The symbolism that residents attributed to open space, and the landscape’s influence on external and internal value judgments (‘ghost town’ or thriving community) warrant consideration by designers. Residents’ attachment to original designs and advertised imagery generated feelings of pride when open spaces were maintained and neglect and anger when they were not. This puts a significant amount of pressure on landscape designers to create timeless designs. Rather, maturation of open spaces should be taken into account, in order to reduce maintenance costs and facilitate the transition to public and community ownership.

In regards to the development of master-planned communities, plans must become adaptable, multidirectional and long-term. Adherence to a final design meant planners and stakeholders for Townsend and Valdeluz were unable to respond to changing economic and social conditions, leaving them no option but to freeze all construction when faced with adversity. A combination of the natural and artificial (Alexander, 1965) is needed, in that communities must be allowed to expand and flourish according to social interactions, supported by a set of alternative guidelines designed to control sprawl and enhance community identity. In addition, the idea of a community ‘from scratch’ must be challenged. The location of developments based on availability of land and political and economic gain rather than existing social patterns results in indistinct spaces or ‘non-places’ (Augé, 2008) that rely on future residents to fulfill marketing illusions. It could be argued that Townsend and Valdeluz, despite
their ‘ghost town’ reputations, have developed more distinct identities, in part as a result of their failure. The involvement of Townsend and Valdeluz residents in the construction of community suggests that public input is essential to successful planning, and should be prominent from the very beginning.

COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS

There is a word in Spanish that I learned during my travels: arropada. It comes from the verb arropar—to wrap up or to cover up—and stems from the word for clothing, ropa. I learned it from a gardener in Valdeluz, who used it in reference to how their community made them feel. Living in Valdeluz gave them a feeling of being enveloped in community; of being safe and protected; of being wrapped in a warm blanket of family and friends. Both Townsend and Valdeluz were initially inhabited by self-proclaimed ‘pioneers’ and ‘originals’ whose bonds were reinforced by personal investment and shared emotional connections. In the absence of developer and stakeholder support and in reaction to external scrutiny, residents looked to their neighbours for reassurance. It was from this social bonding that community-driven projects came about, sometimes resulting in physical improvements to the developments. Residents were able to connect with place in a meaningful way by planting trees, ensuring regular maintenance and putting forward their own visions of community identity, to the extent that some Townsend interviewees defined a social organization—the Townsend Community Church—as both the geographic and spiritual centre of the community. It was Lefebvre’s third process, lived experience, that brought about a connection to the physical and mental aspects of these incomplete planned developments. Despite the appearance of fragmented infrastructure and the stark juxtaposition of suburban development and rural surrounds, there was a warmth of community to be found in Townsend and Valdeluz. The future growth of these communities will
depend on a host of external factors, including economic conditions and government investment. However, the core of expansion will be the community itself, and the residents who created bonds between each other and their environment when stakeholder support was lacking.
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