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Title: **Social Infrastructure in Tall Buildings: A Tale of Two Towers**

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Subjects: Social Issues  
Urban Design

Keywords: Residential  
Social Interaction

Publication Date: 2001

Original Publication: CTBUH 2001 6th World Congress, Melbourne

Paper Type:

1. Book chapter/Part chapter
2. Journal paper
3. **Conference proceeding**
4. Unpublished conference paper
5. Magazine article
6. Unpublished

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## URBAN SYSTEMS

# Social Infrastructure in Tall Buildings: A Tale of Two Towers

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Two towering housing complexes, each famous in their respective cities, with different origins and very different fates, illustrate both the challenges and the possibilities of high rise housing, and the importance of social infrastructure in tall buildings. One is St. James Town, designed in downtown Toronto in the 1960s as swinging singles apartments for the newly affluent youth market. It is now a byword throughout Canada for overcrowding, as the highest density neighbourhood in the nation, and is also considered a sinkhole of crime and poverty – although, as I will discuss, this cliché obscures as much as it illuminates. The second example is Trellick Tower in central London, constructed as public housing in 1972, and still the tallest housing block in England. While it was once seen as the perfect example of the perils of modernism in the 1980s, when drug dealing and petty crime was rife in its corridors, it is now listed as architecturally significant, and a two bedroom flat there can be bought for a mere 170,000 pounds, or approximately \$400,000 Australian dollars.

## 1 WHAT IS SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE?

But before I discuss these two case studies, we should start off with discussing ‘social infrastructure’, since it is a term that many people use, but few people bother to define. ‘Infrastructure’ itself means “the basic framework of a system or organization”, while the prefix ‘infra’ itself, means “below or beneath”. So infrastructure is what is below or beneath a structure, in this case high rise buildings. Looking again to the dictionary, ‘social’ is defined as “of or pertaining to society and its organization” (Funk and Wagnalls, 1980; my 1971 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* contains no separate entry for infrastructure, a sign, perhaps, of it being a relatively new catchphrase). So “social infrastructure”

can be seen as the basic framework of services pertaining to the organization of society, underlying any human settlement.

What do these services include? Almost anything pertaining to people's socialization – the way they become an active and productive part of society; their social welfare – their emotional and physical well-being; and their social life – what happens apart from the basic survival functions of work, eating, and sleeping. So social infrastructure includes schools, child care centres, libraries, and other places that children learn how to use skills they will need as adults. It also incorporates adult education facilities, literacy centres, multicultural and multilingual centres, services for people with disabilities: places where adults continue the life long process of learning. Hospitals and health clinics, parks, playgrounds, sports and recreation centres – places that help keep people healthy – are vital components of social infrastructure. But so are community gardens, community kitchens, parent-child drop-in centres: places that promote physical and mental health in their broadest meanings. Social infrastructure includes the theatres, art galleries, music halls, and movie houses that bring people together for arts and entertainment. It can also include seniors' centres, home work clubs, computer and Internet cafes, houses of worship, workshops, laundromat . . . anywhere which brings people together. Even the common bench is a vital piece of social infrastructure (Marcus and Sarkissian, 1986).

Social infrastructure is often given the term 'soft' services, to be contrasted with the 'hard' services underlying a settlement, such as roads, water, sewers, electricity, and heating pipes. 'Hard' and 'soft' are suggestive terms, hinting at the 'hard-headed' reality of the importance of providing sewers, roads, and water, in contrast to the 'soft', 'wet', 'bleeding heart' or weak arguments in favour of providing adequate schools, recreation, and health care. In reality, social infrastructure is the poor cousin of physical infrastructure. While there are building codes which state clearly to developers how much sewage capacity or electrical outlets must be provided in a given building, there is no corresponding 'social code' which would state, for instance, how much common meeting space should be provided in an apartment building, or guaranteeing a certain amount of affordable grocery stores per hundred units of offices. While there are certified professionals, such as engineers, trained to create and inspect physical infrastructure, planners, architects, and other relevant professionals are rarely given a solid background in social infrastructure before being entrusted with providing it. Whereas, in advanced industrialized countries such as Australia and Canada, we do not now let people move into housing before there are sewers, roads and water in place, we often let people move into new housing years before the necessary schools, recreation centres, and health care facilities are built. There are entire districts of high rise office buildings where the thought that people might have to shop for groceries before, during, or immediately after their work day was not even considered (for instance, St. Kilda Road in Melbourne, Huxley, 1994). As a society, we know far less about social infrastructure than we

do about physical infrastructure. Certainly, from a legislative standpoint, we seem to care much less as a society about these ‘soft’ services.

Yet, time and time again, housing – and the settlements that contain them – succeed or fail because of the quality and quantity of social services. What is more, consumers in the advanced industrialized countries are placing an ever greater emphasis on ‘quality of life’ concerns, such as recreation, tourism, education, and health care, leading to increased jobs in that sector. Businesses in key growth sectors of the economy are basing decisions on where to locate business on ‘quality of life’ issues largely determined by social infrastructure (UNDP, 1996). My hometown, Toronto, is often named one of the best cities in the world to live and work in by corporate analysts and business magazines (Fortune Magazine, 1996; Corporate Resources Group, 1995). This is because the city is considered safe, stable, clean, and green, not because of the traffic (which is terrible) or taxes (which are high compared to cities in England and the United States). What this means is that there are tremendous economic opportunities related to promoting social infrastructure, and terrible fiscal, as well as human, costs related to dismissing or downplaying it.

Before I return to the question of how we – as architects, planners, engineers, social and physical scientists – might work together to promote high quality social infrastructure in tall buildings, I would like to turn to two housing-related case studies to illuminate some dos and don’ts.

## **2 TWO TOWERS**

### **2.1 St. James Town, Toronto Canada**

St. James Town was built between 1959 and 1976 in central Toronto as a “city within a city” to house affluent young singles. It was a classic urban renewal project, involving the erasure of a 19th century working class neighbourhood that was felt to have become degraded in order to build housing for “the way we live now” (Whitzman, 1991; Collins and Silva, 1995; Doucet and Weaver, 1991). The 8.2 acre site eventually held almost 7,000 units in eighteen buildings, each between 16 and 33 stories. Even as singles housing, this would result in a high-density neighbourhood. With its present ‘legal’ population of 12,000 residents, as well as countless apartments whose occupancy exceeds the building code, the density is at least 400 persons per acre.

The story of the development of St. James Town typifies a cosy relationship between private developers and local government that is, unfortunately, quite common in not only Toronto but many cities. It also illustrates assumptions about families, housing types, and social life, that are also typical, in this case of society fifty years ago. In the 1950s, Toronto’s city government became concerned about housing the demographic bulge now known as the “baby boom”. It was able to

forecast a potentially large market of “upwardly mobile singles and professional couples” that would be seeking housing in the next 10 to 20 years. The prediction was that young people who had grown up in suburbs would want to live downtown during their single years, then presumably move back to the suburbs to marry, buy a house, and bear 2.4 children. In a neighbourhood of aging 19th century houses, many converted to rooming houses, the city government and a large local developer saw a prime opportunity for ‘urban renewal’. City government assisted the developers by taking over the management of 250 ‘doomed houses’ and relocating the tenants to new public housing in the neighbourhood. At one part of the site, the approval of three 24 storey buildings was obtained for \$22,500 and the promise of a parkette in the vicinity, which was then quietly built over. The federal government funded the construction of the first two buildings in St. James Town, and provided low-interest mortgages for the next nine buildings, constructed between 1964 and 1969, in return for a rather vague promise of “recreational facilities”. Finally, the provincial housing authority contracted the developers to construct four further buildings in 1969-70, for use as public housing.

It should be noted that a considerable amount of ‘social infrastructure’ was planned into St. James Town. It was developed as a classic modernist “city within a city”. There was retail space including space for ground floor grocery shopping, banking, and medical facilities. Comprehensive recreation facilities included indoor swimming pools, saunas, TV and record rooms, and raised jogging tracks. There was an extensive network of underground garages, and enough open space for several football fields. The school was literally the only structure in the nine square blocks of St. James Town that was not torn down. Surely it had everything a swinging single or couple could want, including proximity to downtown jobs and nightlife.

But by the time the complex was finished, tastes had changed among this demographic bulge. ‘Swinging singles’ found the lack of convenient shopping and street life in St. James Town a distinct ‘turn off’. The surrounding working class neighbourhoods, in no better or worse shape than the houses in St. James Town condemned as unliveable, were being bought up by the same young upwardly mobile professionals in a process then known as ‘white painting’ and now called ‘gentrification’. The apartments, especially those constructed as public housing, became known as accommodation of last resort for working class and immigrant families, including those who had been driven out by the construction of St. James Town and the gentrification of the surrounding neighbourhoods.

By the late 1980s, the physical infrastructure in St. James Town had become completely degraded. The elevators were broken down more often than not, the trash collection system was dysfunctional, the front doors were unguarded, locks were left broken for weeks, and the underground garages were

strewn with abandoned cars. The social infrastructure was in no better shape. The swimming pools and community rooms had been closed for years. There was no real space for children to play. The remaining shops were overpriced, and the banks had moved away. Not surprisingly, tenants were concerned about crime, drugs, and prostitution, although the top complaint was of poor management and maintenance (Rahder, 1988). Tenant activists complained of systemic harassment, including the windshields of tenant leaders' cars being bashed in, and sexual favours being asked in return for apartment repairs.

Now this is an extreme example, but it does point to the problems that the private sector has in providing social infrastructure and public goods to low-income tenants. The initial provision of social infrastructure was good. But after the area became predominantly low-income, the private sector – the developers themselves, the banks and the shops, all cleared out. With the loss of commercial enterprise, there were few local employment opportunities. A classic vicious circle was created: the kind of middle-class residents who would attract local business would never be attracted to a place without such goods and services.

There were also clear problems with the planning and design of the project. The most obvious is the assumption that only one age group – young adults – and one income group – the upwardly mobile middle class – would live in the housing. As long as the residents were middle class, they could pay for the upkeep of the privately owned recreational facilities, and support the large commercial units within the shopping centre. As long as they were childless adults, it didn't matter that the developer did not improve the local school, build a promised parkette, or assign the swathes of open green space to specific purposes. Once poor people of varying ages moved into St. James Town, however, the stage was set for erosion of recreational and shopping facilities, and tensions over use of open space between teens with nothing to do but hang around and seniors who were intimidated by the youths' presence.

The quite common practice of privatizing the public streets in St. James Town, and consolidating them into a traffic-free 'monster block' also had negative repercussions for the development. There was an attempt in the late 1980s to buy back street right-of-ways from the developers, in order to improve lighting and garbage collection, combat perceived isolation of the neighbourhood through re-establishing through streets, and add some social mix through the construction of street-side townhouses on vacant land. But this would have cost several million dollars per block, and was quickly abandoned in favour of more pressing concerns. All levels of government had given enormous financial concessions to the developers of St. James Town in order to get it built. But once problems appeared, governments had virtually no say over the way the buildings were managed. The owners said that if the city enforced repairs, it would pass on the bill to the tenants, which would eliminate what had become a large source of low-income housing. The owners also refused to sell

the privately-owned ‘common’ space to the local government for much-needed social and recreational uses. The public and non-profit sectors were forced to focus on what little publicly owned land was left. A new recreation centre has been constructed as part of the redevelopment of Rose Avenue School. There has been extensive renovation of the four public housing buildings in St. James Town, including new playgrounds. But, other than the occasional “inspection blitz” in the privately owned buildings, there have been few successful attempts to address the management and social issues which were of most concern to tenants.

Despite high density and problematic infrastructure, there is much about St. James Town that works. First and foremost, St. James Town provides 7,000 units of low cost downtown housing to many of the people who need it most. New immigrants, seniors, people with disabilities, and families with children are all close to schools, work, and downtown community services. There are a number of long time residents, who have given some stability to the building and its tenants’ association. The high proportion of Tamil and Filipino newcomers means that services in these languages – English as a Second Language course, cultural activities – are provided in the newly constructed meeting rooms in the school, or in nearby community centres. Stores providing specialized groceries have sprung up on nearby Parliament Street, where smaller and less expensive commercial units are available. Drug dealing and other crimes have declined in the publicly owned buildings, where the underground garages, entrances, and playgrounds have been redesigned, and community involvement in crime prevention has been promoted by the local and national governments.

At the height of St. James Town’s problems in the late 1980s, there were those who said that the only solution was to tear down St. James Town and start again. I would now like to turn to another case study, this time in London, England. There, an apartment building underwent the same diagnosis at approximately the same time. But Trellick Towers has undergone an even more remarkable transformation in the past 20 years.

## **2.2 Trellick Tower, London England**

Trellick Tower was designed by a renowned architect and won numerous design awards, which is often a recipe for disaster. In the words of Short (1989), “It is a common belief that buildings which win architectural awards begin to fall apart after two years and send their occupants crazy after four” (see Carroll, 1999 and Gibson, 1996).

After the second world war in England, chronic underhousing of the working poor assumed crisis proportions. According to Alan Gibson’s short

history of Trellick Tower, “around four million homes were destroyed during the war – some 35 percent of the housing stock”. The 1951 Census found 5 million people across the country still dependent on public washrooms for baths.

In response, a massive public housing program was embarked upon by the national government, in conjunction with local councils. Between 1952 and 1976, an average of 145,680 council homes were built each year. Post-war public housing had private baths and central heating, virtually unheard of in working class homes. While most housing estates were large, London County Council also commissioned competitions and hired leading architects.

One such architect, Erno Goldfinger, was hired in 1966 to create a 31 story slab block in North Kensington, at the edge of the then, working class Notting Hill neighbourhood. The building was completed by 1972, and almost immediately fell victim to funding cuts. Goldfinger had requested a concierge for the front door, but the Greater London Council considered concierges too expensive and overly “paternalistic”.

By the 1980s, Trellick Tower was known to newspapers as ‘The Tower of Terror’. There were only 3 elevators for the 175 unit building, at least one of which always seemed out of order. One elderly resident collapsed and died after broken elevators forced him to climb six flights of stairs. Rapes, muggings, and burglaries were commonly reported. Residents described the stench of urine, beer and stale sweat in the lobby, broken bottles and syringes in the hallways, graffiti, used condoms and vagrants in the elevators. According to an article in *The Guardian* newspaper on the transformation of the building, “one Christmas, vandals opened the fire hydrant and unleashed thousands of gallons of water into the lifts, blowing fuses and leaving the block without electricity, water, or toilet facilities”.

The Greater London Council belatedly attempted to fix the front door problem by buying an expensive entryphone system, which was repeatedly vandalized. But the real answers to the problems in Trellick were found by a strong and active residents’ association, which was formed in 1984. The residents’ association formed a management group, developed surveys and reports on tenants’ concerns, and kept after their local council until changes started to happen. One of the first breakthroughs was when the council changed its policy in 1986, and only assigned flats to people who wanted to live in the tower. Surprisingly, many people did want to live at Trellick, and many people also wanted to buy their units when that option became available.

Improvements continued, including the long-awaited concierge, who along with 24-hour security and closed-circuit television, improved the security of the building. New elevators, an improved hot water system, and a playground added to the amenity and comfort of the units.

Now there is a mix of long time residents and newcomers. There are examples of people who brought up their children in Trellick Tower and

eventually bought their flat. There are also young families buying. One resident gushed in a recent article: “On this floor there’s a girl from the BBC, a woman in a bank, a social worker, pensioners, a market stall holder. They’re all great. They don’t mind when the kids race up and down on their bikes or whatever. There’s no way we’d have as much space anywhere else.” Residents also rave about the views, and have developed a strong social network. For instance, in 1997, a light show, visible for miles, was orchestrated by residents, who operated special coloured lights on their balconies in a sequence co-ordinated with the passing of trains below. Indeed, the greatest social concern at Trellick may now be that the units are too expensive, along with most other property in London, for the working poor and lower middle class to buy into.

### **3 LESSONS FROM ST. JAMES TOWN AND TRELICK TOWER**

St. James Town and Trellick Tower are different in several important ways. St. James Town is a classic modernist ‘city within a city’, with 18 buildings and almost 7,000 units over a total of 9 former city blocks. It was planned for isolation from the surrounding community, which was then working class, although it has since become gentrified. Trellick, in contrast, is one individual 175 units building in a mixed and thriving neighbourhood. St. James Town was also constructed over 15 years, by a variety of undistinguished architects, under a number of cost constraints. Trellick Tower is one building within a heterogeneous community. Although separated from part of the community by an elevated expressway, it partakes of the same social infrastructure: the famous Portobello Road market, the schools, the excellent parent-child drop-in centres and recreation activities provided by the local council. It was, by and large, the vision of one architect, and although cost constraints were imposed by the local authority, the vision – for better or worse – remained intact.

Yet St. James Town and Trellick have a number of similarities, as well. Both were designed as ground-breaking modernist developments in the 1960s. Both have been faced with challenges related to crime, social isolation, and maintenance. There have been serious suggestions that both St. James Town and Trellick be torn down, that they were simply too expensive to maintain, that they were design and social experiments that had gone horribly wrong. Both St. James Town and Trellick have almost mythic status in their respective cities and countries: they act as symbols of the perils and the pleasures of high rise living. Finally, the social infrastructure has been a key to livability in both places.

St. James Town is considered symbolic of “the nature of problems that can be encountered in many other high rise buildings in the city and elsewhere” in Canada, according to Toronto’s Planning and Development Department.

Throughout not only Canada, but many developed nations, there is a legacy of high rise housing from the second half of the last century. Much of it is poorly designed and built, and residents face problems ranging from physical deterioration to criminal activity. Although much attention has focused on publicly owned housing, the public is also left “holding the bag” for private housing which does not work. Problems are particularly acute when high-rise housing is lived in by low-income tenants, where maintenance may easily lead to higher rents pricing out occupants. In St. James Town, this was a concern even before the abolition of rent controls under the present neo-conservative provincial government.

St. James Town is also used in Toronto and in Canada as an example of why high rise housing does not work, period. Both the general public and certain sectors of the “chattering classes” have damned modernism in general, and high rise housing in particular, over the past 50 years. This almost atavistic dislike of modernism peaked in the 1980s, when Alice Coleman, the guru of British crime prevention through environmental design, contended that high rise housing in and of itself, led to “crime, fear, anxiety, marital breakdown, and physical and mental disorder that would largely be avoidable in more socially stabilizing environments”, whereas most people could “cope perfectly well with life in more traditional houses” (Coleman, 1985).

Trellick Tower has also become a symbol of both subtle and paradigmatic shifts which have been occurring over the past decade in England, and in other English-speaking advanced industrialized nations. The subtle shifts are towards a partial acceptance of architectural modernism, including high-rise housing towers, and what I believe to be a related acceptance of the principles behind public housing.

In the 1980s, modernism stunk of the social and political experimentation of the sixties, and it was a truism that it did not work. Modernist buildings, and high rises in particular, were ugly, stupid and made people go bad. Prince Charles said so, and he must be right. Now the eighties are history, and modernism, to a certain extent, is back. In 1997, for example, English Heritage listed Trellick Tower as “worthy of preservation for posterity”, along with a number of other modernist buildings, including Coventry Cathedral and several public housing estates.

Trellick Tower is also used as an example of the best principles and practices of public housing. In the 1980s, national governments in Great Britain, Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand began to step away from their previous commitments to provide housing for low-income people. One reason given was the lack of success of public housing: its tendency to ‘ghettoize’ residents, the brutality of much of its design, its often dehumanizing bureaucracy. And indeed, public housing has often concentrated on poor people within large areas with few jobs, poorly funded schools, banks unsympathetic to community

economic development, and in general, a pretty shabby state of social infrastructure. On the other hand, private housing has also received large subsidies from various levels of government, and has often done just as lousy a job of housing poor people decently, with St. James Town being a perfect example of this sad state of affairs.

Trellick is an especially good spokesperson for both modernist design and public housing. Trellick Tower was well designed and well built from good materials. The local council was responsive to tenants' concerns, although the cynical might well note that the council's improvements coincided with the first offering of the units for sale. Many high rise housing blocks, both privately and publicly owned, were the result of overly cosy relationships between unethical developers, corrupt local councils, and incompetent architects and contractors. Many public housing blocks have been torn down, especially in England and the United States, because they were unsafe or so hated by their residents there seemed no hope of improvement. But as in the case of destroying privately-run tenements 50 years before, the alternative was not necessarily an improvement. It is important to recognize and learn from public housing buildings and communities that work.

Trellick Tower is also an example of a more profound paradigmatic shift. Whether you call it post-modernism or post-industrialism, it goes beyond design labels to encompass the tremendous social and economic changes of the past half century. Who would have predicted 50 years ago, the rate of divorce, single parenthood, and 'non-traditional' families that now characterize western societies? Who would have known that rapid increases in longevity would lead to a tremendous increase in empty nesters and single seniors? And especially, who would have thought, in the triumph of the car and in an age of rapidly changing technology, that these innovations would have led to centrality, to the desire to live downtown, becoming ever more fashionable?

Even and especially in the age of television, video players, the Internet, and working out of the home, living downtown has become ever more popular. Commercial and industrial buildings are being converted into central city 'lofts', which are inhabited not only by the spiritual descendants of the swinging singles, but also by older people and families. Gentrification has priced out ever larger segments of households from formerly declining downtown neighbourhoods. All of the generalizations that used to be made about cities in Canada, the United States, England, Australia and New Zealand are now under revision: that suburbs would continue to draw the middle class from the centre city, that people's ideal accommodation is the single family detached home, that in an increasing era of privatization, public education, health, and other elements of social infrastructure would matter less.

In the London neighbourhood of Notting Hill, Trellick Tower's success has occurred concurrently with the transformation of this traditionally working class

immigrant community to one of the most fashionable districts in London. Trellick's success in attracting buyers was not solely a function of location – there are still public housing estates that are not popular with the middle class in the neighbourhood. But Trellick Tower, unlike St. James Town, has been embraced by its surrounding community. It has become to be seen as an icon of 'cool'.

Despite its problems, it is quite possible that St. James Town be fashionable as well in 20 years. As mentioned before, the surrounding neighbourhoods have become quite gentrified. The current neoconservative government in Ontario has ended rent controls and plans on selling off public housing, two key Thatcherite policies which helped to create the sort of supercharged demand that exists in London. Well-to-do residents could buy the kind of social infrastructure – the parent-child drop-in centres, the after-school programs, the recreation centres – which presently barely survive in the face of social service cuts. And of course, shopping and banking choices would follow in the wake of a critical mass of middle-class residents.

And then where will the housing of last resort be? Quite possibly in those quiet allegedly stable suburbs, chock full of single family houses, where the baby boomers grew up. We are seeing this already in London, where virtually the entire central area is now priced out of the hands of the lower middle class, the nurses, teachers, and retail workers, never mind the working poor. The suburbs have generally housed the industrial workers and the immigrants in other parts of Europe and the world. Even countries as wedded to the single family home and the suburban dream as Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Australia will be faced by the challenge of this societal shift in the coming century. The challenges of providing adequate social infrastructure in high rise housing will be especially acute in suburbs, where a more dispersed pattern of settlement, poor public transportation, and a legacy of non-interventionist local governments have left these areas particularly underserved.

#### **4 CONCLUSION: SIX MAXIMS ON SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN TALL BUILDINGS**

The principles behind the provision of social infrastructure are more vague, and the importance of social infrastructure less understood, than is the case for physical infrastructure. Obviously and understandably, local governments in the industrializing countries of the nineteenth century, and local governments in industrializing countries of today, have shown more concern about typhoid epidemics and buildings falling down than about people not reaching their full human potential because of their housing. But beginning in the nineteenth century, local governments began to invest in education, health care, and

recreational facilities because these services were understood to be an essential ingredient for the good life in cities.

It is important to remember that modernism did consider social infrastructure: this network of relationships and services that together make people a community. The much maligned Le Corbusier did intend high rise housing to include shops, nurseries, community centre, doctors' surgeries, and even roof gardens. He intended a mix of people, including people who needed to work in the neighbourhood, seniors, and children. Like garden cities, towers in the sky have been poorly served by their alleged followers. And it was the anti-modernists, like Margaret Thatcher, who contended that community did not exist, and did their utmost to try to make it so.

The two case studies I have used suggest questions about ownership and accountability in relation to social infrastructure. The problem with the social infrastructure within St. James Town is that it was almost entirely privatized. The recreation facilities and shopping centre were, at least at first, spanking new and thus unaffordable to the tenants who began to move there. As for public facilities, there was no library, the school was old and neglected, and the local government did not press to retain land for a playground, or indeed any public land for future use. **It is always a mistake to assume that all necessary social infrastructure needs can be provided to people at market prices, without government intervention.**

“There is no simple relationship between density and satisfaction” (Marcus and Sarkissian, 1986), and high density is not necessarily a bad thing. Density can create a demand for social services, like literacy classes or parent-child drop-ins, that would not necessarily be available in a more dispersed community. Sometimes people need to be with people like themselves, which is why there needs to be enough flexible space to accommodate people's varying needs for social interaction. Teenagers often need space to be apart from adults, with minimal supervision. Parents and dog-owners both like to meet suitable play companions for their charges. Seniors have particular needs, as do people who share language and culture. But there also needs to be larger spaces, where a tenants' association or special meeting can take place. Folding walls in larger rooms can sometimes help. **But in order to have the flexibility to respond to these changing needs, developers need to provide meeting rooms and small store-fronts that can be used by community organizations.**

High rise housing can be alienating, especially for people who are used to other forms of living, or who have experienced a traumatic break from their home community, as is true for many newcomers to a city. If there is one thing we have learned from the failures of modernism, it is that apartment corridors do not function as “streets in the sky”. Children can't play in them, without disturbing people living inside units. People cannot informally ‘hang out’ in corridors, the way they often do on streets. **It is necessary to provide a range**

**of opportunities in outdoor and indoor space for informal social interaction.** That means providing benches, in playgrounds, near dog runs, in front of stores selling food, in front of schools so parents can talk as they drop off and pick up their children. It also means that pubs, low cost cafes, and clubhouses should not be zoned out of high rise housing communities. It means providing space for play centres, advice centres, homework clubs, community gardens, and workshops. It can mean a children's play area or book exchange in the laundry room. There is a remarkable amount of 'dead space' in and around many high rise buildings: much of that space can be used in ways that promote social interaction. I know of a cigar-smoking room in one high rise building that not only took care of a perceived loitering problem, but became a valuable informal social centre for immigrant men from Latin America.

The previous few maxims lead to an obvious point, which always needs to be stressed: **residents have both the right and the ability to suggest social infrastructure improvements. The people who live in communities are the experts.** They not only come up with wacky and wonderful ideas like the light show at Trellick, or the cigar-smoking room, but they can put in the energy to make things happen.

In Trellick, the tenants knew they wanted a concierge. They were right. Concierges are not only less expensive than closed circuit television and complicated entryphone systems, they are more effective in preventing crime. Concierges, and good staff in general, are an essential element of the social infrastructure in tall buildings. They pass on messages, assist residents and non-residents, and help maintain social control in lobbies. They know the people who live there (Bright et al., 1986). On-site superintendents can often perform some of the same functions, although they can also be intimidating to tenants in buildings with poor management practices. **In high rise buildings, there should be resident staff people providing supervision of meeting spaces and laundry rooms, which preferably should be sited near the building's management office.**

There is no fundamental reason why people should not live high up. High rise housing has problems inherent in its design. It is dependent on technology. When lifts, lighting, and garbage disposal don't work, or when communal spaces such as underground garages, entrances, and hallways are inadequately supervised, high rises can be dangerous and depressing places to live. It is sometimes difficult to maintain privacy and restrict noise. But we should also remember that there are problems with the design of low density, low rise housing: lack of sufficient density to support services and public transit, for instance. There are even problems with "the golden mean" of medium density, medium rise housing, so called 'traditional' and 'neo-traditional' housing: namely, not everyone wants to live there for all of their lives. **It is always a**

**good idea to plan for a range of housing types across all incomes and ages, in all parts of the city centre and in suburbs.** Homogenous neighbourhoods tend to work only for the very wealthy and stable.

Perhaps the greatest lesson from the changing fortunes of Trellick Tower and St. James Town is that no part of the city and no kind of architecture should be seen as finite, when the possibilities of social change are infinite. Architects, planners, building managers, and social service providers all play a part in providing social infrastructure. Together with the people who live and work in tall buildings, ideas and imaginations can be pooled to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

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