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## 'Whoville' report essential Vancouver reading

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The title of the document presented to council last week is a mouthful: The Social Indicators and Trends Report. But inside city hall, this once-every-five-year document is better known by the label applied by the recently retired head of housing, Cameron Gray. It is the "Whoville" report.

Whoville is Vancouver, and thumbing through the 138-page document is better than a Mac Parry column for figuring out who is who in Whoville and just what our city is all about.

It is based on the latest census figures, in this case 2006, and reports, among other things, on where the rich live, how much poorer the poor are and who is having kids. You can also figure out how many of us make it past high school and how our diverse culture has changed over time.

The document is an essential tool for everyone from social planners trying to figure out where to put new seniors centres or childcare facilities to private sector entrepreneurs who want a bit of help locating a grocery store or a shop selling kids clothes.

And that is where I'd like to start our trip through Whoville.

I was surprised to find the neighbourhood with the most kids per capita from zero to three years of age was the once contemplated single swingers' enclave of Yaletown. In fact, the planners who had the brilliant idea of encouraging people to live in what was a light industrial area seriously miscalculated who would move in.

There were no schools planned and apparently no daycares nor enough supermarkets. Andrew Pask, the city's social policy analyst who stitched the Whoville report together says, as a result, Yaletown had to be expensively "retrofitted" to serve the more family-oriented population.

Vancouver is, by the way, no longer the population centre of the regional universe. It hasn't been for some time, although it continues to pull more than its share of the weight for services like policing. In 1961, almost half the folks in the region lived here. Now, it's just over one quarter as the 'burbs explode.

Regionally, we have fewer seniors and more 20-somethings.

And most of the folks who live here live in apartments, not single family homes. Almost 60 per cent of the city's housing stock is made up of rental apartments and condominiums. This would help explain how tenants, at 52 per cent of the population, outnumber owners. And we have the highest ratio in the country after Montreal, where renters are at 66 per cent.

Where we do top the charts in Canada is in what are called visible minorities. Vancouver is the only city in the country where, as of 2006, those minorities at 51 per cent are a majority. Toronto comes second at 46.9 per cent.

And not all minorities are created equal either. Consider people of Chinese origin and look at the Whoville maps that detail who live in what part of town. Cantonese speakers are heavily concentrated on the city's East Side. Large numbers of people reporting Mandarin as their mother tongue can be found in Oakridge, Kerrisdale and Arbutus-Ridge as well as some of the more expensive areas of the downtown peninsula.

And where do the best educated folks live? That may be a no brainer. But now we have proof. The higher your degree the further west you live. PhDs prefer Point Grey.

That's Whoville for you.

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A clarification: Mike Bruce, the former Vision executive member who noisily quit the party in a huff over what he said was Gregor Robertson's failure to explain why he was saying nice things about Premier Gordon Campbell, only appeared to disappear from the Vision election campaign office days before the vote. To "separate the tribes" in a seething Liberal/NDP dispute inside the big Vision tent, Bruce agreed it would be more productive if he moved to a satellite office in South Vancouver and helped get out the vote for Raj Hundal and Kashmir Dhaliwal.

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