

Places + Access

INTRODUCTION

Vancouver is home to exciting, dynamic and accessible places—its 22 neighbourhoods are woven together by parks, school yards and an array of important community facilities.

Transit, bikeways, walking paths, lively sidewalks, roads and many other provide important places to gather and recreate. The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation is developing Vancouver's Playbook, a new master plan to guide the delivery of vibrant parks and recreation for the next 25 years. Vancouver's Playbook will support a network of places, including parks, open space and cultural destinations, that are accessible to all and relate to a diversity of active modes of transportation, like walking and cycling. If high-quality parks, recreation and social destinations are located within a 5 to 10-minute walk, people are more likely to grab their bikes or walk than get into their cars. Walking, cycling and being outside can refresh our spirit and provide long-term health benefits against obesity and stress.

BACKGROUND

Vancouver first prioritized access to parks in the Harland Bartholomew and Associates' 1928 Plan for the City of Vancouver that introduced neighborhood parks every square mile.

The 1982 Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation Master Plan expanded the City's parks and recreation network and formalized many of the social services provided in facilities. An innovative Management Plan in 1992 set a clear standard by introducing the goal of providing 1.1 hectares of green space per 1000 residents. 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. 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.



85% of Vancouverites live in high density, multi-unit dwellings, we are living closer together than ever before.





**That's a decrease of
18% in only 25 years.**



Which is only 21 minutes per day.



50%

OF TRIPS IN 2014 WITHIN THE CITY
WERE MADE ON TRANSIT, FOOT,
OR BIKE.

**We're up 10% in
only 6 years.**



**Van
Play**

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The Park Board endeavors to evaluate access to parks through the lenses of connectivity, quality and quantity. To that end, the City commissioned the 2016 Parks Provision Standard and Metric Study to analyze park access through the sidewalk network. The study accounted for time delays at busy intersections and physical barriers to access, such as rail lines or steep hills. This study found that 80% of residents were within the five-minute walk range (though 99.5% were within a ten-minute range.)

VanPlay and the Playbook will build off the 2016 study and further describe what access to high-quality parks and recreation opportunities looks like.

OBJECTIVES

- To look for opportunities to **co-locate parks and facilities** with other destinations, like libraries, cultural amenities and child care, to create vibrant places people are more likely to walk or cycle to as part of their daily recreation
- **To plan for future increases in population** and density to protect the quantity of parks and recreation opportunities available to the community

- To prioritize efforts to **improve the quality** of Park Board parks and facilities for today's population and the future growth of Vancouver's community

CHALLENGES

- **Population growth:** Vancouver's continued population growth puts pressure on the quantity and quality of parks and recreation places available to the community. By 2041, Vancouver's population will grow by over 150,000 people.
- **Equitable access:** The provision of equitable parks and recreation can be seen from two residential perspectives differentiated by density—the very high-density residences in the urban core and growth areas like Cambie Corridor and lower density residences in neighborhoods like Dunbar-Southlands. VanPlay's study of access to provide meaningful recommendations for delivering future quantity and quality of parks and recreation.
- **Vulnerable populations:** Low-income and ethnic groups tend to already have lower levels of physical activity and higher rates of obesity. Disparities in park access and quality may worsen these conditions, and should be taken into consideration in park investments and planning strategies.



Vancouver is one of the most densely populated cities in North America with over 630,000 people living in 114.97 square kilometers

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- **Rising land costs:** High costs of construction and land acquisition can limit the possibility of adding additional parks and recreation over time in Vancouver.
- **Maintenance:** Ongoing maintenance, governance and stewardship costs are challenges for parks, recreation and connective routes in Vancouver and cities across North America.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Highly valued places:** Parks and open space are highly-valued places: Vancouver's Stanley Park alone attracts over 8 million visitors annually.
- **Increased accessibility:** Accessible walking distances to parks and recreation are especially beneficial to people with reduced mobility (e.g., families with small children and older adults).
- **Recreational opportunities:** Recreational programming has become an important strategy in addressing the obesity crisis by promoting physical activity through means of organized sports leagues, outdoor fitness classes, interventions to encourage the use of walking paths and trails, and varied leisure activities, like yoga.

- **Meeting demand for transit:** Vancouver's transit demand is out-pacing system capacity and indicates room for future growth of active transportation and parks and recreation destinations.
- **Addressing climate change impacts:** In Vancouver, 30% of greenhouse gas emissions come from vehicles. Increasing parks and recreation destinations will support active transportation which in turn can help lower the City's ecological footprint. Sea level rise is triggering new conversations about our sea side land, infrastructure and land required to protect infrastructure and housing can provide abundant opportunities for recreation use.



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ONGOING INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING PROJECTS:

There are several current and planned projects supporting active transportation and the creation of park and recreation destinations.

- Removal of Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts around False Creek
- Arbutus Corridor as a multiuse greenway
- Parkland consolidation and greenways along Fraser River
- Utilization of land below the SkyTrain as open space
- Pavement to Plaza sites across downtown
- Additional bike and pedestrian facilities on Granville, Cambie and Burrard Bridges
- Collaboration with the City of Vancouver and community partners to connect parks and recreation through active transportation (walking and cycling)
- Enhance the connectivity of recreation opportunities by converting excess road right of way (ROW) to park and open space in areas of City where land costs are prohibitive

RELATED INITIATIVES

- Park Board Management Plan – 1992
- Greenest City 2020 Action Plan – 2011
- Park Provision Standard and Metric Study – 2016
- Transportation 2040 Plan – 2012
- Healthy City Strategy – 2014
- Metro Vancouver 2040 Regional Plan – 2011
- British Columbia: Provincial Transit Plan – 2008
- Climate Change Adaptation Strategy – 2011
- Downtown Transportation Plan – 2002
- Vancouver Bicycle Plan – 2008
- Vancouver Transportation Plan – 1999
- Vancouver Greenways Plan – 1991
- City of Reconciliation Framework – 2014
- Park Board 11 Reconciliation Strategies – 2016

Learn more at:

www.vancouver.ca/vanplay



*63% of
Vancouver's 22
neighborhoods
score in the
"very walkable"
category on
walkscore.com*

