Downtown Eastside (DTES)
Local Area Profile 2012

NEIGHBOURHOODS:
Chinatown
Gastown
Industrial Area
Oppenheimer
Strathcona
Thornton Park
and
Victory Square
The Downtown Eastside (DTES) is one of Vancouver’s oldest neighbourhoods and the historic heart of the city. It is a strong community, rich in history, architecture, and diverse communities. It has many assets, especially for its low-income residents, who appreciate feeling accepted and at home within the cultural heritage and having nearby health and social services.

The DTES also struggles with many complex challenges including homelessness, housing issues, unemployment, drug use, crime, and loss of businesses in the community.

Note: While census data under-represents low-income and homeless individuals, due to the challenge of surveying these populations, it is the only baseline demographic data available. Statistics Canada’s 2011 Census data for DTES will be available later in 2012 and 2013.

For more information or to print copies of this profile, please check the DTES Local Area Plan website: vancouver.ca/dtesplan
The Downtown Eastside (DTES) area includes Gastown, Victory Square, Strathcona, Chinatown, industrial lands, and the Oppenheimer and Thornton Park areas. The planning area is bounded by the rail yards and port lands to the north, Malkin Street to the south, Richards Street to the west and Clark Drive to the east. It comprises about 202 hectares.
LINKING THE LOCAL AREA PLAN TO THE HEALTHY CITY FRAMEWORK

The early reviewing steps of the DTES Local Area Plan involve identifying critical needs, key issues, and important challenges and opportunities affecting the people in the area. This Local Area Profile presents a brief assessment of how the neighbourhoods of the Downtown Eastside are doing in relation to the building blocks of “A Healthy City for All” as laid out on Page 4. This healthy city framework identifies what we believe is necessary to create “A Healthy City for All”. The Local Area planning process will formulate strategies to help the neighbourhoods of the DTES become healthier in three major and interconnected areas: healthy people, healthy communities and healthy environments.

The Local Area planning process involves four main steps: reviewing and understanding the key issues and where these occur and identifying our resources and assets; planning what we will do, how we will do it and when we will do it; getting feedback from the public and Council followed by Council approval of the plan; and finally, implementing the plan and checking if we have been able to make a difference.

An important part of the review process in the plan involves preparing a Local Area Profile, which will share information and assess the characteristics of all the communities living and working in the various neighborhoods of the Downtown Eastside, looking at our communities (the people), our livelihoods (the local economy) and our homes and places (the built and natural environment)

The Local Area planning process will formulate strategies to help DTES become a healthier community in terms of the basic needs listed on page 4. Typically a healthy community would promote inclusion; belonging and connectedness within a well-planned built environment; a sustainable natural environment; and thriving economic and vibrant social environments, where all are welcome, safe and valued, and where basic needs for homes, nutritious food, and adequate income are met.
In 2006, the DTES population was just over 18,000 people. Population growth in the DTES as a whole between 2001 and 2011 was slightly faster compared to the city at large.

Over that period the city’s population grew by 10.6 per cent while the population in DTES grew by 12.8 per cent. Between 2001 and 2011, all sub-areas have seen a growth in population, except in Strathcona where there was a slight drop of four per cent. Strathcona and Oppenheimer are still the main residential neighbourhoods in the DTES. Together, they compose 64 per cent (11,868) of the total population in the area. Although the Victory Square and Chinatown sub-areas had the greatest growth (70 per cent and 64 per cent respectively), collectively, they comprise of only 18 per cent (3,380) of the total DTES population.
**GENDER PROFILE**

The gender split in the DTES remains stable (60 per cent male and 40 per cent female) over the 10-year census study period. Victory Square and Thornton Park have the highest male population, while the female/male population split in Strathcona closely resembles that of the city, close to a 50/50 split.

**AGE PROFILE**

In 2006, just over half of the people living in the DTES were over 45. The DTES area has a high percentage (21 per cent) of seniors (65+) compared to the city (13 per cent), and a particularly low percentage of children and youth, at two per cent and eight per cent respectively, about half of the city’s figures.

![2006 Gender Breakdown by Sub-Areas](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-areas</th>
<th>DTES - Total</th>
<th>Vancouver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 years</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 19 years</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 44 years</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 65 years</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+ years</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME**

Most (over 50 per cent) of the people in the DTES speak English as their home language. Chinese (including both Mandarin and Cantonese) is the next most spoken home language. Strathcona has a large Chinese-speaking population, even larger than Chinatown’s.

**IMMIGRATION**

The percentages for immigrant and non-immigrant populations are similar to that of the city, which are close to a 50/50 split. But the distribution of immigrant/non-immigrant populations within the DTES is highly uneven. Strathcona and Chinatown have a large immigrant population while the population in the other sub-areas is mostly non-immigrants.

Between 1996 and 2006, Vancouver had a slight increase in immigrant population while the DTES experienced a decrease in immigrant population (most are from Mainland China).

Source: 2006 Statistics Canada Census data
FOUNDING COMMUNITIES

Aboriginal Population 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Background</th>
<th>Vancouver</th>
<th>DTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>11,140</td>
<td>1,705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>560,455</td>
<td>15,295</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Downtown Eastside is one of Vancouver’s oldest neighbourhoods, the historic heart of the city, and the urban home of First Nations Aboriginal communities for many generations. It is also home to the founding communities of Chinese and Japanese immigrants and labourers and immigrants from other cultural groups, including Italian, Jewish, British, Scandinavian, Russian and Ukranian.

* It is believed that possibly as long as 3,000 years ago, Coast Salish people had seasonal camps in the protected coves along the south shore of Burrard Inlet at several sites including places they called Luq’Luq’i (variously translated as “Maple Leaves Falling” and “Grove of Beautiful Trees”) and Q’umq’umal’ay (“Big Leaf Maple Trees”).

The Powell Street or Japantown area lies on unceded Coast Salish territory near the early settlements of Hastings Mills and Granville (Gastown). The Powell Street grounds bounded by Cordova, Powell Streets, Dunlevy, and Jackson Avenues were an important centre in the early years of the city where many communities used it as a home and an open space. This early historical significance is reflected in the many heritage buildings in the area.

* Birmingham and Wood et al (Historical and Cultural Review - Powell Street (Japantown).

The area around Oppenheimer Park and the adjacent Powell Street is home to the Japanese-Canadian community who settled here beginning in the 1890s and whose businesses thrived in the early 1900s. It remains a distinctly working-class neighbourhood, proud of its identity.

Vancouver’s Chinatown emerged in the 1880s on the edges of False Creek around the intersection of Carrall and Pender Streets. It was a community established and fostered by the many Chinese immigrants who moved to Vancouver years before the City’s incorporation in 1886 to work as labourers in local industries and to help build the railroads.

While two per cent of Vancouver’s population is Aboriginal, the DTES has an Aboriginal population of 10 per cent. Many more visit the area on a regular basis.

Proportion of Vancouver’s Aboriginal Population Living in:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vancouver</th>
<th>DTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2006 Statistics Canada Census data

Ethnic Background Vancouver DTES

Aboriginal 11,140 1,705
Non-Aboriginal 560,455 15,295
TOWARD HEALTHY PEOPLE

Taking Care of the Basics

Urban planning, land use, transportation, and law and order influence the air we breathe, the water we drink, but how we get around, our housing, food, jobs, commute, green space and how safe, connected and included we feel in our neighbourhoods. The World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. Health is linked not only to biology and genes, but also to the conditions in which we live, work, learn and play. This “determinants of health” approach recognizes the role that housing, employment, education, the built environment, social networks, and access to health and community services, play in determining our health and well-being.

And what do we need to be healthy? A good start in life is critical for our long term health and well-being. Research shows just how critical the first six years of life are for long-term health. Other basic needs include a place we can call home, enough money to buy healthy food, freedom from fear and violence, a sense of safety and belonging, and plenty of opportunities for play, work, learning, and connecting.

Although Vancouver is a city known across the world for its healthy assets, many groups across the city live in poverty, struggle with mental health and addictions, or are unemployed.

1.1 A GOOD START

Healthy Childhood Development

Child Poverty:
The proportion of children under 6 living in low-income families is almost 2.5 times higher on the Downtown Eastside than the Vancouver.

Source: 2006: Statistics Canada Census data (Figures are based on after-tax income.)
Childcare and School Facilities

Childcare Programs in the DTES

Legend
- Infant and Toddler
- Preschool
- Group Care (3-5)
- School Age (6-12)
- Occasional, Emergency or Specialized
1.2 A HOME FOR EVERYONE

Housing Overview

Housing Type

According to census data, the most common housing type in the DTES is apartments (almost 90 per cent). In 2006, the majority of apartments were more than five storeys tall (48 per cent).

Housing Tenure and Expenses

A high percentage of people remain renters in the DTES compared to the city average. In 2006, 88 per cent of residents rented homes and 12 per cent owned.

Small changes in the percentage of owner vs. renter-occupied homes in the DTES mirrored city-wide trends. Renting households have decreased by two to three per cent every five years since 1996.
1.2 A HOME FOR EVERYONE

Key Housing Facts

Market rents are slightly less costly in the East Hastings zone compared to the city average according to Canada Mortgage and Housing (CMHC).

In 2006, the City of Vancouver’s Low-Income Housing Survey found an average rent of $416 for a room in a private Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotel in the DTES.

According to 2006 census data, more than half of DTES renters (51 per cent) paid more than 30 per cent or more of their household income on shelter costs compared to 23 per cent in Vancouver.

Key Rental Housing Types

The DTES neighbourhood has a range of both market and non-market rental housing options, including market and non-market SROs, non-market or social housing operated by non-profit or government agencies and other housing in the private rental and ownership market.
1.2 A HOME FOR EVERYONE

Single-Room Occupancy (SRO)

Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels make up a large majority of the market rental stock in the DTES, especially for individuals on income assistance and others living on a fixed income.

The majority of SRO rooms are not self-contained, meaning they have shared bathrooms and kitchen facilities.

As of July 2011, there were 3,975 private and 1,522 non-market SRO units in the DTES.

The City supports protecting, updating, enhancing, and maintaining existing SROs as some SROs are tiny, dirty and not well managed.
1.2 A HOME FOR EVERYONE

Non-Market Housing

Non-market or social housing is self-contained (own bathroom and kitchen) housing owned and operated by a non-profit or government agency.

Non-market housing includes housing for seniors, singles and families. It also provides homes for those able to live independently or who may require supports.

A total of 5,184 self-contained non-market housing units currently provide secure, affordable housing in the DTES. Although if an operating agreement expires it could result in the loss of government subsidies.

An additional 1,522 non-market SRO units, bought by the Province since 2006, provide secure housing for low-income residents.
1.2 A HOME FOR EVERYONE

Community care facilities and group residences

Community care facilities provide temporary and sometimes long-term housing for people with disabilities or health, developmental or addictions issues and seniors who are unable to live independently. This type of housing is usually funded by senior levels of government and includes programming or varying levels of support such as addictions or mental health treatment programs and hospice services.

As of 2011, there were 905 community care facility beds in the DTES for women, seniors, youth and men. Many of these beds are located within non-market housing or transitional housing developments.

In the DTES, there are many people on welfare that don’t have enough money to both pay the rent and eat nutritiously.

Emergency shelters

Several emergency shelters fulfill a short-term need for people when longer-term housing is not an option. Year-round and temporary or seasonal shelters operate throughout the DTES based on different shelter programs. Shelter programs are funded by senior governments.

As of February 2012, there were 10 shelters operating in the DTES — four of these were temporary winter response shelters which include funding support from the City. For an up-to-date list of shelters, see: www.gvss.ca.

1.3 FEEDING OURSELVES

A Healthy, Just and Sustainable Food System

Food systems — the way we grow, process, transport, and consume food — have been central to the sustainability of communities for millennia. It’s estimated that Vancouver has 3,340 food assets, including community kitchens, markets, compost facilities, garden plots and more.

Much like in the rest of Vancouver, in the DTES, community gardens and other forms of urban agriculture are important neighbourhood gathering places that promote sustainability, livability, urban greening, community building, inter-generational activity, social interaction, crime reduction, exercise and food production.

There are eight food-producing gardens with approximately 650 plots on City, park, school and private lands in the DTES.
1.4 BEING ACTIVE
Opportunities for Active Living

In the DTES there are nine city parks (17.07 hectares of park space) with another five parks (9.09 hectares of park space) adjacent to it. The City park standard is 2.75 acres per 1,000 residents. For the DTES, including park spaces in and adjacent to it, the ratio is 3.59 acres per 1,000 residents. Note that the northeast section of the DTES has less access to park space.
1.5 GETTING AROUND
Safe, Active and Accessible Transportation

The DTES community takes 65 per cent of trips to work by walking, cycling, or transit and 35 per cent by car, motorcycle, or taxi. Access has been difficult for low-income people in the DTES who can’t afford transit or cars.

The city-wide average for walking, cycling or transit to work is 41 per cent and travel by car, motorcycle or taxi is 59 per cent.

**Journey to Work Mode Share**

The chart shows the distribution of transportation modes for the DTES and City of Vancouver. The DTES has a higher percentage of people walking (35%) and cycling (59%) compared to the City of Vancouver (41% walking). The percentage of people using cars or taxis is lower in the DTES (20%) compared to the city-wide average (59%).

- **DTES**
  - Walk: 35%
  - Car, Van, Taxi, Other: 65%

- **City of Vancouver**
  - Walk: 41%
  - Car, Van, Taxi, Other: 59%

Source: 2006 Statistics Canada Census data
1.5 GETTING AROUND

Cycling and Transit Routes

Over 65 per cent of residents in the DTES walk, cycle or take a bus to work. Building from that, the key transportation issues from the area are walkability, pedestrian safety, and access to transit.
1.5 GETTING AROUND

Downtown Eastside Pedestrian Safety

A 2009 study by researchers at Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia found that a section of Hastings Street in the DTES was the most dangerous place for pedestrians in Vancouver and 10 per cent of all pedestrian injuries happen in this neighbourhood. This section is home to a large number of vulnerable road users including seniors, families with children, and people with disabilities, mental illness, and addictions — some of Vancouver’s most marginalized residents.

The DTES Pedestrian Safety Project aimed to provide good health and safety for all of the DTES population. A partnership between the City and the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU) set out common goals and integrated responses to pedestrian safety along Hastings Street.

As a result of this project, the City of Vancouver:
- reduced speed limit to 30km/hour on Hastings Street from Jackson to Abbott to create a pedestrian safety zone
- increased pedestrian walk times at traffic signals
- put in place crosswalk clearance times
- installed a countdown pedestrian timer at the intersection of Hastings and Main Street
- installed speed reader boards

VANDU and the City presented the Pedestrian Safety Project report at an international forum on Urban Health in New York City on October 25, 2010, highlighting the success of participatory research projects between government funders and citizens.

Staff are in the process of designing a mid-block pedestrian signal on Hastings between Main and Columbia. Construction is expected to begin this year.
### JOBS, INCOME, AND THE LABOUR FORCE

The number of people working in the DTES is generally low — this is called ‘Low Labour Market Participation.’ In 2002, more than 20,000 people were employed by 2,300 businesses or organizations in the DTES planning area. An estimated 13 per cent of the people who work in the area also live here. As of 2007, there were approximately 18,000 people working in the east Downtown Area (this is a portion of the DTES planning area, plus part of the industrial area to the east), which represents about 10 per cent of the labour force of the Metro Core and six per cent of the city’s labour force.

Of the people living in the DTES as of 2005, 4,340 men and 2,640 women were working, according to 2006 census data. The unemployment rate in the DTES is 11.3 per cent.

The DTES has the lowest per capita income of any urban area in Canada, with 63.3 per cent of the population considered as low income.

As of 2005, the median earnings for residents living in the DTES was $12,928, according to Census Canada. This changed from $10,393 in 2000.

A notable portion of the DTES is considered part of Vancouver’s working poor (low-paid workers living in low-income situations).

![Number of Jobs](chart.png)

Source: 2006 Statistics Canada Census data
1.7 LEARNING FOR LIFE
Continuous Education and Development

Population (Age 15+) by Highest Educational Certificate, Diploma or Degree

Source: 2006 Statistics Canada Census data. Note small sample sizes in the industrial and Thornton Park sub-areas.
1.8 BEING AND FEELING SAFE
Addressing Fear, Violence and Crime

The Downtown Eastside has disproportionately high crime rates, and unreported crimes may make the situation even more acute.

Perceptions of Personal Safety Among Selected Groups, 2009

Source: Statistics Canada General Social Survey 2009. Date is based on country-wide survey. Categories selected have significantly (p<0.05) difference compared to reference categories (male, married, income >20,000, non-Aboriginal) not limited in activities.
1.8 BEING AND FEELING SAFE

Women’s Safety

The safety of all women in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside is a priority for both the community and the City. Poverty, homelessness and unsafe housing make many women more vulnerable to sexual, emotional, mental, and physical violence. About 8,000 women live or work in the Downtown Eastside or visit the area (about 40 per cent of the population). The rates of physical and sexual violence against women here are reported to be double that of other regions of Vancouver.

The Downtown Eastside “Missing Women” case is a tragic example of how marginalized women, including many Aboriginals and survival sex workers, can become victims of serious crime. Vancouver’s street sex work population is estimated to be between 1,000 and 2,000 individuals. However, studies suggest that at least 80 per cent of sex work in Canada’s urban centres takes place indoors and is less visible than street sex work. The majority of people engaged in sex work are women (80 per cent), while about 20 per cent are males and transgendered persons. An estimated 40 per cent of street sex workers are immigrant or visible minority women.

The urban Aboriginal population is vastly over-represented in street sex work. While comprising two per cent of Vancouver’s population, about 40 per cent of street sex workers are Aboriginal. Several authors draw a direct link to the negative effects of colonization, including the residential school experience, as contributing factors. Despite making up only four per cent of the female population, women of Aboriginal descent make up the majority of women who are missing and murdered in Canada.

The first Women’s Memorial March was held on Valentine’s Day in 1991 in response to the murder of a Coast Salish woman on Powell Street in Vancouver. Out of a sense of hopelessness and anger came this annual event which provides an outlet to express compassion, community, and caring for all women in the Downtown Eastside. Twenty-one years later, the Women’s Memorial March continues to honour the lives of missing and murdered women.
1.9 HEALTHY SERVICES
Providing Accessible Health and Social Services

Downtown Eastside (DTES) Sites and Facilities

1. Gastown Vocational Services
2. Pender Community Health
3. Residential Addiction Treatment
4. Community Transitional Care Team
5. Pigeon Park Savings
6. Insite / Onsite
7. Vancouver Intensive Supervision Unit (VISU)
8. Life Skills Centre
9. Sheway
10. Buddhist Temple
11. Downtown Community Health
12. Strathcona Mental Health Team
1.9 HEALTHY SERVICES

Selected Health Outcomes and Accessibility Indicators, Downtown Eastside Local Health Area

**Life Expectancy, 2005-2009 (Years)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78.0</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>84.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002-06 Change</td>
<td>+3.2%</td>
<td>+1.2%</td>
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**Emergency Room Visits Per 100,000 Population, 2008-2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Downtown Eastside</th>
<th>City of Vancouver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20,141</td>
<td>31,800</td>
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**Medical Practitioners Per 100,000 Population, 2008-2009**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>General Practitioners</th>
<th>Specialists</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>125.6</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>136.6</td>
<td>231.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Vancouver Coastal Health 2010 Local Health Area Profile. Note that the Downtown Eastside Health Service Area is not identical to the Downtown Eastside Local Area Plan boundaries.
1.9 HEALTHY SERVICES

Urban Health Initiatives

**Methadone Maintenance Therapy Working Group**

It is critical that all members of the DTES neighbourhoods have access to a range of health and social services, particularly those who are most vulnerable. The Methadone Maintenance Therapy Working Group is one example of a range of stakeholders coming together to improve how critical services are delivered in the neighbourhood.

Council approved a motion directing staff to initiate a Methadone Maintenance Therapy working group to: investigate alleged abuses at the Wonder and Palace Hotels and other SRO hotels; involve the community, Province, College of Physicians and Surgeons, College of Pharmacists, health authorities, BC Coroner’s Office and other stakeholders; and recommend policies or by-law changes the City may undertake to mitigate problems and prevent future abuses. The MMT Working Group brings together a range of stakeholders to develop draft recommendations on the above motion.

**Sex Work and Sexual Exploitation Task Force**

Council unanimously supported the creation of a task force to address actions contained in the report entitled “Preventing the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth and Addressing the Negative Effects of Sex Work in Vancouver Neighbourhoods”. Council also supported a comprehensive approach to addressing prevention, health and safety, exiting, services and supports, and enforcement issues. The purpose of the task force is to advise on the implementation of actions identified in the Council report through the cooperation and partnerships between task force members, City staff, the advisory committees and other sources.

**DTES Toilet Monitoring Study**

The City partnered with the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU) in an effort to reduce the amount of feces in the area by: encouraging the use of public toilets; addressing the need for safe, clean washrooms available in the evening; and ensuring that the public toilets at Oppenheimer Park are safe and open when staff are not at the park.

Long-term goals are to build a healthier and cleaner street environment by encouraging longer toilet operating hours and better maintenance of washrooms in SROs and social housing.
1.10 CRITICAL CONNECTIONS
Strong Social Relationships and Support Networks

The presence of friendships, family and strong social supports are essential for personal health and well-being.

Household Structure
In the Downtown Eastside, there are a high percentage of people not living in families. In the DTES, over 55 per cent of these people are living alone, compared to less than 30 per cent in the city of Vancouver.

Average Household Size
The average size of private households is 1.5 persons per household compared to an average of 2.2 for Vancouver. Strathcona and Chinatown are the only sub-areas that have more people living in families over 50 per cent. In Victory Square, Oppenheimer and Gastown, more than 70 per cent of the population does not live with a family.
1.10 CRITICAL CONNECTIONS

City of Vancouver Grants

Each year, the City of Vancouver provides more than $1 million in grants to Downtown Eastside organizations for important services for children, youth, families, Aboriginals, immigrants, refugees, people with disabilities, seniors and women. Many of these grants go towards bettering neighbourhood services with vulnerable populations and issues concerning social justice, mental health and addictions. In addition, thousands of volunteer hours are contributed to this work by neighbourhood residents and others.

“Many DTES members do not like to leave the comforts of their environment but 30 members took the chance and opportunity to invest into their organization and wander out of their comfort zone for the betterment of their society.”
-- Aboriginal Front Door Society

“Knowing that I contributed just by showing up and participating made me feel that I was part of something special, made me feel I was also needed as well, to make this workshop complete.”
-- Providing Alternatives Counselling & Education Society

A 6 year old girl of Japanese ancestry brings her unilingual Japanese speaking grandfather every weekday to Family Time. She translates for him and to the DTES NH has interpreted his words of pleasure, as he now feels less isolated by coming to the multilingual NH, even if at present, they are the only Japanese speakers.”
-- Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House
1.11 MAKING ENDS MEET

Adequate Income

**Household Income**

In 2006, the median household income in the DTES was $13,691, less than 30 per cent of the city’s median household income figure ($47,299).

Source: 2006 Statistics Canada Census data
1.11 MAKING ENDS MEET

Proportion of Population Low-Income After Tax

Source: 2006 Statistics Canada Census data. Due to small sample size, income data is not available for the Thornton Park sub-area.
1.12 GETTING CREATIVE

Enhancing Arts, Culture and Cultural Diversity

The arts can play an important role to the quality of life as well as the social and economic vitality of cities. For an individual, the arts can stimulate, inspire and entertain. At the neighbourhood level, strong creative communities may contribute to positive change in local economies, social environments, neighbourhood character and demographics.

Artists tend to be attracted to neighbourhoods that have inexpensive housing and easy access to resources such as studio space, galleries, rehearsal and performance spaces, artist-run centres and associations. However, gentrification may occur as a result of neighbourhoods being considered “artsy” or “trendy”.

It’s important to track these creative neighbourhoods to identify where gentrification and displacements of artists may be happening.

A Hills Strategies Research report, “Mapping Artists and Cultural Workers in Canada’s Large Cities” (February 2010), profiled artists and cultural workers in Canada’s five largest cities (Calgary, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver). Using data from Statistic Canada’s 2006 Census, five variables were examined: concentration of artists and cultural workers within neighbourhoods and labour force; median earnings; income gap; education; and gender balance.

The data indicates that Vancouver has the highest concentration of artists among the five cities in this study, with almost one-third of all B.C. artists residing in the City of Vancouver (8,200, or 31 per cent).

The concentration of artists in Vancouver (2.3 per cent of the local labour force) is double the provincial average (1.1 per cent) and nearly triple the national average (0.8 per cent).

Vancouver also has a high number and concentration of cultural workers, representing 7.2 per cent of all Vancouver workers.

The DTES neighbourhoods comprise two postal regions. The V6A postal region is fully within the DTES from Carrall Street east to Clark Drive and Burrard Inlet south to the Great Northern Way.

The V6B postal region extends beyond the DTES and includes the city’s downtown area from Carrall Street west to Granville Street and Burrard Inlet south to False Creek. It is difficult to disaggregate data from the second postal DTES area.

The data also likely under-represents the number of community artists working and living in the DTES. The data on the right is for the V6A postal region only.

Data for V6A

- **Concentration of artists:** The V6A postal region had the second highest concentration of artists in the city at 4.4 per cent of the labour force and is almost double the concentration of artists in the city as a whole (2.3 per cent).

- **Income and earnings gap:** Artists’ median earnings for the V6A postal area were $14,300 as compared to $17,400 median earned by artists living in city overall, and is 25 per cent less than all Vancouver workers.

- **Education:** At least 48 per cent of artists living in the V6A region have a bachelor’s degree or higher, which is comparable to the statistic for city artists.

- **Gender distribution:** The V6A postal region contains a smaller proportion of female artists (36 per cent) than in Vancouver as a whole (47 per cent).
TOWARD HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
Promoting Inclusion, Belonging and Connectedness

The Downtown Eastside is a neighbourhood of diverse communities that tells a story of compassion, tolerance, activism and hope for the future. Its residents value its rich cultural and community heritage, strong social networks, green spaces, acceptance of diversity and strong sense of community.

One of the City of Vancouver’s biggest challenges is to support and engage people on the margins of society, which calls for innovative efforts.

Vancouver sees its diversity, both cultural and socio-economic, as a source of strength, resilience and creative energy. Achieving social and environmental sustainability is essential to the future of the city and this neighbourhood.

In 2007, the City adopted a definition of “social sustainability.” This definition says that for a community to function and be sustainable, the basic needs of its residents must be met. A socially sustainable community must have the ability to maintain and build on its own resources and have the resiliency to prevent and/or address problems in the future.

There are two types or levels of resources in the community that are available to build social sustainability (and economic and environmental sustainability) — individual or human capacity, and social or community capacity.

To be effective and sustainable, both these individual and community resources need to be developed and used within the context of four guiding principles: equity, social inclusion and interaction, security, and adaptability.

The City is currently developing a Healthy City Framework that builds on its long-term commitment to social sustainability. This strategy will contribute to the building blocks of well-being for the Downtown Eastside and its residents.
2.1 IN THE ‘HOOD

Fostering Belonging and Inclusion Close to Home

Use of Downtown Eastside libraries and community centres has increased, even as city-wide use has fallen.

Community centres, libraries and other similar facilities can be important places for fostering belonging and inclusion and connecting the community.

DTES is seen by many as a vibrant and welcoming environment. Many low-income DTES residents fear they will lose this environment with gentrification and change taking place over time.

Change in Community Centre and Library Use
2006 - 2010

Sources: Vancouver Public Library, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. Downtown Eastside facilities included in the graph are Ray-Cam and Strathcona Community Centres and Carnegie and Strathcona Libraries.
2.2 OUT AND ABOUT
Connecting for Belonging at Work, at School, at Play

Schools, workplaces, community organizations and other settings play important roles in social interaction and providing a sense of belonging. These places also support health and well-being, volunteering, a robust non-profit sector, community building, local organizations, clubs, sports, and more.
2.2 OUT AND ABOUT

Vancouver Dialogues Project

The Vancouver Dialogues Project aims to build increased understanding and strengthened relations between Aboriginal and immigrant/non-Aboriginal communities. Convened by the City of Vancouver, the project is a collaboration between a diverse range of community partners, including local First Nations, urban Aboriginal and immigrant community organizations.

The first phase of the project (January 2010 - July 2011) included five main initiatives: dialogue circles, community research, cultural exchange visits, youth and elders program and a neighbourhood legacy project.

Now in its second phase, the project aims to build on the connections made and ideas raised during Phase 1. Some highlights are: a stronger youth engagement component, further opportunities for cultural exchange and the development of a newcomer’s guide to First Nations and Aboriginal communities in Vancouver.

Work in the DTES included a cultural exchange visit in Chinatown in which historical and present relationships between the Chinese and Aboriginal communities were highlighted. The Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre and Urban Native Youth also took part in the steering group and as partners for cultural exchange visits and youth involvement. The DTES Neighbourhood House’s staff and patrons were interviewed and featured in the Dialogues book as well.

The Vancouver Dialogues Project aims to build increased understanding and strengthened relations between Aboriginal and immigrant/non-Aboriginal communities.
2.3 ACROSS THE CITY

Engaged Citizenship

Civic engagement and participation take many forms, but a basic indicator of engaged citizenship is voter turnout. Elections at all three levels of government — municipal, provincial and federal — have taken place in the last three years. At all levels, voter turnout in these elections has been significantly lower for the Downtown Eastside than for Vancouver as a whole.

Voter Turnout in Recent Elections

Sources: City of Vancouver, Elections BC, Elections Canada. Downtown Eastside turnout is estimated; polling divisions do not exactly correspond to area boundaries.

2.3 ACROSS THE CITY

citizenU

citizenU is a federally-funded project delivered by the City of Vancouver that will engage about 2,000 young Vancouver residents from 2011 to 2013 in addressing racism, discrimination and bullying and building community across cultures, faiths and generations.

The initiative is developed and delivered in partnership with the Vancouver Board of Education, Vancouver Park Board, Vancouver Public Library, community organizations, youth and their families.

Youth complete a nine-month program of issue exploration and skills training with one of 50 community host organizations such as Red Fox Healthy Living Society in Strathcona.

They then participate in a series of city-wide events and activities to continue their investigations to culminate in the development and launch of their own youth-led projects to tackle racism, discrimination and bullying in their schools, organizations, neighbourhoods and the city as a whole.
TOWARD HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

Ensuring Livability Now and Into the Future

The health of people, places, and the planet are inextricably linked. A well-planned built environment is critical for our health and well-being. We need to get around easily whether it’s on foot, by bike, using a wheelchair, or on transit. Easily accessible services and food along with a vibrant and welcoming environment are also key. A sustainable natural environment is not only critical for the water we drink and the air that we breathe but also for our access to nature. We need a thriving economic environment to develop local employment opportunities.

A vibrant social environment should provide accessible and shared spaces where we can meet, learn, access services, relax and enjoy.
The DTES includes many kinds of land use — commercial, industrial, and residential. Chinatown, Gastown, Victory Square, Thornton Park and parts of the Oppenheimer District (DEOD) typically include a mix of commercial/retail at street level, with either residential or commercial above. Strathcona is primarily residential with single family homes and duplexes/townhomes across the area, and bounded by apartment blocks to the east and west. Parts of the DEOD are also residential. Industrial areas to the north and south are typically low-density, job areas. The area has several key commercial/retail areas such as Water, Hastings, Cordova, Main, Pender and Keefer Streets. According to 2010 records from Canada Post, the general land use in the DTES amounts to around 990 houses, 8,788 apartments and 2,817 business uses. With an estimated total of 9,779 residential units occupied by approximately 17,000 residents, there are an average of 1.7 persons per unit.
3.1 TOWARD A WELL-PLANNED BUILT ENVIRONMENT

There are approximately 500 buildings in the area currently listed on the City’s Heritage Register, accounting for nearly 20 per cent of all the buildings on the register.
3.2 TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Currently, about 92 per cent of Vancouver residents live within a five-minute walk of a park or green space. Green space can include parks and fields, greenways, 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 green space such as the seawall. Parks in the DTES include Victory Square, Pioneer Place, Oppenheimer and Strathcona.

The northeastern portion of the Local Area is not within 400 metres of a park or open space.
3.3 TOWARD A THRIVING ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Local Economy: Key Economic Sectors

In 2002, a study was commissioned through the Vancouver Agreement to review the opportunities for economic development in the DTES. It identified some viable opportunities for growth in a wide variety of sectors, including:

- Retail
- Tourism
- Education
- Apparel
- Food processing and wholesale
- Film, arts, and culture
- High technology
- Light manufacturing, wholesale, and logistics
- Business services
- Woodward’s building
- Social enterprise

Since 2011, the Vancouver Economic Commission has been working on an economic profile for the DTES.

This work involves more in-depth analysis of some of the key growth sectors for the neighbourhood and the potential for a vibrant employment climate emerging in key sectors, including: high technology and creative industries; the growing digital economy; tourism, hospitality and retail; finance, insurance and real estate; social enterprise sector; and green business. Some of the factors that contribute to growth in these sectors in particular are lower-cost real estate (relative to elsewhere in Vancouver) that facilitates incubation of new enterprises; proximity to the Central Business District; historic character and open spaces in units; and many urban lifestyle amenities such as cafés and bars.

The table on the right provides a breakdown of the types of businesses licensed by the City of Vancouver in the DTES as of 2011.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of These Businesses Licensed in the DTES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waste Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation &amp; Warehousing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scientific Establishment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health and Beauty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating and Drinking Places</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction and Trades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Entertainment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2011 Statistics Canada Census data
### 3.3 TOWARD A THRIVING ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

**Local Economy Characteristics**

**Social Enterprise**

There are approximately 86 social enterprises operating in the DTES area. Some examples of the positive impact that social enterprises have already had in the DTES include:

- Four of the larger social enterprises in the DTES (Potluck, APMI, United We Can and The Cleaning Solution) currently employ 360 residents with barriers to employment.
- Providing job opportunities for people who were unemployed long term and on income assistance can result in substantial savings to income assistance programs.
- There are also additional savings related to health care, social justice, criminal justice and housing.

**Investment in the DTES**

In 2002, the level of business investment in the DTES was low and was projected to remain low over the short term. The indications that led to that conclusion included few development projects in the previous five years, high vacancy rates, low levels of business investment, and businesses shutting down or moving out of the area.

Attracting new investment to the area was a critical factor for economic revitalization. For the DTES, some of the strengths to attract new investment include:

- The DTES is well-positioned geographically to access other markets in the Lower Mainland.
- The strong heritage of the region provides the opportunity to promote tourism and retail products and services in an authentic heritage environment.
- The area has a long history as a centre for apparel and food manufacturing.
- Property costs are generally lower than elsewhere in Vancouver.
- There is a strong base of residents, organizations, and business improvement associations committed to improving the area.
3.3 TOWARD A THRIVING ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Development Activities

Development permits numbers are for total number of permits issued. This include permits for: change of use, time-limited uses, and alterations. Therefore, it is not a good indicator of the number of buildings constructed.

The total number of development permits for the last three years have been consistent at around 50 permits each year. Building permits for almost all the areas declined in 2007, suggesting the recession impacted building activity.

Building permits for the Strathcona and industrial areas show an increase for the last two years.
3.3 Toward a Thriving Economic Environment

Vacant Premises

The number of vacant storefronts is currently lower than in 2007, the last time data was available. There has been a noticeable trend of new retail and restaurant outlets in certain parts of DTES including Pender, Hastings, Powell, Abbott and Carrall Streets.

This has led to a drop in vacant premises. The drop has been most significant on the 400 and 100 block of West Hastings and the 100 block of East Hastings as reflected above.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>GLOSSARY</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aboriginal Identity:</strong> Refers to people who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit, and/or those who reported being a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian, as defined by the Indian Act of Canada, and/or those who reported they were members of an Indian band or First Nation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Household:</strong> Refers to a person or a group of persons (other than foreign residents) who occupy the same dwelling and do not have a usual place of residence elsewhere in Canada. It may consist of a family group (census family) with or without other persons, two or more families sharing a dwelling, a group of unrelated persons, or one person living alone.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Low-Income Household:</strong> Determined by Statistics Canada as those households that qualify for Low-Income Cut-off (LICO). LICO is the income level below which a family spends 20 per cent more of its income on necessities (food, shelter and clothing) than the average family does.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Workers:</strong> Includes creative, production, technical and management occupations in the areas of broadcasting, film and video, sound recording, performing arts, publishing, printing, libraries, archives, heritage, architecture and design.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Immigrant:</strong> Refers to people who are, or have been, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities.</td>
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<td><strong>Métis:</strong> A person of mixed North American Indian and European ancestry, who identifies as Métis.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Extreme Weather Response Shelter:</strong> A temporary space that is made available to people who are homeless during situations where sleeping outside might threaten their health and safety. These temporary shelters are made available from approximately November 1 to March 31.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mode of Transportation:</strong> Main means a person uses to travel between home and place of work (by car, on foot, on public transit, or by some other means).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Live/Work:</strong> Also known as “artist live/work studios”. Combines “living” and “working” in the same premises. The type of work activity varies from commercial (e.g. childcare, music teacher, software developer), industrial (e.g. jeweller, recording studio, woodwork), or artist (e.g. painter or photography) work.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Home Language:</strong> Refers to the language spoken most often or on a regular basis at home by the individual at the time of the census.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Neighbourhood House (Association of Neighbourhood Houses of British Columbia):</strong> A non-profit organization that provides programs and services that are locally-based but also supportive of Metro Vancouver and provincial initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Housing (Non-market Housing):</strong> Social housing provides housing mainly for those who cannot afford to pay market rents. It is housing owned by government, a non-profit or co-operative society. Rents are determined not by the market but by the residents’ ability to pay. Non-market housing is designed for independent living.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>North American Indian:</strong> Also known as First Nations people.</td>
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<td><strong>Private Household:</strong> Person or group of persons occupying the same dwelling.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Single-Detached House:</strong> A building that does not share an inside wall with any other house or dwelling that is usually occupied by just one household or family and consists of just one dwelling unit or suite.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tenure:</strong> Refers to whether some member of the household owns or rents the dwelling or whether the dwelling is band housing (on an Indian reserve or settlement).</td>
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