



Goal: Environments to Thrive In

Vancouverites have the right to a healthy environment and equitable access to liveable environments in which they can thrive.

Healthy City for All Target

- ☐ Add to the Greenest City Action Plan, a biodiversity target and a target related to toxins prevention.
- ☐ By 2025: every Vancouver neighbourhood has a “Walk Score” of at least 70 (indicating the most errands can be accomplished on foot).

Indicators in this Fact Sheet

- Population and Employment Density
- Walkability
- Planning for Environments to Thrive In

Key Findings

- Built environments, natural environments, economic environments and social environments are **interconnected**.
- Vancouver is a **walkable city**, but not equitably: some neighbourhoods are less walkable than others.
- There are a number of **plans and actions** that the City can undertake to ensure equitable access to liveable environments.

Why it Matters

Planning communities, buildings, amenities, transportation networks and infrastructure are shaped by complex interactions between planning and design principles, community values and goals and local governments’ public policy choices. The allocation of space within a city has a profound impact on the health and well-being of people, communities and the planet.

Healthy, livable urban environments are characterized by complete, compact and connected communities. Key components include a well-planned built environment, a sustainable natural environment, a thriving economic environment and a vibrant social environment. There are many interconnected ways in which healthy urban environments lead to better physical and mental health outcomes; enhanced engagement and connectedness; and abundant opportunities to thrive that can be sustained in the face of local, regional and global challenges.

Vancouver has achieved much to promote healthy urban environments. Vancouver is renowned for its parks and natural spaces, its urban planning and its goal to be the greenest city in the world. However, access to healthy environments is not equitable. Land use and building types vary considerably across the city, with consequences for physical, social and economic accessibility. Some neighbourhoods have fewer or lower quality amenities than others, such as parks, recreation facilities, community services or gathering space. Transportation networks constrain the mobility options of residents in different neighbourhoods in different ways. The reasons for these inequities are complex: our city has been shaped by geography, by history and by changing political and economic contexts.

The indicators presented here are intended to serve as first steps toward understanding the need for more equitable access to liveable environments.

About this Fact Sheet

This series reports on social indicators and trends related to the 12 long-term goals of the City of Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy. More information on the Strategy is available online at vancouver.ca/healthycity4all. **Environments to Thrive In** explores how Vancouver's built, natural, economic and social environments can enable all Vancouverites to thrive.

Social research is always imprecise and uncertain. Collaboration, replication and information sharing are crucial to building a more complete and rigorous picture of health and well-being in Vancouver. Readers are encouraged to provide feedback, ask questions and to engage in exploring and interpreting the information presented here.

Areas of Study

Information in this fact sheet is presented for a number of different geographies. Comparisons between Vancouver and other cities refer to individual local governments, as defined by Statistics Canada's census subdivisions.

Within the City of Vancouver, this fact sheet provides information organized in two ways. The map below left illustrates Vancouver's local planning areas (neighbourhoods). Readers should note that the Dunbar-Southlands local area includes the Musqueam community, but it is not included in citywide figures from Statistics Canada unless otherwise noted.



Many aspects of environments to thrive in relate to regional policies, services, goals and actions. The map above right illustrates the multiple municipalities that comprise Metro Vancouver.

Engaging with Data Sources

Sources used are noted in each section of this fact sheet. Key online resources include:

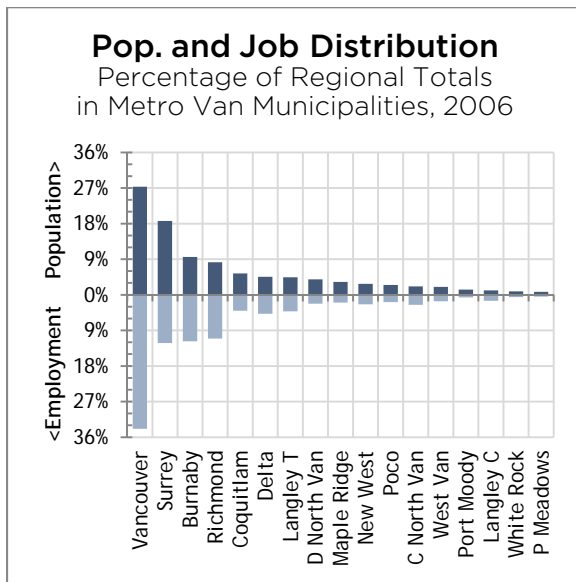
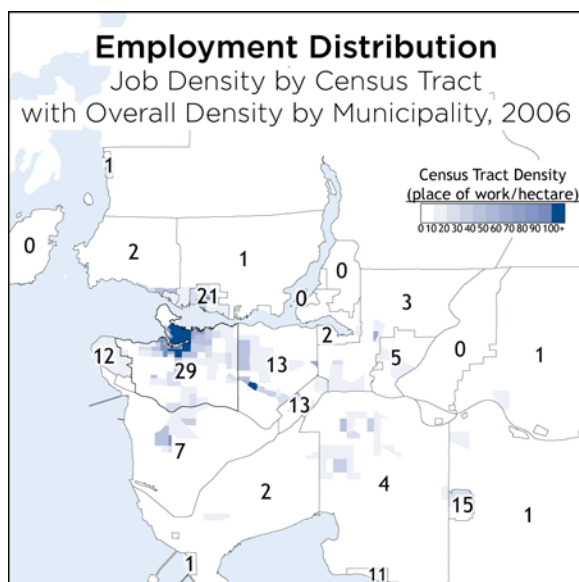
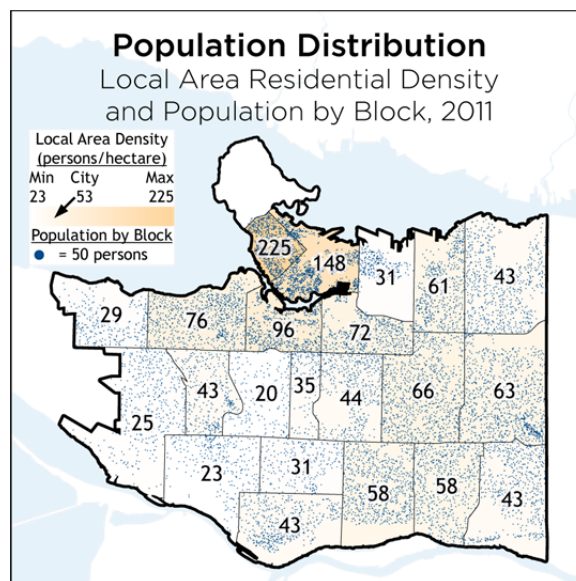
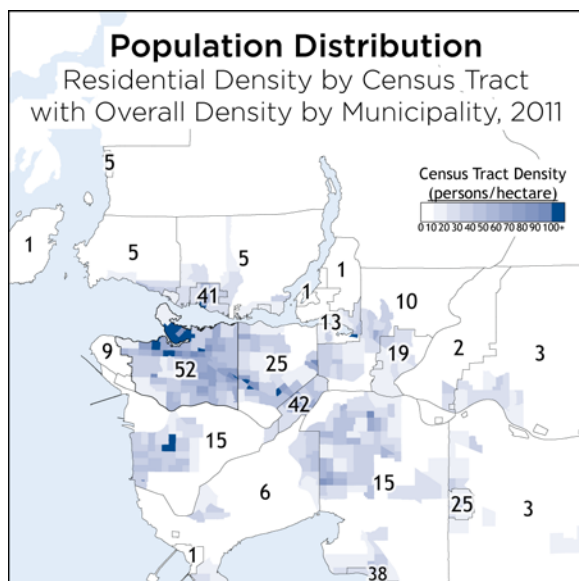
- Information from Statistics Canada's Census of Population and National Household Survey is available online at statcan.gc.ca.
- The City of Vancouver's open data catalogue contains a wealth of geographical information about City services and infrastructure: data.vancouver.ca.
- Walk Score statistics on the City of Vancouver can be found at walkscore.com/CA-BC/Vancouver. Further recommended reading on academic research into walkability can be found at UBC's Health and Community Design Lab: health-design.spgh.ubc.ca/tools/walkability-index.

Population and Employment Density

Understanding environments to thrive in begins with understanding where people live and work. Neither people nor jobs are evenly distributed through the City of Vancouver or the broader region.

Within the region, Vancouver was nearly 25 per cent more densely populated than the second-densest city (New Westminster) in 2011, and was several times more densely settled than the populations of some outer municipalities. Within the city, Downtown and the West End were much denser than any other neighbourhood.

Employment data are available from the 2006 census: in 2006, Vancouver also contained the highest concentration of jobs in the region, with the Downtown core and Central Broadway corridor standing out as employment locations. Vancouver had slightly more than a quarter of Metro Vancouver's population in 2006, but over a third of the region's jobs.



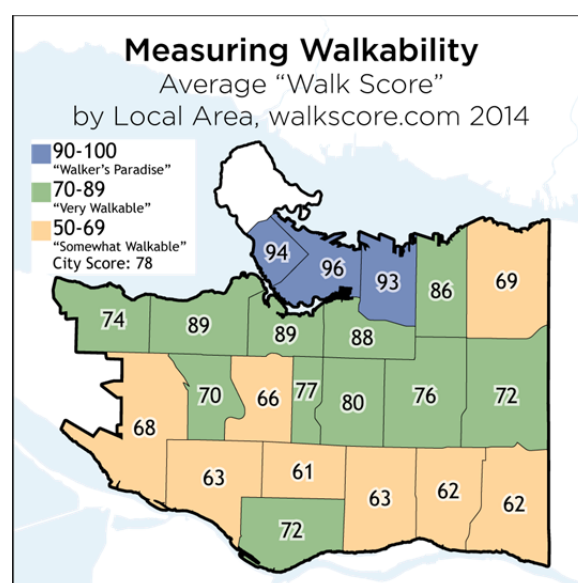
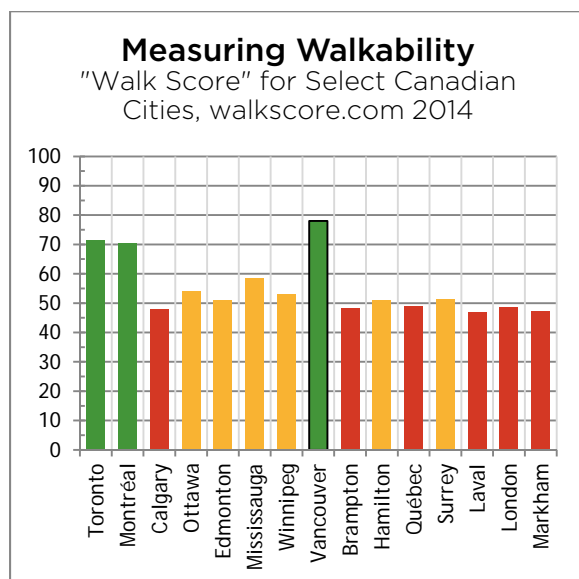
Data Sources

Population and employment statistics are adapted from Statistics Canada's 2006 and 2011 Census of Population. Density calculations based on area are affected by commercial, industrial, institutional, parkland or agricultural land uses, and the statistics used need to be understood within a local context.

Indicator: Walkability

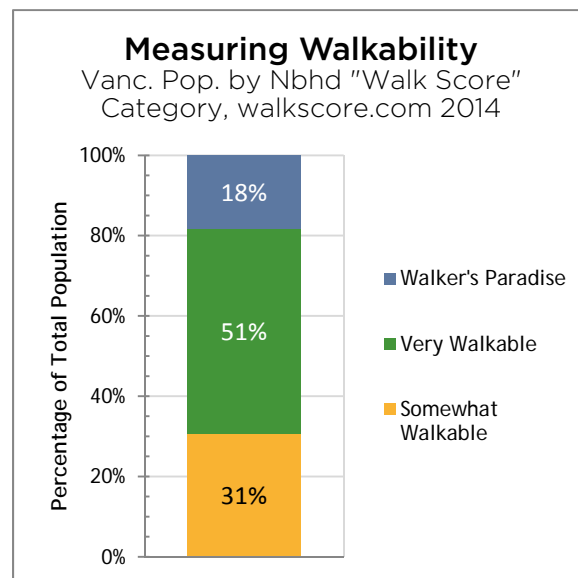
The walkability of a community is an indicator of the health of its built, natural, economic and social environments. The emergence of online tools such as Walk Score has brought the issue of complete, compact and connected communities to the forefront; it is now common for real estate developers to cite the “walk score” of their development as a marketing tool. Meanwhile, academic research has explored and raised awareness of the links between walkability and health outcomes, environmental quality, behaviour and social connectedness.

Vancouver has the highest “walk score” of large cities in Canada that have been measured to date. Vancouver’s score is 78, or “very walkable.” However, not all of Vancouver’s neighbourhoods are equally walkable. Different patterns of development, land use planning, density and amenity provision have created a city with considerable variation, particularly between Downtown and some outlying neighbourhoods.



Downtown, the West End and Strathcona have the highest “walk scores” within Vancouver. A number of neighbourhoods south of 41st Avenue, including Kerrisdale, Oakridge, Sunset, Victoria-Fraserview and Killarney, have the lowest. Just over half of Vancouver’s residents live in communities that are classified as “very walkable” (score 70-89), in which “most errands” can be accomplished on foot. Another 18 per cent living in a “walker’s paradise” (score 90 or higher), where “daily errands do not require a car”. Finally, 31 per cent of Vancouver’s population lives in “somewhat walkable” areas, where “some errands can be accomplished on foot” (score 50-69).

The Healthy City for All target is for all Vancouver neighbourhoods to have “walk scores” of at least 70—that is, to be considered “very walkable.” The next page outlines some steps that could be taken toward achieving this outcome.



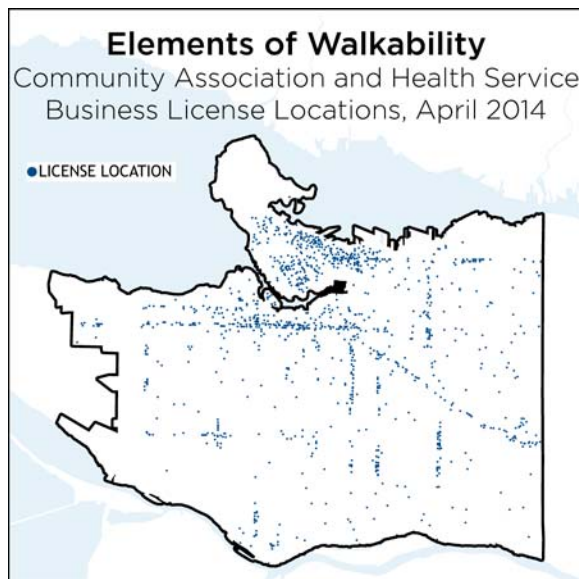
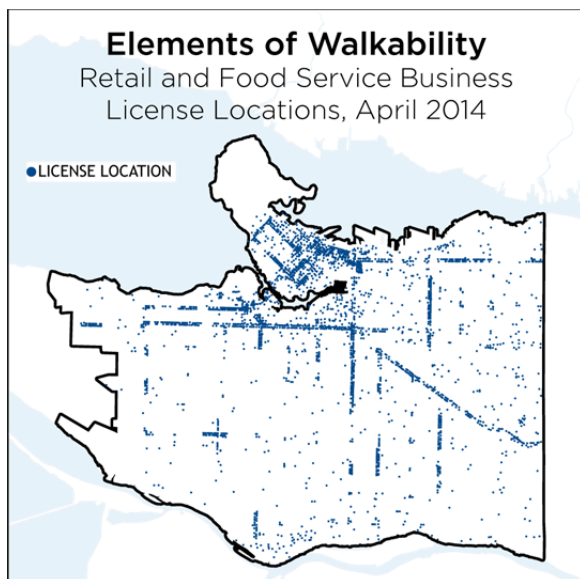
Data Sources

“Walk scores” and the interpretations of what scores mean are extracted from walkscore.com. Statistics were initially extracted in September 2013 and were still current as of summer 2014.

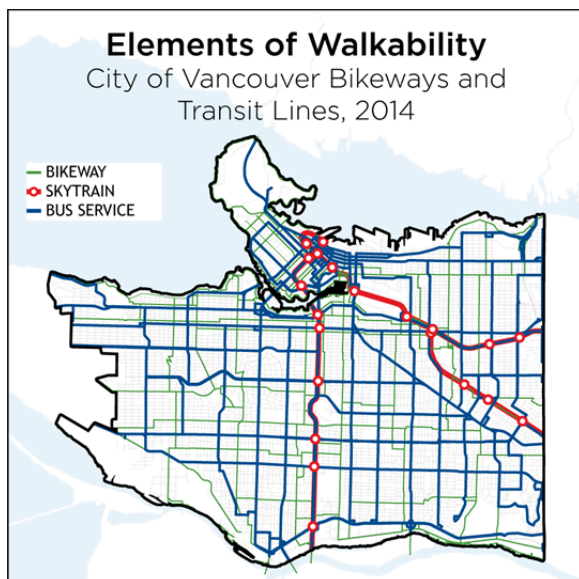
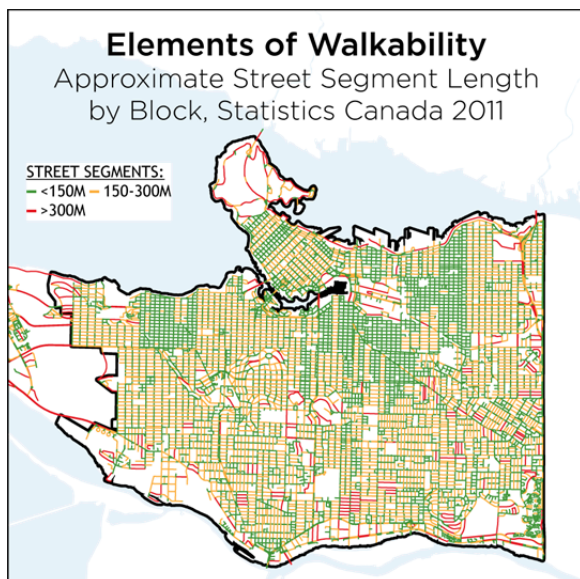
Elements of Walkability

Walkability is much more than a single number. Tools such as Walk Score are tremendously useful for comparing walkability across cities, but tools are created for different purposes and reflect different priorities. This page offers a sample of some of the features that can impact the overall walkability of a city.

Walk Score's calculation of walkability is largely based on how many amenities are within nearby walking distance to an address or neighbourhood. The map below left shows the distribution of retail and food service business licenses within the city, while the map below right shows selected community association and health service licenses, which broadly represent services and organizations in the community.



Walkability is also impacted by infrastructure. The map below left illustrates **block length** on streets throughout Vancouver, suggesting areas in which pedestrian paths are challenging or indirect. Vancouver's street network is generally a walkable grid, but long blocks often coincide with industrial areas, large parks, major institutions or steep hills. Meanwhile, the map below right illustrates active transportation systems that complement walking, including bikeways and transit lines.



Data Sources

Map data are adapted from City of Vancouver open business license and bikeway data; from Statistics Canada boundary and road network files; and from Translink GTFS data current as of December 2013.

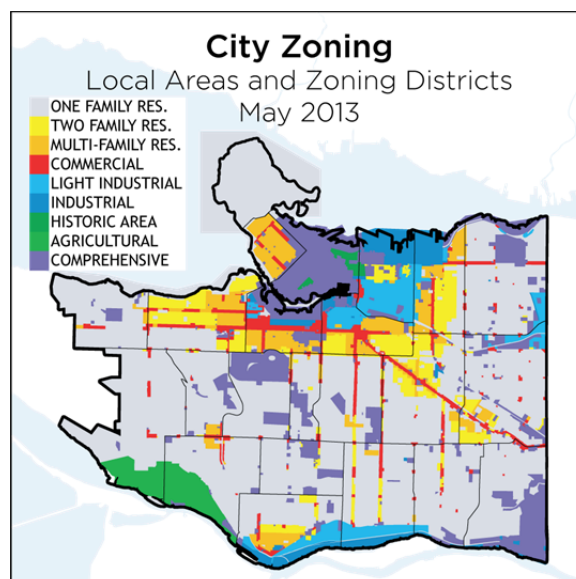
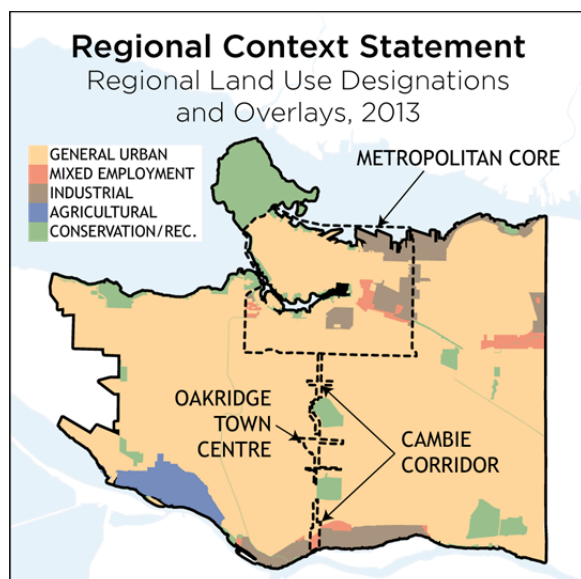
Planning for Environments to Thrive In

A Well-Planned Built Environment

The City of Vancouver's citywide land use policies have most recently been expressed through its Regional Context Statement, which links Metro Vancouver's Regional Growth Strategy to local planning within the City of Vancouver. More detailed land use planning takes place through City zoning and development processes.

The map below left illustrates the major regional land use classifications assigned within the City of Vancouver, as well as the area defined to be the region's metropolitan core. In addition, Oakridge is designated as a municipal town centre, and the Cambie Corridor is highlighted as a frequent transit development area.

The map below right illustrates zoning districts within the city, providing a general overview of how land use policies are realized. Recent rezoning processes have typically resulted in the creation of comprehensive development zones and districts, which permit more direct and contextual regulation of land uses.

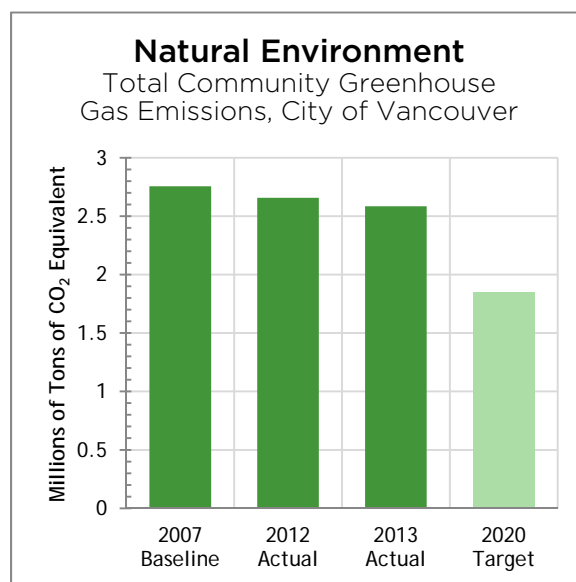


A Sustainable Natural Environment

The City of Vancouver's Greenest City Action Plan sets 10 goals and 15 targets to make Vancouver the greenest city in the world by 2020. Goal areas include a green economy, climate leadership, green buildings, green transportation, zero waste, access to nature, lighter footprint, clean water, clean air and local food.

Progress toward one target, overall greenhouse gas emissions produced in the City of Vancouver, is illustrated in the graph at right. All targets are tracked and monitored through annual implementation updates.

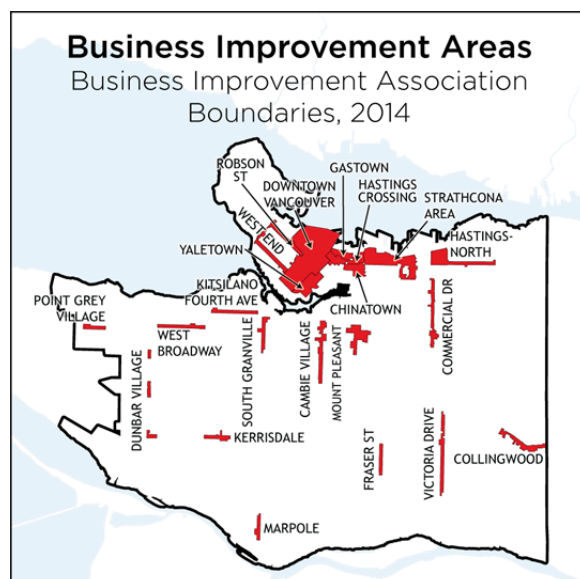
The Greenest City Action Plan is intended to ensure that Vancouver is a sustainable and resilient city that can thrive while responding to major global environmental challenges, including climate change; energy and waste; and ecosystem changes. It demonstrates that cities can show leadership in addressing these global issues.



A Thriving Economic Environment

The Vancouver Economic Action Strategy, completed in 2011, outlines a vision for a thriving economic environment for Vancouver. It focuses on three key areas: ensuring a healthy climate for growth and prosperity; supporting local businesses, new investment and global trade; and attracting and retaining human capital. It recognizes the links between economic development and environmental and social sustainability, and sets a number of goals for ensuring the city's prosperity into the future.

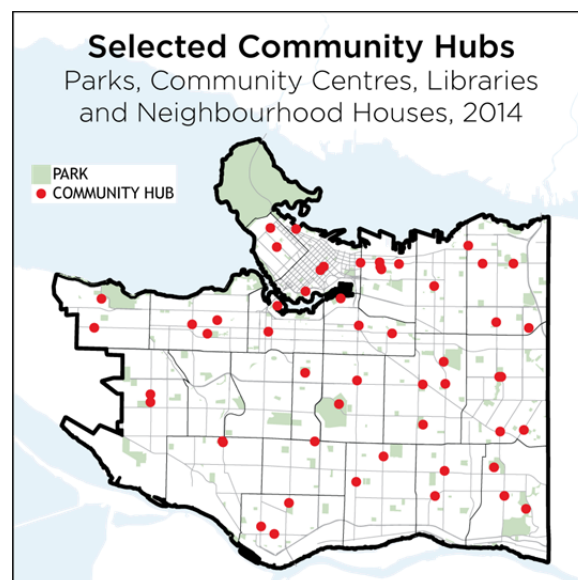
The maps below provide an overview of how economic development is realized at a local scale in neighbourhoods within the city. The map below left illustrates BIA (Business Improvement Association) boundaries throughout the city, while the map below right illustrates the general locations of local centres and shopping areas within neighbourhoods outside of the downtown core.



A Vibrant Social Environment

The City of Vancouver's definition of social sustainability consists of three parts: meeting basic needs; individual or human capacity; and social or community capacity. Ensuring a socially sustainable city is realized through four principles: equity; social inclusion and interaction; security; and adaptability.

The Healthy City Strategy is intended to bring together a number of different City plans and programs to achieve a vibrant social environment. By planning in an integrated way, by setting targets and by increasing awareness of social sustainability issues throughout the city, the Strategy will integrate City initiatives in diverse areas such as planning for public space, addressing homelessness, supporting neighbourhood organizations, planning and maintaining social amenities and more.



Data Sources and Further Reading

All maps and graphics are based on data from the City of Vancouver. Zoning and BIA boundaries are available in the City's open data catalogue at data.vancouver.ca.

Further reading on City plans and initiatives referenced here can be found at vancouver.ca/planning; vancouver.ca/greenestcity; vancouvereconomic.com; and vancouver.ca/people-programs.

Toward a Healthy City for All

Integrating the built environment, the natural environment, the economic environment and the social environment is tremendously challenging. Conflicts can easily arise between, for instance, economic growth and environmental resilience; or between equity and social justice goals and land-use planning processes. Resolving these is difficult, but not impossible, and it begins by deciding what sort of city we want to live in:

- What does it mean to have a city with a well-planned built environment? A sustainable natural environment? A vibrant economic environment? A vibrant social environment?
- What kind of future is Vancouver planning for? What needs to change to move us there?
- What is the City's role in addressing regional, provincial, national and global challenges?
- How can we move from conflicts between social, environmental or economic goals to opportunities for collaboration and integration?

Answering these will be a complex challenge. The City of Vancouver is not going to single-handedly create environments to thrive in. But there are opportunities to lead, to collaborate and to connect different aspects of public policy together to articulate a vision for our city's future.

The City's Role

Key areas in which the City can show leadership include:

- Pursuing **land-use, transportation and infrastructure planning** with a social equity lens, to ensure that all Vancouverites have equitable access to liveable environments in which they can thrive. This can take place at both community and citywide levels.
- Continuing to work toward becoming **the greenest city** in the world, to demonstrate the role that local governments can play in responding to climate change, energy depletion and changing ecosystems.
- Creating **economic development** plans that incorporate sustainability and equity as key components of economic growth and prosperity.
- Ensuring **social sustainability** by developing more opportunities for people in Vancouver to meet their basic needs, to contribute to their city and to participate in networks, organizations, communities and institutions that empower and engage them.

Your Turn

The Healthy City for All target of ensuring that all Vancouver neighbourhoods receive a high Walk Score is a proxy that indicates how Vancouver is creating compact, connected and complete communities across the city. This is a complex target that will be realized through a number of participatory processes, actions, plans and policy. It will not be realized without contributions of all who have a stake in building a healthy city for all, from local government to community organizations to individuals. We all live in a number of different environments within the city, and all of us have a role to play in ensuring that we and others can thrive.

Learn more and get involved at vancouver.ca/healthcity4all.