

## WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE PARKS CHAPTER?

This chapter assesses Vancouver's inventory of parks across five classifications. Information is provided on the range of park amenities and arts and cultural experiences found in parks, horticulture gardens and community gardens.

# CHAPTER 2: PARKS



## BACKGROUND

History + System Context  
Major Initiatives

29

## ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

32

## INVENTORY + ANALYSIS

36

Access Analysis  
Quality Analysis  
Inclusivity Analysis

## OPPORTUNITIES + CHALLENGES

56

## FOUNDATION FOR INNOVATION

59



Automobile Parade, Stanley Park, circa 1911 | CoV Archives

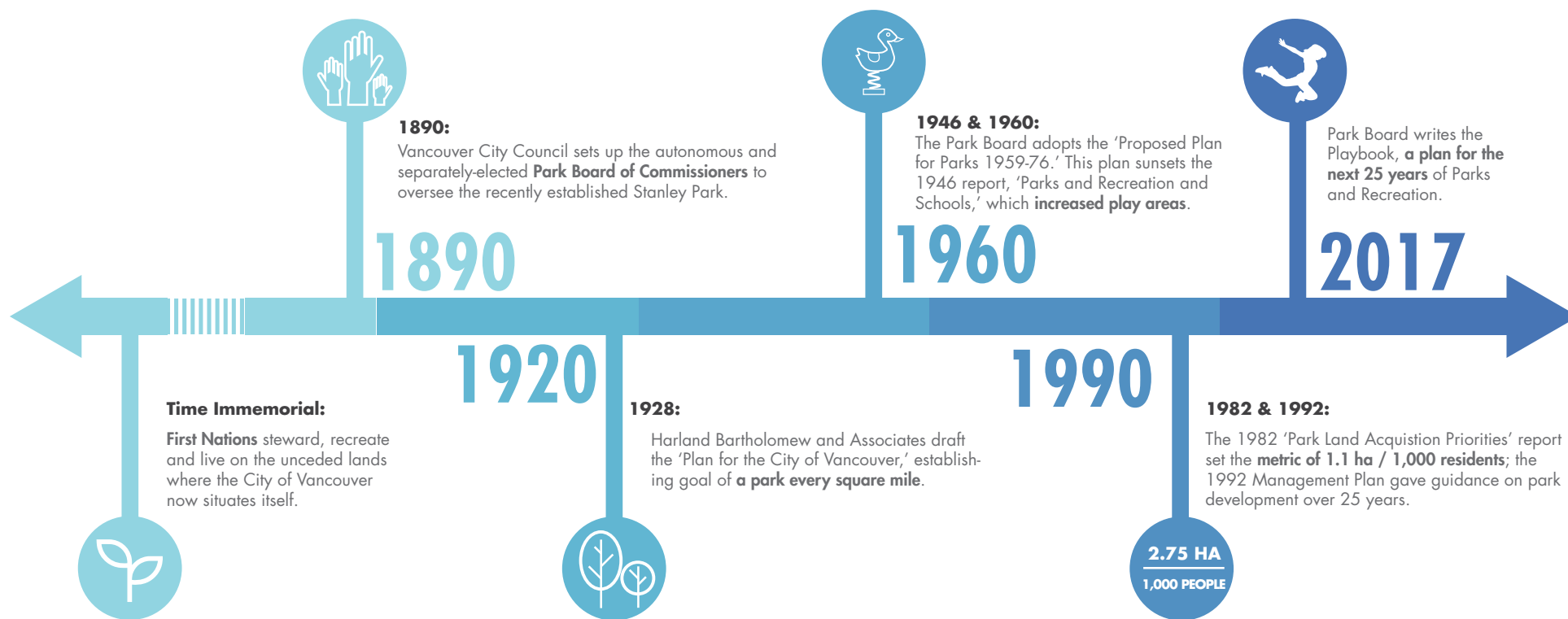


Second Beach, 1940 | CoV Archives



Performance at Malkin Bowl, 1952 | CoV Archives

## PARKS TIMELINE



# BACKGROUND

## HISTORY + SYSTEM CONTEXT

*Vancouver is home to a vibrant network of hundreds of parks, public gardens and plazas. The park system offers a wide variety of experiences and natural areas, from temperate rainforests to urban plazas.*

With 67% of residents within a five-minute walk of a green space, and 98% within 10 minutes<sup>1</sup>, parks are integral to the character of Vancouver neighbourhoods and to the daily life and rhythms of the city. Today, 11% of Vancouver is covered in parkland and 46% of the city's shoreline is protected as public land with 63% is publicly accessible<sup>2</sup>.

While pedestrian access to parks is an important metric, the quality of parks also impacts how welcoming and equitable individuals experience parks. Many of the city's parks are over 100 years old, a recent Park Board study of park condition found that 30% of park amenities are in critical condition. With the city increasing in density and the population gaining more than 400 new residents each month, the preservation of public land and strategic investment in the park system are key priorities of the current report.

Vancouver has a long history of prioritizing access to parks, dating back to the 1928 Plan for the City of Vancouver, which introduced neighbourhood parks every square mile. The 1982 Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation Master Plan expanded the city's parks and recreation system through park classifications, and an innovative Management Plan in 1992 set a clear standard by introducing the goal of providing 1.1 hectares of neighbourhood parkland per 1,000 residents. There are 1.06 hectares of neighbourhood parkland per 1,000 residents, although distribution is not uniform.

In the 2011 *Greenest City Action Plan*, the City of Vancouver in partnership with the Vancouver Park Board, set the goal of providing a green space within a five-minute walk of all residents. This study of the city's park and open space network measured park access with a 400m walk radius. This "as the crow flies" methodology put 92% of the city's population within the five-minute walk range but did not account for

## KEY TERMS

### *park*

an area of natural, semi-natural or groomed space set aside for human enjoyment, recreation and ecological value.

### *plaza*

a public square, marketplace or hardscaped open space.

### *garden*

a cultivated plot of land used to grow ornamental plants, vegetables or fruit.

### *natural area*

large and small patches of the urban landscape which support nature such as forests, wetlands, and shorelines, but also including green roofs, constructed wetlands, and rain gardens. 44% of Vancouver's parks are classified as natural area.

<sup>1</sup> Vancouver Park Board. Park Provision Standard Study. Vancouver, BC, 2016 / 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Vancouver Park Board. Waterfront Inventory Report. Vancouver, BC: 2011.

# BACKGROUND

## HISTORY + SYSTEM CONTEXT CONT.

how people actually walk to parks or the impact of physical barriers. To understand these constraints, the Park Board commissioned the *Parks Provision Standard Study (2016, revised 2018)* to analyze park access using census data and the sidewalk network. It accounted for time delays at busy intersections and physical barriers to access, such as rail lines or steep hills. **The study found that 80% of residents were within the five-minute walk range (though 99% were within a ten-minute range).**<sup>3</sup> This chapter will build off of these findings and identify: 1) opportunities for greater connectivity to parks 2) opportunities to improve park quality 3) current and future vulnerabilities caused by social, environmental and economic threats to the park system. In particular parks will need to operate at a higher carrying capacity as their catchment areas grow.

The City of Vancouver's Real Estate and Facilities Management (REFM) department delivers many management and maintenance services to the Park Board as outlined in a Partnership Agreement (in place since 2014, revised in 2016). In regards to parks, the Park Board is responsible for management and maintenance of all park non-building assets (for example: playgrounds, park furniture), whilst REFM is responsible for buildings, marinas and utilities. REFM's Real Estate Services group executes property acquisition, lease negotiations and other activities in relation to the city's land portfolio on behalf of the Park Board.

For a full description of the roles and responsibilities outlined in the Partnership Agreement please see Appendix.

## MAJOR INITIATIVES

There are many major projects underway to renew or add to Vancouver's park system. Many related initiatives also address big ideas like healthy cities, reconciliation with First Nations, transportation connectivity and biodiversity. Future reports will use the most relevant metrics from these projects and plans to help build strategies to improve the park system and align appropriate resources for future improvements.

## RELATED INITIATIVES

- People, Parks and Dogs Strategy—ongoing
- VanSplash Aquatics Strategy—ongoing
- Downtown Places for People—ongoing
- Park Board 11 Reconciliation Strategies – 2016
- Park Provision Study – 2016 / 2018
- Vancouver Park Development Standards—2015
- Healthy City Strategy – 2014
- City of Reconciliation Framework – 2014
- Transportation 2040 Plan – 2012
- Greenest City 2020 Action Plan – 2011
- Metro Vancouver 2040 Regional Plan – 2011
- Climate Change Adaptation Strategy – 2011
- Downtown Transportation Plan – 2002
- Vancouver Bicycle Plan – 2008
- British Columbia: Provincial Transit Plan – 2008
- Vancouver Transportation Plan – 1999
- Park Board Management Plan – 1992
- Vancouver Greenways Plan – 1991

<sup>3</sup> Vancouver Park Board. Park Provision Standard Study. Vancouver, BC, 2016 / 2018.





English Bay Beach Park



Ted & Mary Greig Rhododendron Garden



Public Art: Abundance Fenced | Park Board



Garden at Bloedel | Park Board



Big Draw at Marpole | Park Board - Arts, Culture & Engagement Team



Rendering of Smithe & Richards Park | Dialog

# ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Through VanPlay, the planning team conducted extensive community outreach to better understand the public's perception of parks. The following summary provides a small selection of key takeaways from the major outreach efforts in Phase 1.

## PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- Over the next 25 years, survey respondents identified parks as the top priority (49% put it in their top three) for improvement.
- 84% of respondents are either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the parks and recreation system.

### Top priorities for action:

1. Equality, inclusion and access
2. Arts and culture
3. Affordability of parks and recreation

## CHALLENGES

- The most commonly cited challenge was in relation to the maintenance and management of parks. The community identified the need for greater emphasis on renewal of aging infrastructure, regular waste removal and for improved access to drinking water.
- Participants highlighted that for easy access, destination parks and beach parks should be connected to active modes of transportation.
- Stakeholders and the external advisory group identified the need for a more granular park classification system for parks. They said that the existing two tiered 'Destination' and 'neighbourhood' classification system does not accurately describe the Vancouver park system.

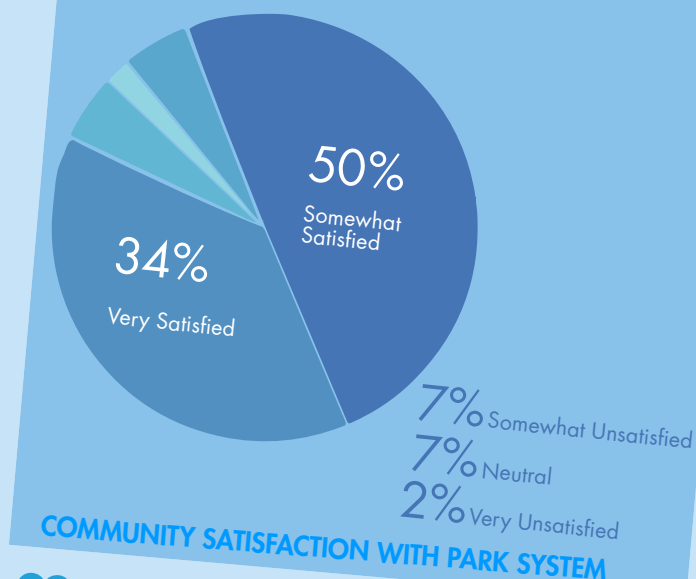
## OPPORTUNITIES

- Comments indicated concern for spatial inequity in access to parks and inequity in the quality of parks, in particular in the Downtown Urban Core where there is a high population and underserved and overused parks.
- Conversations on the VanPlay tour centred around the need to strike a good balance of spaces for quiet relaxation, with space for gatherings, events and celebrations, public art, performances, farmers markets, food trucks and more active pursuits such as walking, cycling, outdoor sports.
- Growth of the park system was a commonly cited opportunity, especially to improve ecological integrity.
- Engagement with the community throughout VanPlay and over the last few years has indicated a strong desire for the incorporation of natural elements, and more "wild" spaces into parks.
- Park spaces that suit the needs of old adults and seniors, a growing demographic in Vancouver, was an often mentioned opportunity for growth in the future. In particular, many previous park development projects heard a desire for looped accessible walking trails and outdoor fitness equipment.
- Stakeholders and the external advisory group brought up the need for park activation to create safe, inviting and colourful park spaces. They suggested considering placemaking initiatives such as public art, events and celebrations and programming.

*Of the big ideas shared for the future, the most popular ideas were to protect and expand green spaces, natural area, wildlife and biodiversity (15%), and to improve, repair and upgrade existing amenities (12%)*

*Community Survey*

## COMMUNITY SURVEY TAKEAWAY



## PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT REVIEW

3 previous surveys indicated participants were **satisfied with parks and recreation staff** as they are well trained and friendly.

2 previous surveys indicated **concern for public safety** on streets for children in the downtown urban core parks and recreation.

TALK VANCOUVER

## PARTICIPATION

- **VANPLAY TOUR**  
4,000+ participants
- **COMMUNITY SURVEY**  
2,700 respondents
- **ONLINE VANPLAY ENGAGEMENT TOOLS**  
10,000+ unique visits

## EMERGING QUESTIONS

**EQUITY, INCLUSION + ACCESS:**

this was the top priority of the public in terms of what is most important to address in the next 25 years. What are the biggest challenges regarding equity, inclusion and access in the park system? In community centres? What populations are currently unwelcome or feel unwelcome? What do the public perceive as barriers now?

**CONCESSIONS:** what kinds of restaurants / food vendors would you like to see in parks? How much would you be willing to spend... for a sandwich? Coffee? Beer? Dinner? Would you be open to private vendors in parks? What Vancouver restaurants / vendors would you like to see in parks?

VanPlay

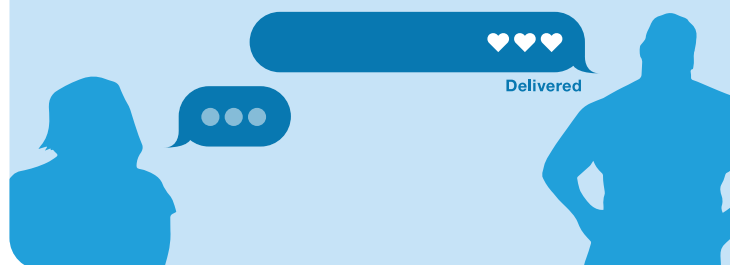
## VANPLAY TOUR TAKEAWAY

"The community needs to **honour the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil Waututh First Nations and urban Aboriginal communities** relationships to the land, through placemaking in parks."



## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT TAKEAWAY

**To better implement plans for parks,** Park Board could explore opportunities for networking, partnerships, alliances and information sharing with community, organizations and other governments.



ARK

# ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

## A VANPLAY DEEP DIVE

Between February and April 2018, key stakeholder groups were invited to engage in the VanPlay process through the “VanPlay Deep Dive”, reaching over 345 members of key stakeholder groups that completed 64 “VanPlay Deep Dive” workbooks. The goals of the VanPlay Deep Dive are:

- To better understand Vancouver’s parks and recreation system by mapping out and celebrating the diverse networks of amenities, programs, services, and experiences that stakeholders contribute to in Vancouver
- To identify who is involved in leading, sharing and supporting these diverse services
- To shape the future by setting principles and goals which reflect what a successful future looks like
- To identify the actions and resources needed to achieve goals

## STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES ON THE CURRENT STATE OF PARKS

Through the VanPlay Deep Dive, 774 comments were gathered on the current state of parks and recreation. The diagram on the facing page reflects findings from stakeholders on the current state of the park network, what broad park topics are top of mind to these stakeholders. The lines map out who the Deep Dive stakeholders see as providers of these park services.

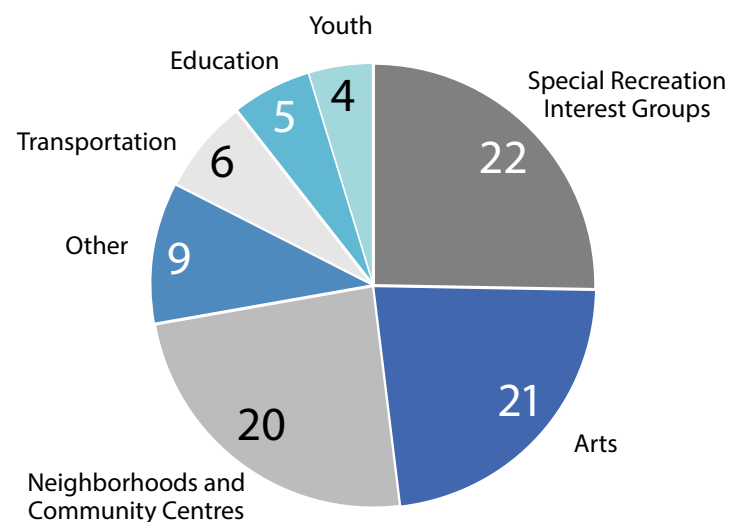
*For the full Deep Dive report, please see the appendix.*

### WHAT THIS DIAGRAM (OPPOSITE) TELLS US



This is a graphic representation of the wide and varied mix of stakeholders and parks services identified by participants in the VanPlay Deep Dives. It is a qualitative tool which does not represent a comprehensive view of the system. It does show a complex and valuable network of providers who support a multidisciplinary mix of services throughout the city. This sets the scene for further work on identifying roles and responsibilities for services. For parks, 15 of the 64 stakeholder discussion focused on parks.

Groups Who Participated in Deep Dive Engagement





## DEEP DIVE FINDINGS SUMMARY: PARK SERVICES AND PROVIDERS

SERVICE PROVIDERS  
IDENTIFIED BY STAKEHOLDERS

Bike Organizations and Advocacy Groups

Car Share Organizations

City of Vancouver

Community Centre Associations

Community Health Providers

Consultants

Cultural Organizations

Developers

Educational Institutions

Independent parks and gardens

Retailers and Merchants

Tourism Groups

TransLink

Vancouver Coastal Health

Vancouver Farmers Market

Vancouver Park Board

STAKEHOLDER SELECTED  
DISCUSSION TOPICS

Parkland

Access to Parks  
(bike trails, walking, transit, shoreline access and seawall, etc.)Food Security  
(community gardens, food assets, etc.)

SOURCE: VanPlay Phase 3 Summary Report: Deep Dive Discussions

PARK BOARD MEETING — July 23, 2018 | 35



# INVENTORY + ANALYSIS: ACCESS

## CITYWIDE PARKLAND PER CAPITA

*By 2041, Vancouver's population is predicted to grow by 150,000 people. The Park Board will need to acquire new parkland to keep up with future demand. Without these acquisitions we would see a 13% decrease in park land available per capita.*

Since 1901, Vancouver has substantially expanded its park system by close to a thousand hectares or another two and a half Stanley Parks. During the same time period, the population has increased twenty-fold. With parks serving more people than ever before, there is an overall decrease in the amount of parkland available to each person. A growing population using less space leads to harder working (or parks that see more use per hectare) parks across the board. This increased use leads to increased maintenance needs, potential conflicts over types of uses in parks and possible deterioration of existing natural area.

## NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK PROVISION

The Park Board undertook its last major park plan in 1992. The plan sets a policy to acquire and assemble land in neighbourhoods with less than 1.1 ha (2.75 acres) of neighbourhood parkland per 1,000 residents. Since that time, the city has densified and destination parks, such as Stanley Park, accommodate both local and global audiences. In this plan, we measured park provision on a citywide basis and included all Park Board park spaces. The 1992 park acquisition policy is still a target goal for all neighbourhoods but is not reflected in citywide statistics.

## DENSITY + PARKLAND LEVEL OF SERVICE OVER TIME

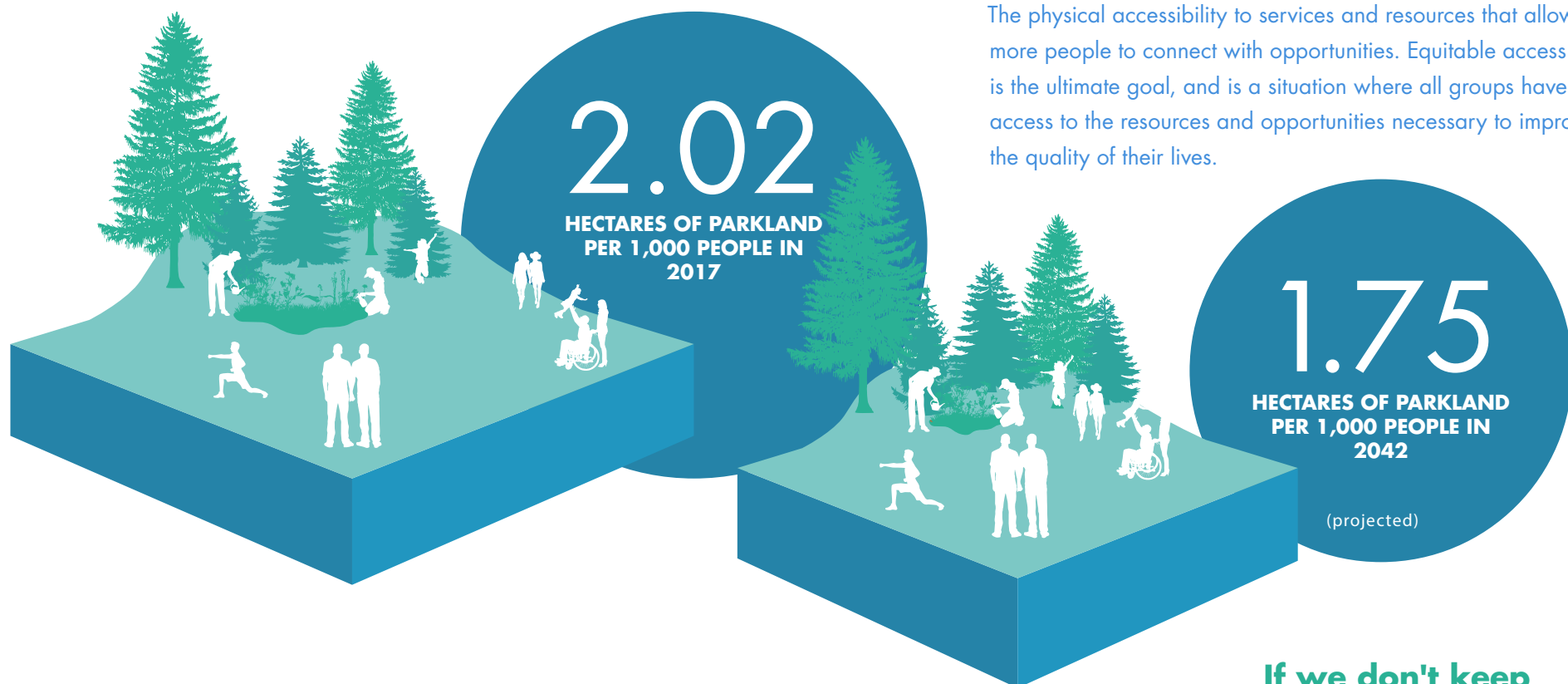
|   | 1901   | 1921    | 1941    | 1961    | 1981    | 2001    | 2017    | 2021    | 2041    |
|---|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>Population</b>   | 30,000 | 165,000 | 275,000 | 385,000 | 415,000 | 545,000 | 631,487 | 685,000 | 776,500 |
| <b>Parkland Hectares</b>  | 459    | 470     | 782     | 923     | 1,207   | 1,283   | 1,262   | 1,310   | 1,359   |
| <b>Level of Service</b><br>(Hectares of Parkland per 1,000 persons) | 15.3   | 2.8     | 2.8     | 2.4     | 2.9     | 2.4     | 2.0     | 1.9     | 1.75    |
| <b>Density</b> (Persons per sq. km)                                 | 261    | 1,435   | 2,391   | 3,348   | 3,609   | 4,739   | 5,491   | 5,957   | 6,752   |
| <b>Municipal Landmass</b><br>(Hectares)                             | 11,497 |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |

SOURCE: City of Vancouver population projections and Park Board park acquisition data

# INVENTORY + ANALYSIS: ACCESS

## CITYWIDE LEVEL OF SERVICE

It has been 25 years since the last major parks and recreation plan was prepared for Vancouver and the demographic profile of the city has changed significantly since then. The following infographics look at the citywide population today and 25 years into the future to better understand how citywide parkland level of service will change over time.



## KEY TERMS

### *optimum level of service*

Optimum level of service is the amount and kind of service that is both appropriate to the needs/desires of the community and sustainable/affordable/realistic.

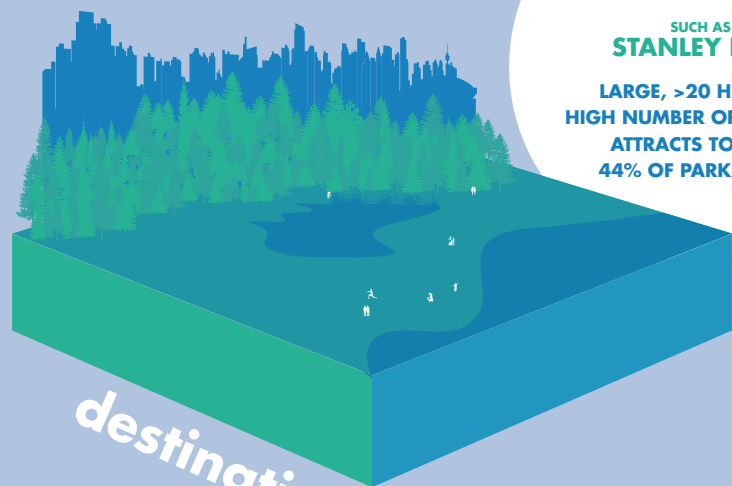
### *access*

The physical accessibility to services and resources that allows more people to connect with opportunities. Equitable access is the ultimate goal, and is a situation where all groups have access to the resources and opportunities necessary to improve the quality of their lives.

**If we don't keep  
pace, we will see a  
decrease of 13% in  
only 25 years.**

SOURCE: City of Vancouver population projections and  
Park Board park acquisition data

# PARK CLASSIFICATIONS



destination

TOTAL: 5

SUCH AS  
**STANLEY PARK**

LARGE, >20 HECTARES  
HIGH NUMBER OF AMENITIES  
ATTRACTS TOURISTS  
44% OF PARK SYSTEM

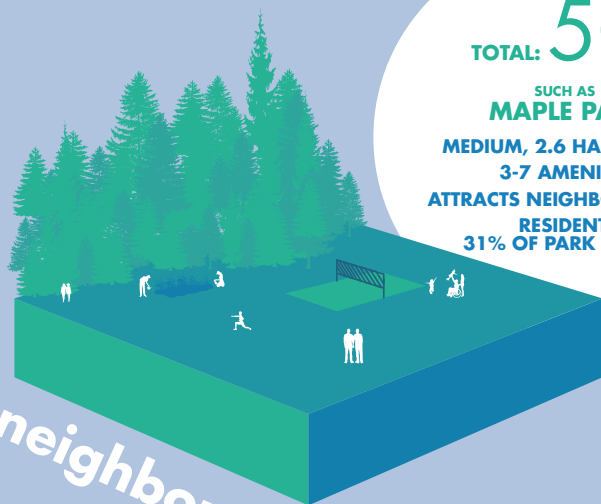


community

TOTAL: 101

SUCH AS  
**ENGLISH BAY BEACH PARK**

MEDIUM, 6.4 HA AVERAGE  
6-15 AMENITIES  
ATTRACTS PEOPLE FROM  
ALL ACROSS VANCOUVER  
22% OF PARK SYSTEM

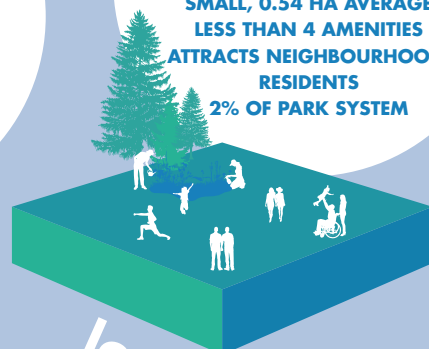


neighbourhood

TOTAL: 50

SUCH AS  
**MAPLE PARK**

MEDIUM, 2.6 HA AVERAGE  
3-7 AMENITIES  
ATTRACTS NEIGHBOURHOOD  
RESIDENTS  
31% OF PARK SYSTEM



local

TOTAL: 63

SUCH AS  
**ASH PARK**

SMALL, 0.54 HA AVERAGE  
LESS THAN 4 AMENITIES  
ATTRACTS NEIGHBOURHOOD  
RESIDENTS  
2% OF PARK SYSTEM



urban  
plaza

TOTAL: 9

SUCH AS  
**PIONEER PLACE**

SMALL, < 0.4 HA AVERAGE  
LESS THAN 3 AMENITIES  
ATTRACTS DAYTIME USERS  
<1% OF PARK SYSTEM

# INVENTORY + ANALYSIS: QUALITY

## TYPES OF PARKS

*A park classification system allows us to establish a common language around park types and quality of amenities.*

Currently, the Vancouver Park Board manages 228 parks, with another thirty new parks in the planning pipeline. The Park Board has two park classification designations (neighbourhood and destination). This study proposes a five-tiered classification system that provides a finer grain

that is a more accurate description of Vancouver's system. The classifications are useful in communications (internal and external), parkland acquisitions (types and locations for future parks), development (amount of investment in a given park), and operations (degree of maintenance and regular investment needed). A strong understanding of the types of parks in different areas of the city inform where service gaps exist. Previously, the park classifications were informal; however, this report recommends formalizing designations to allocate resources based on use. Park classifications have limited utility for: metrics regarding specific amenities; evaluation of how parks are used and their functionality, and for defining large parks. Subclassifications for parks include: Beach / Waterfront, Sports Hub and Facility Adjacent. For a full list of park classifications, please see Appendix.

## KEY TERM

### quality

Quality in this report refers to financial investment over time and functional, beautiful and resilient experiences.

## PARK CLASSIFICATION TABLE

|               | CRITERIA   | EXAMPLES  | #   | PERCENT |
|---------------|--|---|-----|---------|
| Destination   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large in size (&gt;20 hectares)</li> <li>Large number of amenities (&gt;15); venue for events, concerts, weddings.</li> <li>Attracts tourists and populations from the region, in addition to local residents</li> <li>Maintained at a higher level to meet user expectations, keep up with higher use and to ensure space is suitable for programming</li> </ul> | Stanley Park<br>Queen Elizabeth Park<br>Hastings Park | 5   | 44%     |
| Community     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medium to large in size (&lt; 20 ha, average of 6.4 ha)</li> <li>Large number of amenities (6-15); includes sports hubs and beach parks</li> <li>Attracts populations from across the City of Vancouver</li> </ul>  | John Hendry Park<br>English Bay Beach Park            | 101 | 22%     |
| Neighbourhood | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medium in size (&lt;10 ha, average of 2.6 ha)</li> <li>Medium number of amenities (3-7)</li> <li>Attracts neighbourhood residents</li> </ul>  | Maple Grove Park<br>Aberdeen Park                     | 50  | 31%     |
| Local         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small in size (&lt;2.5 ha, average of .54 ha)</li> <li>Select amenities, mostly passive (four or less)</li> <li>Attracts neighbourhood residents</li> </ul>   | Ash Park<br>Foster Park                               | 63  | 2%      |
| Urban Plaza   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small in size (less than .4 ha)</li> <li>Select amenities (three or less); low in landscape cover</li> <li>Located in areas with high day-time population - attracts daytime users</li> </ul>   | Pioneer Place<br>Yaletown Park                        | 9   | <1%     |

# INVENTORY + ANALYSIS: ACCESS

## PARK SYSTEM ACCESS

*The Park Board undertook a study to better understand the accessibility and intensity of use of Vancouver's parks.*

In the Greenest City 2020 Action Plan, the City of Vancouver – in partnership with the Vancouver Park Board – set the goal of providing a green space within a five-minute walk of all residents by 2020. This study of the City's park and open space network measured park access with a 400m walk radius. This "as a crow flies" methodology put 92% of the City within the five-minute walk range but did not account for how people actually walk to parks.

In 2016 the Park Board commissioned a Parks Provision Study to analyze park access through the sidewalk network to get a better understanding of how far residents actually live from parks. The study employed census data to determine where people live and work in relation to parks.

The study used five-minute, eight-minute and ten-minute walk radiuses based on street and sidewalk networks as well as accounting for park entrances, barriers (such as steep grade or transit lines), and delays (such as intersections).

The result was that 80% of residents were within the five-minute walk range (and 99.5% were within a ten-minute range).

Using this new methodology we can analyse the impact of improvements to access, more clearly identify where new parks are required to fill access gaps, and conversely can measure the population catchment of parks (how many people live within a 5-minute walk, and what is the daytime population within that same distance) to see how hard are parks are working.

### WHAT THIS TELLS US

1. **Vancouver has one of the most accessible park systems in North America.** While the more rigorous analysis disproved the Greenest City baseline of 96% of residents within a five minute walk, it does provide further evidence that Vancouver is a leader in walkability and park access, with 80% of residents within a five minute walk and 99% within 10 minutes. San Francisco is the only city that outranks Vancouver.
2. **The hardest working parks, densest areas and biggest park access gaps are in the Downtown Core.** While there are large service gaps in Oakridge and Kerrisdale, these are low density areas with some of the least hard working parks in the system. The combination of high density, high use, high land value and large service gaps makes Downtown a top priority.

### WHERE MORE WORK IS NEEDED

1. **The 2016 study provides a thorough analysis of park system access but does not factor in the relative quality of parks.** Vancouver is a champion of park system access but has focused less on equity in terms of quality of environment and experiences within parks and addressing specific vulnerabilities.
2. **While access is an excellent way of gauging the equity of the park system, there are also other indicators that need further analysis.** To further understand geographic equity, analysis is needed to determine which populations or sub-groups require better access (see maps on following pages).

### greenspace

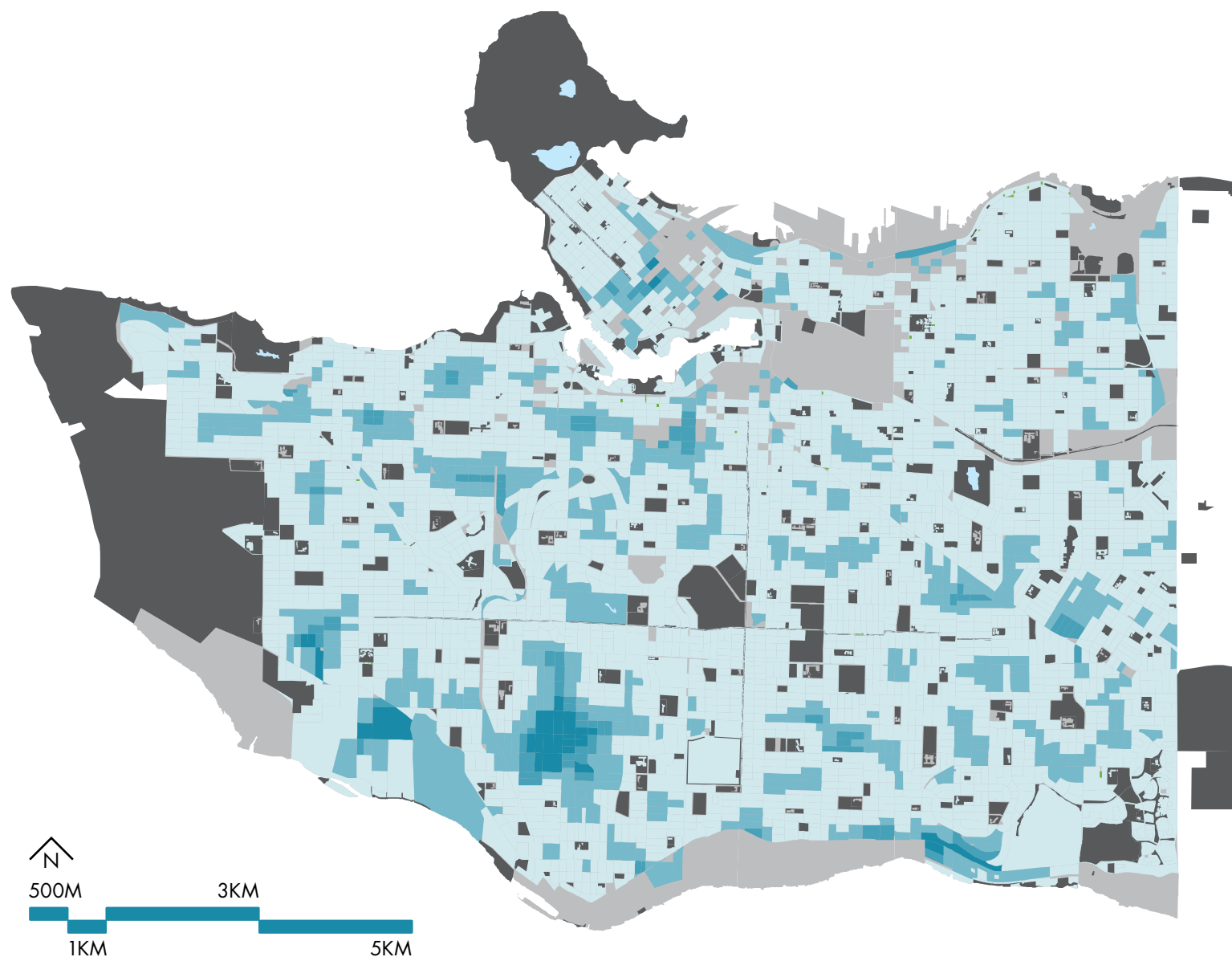
This includes parks and fields, greenways, the seawall, street mini-parks, natural green spaces, as well as park-like spaces such as the grounds around institutional buildings like City Hall, hospitals, and schools. It also includes linear greenspace such as the seawall and the extensive Champlain Heights walkway system.

### hardest working

Parks with very large populations in their catchments were determined to be "hard-working," whereas parks with very low populations were determined to be "less hard working."

SOURCE: Vancouver Park Board.  
Parks Access Study.  
Vancouver, BC: 2016 (revised 2018).





# 99%

*or 600,564  
people are within  
a 10-minute walk  
of a greenspace.*

## LEGEND

- 80% RESIDENTS WITHIN A 5-MINUTE WALK
- 96% RESIDENTS WITHIN AN 8-MINUTE WALK
- 99% RESIDENTS WITHIN A 10-MINUTE WALK
- 1% RESIDENTS BEYOND A 10-MINUTE WALK

# NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK PROVISION (2011)

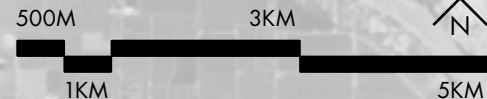
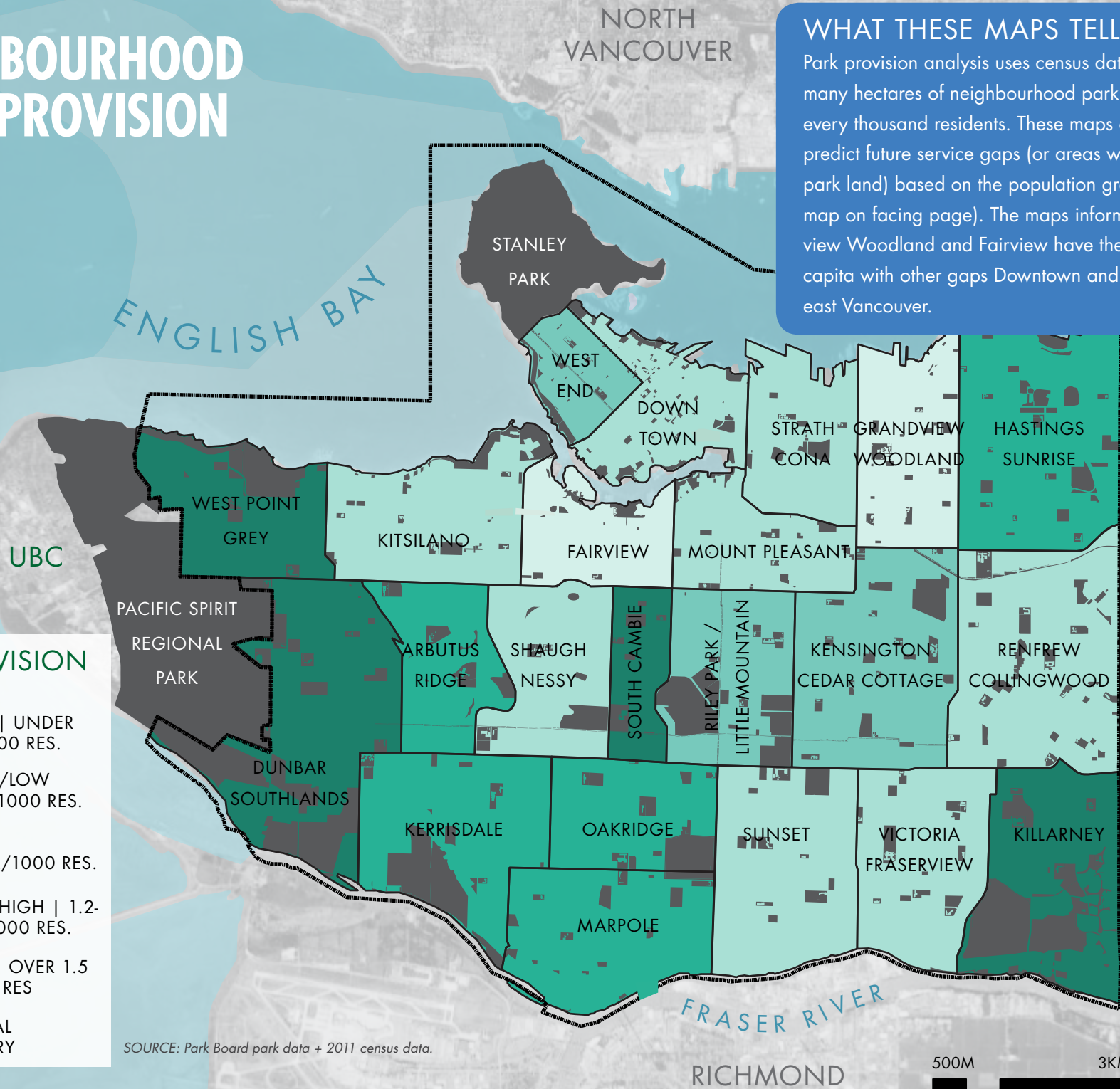
**WHAT THESE MAPS TELLS US:**  
Park provision analysis uses census data to assess how many hectares of neighbourhood parkland there for every thousand residents. These maps can also be used to predict future service gaps (or areas will have a deficit of park land) based on the population growth estimates (see map on facing page). The maps informs us that Grandview Woodland and Fairview have the least parkland per capita with other gaps Downtown and in East and South-east Vancouver.

## PARK PROVISION SCORE

- 1.5 LOW | UNDER .6 HA/1000 RES.
- 1.25 MED/LOW .6-.9 HA/1000 RES.
- 1.25 MED .9-1.2 HA/1000 RES.
- .75 MED/HIGH | 1.2-1.5 HA/1000 RES.
- .5 HIGH | OVER 1.5 HA/1000 RES

MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY

SOURCE: Park Board park data + 2011 census data.





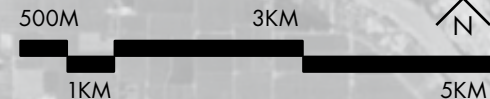
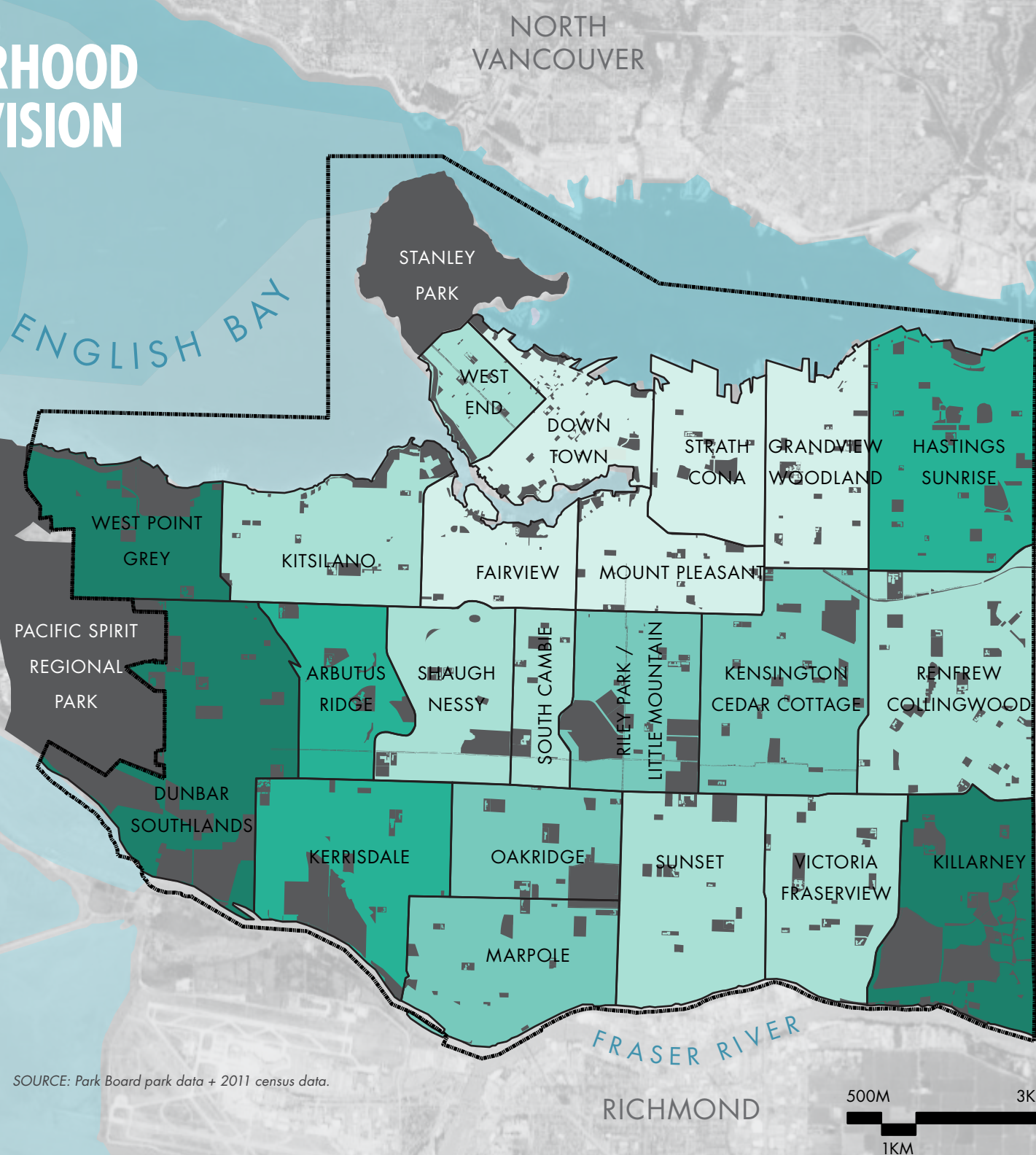
# NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK PROVISION (2041)

**PARK PROVISION SCORE**

- 1.5 LOW | UNDER .6 HA/1000 RES.
- 1.25 MED/LOW .6-.9 HA/1000 RES.
- 1.25 MED .9-1.2 HA/1000 RES.
- .75 MED/HIGH | 1.2-1.5 HA/1000 RES.
- .5 HIGH | OVER 1.5 HA/1000 RES

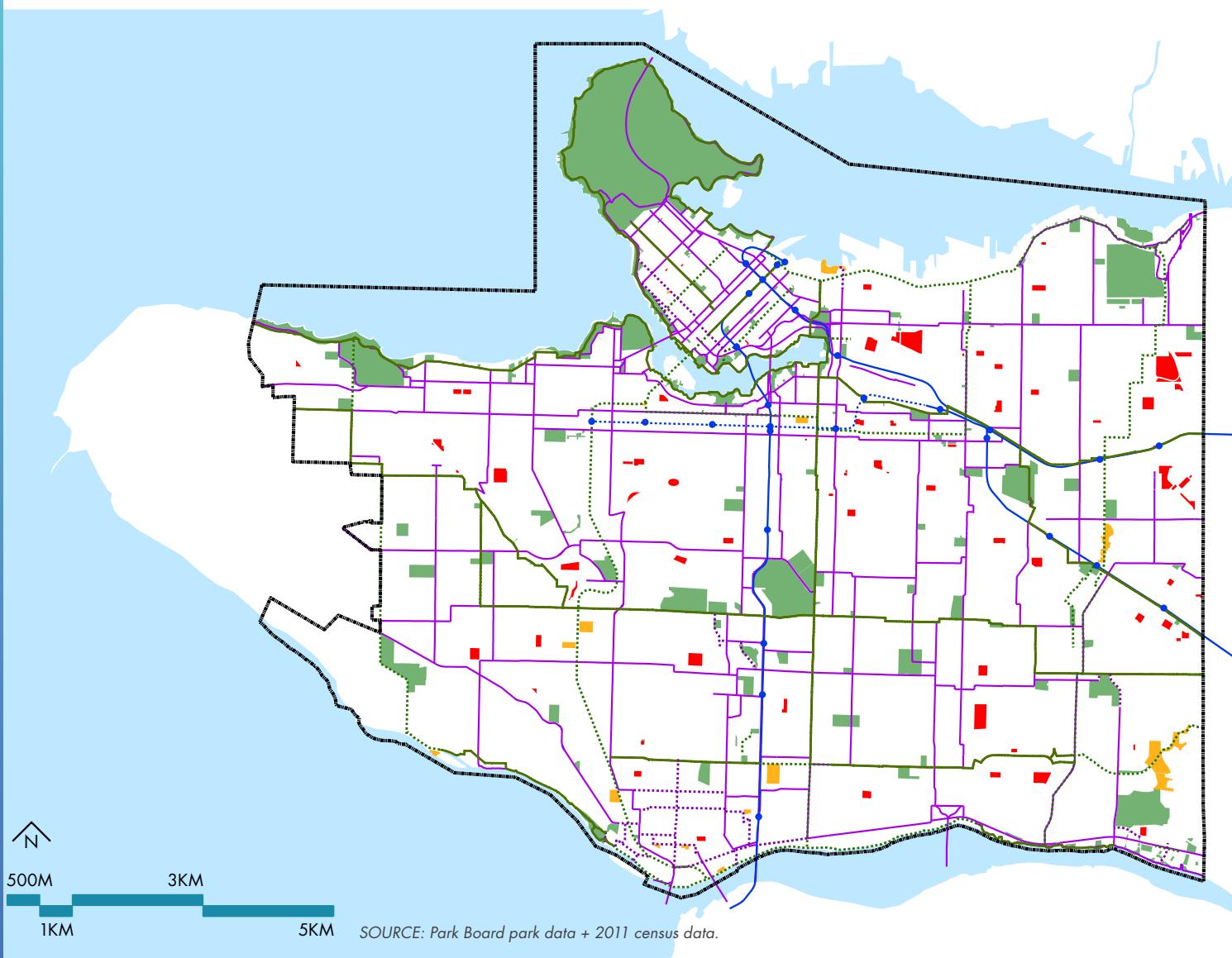
----- MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY

SOURCE: Park Board park data + 2011 census data.



# INVENTORY + ANALYSIS: ACCESS

## PARK CONNECTIVITY MAP



### LEGEND

- 63% PARKS WITH BIKE OR GREENWAY
- 6% PARKS WITH FUTURE BIKE OR GREENWAY
- 31% PARKS WITH NO BIKE OR GREENWAY
- GREENWAYS
- PROPOSED GREENWAYS
- BIKEWAYS
- PROPOSED BIKEWAYS
- SKY TRAIN
- PROPOSED SKY TRAIN LINE
- MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY

### WALK!

Walk Score  
**78**



67% of Vancouver residents live within a 5-minute walk of a park or greenspace in 2016.

# INVENTORY + ANALYSIS: ACCESS

## CONNECTIVITY

*While Vancouver rates highly among peer cities in terms of bike and transit connectivity and walkability, stronger connections between parks and other cultural facilities are necessary.*

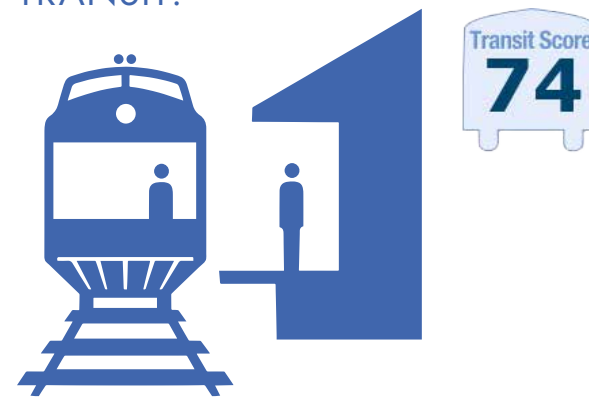
### Cycling + Walking

In the 2014 Transportation Panel Survey, 48% of Vancouverites reported commuting by transit, walk or cycle. Between 2013 and 2014, bike trips increased from 83,300 to 99,100 trips, a 19% increase, and bike mode share increased by 1% (4.4% to 5.4%).<sup>1</sup> The Transportation 2040 plan outlines several projects to improve bike and pedestrian experiences, including seawall upgrades, transformation of the Arbutus greenway, more public plazas and removal of the Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts. Safe and continuous access between parks and other cultural facilities—such as schools and community centres—was identified as a public priority in the first stage of community outreach.

### Public Transit

The City of Vancouver offers a range of transit services, including light rail, rapid buses and ferries. The Transportation 2040 plan proposes a set of recommendations to improve rapid and local transit. To serve future growth areas, the plan proposes to extend the Millennium Line along the Broadway corridor, upgrade SkyTrain stations and collaborate with Translink to improve service and capacity for local transit. While the City does not operate the regional transit system, the plan aims to provide "transit-supportive public realm," including better wayfinding, multimodal connections, and waiting areas.

## TRANSIT!



*91.5% of Vancouver residents can access transit within a five-minute walk.*

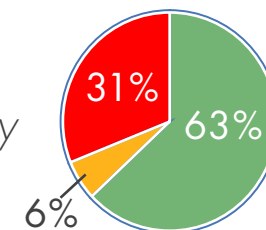
SOURCE: City of Vancouver. Transportation 2040. Vancouver, BC, 2012.

## BIKE!



*63% of parks are fronted by a bikeway or greenway on at least one side.*

SOURCE: Design Workshop Analysis, 2018.



<sup>1</sup> CH2MHill. 2014 Transportation Panel Survey. Vancouver, BC: 2015.



# INVENTORY + ANALYSIS: QUALITY

## GARDENS + HORTICULTURE

*Rich red tulips one minute, sunny yellow daffodils the next; the bees love Vancouver's horticultural displays as much as the people.*

The Park Board maintains over 1,020,217 square meters (that's equivalent to completely covering Queen Elizabeth Park, twice!) of annuals, perennials, roses, naturalised areas, shrubs, water features, and vegetable gardens. Thirty-two gardeners and 12 apprentices (3 new to the program each year) use pesticide-free practices. The Park Board co-manages VanDusen and Bloedel with Vancouver Botanical Gardens Association. Nearly half of all overnight visitors to Vancouver will visit a park or garden, with this number increasing to nearly 60% during the summer<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Data from Vancouver Park Board



### *Example: Stanley Park Gardens<sup>2</sup>*

- Stanley Park's horticultural practices aim to raise awareness of this cultural presence and the methods for cultivating the natural environment sustainably.
- While Stanley Park is comprised of mostly native plantings, unique pocket display gardens showcase plant specimens from around the world.
- Display gardens in Stanley Park include the Main Garden, the Rose Garden, the Pavilion Garden and the Ted and Mary Greig Rhododendron Garden.
- Professional gardeners and a range of other staff take care of the gardens and forest trails in Stanley Park.
- The gardeners plant 228,000 annuals and bulbs as well as many tropical shrubs and trees every year.

For more information on botanic gardens, please see the facilities chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Data from Vancouver Park Board

[This page: Stanley Park Annuals](#)

**OPPOSITE:** Queen Elizabeth Park is the highest point in Vancouver with the best views; Originally a rock quarry, this 52 hectare park was converted into a top show garden in the 1930s.









## COMMUNITY GARDENS

*The Park Board currently supports nearly 1,000 community garden plots, 725 fruit and nut trees, and four pollinator gardens.<sup>1</sup>*

There are five key City-wide plans that set out a common vision for a sustainable food system in Vancouver, including:

- Vancouver Food Action Plan – 2004
- Vancouver Food Charter – 2007
- Greenest City Action Plan – 2011
- Local Food Action Plan (LFAP) – 2013
- Healthy City Strategy – 2014

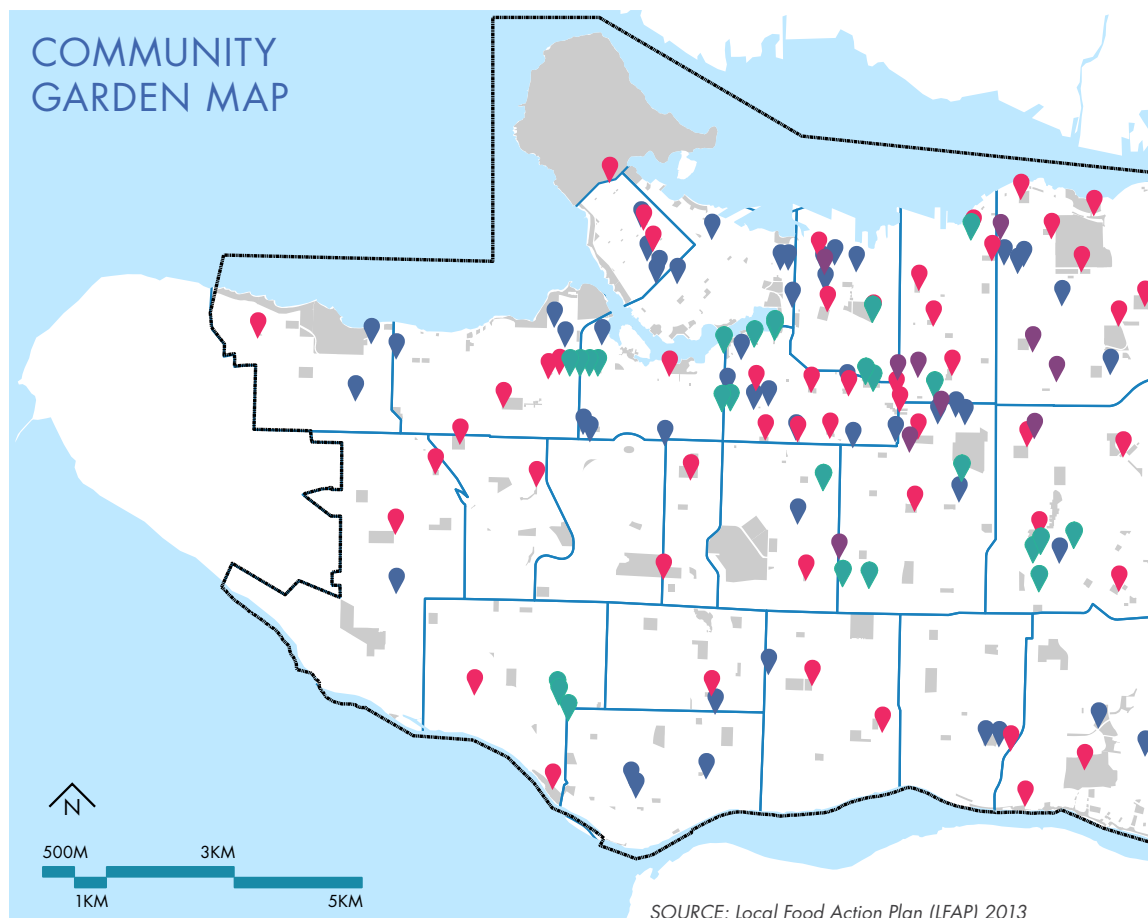
### WHAT THESE PLANS TELL US

#### 1. The Vancouver Park Board is rich in food assets

- farmer's markets, festivals, community gardens, urban orchards, and concession stands. Park Board concessions staff estimate that 30-40% of food served are grown in British Columbia. Community Centres enhance this resource by providing abundant food programming in their kitchens.

#### 2. Greenest City Action Plan (2011) established a key performance metric of increasing food assets by 50% over 2010 levels by 2020.

#### 3. Healthy City Strategy (2014) set a 3-tiered framework of sustainable food systems by prioritizing food production, empowering residents and food access.



### LEGEND

- PARK BOARD GARDENS
- CITY + PARTNER GARDENS
- PRIVATE GARDENS
- OTHER GARDENS



### KEY TERM

#### *food asset*

Food assets are defined as "resources, facilities, services, or spaces, that are available to residents of the City [...] which are used to support the City's food system" (LFAP, 2013)

<sup>1</sup> Data from Vancouver Park Board



# INVENTORY + ANALYSIS: QUALITY

## ARTS AND CULTURE IN PARKS

*Vancouver parks are home to spectacular works of visual art from historic sculpture to contemporary installation art, as well as spaces and places for dance, music, theatre and more.*

The City of Vancouver's Public Art Program supports and presents contemporary and traditional visual art, by emerging and established artists, in public spaces and parks throughout the city. Public art in parks ranges from memorial sculpture projects to totem poles to temporary contemporary installations. The Park Board provides a searchable on-line database of public art and community arts projects in parks and public spaces. Events showcasing the performing arts in established venues and pop up spaces are abundant too—especially during the summer. Malkin Bowl, in Stanley Park, is an open air performance venue that also has indoor rehearsal space that is available for rent. It hosts the annual Theatre Under the Stars during the summer as well as major music events year-round. Artists at work in parks range from travelling painters and portraitists in Stanley Park and Queen Elizabeth Park's Painter's Circles to work by visual and performing artists who create pop-up projects with and for the public through Park Board artist in residence projects and arts partnerships. From stunning performances by aerial dancers high in the trees of Stanley Park Public to pedal-powered film projection with artists in residence in Hadden Park, amenities and staff support help ensure that artists and arts organizations can present their work to audiences large and small, enhancing quality of life for Vancouver residents.



Top to Bottom:

Mural in Chinatown | Park Board

Vancouver Draw Down | Park Board - Arts, Culture & Engagement Team

*Cultural spaces and events are essential to Vancouver; they serve residents, attract tourists and support the economic health of the community.*

Festivals and cultural celebrations happen year-round in Vancouver parks. Skookum is a new popular music festival in Stanley Park that also showcases local artists and notable Vancouver chefs and restaurateurs. Oppenheimer Park is home to the Powell Street Festival showcasing Japanese Canadian culture with live music and theatre performances, martial arts, food and more. Jericho Beach Park welcomes The Vancouver Folk Music Festival every year; a family-friendly festival celebrating folk and world music and culture. On a more intimate, neighbourhood scale, Still Moon Arts' Moon Festival in Renfrew Ravine welcomes the harvest moon with food, community arts projects and local music. A commitment to diverse arts festivals reveals Vancouver as a lively city focused on bringing accessible cultural programming to its residents.

## *Reconciliation Arts*

Since 2013, Vancouver Park Board has taken a lead role in Truth and Reconciliation work in and through the arts, developing and supporting Indigenous community consultation, conferences and education projects on Indigenous/non-Indigenous collaboration in the arts, Indigenous arts projects and Indigenous/non-Indigenous collaborations in the arts in parks and community centres, and Indigenous food security work. Examples include Park Board collaboration in the annual Wild Salmon Caravan, a cultural initiative and parade connecting Indigenous arts, food and environmental stewardship with a focus on the centrality of wild salmon to West coast cultures; a Roundhouse arts partnership in the annual Talking Stick Festival, Canada's largest festival of contemporary Indigenous culture; and artist in residence projects in community centres across the city that increase the presence and visibility of local Indigenous art and culture.



Top to Bottom:

Festival in Clark Park | Park Board

Vancouver Folk Music Festival Opening Day | Park Board

# INVENTORY + ANALYSIS: FUNDING PARKS

## OPERATIONS + MAINTENANCE

With an operating budget of \$36M (including \$5.14M for urban forestry and \$2.6M for golf) per year the Park Board manages and operates over 1,300 hectares of parkland and hundreds of recreation amenities. Maintenance and operations budgets are set internally each year. There are 8 maintenance yards and 7 greenhouses, all of which are in poor condition and in need of renewal.<sup>1</sup> Maintenance in Vancouver is divided into districts, these districts are identified for operational efficiency, not to equalize budget. The districts are designed to minimize travel time to and from the service yards (Stanley Park, Jericho, Evans and Sunset). Queen Elizabeth and Stanley Park have their own dedicated work force. Whereas, the majority of parks are maintained by roving, mobile crews. The districts are as follows:

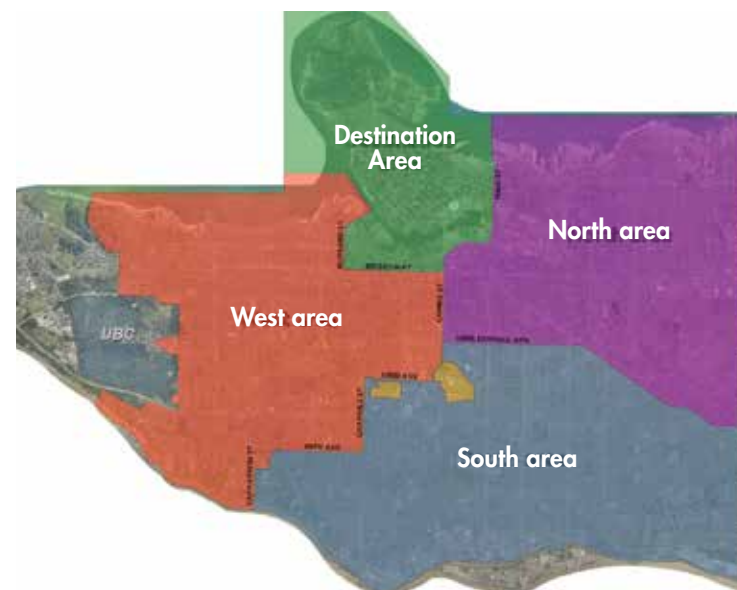
- **Stanley District (Destination):** Covers Downtown Vancouver—bounded by Main Street, Burrard Street and Broadway—and Stanley Park.
- **North District:** Northeast area of the City, bounded by Main Street, Cambie Street and King Edward Ave.
- **West District:** West of city, bounded by Burrard St, Cambie St, Broadway, 33rd Ave, Granville St, 49th Ave., Carnarvon St.
- **South District:** South of city, bounded by King Edward Ave, Cambie St, 33rd Ave., Granville St, 49th Ave., Carnarvon St.

<sup>1</sup> Vancouver Park Board Capital Planning Data

- **Bloedel, Queen Elizabeth and VanDusen** are grouped into their own district for the report since they have unique plant types and maintenance requirements. In 2016 the Park Board published the Turf and Horticulture Booklet. This modern, comprehensive inventory of all horticultural turf amenities in all parks, golf courses and pitch and putts. Managing Vancouver parks is part art and part science with many issues (such as weather and pests) outside of Park Board control. The inventory is a useful tool to understand these living assets and to preserve them on a day-to-day basis.
- **Golf courses:** Are their own separate maintenance district.

3 of the 4 service yards require complete rebuilds as they are in critical condition. The only one that's not critical is Evans Yard.

SOURCE: 2015-2018 City of Vancouver Capital Plan



SOURCE: Turf + Horticulture Booklet, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, 2016



Capital funding, to the Park Board, is used for parkland acquisition, developing new parks, and replacement of assets, whereas, operating funds look after maintenance, staffing and other costs for the ongoing care of those assets. Various sources and methods finance the City's capital and operating budgets. Park-related funding sources and mechanisms are described below.

## OPERATING

*Staff, operations and maintenance of existing assets are primarily funded through property taxes, and revenue.*

### Revenue

The Park Board generates roughly \$42.4M (2017) of revenues from entities such as concessions and user fees, providing roughly 34.5% of the necessary funding to operate a balanced budget. Pay parking is a critical source of revenue for the Park Board, \$7.2M in 2017 (13% of total revenues) which enables funding of necessary enhancements to the safety, security, and cleanliness of our parks.

## CAPITAL

*New park components, such as the purchase of land for new parks and the development of those lands into parks, are funded primarily through developer and partner contributions.*

Community Plans include a Public Benefit Strategy which identifies amenity needs such as parks and community centres, to support the projected density and urban form described in the community plan. Growth related park amenities are typically delivered via development cost levies (DCLs),

density bonus zoning, and other conditions of development or through negotiations with developers for community amenities contributions (CACs).

### Development Cost Levies

DCLs are charges imposed on development to fund growth-related capital projects. They typically pay for new infrastructure and facilities to maintain service levels as city grows. The principle is that 'growth pays for growth' so that financial burden of the growth of the city is not borne by existing tax/rate payers. DCL funds (as per the Vancouver Charter) can only be used for acquiring park land, providing fencing, landscaping, drainage and irrigation, trails, restrooms, changing rooms, playground and playing field equipment on park land. So, DCLs don't fund upgrade work needed to serve the existing population, or for operations and maintenance. Park projects such as new amenities to enhance an existing park, land acquisition to augment an existing park, or strategic acquisition of land along waterways, are typically funded by DCLs.

### Community Amenity Contributions

CACs are contributions provided by developers (either in-kind amenities or payments in lieu), negotiated during rezoning, such as new parks, recreation centers, fire halls, and libraries to provide amenities to service the new population. Park projects on lands being rezoned for development are typically community amenity contributions.

### Partner Contributions

These can include cash contributions from other governments (federal, provincial and regional), non-profit agencies, foundations and philanthropists. Partner contributions can fund existing or new amenities.

## CRITICAL CONDITION

Many of the City's parks are overdue for renewal, a recent Park Board assessment found that 30% of park amenities are in critical condition. Keeping up with renewal and maintenance of existing parks is a challenge due to Charter restrictions on the use of specific funding sources. In addition, as new amenities are added supplemental operating capacity is considered but needs are not always fully met.

## DCL REDUCTION

The city occasionally re-assesses the rate at which DCLs are allocated to city services (parks, non-market housing, infrastructure etc.). Due to competing priorities, in 2017 the allocation for parks was reduced from 41% to 18%.

# INVENTORY + ANALYSIS: INCLUSIVITY

## SOPARC KEY PARKS FINDINGS

*The System for Observing Play + Recreation in Communities (SOPARC) is an observational survey tool that was used in the summer of 2017 to acquire data on community, neighbourhood and local park use.*

*To see the complete data and findings of the SOPARC study, please see the Appendix.*

### Park Atmosphere Findings

- Only 13% of parks had graffiti
- 61% of parks had “a little” litter present
- Food, drink or snack vendors in parks were observed 16% of the time

### Park Use Findings

- 70% of all total users of parks were present on weekends
- More women are proportionately present during weekdays\*
- Afternoons (30%) are the most popular time to be in parks, followed by early evening (28%), mid day (26%) and early morning (16%)
- The highest numbers of users observed over all observation periods were John Hendry (Trout lake) and David Lam by a large margin, followed by Memorial South, Emery Barnes and Connaught Park.

### Demographics

- 46% of park users were female and 54% were male (for children, the discrepancy was larger: 61% male, 39% female)\*
- 60% of park users were adults (20 to 59 years old)
- People using a wheelchair or mobility chair were observed 33% of the time in parks during the observation window
- People who appeared homeless were observed being present in parks 27% of the time

*The observational surveillance nature of the SOPARC tool necessitates that raters make educated guesses on the gender of park goers using only the female and male binary relation based on their physical appearance and dress. There is an acknowledgement that not all individuals adhere to this binary structure and some park users may identify as a gender other than female or male.*



John Hendry Park | Park Board

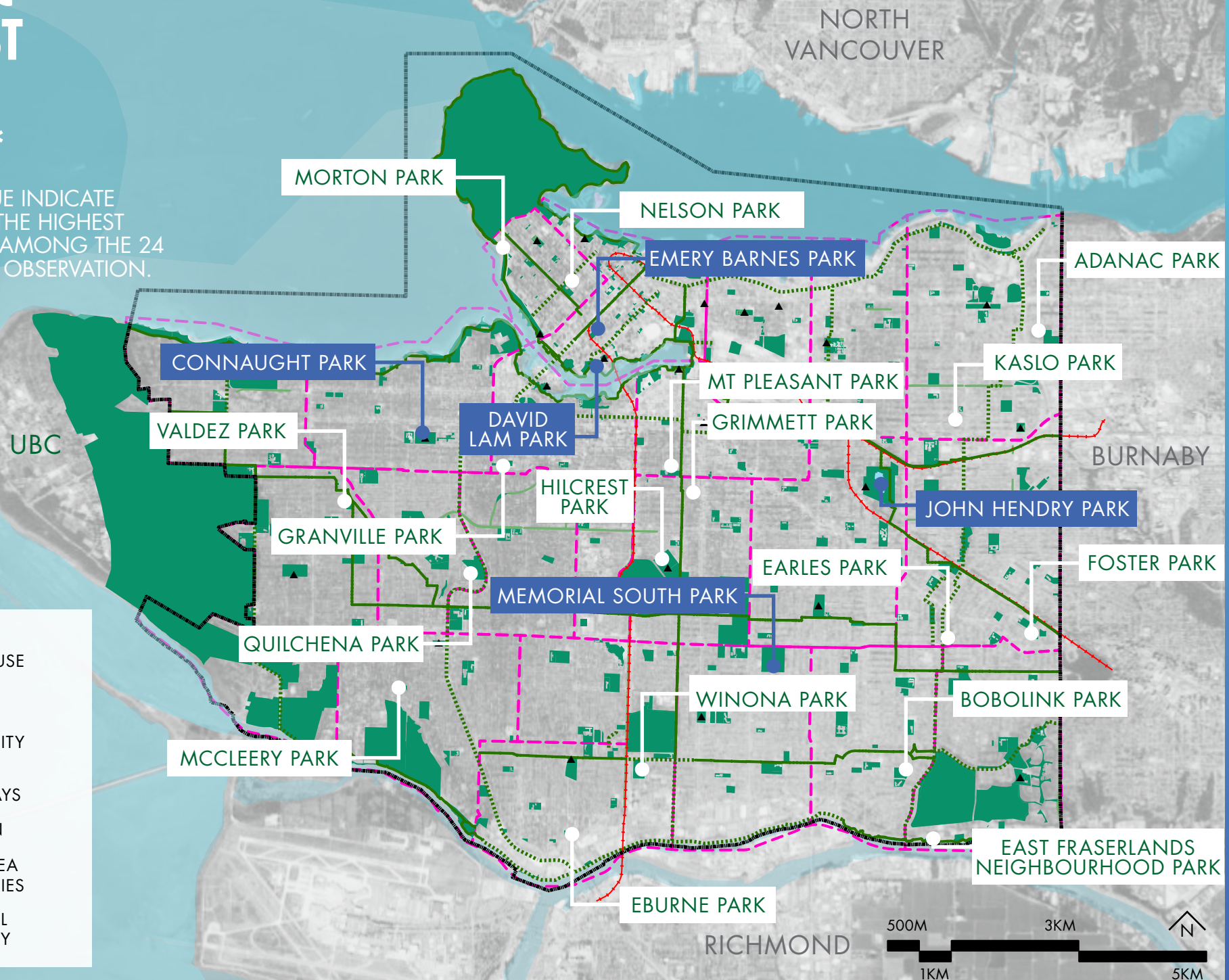


# SOPARC HIGHEST USE PARKS\*

\*PARKS IN BLUE INDICATE THOSE WITH THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF USE AMONG THE 24 PARKS UNDER OBSERVATION.

**LEGEND**

- HIGHEST USE PARKS
- PARKS
- COMMUNITY CENTRES
- GREENWAYS
- SKY TRAIN
- LOCAL AREA BOUNDARIES
- MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY



# OPPORTUNITIES + CHALLENGES

*The following list of opportunities and challenges is a summary of key findings gleaned from consultation with staff, stakeholders and the community (including fall 2018 Community Dialogue and Community Centre Association Meetings).*

## opportunities

interests or topics that have the potential to positively impact parks and recreation

## challenges

constraints or obstacles that have the potential to negatively impact parks and recreation

## OPPORTUNITIES

- 1. CONNECTIVITY**—Increasing system connectivity benefits both the human and nonhuman inhabitants of Vancouver by prioritizing habitat corridors and safe routes to schools and parks.
- 2. CONNECTION TO NATURE**—Natural beauty ranked as the top reason residents call Vancouver home. A strong connection to nature is core to the identity of Vancouver and many of the opportunities identified by the public for the future of parks centre on improving natural area, including biodiversity, green corridors and more wild areas.

- 3. UNCONVENTIONAL PARKLAND**—While land is limited in Vancouver, cities across the world, from Barcelona to New York City, have transformed their shorelines, former industrial sites, piers and barges into supplemental parkland.
- 4. FIRST NATIONS**—Local First Nations have stewarded Vancouver's open spaces since time immemorial and learning from their intricate knowledge of the environment could transform how we manage the landscape. Park design integrates elements of Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh Nations and Urban Indigenous Peoples history and living culture. First Nations are integral rights holders in the future of parks and public lands. The Park Board is committed to learning from First Nations in the planning and programming of parks.
- 5. INCLUSIVITY + WELCOME**— Through programming, activities, subsidies, permitting, events, art, and education we can make spaces more welcoming, interesting and safe for everyone.
- 6. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**—Parks and park edges offer opportunities to collaborate with the City of Vancouver green infrastructure group. Collaborations could improve resiliency, aesthetics, the health and abundance of the urban forest and pedestrian safety. Multifunctional spaces that meet human needs as well as environmental are preferred.
- 7. COLOCATION**—with the elevated cost of land, colocation offers opportunities for expanded parkland through partnerships and unconventional spaces, such as green roofs (if public access is ensured) or grade separated parks as proposed for the Oakridge Centre redevelopment. We recommend further study of this topic.
- 8. FOOD + BEVERAGE**—This was identified by the public as a key gap in the park system. Project for Public Space notes that increased food choice increases dwell time, is a people multiplier and enables parks to be third spaces between work and home.
- 9. EQUITY + ACCESS**— Equitable delivery of places and services recognizes the inherent privileges some populations (residents) have to access and enjoy parks and recreation and to provide added support and welcome to those populations (residents) without this privilege. By targeting land acquisition, amenity improvements and service provision in areas of the city with the highest need, to provide equitable delivery of parks and services. The VanPlay team is making an extensive effort to define, measure and set goals with the community for equity and welcoming in parks.



- 10. TRULY VANCOUVER** - As the steward and designer of the public realm we have the opportunity to influence the character and feel of a place. Our parks can reflect the traditional and contemporary values of everyone who lives here, to create our own look and feel which is unique and grounded in Vancouver.
- 11. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT** - Mapping and tracking our assets such as through development of a GPS located "hard assets inventory" allows for more efficient allocation of resources, and the ability to consider the total life cycle costs and repair due dates for park amenities such as park benches and lights.
- 12. FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING** - Park maintenance is scheduled however, it's not a precise art. Circumstances such as unexpected weather, equipment malfunctions, and expert staff availability mean that a flexible approach is best. Communicating this well to our users could manage expectations and help us be more strategic.

## CHALLENGES

- 1. INCREASED DEMAND**—While Vancouver has more park space today than it did 25 years ago, the amount of park space per person (or what we call park provision) has declined by almost a third. With space at a premium, many competing demands on park space and an increasingly limited budget, the Park Board is struggling to keep up with development and provide adequate recreation space to its growing population.
- 2. DEFERRED MAINTENANCE**—As Vancouver's parks work harder, keeping up with a high maintenance standard is a challenge. Downtown parks and those in the growth areas see disproportionate use and social issues alongside mounting maintenance and renewal costs. As we add new parks and amenities, we don't add staff capacity to match. The capacity of our aging service yards is also impacting maintenance efficiency. A lack of space for staff and specialist equipment, and poor conditions impacts our ability to perform.
- 3. VARYING NEEDS ACROSS COMMUNITIES**—There are local challenges facing parks that a systemwide plan cannot address. Downtown parks, like David Lam Park, see the most use, while local parks, such as East Fraserlands and Kaslo, are underutilized. With increased and varied usership, meeting the needs of neighbourhoods will remain challenging.
- 4. DETERIORATING LANDSCAPES**—The decline of natural area have long-standing impacts on parks and their resiliency. With a growing population and large public events, the city's beaches and lawns see use exceeding carrying capacity. Invasive species introduce further challenges, such as the Chafer and Japanese beetles impact on sports fields.
- 5. CLIMATE CHANGE**—Predictions for climate change include higher temperatures and increased volatility of storms. Hotter, dryer summers are impacting the health and abundance of the urban forest and natural area. Extreme weather events will bring increased maintenance and repair costs as a secondary impact such as an increase in irrigation required to maintain the quality of gardens and turf.
- 6. SEA LEVEL RISE**—Seas are estimated to rise by 1m by 2100 in Vancouver, putting 11% of the city's landmass at risk due to climate change. Waterfront parks will be impacted disproportionately by rising tides. The CCAS offers an action plan for sea level rise which will plan and implement feasible and adaptive solutions that will address the impacts of sea level rise.
- 7. HIGH DEMAND FOR PUBLIC LAND**—From housing to new roads to utilities to schools, there are many demands on public land and water. Collaboration with these agencies can create win-win scenarios and/or this plan can offer critical arguments to protect precious parkland. Parks are currently using potable water for irrigation, with a changing climate and increased scarcity and cost of water this is a huge vulnerability for horticulture and turf in particular.
- 8. LOSS OF SOLAR ACCESS**—Shadows from tall buildings is a challenge for growing cities. Open spaces must be protected from excessive shadowing to protect your sunny spot on the grass and keep vegetation thriving. New density can add vibrancy so proposals must be critically evaluated to ensure good collaborations and win/win scenarios for city building.







# FOUNDATION FOR INNOVATION



## PEER CITY CASE STUDIES

*Park equity is a challenging question for urban park systems across the globe. Here are two innovative approaches.*

### **NYC Parks: Framework for an Equitable Future — 2014**

This study sets a framework for how the City will equitably invest in park capital projects, and programming and maintenance projects. Key to approach is defining parks and communities that are underresourced. For parks, the planning team compiled longitudinal data on capital investments across the city to identify vulnerable parks. To identify communities with high potential need, they screened for above-average density, recent population growth and an above-average percentage of residents living below the federal poverty line. They then identified 35 parks of need within communities of need for immediate investment through the "Community Parks Initiative."

### **San Francisco Parks + Recreation: Equity Metrics — 2016**

San Francisco's pathway to equity began with a proposition charter that mandated the department develop a set of equity metrics to establish a baseline of services for low-income neighbourhoods that equitably aligns with services provided citywide. The P+R department utilized the statewide tool from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to identify equity zones. The population characteristics included Age (youth and seniors), Asthma, Low Birth Weight, Low Education, Linguistic Isolation, Poverty and Unemployment. Parks within a five minute walk of equity zones are priorities for investment and are monitored yearly against the citywide average to track progress.



