



## Historical Background

Hillside Place belongs to a large family of co-operatives who trace their history back to the mid-19th century. During the era of early industrialization, the ravaging effects of dog-eat-dog capitalist competition provoked thinkers (like Robert Owen and Karl Marx) to imagine more co-operative and humanistic ways of working and living together. Around the same time, a group of 28 weavers from England's Lancashire district succeeded in setting up a co-operative store. They also drew up the famous Rochdale Principles. These principles still provide an insight into the philosophical purposes of co-operatives of all kinds. Consumer and producer co-operatives were followed by credit unions and, eventually, a large variety of organizations based on co-operative ideas. Housing co-operatives are relative latecomers.

Co-operative organizations developed in Canada in the early 20th century: a credit union in Quebec in 1900 the prairie wheat pools in the 1920's, building co-ops in the Maritimes during the 1930's. The first modern continuing housing co-op, Willow Park in Winnipeg, Manitoba, was completed in 1965. As understanding and interest in housing co-operatives spread through key organizations (i.e. Labour, churches, student organization, and the co-operative movement) the time became ripe for a more formal organization designed to encourage non-profit co-operative housing.

In 1968, the Co-operative Union of Canada, the Canadian Labour Congress, and the Canadian Union of Students jointly formed the Co-operative Housing Foundation of Canada. C.H.F. became an important lobbying organization which convinced the Federal Government to experiment with programs for non-profit co-operative housing. By 1973 the experiment had worked (including the first Vancouver area co-op, De Cosmos Village – 1972), and the Government extended and expanded the program to provide more units. This program was improved by legislation passed in 1978 at the urging of C.H.F. and is the program used by Hillside Place.

Meanwhile, changes were taking place in the co-op housing sector. The complexity of developing co-ops led to the creation of non-profit "resource groups" like Columbia Housing Advisory Association (founded in 1976) which worked with people to form co-ops and obtain C.M.H.C. assistance. By the time Hillside Place was incorporated in August 1981, there were already approximately fifty housing co-ops in B.C. and nearly 400 in Canada.

Hillside Place can trace its roots back to decisions made by the Provincial Government in 1973. In the midst of one of our periodic housing crises, the Government of the day proposed to prepare the south slope of Burnaby Mountain for a large-scale development. Roads were laid out, services put in, and a couple of housing developments started. It was the policy of this Government to encourage co-ops, and so agreement was reached with Burnaby to set aside several portions of land for the development of co-



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operative housing projects. However, before this could happen, the Government fell and the Provincial housing policies changed.

Development on Burnaby Mountain sites stopped and nothing was done for several years. Finally, the Provincial Government began auctioning off the properties to private developers. Columbia Housing learned in early 1981 of the previous agreement between the Province and Burnaby, calling for some sites to be made available to non-profit groups. Both levels of Government were asked to stick by this commitment and to provide land at an appropriate price for co-op housing. Hillside Place Housing Co-operative was formed in order to build on one of these sites.

The original membership of Hillside Place was drawn from those who had long wanted to live in a Burnaby Co-op. An orientation meeting was held in June 1981 and was attended by several hundred people. At that time, we were asked for suggestions for a name for our new co-op and the name for Hillside Place was voted on and selected by the majority. A Board of Directors was also selected with Mr. Sham Hirji serving as the first President.

Mr. John Currie, architect for the new co-op, submitted preliminary plans for one, two, three and four bedroom units. Hillside Place was incorporated with the Province in August 1981, and application to C.M.H.C. was made shortly thereafter. C.M.H.C. approved the project subject to satisfactory bids from contractors and mortgage arrangements. The construction contract was granted to Concosts Construction of Burnaby, and the mortgage obtained through Bancorp. Columbia Housing signed a contract with the Co-op for membership and development services.

In the meantime, various committees were quickly formed from volunteers of the general membership. The Membership Committee continued to interview prospective members for our co-op and the Design Committee met frequently with the architect to make decisions for carpeting, cabinets, appliances, etc. As the need arose, various other committees were formed, such as the Rules Committee, in order to ensure a smooth running environment for our future home.

A groundbreaking ceremony was held in January 1982 amidst a typical west coast downpour, attended by local politicians and some of the future members of Hillside Place. It was difficult to imagine our present co-op through the rough terrain of tree stumps and mud.

Construction of the 172-unit project then began and completion was scheduled for January 1983. However, favourable conditions in the building industry permitted early completion with the first members scheduled to move in at the end of October 1982.



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For those of us involved in Hillside Place from “day one”, it seemed like move-in day would never arrive. However, you must agree the work, the meetings and the wait were well worth it. We can all be proud of our beautiful homes on the south slope of Burnaby Mountain and in the true co-op spirit say “We Did It Together”.