

HEALTHY CITY STRATEGY

Vancouver's Strategic Framework
for Social Sustainability

Updated 2026



CITY OF
VANCOUVER

Healthy City
Strategy

Land acknowledgement

The City of Vancouver is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x̱m̱əθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam Indian Band), Sḵwx̱w̱ú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), and səliiwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation). The lands and waters have been stewarded by Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Peoples since time immemorial. The Nations' unique knowledge, relationships, rights, and title on these lands are essential to building and sustaining healthy communities.

The updated Healthy City Strategy reflects the commitments of the City of Vancouver's UNDRIP Strategy and Vancouver's continued efforts to be a City of Reconciliation. It adds a lens of Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation to all of its goals, building on the assets and strengths of Indigenous communities while addressing the policies and systems that have created barriers to health and well-being for Indigenous Peoples in Vancouver.

Contents

Land acknowledgement	2
Executive summary	3
Introduction	
Why a Healthy City Strategy?	4
Building on strengths	5
Guiding principles	6
Healthy City Strategy framework	
Vision and foundations	7
<i>A Healthy City for All</i>	7
<i>Healthy People, Healthy Communities, Healthy Environments</i>	7
Lenses	8
<i>Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation</i>	8
<i>Equity and Intersectionality</i>	9
<i>Accessibility and Inclusion</i>	9
Goals	10
<i>Good Health Throughout Life</i>	11
<i>Affordable, Safe, Secure Housing</i>	11
<i>Food Systems</i>	12
<i>Care and Support Networks</i>	12
<i>Income and Economy</i>	13
<i>Community Safety</i>	13
<i>Belonging and Connection</i>	14
<i>Active Living</i>	14
<i>Arts, Culture, and Learning</i>	15
<i>Sustainable Transportation</i>	15
<i>Complete Neighbourhoods</i>	16
<i>Climate Change and Disaster Resilience</i>	16
Monitoring and Alignment	
Snapshot of Vancouver's health in 2026	17
Alignment with global Sustainable Development Goals	20
Existing City strategies contributing to Healthy City goals	21
Implementation and monitoring	22
Conclusion	23

Executive summary

Purpose of the Healthy City Strategy

People's health is significantly shaped by social, economic, and environmental factors, a number of which fall within local government sphere of influence. A sustainable future depends on reducing inequities in these determinants of health that can prevent people from achieving the best possible level of well-being. The Healthy City Strategy is the City of Vancouver's framework to help contextualize, focus and prioritize action on health across City operations, and for fostering collaboration and partnership. It enables monitoring and reporting on health and well-being, building on Vancouver's role as a leader in the global healthy cities movement.

This document updates Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy (2014) to guide long-term change and embed a health perspective in the City of Vancouver's work.

Changes in this refresh

This update to the Healthy City Strategy preserves the original breadth of the strategy, recognizing the many aspects of health and well-being in Vancouver's urban context. It responds to the need for clearer City roles and accountabilities and greater integration of City policies and commitments. Key updates include:

- The addition of **guiding lenses** to apply to all goals and associated actions and metrics. These reflect City commitments to Indigenous rights and reconciliation (expressed in the City of Vancouver's UNDRIP Strategy), equity and intersectionality (the Equity Framework), and accessibility and inclusion (Accessibility Strategy).
- Updates to all **Healthy City goals** for clearer focus, a stronger understanding of the social determinants of health, and a focus on current social issues in Vancouver. City staff engaged with key partners in 2024 and 2025 to develop these updates.
- Renewed **partnerships**, especially with Vancouver Coastal Health, to enable collaborative action on health while recognizing the City's mandate and scope as a local government.
- Alignment with **global Sustainable Development Goals**, enabling the Healthy City Strategy to track Vancouver's contributions to global sustainability efforts.
- A new **implementation and monitoring framework** that will be developed over time through regular reporting and engagement on the Healthy City Strategy.

Next steps

As the City implements the next phase of the Healthy City Strategy, Vancouver will continue to be a leader in advancing health and well-being for all Vancouver residents, through direct action and partnership with other sectors and levels of government. As Vancouver's overall strategic framework for social sustainability, the Healthy City Strategy will guide Vancouver to a future in which everyone in the city has the opportunity to thrive.

Why a Healthy City Strategy?

Vancouver’s longstanding definition of sustainability is “a community that meets the needs for the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs... achieved through community participation and the reconciliation of short and long term economic, social, and ecological well-being.”¹ The Healthy City Strategy is Vancouver’s framework to define, measure, and prioritize action related to health and social well-being in the city. It helps the City and partners respond to the needs different communities have today while also looking toward a sustainable future.

A holistic understanding of health

Many factors that make people healthy happen outside of the health care system, such as clean air, healthy food, or opportunities to be active. With 85% of Canadians now living in urban areas,² it is important for cities to be leaders in creating communities and environments that support everyone’s health and well-being. As Canada’s densest large city, Vancouver has an opportunity to show leadership locally, nationally and globally by prioritizing health and well-being throughout its policies and programs.

Two public health emergencies in recent years—the toxic drug crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic—have impacted some groups greater than others, highlighting deeper inequities. These emergencies have shown the importance of action on the upstream determinants of health.

Integrating health across the City

The Healthy City Strategy is a people-focused framework that applies to all of the City’s policy work, while encouraging collaboration from other sectors. It does not replace other City policies and strategies but provides tools to align the City and partners toward shared social goals and to prioritize health in all policies. Opportunities include:

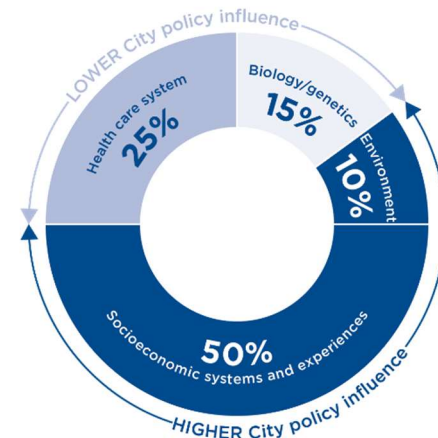
- **Policy development:** common goals and indicators that can focus on specific communities’ needs while also contributing to larger population outcomes.
- **Physical planning and land use:** a framework for integrating health and well-being into how communities in the city are designed and developed.
- **Resource allocation:** tools to enable evidence-based decision-making relating to health and well-being in City budget and other processes.
- **Partnership and advocacy:** a framework that enables collaboration; for example, understanding trends and gaps in well-being that are shaped by decisions at all levels of government, and benchmarking with other cities.

¹ “Creating a Sustainable City” report to Vancouver City Council April 23, 2002.

<https://council.vancouver.ca/020423/rr3.htm>

² Statistics Canada, population estimates, by census metropolitan area and census agglomeration, July 1, 2024. Table 17-10-0148-01.

Determinants of Health



Data source: Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, A Healthy, Productive Canada: A Determinant of Health Approach, final report of Senate Subcommittee on Population Health, 2009

Figure 1 Diagram of the relative impact of different factors on people’s health outcomes

Building on strengths

Since the adoption of the first Healthy City Strategy in 2014, Vancouver's work integrating health into City policy has been recognized as leading practice worldwide. This enables the City to leverage significant contributions and resources to address the determinants of health in the city.

In 2024, Vancouver City Council directed City staff to update the Healthy City Strategy. The refreshed Strategy builds on its strengths and updates its goals to respond to social changes and current priorities.

Accomplishments from the first Healthy City Strategy, 2014-present

Key achievements from the original Healthy City Strategy include:

- Ongoing partnership between the City of Vancouver and Vancouver Coastal Health.
- Implementation of policies advancing the Strategy's goals, such as the Equity Framework, Social Infrastructure Strategy.
- Advancing detailed strategies and actions for specific goals or populations, such as the development and implementation of the Childcare Strategy.
- Integration of Healthy City Strategy goals to inform social grants.
- Active partnerships in regional, national, and international health-related networks and projects.
- Community engagement through a public-facing Healthy City indicator dashboard.

The original Strategy was successful in promoting a more holistic understanding of health and enabling strong partnerships. The updated Strategy focuses on new opportunities such as developing a more effective collaborative governance model, clearly defining the City's roles and responsibilities, and enabling better alignment of policies.³

Partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health

The City of Vancouver and Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) have a long history of collaboration to promote health and well-being. Under BC's Public Health Act, local governments must work with Medical Health Officers to address health hazards and barriers to well-being, and to consider their advice to protect the health of the population.

Since 2013, the City and VCH have had a formal Memorandum of Understanding to prioritize collaborative projects, support healthy policies, build new partnerships, and improve service coordination. With the updated Healthy City Strategy, this partnership will be strengthened to ensure that a strong health perspective continues to inform City policies. This refresh also aligns with the Province's newly adopted Population and Public Health Framework, Age Forward Strategy for British Columbians 50 and older, and the most current VCH Strategic Plan, supporting policy alignment across different levels of government.

³ SHIFT Collaborative, Healthy City Strategy Evaluation report, December 2017

Guiding principles

The principles guiding the Healthy City Strategy reflect its intention to enable multi-sectoral collaboration across the determinants of health. The City plays a leadership role within its own jurisdiction but also invites others to the table. The updated principles below help shape the Strategy itself and will offer guidance for ongoing collaboration and alignment:

- **Health in all policies:** with a broad understanding of health, every policy choice the City makes has implications for the well-being of people, communities, and environments in Vancouver, and these implications are interconnected. The Healthy City Strategy aims to integrate health into all aspects of City policy, planning, and decision-making.
- **Systems focus:** while individual choices and behaviours are important to people's health, the Healthy City Strategy focuses on the structures that shape those choices. The responsibility for addressing health inequities falls on those who can influence larger systems, not on those who are impacted by them.
- **Equity-driven approach:** the Healthy City Strategy's goals are universal, reflecting needs everyone has for health and well-being. The level of effort needed to achieve these goals is higher for those who face greater inequity. A healthy city approach involves working toward universal goals for everyone but targeting efforts and resources to prioritize those who experience the greatest barriers to achieve them.
- **Upstream orientation:** substantial work and resources at all levels are currently directed toward responding to the impacts of inequitable systems and gaps in the determinants of health. A more sustainable approach gradually shifts attention to the root causes of these issues and directs effort and resources to not only responding to current issues but working to prevent future impacts.
- **Collaborative leadership:** the City of Vancouver is a leader in aspiring to be a healthy city. The City will set priorities for action within its jurisdiction, while also recognizing that municipal jurisdiction and resources are not sufficient to fully achieve the Healthy City Strategy's goals. A healthy city approach engages many partners across sectors and levels of government to work together toward a shared vision for health and well-being.
- **Multiple approaches:** to put the Healthy City Strategy into action, and the City will need to use a variety of tactics to focus its work. These may include physical planning of the city to create healthy environments, developing programs and services, allocating resources, or advocating to other levels of government.
- **Evidence informed:** data is central to the Healthy City Strategy. Implementing it requires ongoing work to understand issues, inequities, and trends across the city. This includes consideration for different types of data, including both population-scale indicators and community-specific understandings of health and well-being.
- **Community grounded:** the Healthy City Strategy will be most successful if all communities, especially those most impacted by health inequities, are active involved in shaping, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating it.

Vision and foundations

At the centre of the Healthy City Strategy is a shared vision and understanding of health and well-being. These elements are carried forward and updated from the original Healthy City Strategy, reflecting Vancouver's ongoing commitment to put health at the centre of a sustainable future and integrate this vision into all its plans and policies.



Vision: A Healthy City for All

Vancouver will continue to aspire to being a city that everyone can thrive in. The updated vision of the Healthy City Strategy is:

A Healthy City for All: a city where we collectively create and continually improve the conditions that foster health, well-being, and equity for everyone, especially those who experience barriers.

Key definitions and commitments associated with this vision are:

- **Healthy:** Vancouver understands health and well-being in a holistic way. Health extends beyond the mere absence of illness to include physical health, mental health, and social well-being, and recognizing that health is shaped by systems, context, and conditions. Many people in Vancouver face barriers to achieving even a basic level of health, and this vision prioritizes actions that remove those barriers.
- **City:** The Healthy City Strategy is a plan for addressing the determinants of health in a sustainable urban context, where there is limited physical space that must be shared by many people with different identities, experiences, goals, and needs. Cities bring people together for connection, community, and opportunities, and they are places where people's well-being is interrelated and interdependent.
- **For All:** The Healthy City Strategy is for everyone in Vancouver, including both those who have the means or resources to access a high level of health and those who do not. It is also intended to be a framework that is grounded in the diverse identities and lived experiences of people in the city. The Strategy aspires to create an equitable and sustainable future where everyone has the agency and resources to achieve the best possible well-being on their own terms.

Foundations: Healthy People, Communities, and Environments

Vancouver's definition of health recognizes the interconnections between the health of people, communities, and environments. These concepts draw attention to:

- **People** are healthy when they have the resources to meet their needs, including not only basic health needs like food, water, and shelter but also a sense of meaning, purpose, and ability to plan for a positive future.
- **Communities** are healthy when people can come together to meet shared goals. Communities include any group that people may want to belong to: chosen or given families, neighbours, cultural communities, virtual communities. Being part of healthy communities benefits individual health, and people's individual health gives them the capacity to shape their communities.
- **Environments** are healthy when the physical, social, and economic surroundings support healthy people and communities. This includes the health of the lands and waters that Vancouver is built on. Mitigating and adapting to a changing climate is an important part of building a healthy city.

Lenses

The Healthy City Strategy applies three lenses that reflect key commitments the City has made:

- Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation
- Equity and Intersectionality
- Accessibility and Inclusion



These lenses guide and shape all aspects of the strategy, ensuring these overarching policy commitments are incorporated into each of the strategy's goals.

The lenses are based on important City documents, including the UNDRIP Strategy (2022), the Equity Framework (2022), and the Accessibility Strategy (2022). These lenses have informed the refresh to date and will continue to direct how the strategy is implemented, monitored, and evaluated. Each lens makes commitments that influence the strategy in four main areas:

- **Strategy development:** shaping the process of updating the Healthy City Strategy.
- **Goal-setting:** influencing how Healthy City Strategy goals are selected, defined, and translated into implementation and monitoring.
- **Data collection and reporting:** prioritizing indicators and metrics and identifying opportunities for alignment and involvement of different communities.
- **Action prioritization:** influencing how the City and partners select and prioritize actions to advance the Healthy City Strategy's goals.

Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation

Vancouver adopted its City of Reconciliation Framework in 2014 with the original Healthy City Strategy. The City continues to work and uphold the distinct Indigenous rights of the Musqueam Indian Band, Squamish Nation, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, and the rights of diverse urban Indigenous peoples into all of its policies and strategies. Vancouver has co-developed an action plan with the Local Nations to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in Vancouver.

Adding an Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation lens to the Healthy City Strategy is aligned with this work. It ensures that the plan's goals uphold the rights of Indigenous Peoples for self-determination and involvement in policies and services that support the social, cultural, and economic well-being of all Indigenous residents. The Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation lens is integrated into the Healthy City Strategy through actions such as:

- Engaging Local Nations and urban Indigenous leaders, organizations, and communities through the development and implementation of the Strategy, integrating Indigenous perspectives and priorities to shape the Strategy.
- Developing goals that integrate Indigenous priorities, practices, and knowledge systems, and address systemic barriers and inequities.
- Continuing to explore data collection methods that are shaped by Indigenous participation, aligned with Indigenous data governance approaches and principles, and that are culturally appropriate and respectful.
- Ensuring accountability to Local Nations and urban Indigenous communities with regular reporting and integration of Indigenous perspectives and assessments of impact.
- Prioritizing implementation actions that align with the priorities of Local Nations and urban Indigenous communities, uphold Indigenous rights, and address systemic inequities and barriers to health.

Equity and Intersectionality

Vancouver adopted its Equity Framework in 2021, defining equity as both a process and an outcome. The Equity Framework includes commitments to name systems that create unequal outcomes and privilege some groups while excluding others. The Equity Framework includes an intersectional approach to understand how people who experience multiple forms of oppression may experience compounding impacts on their health and well-being.

The original vision of “A Healthy City for All” includes a commitment to equitable outcomes. Adding an Equity and Intersectionality lens to the Strategy strengthens this commitment and acknowledges the structural barriers many people face to health and well-being. Becoming a healthy city will require working to remove these barriers and prioritizing the needs of those most affected by such barriers. The Equity and Intersectionality lens will be integrated into the Healthy City Strategy through actions such as:

- Actively involving people from equity-denied communities in shaping the Strategy, ensuring that engagement processes are designed to enable and empower people who have faced barriers to well-being.
- Developing goals that address systems of inequity and the root causes of health disparities.
- Collecting and analyzing disaggregated data based on the fullest possible understanding of factors such as race, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or socioeconomic status—and the intersections between these identities—and using this data to measure and direct action on the systems that create differential health and well-being outcomes for people in different groups.
- Developing metrics to measure progress toward more equitable outcomes, and involving equity-denied communities and organizations in reporting on these metrics.
- Prioritizing implementation actions that reduce inequities and address the needs of equity-denied communities.

Accessibility and Inclusion

Vancouver’s Accessibility Strategy (adopted in 2022) focuses on recognizing the rights, dignity, independence, and contributions of people with disabilities in the city, and supporting their full participation through inclusive services, programs and infrastructure. This means ensuring that environments, programs, and policies are usable by all people to the greatest extent possible.

Adding an Accessibility and Inclusion lens to the Healthy City Strategy recognizes that people with disabilities have often been excluded from mainstream understandings of health and well-being. The Accessibility and Inclusion lens is integrated into the Healthy City Strategy through actions such as:

- Actively engaging and involving people with disabilities in the process of developing and implementing the Healthy City Strategy.
- Integrating universal design principles into goals and actions.
- Defining goals in ways that incorporate this lens, including developing specific, measurable outcomes related to accessibility for people with disabilities.
- Collecting and analyzing disaggregated data to understand inequities, and ensuring this data is collected and reported in accessible ways and that support the involvement of people with disabilities.
- Prioritizing implementation actions that improve accessibility in the city, remove barriers to participation, and promote inclusive design.

Goals

The Healthy City Strategy includes 12 long-term goals reflecting key determinants of health in Vancouver. Setting these goals means that the City will continuously strive to improve well-being in these areas, in alignment with the lenses and guiding principles of the Strategy.



Each goal presented in this document includes three parts:

- a high-level statement describing what a healthy city should look like in the future;
- a snapshot with examples of key indicators; and
- contributions the City of Vancouver makes as a local government.

Implementation of the Healthy City Strategy will identify actions and monitoring programs for each of these goals.

Updates from the original Healthy City Strategy

Engagement with key partners confirmed that the original Healthy City Strategy goals continue to be important for integrating health and well-being into all of the City's policy areas. Partners also identified opportunities to update and refine these original goals. Key changes include:

- Renaming all goals for a clearer statement of purpose and outcome.
- Reframing the previous "A Good Start" goal to a new "Good Health Throughout Life" goal. This reflects the importance of health across the entire life course while still naming the lifelong importance of healthy childhood development.
- Creating a standalone "Community Safety" goal to focus efforts on safety as a determinant of health.
- Combining the previous "Lifelong Learning" and "Expressing Ourselves" goals into a new "Arts, Culture, and Learning" goal.
- Separating the previous "Environments to Thrive In" goal into a "Complete Neighbourhoods" goal focused on the health of the natural and built environments, and a "Climate Change and Disaster Resilience" goal focused on mitigating climate change and responding to the health impacts of a changing climate and the risk of disasters.
- Changing "Collaborative Leadership", which was a goal in the original Strategy, into a guiding principle to apply throughout the refreshed Strategy.



GOOD HEALTH THROUGHOUT LIFE

A healthy city enables people to grow and thrive through all developmental stages and life transitions, from birth to death.

Why is this goal important?

This goal focuses Vancouver on supporting people to thrive through all stages of life, becoming a city for all ages, identities, abilities, and needs. People’s identities, relationships, needs, and levels of independence develop and change throughout life. A focus on children and youth can shape the whole life course, while a growing population of older persons presents changing needs for access to spaces, infrastructure, and services.

Example indicators

- ➔ Early childhood and youth development
- ➔ Access to age-based programs
- ➔ Demographic change
- ➔ Experiences of aging

How does the City of Vancouver contribute?

- **Providing direct services** in community centres and libraries.
- **Facilitating growth in childcare spaces** through planning and development.
- **Support organizations** that support children, youth, and older persons (e.g. grants).
- **Planning** for accessible, age-inclusive communities.
- **Convening and engaging** sectors and individuals to identify needs.



AFFORDABLE, SAFE, SECURE HOUSING

A healthy city supports a diverse, inclusive, accessible, and affordable housing system for people across all incomes, household types, and access or support needs.

Why is this goal important?

Housing is a basic need for everyone, but also one of the biggest challenges Vancouver faces. Many people are unhoused or in precarious housing situations; many more have housing but struggle with unaffordability and insecurity for the future; and still others cannot find housing that meets their needs in a neighbourhood they want to live in. All of these challenges have direct impacts on people’s health and well-being, and on the sustainability of the city’s diverse communities.

Example indicators

- ➔ Homelessness
- ➔ Housing need indicators
- ➔ Housing supply
- ➔ Confidence and security in housing

How does the City of Vancouver contribute?

- **Setting targets for housing** that respond to provincial legislation and needs across the city.
- **Facilitating the creation of new housing** through citywide and neighbourhood planning and development processes.
- **Protecting existing affordable housing** through tenant support policies.
- **Directly delivering non-market and market housing** on City-owned land.
- **Providing services, supports, and pathways to secure housing** for people experiencing homelessness.



FOOD SYSTEMS

A healthy city fosters a just and sustainable food system that contributes to the health and well-being of all peoples and ecosystems, and where everyone has the power to choose what and how they eat.

Why is this goal important?

Food is a basic human right and a critical determinant of health. The lands and waters of Vancouver have sustained communities since time immemorial, and the region has substantial food production. But many people in the city lack access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food. A just food system addresses these gaps while respecting cultural and ecological diversity, tackling food insecurity, strengthening food networks, and ensuring food environments reflect all communities.

Example indicators

- ➔ Household food insecurity
- ➔ Access to food retail
- ➔ Cost of healthy food
- ➔ Food recovery

How does the City of Vancouver contribute?

- **Engaging communities and building knowledge** of access to food across the city.
- **Facilitating and enabling growth in food assets** like markets or community gardens.
- **Embedding food security and access** into land-use and policy planning across the city.
- **Supporting** projects to advance Indigenous food sovereignty and resilience.
- **Building community resilience** by integrating food security into emergency preparedness.
- **Developing regulations** that prevent food waste.



CARE AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

A healthy city connects people with the programs, services, and supports they need to thrive

Why is this goal important?

Community, health, and social services build people's capacity and connections with others. They fill gaps in well-being created by other systems, and they help people and communities prepare for emergencies and challenges. Vancouver benefits from a public health system and a rich ecosystem of community services. But more work is needed to meet all people's needs.

Example indicators

- ➔ Access to services and supports
- ➔ Partnerships with community-based organizations
- ➔ Connection with primary health care

How does the City of Vancouver contribute?

- **Supporting community-serving organizations** to serve people experiencing inequity and build community capacity (e.g. through grants).
- **Integrating social infrastructure** into planning and development processes.
- **Supporting Indigenous-led services and programs** through funding and partnerships.
- **Responding to public health issues related to mental health and substance use** with a multi-level approach of harm reduction, treatment, prevention, and enforcement.



INCOME AND ECONOMY

A healthy city nurtures its local economy through inclusive access to opportunities, resources, and pathways to living a high quality of life.

Why is this goal important?

Income in Vancouver is inequitably distributed, and many people struggle to meet a high cost of living, resulting in significant health impacts. The city's economy is built on many successful businesses and sectors that create opportunity; sustainable economic growth requires continued focus on both supporting people to access adequate incomes and enabling the business sector to thrive.

Example indicators

- ➔ Access to income that meets people's needs
- ➔ Access to employment
- ➔ Health and vitality of business areas

How does the City of Vancouver contribute?

- **Deliver programs that support** improvements in business areas.
- **Streamlining processes** such as commercial renovation permits.
- **Leveraging City procurement** to support Indigenous-led projects.
- **Engagement** with industry partners to address issues impacting local business.
- **Facilitating** major development projects that support economic development.
- **Creating local and low-barrier employment** through City programs and policies.
- **Engaging communities and other levels of government** on barriers to doing business, poverty and inequity.



COMMUNITY SAFETY

A healthy city ensures people feel safe, respected, and able to fully express their identities and experiences.

Why is this goal important?

Safety is fundamental to health and well-being. Safety includes freedom from violence and discrimination, and also people's confidence that they can be treated with respect, bring their full identities into the city, and feel that the city is built to include them. Inequities in health, compounded by the impacts of health emergencies, have made some challenges with community safety more acute. This goal focuses on building a shared experience and sense of safety among all the diverse people in Vancouver.

Example indicators

- ➔ Sense of safety
- ➔ Experiences of discrimination
- ➔ Crime rates
- ➔ Impacts of public health emergencies

How does the City of Vancouver contribute?

- **Providing core public safety services** including policing, fire and rescue services, bylaw enforcement, and park rangers.
- **Supporting and working with** organizations, programs, and services that promote community safety through grants and partnerships.
- **Engaging people in equity-denied communities** to identify and address systemic barriers created by City programs and services.
- **Creating and managing public spaces** that are safe, inclusive, and accessible.



BELONGING AND CONNECTION

A healthy city enables people to connect within and across the diverse communities they wish to belong to.

Why is this goal important?

A sense of belonging is a foundation for personal mental health, engaging with the community, and participating in society. Social connections can take many forms, from casual connections to participating in events or finding in-person or virtual communities, but they all contribute to a healthier city. This goal focuses on creating the conditions for people to belong and to contribute to the shared future of the city.

Example indicators

- ➔ Sense of belonging
- ➔ Loneliness
- ➔ Visits to community and social spaces
- ➔ Civic engagement and participation

How does the City of Vancouver contribute?

- **Engaging residents and communities** in City planning and decision-making.
- **Providing programs and services** in libraries, community centres, cultural facilities, and civic spaces that bring people together.
- **Identifying and protecting** community-serving spaces through land use planning.
- **Creating public spaces and enabling events and festivals** across the city.
- **Forming partnerships** with and supporting (e.g. grants) community services organizations that build community connection and belonging in neighbourhoods and/or with specific age groups or cultural communities in the city.



ACTIVE LIVING

A healthy city enables all people to lead active lives, by weaving access to parks, nature, and recreation into everyday life.

Why is this goal important?

Physical activity, access to different forms of recreation, and connection with the natural environment are key assets for health in Vancouver, but not everyone has access to these benefits. Physical activity has direct impacts on individual health and is also an important way for people to connect with each other. Access to nature is essential to well-being. Setting this goal focuses the City on enabling everyone in the city to equitably access parks, nature, and recreation opportunities.

Example indicators

- ➔ Physical activity
- ➔ Access to parks and green space
- ➔ Participation in recreation programs

How does the City of Vancouver contribute?

- **Providing recreation infrastructure, programming, and services** in community centres, as well as programs to reduce barriers to access.
- **Maintaining, renewing, and expanding** parks and recreation infrastructure to meet the needs of the population.
- **Expanding tree canopy and green infrastructure** in public spaces.



ARTS, CULTURE, AND LEARNING

A healthy city fosters people's access to learning, creativity, and opportunities to participate in arts and culture.

Why is this goal important?

Culture is a core determinant of health. Participating in arts and culture helps people learn about and celebrate each other's communities, cultures, and experiences. Opportunities to learn from Indigenous Nations and communities in the city benefit everyone's connection to these lands and waters. Education and all forms of learning is essential to democratizing knowledge and information, giving people tools for their own development and enabling contributions to the broader community.

Example indicators

- ➔ Active library use
- ➔ Arts and culture participation
- ➔ Presence of and engagement with Indigenous culture

How does the City of Vancouver contribute?

- **Providing opportunities for information and learning** through library spaces, collections, resources, and programs.
- **Operating civic theatres** as spaces for connection with arts and culture.
- **Supporting artists and cultural organizations and programs** through grant programs.
- **Facilitating use of parks and public spaces** for expression, connection, and enjoyment.
- **Expanding the visible presence of arts and culture** across the City, including partnerships to increase representation of Indigenous culture.



SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

A healthy city prioritizes active, sustainable, space-efficient ways for people to access all opportunities in the city.

Why is this goal important?

Moving around the city is essential to accessing all the opportunities the city provides. Transportation systems and choices can also have negative impacts on health. Active transportation, including walking, wheeling, cycling, and riding public transit, is both a healthy choice and part of building a more equitable community. This goal focuses the City on continuing to encourage, promote, and prioritize active ways of getting around the city.

Example indicators

- ➔ Traffic fatalities and serious injuries
- ➔ Walking, cycling, and transit mode share
- ➔ Access outcomes
- ➔ Active transportation infrastructure

How does the City of Vancouver contribute?

- **Supporting active choices though land use** that puts people closer to daily destinations.
- **Promoting low-carbon transportation options** as part of broader climate action.
- **Upgrading and expanding walking and cycling infrastructure** to improve safety and access to nature, public spaces, and daily destinations for people of all ages and abilities.
- **Investing in transportation programs** that incentivize walking, cycling, and transit through training, promotions, events, or programming.
- **Improving road safety** through street design, regulations, and education campaigns.
- **Embedding health promotion into transportation planning** for activity and well-being.



COMPLETE NEIGHBOURHOODS

A healthy city creates connected and walkable neighbourhoods with a wide range of amenities, services, housing, and job opportunities.

Why is this goal important?

Compact, complete neighbourhoods support strong local economies, build positive social connections, create opportunities for active living, and reduce environmental impacts. Vancouver is known for its vibrant communities, but not all parts of the city are equally walkable or complete. This goal focuses the City on continuing to build neighbourhoods that include access to services, housing, employment, parks, recreation, and social infrastructure.

Example indicators

- ➔ Walkability and access to daily needs
- ➔ Spatial distribution of opportunities
- ➔ Provision of parks and natural spaces
- ➔ Physical accessibility

How does the City of Vancouver contribute?

- **Planning sustainable, compact, and mixed-use neighbourhoods** with diverse housing, parks, employment, and services to create complete communities.
- **Providing development and land use guidelines** for livable, walkable neighborhoods.
- **Creating safe, accessible, inclusive, and vibrant public spaces** across the city.
- **Facilitating and enabling space** for social, cultural, and childcare services.
- **Expanding green infrastructure projects** that promote sustainability and well-being.



CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTER RESILIENCE

A healthy city produces zero emissions, restores and maintains ecosystems, and fosters adaptive and resilient communities that withstand and recover from hazards and emergencies.

Why is this goal important?

Climate change is having substantial impacts on Vancouver, along with hazards and emergencies that challenge the city's resilience. Risks in Vancouver include earthquakes, flooding, extreme heat, poor air quality, and others. These emergencies disproportionately impact people in equity-denied communities with fewer resources to respond. Vancouver has a long legacy of work on environmental sustainability, climate change mitigation, and disaster and risk reduction. This goal focuses the City on addressing climate change while supporting people and communities to thrive.

Example indicators

- ➔ Carbon pollution
- ➔ Tree canopy cover
- ➔ Emergency preparedness
- ➔ Access to cool spaces

How does the City of Vancouver contribute?

- **Advancing City actions** that contribute to addressing climate change.
- **Developing policies and regulations** to reduce emissions and build resilience in buildings and infrastructure.
- **Expanding tree canopy and green spaces** in the city.
- **Minimizing the environmental impact** of City operations and services.
- **Responding** to emergencies and disasters, supporting residents and maintaining services through grants, resources, and partnerships.

Snapshot of Vancouver's health in 2026



Good Health Throughout Life

34% 

Kindergarten children in Vancouver are considered **vulnerable** on one or more developmental scales

UBC Human Early Learning Partnership, Early Development Instrument (wave 8, 2019-2022)

63% 

Youth rate their **mental health as good or excellent**

McCreary Centre Society, BC Adolescent Health Survey (2023)

16% increase

Change in the number of persons age **65 and older**, compared to **3%** increase for people **64 and younger**

Statistics Canada, Census of Population (2016 to 2021)



Affordable, Safe, Secure Housing

19% 

Households in core housing need, facing gaps in housing affordability, adequacy, or suitability

Statistics Canada, Census of Population, Community Data Program (2021)

2,715

People counted in the **Homeless Count**

Homelessness Services Association of BC, Metro Vancouver Homeless Count (2025)

53%  Survey respondents confident of being able to stay in their current housing for the next 12 months

City of Vancouver, UN Quality of Life Survey (2024)



Food Systems

26%

People concerned about food insecurity post-pandemic

BC Centre for Disease Control, SPEAK (Survey on Population Experiences, Actions, and Knowledge) (2023)

\$1,287 

Average monthly cost of a nutritious food basket for a family of four

BC Centre for Disease Control, Food Costing in BC (2022)

48%

Vancouver residents have a minimal level of access to healthy food retail options within a 10 minute walk or roll

City of Vancouver (2024)



Care and Support Networks

77%

Survey respondents agreeing that their communities can **access services and supports**

City of Vancouver, UN Quality of Life Survey (2024)

77% 

Adults have a regular health care provider

BC Centre for Disease Control, SPEAK (Survey on Population Experiences, Actions, and Knowledge) (2023)

76%

Non-profit organizations across BC reporting an **increased demand** for services and supports

Vantage Point, State of BC's Non-Profit Sector (2024)



Income and Economy

10% Storefront vacancy rate in commercial areas
City of Vancouver, Vancouver Storefront Inventory (2024)



63% Estimated people with income at or above the equivalent of a living wage

Statistics Canada, T1 Family File, Community Data Program; Living Wage BC (2022)

36% Survey respondents agreeing that it is **easy** to find a **good job** in the city
City of Vancouver, UN Quality of Life Survey (2024)



Community Safety

68% Survey respondents feel **safe** walking in their **neighbourhood** after dark
City of Vancouver, UN Quality of Life Survey (2024)



525 Toxic drug deaths in 2024
BC Coroners Service, Unregulated Drug Deaths (published July 2025)



59% Survey respondents have experienced discrimination or unfair treatment
City of Vancouver, UN Quality of Life Survey (2024)



Belonging and Connection

43% Adults reporting a strong sense of belonging to their **local community**
BC Centre for Disease Control, SPEAK (Survey on Population Experiences, Actions, and Knowledge) (2023)

48% Survey respondents feel that they are alone more often than they would like
City of Vancouver, UN Quality of Life Survey (2024)

73% Survey respondents visit a space **outside of their home** or workplace for **social connection** at least **three times per week**
City of Vancouver, UN Quality of Life Survey (2024)



Active Living

81% Survey respondents satisfied with parks, gardens, and beaches
City of Vancouver, UN Quality of Life Survey (2024)

0.95 hectare Land area of neighbourhood-serving parks per 1,000 residents
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation (2021)



58% Adults **physically active** for **150 minutes or more** per week

BC Centre for Disease Control, SPEAK (Survey on Population Experiences, Actions, and Knowledge) (2023)





Arts, Culture, and Learning

50%

Vancouver residents that have actively used their public library membership in the past 3 years

Vancouver Public Library (2023)



3.8 million

Attendance at public activities held by arts and cultural organizations supported by the City's grants programs

Canadian Arts Data/Données sur les arts du Canada (2022-2023)

45%

School children report that they are learning about Indigenous Peoples at school

BC Ministry of Education, Student Learning Survey (2022-2023, average of grade 4, 7, 10, and 12)



Sustainable Transportation

52%

Daily trips made by walking, cycling, or public transit

City of Vancouver, Transportation Panel Survey (2024)



64%

Average share of the city that can be accessed in 45 minutes by transit at midday

City of Vancouver, Engineering Services, based on TransLink timetables (fall 2024)



79%

Survey respondents satisfied with walking, rolling, and cycling routes

City of Vancouver, UN Quality of Life Survey (2024)



Complete Neighbourhoods

56%

Adults who find their neighbourhood safe and convenient to get around using a stroller, wheelchair, scooter, or walker

BC Centre for Disease Control, SPEAK (Survey on Population Experiences, Actions, and Knowledge) (2023)



81%

Adults agreeing that there are many shops, restaurants, services, and facilities within easy walking, rolling, or cycling distance

BC Centre for Disease Control, SPEAK (Survey on Population Experiences, Actions, and Knowledge) (2023)

67%

Employed people whose usual workplace is within the City of Vancouver

Statistics Canada, Census of Population (2021)



Climate Change and Disaster Resilience

25%

Land area covered by tree canopy

Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation (2022)

2.4 million tCO2e

Carbon pollution from transportation and buildings

City of Vancouver, Climate Emergency Action Plan Annual Report (2023)

58%

Adults reporting access to cool space in their homes during hot weather

BC Centre for Disease Control, SPEAK (Survey on Population Experiences, Actions, and Knowledge) (2023)



Alignment with global Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, Canada and all other United Nations member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This agenda includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to address global challenges and work toward a more equitable and prosperous world. In 2020, Vancouver City Council directed that the City review these goals and identify opportunities for alignment with the updates to the Healthy City Strategy. This page provides an overview of how each SDG is represented in the refreshed Healthy City Strategy's goals:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Affordable, Safe, Secure Housing → Income and Economy 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Equity and Intersectionality lens</i> → Income and Economy → Community Safety
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Food Systems 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Accessibility and Inclusion lens</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Good Health Throughout Life → Care and Support Networks → Active Living 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Affordable, Safe, Secure Housing → Belonging and Connection → Active Living → Arts, Culture, and Learning → Complete Neighbourhoods → Climate Change and Disaster Resilience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Good Health Throughout Life → Arts, Culture, and Learning 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Food Systems → Complete Neighbourhoods
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Equity and Intersectionality lens</i> → Community Safety 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Sustainable Transportation → Climate Change and Disaster Resilience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Complete Neighbourhoods 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Climate Change and Disaster Resilience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Climate Change and Disaster Resilience 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Active Living → Climate Change and Disaster Resilience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Income and Economy 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Community Safety → Belonging and Connection
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Sustainable Transportation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Guiding principles: systems focus, collaborative leadership, community grounded</i>

Existing City strategies contributing to Healthy City goals

The City of Vancouver and its boards and agencies have many existing strategies, policies, and programs that support health and well-being and are aligned with the goals of the Healthy City Strategy. This page provides a snapshot of key existing strategies and the primary goals they contribute to.

	Good Health Throughout Life	Affordable, Safe, Secure Housing	Food Systems	Care and Support Networks	Income and Economy	Community Safety	Belonging and Connection	Active Living	Arts, Culture, and Learning	Sustainable Transportation	Complete Neighbourhoods	Climate Change and Disaster Resilience
Accessibility Strategy (2022) and Action Plan (2024)	✓									✓	✓	
Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2024)												✓
Climate Emergency Action Plan (2020)										✓		✓
Culture Shift (2020)								✓			✓	
Downtown Eastside Community Economic Development Strategy (2016)					✓							
Employment Lands and Economy Review (2020)					✓							
Equity Framework (2021)						✓						
Four Pillars Drug Strategy (2005)						✓						
Housing Vancouver Strategy (2017), Housing Needs Report and Targets (2024)		✓										
Local Food System Action Plan (Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, 2021)			✓									
Making Strides: Vancouver's Childcare Strategy (2022)	✓											
MMIWG2S Response Report (2022)						✓						
Moving Towards Zero Safety Action Plan (2016)										✓		
Older Persons Strategic Framework (2025)	✓						✓			✓		
Resilient Vancouver Strategy (2019)							✓					✓
Seniors Housing Strategy (2024)	✓	✓										
Spaces to Thrive Social Infrastructure Strategy (2021)			✓				✓				✓	
Trans, Gender Diverse, and Two-Spirit Action Plan (2016)						✓						
Transportation 2040 (2012)								✓		✓		
UNDRIP Strategy (2022) and Action Plan (2024)		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓		
Urban Forest Strategy (2025)								✓				✓
Vancouver Fire Rescue Services Strategic Plan (2024-2026)						✓						
Vancouver Plan (2022)	✓	✓			✓		✓			✓	✓	✓
Vancouver Police Department Strategic Plan (2022-2026)						✓						
VanPlay: Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan (Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, 2019)								✓	✓			
Vancouver Public Library Strategic Plan (2020-2025)									✓			
What Feeds Us: Vancouver Food Strategy (2013)			✓									
Women's Equity Strategy (2018)						✓						
Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy (2023)	✓					✓						

Implementation and monitoring

The refreshed Healthy City Strategy will be implemented with an agile approach, including regular updates to Vancouver City Council and the community. Implementation will involve prioritizing near-term actions within existing programs to advance each goal and indicators to track progress.

Tools for taking action

Advancing the Healthy City Strategy requires a multi-sectoral approach, where the City plays a key role alongside other sectors and levels of government. The City's roles fall into these areas:

- **Policy and regulation:** influencing Healthy City outcomes through land use, development, and other regulatory processes.
- **Partnerships:** working collaboratively with other agencies, levels of government, industry, and networks on projects that advance shared goals.
- **Research and training:** sharing knowledge and data with communities and sectors to build capacity for collective action.
- **Infrastructure:** investing in infrastructure that promotes well-being across the city.
- **Funding:** investing in community services that support Healthy City outcomes (e.g., grants).
- **Service delivery:** directly providing programs and services.
- **Advocacy:** encouraging action from other sectors or levels of government to advance Healthy City goals.

Social Development Tools



CITY OF VANCOUVER | Social Policy and Projects

Figure 2 Diagram of different tools the City can use to enact social policy

Developing a monitoring framework

The Healthy City Strategy is integrated with a data and monitoring program that tracks - indicators and engages communities. The original Healthy City Strategy developed a public-facing dashboard to report on population-level outcomes, in addition to other community-specific tools. The updated Strategy will include **performance metrics** that measure how the City is contributing to the Healthy City Strategy, and **population metrics** that continue to track broader, longer-term change in community well-being.

Reporting back

An annual update to Vancouver City Council and the broader community will provide a regular opportunity to report on actions and outcomes as Vancouver continues its journey toward health and well-being.

Conclusion

This refreshed Healthy City Strategy builds on the momentum of the original Strategy. The City of Vancouver, Vancouver Coastal Health, and other partners have demonstrated leadership in putting a vision for health and well-being for all at the centre of their work, and in developing a collaborative approach to working together toward shared outcomes.

Vancouver has tremendous potential for a more sustainable and equitable future, and for demonstrating leadership in integrating health into local government work. Refreshing the Healthy City Strategy for its next phase is a commitment to addressing the inequities and barriers to health and well being that people face today while working toward a future that prevents those barriers from occurring. Becoming a healthy city is a collaborative effort, and everyone in Vancouver can contribute to it.

