

## WHAT'S INCLUDED IN INITIATIVE ZONES?

This chapter considers equity challenges faced within Vancouver's parks and recreation system and presents a geographic priority setting tool to identify historically underserved areas.

These areas, called Initiative Zones, are one component of a larger social infrastructure effort to address systemic barriers and justly provide Park Board services on the journey to equity.

# MOVE 1: EQUITY

## TOOL: INITIATIVE ZONES

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# BACKGROUND

## OVERVIEW

*Examining parks and recreation through an equity lens reveals the inherent privilege in access to and enjoyment of parks and recreation held by some populations and opens up opportunities to provide the same support and welcome to populations without this privilege.*

Due to patterns of development and investment over the history of Vancouver, the distribution of trees, parks, lot sizes, land use, transit and other infrastructure is expectedly uneven. These patterns of investment have been tightly tied to class, race, gender and other systems of power. Consequently, conditions of social and environmental injustice persist. This complex city is a product of its upbringing.

Emerging challenges to city living and park planning—such as rapid redevelopment and unaffordability—and the legacies of histories and systems of social inequity continue to reinforce barriers and reproduce unevenness and inequality. Providing equitable access to urban parks and recreation is an urgent priority.

The uneven distribution of opportunities presents a complex challenge. With limited resources we must prioritise effort and investment where it will make the biggest difference to the community and target where we have service gaps. How might the Park Board make better decisions for a more just and equitable parks and recreation system? Initiative Zones are one tool to help locate where we can focus our attention and apply our efforts more effectively and transparently on a daily basis.

Providing equitable access to parks and recreation is not exclusively spatial or physical; programming and access programs are critical to the discussion of equity. The goal in identifying underserved areas of the city is not to connote deficit or imply victimhood in these communities but rather to recognize where the parks and recreation system is not meeting needs, and where the history of investment has resulted in an uneven distribution of resources and opportunities.



*Striving for equity means addressing the fact that some parts of the city enjoy more privilege than others.*

## WE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN CREATING A CITY FOR ALL

In 2015, the Healthy City Strategy set a city vision of "A Healthy City for All: a city where together we are creating and continually improving the conditions that enable all of us to enjoy the highest level of health and well-being possible."

Health is much more than our genetics or the lifestyle choices that impact physical health. Our health and well-being is dynamically influenced by the conditions of the physical and social environments in which we live and the broader set of structures shaping daily life.

Income, education, working conditions, social supports, community connection, colonization, and access to health services are some 'social determinants of health' that influence disparities in health outcomes.<sup>1</sup> An academic study found that people who are exposed to the greenest environments also have the lowest levels of health inequality among low-income households.<sup>2</sup>

Initiative Zones is a tool the Park Board can use to address health inequities as an outcome of the uneven distribution of services and resources. We all have a role to play in this collective vision for a healthy city for all.

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization. 2018. "Social Determinants of Health." [https://www.who.int/social\\_determinants/en/](https://www.who.int/social_determinants/en/)

<sup>2</sup> Mitchell, R and Popham, F. 2008. "Effect of exposure to natural environment on health inequities: an observational population study." *The Lancet* vol 372

## KEY TERMS

### *power*

People with power have the opportunity to shape their lives and the larger world around them. Power is unequally distributed globally... Some individuals or groups wield greater power than others, thereby allowing them greater access and control over resources. Wealth, whiteness, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, and education are a few key social mechanisms through which power operates.<sup>1</sup>

*"The ability to achieve a purpose." — Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

### *privilege*

By definition, a special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group.<sup>2</sup>

*"Privilege exists when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to, rather than because of anything they've done or failed to do." — Peggy McIntosh*

### *oppression*

Results from the use of institutional power and privilege where one person or group benefits at the expense of another. Oppression is the use of power and the effects of domination.<sup>3</sup>

*Oppression is reinforced by social norms and institutional power and privilege. It can be institutionalized in society and culture and also manifests in interpersonal interactions and individual beliefs.*

<sup>1</sup> Intergroup Resources. Glossary: "Power." <http://www.intergroupresources.com/power/>. 2012.

<sup>2</sup> "Privilege | Definition of privilege in English by Oxford Dictionaries." <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/privilege>. 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Office for Multicultural Affairs. "Diversity and Social Justice: A glossary of working definitions." [https://www.uml.edu/docs/Glossary\\_tcm18-55041.pdf](https://www.uml.edu/docs/Glossary_tcm18-55041.pdf). 2019.

# BACKGROUND



*"There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we don't live single-issue lives."*

—Audre Lorde  
Self described black feminist, lesbian,  
mother, warrior and poet (1934-1992)

## TOOLS FOR CHANGE

*Geographic analysis at a city-wide scale is one tool that will allow us to:*

- Identify **patterns of uneven service and resource distribution**;
- Inventory **existing amenities**;
- Prioritise **investment**;
- Ask **better questions**; and,
- Catalyze **transformative change**.



**All people and communities in Vancouver,  
regardless of their ethnicity, gender, religion, race,  
financial status, sexual orientation, abilities or age  
deserve the right to access quality parks, recreation and nature,  
and the opportunity to partake in social, cultural and recreational activities  
to acquire physical literacy skills, to express and enjoy culture,  
and to connect with community.**



# BACKGROUND

## THE JOURNEY TO EQUITY

*To reduce barriers to parks and recreation, the Park Board works alongside community partners who strive to meet the needs of the individual and the neighbourhood.*

These partners include Community Centre Associations, internal city partners, other social infrastructure facilities, community groups, and many more service providers.

Community Centre Associations and their partners provide programs that aim to meet the unique needs of their communities. Among many examples:

- Kitsilano Community Centre and volunteers offer a weekly “Shower Program” that is highly successful in treating unhoused neighbours with dignity, demonstrating that there are no restrictions on who deserves respect and comfort.
- Kerrisdale Seniors Centre serves lunch every day, bringing people together to eat an affordable nutritious meal and to connect with community.
- MoreSports provides affordable sports and physical activity opportunities for children and youth. They take a collaborative approach, which uses sport as a tool for empowering youth as the leaders in creating healthy, connected and resilient communities.

The Park Board is dedicated to co-creating city building processes and systems that intentionally create and hold space for empowerment and honour the needs of the most excluded, on their terms. In order to carry out this work, it is essential to acknowledge existing injustices, biases, racism, and oppression—and to not only ask who is not at the table, but why aren’t they and how can they be?

Equity is a global challenge that bears responsibility at all levels of government and in our community. Through a systemic view of equity, we aim to support and inform a citywide framework, to develop Park Board policies and to catalyze local action.



Big Draw Marpole | Park Board

# BACKGROUND

## WHAT WE ARE DOING NOW

*The Park Board, City, and key partners—such as Community Centre Associations—work together to reduce barriers to opportunities for safely accessing and enjoying parks and recreation.*

Here are a few examples that give a snapshot of current actions working towards an equitable parks and recreation system:

- The Park Board's Leisure Access Program (LAP) supports individuals, families, groups and communities in need by reducing financial barriers to recreation.
- Universal and gender neutral washrooms are now being rolled out to all facilities.
- Swim and fitness programming is available as a safe space for the Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Two-Spirit (TGD2S) communities.

### RECONCILIATION

In January of 2016, the Park Board approved 11 recommendations to direct staff in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and their 94 Calls to

Action. The Park Board recognizes the institution's colonial history, and endorsed the reconciliation mission to decolonize the Park Board and set an example in treating reconciliation as a process of decolonization. Reconciliation values of patience, clarity, pragmatism, leadership and learning guide the way we work at the Park Board and how we interact with colleagues, external partners, and the public.

### STEWARDSHIP ANNUAL PLAN

The Park Board's upcoming Stewardship Annual Plan aims to create a transparent and equitable process for community groups interested in organizing community programming and ecological enhancement activities in Vancouver parks. Reconciliation, Transparency, Equity, and Sustainability are the four VanPlay principles guiding how the Annual Plan can support park users and community initiatives.

### ARTS, CULTURE AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

The City's Arts, Culture and Community Services (ACCS) collaborates with program partners, City departments, and external stakeholders to:

- Enable the provision of affordable housing, childcare spaces, integrated social and wellness services and spaces, and vibrant arts and cultural services and spaces.
- Enable the provision of programs and services to build capacity among the City's most systemically excluded and discriminated residents through direct delivery and through granting to non-profits and community organizations. ACCS is currently developing a city-wide equity framework.
- Manage a diverse portfolio of leases with not-for-profit organizations, including housing, childcare, social services, and arts and culture groups.

# BACKGROUND

## WHAT DOES EQUITY IN PARKS + RECREATION MEAN TO YOU?

*We heard many different interpretations of "equity" through the VanPlay Deep Dive Workshops.*

"Spaces that are designed for youth specifically."

**RAY-CAM YOUTH PARTICIPANTS**

"Anyone, regardless of disability, can go to any recreation guide or centre and learn about/sign-up for inclusive, accessible and affordable sports and recreation."

**BC WHEELCHAIR SPORTS**

"Respect and dignity for all."

"Working together to meet the needs of those we are supporting."

**PARK BOARD ACCESS & INCLUSION STAFF**

"Ensure not just physical access but mental and social access are considered as well. Ensure there are no social barriers to inclusion."

**VANCOUVER COASTAL HEALTH**





# BACKGROUND

## WHAT WE HEARD

*During the VanPlay process, thousands of residents and stakeholders voiced their top concern: geographic equity in access to parks, recreation facilities and nature.*

- In the 2018 TalkVancouver survey on the 10 Goals to Shape the Next 25 Years, 92% of respondents supported the goal of “prioritizing the delivery of resources where they are needed most.”
- Comments regarding challenges and opportunities cited by staff and stakeholders included concerns with spatial inequity in access to parks and inequity in the quality of parks, particularly in the Downtown Urban Core where there is a large underserved population and overused parks.
- “Equity, Inclusion, and Access” was one of the top three priorities for action identified by the community in Phase 1 of VanPlay engagement. VanPlay tour participants were enthusiastic for the Park Board to address the equitable delivery of facilities across the City.
- Stakeholders and the External Advisory Group shared that while they perceived inequities in resources throughout the City, they were unsure of how the Park Board assigns priority to projects in order to address this.



VanPlay Outreach | Katherine Howard

# APPROACH

## WHY INITIATIVE ZONES?

*The playing field is not level and the barriers are uneven.*

While the Park Board and partners work hard to reduce barriers to existing services, the Initiative Zones concept helps us show where resources should go to support this effort. Investments made – whether in capital or operating funds, funding support to partners and community groups, project attention or staffing hours – can maximize impact on traditionally underserved areas of the city while striving to maintain all parks to a high level of care.

While it is easy to assume we know where investments are needed, it is complex to communicate the rationale behind them. This presents a challenge to transparent and logical decision making. Data and mapping tools can alleviate this challenge by exposing patterns, testing hypotheses and revealing a more nuanced portrait of service and community infrastructure distribution, one tinted by inequity.

In 2010, the Greenest City Action Plan set a goal of providing a park or open space within a 5-minute walk for all residents.<sup>1</sup> This goal was a starting point to help guide investment to ensure park space is equally provided throughout. However, this goal doesn't acknowledge that parts of the city are more densely developed than others. It is also important that we assess the availability of private open space (such

as properties with backyards), consider access to low barrier recreation opportunities, and look overall at delivery of parks and recreation resources through an equity lens.

As the city grows, the public amenities required to meet the needs of new residents are generally provided by developers, by way of contributions, fees, and levies. While there are some exceptions, this theory of 'growth pays for growth' means that densifying areas receive necessary investment in roads, pipes, parks, and public facilities. This method, generally, does not help to address imbalances in service provision for historically underserved areas, aging infrastructure, or neighbourhoods not experiencing growth.

People with more privilege than others often have more time and resources to advocate for their parks and recreation needs, allowing them greater access to parks and recreation, opportunities for decision-making, and the highest advantage in a system where resources are unevenly distributed.

A simple, powerful, and transparent geographic tool was created to identify resource allocation patterns that take into account density, demand, and quality of parks and recreation provision. Geography is one of several considerations to keep in mind when addressing inequities in access to parks and recreation. This tool acts as a compass to guide where the Park Board will prioritise efforts and investments to lower or remove barriers.

Over time the Park Board has continuously improved its approach to determining where to focus parks and recreation resources, as seen by the timeline on the facing page.

<sup>1</sup> In the Greenest City 2020 Action Plan, the City of Vancouver – in partnership with the Vancouver Park Board – set the goal of providing a green space within a five-minute walk of all residents. This study of the City's park and open space network measured park access with a 400m walk radius. This "as the crow flies" methodology put 92% of the City within the five minute walk range.

# APPROACH



## 1888



### FIRST PARK DEDICATION

1888 saw the forceful removal of First Nations villages for the dedication of Stanley Park as Vancouver's first protected open space. Two years later, the Park Board was formed as an autonomous governing body, cementing the City's early dedication to parks (and later recreation).

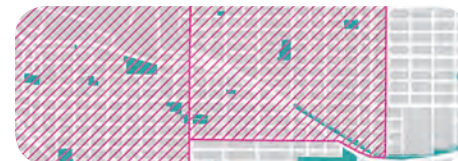
## 1928



### A PARK EVERY SQ. MILE

The 1928 Plan for Vancouver introduced the important metric of a park every square mile, hugely influencing the distribution of the park system today. The plan also introduced a suite of recreation amenities into parks, broadening the role of the Park Board to include recreation.

## 1992



### PARK PROVISION

The 1992 Management Plan was the City's first initiative to address the challenges of accommodating a growing population. The metric of 1.1 hectares of neighbourhood park space per 1,000 residents was introduced to tie park acquisition to growth.

## 2010



### FIVE MINUTE WALK

The Greenest City was a visionary plan that heralded a citywide, interdisciplinary approach to making Vancouver the greenest city in the world. One of the key recommendations was to put all Vancouver residents within a five minute walk of a greenspace.

## 2014



### RECONCILIATION

In 2014, Vancouver became a City of Reconciliation. This seminal moment brought First Nations and the hard work of truth and reconciliation into the forefront of City operations. To support the effort, the Park Board adopted 11 Reconciliation strategies and hired a reconciliation planner with the mission to "decolonize the Vancouver Park Board."

## 2019



### INITIATIVE ZONES

As part of this master plan, the Park Board is committed to advancing equity in Vancouver through parks and recreation. Building off the incredible system Vancouver has today, the Initiative Zones identify areas in need of additional resources, based on low recreational access, urban forest canopy, and park provision.



# APPROACH

## INITIATIVE ZONES AS A TOOL

*The Initiative Zones mapping tool highlights areas in need of resources so that projects, programs and resources can be prioritised.*

Over time, by targeting investment and updating the Initiative Zones data, provision of parks and recreation will become more equitable.

To understand how we can target historically underserved areas we can:

- 1. Identify service gaps** (Initiative Zones)
- 2. Address inequity by applying an intersectional lens** as we work to fill these gaps in an inclusive way that meets the needs of the community (see Equity Analysis Factors on page 34)

The following pages introduce the Initiative Zones and describe how they were created and how they can be used.



All Bodies Dance | Park Board



# APPROACH

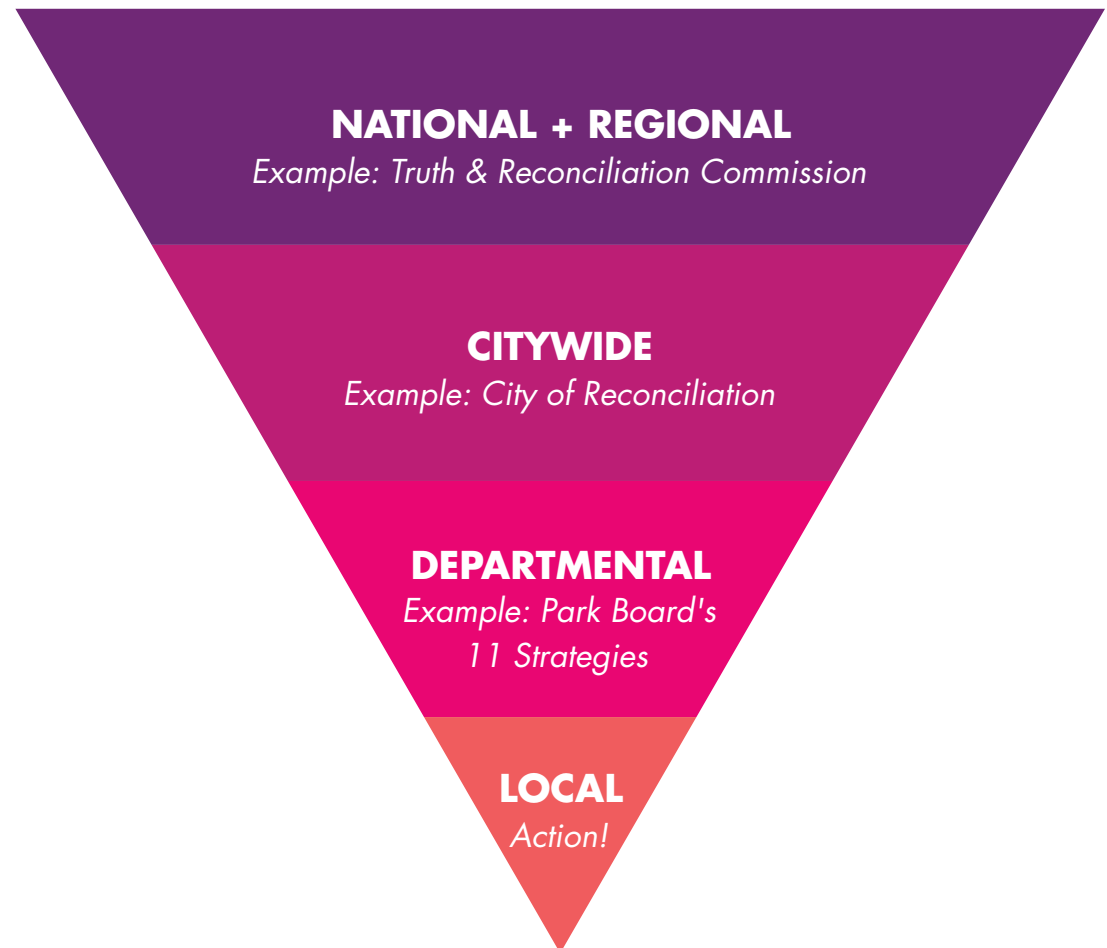
## INITIATIVE ZONES AS A TOOL

The intention is to highlight areas in need of resources so that projects, programs and resources can be focused, and alleviate imbalances within the parks and recreation system so that, over time, provision will become more equitable.

The Initiative Zones tool combines a measure of access to parks, recreation and nature in order to create a powerful story that sets the scene for great conversations about where resources may be required.

The maps of the Initiative Zones shown in this report is a 1.0 Version. It is a 'living document' that can and should be updated over time as data is updated and improved, and as we integrate what we've learned throughout this journey. Equity is not a static target!

This tool is not intended to answer all questions – it is intended as a prioritisation tool, not one to make decisions on its own. It should be used in tandem with the other VanPlay tools and approaches; Park Board Reconciliation Mission, Vision, and Values; City of Vancouver Equity Framework and Poverty Reduction Strategy (underway) and other City initiatives rooted in equity. Meaningful and nuanced engagement with communities, governments and stakeholders should occur in concert with use of this tool.



# APPROACH

## HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

*The Initiative Zones is a tool to help determine project prioritisation. It is one tool in the toolbox to be used alongside a suite of other tools.*

Initiative Zones can be used for a wide range of projects that improve the quality of parks and recreation experiences. They are intended as a launch point. Implementation should be further reflected on, reviewed, revised, and agreed upon through collaboration with partners and the community. For example, using Initiative Zones to prioritise investment in washroom upgrades would help to improve the overall quality of parks and recreation experiences, although it won't necessarily change the dial of an indicator (Park Service Gaps, Demand for Low-Barrier Recreation, and Urban Forest Canopy).

Conversely, using Initiative Zones to prioritise where to plant street trees would improve tree coverage and directly reduce the 'Tree Coverage Gaps' indicator. As the 'Equity Analysis Factors' develop and data gathering methods improve over time, these overlay factors can further help to address inequities in accessing and enjoying quality parks and recreation services.

When using this tool, it is important to be aware of the impacts of park and greening investments in the larger context

of land use planning, development, and housing. Without proper and targeted mitigation strategies, improvements to a neighbourhood's parks and recreation facilities can inadvertently cause displacement. This tool should align with robust policies from the City of Vancouver's Planning, Urban Design & Sustainability departments, Arts, Culture and Community Services, Healthy City Strategy, and Resilient Vancouver to help prevent displacement, reno-victions, gentrification and further urban stratification.

Removing barriers to inclusion in the parks and recreation system will require sustained and cooperative efforts across the Park Board and City departments, service providers, community organisations, and on an individual and interpersonal level day-to-day. An equity approach to parks and recreation planning recognizes that services must be provided in a way that suits the unique needs of a community. This approach requires us to be empathetic and exhibit humility in our work. Initiative Zones seek to create the conditions for a "level playing field" by addressing these exclusions and forms of inequity in Vancouver's parks and recreation system.

**This network of partnerships and key resource and knowledge holders, and holding each other accountable, are at the core of Park Board efforts to mitigate continuing displacement of those who are systematically excluded to neighbourhoods with lower service. Addressing inequity in Vancouver calls for unparalleled collaboration and illuminates the need for innovative solutions.**

## DATA SUPPORTS GREAT CONVERSATIONS

*Data can be a really important tool when used in conversations about equity but there are data gaps that need to be addressed.*

Equity-seeking groups are often missing from the data and the data does not elevate their knowledge or voice. As a result, these communities are not meaningfully represented nor is the data culturally reflective of all populations. Data can take the form of numbers or percentages (quantitative data) or it can be descriptive information, such as stories of lived experience (qualitative data).

The Park Board will collaborate with partners, equity-seeking groups, and others on the Equity Analysis Factors (see page 34) so that the community is directly involved in the data gathering process and data interpretation, leading to greater equity. Developing data partnerships to find new ways of measuring equity can spur collaborative and innovative solutions for complex problems.

This approach can de-center the colonial, dominant narrative of data collection that often reinforces systemic oppression. A strengths-based approach to the data-gathering and analysis process, together with other forms of appropriate qualitative and quantitative data, builds a stronger narrative, rather than reducing experiences to numbers and focusing only on deficits. This can help address data gaps and have a transformative impact at personal, organizational, and systemic scales. A strengths-based approach can ensure voices and the wisdom of those systemically excluded are heard, represented, and valued in dialogue and decision-making around equity.

**Maps are powerful representations that reveal spatial patterns and processes of social and environmental phenomena.** However, maps can also selectively exclude or include information and this can lead to use for discriminatory practices. VanPlay includes considerable data and compelling maps to tell stories. How you choose to represent information is very important. It is essential to build maps so they tell a story that does not continue discriminatory practices.

## *strengths-based approach*

A collaborative process between the person supported by services and those supporting them, allowing them to work together to determine an outcome that draws on the person's strengths and assets.

## *environmental gentrification*

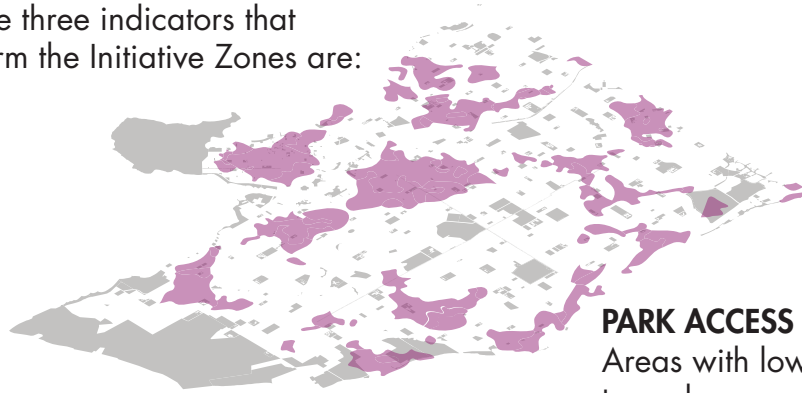
Environmental, ecological, or green gentrification is a process in which cleaning up pollution or providing green amenities increases local property values and attracts wealthier residents to a previously polluted or disenfranchised neighbourhood.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Banzhaf, H. Spencer; McCormick, Eleanor (2006). "Moving beyond cleanup: Identifying the crucibles of environmental gentrification." NCEE Working Papers Series.

# APPROACH

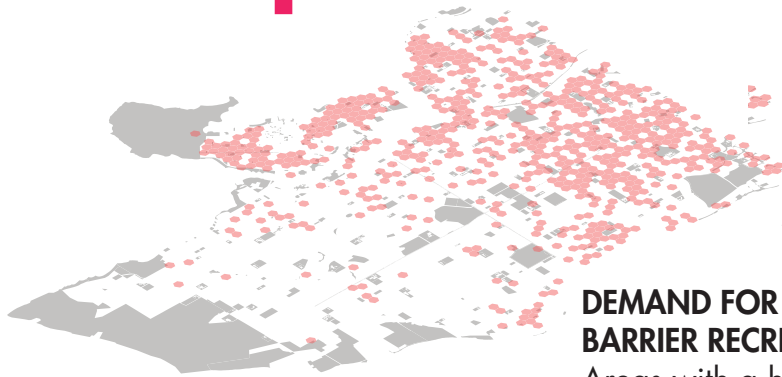
## INITIATIVE ZONES MAPPING

The three indicators that form the Initiative Zones are:



### PARK ACCESS GAPS

Areas with low access to park space



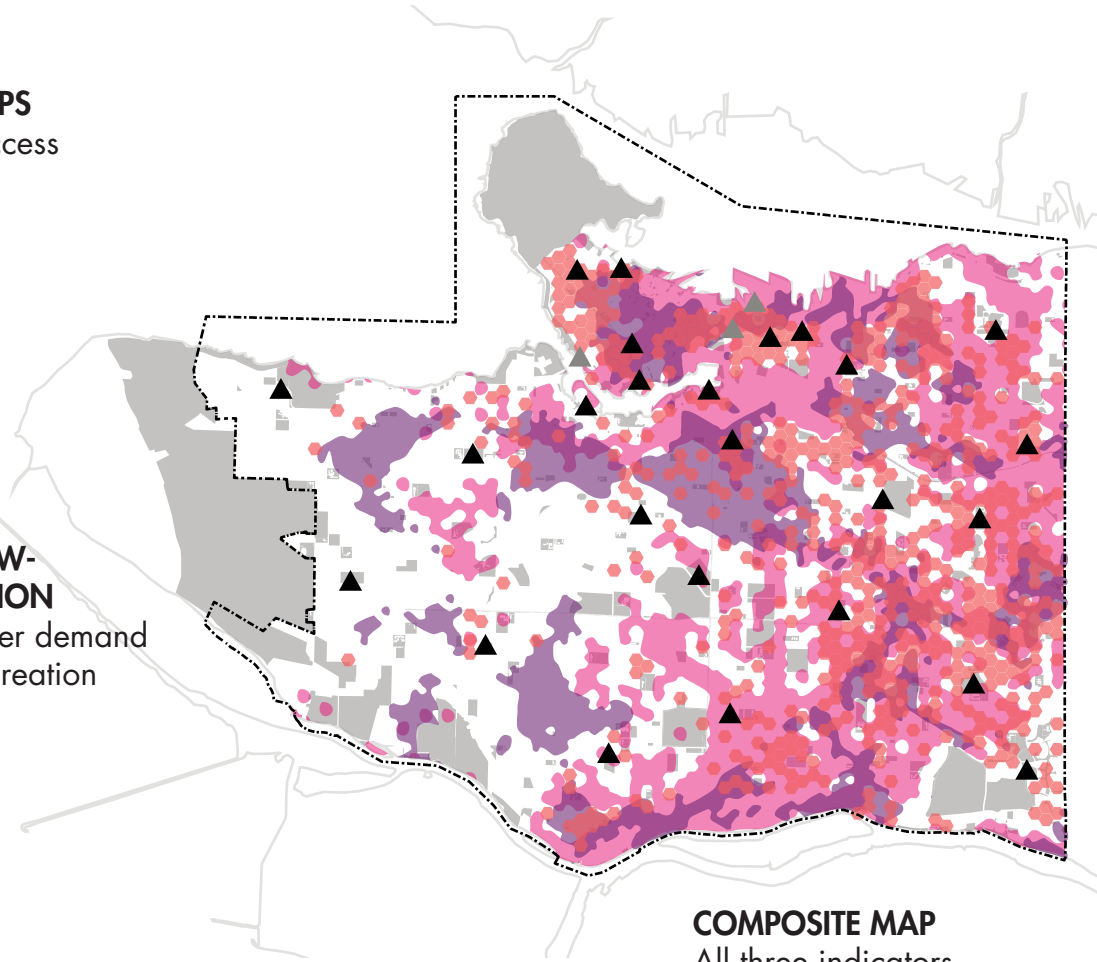
### DEMAND FOR LOW-BARRIER RECREATION

Areas with a higher demand for low-barrier recreation services



### URBAN FOREST CANOPY GAPS

Areas of the city with a less robust urban forest



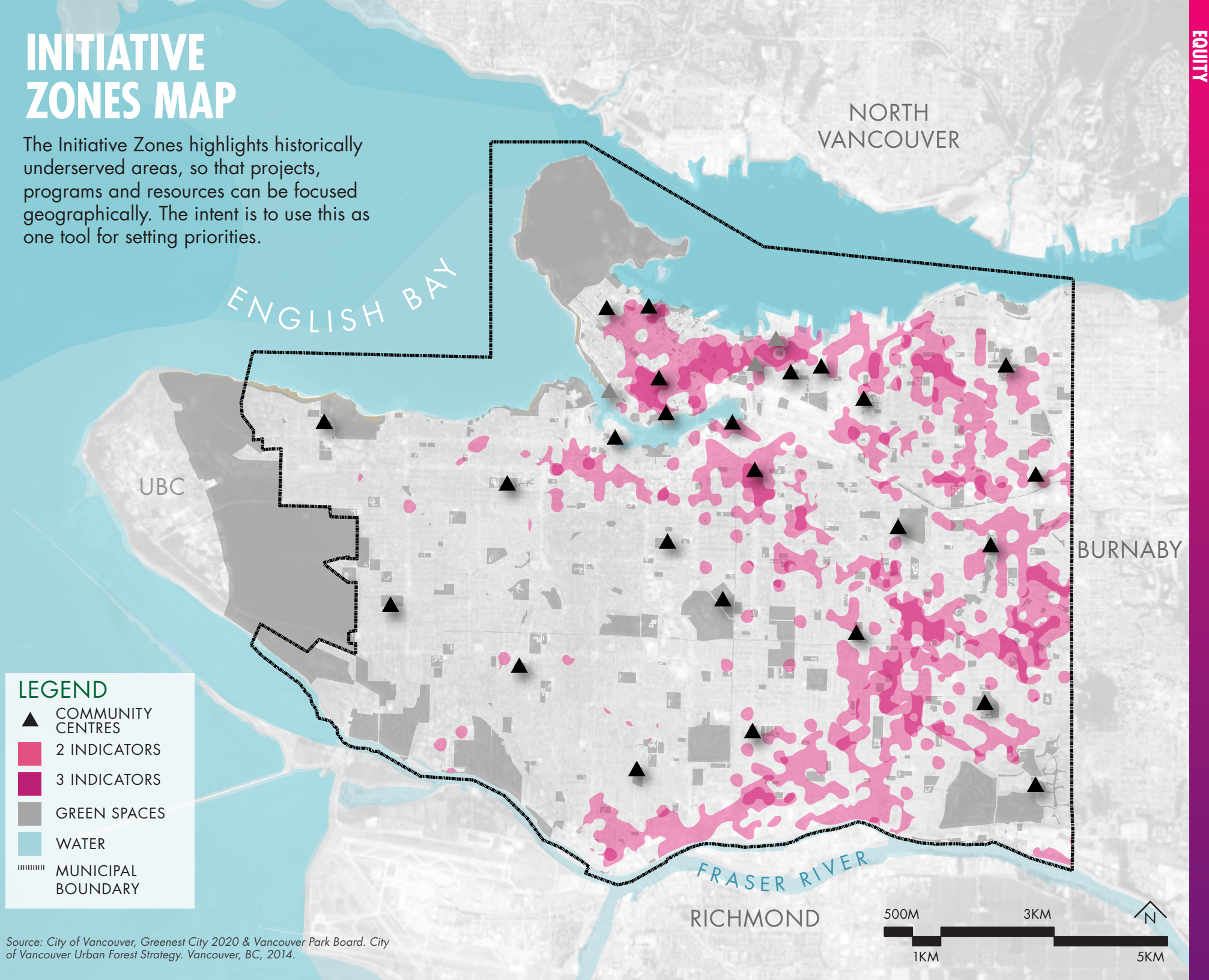
### COMPOSITE MAP

All three indicators shown with community centre locations



# INITIATIVE ZONES MAP

The Initiative Zones highlights historically underserved areas, so that projects, programs and resources can be focused geographically. The intent is to use this as one tool for setting priorities.



Source: City of Vancouver, Greenest City 2020 & Vancouver Park Board. City of Vancouver Urban Forest Strategy. Vancouver, BC, 2014.

# ANALYSIS

## PARK PROVISION

Vancouver is home to hundreds of parks, green spaces, public gardens, and plazas. The park system offers a wide variety of experiences and natural areas, from temperate rainforests to urban beaches. With the city increasing in density and the population gaining more than 400 new residents each month, the preservation of public land and strategic investment in the park system are key priorities. While Vancouver has more park space today than it did 25 years ago, the amount of park space per person (or what we call 'park provision') has declined by almost a third.<sup>1</sup>

How do we measure access to parks? It is a matter of balancing distance, quantity and quality to determine how well the city's population is connected to the park system. The "Park Service Gaps" indicator considers distance to parks and the density of population within a 10-minute walk of each park.<sup>2</sup> This map is created from an output of the Park Provision Study (2016, 2018).

<sup>1</sup> Park Provision Study, Vancouver Park Board.

<sup>2</sup> Ten minutes was chosen because when combined with density, it showed a more comprehensive picture of access to and demand on park space.

## WHY PARK SERVICE GAPS MATTER

Whether you're 8 or 80, parks give people a place to socialize, exercise, relax and build community. They offer a wide range of environmental, economic, and social benefits on a variety of scales (individual, neighbourhood, city, earth, etc.) and over different points of time.

In a 2015 study, people living more than 1 kilometer away from a green space were shown to have nearly 50 percent higher odds of experiencing stress than those living fewer than 300 meters from a green space. Results correlated the frequency of visits to green spaces with lowered rates of stress.<sup>1</sup> Parks are places where people get to know their neighbours. Engaging with each other across difference and providing opportunities for meaningful interactions and shared activities in parks can improve social cohesion and social capital.

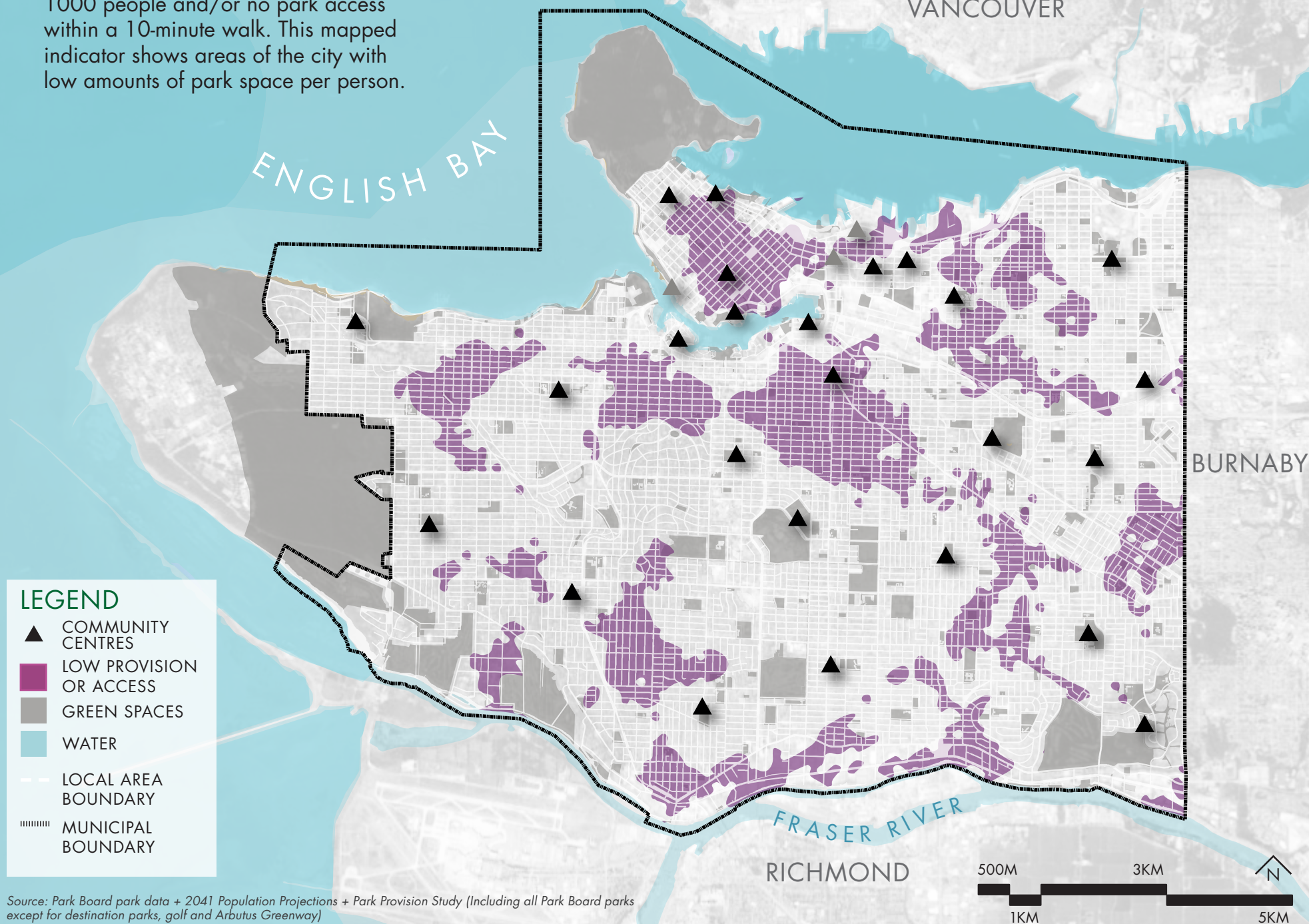
Careful planning and meaningful engagement is necessary to ensure that people living in areas with park service gaps receive the accompanying benefits of equitable access and are not displaced inadvertently through environmental gentrification. Groups and individuals can experience the same park in different ways. Listening to voices from the margins while taking time to nurture relationships is an example of genuine community participation in park planning and design. It is crucial to understanding how parks are experienced, what is needed to reduce barriers to safe access to parks, and how the park is or isn't meeting needs. For example, safety goes beyond physical hazards in a park. Feeling safe can also mean feeling respect and welcome to express one's culture or walking in a park without fear of discrimination.

<sup>1</sup> Making the Case for Designing Active Cities, Active Living Research (Stigsdotter, 2010), 2015.



# PARK ACCESS GAPS

Areas with less than .55 park ha/1000 people and/or no park access within a 10-minute walk. This mapped indicator shows areas of the city with low amounts of park space per person.



Source: Park Board park data + 2041 Population Projections + Park Provision Study (Including all Park Board parks except for destination parks, golf and Arbutus Greenway)

# ANALYSIS

## DEMAND FOR LOW-BARRIER RECREATION

Spread throughout Vancouver's diverse neighbourhoods, 24 community centres provide social, cultural and recreational facilities and programs for people of all ages and abilities to play, exercise, learn, and connect with others. Each of Vancouver's community centres serves as the hub of its respective neighbourhood, linking residents together with resources to encourage positive health outcomes through healthy lifestyles, social connectedness, and the ability to contribute to community.

Defining and mapping access to recreation is difficult. It is not just about physical proximity, space available in square feet, or even the quality of that space. Access and perceptions of access are impacted by factors such as the affordability of commercial operators and private clubs, whether you have a car, if you have private recreation space at home, if you see people like you, how welcome you feel...and so much more.

Through the Leisure Access Program (LAP), Vancouver residents facing financial barriers are provided free or reduced cost access to Park Board programs and services offered at its pools, rinks, participating fitness centres and community centres. LAP registration highlights areas of our system with a high demand for recreation services with reduced barriers. This works well because, by registering for LAP, participants express a wish to access recreation facilities but are otherwise experiencing barriers. Registration in LAP is supported and encouraged by recreation staff in community centres and external social service providers. By directing resources to where these important relationships take place, we are helping them thrive. As the Park Board enhances, supports, and grows the LAP to best respond to the needs of the community, this metric will help us continue to provide this valuable work with targeted resources, such as more staff and training.

Delivering resources to areas of the city with high demand for low barrier recreation will assist the Park Board in delivering a more equitable distribution of recreation facilities and assets over time.

## WHY LOW-BARRIER RECREATION MATTERS

Taking part in recreational activities can greatly improve physical and mental health, improve concentration and learning, strengthen communities, promote social bonds, and encourage healthier lifestyles.

Barriers to participating in recreation can take many forms—feelings of discomfort or unwelcome, prohibitive costs, lack of transportation options, and/or a lack of information about recreation resources and programs reaching low-income families or individuals. The Park Board is in the service of providing access to recreation for all—we are committed to reducing barriers and making recreation affordable, welcoming, and available to as many people as possible.

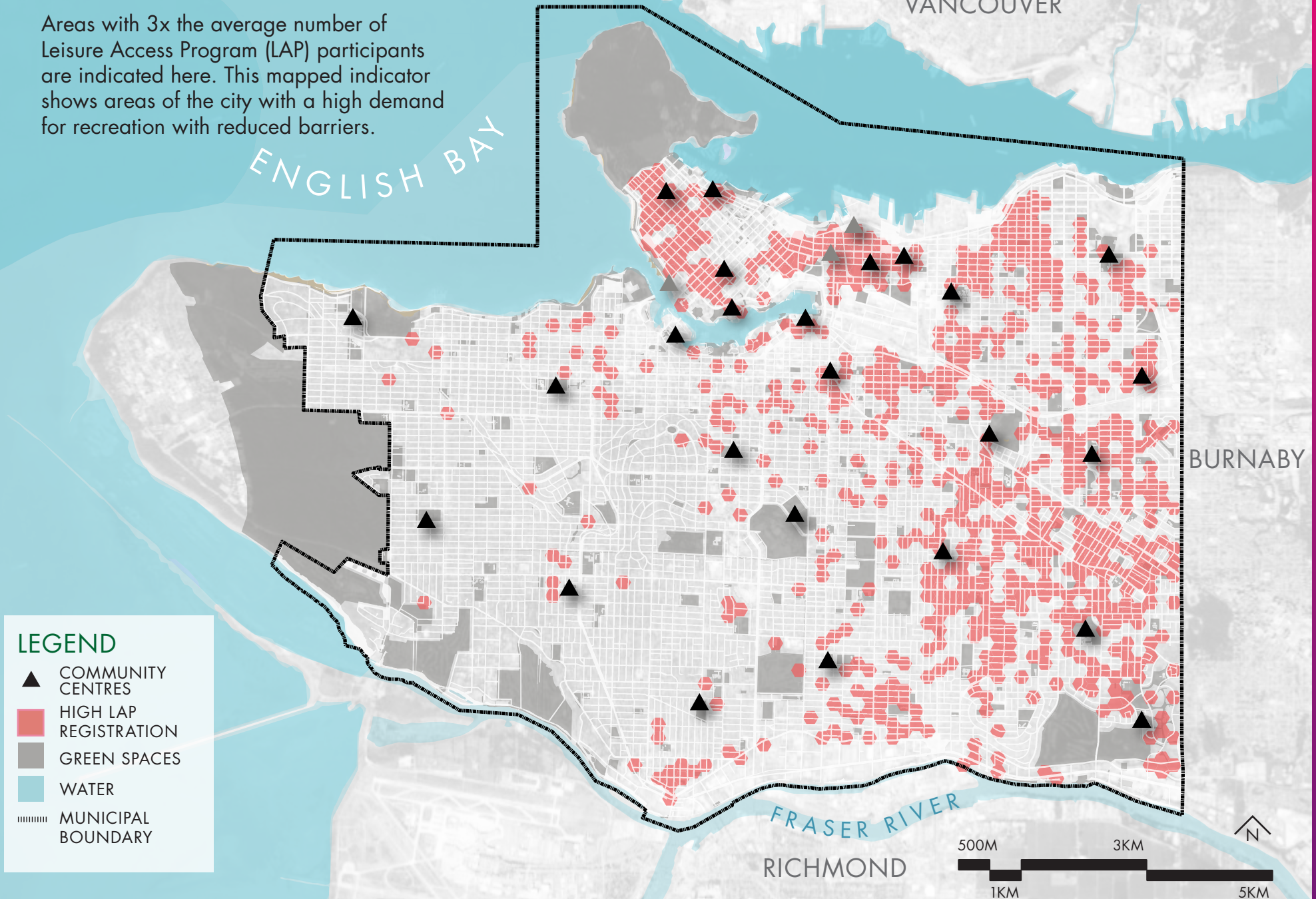
Vancouver's parks and recreation are meant to serve all populations. However, people systemically excluded should be prioritised, not only to reconcile historic injustices but because public services are often the only ones available to them—private recreation facilities are even more financially out-of-reach.

The Park Board has the ability to influence some of the barriers to accessing and participating in recreation services. The Park Board's Access & Inclusion team is working towards lowering barriers for participation in the Leisure Access Program and is expanding the scope of services that the program includes.



# DEMAND FOR LOW-BARRIER RECREATION

Areas with 3x the average number of Leisure Access Program (LAP) participants are indicated here. This mapped indicator shows areas of the city with a high demand for recreation with reduced barriers.



# ANALYSIS

## URBAN FOREST CANOPY

According to the 2016 Vital Signs report by the Vancouver Foundation, "natural beauty" is the number one reason people give for choosing to live in BC. Vancouver's mild coastal climate supports a magnificent urban forest is a mix of everything from native towering cedar, fir and hemlock trees to annually blossoming cherry trees. Measuring forest canopy is an indicator metric for a city-dweller's access to nature and a high-quality living environment. Vancouver's canopy cover is provided by vegetation in public parks, on public rights-of-ways, and on private land.

The 'Urban Forest Coverage Gaps' indicator considers the quality of the urban environment, and how the lack of accessibility to private green open space may result in feeling as though you have less access to nature and recreation space.

The Park Board's Urban Forest Strategy (2016) used LiDAR<sup>1</sup> data to map the distribution of canopy cover in the city. This mapping demonstrated how uneven urban forest cover is across Vancouver's neighbourhoods. For example, the industrial zones along the Burrard Inlet, False Creek Flats, Fraser River, and major thoroughfares like Nanaimo St., are largely devoid of trees. Areas like the Downtown Eastside and False Creek Flats have very low canopy cover (less than 5%) and are difficult to plant due to the urban form, streetscape design and lack of green open space. The Urban Forest Strategy (2014) set a target to increase the urban forest canopy to 22% by 2050 (currently 18%).

<sup>1</sup> LiDAR, which stands for Light Detection and Ranging, is a remote sensing method that uses light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure ranges (variable distances) to the Earth. LiDAR points are collected from aircraft using a sensor that sends down laser pulses. Canopy cover is extracted from LiDAR data and can measure tree height, stem diameter, canopy width and volume.

## WHY URBAN FOREST COVERAGE GAPS MATTER

If you have a leafy backyard you are less reliant on your local park as a space to sit outside in the sunshine. If your street is lined with mature trees and colourful gardens, you are likely to see and hear birds and insects.

Trees in an urban environment provide a wide range of benefits that:

- Improve human health and well-being
- Support wildlife and plant diversity
- Add beauty to the city's built form
- Reduce air pollution
- Conserve water and reduce soil erosion
- Mitigate urban heat island effect
- Increase resilience to climate change impacts
- Reduce noise pollution

Increasing tree canopy in the city's hottest areas is one way to reduce susceptibility to heat stress. Urban areas with little vegetation and lower tree coverage, as well as high percentages of impermeable hard surfaces (e.g., concrete, asphalt) create an urban heat island, a developed area with higher temperatures than nearby rural areas.<sup>1</sup> Land surface temperatures coupled with other social factors contribute to vulnerability to extreme heat. These factors can include social isolation, mental health, homelessness, substance addiction, physical disability, and developmental disability. Many residents of the Downtown Eastside have little access to proper shade, indoor cooling, and find it difficult to avoid the summer heat. Increasing tree canopy in the Downtown Eastside and other heat island hotspots is one way to reduce vulnerability to heat-related illnesses and mortality in these locations.

<sup>1</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). "Heat Island Effect." <https://www.epa.gov/heat-islands>. 2019.



# URBAN FOREST CANOPY GAPS

Areas with less than 10% canopy coverage. This mapped indicator shows areas of the city with less street trees, park trees and green private open space.

ENGLISH BAY

NORTH  
VANCOUVER

UBC

BURNABY

## LEGEND

- ▲ COMMUNITY CENTRES
- <10% COVERAGE
- GREEN SPACES
- WATER
- ▬ MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY

FRASER RIVER

RICHMOND

500M

3KM

1KM

5KM

# ANALYSIS

## EQUITY ANALYSIS FACTORS

*There are many, many factors that contribute to “equity” and “need” and each are unique to individuals, communities and places.*

The current state of parks and recreation service distribution across the city is neither equal nor equitable and it is important to keep having conversations and taking action, and co-creating equity while we fill these gaps.

By including relevant disaggregated data layers (data that is broken down by categories) in the Initiative Zones policy, we are more likely to spot where the needs and gaps in services are. We can measure progress, and then appropriately respond in a more-informed way. It is important to see this data as a snapshot, a benchmark at a single point in time to identify where we need to go in order to change these numbers and patterns. Community input and collaboration will help inform what the Equity Analysis Factors should consider and will identify relevant ways the Park Board can apply this tool.

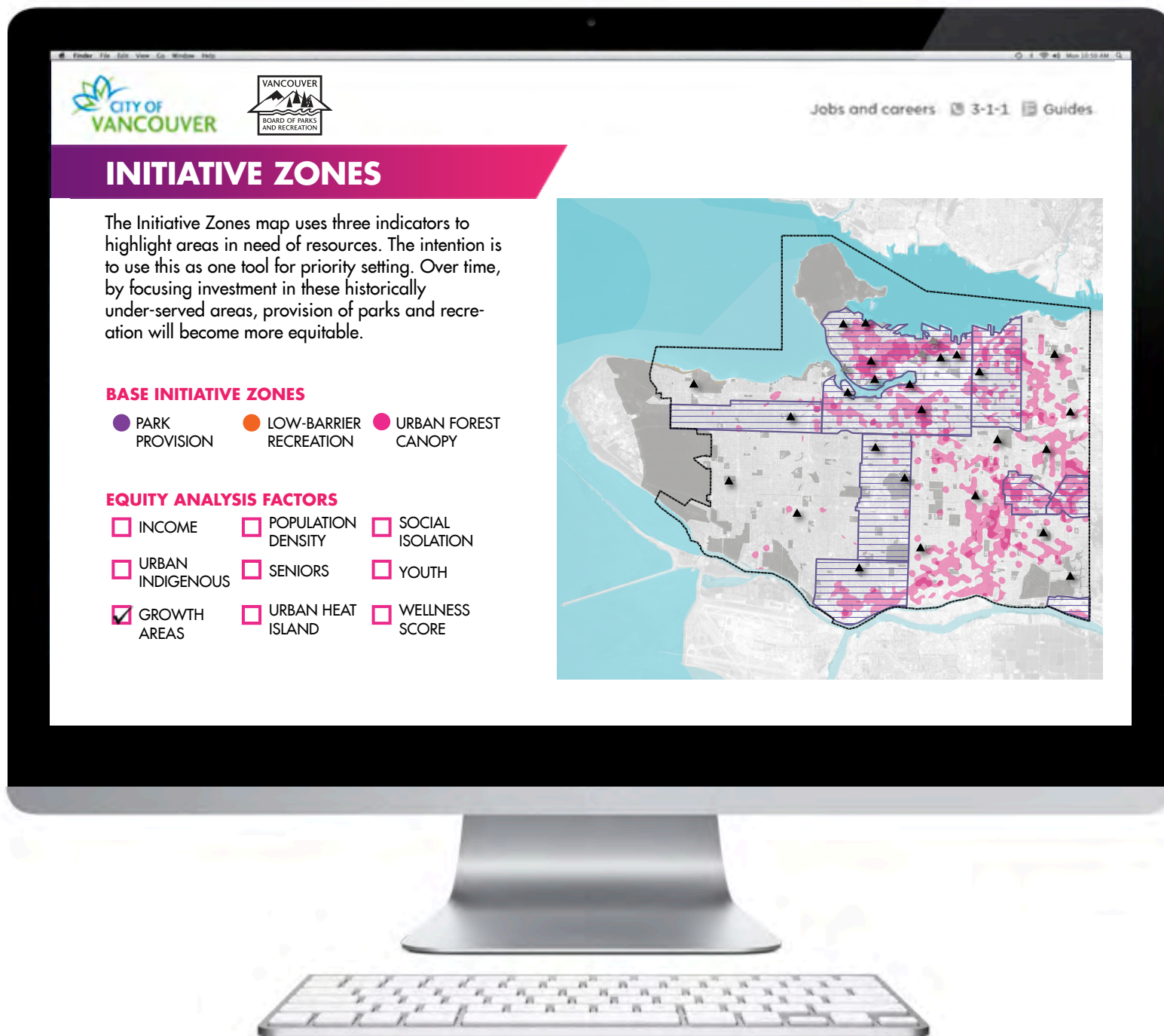
Equity Analysis Factors can be added over time and may include spatial patterns to facilitate better decision-making, deeper listening and asking better questions during community engagement, capital planning, and proposal reviews. Equity Analysis Factors are malleable and responsive to emerging needs and opportunities so the Park Board can reflect and refine its approach to advance equity in the overall parks and recreation system.

**The set of factors that could be added over time include but are not limited to:**

- Access indicators (e.g. car ownership, languages spoken at home, wealth, people with disabilities)
- Equity-seeking groups (those facing barriers to equal access due to being treated differently)
- Number of hours of free programming (at community centres and in parks)
- Indicators to help us reduce disaster risk and foster disaster resilience
- Survey data (e.g. annual satisfaction surveys, the “My Health, My Community” survey, or findings from the Vancouver Foundation’s Connect & Engage surveys)<sup>1</sup>
- Location of capital investments made by the Park Board in the past
- Indigenous community health indicators (informed by an Indigenous perspective, and unique to the community of Indigenous peoples they are measuring)
- Sociodemographic patterns (e.g. children, youth, older adults, and seniors)

<sup>1</sup> The “My Health, My Community” survey reports physical activity levels among other statistics. The Vancouver Foundation’s Connect & Engage survey shows that some groups—including young adults and people in low-income households—experience social isolation and barriers to civic and social participation more acutely.





Long term vision for a web-based, interactive map which allows staff and the community to overlay various "equity analysis factors" on top of the Initiative Zones.

# ANALYSIS

## EQUITY ANALYSIS FACTOR EXAMPLE: OVERLAY OF GROWTH AREAS

*Many aspects of equity cannot be measured, represented on a map, or tracked geographically. However, there are some indicators that help to explore patterns, and help us ask better questions.*

For example, new developments and growth areas receive funding and attention through the City's development process. As such, we really need to address areas of the city that don't receive amenities and services through these public benefit strategies and investment from growth.

Adding on a Growth Areas layer to the base layers can be useful during the capital planning process to demonstrate where the areas of need are, both within and outside of designated Growth Areas, and where investment should be allocated. Tying this to how the tool might be used in a more granular and complex way is taking an equity approach to the decision-making process for prioritised investment, such as identification of barriers and needs to safely access parks and recreation with equity-seeking groups.

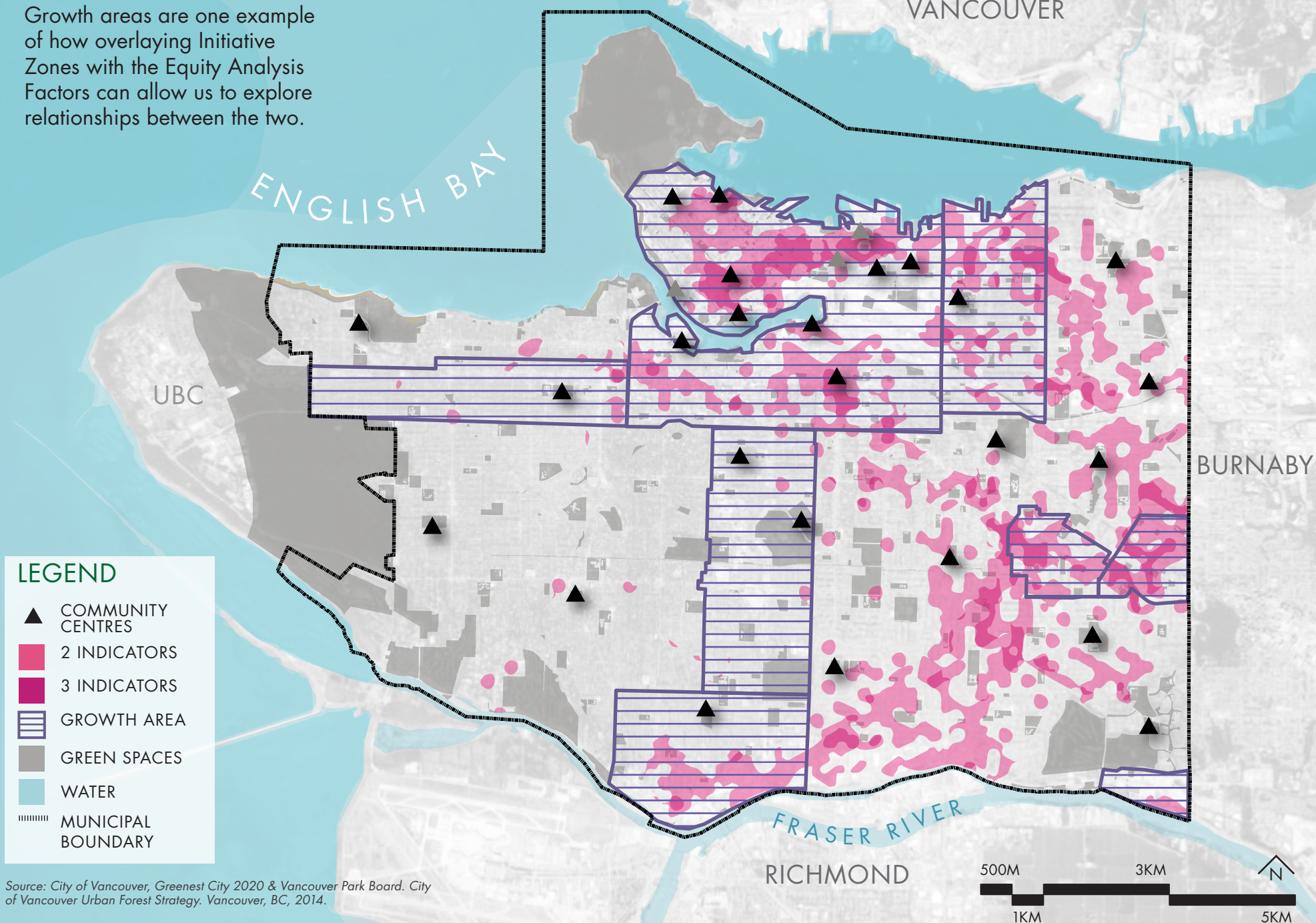


Dance Class | Park Board



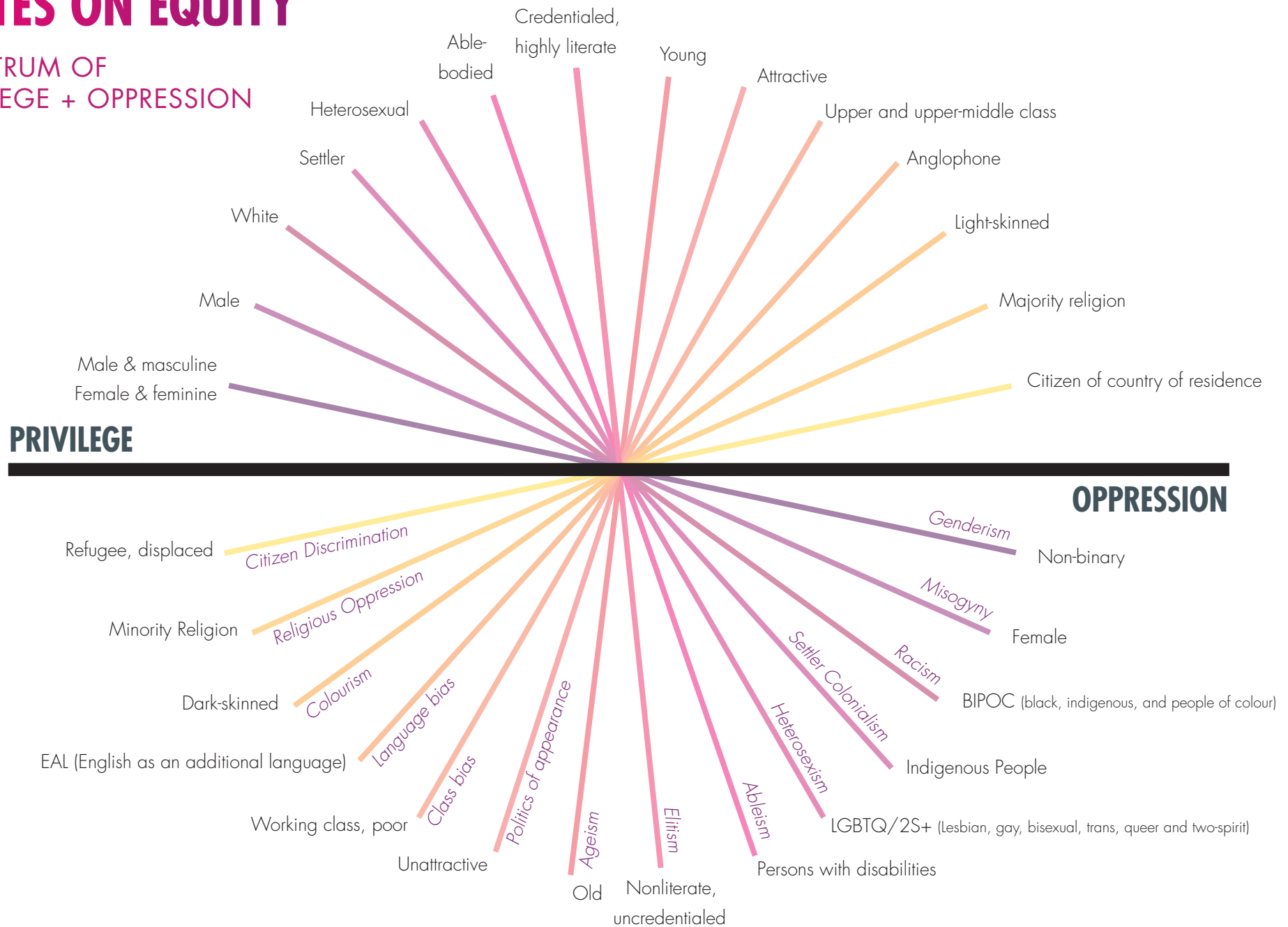
# INITIATIVE ZONES WITH GROWTH AREAS OVERLAY

Growth areas are one example of how overlaying Initiative Zones with the Equity Analysis Factors can allow us to explore relationships between the two.



# NOTES ON EQUITY

## SPECTRUM OF PRIVILEGE + OPPRESSION



NOTE: The terms of discrimination based on systems of oppression, as well as the diverse identities represented in this diagram, are not exhaustive. The diagram on this page is adapted from the 'Power Flower' and 'Intersecting Axes of Privilege, Domination, and Oppression.' Taylor and Yusuf are illustrative characters and could be experiencing privileges or oppression not mentioned in the narrative.



# NOTES ON EQUITY

## INTERSECTIONALITY + WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU

*To create inclusive cities that meet the needs of the community, we need to understand how people experience the city individually.*

Think about how your experience of the city may differ from that of others. Each of us has a multitude of identities—our gender, class, race, sexuality and so much more—that affect our lives in a myriad of ways. With all these identities attached to us at once, the ways in which we interact and experience the city are unique.

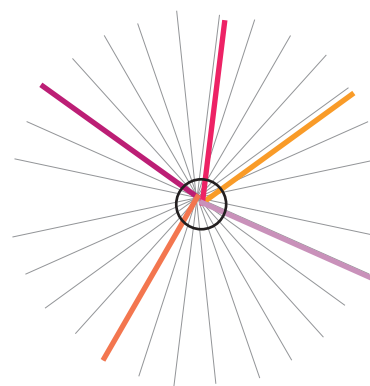
**Intersectionality provides a nuanced lens to understand each person's experience by taking into account the overlap of multiple identities (eg. class, gender, ethnicity, Indigeneity, wealth, education, sexual orientation, etc.)<sup>1</sup> Forms of oppression and privilege assigned to these identities intersect and influence one another and impact the way we move through the world.**

Rather than seeing identities, privileges, and oppressions in a vacuum, intersectionality allows for a more holistic understanding of identity, its relationship to power, and how it influences people's experiences navigating city services. It provides us with a lens that encourages nuanced conversations around inequity in accessing Park Board services and exposes the interwoven prejudices people face day-to-day. Different forms of oppression can interact, overlap, and be compounded. Intersectionality helps to ensure that different needs and challenges of people accessing Park Board resources aren't overlooked. Recognizing and confronting privilege and applying an intersectional lens helps us to understand how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of oppression and privilege, and how we can move beyond single stories to respond to the needs of diverse communities and groups.

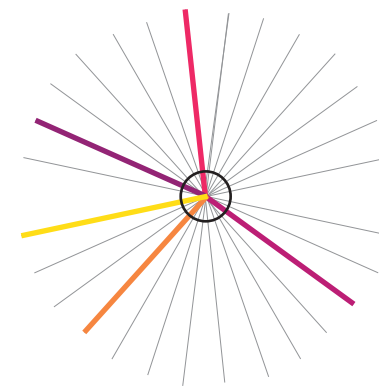
<sup>1</sup> Intersectionality is a dynamic theory developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw as a way to help explain the layers of oppression experienced by African-American women.

**Think about Taylor and Yusuf. They each experience different forms of oppression and privilege as they participate in Park Board facilities and services.** Taylor is a 14-year-old white female who attends high school, has an afterschool job, takes pottery classes, and her single mother receives social assistance. Yusuf is a 58-year-old male Syrian refugee, holds a PhD, and his son attends childcare at a neighbourhood community centre. Taylor's needs and challenges are different than Yusuf's. **It is important to recognize and take these differences into account to understand the converged complexity of privilege and oppression Taylor and Yusuf experience when accessing Park Board services.**

*Taylor's Spectrum of  
Privilege + Oppression*



*Yusuf's Spectrum of  
Privilege + Oppression*



## intersectionality

The interconnected nature of social categorizations, such as race, class, and gender, is regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. (Oxford Dictionary)

# NOTES ON EQUITY

## BRITISH COLUMBIA FIRST NATIONS PERSPECTIVE ON HEALTH & WELLNESS

*Equity is a complex, personal and cultural concept. While the Initiative Zones tool starts to identify patterns, addressing historical injustices and building strong communities requires a deep and multifaceted approach, including a First Nations perspective.*

The *First Nations Perspective on Wellness* model is a snapshot of a fluid concept of wellness that was developed from the wisdom, teachings, and culture of BC First Nations to visually express the vision of healthy, self-determining and vibrant BC First Nations Children, Families, and Communities. It aims to create shared understanding of a holistic vision of wellness, and serve as a starting point for discussion by First Nations communities on what they conceptualize as a vision of wellness for themselves and the First Nations Health Authority.

The **Centre Circle** represents individual human beings. Wellness starts with individuals taking responsibility for our own health and wellness (whether we are First Nations or not).

The **Second Circle** illustrates the importance of Mental, Emotional, Spiritual and Physical facets of a healthy, well, and balanced life. It is critically important that there is balance between these aspects of wellness and that

they are all nurtured together to create a holistic view of well-being in which all four areas are strong and healthy.

The **Third Circle** represents the overarching values that support and uphold wellness: Respect, Wisdom, Responsibility and Relationships.

The **Fourth Circle** depicts the people that surround us and the places from which we come: Nations, Family, Community and Land are all critical components of our healthy experience as human beings.

The **Fifth Circle** depicts the Social, Cultural, Economic and Environmental determinants of our health and well-being.

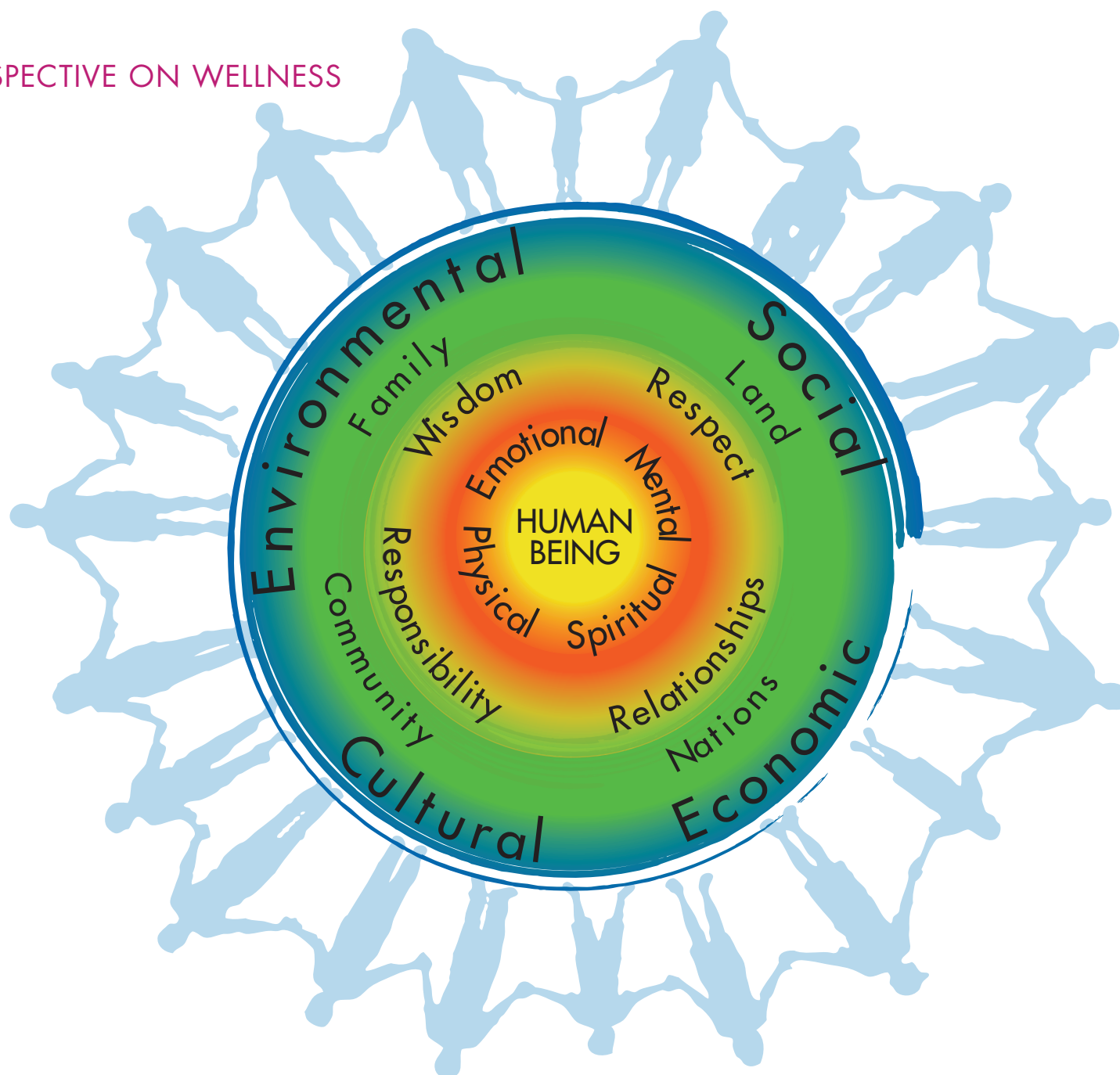
The people who make up the **Outer Circle** are holding hands to demonstrate togetherness, respect and relationships, which in the words of a respected BC elder can be stated as "one heart, one mind."



Dancer at Winter Solstice | Park Board

## FIRST NATIONS PERSPECTIVE ON WELLNESS

This model is a snapshot of a fluid concept of wellness that was developed from the wisdom, teachings, and culture of BC First Nations to visually express the vision of healthy, self-determining and vibrant BC First Nations Children, Families, and Communities.



# NEXT STEPS

## RECOMMENDATIONS

*This first take on Initiative Zones highlights areas of the city that have been historically underserved in provision of parks and recreation opportunities.*

The road to equity will be a long journey that requires hard work, the ability to embrace complexity, innovative thinking to shift the status-quo, accountability, collaboration and co-creation. There will be many bumps along the way but we are ready, and we are excited to get started.

Used as a tool to identify where we need to work, Initiative Zones will help to advance equitable distribution of services and resources by considering diverse needs and focusing on communities where redistribution will have the most impact.

Reflecting on the vision and findings outlined here, *Report 4: The Playbook: Implementation Plan* will provide implementation steps that aim to support this Bold Move.

## Programs

Supporting actions to achieve greater equity for parks and recreation include the following programs, policies and partnerships.

- Develop tools and resources to facilitate **ongoing data interpretation** by equity seeking groups and communities experiencing the identified “need” to ensure that assumptions are correct, stories are helpful and not discriminatory, and that useful actions to solve problems are identified through the work.
- Review and refresh the Park Board approach to **community engagement** to facilitate conversations which make use of the tools outlined in this Bold Move.
- Advocate for enabling additional **geographic flexibility** in the delivery of **developer contributions** (Development Cost Levies and Community Amenity Contributions) to address the high need areas of the city, to provide ongoing operational funding to support new amenities, and to support planning and strategy for increased efficiency and innovation.

## Policies

- Integrate the Initiative Zones and the approach described in this Report into **day-to-day operations** within the Park Board by updating policy, guidelines and templates where appropriate (for example, report structures, prioritisation matrices, application guidelines).
- Advocate for continued work to enhance our understanding of city-wide equity and development of **policy tools** as a part of the upcoming Vancouver Plan and other future city-wide planning strategies.



## Partnerships

- Create an internal Park Board and City **interdepartmental working group** to coordinate creation of an appropriate web-based, interactive site for the Initiative Zones, Equity Analysis Factors and other data and mapping efforts such as an integration with VanMap for staff and public use.
- Collaborate with the wider **Equity Framework project**, led by Arts, Culture and Community Services and reflect the outcomes of this work in future revisions of the Initiative Zones, and any supporting programs and policies.
- Develop **additional Equity Analysis Factors** via data partnerships with the City (especially Arts, Culture and Community Services), and partners such as community serving groups, Vancouver Coastal Health, Vancouver Foundation, Community Centre Associations, Metro Vancouver and Vancouver School Board (as described on page 42).
- Continue to take a **community development and stewardship approach** to interfacing with community groups and individuals supporting safe and welcoming parks and recreation. Build from learnings of the multidisciplinary Team UP (Urban Parks), which are working to improve service in areas of the city under pressure.



Drawing to Save the Birds at Roundhouse | Park Board