



Downtown Eastside LOCAL AREA PROFILE 2013

- Chinatown
- Gastown
- Industrial
- Oppenheimer
- Strathcona
- Thornton Park
- Victory Square



A joint publication between:

City of Vancouver Community Services - Social Development, Social Policy

City of Vancouver Planning and Development Services - Central Area Planning, Downtown Eastside Group

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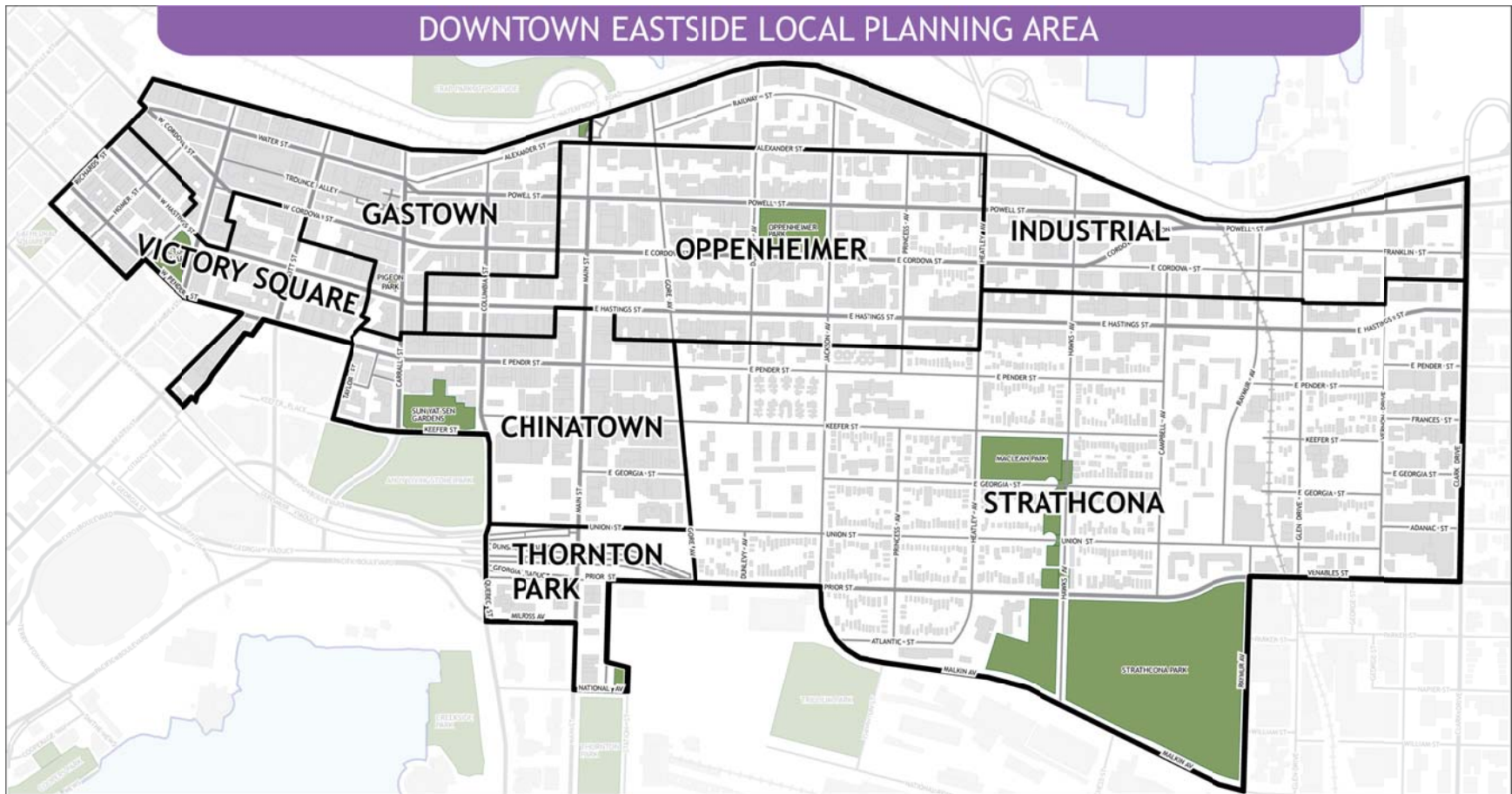
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DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE LOCAL PLANNING AREA



Introduction

The Downtown Eastside, also called “Q’umq’umal’ay,” is one of Vancouver’s oldest neighbourhoods and the historic heart of the city. It has a diverse, mixed and predominantly low income¹ population living in a neighbourhood rich in history and strongly connected to its founding Aboriginal communities, including the Musqueam and Squamish First Nations. Japanese, Chinese and other cultural groups also have early ties to the neighbourhood. The uniqueness of Downtown Eastside stems from the early settlements in the areas of Gastown, Powell Street (Japantown), Oppenheimer, Chinatown and Strathcona. The neighbourhood has many assets, critical for low income residents. Residents value the sense of belonging and feelings of acceptance experienced in the Downtown Eastside; the rich diversity of Downtown Eastside communities linked to their strong cultural heritage; and access to health and social services.

The Downtown Eastside struggles with many complex challenges including homelessness, poverty, affordable and quality housing, unemployment, mental health, drug use and crime. There are many vulnerable groups living in the Downtown Eastside, and the rapid changes occurring in the area are placing increased pressure on these groups. Rising rental rates and displacement as renovations of older buildings take place are among the factors contributing to perceptions of pressure on vulnerable residents. Many jobs are located in the Downtown Eastside, but relatively few of them are held by area residents. The high level of accessibility to transit services and proximity to Downtown is attractive to new emerging business ventures and developers seeking to meet the demand for affordable commercial premises and middle to upper income accommodation near the core of the city. These fundamental differences go to the heart of the complicated issues facing Downtown Eastside Local Area Planning.

As the Pivot Legal Society puts it, “Vancouver—the most livable city in the world, in one of the most peaceful and wealthy countries in the world—is a key trendsetter. How we address the social problems represented by the Downtown Eastside—one of the most concentrated districts of poverty, illness and addiction in the world—could set the bar for global best practices.”²

From a City planning point of view, the Downtown Eastside is a specially defined boundary that straddles the boundaries of two of Vancouver’s 22 local areas: Downtown and Strathcona. The neighbourhood’s unique social, economic and geographical context and the particular challenges it faces have led to the development of this local planning area. The Downtown Eastside is further broken down into sub-areas, reflecting differences in character, population, built form and land use. These sub-areas are not

¹ The Downtown Eastside Local Area Planning Process (LAPP) terms of reference defines “low income” as follows: “Low income” is broadly defined by the City of Vancouver as those who are living under the low income cut off line (LICO). In the Downtown Eastside, and for the purpose of the LAPP, the definition of “low income” will be for residents who depend on Income Assistance, Old Age Pension, part-time minimum wage, informal and unregulated labour, and volunteer work to survive. “Low income” people in the DTES subsist well below the city’s low income cut-off line and the Canadian poverty line. The exact number of low income residents is unknown. According to the 2006 Census, 53 per cent of the residents in the Downtown Eastside (more than 8,500 people) have after tax incomes below the LICO.

² John Richardson, Pivot Legal Society, “Heart of the City”.

definitive or the only way to identify different spaces; they are simply a planning tool used to identify key characteristics of different parts of the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood.

This profile provides baseline information for the Downtown Eastside, to help the community engage with current and upcoming plans and projects in the area. It builds on the 2012 Local Area Profile by adding maps, updated information and more research. Data have been gathered from a variety of sources including Statistics Canada's Census of Population, the City of Vancouver, non-profit service providers and, in some cases, primary research shared by low income community members.

Using census data in the Downtown Eastside poses particular challenges. First, only limited population information is available from the 2011 Census of Population and National Household Survey³, so 2006 data continue to be used throughout this document in most cases. It had been hoped that some updated data would be available, but this appears unlikely, particularly at the sub-area level. Second, notwithstanding the changes made to the 2011 Census, there are longstanding challenges with the reliability and completeness of census data in the Downtown Eastside, particularly for marginalized and transient populations that are often undercounted. As door-to-door enumeration and paper questionnaires have been diminished in favour of mailed notifications and online questionnaires, some people in the Downtown Eastside have likely not been included in census data. Finally, data at the sub-area level is not always reliable due to small sample sizes and suppression of data.⁴ However, despite these limitations, the census remains the most comprehensive and reliable information available.

This profile is not a complete—or completely accurate—picture of the Downtown Eastside. The information needed to understand aspects of this community may not be available, and the quality of data that are available varies significantly. While all information presented in this document is believed to be as accurate as possible, there remains the possibility of errors, omissions and differences in interpretation or analysis. This should be considered a “living draft” document; it is intended to serve as a beginning, not end, of understanding the people, places and issues facing the complex communities that make up Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

³ The 2011 Census was conducted differently than previous censuses, with the former mandatory long-form questionnaire replaced with an optional survey. At the time of this writing, only partial information is available from the 2011 National Household Survey, and the impacts on data quality are not yet known.

⁴ Statistics Canada is mandated not to report any information which might identify individual respondents; as such, data are always rounded and may be suppressed in areas of small population or low response rates. Note also that census data dissemination boundaries for sub-areas may differ slightly from the planning boundaries.

Framework: A Healthy City for All



The City of Vancouver is developing a Healthy City Strategy as the third component of our overall plan for sustainability. This long-term, comprehensive strategy for social development will be based on the understanding that the conditions in which we are born, grow up, play, learn, love, work, and age largely determine our health and well-being at different stages throughout our lives. The interconnected and interdependent nature of these broad determinants of health and well-being are illustrated at left: the building blocks of a *healthy city for all*.

What does a healthy city for all look like? We know that the healthiest cities pay attention to the health of their residents, to the health of their neighbourhoods, and to the health of the planet that we're all living on together. That means that at the most basic level we all need a good start in life, a place we can call home, enough money to get by, access to nutritious food, a strong social support network, a sense of safety, and plenty of opportunities for working, playing, and lifelong learning. So, we need to take care of the basics.

But, healthy cities also have places and spaces that cultivate belonging, inclusion, connectedness and engagement, and they have a well-planned built environment, a sustainable natural environment, a thriving economic environment and a vibrant social environment in which people can live, work and play.

Building a healthy city for all means creating the conditions in which we can all thrive, not merely survive, *in every neighbourhood*. We know that some of the worst health inequities in our city—avoidable inequalities in health between groups of people—are found in the Downtown Eastside. We are using the 20 building blocks as a way to present information in this document to help ensure that planning and monitoring that is holistic and comprehensive, with the overall goal of achieving a healthy city for all, including the city's most vulnerable residents.

1. Toward Healthy People

Demographics

Who lives in the Downtown Eastside (DTES)? This section contains some basic data on the people making up this community and explores some of the vulnerabilities and challenges they face. The purpose of this section is to clarify and dispel traditional stereotypes commonly associated with vulnerable people, and to identify those for whom special care and attention must be paid to achieve a more healthy and equitable neighbourhood for all peoples.

Population Characteristics

The DTES is one of Vancouver's oldest neighbourhoods, with the historic heart of the city located on land considered by the communities as unceded territory of the Coast Salish Nations and the urban home of First Nations Aboriginal communities for many generations. The area is also home to the immigrant communities of Chinese and Japanese Canadians and other cultural groups, including those with African, Asian, European, British, Scandinavian and South American heritage. While many of the population are largely considered low income, there are also working poor, moderate income and middle income families and singles living in a diverse mix of accommodation in seven different neighbourhoods.

Many groups in the DTES are considered vulnerable because they experience greater risk to health and wellbeing than the population as a whole. These groups include women, children and youth, homeless, seniors, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) residents, low income singles and families, sex workers, drug users and people with disabilities or mental illness. Some of the vulnerabilities and challenges experienced by these groups include poverty, safety, adequate and affordable accommodation, unemployment, poor nutrition, poor health, a poor sense of self-esteem, a lack of wellbeing and connectedness and dependency on social services and charity. More detail about specific vulnerabilities faced by these groups may be found in Appendix A of this document.

Population Growth (2001-2011)

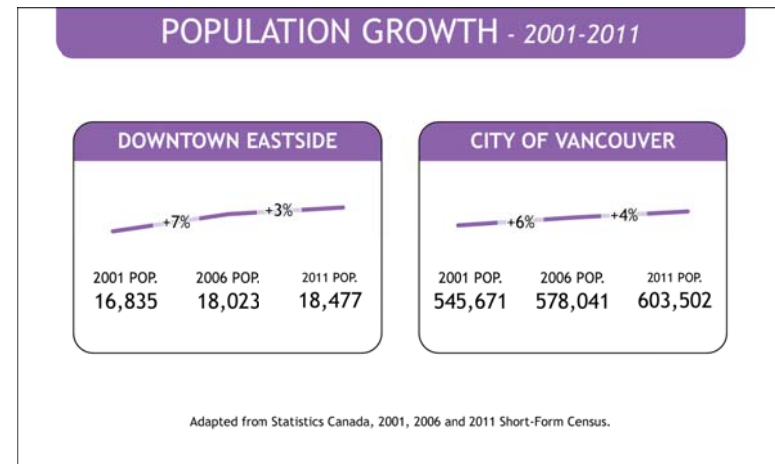
Between 2001 and 2011, the total population of the Downtown Eastside (18,477) grew slightly faster than the population of the city as a whole, though the rate of growth has slowed since 2006.

Growth has been influenced by the provision of new accommodation, including the renovation and replacement of older housing and hotel stock with new apartments and condominiums; and the development of sites that had been vacant, such as the Woodward's project. Continued replacement of older buildings could maintain the recent growth rate (12.7 per cent from 2001 to 2011); if so, the 2011 population of 18,500 could reach approximately 25,000 by 2041⁵.

Age and Gender Profile

The concentration of males in the Downtown Eastside is strikingly different from other areas of Vancouver, which has significant implications for planning and facilities provision in the future. The gender split in the Downtown Eastside has remained stable (approximately 60 per cent male and 40 per cent female⁶) since 2001. Based on 2006 data shown on the map below, Victory Square and Thornton Park have the highest proportional male population, while Strathcona is closer to the city as a whole.

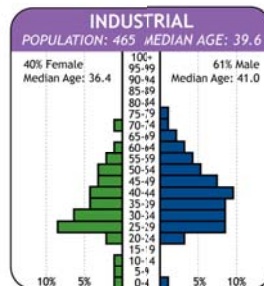
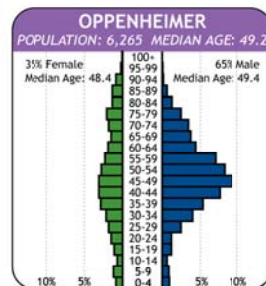
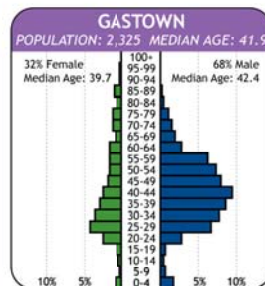
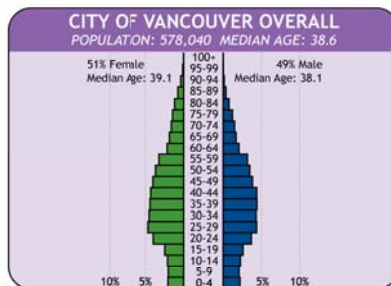
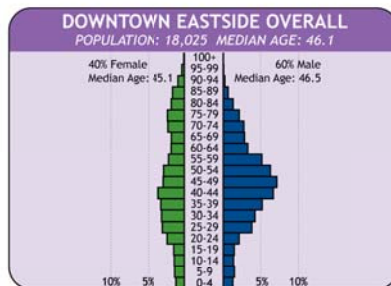
In 2006, just over half of Downtown Eastside residents were over 45 years of age. There is a high percentage of seniors (65+) compared to the city as a whole. The Downtown Eastside has a relatively low percentage of children (2 per cent) and youth (8 per cent), about half the citywide percentage. The relatively small proportion of young people and the high concentration of seniors need to be considered when planning for future needs, services and amenities in the Downtown Eastside.



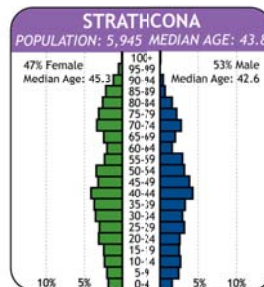
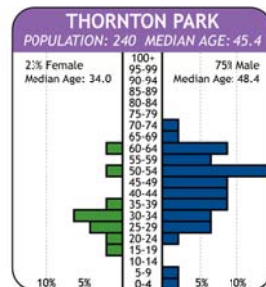
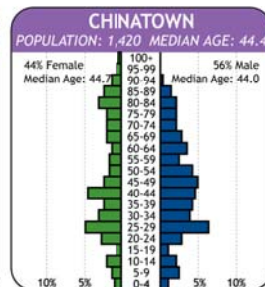
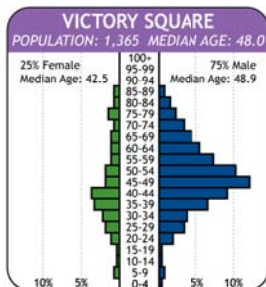
⁵ City of Vancouver. Research and Data Services. 2012. Growth rate is dependent on construction of new homes and replacement of aging Single Room Occupancy (SRO) residences.

⁶ The census questionnaire does not allow respondents to indicate a full representation of their gender identity. People are not provided with options to indicate having transitioned from male to female or female to male; additionally, there are no options to identify outside of dichotomous "male" and "female" categories, or identify with both "male" and "female". The use of gender statistics from census data is not meant to be exclusive or normative, but more inclusive data are not available from this source at this time.

AGE AND GENDER PROFILE - BY SUBAREA, 2006

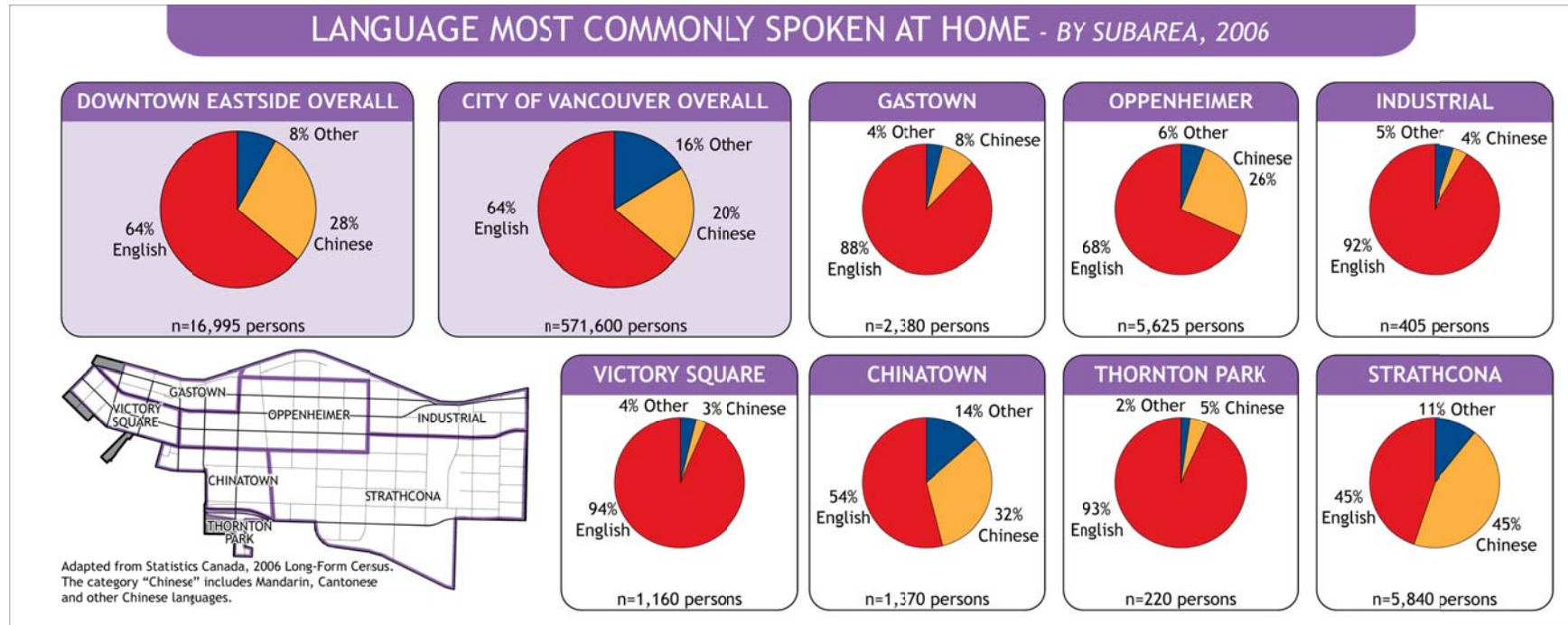


Adapted from Statistics Canada, 2006 Short-Form Census.



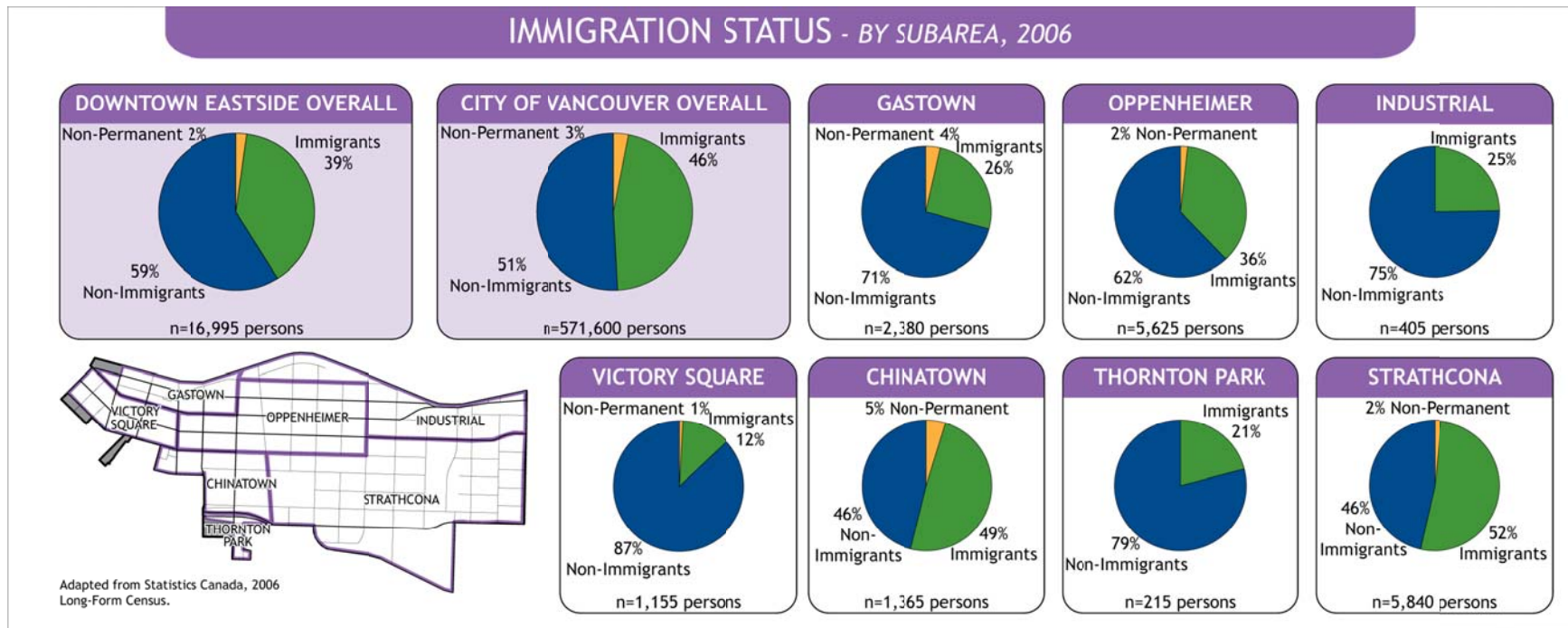
Language Spoken at Home

The majority (64 per cent) of Downtown Eastside residents speak English as their main home language. Chinese (including both Mandarin and Cantonese) is the next most spoken home language. Strathcona has a large Chinese-speaking population (45 per cent), which is proportionally even larger than that of Chinatown.



Immigration

The Downtown Eastside has proportionately fewer immigrants than the City of Vancouver as a whole. However, the distribution of immigrant and non-immigrant populations within the Downtown Eastside is highly uneven. Strathcona and Chinatown have a large immigrant population while the population in the other sub-areas is much lower. Between 1996 and 2006, the absolute number of people born outside Canada decreased by 6 per cent, while across the City of Vancouver the number decreased by 3 per cent.



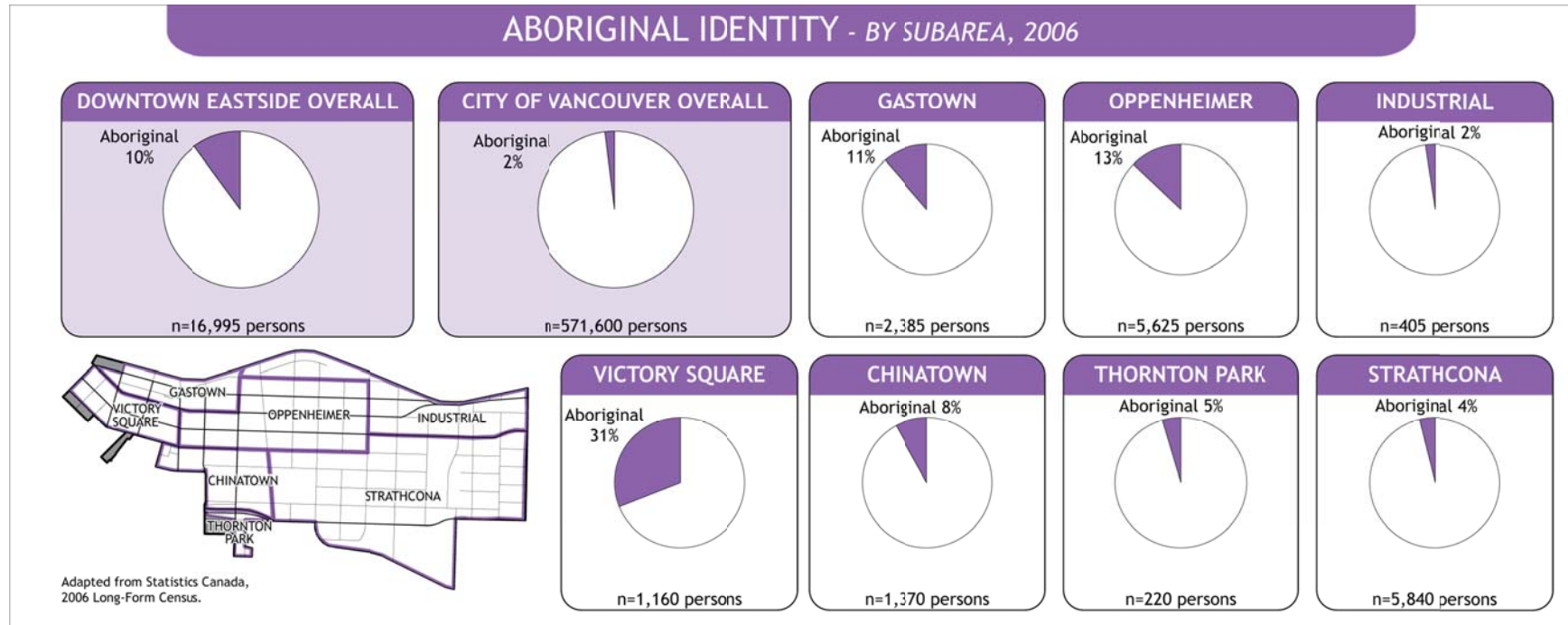
In 2006, the Downtown Eastside had a slightly lower proportion of both total immigrants (39 per cent vs. 46 per cent) and recent immigrants (15 per cent of immigrants arrived from 2001 to 2006 vs. 17 per cent) than the City of Vancouver as a whole. The largest proportion of recent immigrants, 16 per cent, is in Chinatown.⁷ New immigrants in the Downtown Eastside overwhelmingly come from China: 74 per cent of immigrants who arrived from 2001 to 2006 came from China.⁸ Newcomers often struggle to enter the job market and find affordable housing.

⁷ Census, 2006.

⁸ Census, 2006.

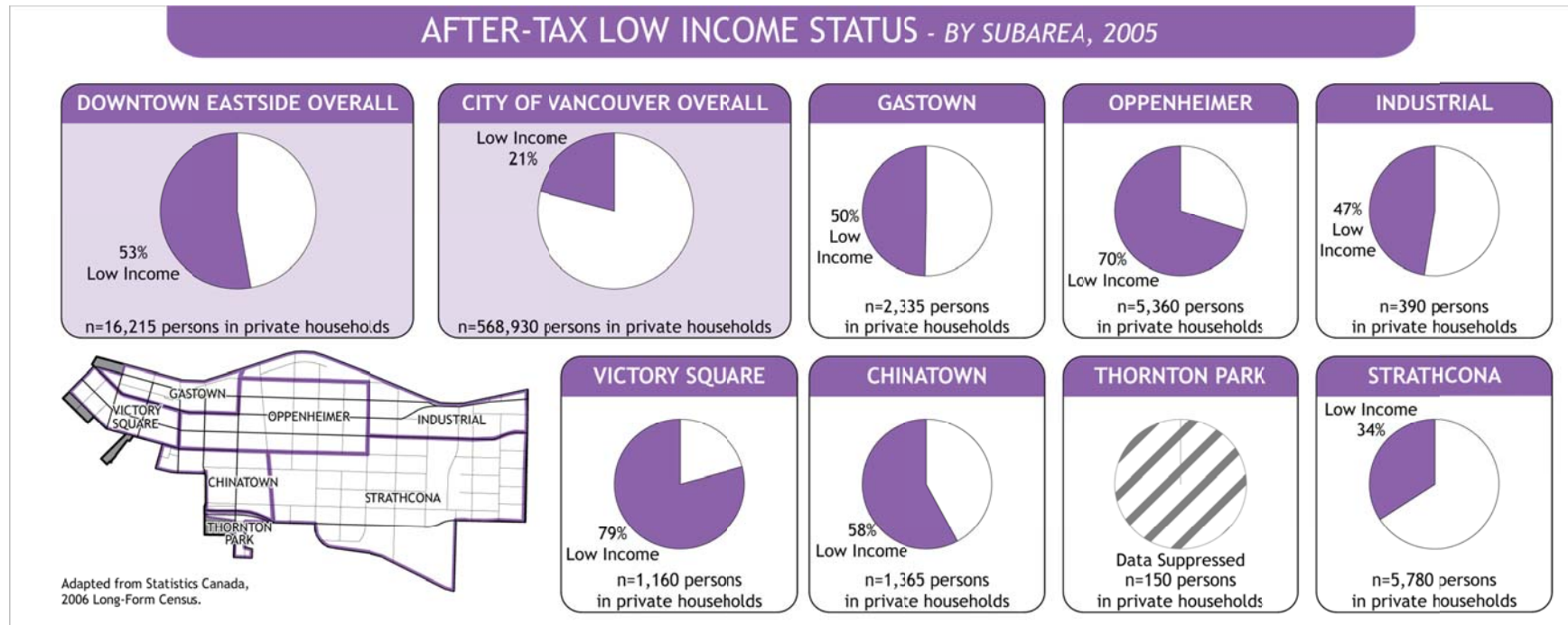
Aboriginal Identity

The Downtown Eastside has a much higher proportion of Aboriginal people than the city as a whole. Aboriginal identity includes people of First Nations, Métis or Inuit identity. Persons with Aboriginal identity represent many different First Nations from across Canada.



1.1 Making Ends Meet

Measuring low income and poverty is challenging. An imperfect measure, but one that is consistently applied and comparable across geographies, is the after-tax low income cut-off (LICO).⁹ Using the LICO shows that Metro Vancouver consistently has a relatively high proportion of its population below the LICO.¹⁰ In this context, the Downtown Eastside is an extreme case; the most recent available census data shows that it has one of the lowest per capita incomes of any urban area in Canada. In 2005, 53 per cent of its residents were considered low income after tax.¹¹



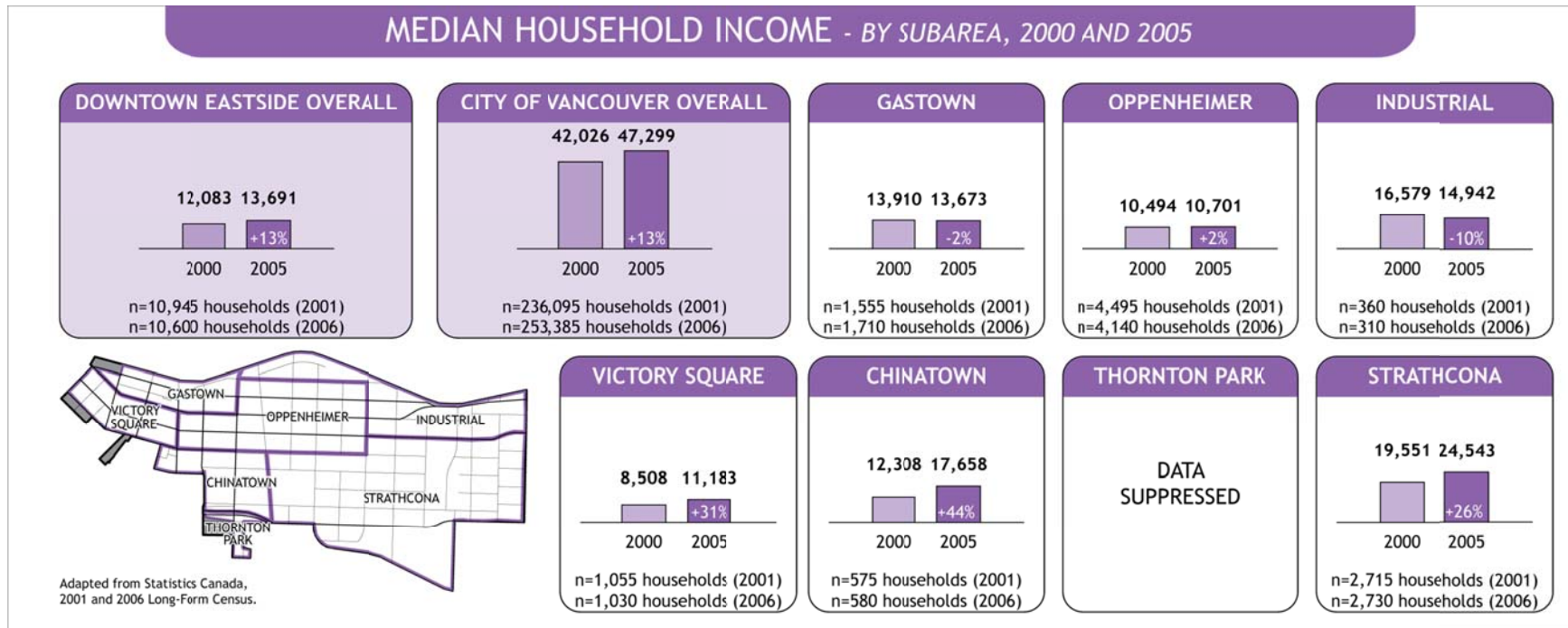
⁹ The LICO varies by community size and family size, and is a relative measure identifying families or individuals who spend 20 percentage points more than average on a basket of basic household goods, based on a survey conducted in 1992.

¹⁰ Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 202-0802, Persons in Low Income Families. In 2011, 13.6 per cent of persons in Metro Vancouver were in low income families, the highest of major census metropolitan areas reported.

¹¹ Statistics Canada, 2006 Long-Form Census. Prevalence of low income shows the proportion of people living below the low income cut-off within a given group.

Income

As of 2005, the median income for private households in the Downtown Eastside was \$13,691, up from \$12,083 in 2000. Median income change was the same in Vancouver and the Downtown Eastside between 2000 and 2005 (13 per cent increase). However, changes in median income varied considerably by sub-area. The largest increase in income was experienced in Chinatown (44 per cent increase) and Victory Square (31 per cent increase), while median incomes slightly decreased in the Industrial area (10 per cent decrease) and Gastown (2 per cent decrease).



Social Assistance

Welfare office¹² catchment areas are organized according to Canada Post mail forward sortation areas (FSAs), which are the first three digits in a client's postal code. Most of the Downtown Eastside falls into V6A, which extends from Carrall Street to Clark Drive and from Burrard Inlet to Great Northern Way. However, some residents live in the V6B postal area, which also covers the downtown core, Downtown South and portions of Yaletown and False Creek.

In March 2013, there were 6,339 cases of social assistance in V6A, seen in the table below.¹³

Type	Expected to Work	Expected to Work - Medical Condition	Medical Services Only	Old Age Security	Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers	Persons with Disabilities	Total ¹⁴
Cases	1,461	115	772	15	676	3,193	6,339

The shelter component for a single, employable person on income assistance (temporary assistance) is \$375 and \$235 for all other expenses.¹⁵ Social assistance is further discussed in sections 1.3 and 1.4.

Volunteering

Many residents in the DTES volunteer at service agencies and community centres, such as the Carnegie Centre. In 2013, 2,075 volunteers contributed to 29 organizations funded by the City of Vancouver, giving 108,955 hours of their time.¹⁶ This volunteer work is an important part of the survival economy and helps residents make ends meet as well as contribute to their community.

Some volunteer opportunities provide food and training in return for hours worked. Additionally, eligible volunteers may be provided with a community volunteer supplement through the Ministry of Social Development's Community Volunteer Program.

¹² Welfare offices are sorted by surname:

Dockside office: V6B, V6A Alpha: A to G

Kiawassa office: V6B, V6A Alpha: H to M

Strathcona: V6B, V6A Alpha: N to Z

¹³ Ministry of Social Development, March 2013.

¹⁴ Includes: child in home of relative, expected to work, expected to work (medical condition), long term care, medical services only, no employment options, old age security, persons with persistent multiple barriers and persons with disabilities.

¹⁵ Income assistance effective June 1, 2007

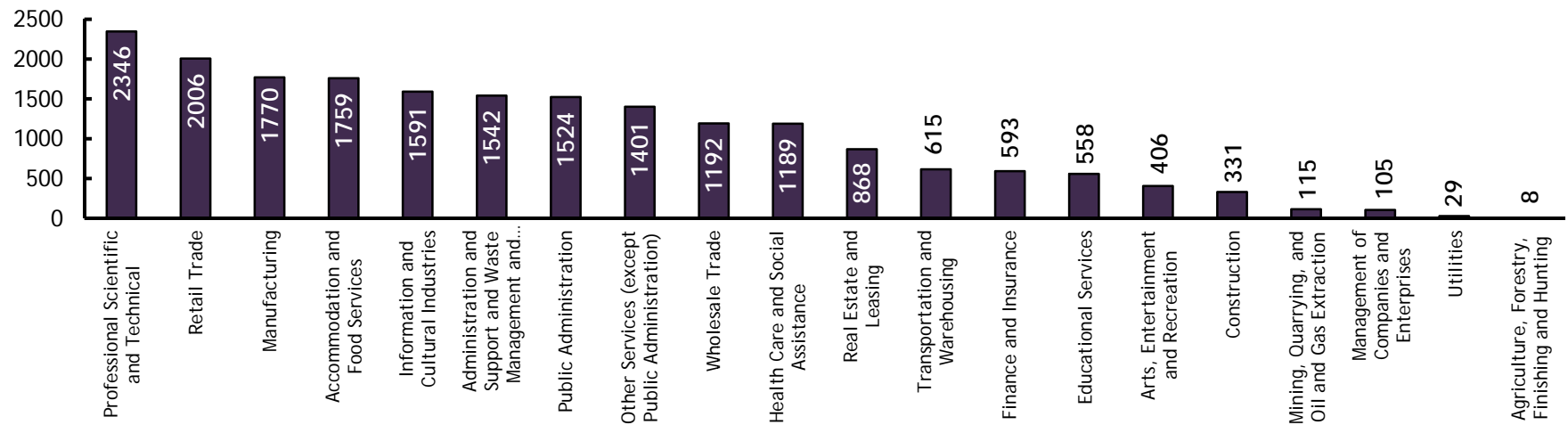
¹⁶ Social Policy, City of Vancouver, 2012. Based on self-reporting by organizations that the City of Vancouver funds through Community Services grant programs.

1.2 Working Well

The proportion of Downtown Eastside residents who are employed or looking for work is generally low compared to the city as a whole. A significant proportion of Downtown Eastside residents are considered part of Vancouver’s working poor, meaning low-paid workers living in low income situations. As a centrally located area with many jobs, the majority of people working in the Downtown Eastside commute from elsewhere in the metropolitan area. In 2002, an estimated 13 per cent of people employed in the Downtown Eastside were residents, with the remaining 87 per cent of employees living elsewhere.¹⁷

Employment Sectors

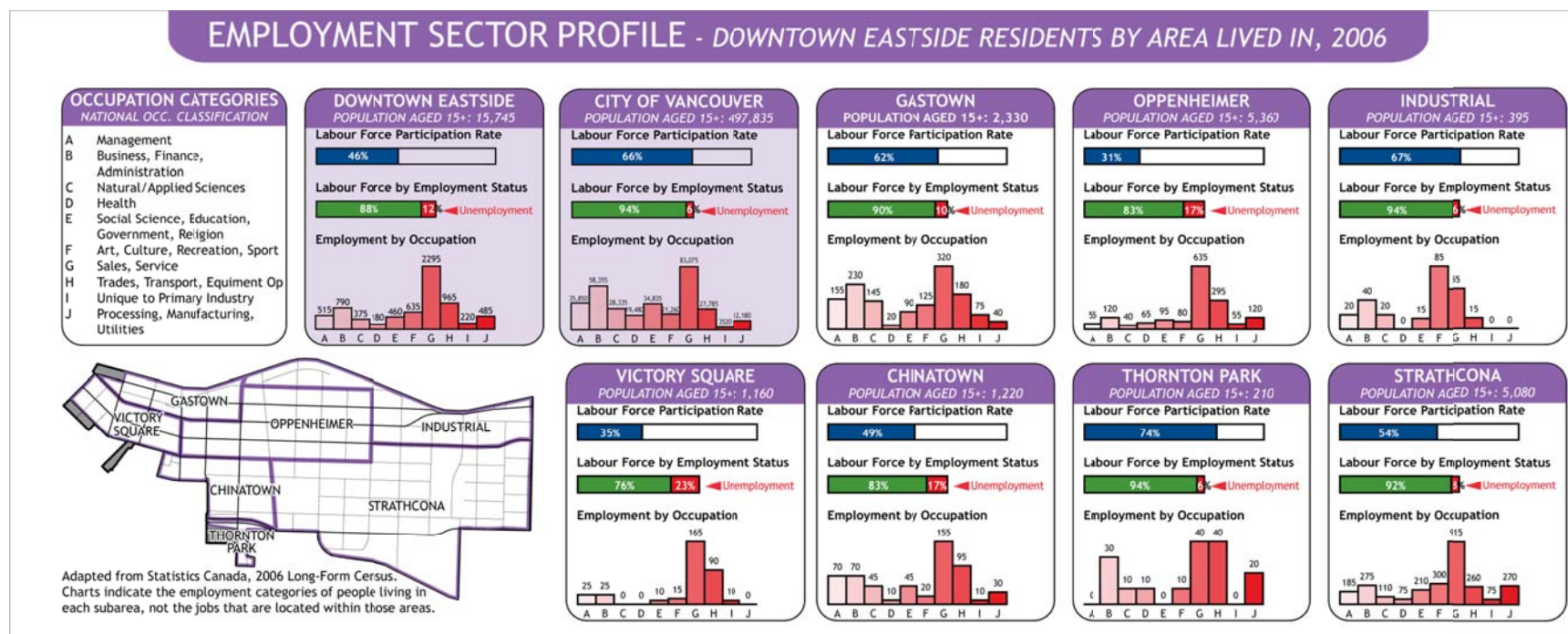
The number of people employed in the Downtown Eastside appears to have remained more or less stable in the last 10 years. There are approximately 19,500 employees in the Downtown Eastside, working at total of 2,800 businesses.¹⁸



¹⁷ Messrs Ference Weicker, 2002.

¹⁸ Vancouver Economic Commission, 2012.

The Census data, presented on the map below, shows the employment occupations for Downtown Eastside residents, which are slightly different than the economic sectors located in the Downtown Eastside. According to the 2006 Census, key occupation categories for Downtown Eastside residents included sales and service; trades, transport and equipment; business, finance and administration; and arts, culture, recreation and sport.

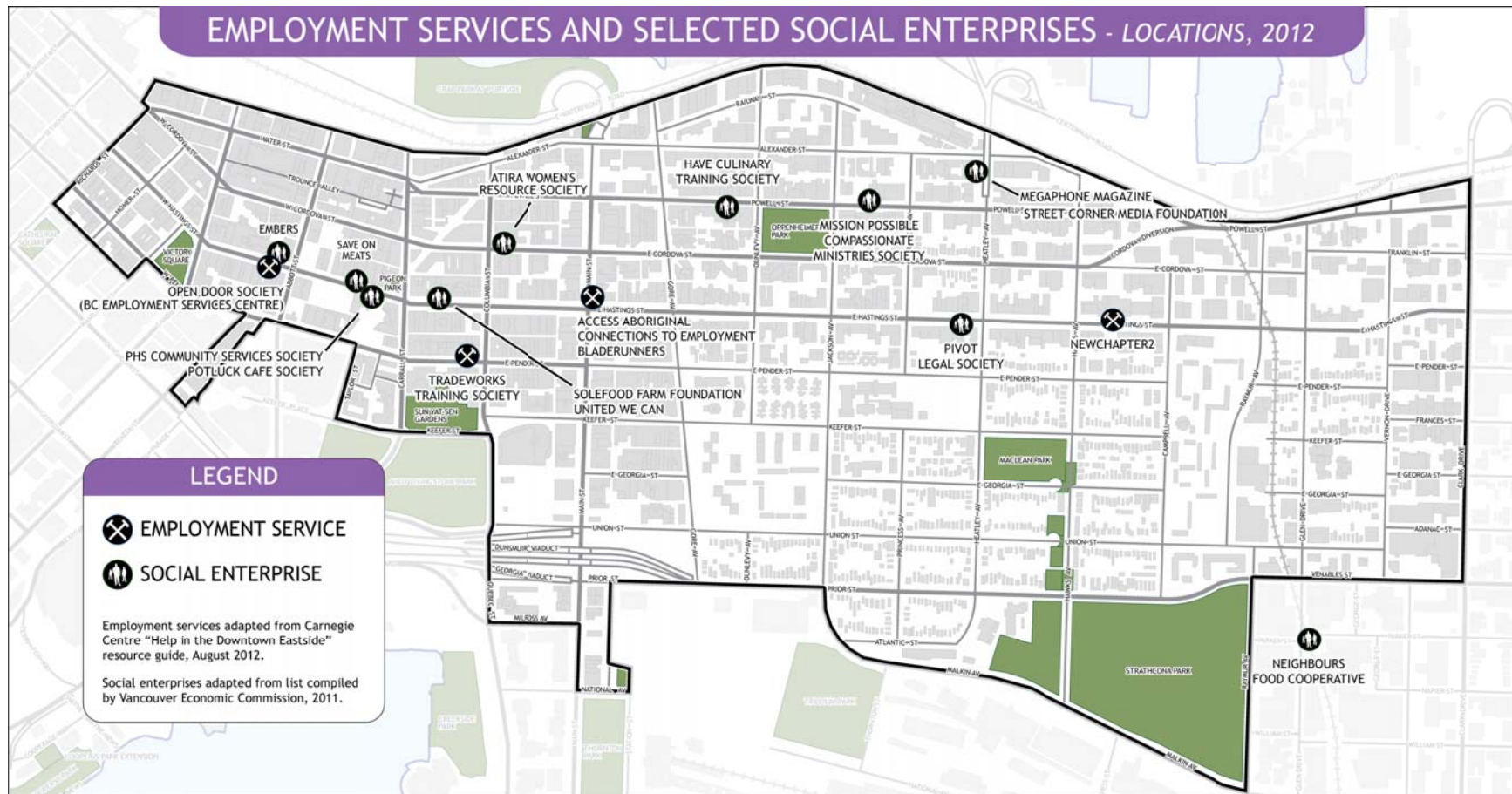


Informal Economy

Some Downtown Eastside residents participate in the informal economy. This includes activities such as binning, street vending or bartering. Although this economy has little formal recognition, it provides an income for many people that is essential to the attainment of their basic needs.

Social Enterprise

Social enterprises are businesses operated by non-profit organizations to support social development. Some social enterprises that employ Downtown Eastside residents are shown below.¹⁹ People with barriers to employment require additional supports to find work and navigate their job once employed. The Downtown Eastside is home to employment services, which provide additional supports to people with barriers to employment for findings work and navigating their job once employed.



¹⁹ Vancouver Economic Commission, 2011.

1.3 Feeding Ourselves Well

Many low income residents of the Downtown Eastside lack sufficient income to access basic needs, including affordable, nutritional, safe and culturally-appropriate food, discussed further in section 1.1.

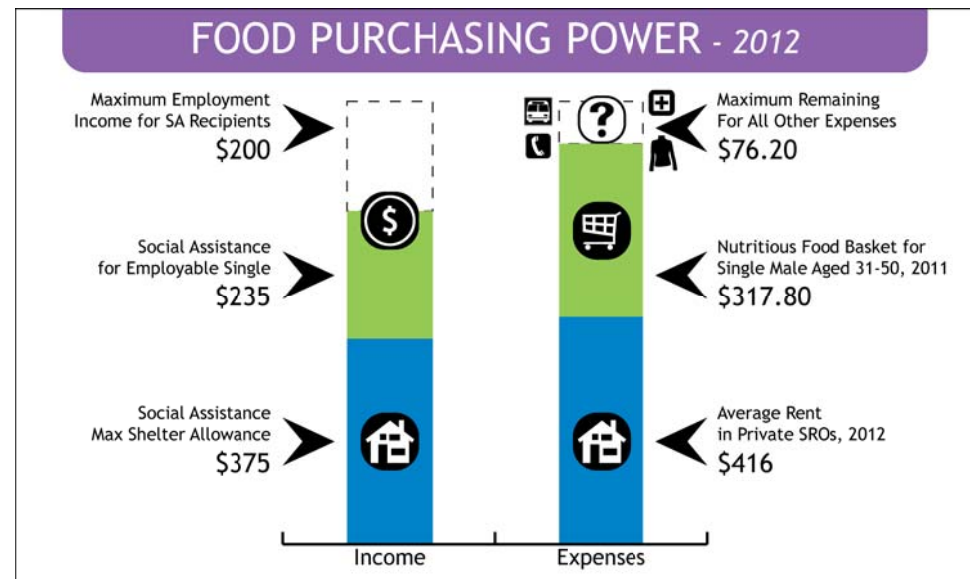
The Downtown Eastside has the highest number of SRO residences in the city.²⁰ SROs typically contain only limited kitchen facilities, limiting residents' ability to prepare or store their own food. Lack of food preparation facilities presents a challenge for low income residents. This contributes to a heavy reliance on charitable food sources and on inexpensive highly processed foods lacking in nutritional quality. These barriers further exacerbate difficulties faced by residents in their ability to purchase healthy and affordable foods.

The Downtown Eastside has the highest concentration of free and charitable food in Vancouver. Food insecurity is a major issue for many Downtown Eastside residents.

Food Insecurity and Purchasing Power

The graphic at right illustrates an example monthly budget for a single male, aged 31-50, living in a private SRO and receiving social assistance. As shown, purchasing a healthy basket of food²¹ is likely beyond the means of this individual.

The graphic on the next page summarizes some key demographic indicators of food insecurity at the population level. This graphic is adapted from a 2006 paper prepared by Vancouver Coastal Health, and is not intended to illustrate all of the factors that give rise to food insecurity.



²⁰ City of Vancouver Housing, 2013. There are 5,497 units of SRO housing.

²¹ Healthy food basket costs adapted by Vancouver Coastal Health from Dieticians of Canada.

POPULATIONS AT RISK OF FOOD INSECURITY - IN THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE

STREET-INVOLVED YOUTH



65% of Vancouver street-involved youth reported the Downtown Eastside as their place of residence¹.

LOW-INCOME/HOMELESS +ACUTE/CHRONIC CONDITION

79% of homeless people in Vancouver have one or more health condition².



The Downtown Eastside has over 800 homeless people, and another 5000 are underhoused³.

INJECTION DRUG USERS

In 2000, there were 4,700 injection drug users in the DTES. A study at the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS found that 64% of injection drug users face severe food insecurity (hunger)⁴.



ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

10% of Downtown Eastside residents are Aboriginal, compared to 2% citywide⁵.



DTES
Citywide

LOW-INCOME SENIORS LIVING ALONE

21% of Downtown Eastside residents are over 65, compared to 13% citywide. 55% of DTES seniors live alone, compared to 29% citywide⁵.



DTES
Citywide

FOOD INSECURITY arises from complex and overlapping individual and systemic barriers to accessing affordable, healthy and culturally-appropriate food. In its 2006 Community Food Action Initiative, Vancouver Coastal Health identified 10 populations especially vulnerable to food insecurity. Nine of these populations are disproportionately represented in the Downtown Eastside.

PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

33% of DTES residents suffer from depression or anxiety, compared with 20% citywide⁷.



DTES
Citywide

SINGLE-PARENT LOW INCOME FAMILIES

46% of DTES single-parent families are considered low-income after tax, compared to 29% citywide⁵.



DTES
Citywide

RECENT IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

The DTES has proportionately fewer recent immigrants. 44% of DTES residents are first-generation, compared to 54% citywide⁵.



DTES
Citywide

WORKING-POOR FAMILIES

27% of DTES families are considered low-income after tax, compared with 16% of families citywide⁵.



DTES
Citywide

PEOPLE WITH MOBILITY BARRIERS

43% of SRO Residents face physical limitations⁶, and rates of some limiting conditions are higher in the DTES than citywide⁷:

Condition	DTES	Citywide
Osteoarthritis	9.5%	6.2%
Osteoporosis	5.7%	4.5%
Rheumatoid Arthritis	1.5%	0.8%

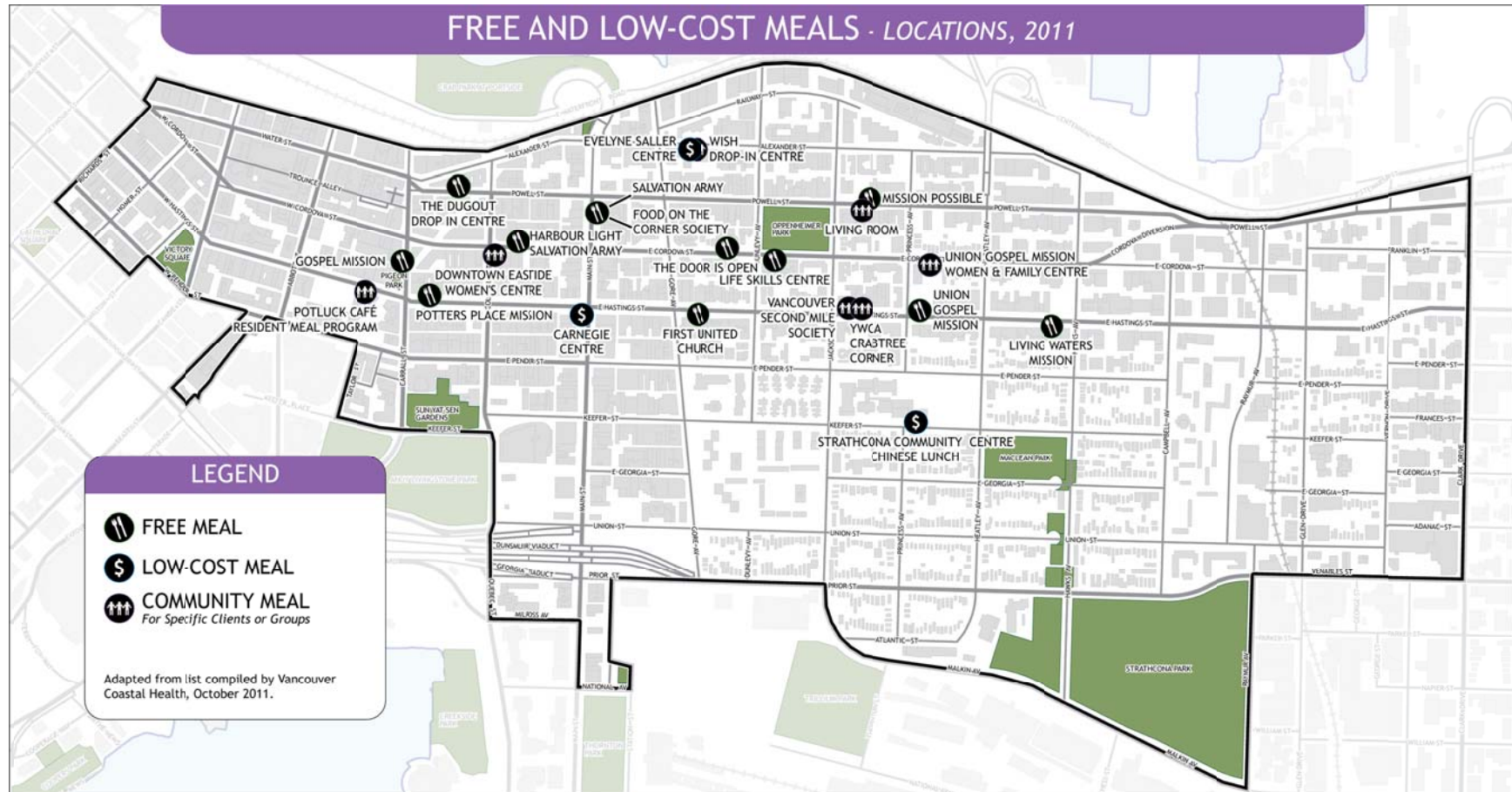
DATA SOURCES

- 1 "High Rates of Homelessness Among a Cohort of Street-Involved Youth" 2009 article in Health Place by B.S. Rachlis.
- 2 June 2010 "Shelters" report by Eberle Planning and Research; DTES Kitchen Tables Phase 1 Report, March 2010.
- 3 SPARC BC Downtown Eastside Homeless Count 2008; City of Vancouver, 2012.

- 4 Injection Drug Users: VCH Community Food Action Initiative Three Year Action Plan, August 2006.
- 5 Adapted from Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population.
- 6 Based on Downtown Eastside Demographic Study of SRO and Social Housing Tenants, Apr 2008.
- 7: VCH DTES Core Health Services Profile, July 2011.

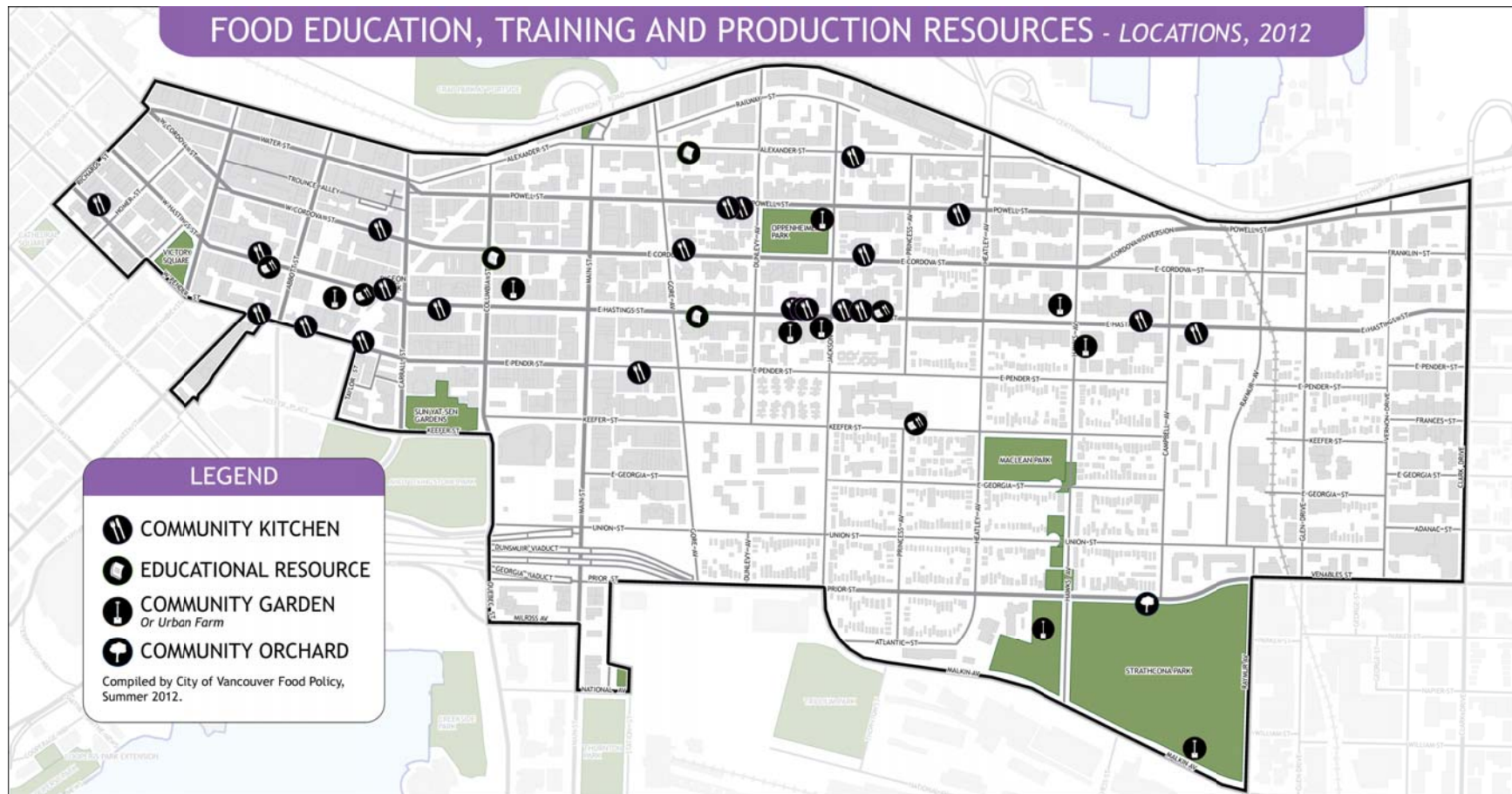
Free and Low Cost Meals

The map below illustrates agencies providing free or low-cost meals in 2011, as compiled by Vancouver Coastal Health. Locations are self-reported by organizations; this map is not comprehensive, and definitions of low-cost meals vary.



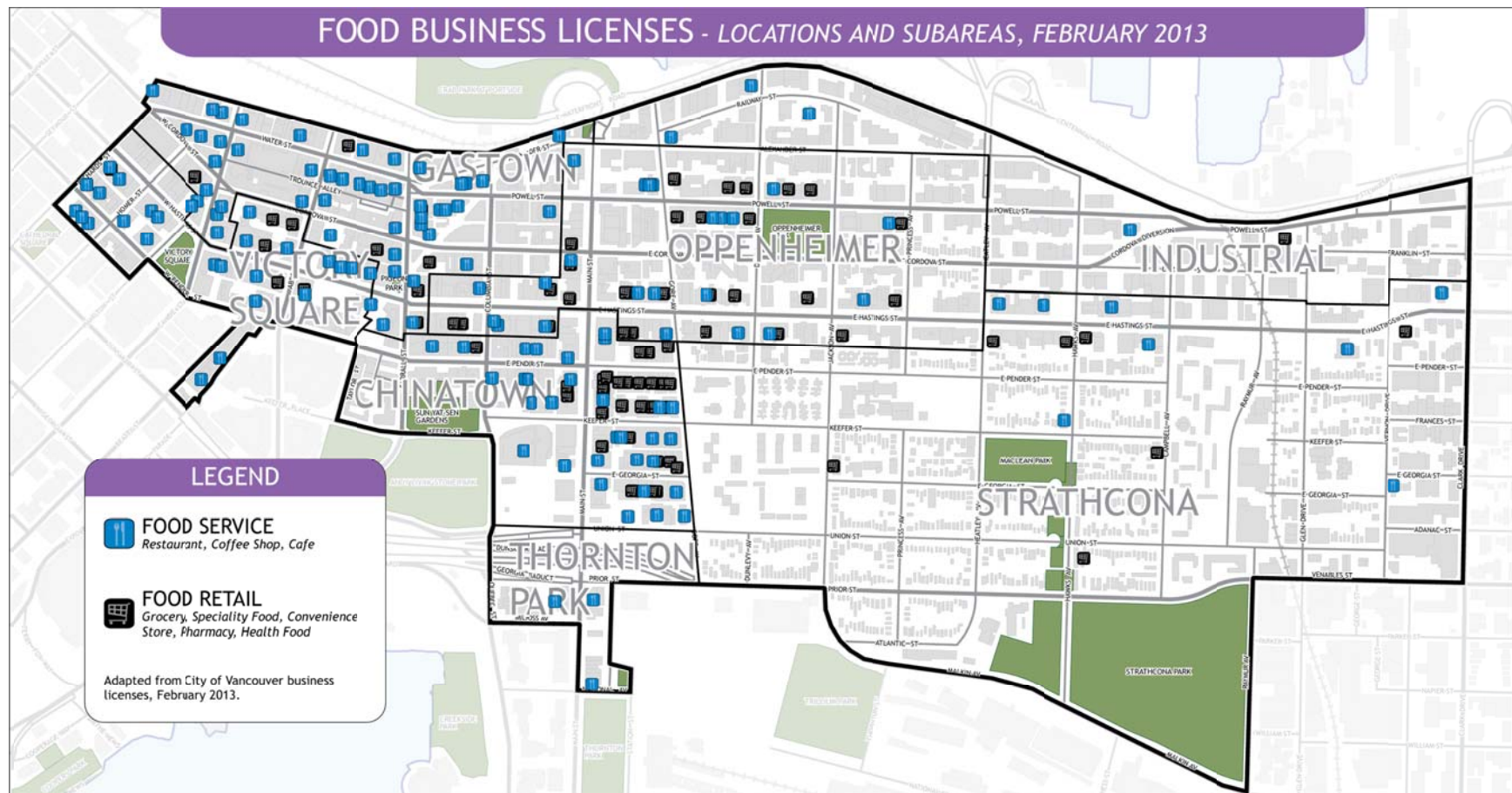
Food Assets

Food assets in the Downtown Eastside include urban agriculture, such as community gardens, urban farms and a community orchard; and capacity-building resources such as community kitchens and training programs. These are important neighbourhood gathering places that increase local food production; and promote urban health, sustainability, livability, community building, inter-generational sharing and social interaction. There are eight food-producing gardens with approximately 650 plots on City, park, school and private lands in the Downtown Eastside. SOLEFood, a non-profit organization that employs Downtown Eastside residents in the local food sector, operates two urban farm sites in the Downtown Eastside.



Food Retail

The map below illustrates food-related businesses located within the Downtown Eastside planning boundaries. Note, however, that food businesses serving Downtown Eastside residents also exist outside the planning area.



A result of gentrification in the Downtown Eastside is that new businesses are locating in the neighbourhood, many of which are unaffordable to low income residents. Work is ongoing to further research retail affordability for Downtown Eastside residents.

Access to fresh produce within walking distance is fundamental for a nutritious diet. Approximately 83 per cent of Downtown Eastside residents are believed to be within a five-minute walk of a store selling produce, but not all of these stores are affordable and accessible to all members of the community. Food access remains a pressing challenge in the Downtown Eastside.

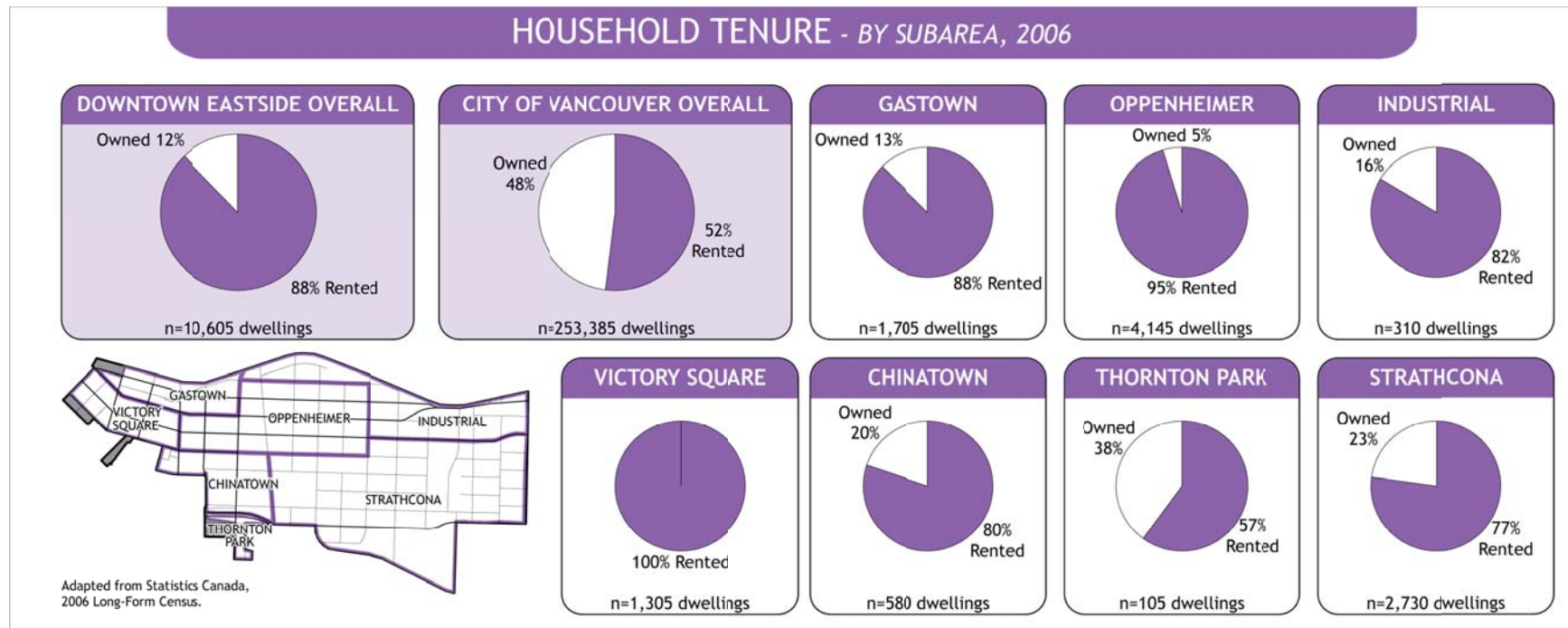


1.4 A Home for Everyone

As of the 2006 census, average gross rent in the Downtown Eastside was \$477, compared to \$898 across the city. For many residents, the comparatively low rental rates are still expensive; half of Downtown Eastside 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 overall.²³

Tenure

The vast majority of Downtown Eastside dwellings are rented. The lowest cost rents in the Downtown Eastside are found in the SRO stock; however, even these units are unaffordable for many low income residents on social assistance.



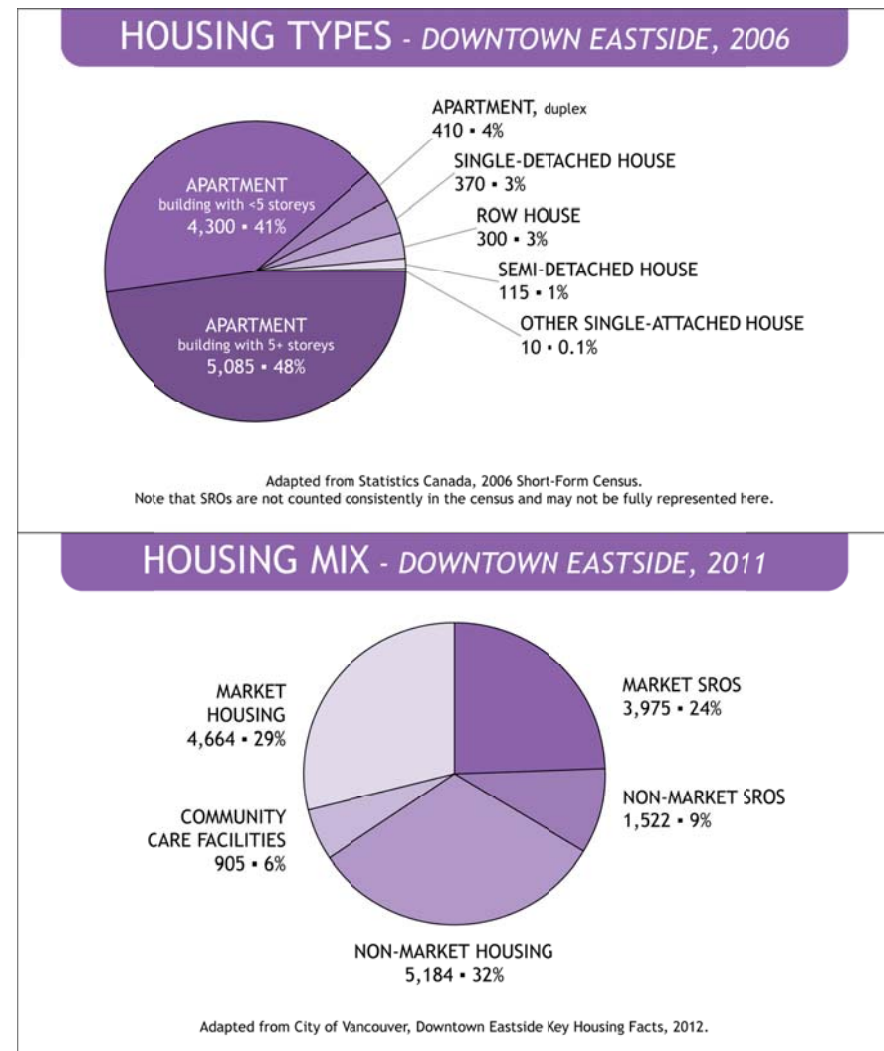
²³ Census, 2006.

Housing Types

According to 2006 census data, the most common housing type in the Downtown Eastside was apartments (almost 90 per cent), with the majority of units were in buildings more than five storeys tall. Variations in housing types occur across sub-areas; for example, nearly 90 per cent of detached homes in the Downtown Eastside are found in the Strathcona sub-area.²⁴

In 2011, there were 1,522 non-market SRO units, all renting at \$375; and 3,975 privately owned SROs, of which 27 per cent (1,073) rent at \$375. In 2011, the City of Vancouver's Low-Income Housing Survey found an average rent of \$416 for a room in a private SRO residence in the Downtown Eastside. The number of units being rented at the shelter component of welfare has been declining.²⁵

- Since December 2010, 200 units of supportive housing have been completed, and 286 are under construction and are expected to be completed by 2014. All units will be rented at \$375.²⁶
- In 2012, there were 846 homeless people in the Downtown Eastside²⁷—675 were sheltered and 171 were on the street.²⁸
- In 2011, there were 905 community care facility beds in the Downtown Eastside for women, seniors, youth and men. Many of these beds are located within non-market housing or transitional housing developments.



²⁴ 2006 Census. Note that SROs are not counted consistently in census data.

²⁵ City of Vancouver. Downtown Eastside Key Housing Facts, June 12, 2012.

²⁶ Ibid.

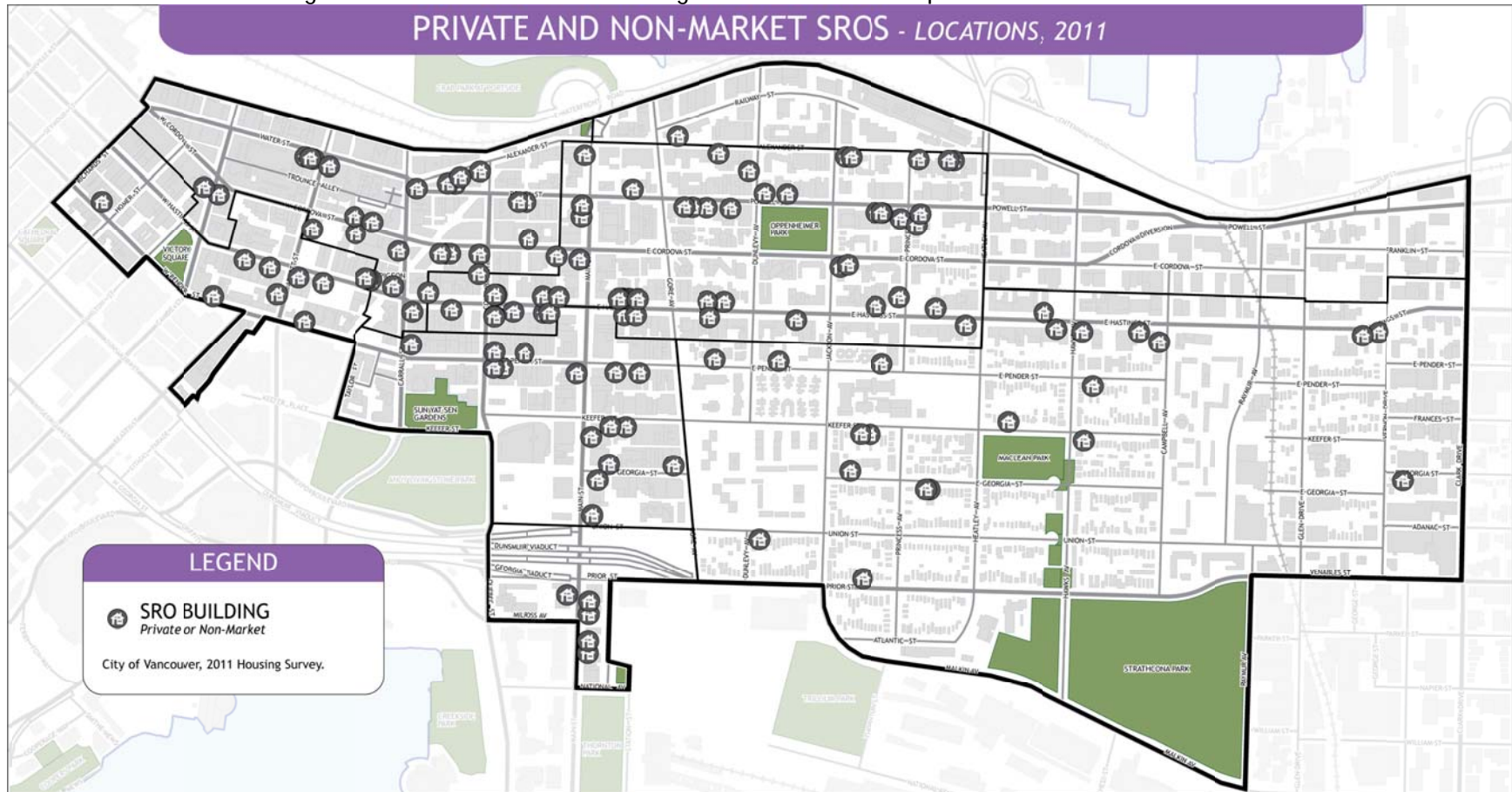
²⁷ City of Vancouver Homeless Count, 2012.

²⁸ City of Vancouver. Downtown Eastside Key Housing Facts, June 12, 2012.

Single Room Occupancy Buildings (SROs)

SRO hotels and rooming houses make up a large portion of the market rental stock in the Downtown Eastside, especially for people on income assistance and others living on a fixed income. Many SRO rooms do not have their own bathrooms or kitchens.

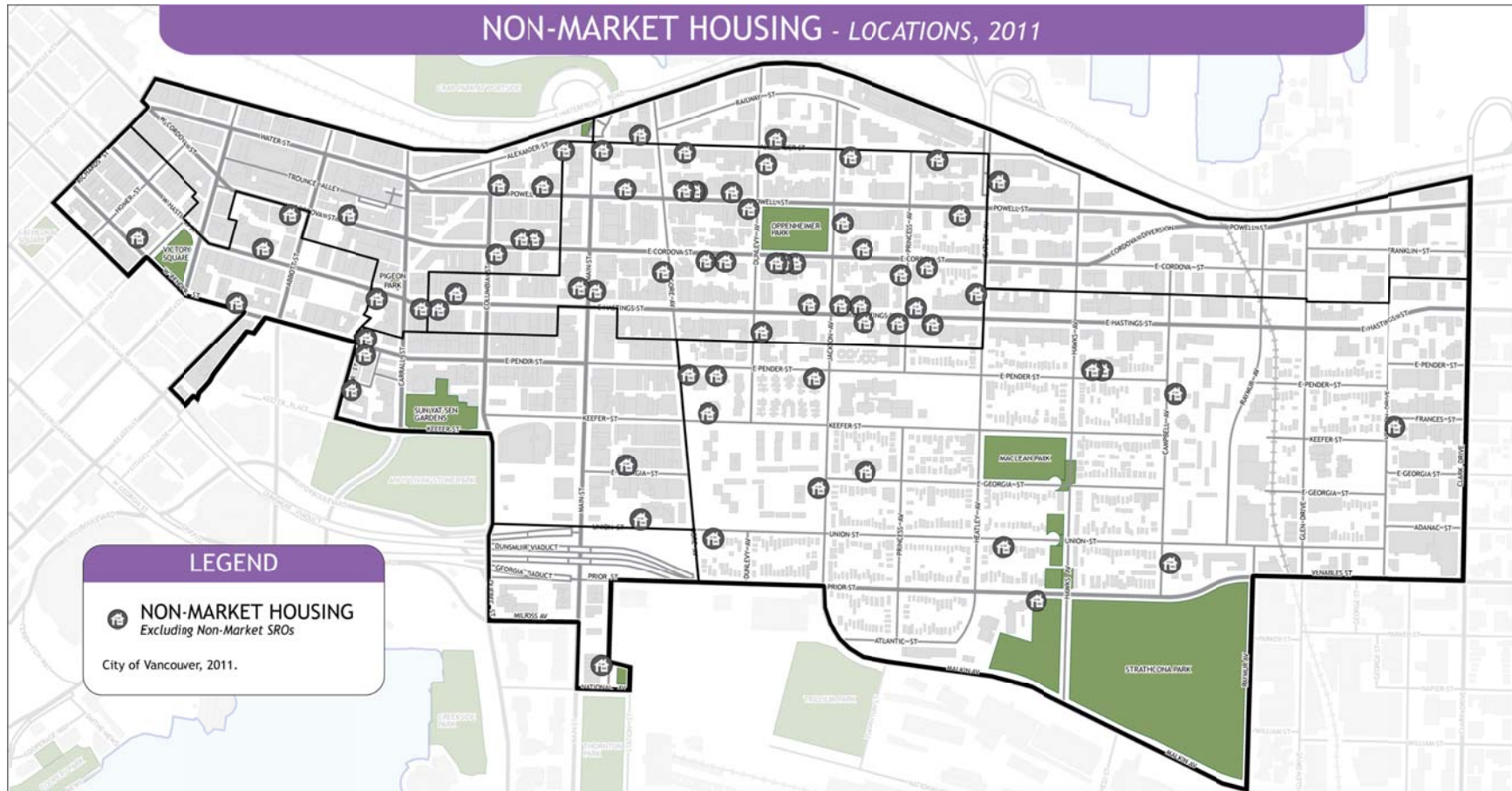
As of 2011, 101 private market SRO buildings were located within the Downtown Eastside, with an additional 31 SROs being rented at non-market rates. The general location of these buildings is shown on the map below.



Non-market housing

Non-market housing (social housing) is self-contained (own bathroom and kitchen) housing owned and operated by a non-profit or government agency. The majority of non-market housing units in the Downtown Eastside are for singles.

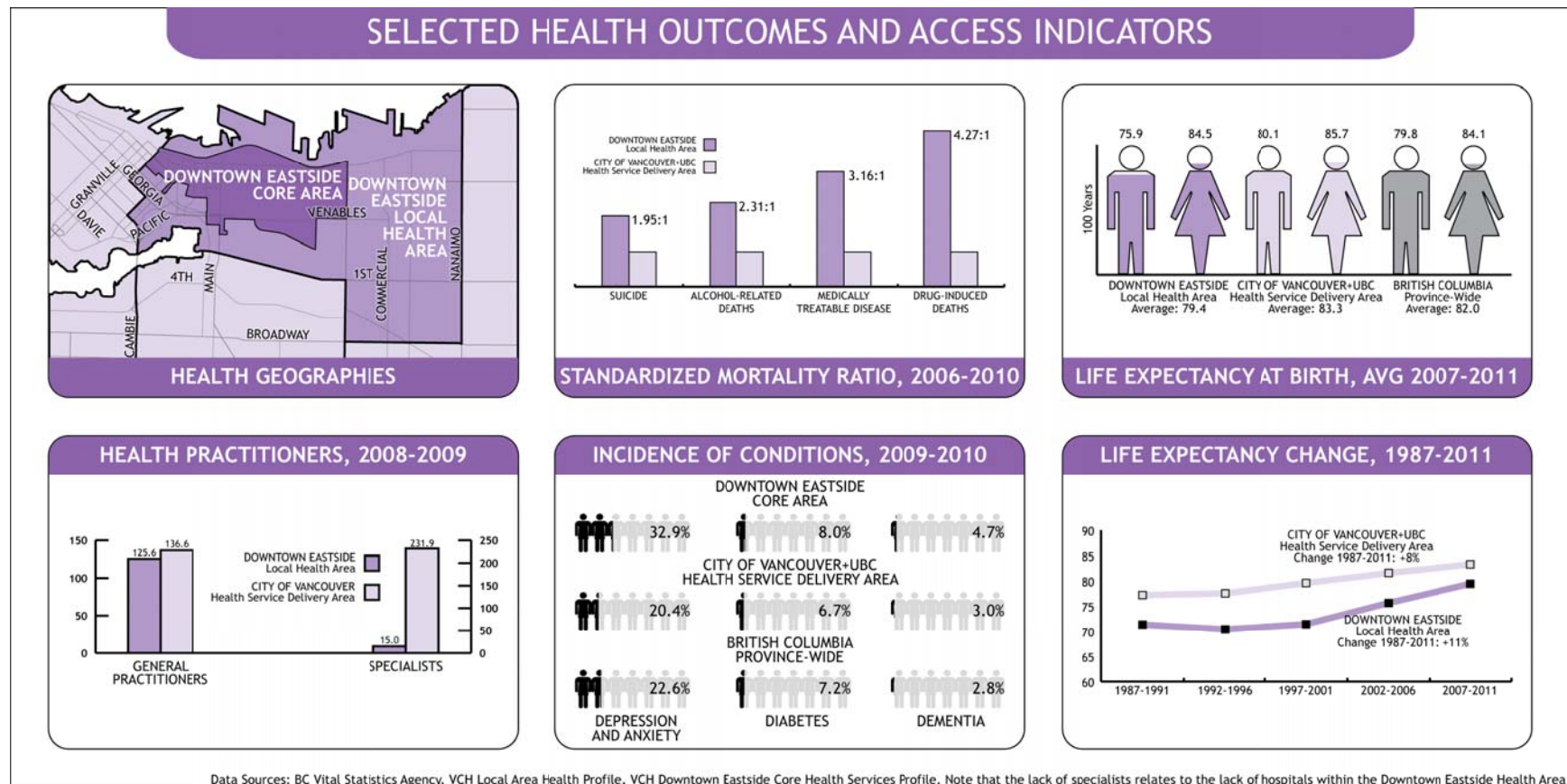
Excluding the 31 non-market SROs mentioned on the previous page, there are 71 non-market developments in the Downtown Eastside, shown below.



1.5 Health and Social Services

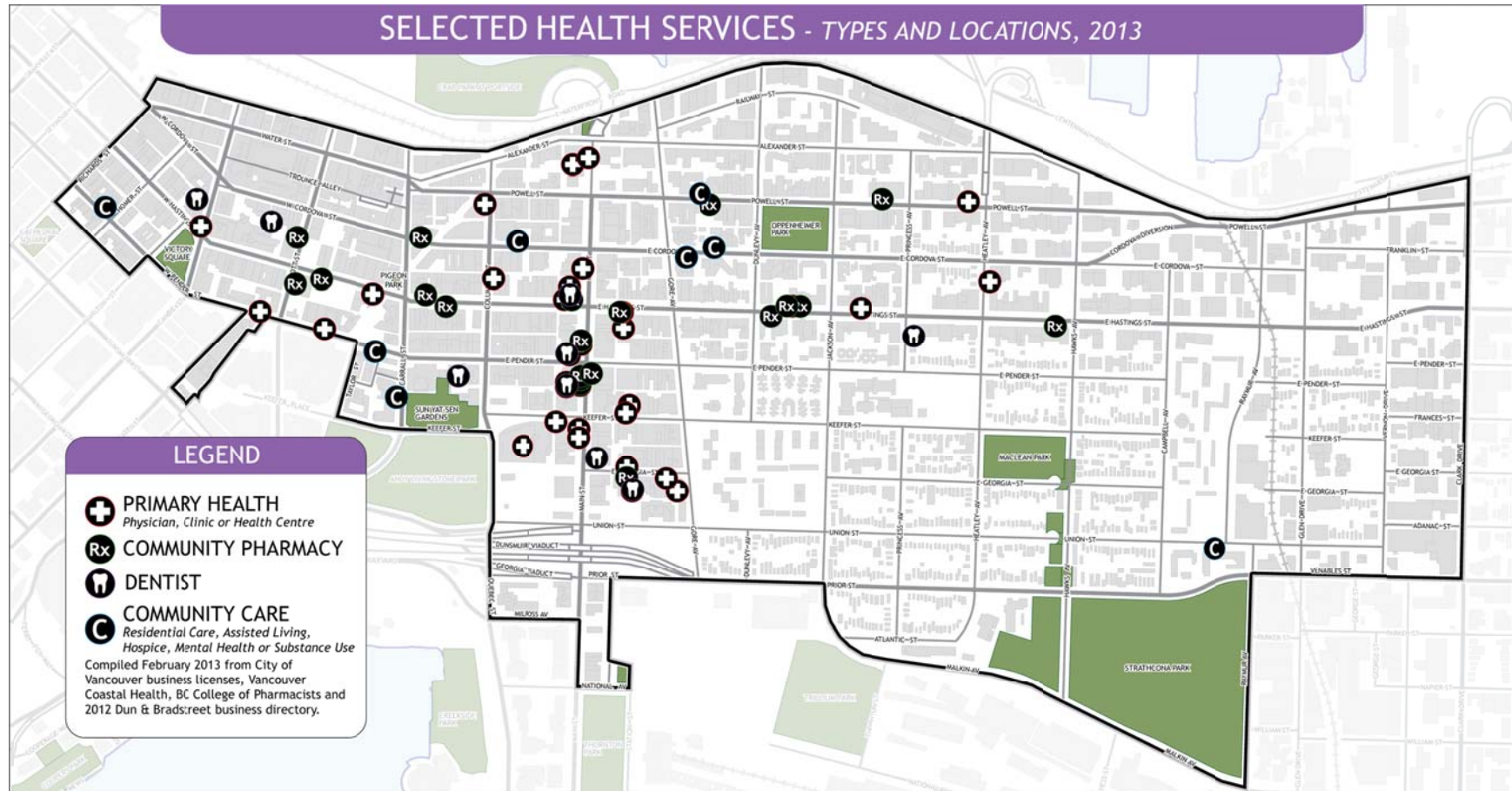
Health Outcomes

Recent years have seen improvements to many health indicators in the Downtown Eastside, including longer life expectancy, lower rates of infectious disease, fewer overdose deaths and greater service provision. However, Downtown Eastside residents continue to experience worse health outcomes than the general population, with many complex health challenges and barriers to accessing care. Positive health outcomes depend on factors such as access to quality food; safe and secure housing; and positive early child development.

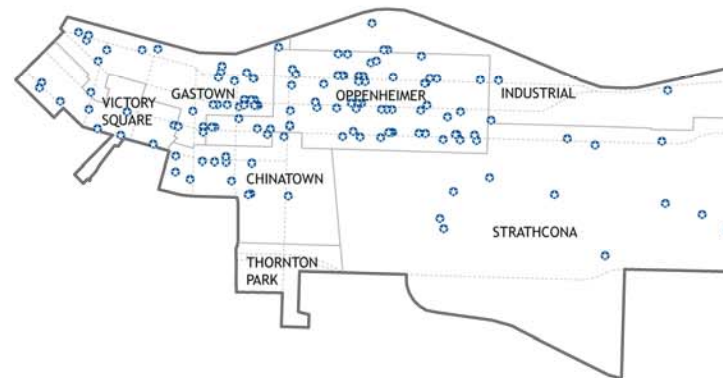
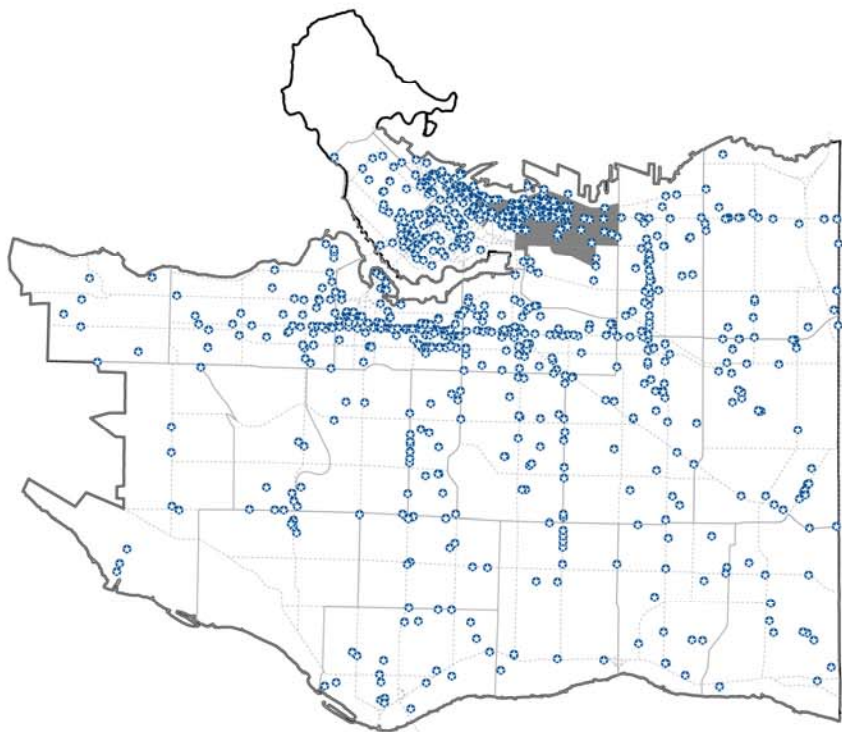


Health and Social Services

There is a high concentration of health and social services in the Downtown Eastside. The following maps illustrate the distribution of services by type; they do not analyze or address service levels or services provided.



COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES - DISTRIBUTION, 2008



LEGEND

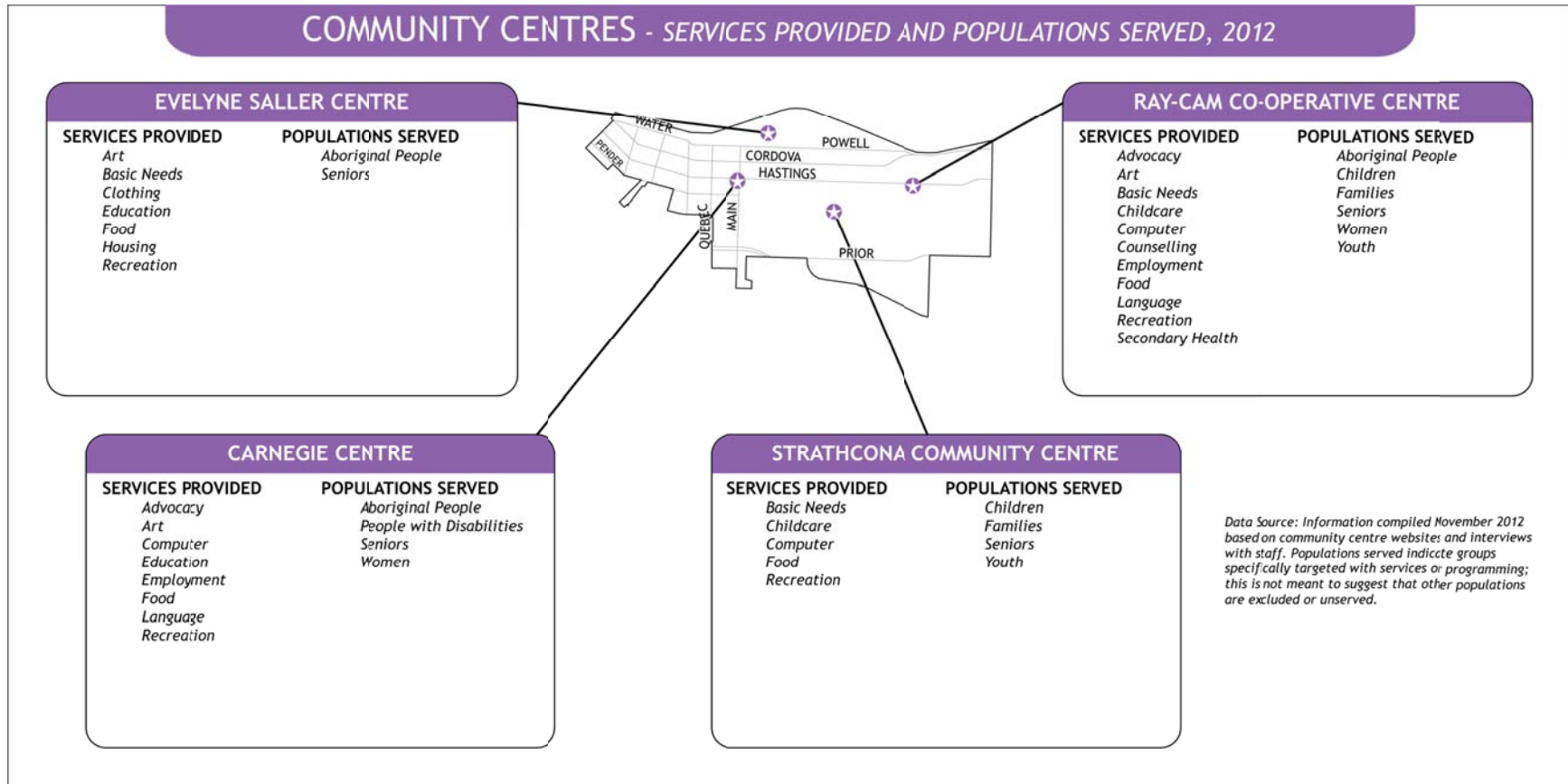


COMMUNITY/SOCIAL
SERVICE LOCATION

Adapted from BC211 Redbook directory,
2007/2008. Not all services are plotted.

Community Centres

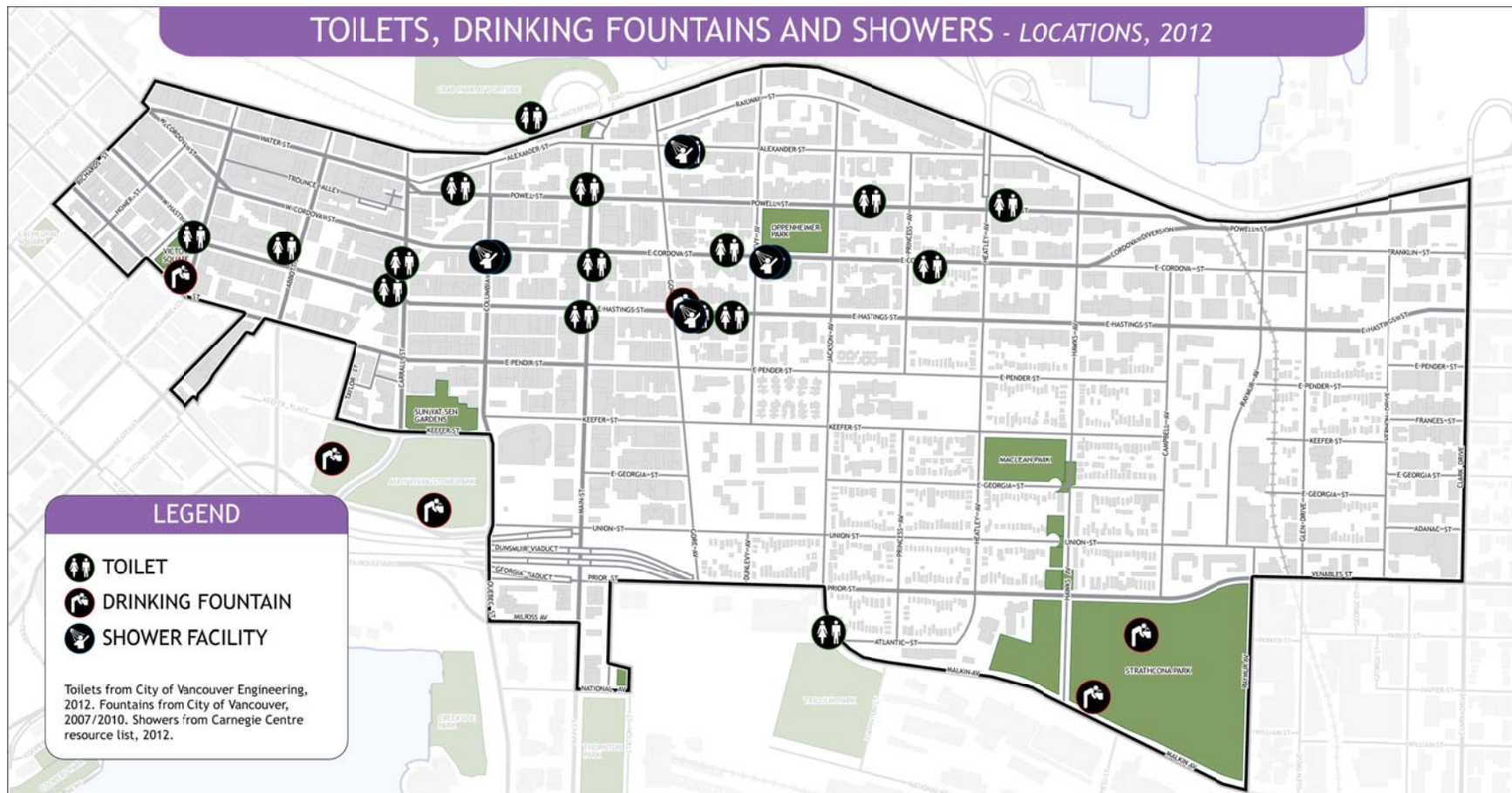
The Downtown Eastside's four City-funded community and resource centres serve as service hubs, gathering spaces and opportunities for recreation. Some facilities, such as the Evelyn Saller Centre, also provide access to basic needs including showers and laundry.



Basic Needs

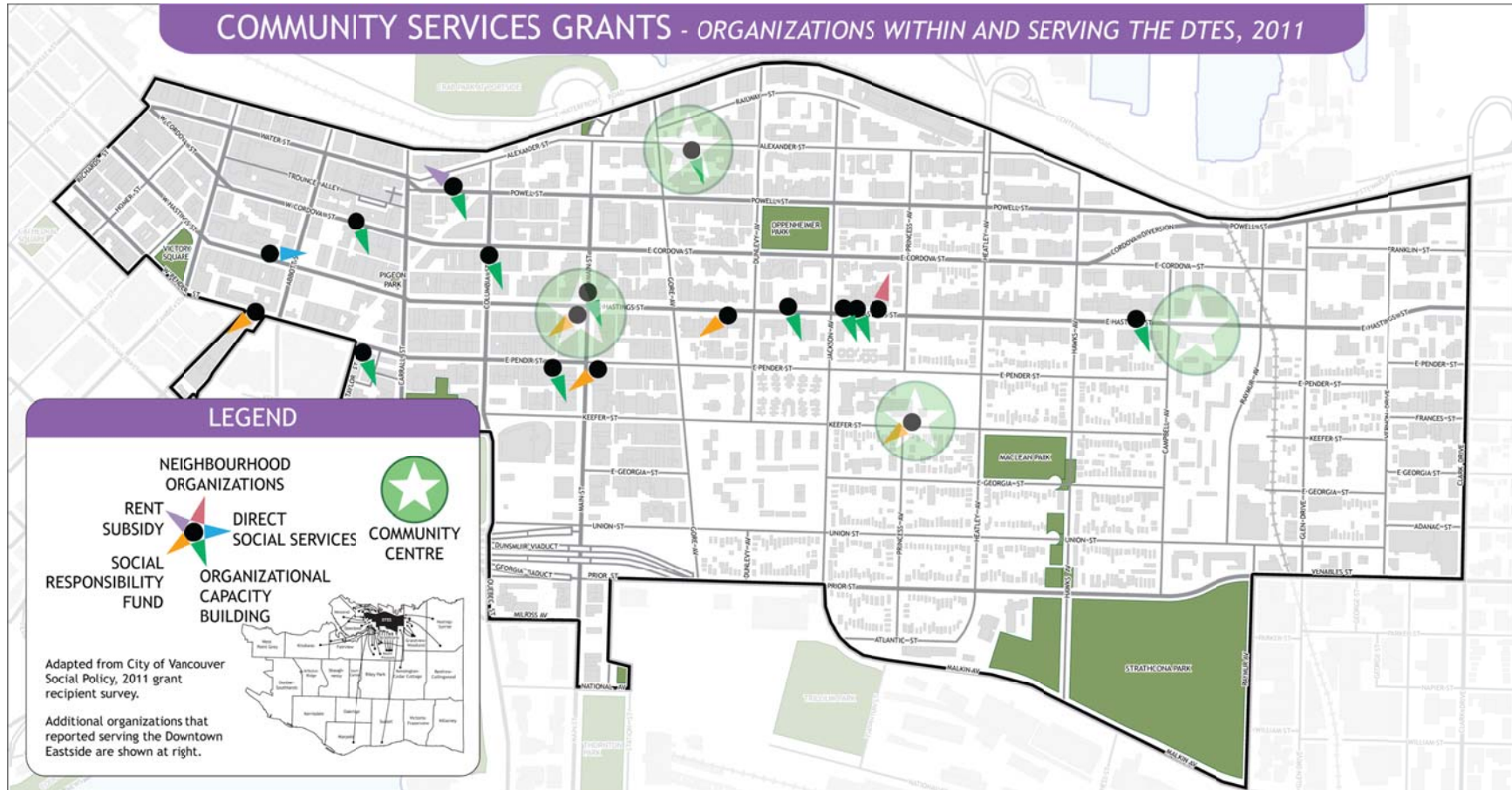
Access to basic needs, including access to bathrooms, showers, water fountains, clothing and laundry, are a particular concern for residents in the Downtown Eastside because of the rate of homelessness and the SRO stock with inadequate bathroom and laundry facilities.

In addition to City facilities such as libraries and community centres, many agencies provide access to toilet and shower facilities; an illustration of some of these facilities appears on the map below.



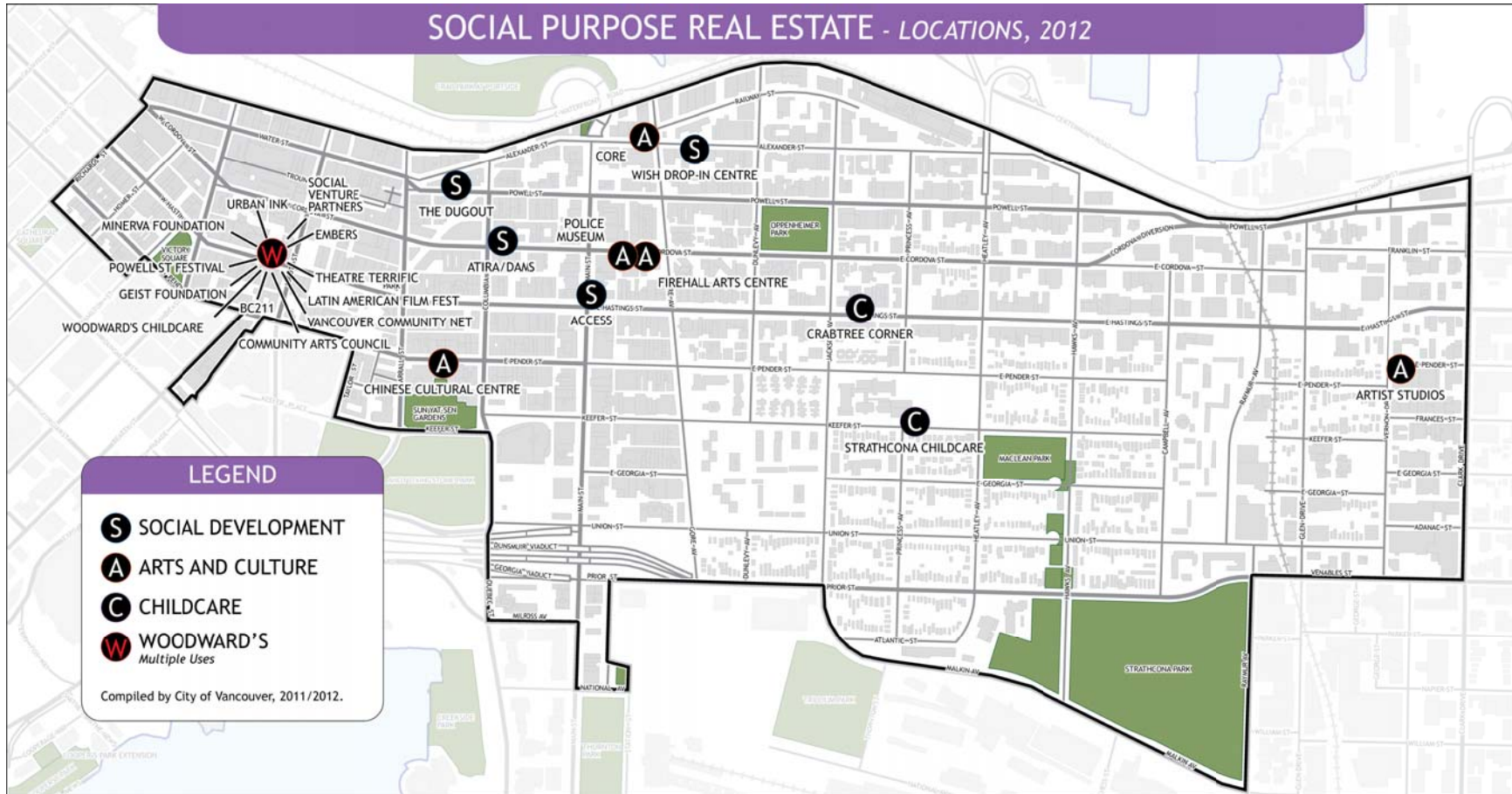
Grants and Social Purpose Real Estate

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 for vulnerable populations and issues concerning social justice, mental health and addictions. In addition to organizations located in the Downtown Eastside, 44 organizations located outside the Downtown Eastside that received grants from Social Policy also reported serving the community in 2011.³²



³² City of Vancouver Social Policy Division, Survey of 2011 Grant Recipients, 2011.

An additional way the City supports organizations is by providing subsidized rent, known as social purpose real estate, on City owned or leased property.

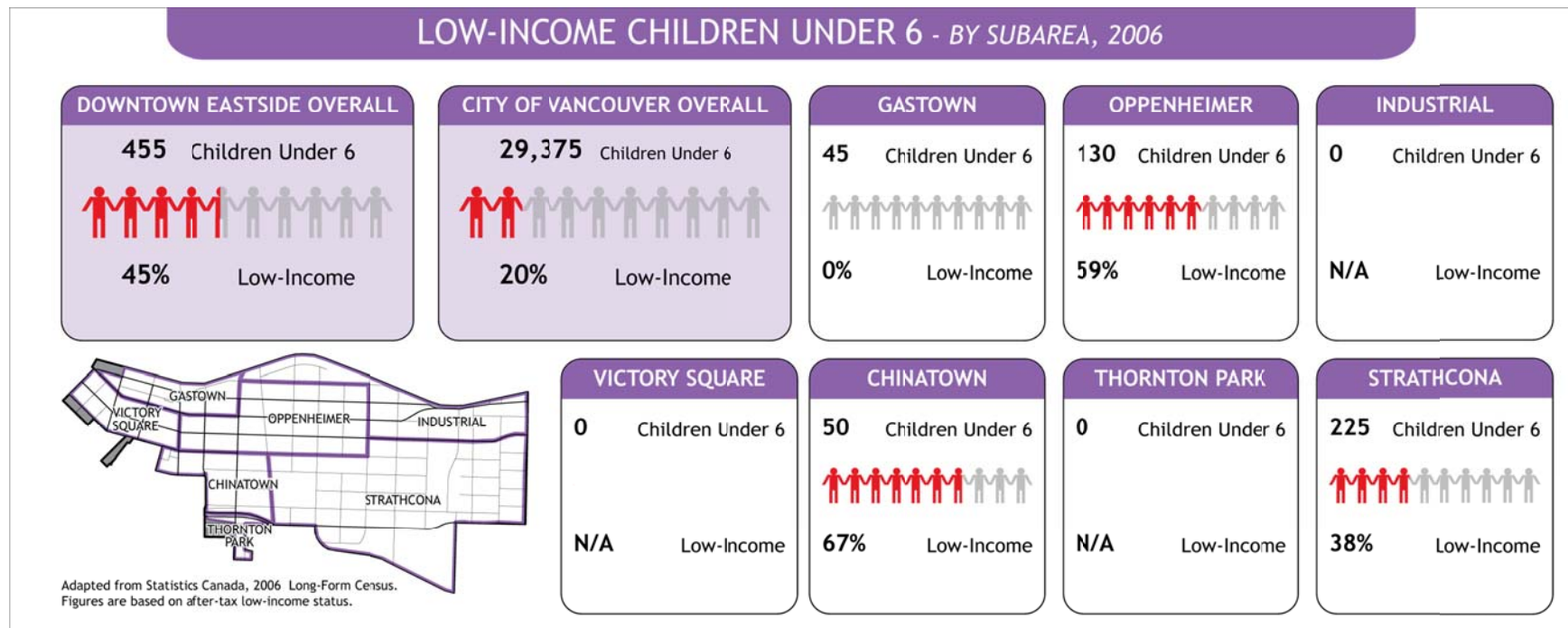


1.6 A Good Start

As discussed in the introductory section, the Downtown Eastside has a relatively small child population compared to the city overall. However, a number of children live in the residential areas of Strathcona and Oppenheimer.

Child Poverty

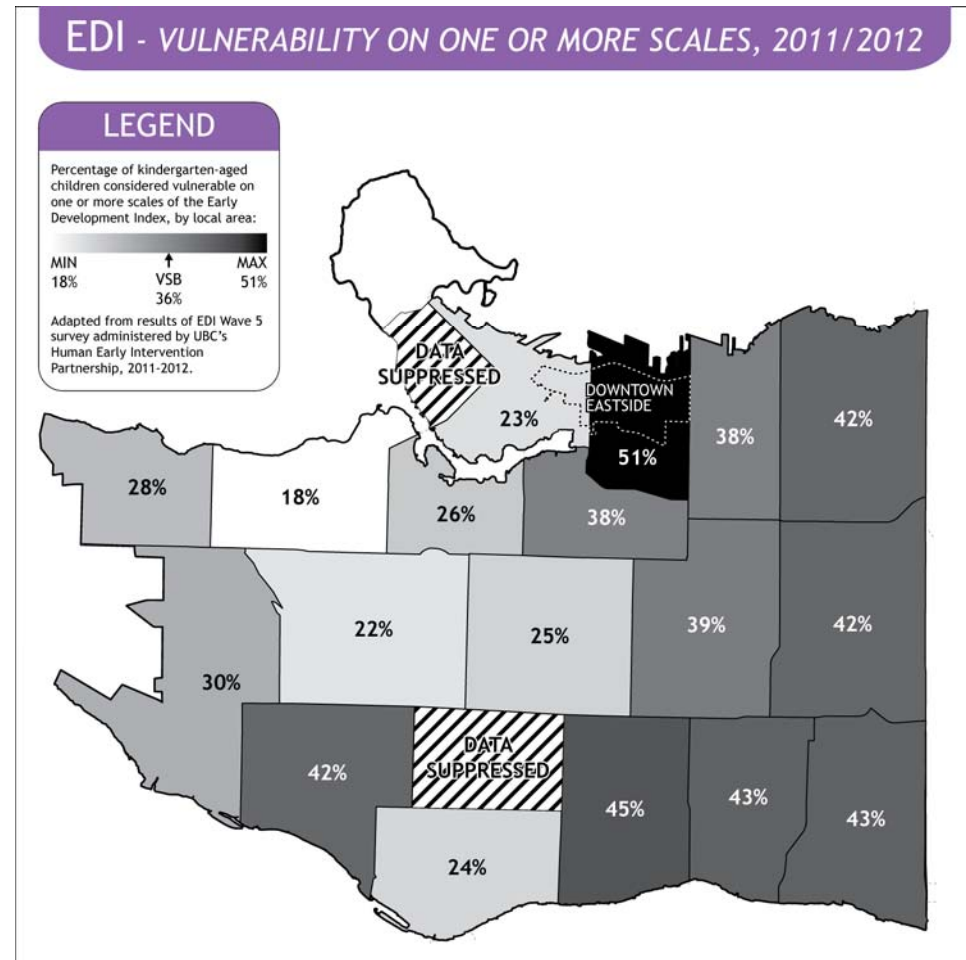
British Columbia has consistently had higher rates of children in low income families than Canada overall. Within the City of Vancouver, the proportion of children under six living in low income families is approximately 2.5 times higher in the Downtown Eastside than across the city as a whole. The effects of child poverty are profound; living in poverty limits access to food and healthy nutrition, daycare options, choices regarding schooling, and social and recreational opportunities. Furthermore, poverty leads to stigmatization, discrimination and alienation.³³



³³ SPARC. The Cost of Poverty in BC, 2011.

Early Development Instrument

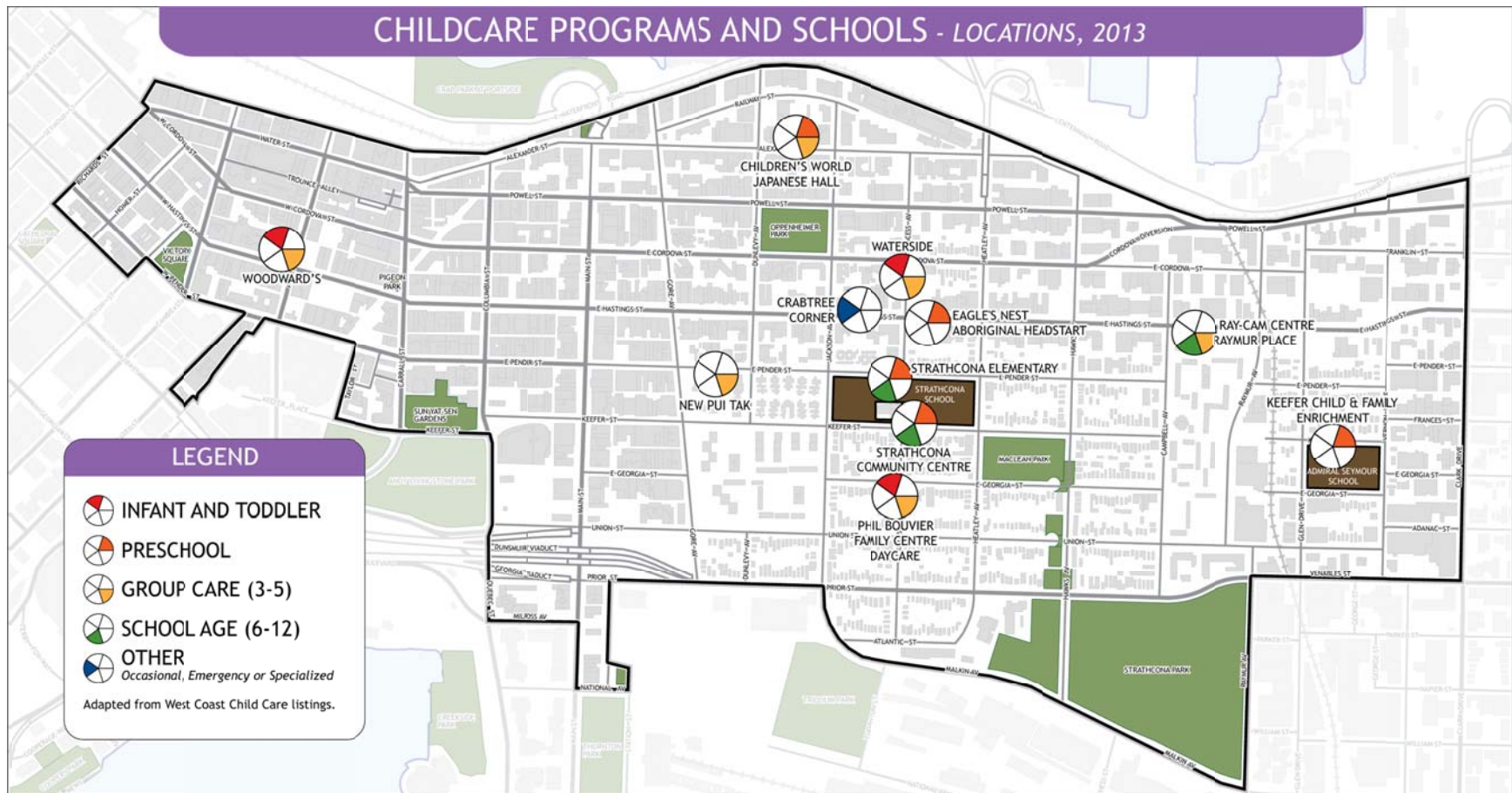
A frequently used measure of child vulnerability is the Early Development Instrument (EDI). The EDI measures school-readiness for six-year-olds on five scales of potential vulnerability: physical, social, emotional, language and communication. As discussed on the previous page, most Downtown Eastside children live in the Strathcona area, which has the highest percentage of children vulnerable on one or more scales in Vancouver. In 2011/2012, 51 per cent of children in Strathcona were considered "not ready for school," compared to 36 per cent for the entire Vancouver School Board.³⁴



³⁴ UBC Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP), 2011/12.

Childcare

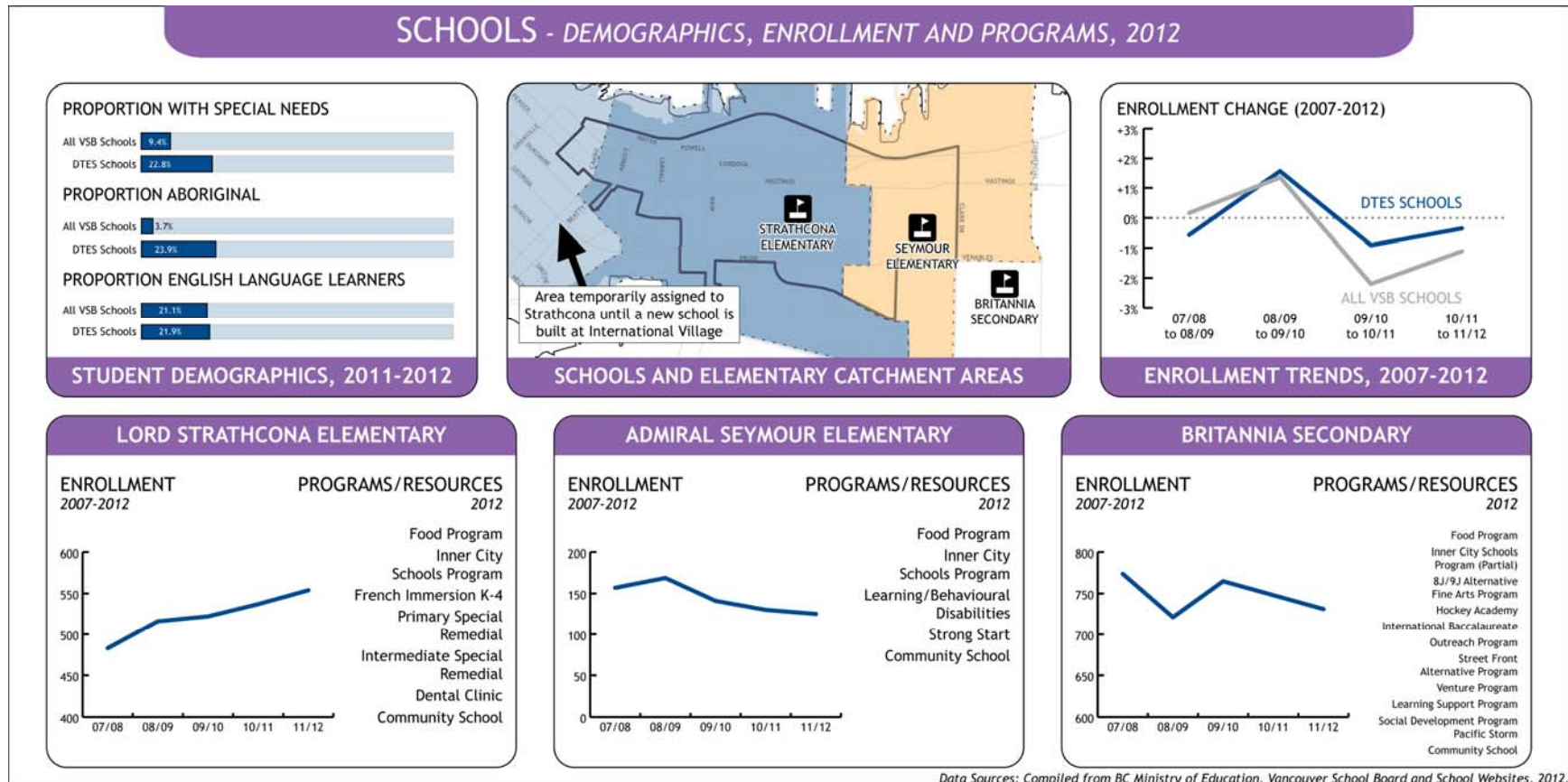
Availability and affordability of quality early learning and care opportunities are key issues, especially for vulnerable families in the Downtown Eastside. Quality care and learning opportunities for children in their early years have been linked to many positive social, economic and health outcomes, for individuals and communities. Without additional support and care, children in highly vulnerable environments in their early years may be at greater risk for difficulty in the school years and beyond.³⁵



³⁵ Early Learning Advisory Group. Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Children and Family Development. British Columbia early learning framework, 2008.

Schools

The catchment areas for the Downtown Eastside feed into two elementary schools and neighbouring Britannia Secondary School. Reflecting the demographics of the community, there is a larger proportion of Aboriginal students compared to other Vancouver schools. There is also a larger proportion of students with special needs, especially at Britannia Secondary where a Learning Support Program is offered. The proportion of English language learners in the Downtown Eastside is similar to that of Vancouver.

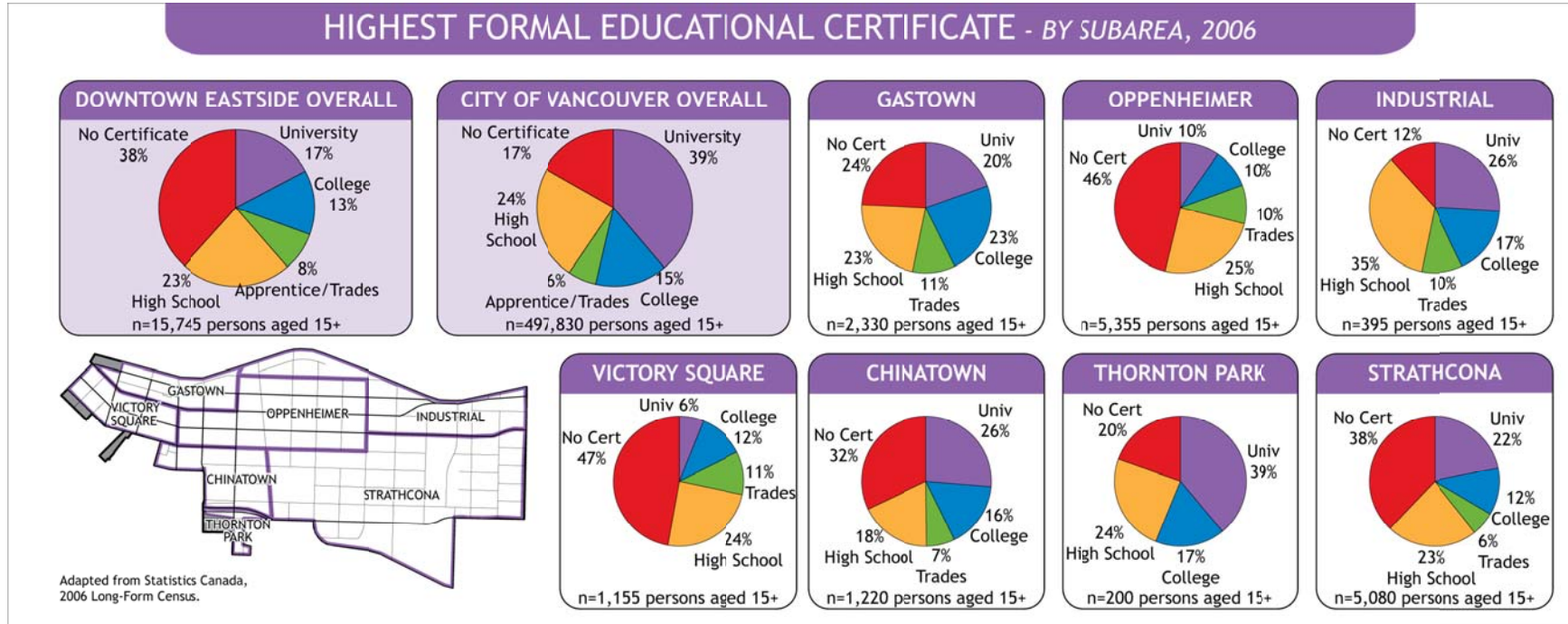


1.7 Learning for Life

Opportunities for learning and development, especially for those who are marginalized, can contribute to improved individual and community health and well-being in countless ways. Education is strongly connected to other determinants of health such as adequate income and decent employment conditions, and there is a clear correlation between health outcomes and education. People with higher education tend to be healthier than those without.³⁶

Formal Education

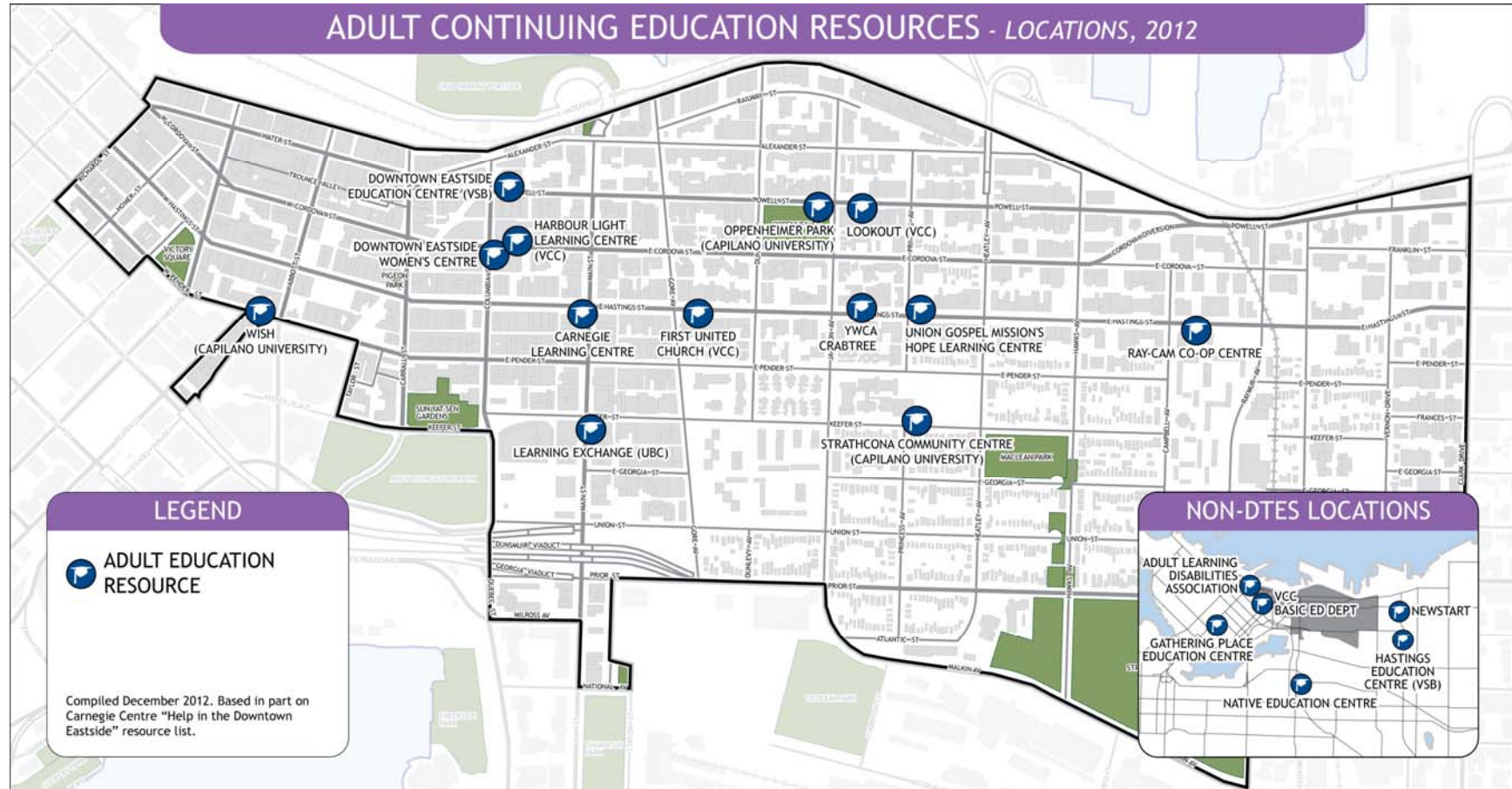
Downtown Eastside residents have much lower rates of formal education than the city as a whole; more than one-third of residents over 15 have not completed high school, and less than 40 per cent have completed a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree. Poverty, addiction and marginalization are serious barriers to accessing formal education, and many residents pursue other learning opportunities.



³⁶ Raphael, D. Social Determinants of Health, 2010.

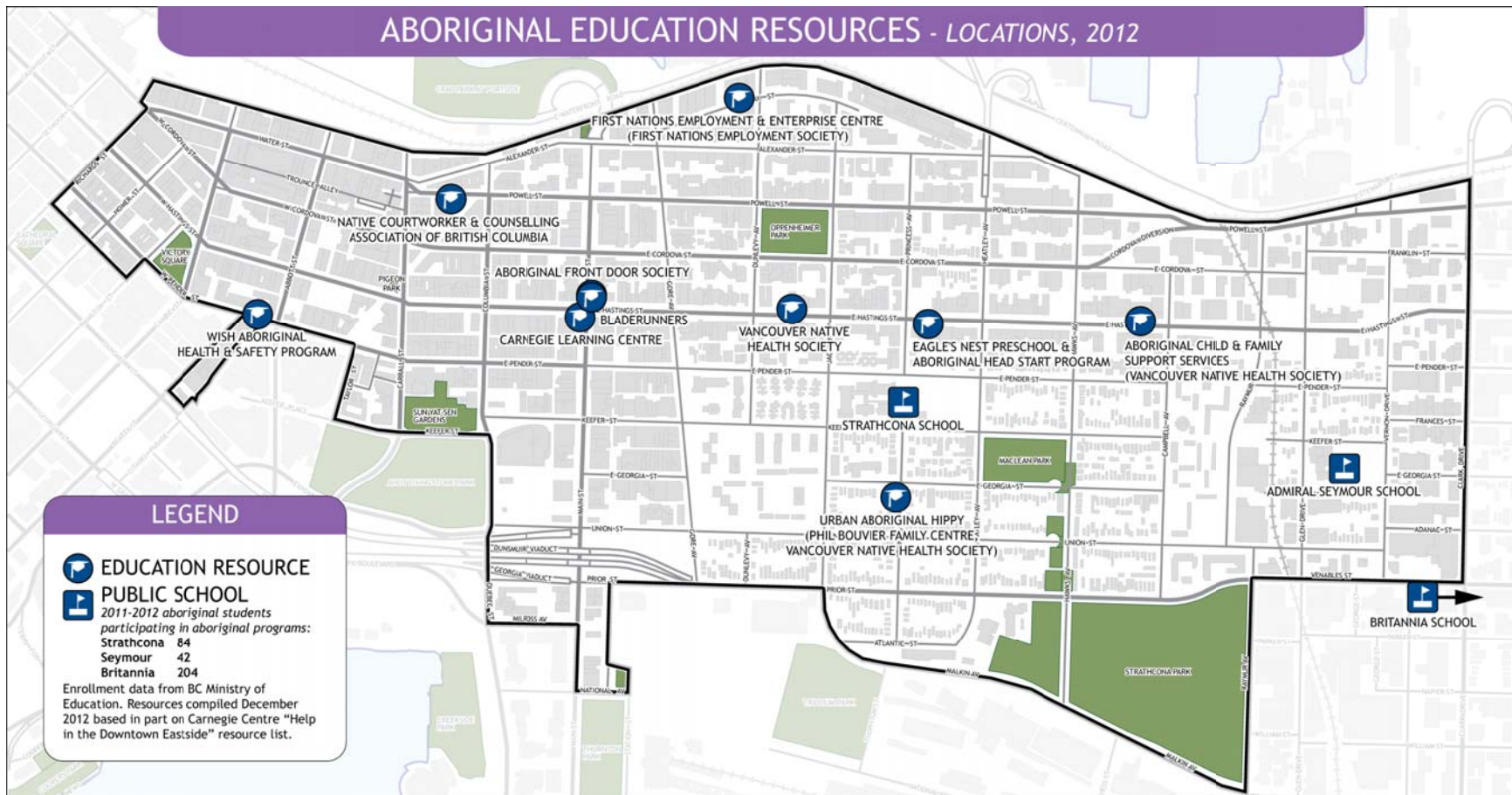
Learning Resources

Many unique learning resources have sprung up in the Downtown Eastside over the years. Neighbouring post-secondary institutions, including UBC, Capilano University, Vancouver Community College, have started programs or support existing programs for Downtown Eastside residents. For example, UBC runs the Learning Exchange which offers internet access, English conversation circles and, opportunities to learn about the humanities 101 or science 101 courses offered at UBC. The Hastings Education School at Britannia Secondary School runs an adult general educational development (GED) program.



Aboriginal Focused Learning

Aboriginal focused learning has been identified as an important contributor to feelings of connection and inclusion. In the Downtown Eastside, there are schools with Aboriginal focused programs; some community kitchens have classes tailored to Aboriginal participants; there is an Aboriginal focused daycare; and there are services that focus on programming for Aboriginal people.

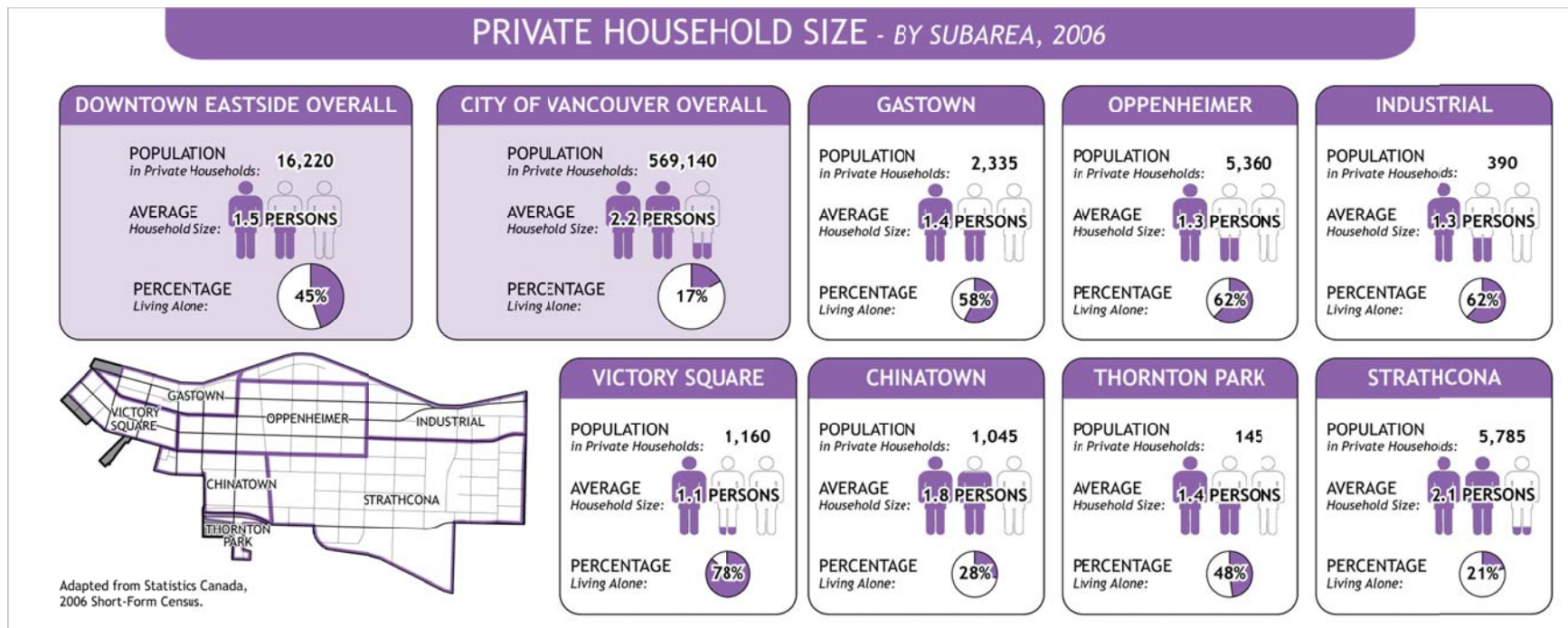


1.8 Critical Connections

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

Household Structure

- In the Downtown Eastside, only 44 per cent of residents live in families with a partner and/or children, compared to 73 per cent of residents across the City of Vancouver. 45 per cent of Downtown Eastside residents live alone, compared to 17 per cent of Vancouver residents.³⁷
- In the Downtown Eastside, 70 per cent of households are occupied by a single person, compared to 39 per cent in the City of Vancouver. The average size of private households is 1.5 persons per household, compared to an average of 2.2 for Vancouver.³⁸

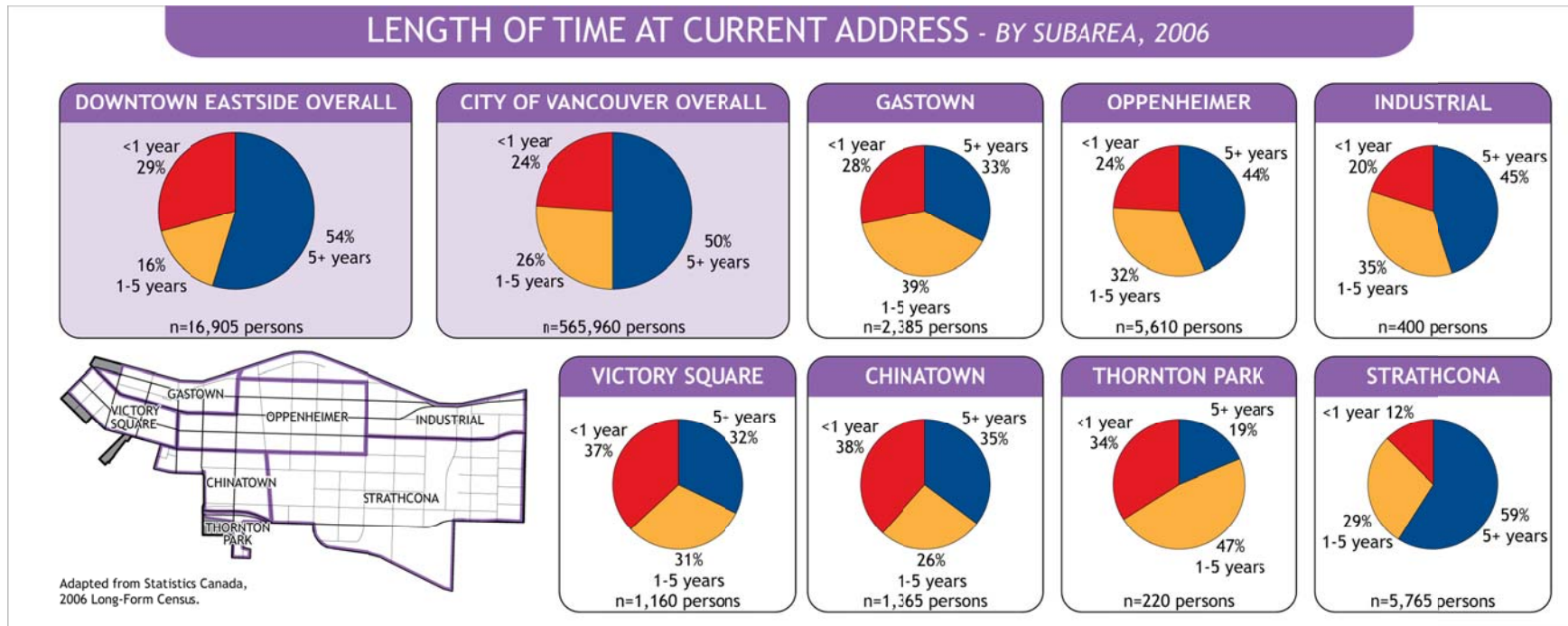


³⁷ Census, 2006.

³⁸ Census, 2006.

Mobility

Mobility measures the length of time a person has lived at his or her current residence. Mobility can be an indicator of community ownership and engagement, but in different ways. Low mobility may indicate secure housing, or it may indicate that people are unable to move. Compared to the City overall, the Downtown Eastside has a higher percentage of people who have lived in their current residence for over five years, and a higher percentage of people who have lived in their residence for less than one year. However, this masks the distinction between sub-areas: Strathcona is the only sub-area with a larger proportion of residents not moving in the past five years than the city overall.



1.9 Being and Feeling Safe

Women's Safety

The safety of women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is a priority for both the community and the City. Poverty, homelessness, racism, sexism and unsafe housing make many women more vulnerable to sexual, emotional, mental and physical violence. The case of the Downtown Eastside's missing and murdered women is a tragic example of how marginalized women, including many Aboriginal women and survival sex workers, can become victims of homicide. As the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry has noted, "Eradicating the problem of violence against women involves addressing the root causes of marginalization, notably sexism, racism and the ongoing pervasive effects of the colonization of Aboriginal peoples - all of which contribute to the poverty and insecurity in which many women live."³⁹

In 2012, 16 per cent of reported sexual assaults in Vancouver occurred in the Downtown Eastside, an area with only 3 per cent of Vancouver's population⁴⁰. As many sexual assaults are unreported, and marginalized groups are particularly unlikely to report crime, this may be an underestimate.

Estimating the number of survival sex workers in Vancouver is challenging: the overall street sex work population is estimated to be between 1,500 and 2,000 individuals, but 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. Eighty per cent of people engaged in sex work identify as women, while about 20 per cent identify as males or transgender. Transgender people may identify as female, male, both or neither.

An estimated 40 per cent of street sex workers are immigrant or visible minority women.⁴¹

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.⁴² 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, Aboriginal women make up a much larger proportion 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. Over 20 years later, the Women's Memorial March continues to honour the lives of missing and murdered women.

³⁹ W. T. Oppal. *Forsaken, The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry Volume 1*, 2012.

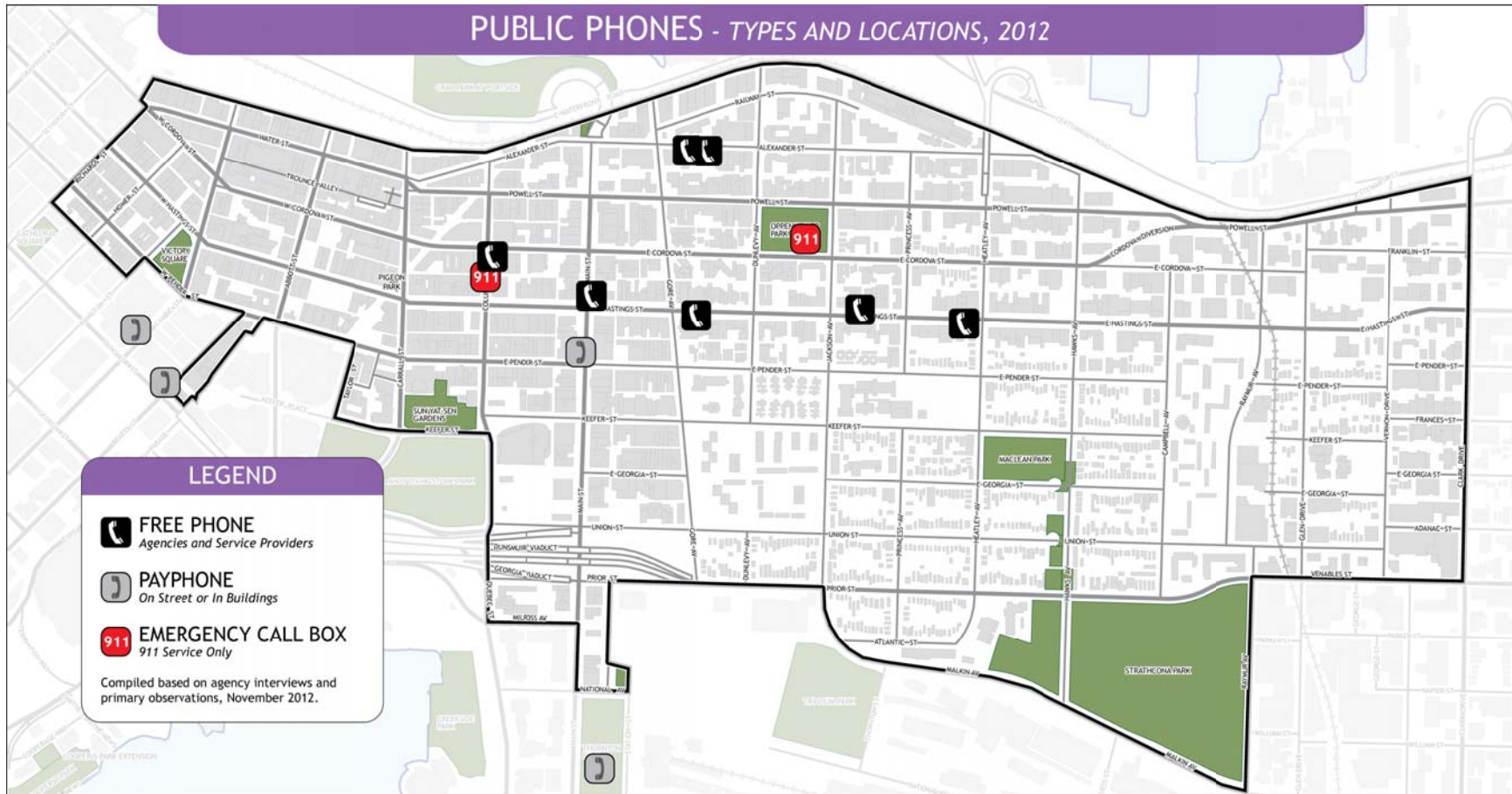
⁴⁰ Vancouver Police Department, 2013.

⁴¹ MAK Project; Farley, M., Lynne, J. and Cotton, A.J. (2005). Prostitution in Vancouver: Violence and the Colonization of First Nation's Women. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 42:2:242-271.

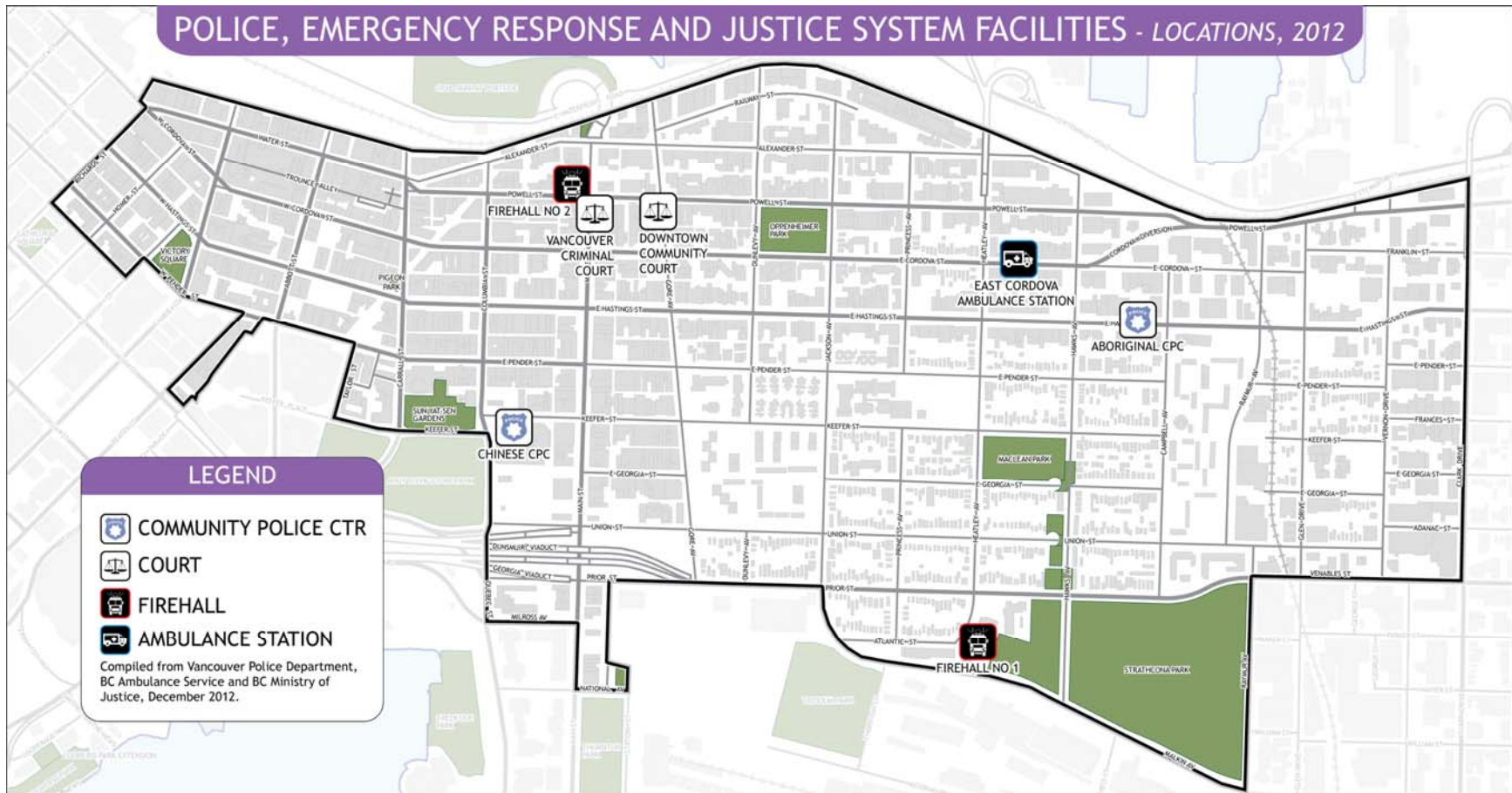
⁴² Farley, M., Lynne, J. and Cotton, A.J. (2005). Prostitution in Vancouver: Violence and the Colonization of First Nation's Women. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 42:2:242-271.

General Safety

Accessibility of public phones is a large concern in the Downtown Eastside because many residents do not have a cell phone. Only a few public phones remain, with many of them operating only for 911 calls. As a result, many non-profits offer free phones to their patrons. An innovative organization, First Funds Society, provides a community voicemail service to low income community members.



Infrastructure and Facilities



Reported Crime

The Downtown Eastside experiences higher rates of reported crime than seen citywide. From 2006 to 2011, reported property crime has decreased, and other criminal code⁴³ and violent reported crime has increased.

Note that interpreting reported crime statistics can be a fraught exercise, particularly in vulnerable communities. An increase in reported crime may be due to an improved relationship between police and residents. Changes to police deployment and priorities can also affect how crime is reported.

These figures must also be understood in the context that crime is expected to be higher in central areas in close proximity to regional destinations. The graph below is only a partial picture and a first step toward a more complete understanding of the safety of the Downtown Eastside and its residents.



⁴³ Other criminal code offences include mischief, bail violations, disturbing the peace, arson, prostitution and offensive weapons.

1.10 Expressing Ourselves

The arts play an important role in 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.

Artist Population

A 2010 report profiled artists and cultural workers in Canada's five largest cities.⁴⁴ The report found Vancouver has the highest concentration of artists among the five cities, with almost one-third of all BC artists residing in the City of Vancouver. The concentration of artists in Vancouver is double the provincial average and nearly triple the national average. Vancouver also has a high number and concentration of cultural workers.⁴⁵

The map at right summarizes the proportion of the population employed in all arts and culture industries in local areas. Downtown and Strathcona have higher concentrations of artists and cultural workers than the city as a whole.



⁴⁴ Calgary, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver were studied. 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.

⁴⁵ Hills Strategies Research. Mapping Artists and Cultural Workers in Canada's Large Cities, February 2010.

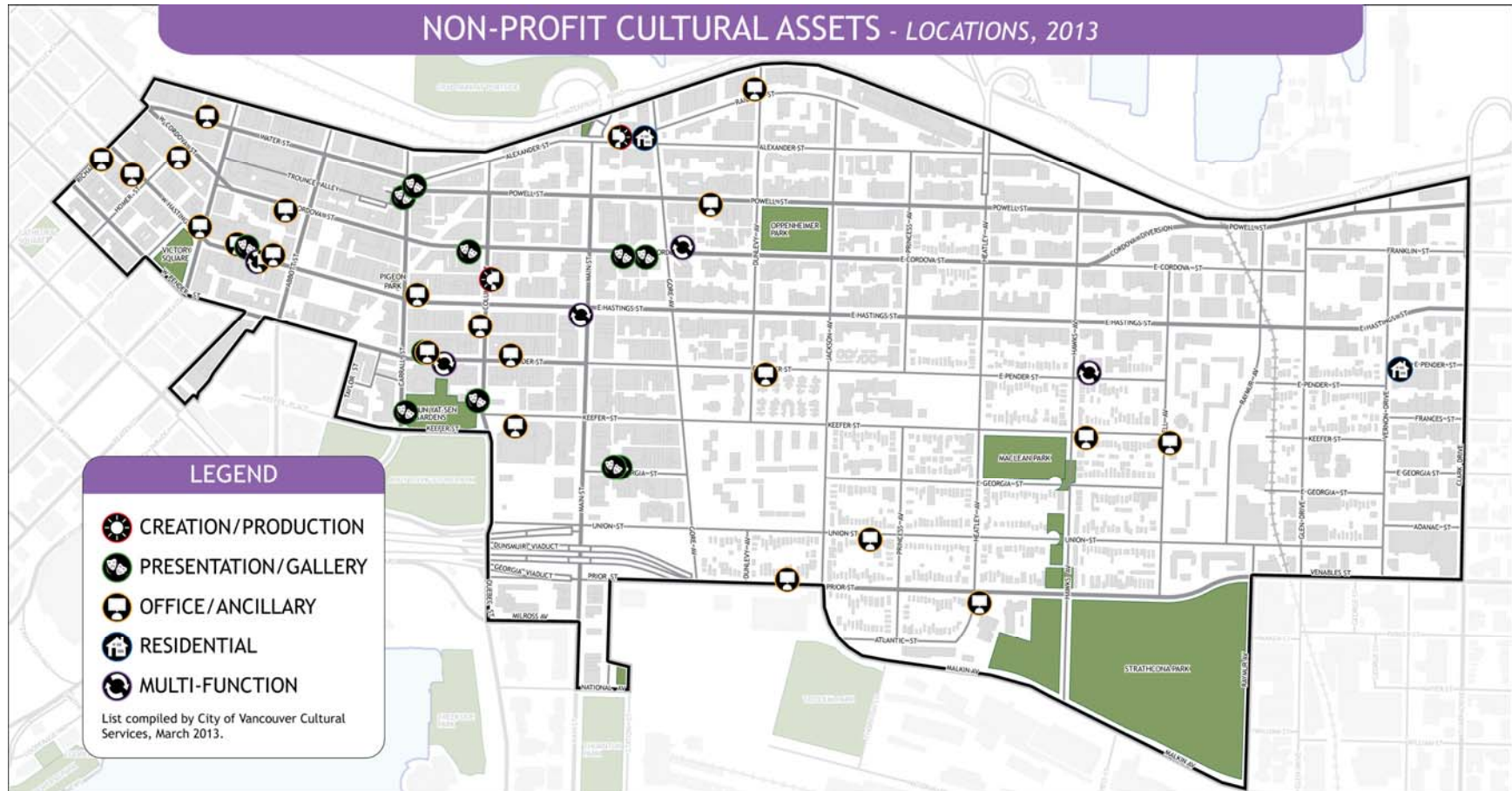
The report referenced above also studies postal FSAs in depth. The V6A postal region, which contains most of the Downtown Eastside, has the following features:

- 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).⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Hills Strategies Research. Mapping Artists and Cultural Workers in Canada's Large Cities, February 2010.

Cultural Assets

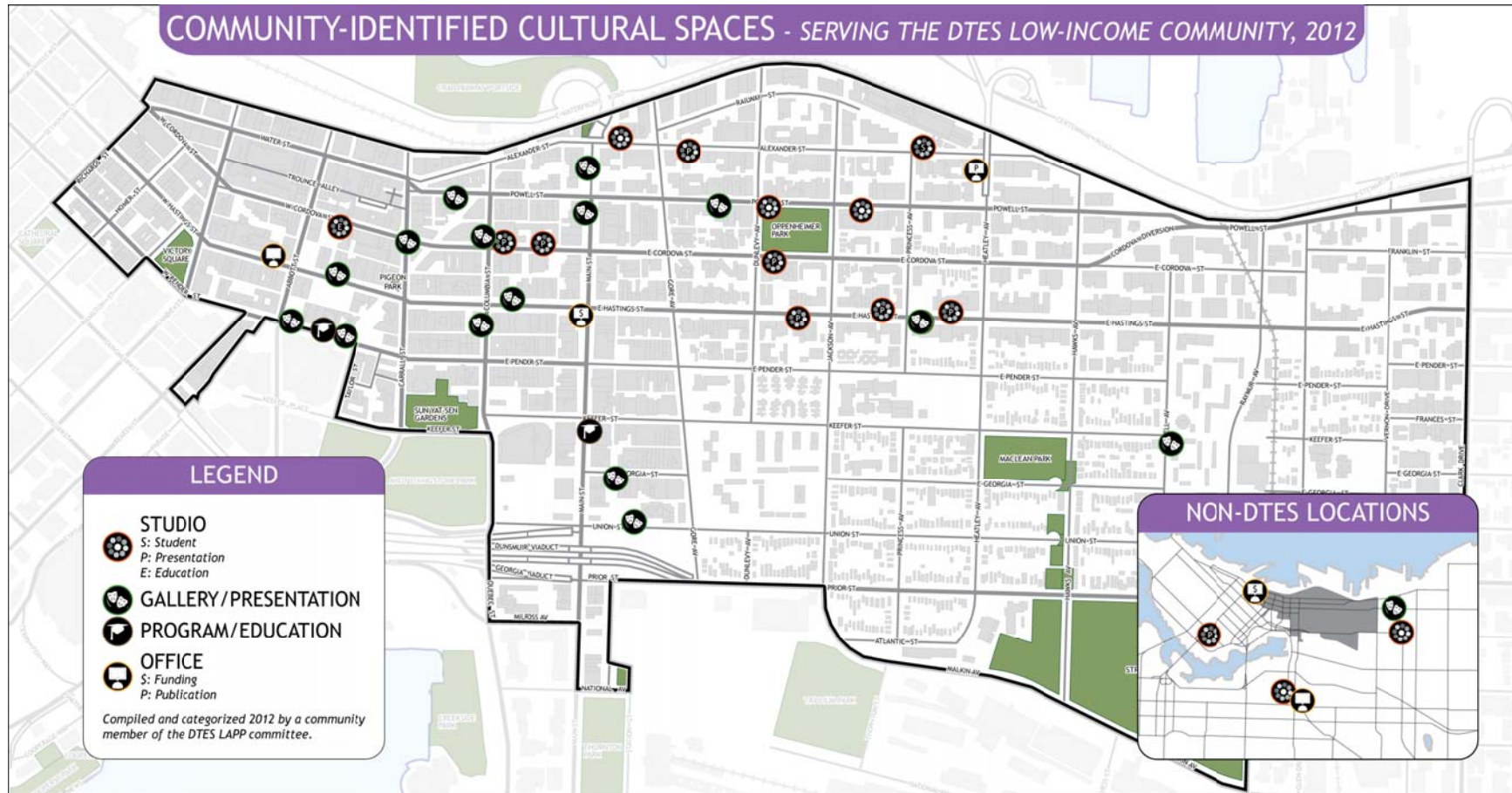
The map below plots the locations of non-profit cultural assets in the Downtown Eastside planning area.



Neighbourhood Change and the Arts

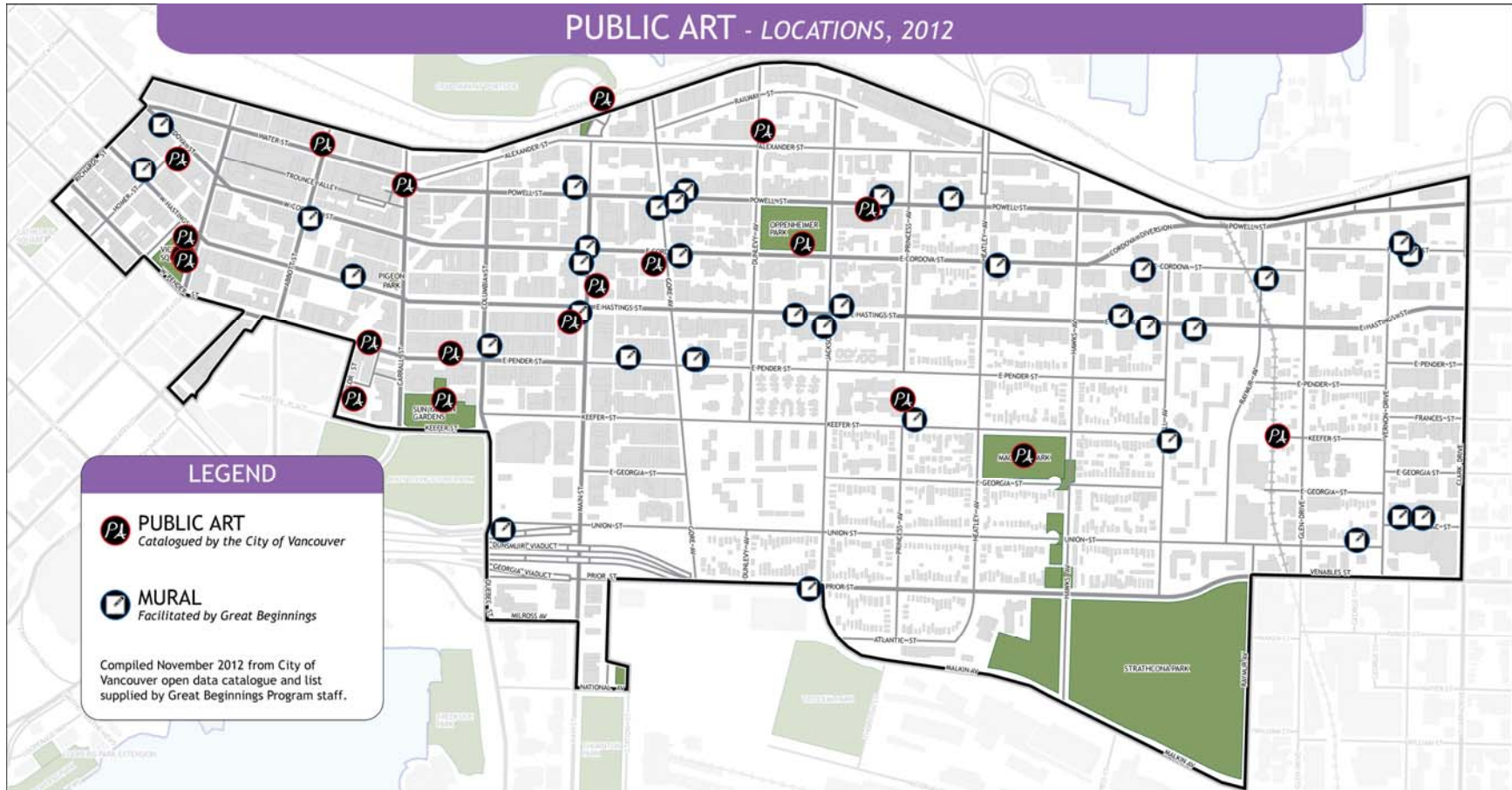
Artists tend to be found in neighbourhoods with inexpensive housing and access to resources (studio space, galleries, rehearsal and performance spaces, artist-run centres, associations). However, neighbourhoods considered “artsy” or trendy often then become unaffordable for the artists community as gentrification occurs. In the Downtown Eastside, there is a perception that artists are being displaced due to rising rent, and migrating east toward Grandview-Woodland.

The map below plots the locations of assets identified by a member of the LAPP committee as serving the Downtown Eastside’s low income artist community; recognizing and protecting these assets through neighbourhood change will be a challenge.



Public Art

Public art has a profound effect on the built environment, and helps to make spaces welcoming and beautiful. Public art is often used as a form of political expression and to highlight the cultural history of the Downtown Eastside. Many public art programs operate in the Downtown Eastside.⁴⁷ Great Beginnings, a City initiative to improve streets and public spaces and to support cultural activities, funded a mural project that produced more than 30 murals in the Downtown Eastside. These murals are illustrated on the map below along with works of public art catalogued by the City of Vancouver.



⁴⁷ Princess Street Interactive Walk; Creative Pathways project (Community Arts Council of Vancouver).

1.11 Getting Outside

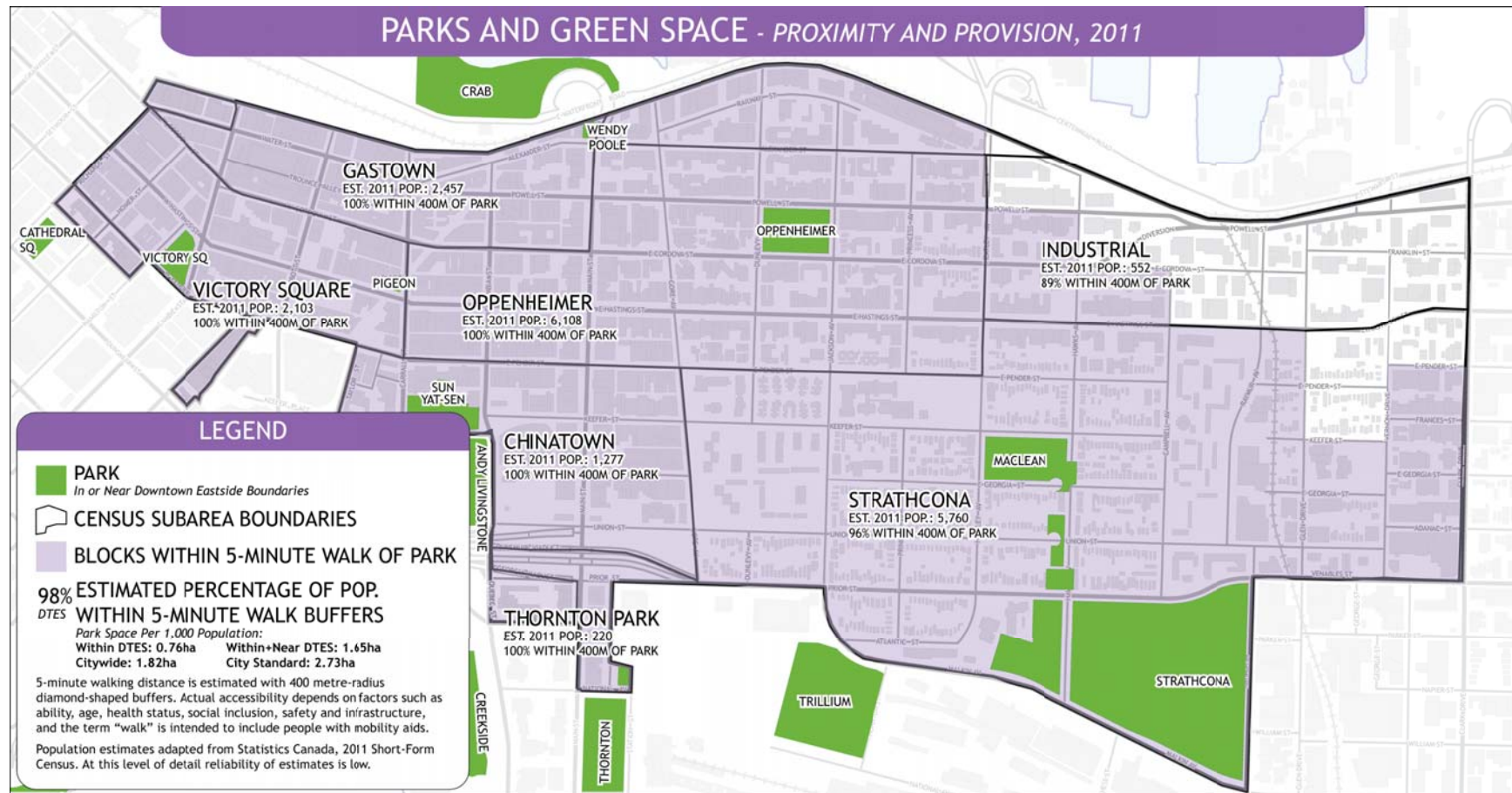
Except for Strathcona, the Downtown Eastside has many multifamily buildings and little yard space. Parks and green spaces in the Downtown Eastside are shared—and sometimes contested—spaces for many different community groups. CRAB Park, created through community organizing, exemplifies the importance of accessible natural spaces to this community.

Opportunities to spend time in natural areas are often constrained by a lack of resources and time low income people experience. Some programs have developed to provide Downtown Eastside residents with the opportunity to spend time in nature. Organizations such as the Carnegie Centre offer programs for seniors and low income residents to go on camping trips and day trips.



Parks

There are five major parks within Downtown Eastside boundaries, consisting of 14.09 ha; another 16.45 ha are in parks adjacent to it.⁴⁸ This amounts to 1.65 ha of park space per 1,000 residents, less than citywide and significantly less than City standards. Most residents live near a park or green space, but access may be constrained by barriers such as railway tracks and heavily trafficked major roads in parts of the neighbourhood.



⁴⁸ Adjacent parks include CRAB Park, Trillium Park, Thornton Park, Creekside Park, Andy Livingstone Park and Cathedral Square.

1.12 Being Active

The central core of the Downtown Eastside in the Oppenheimer District (DEOD) has little space for relaxation and active recreation, apart from Oppenheimer Park. Community centres and social agencies provide vital gathering and recreation space for residents of the Downtown Eastside to socialize and play.

Recreation and Gathering Space

The map below presents a selection of community-identified recreation and gathering spaces, as compiled for the Carnegie Centre's Downtown Eastside resource guide.

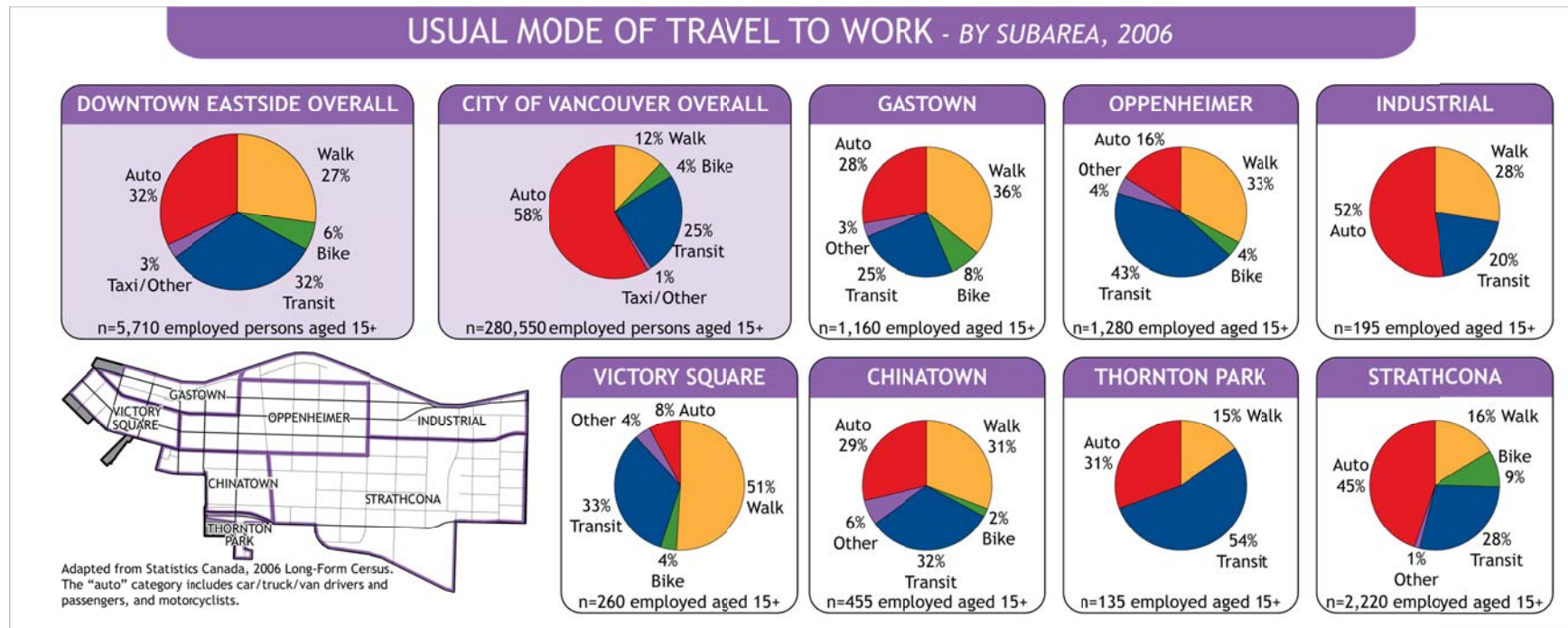


1.13 Getting Around

Residents in the Downtown Eastside commute more frequently by walking, biking or transit, compared to citywide averages. While work trips offer only a limited picture of mobility,⁴⁹ given the low labour force participation in the Downtown Eastside, high use of walking, cycling and transit is supported by other indicators: Adanac is among the city's busiest bikeways; transit service levels and ridership are high, particularly on Hastings Street; and many day-to-day trips are made by walking.

The Downtown Eastside's central location allows for convenient walking, cycling and transit trips to work. However, for low income people, transportation options may be constrained by income.

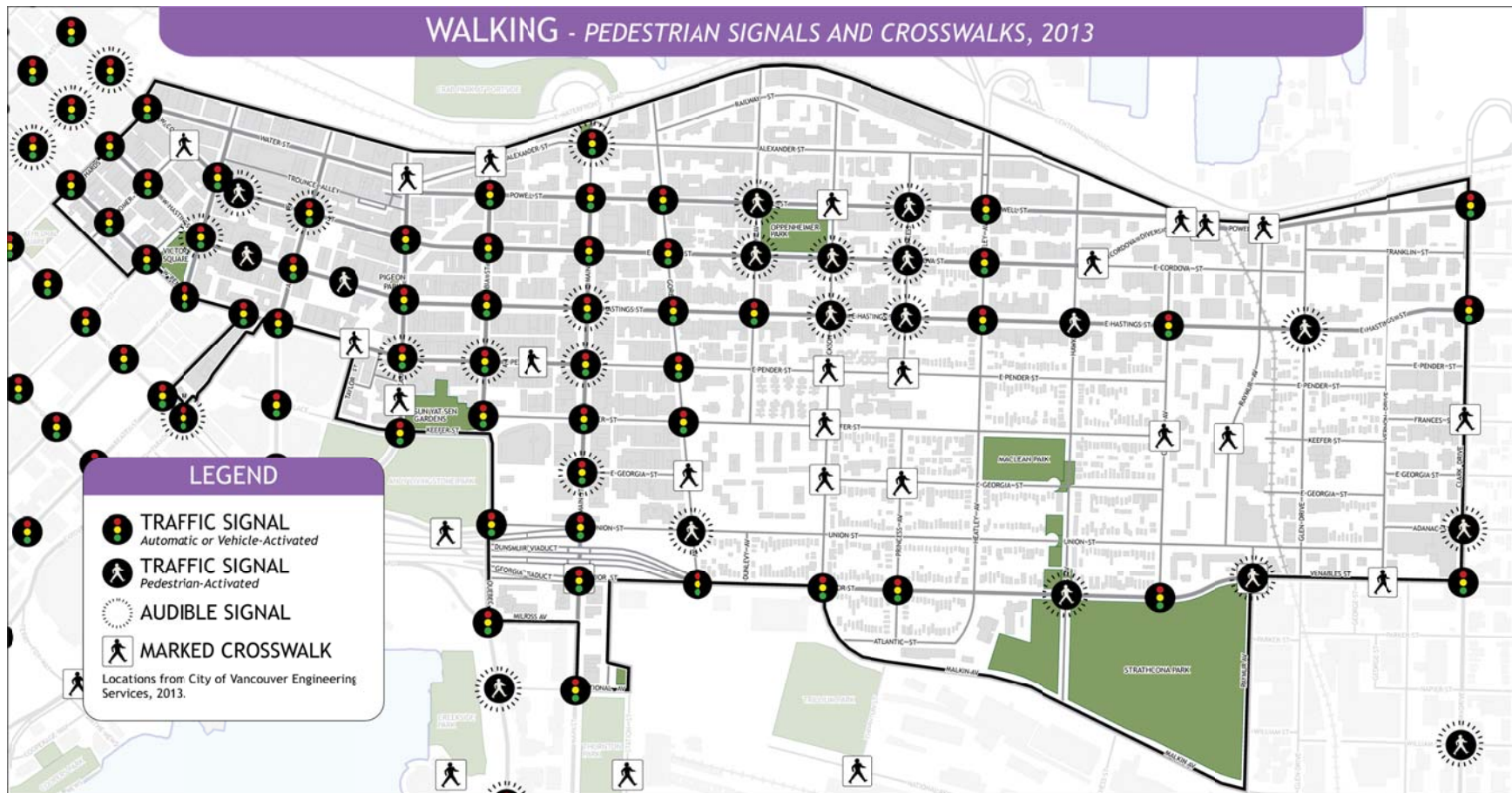
Journey to Work



⁴⁹Census information on modes of travel is only asked for commute to work trips. While Translink collects information on all trips through regular trip diary surveys, neighbourhood-level data are not available.

Walking

Studies in 2009⁵⁰ and 2012⁵¹ have found that a disproportionate number of pedestrian injuries take place in the Downtown Eastside. The Downtown Eastside is home to a large number of particularly vulnerable road users with special safety needs. Actions taken to improve safety include establishing a 30 kilometres per hour zone along Hastings Street from Jackson to Abbott; increasing pedestrian walk times at intersections; adding midblock signals; and installing countdown crosswalk signals.



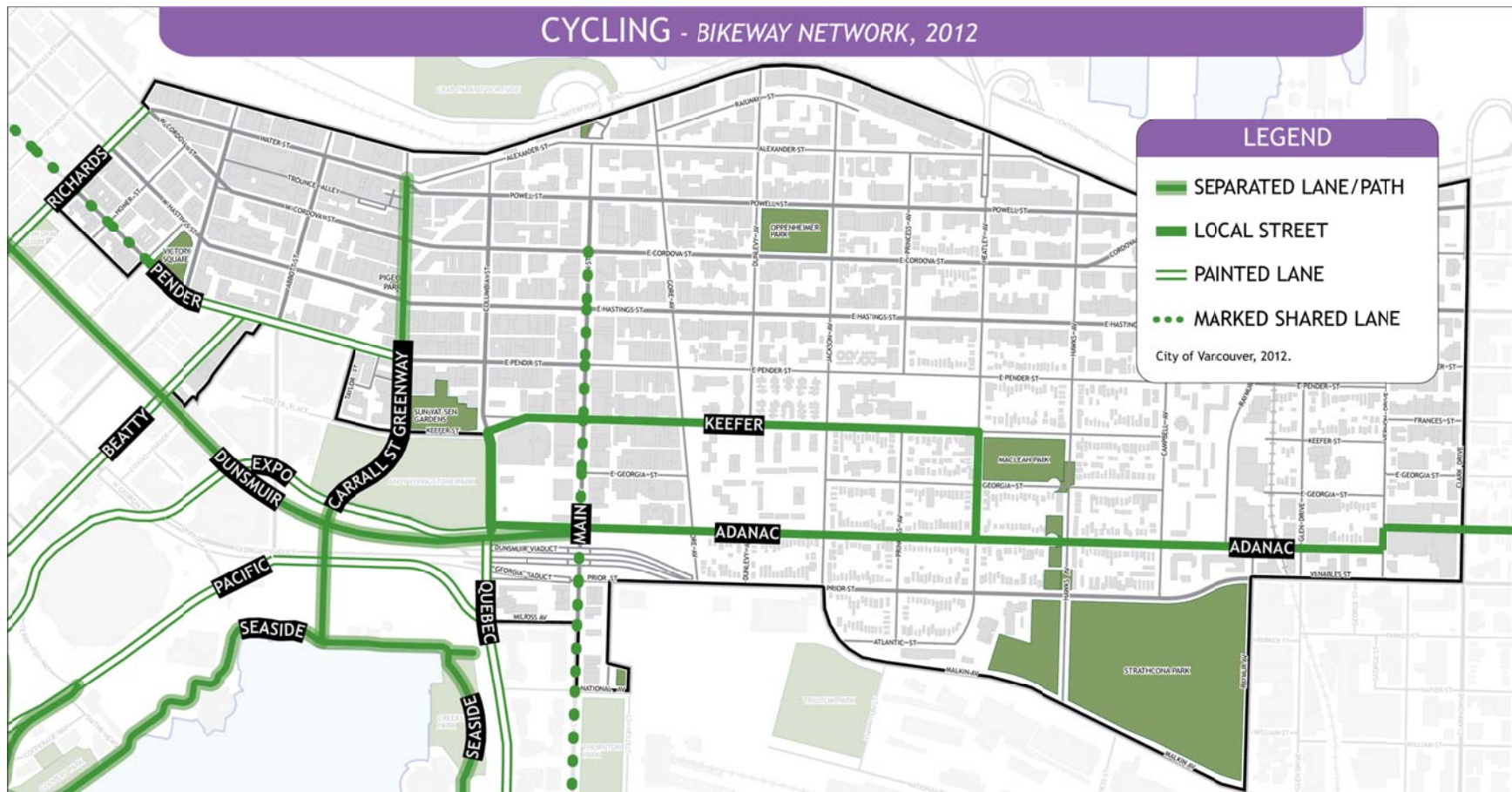
⁵⁰ Schuurman, N., et al. Pedestrian injury and the built environment: an environmental scan of hotspots. 2009. BMC Public Health, 9:233.

⁵¹ City of Vancouver, Pedestrian Safety Study, 2012.

Cycling

While bike ridership is relatively high in the DTES, there are major gaps in the bike network. In particular, the area has limited east-west connections. Furthermore, many of the existing routes only feel safe for riders who are confident riding in traffic. The map below illustrates current bikeways and greenways in the Downtown Eastside. Future additions may include:

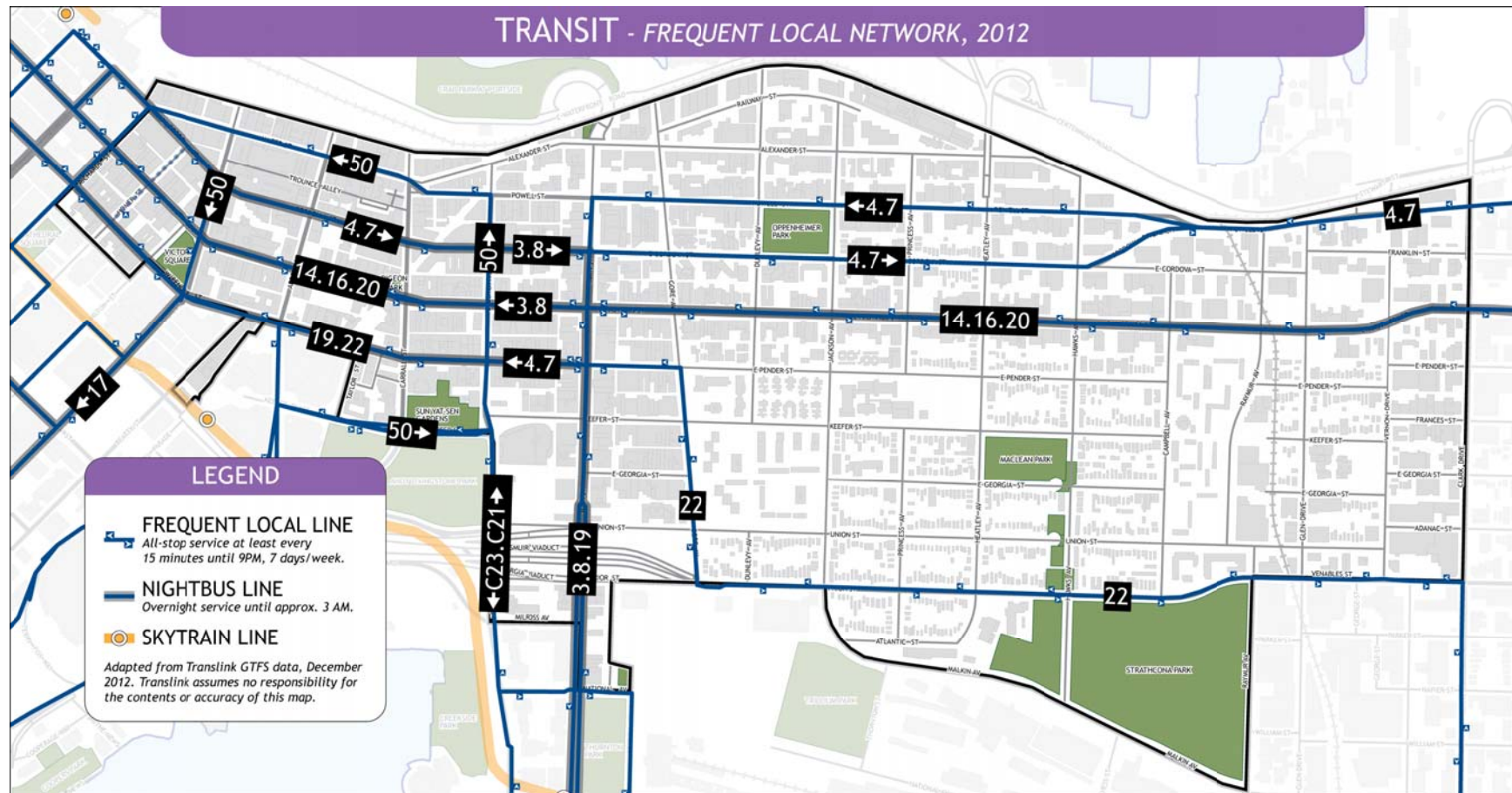
- Upgrades to bike infrastructure on Expo Boulevard and Union Street between Gore Avenue and Carrall Street is being considered by City Council in summer 2013, pending further consultation with neighbouring residents and businesses.
- In conjunction with the Powell Street overpass project, a new bike connection will be developed along Alexander and Powell Streets, addressing a gap in east-west bike routes through the northern portion of the Downtown Eastside.



Local Transit

The map below illustrates frequent local (all-stop) transit lines operating in the Downtown Eastside. These services provide all-day access to destinations along major Downtown Eastside corridors such as Hastings Street and Main Street, and connections to regional services. Hastings Street is identified as a future rapid transit corridor.

Additional transit lines operating in the Downtown Eastside include the 135 limited stop service along Hastings Street, and suburban express services to the North Shore, Port Moody, Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam. The West Coast Express commuter train operates on the railway tracks at the north edge of the Downtown Eastside next to Burrard Inlet.



Commercial Transportation

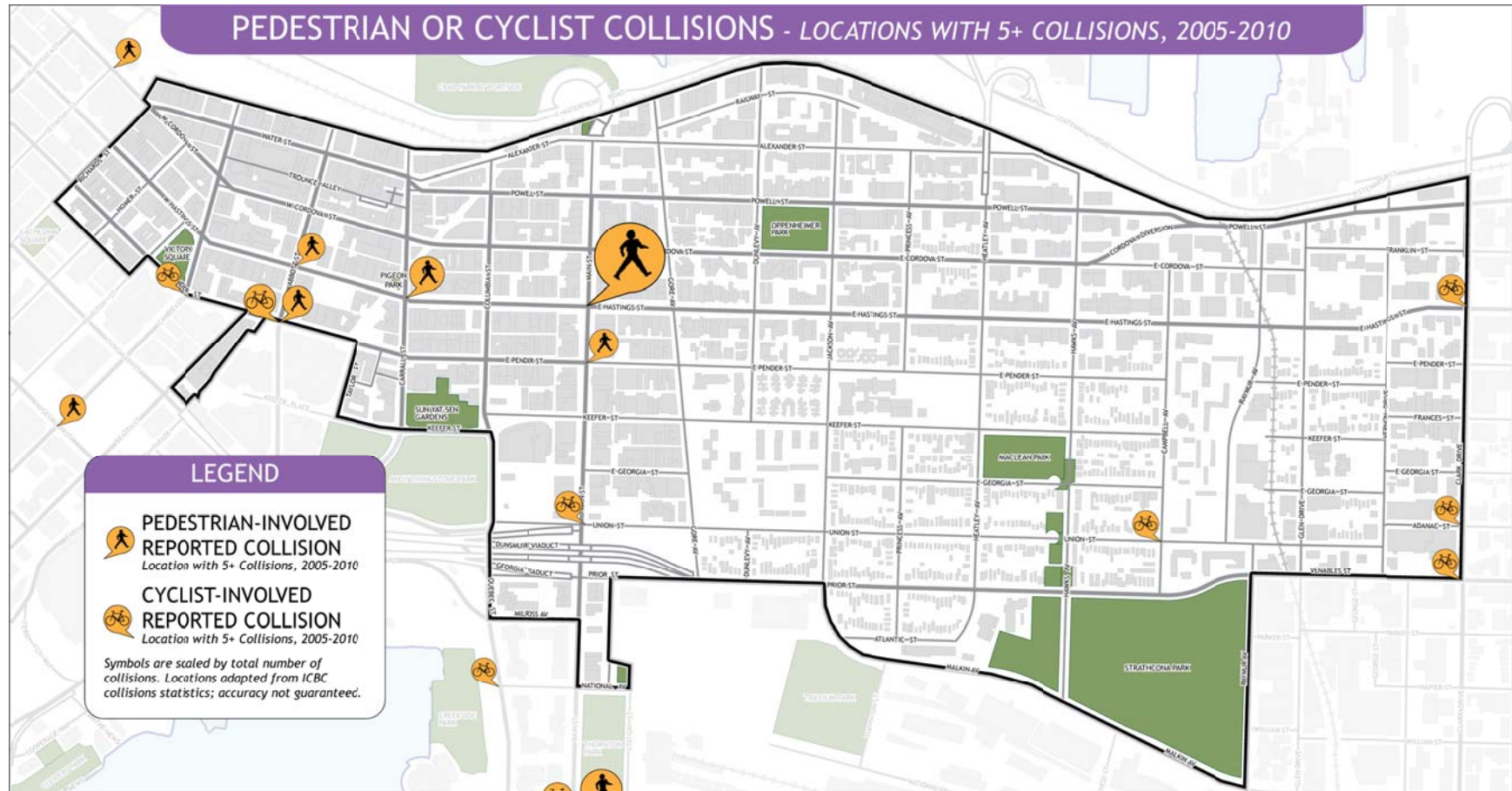
A significant transport asset and opportunity for Downtown Eastside is the adjacent port, which is linked by rail to the waterfront and through the Downtown Eastside by a north/south rail corridor route through Strathcona. The False Creek flats rail yards, industrial area and station provide additional transport advantages to businesses and industry in this area of the city. Road access to the port is achieved through Downtown Eastside along Heatley Avenue. As a result the Downtown Eastside has a relatively high connectivity to global markets and other regional economic opportunities.

Areas of Concern

The Downtown Eastside has a significant proportion of wheelchair users and residents dependent on walkers and different forms of mobility assistance. Uneven sidewalks, high curbs lacking ramps, and wide streets with limited crossing times make a challenging environment for people relying on mobility aids. The relative lack of on-street bike facilities can sometimes result in more people cycling or skateboarding on the sidewalk, leading to increased conflicts with pedestrians.

Pedestrian and Cyclist Collisions

The Downtown Eastside has intersections that are areas of concern for pedestrians and cyclists. The map below illustrates locations with five or more pedestrian- or cyclist-involved collisions from 2005 to 2010.



2. Toward Healthy Communities

The Downtown Eastside is a neighbourhood of diverse communities that tells a story of compassion, tolerance, activism and hope for the future. Residents value its rich cultural and community heritage, strong social networks, acceptance of diversity and strong sense of community. Building, maintaining and supporting inclusion, belonging and connectedness is critical for well-being. Preserving the uniqueness of the Downtown Eastside, while addressing major social issues, is a central challenge for planning in this community.

2.1 In the Neighbourhood

A 2012 Vancouver Foundation report found that social connectedness and engagement is low in Vancouver. Their findings showed high levels of loneliness; one in four people indicated they are alone more often than they would like and a third of people found it hard to make friends.⁵² The Downtown Eastside provides a slight contrast; many people reported during the Social Impact Assessment, described in section 3.4, that they had a strong sense of community in their neighbourhood.

As discussed in section 1.8, many people live alone, and many of those residents live in small SROs. Bars, restaurants, community centres and parks are often seen as major assets for gathering and social interaction. Pigeon and Oppenheimer Parks in particular are highly valued by residents, and are often described as the living rooms of the Downtown Eastside. Social service agencies also offer gathering spaces for vulnerable residents.

With the influx of new residents, many low income people are feeling their sense of community eroding. There is particular concern about discrimination towards low income people and decreased affordability.⁵³ For others, the neighbourhood changes are welcomed, and bring with them increased sense of safety and improvements to the built environment.

⁵² Vancouver Foundation. Connections and Engagement. A survey of metro Vancouver. June 2012.

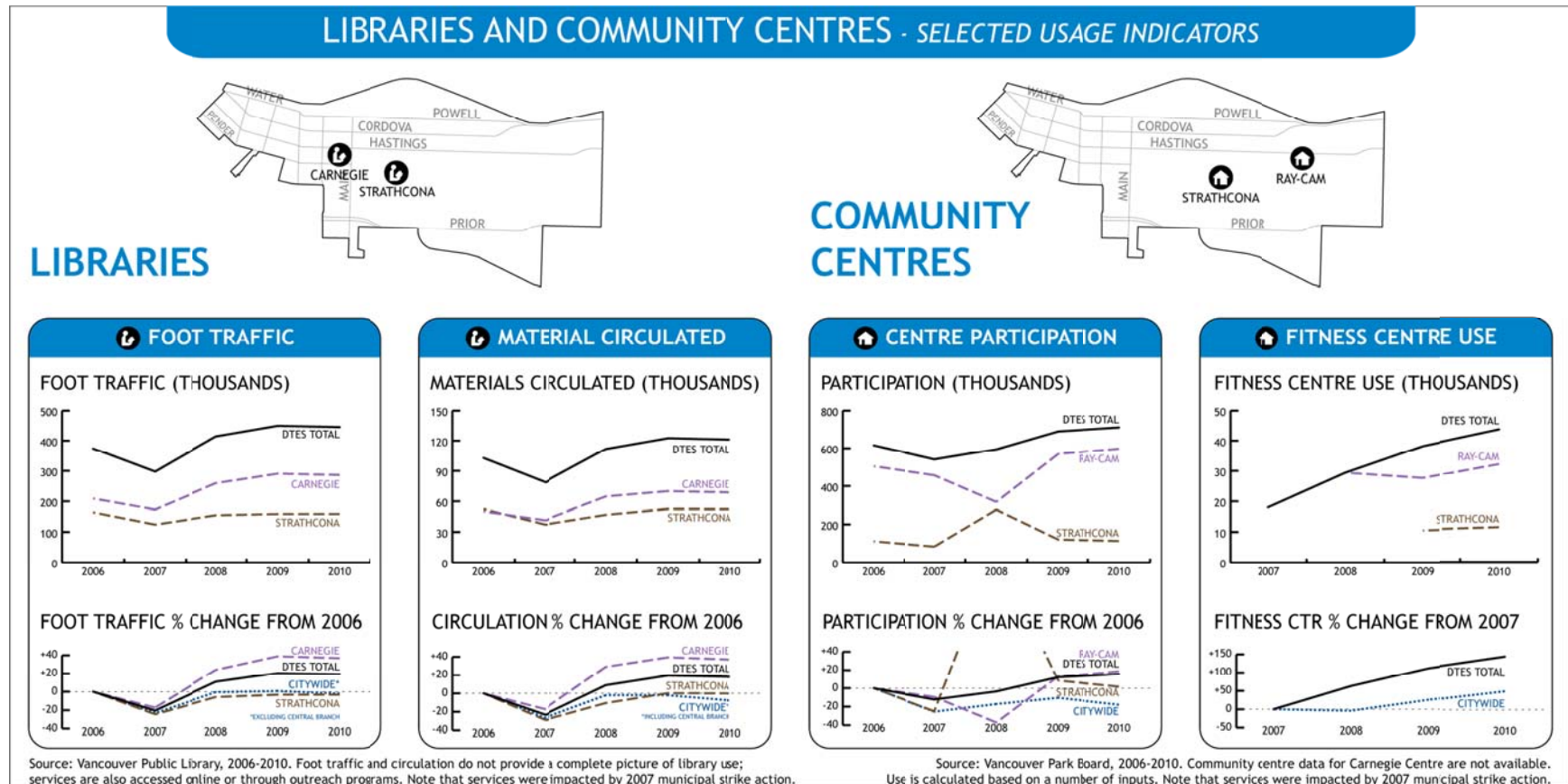
⁵³ Result of Social Impact Assessment. See section 3.4.

2.2 Out and About

Schools, workplaces and community organizations play important roles in social interaction and increasing sense of belonging. These places also support health and well-being, volunteering, community building, local organizations, clubs and sports.

Library and Community Centre Use

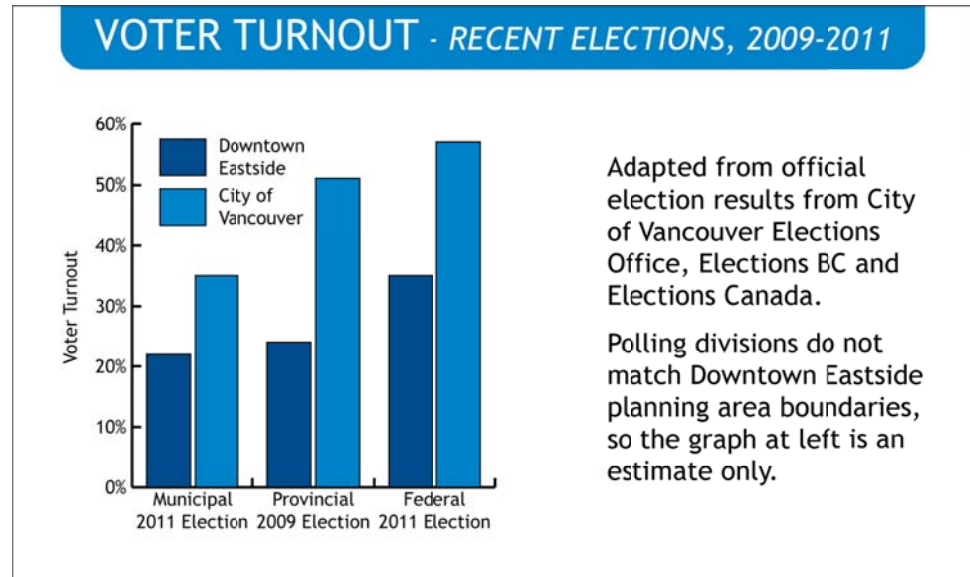
The use of Downtown Eastside libraries and community centres has increased, even as city-wide use has fallen. These facilities are important gathering spaces for Downtown Eastside residents, in addition to offering recreation and learning programming.



2.3 Across the City

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 four years⁵⁴. In all elections, voter turnout has been significantly lower in the Downtown Eastside than Vancouver as a whole.

In an attempt to increase voter turnout in the Downtown Eastside, many programs seek to register voters who face barriers to voting. The Carnegie centre runs voter engagement programming to register and support people in advance polls or on Election Day. Often this involves coordinating witnesses, either service providers or friends, in lieu of providing proof of address.



⁵⁴ At the time of this writing, poll-by-poll voter turnout data for the 2013 provincial election is not yet available.

3. Toward Healthy Environments

The health of people, place and the planet are inextricably linked. To achieve a healthy city requires a built environment that is vibrant and welcoming, and facilitates easy access to services and retail. A sustainable natural environment ensures clean air and water, but also access to nature. A thriving economic environment develops local employment opportunities. A vibrant social environment provides accessible and shared spaces where we can meet, learn, collaborate, access services, relax and enjoy.

Neighbourhood Change

The Downtown Eastside is changing, and these changes affect the social, economic and built environment of the Downtown Eastside. This is of particular concern for the many vulnerable people living in the Downtown Eastside who are socially and economically marginalized. Any large and rapid changes occurring in the neighbourhood place pressure on vulnerable residents through rising rental rates, displacement as renovations of older buildings take place, the closure of the few remaining affordable businesses, and the accompanying feelings and perceptions of exclusion from a gentrifying landscape. The City of Vancouver's philosophy in the Downtown Eastside has been "revitalization without displacement"—meaning that the existing low income residents will be a stable part of a future community that will also include people with diverse social and economic backgrounds.

"Revitalization without displacement" is proving to be a challenging philosophy to achieve amidst the current land use changes taking place. Several factors serve as evidence that the Downtown Eastside is experiencing growth and change and will probably continue to do so in the future:

1. **Population growth** in the Downtown Eastside as a whole (12 per cent) between 2001 and 2011 was slightly faster compared to the city at large (10 per cent). The Development Capacity model of the Downtown Eastside estimates a growth of approximately 7,000 people by 2041 based on current rates of development and land use constraints, such as the availability of suitable redevelopment properties, the Rate of Change Policy for Rental Housing, etc.⁵⁵
2. The high level of **accessibility to transit services** and proximity to the Downtown core is attractive to new emerging business ventures and developers seeking to meet the demand for affordable commercial premises and middle to upper income accommodation near the core of the city.
3. The neighbouring **downtown peninsula** has been the focus of major residential development over the last decade. Some of this has occurred within the Downtown Eastside through renovation of older buildings and some in new neighbourhoods nearby. There has been a mix of market and non-market housing, with most being market units.
4. Analysis of the distribution of **vacant and underdeveloped properties** reveals there is capacity in the Downtown Eastside for **additional development** at even moderate levels without affecting heritage buildings or existing tall structures.

⁵⁵ City of Vancouver. Research and Data Services. 2012.

There is estimated to be potential to accommodate from 6,000 to 10,000 additional units on vacant or 1 to 2 storey developed sites.⁵⁶

5. 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 Downtown Eastside including Pender, Hastings, Powell, Abbott and Carrall Streets. New commercial activities and retail outlets are being seen in the western sector resulting in less vacant storefronts along Hastings, Pender and Keefer streets.⁵⁷
6. In spite of the slight decrease in the number of vacant storefronts, rising rents and expenses are seen to be threats to business occupancy.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ City of Vancouver. Research and Data Services. 2012.

⁵⁷ City of Vancouver. Research and Data Services. 2012.

⁵⁸ Social Impact Assessment, 2012. City of Vancouver. No quantitative data on business displacement is available.

3.1 A Thriving Economic Environment

The Downtown Eastside has seen a significant transformation in its economy over 125 years since the days of early settlement by immigrants. From the trading summer camps of the Coast Salish Nation to a harbour, railway line, sawmill, steelworks, hotels, boarding houses, retail, commercial and industrial development. Following the pattern of many major central business districts and the adjacent precincts, Downtown Eastside is undergoing change with older buildings becoming uneconomic for their current uses, leading to renovation or demolition and replacement with new structures to accommodate new uses and residents.

The Downtown Eastside is considered geographically well positioned to access other markets in the Lower Mainland because of the Hastings Street corridor, Skytrain lines, rail, port and bus facilities. Added to high accessibility, the heritage character provides the opportunity to promote tourism, retail products and services. Lastly there is a diversity of land uses and building types which provides a mixture of business and employment opportunities. There is the industrial zone, tourist areas of Chinatown and Gastown, and mixed commercial and office space along the Hastings corridor.

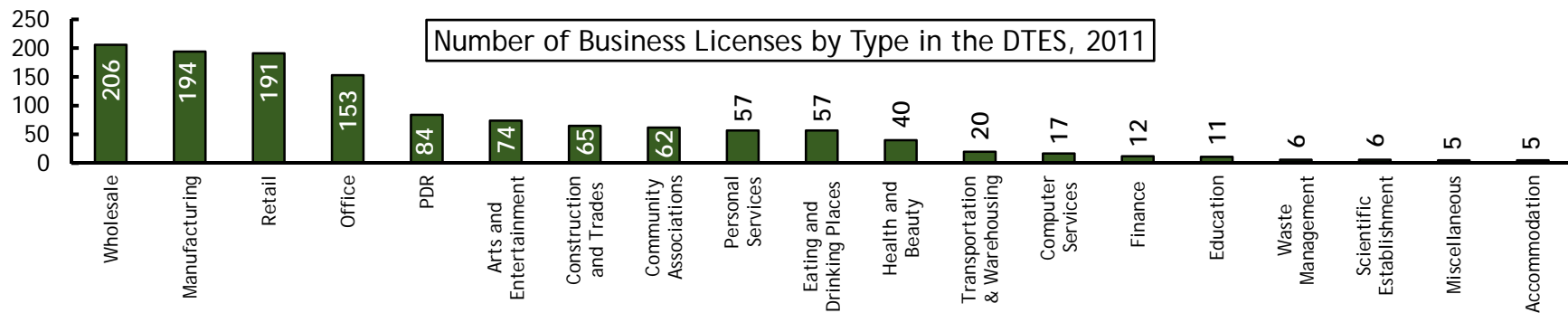
Key Economic Sectors

The Downtown Eastside has a long history of manufacturing and wholesaling, and there has been recent growth in the digital creative industry and in green jobs. There are approximately 2,800 businesses and an estimated 19,500 employees working in the Downtown Eastside; the most prevalent Downtown Eastside businesses are professional, scientific and technical services; administrative support, waste management and remediation and retail.⁵⁹ Additionally, there is a large cluster of non-profit service agencies,⁶⁰ some of which support social enterprises linked to low threshold jobs. The chart on the next page provides a breakdown of the types of businesses licensed by the City of Vancouver in the Downtown Eastside as of 2011.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Vancouver Economic Commission compared the statistics generated by a 2002 study by Messrs Ference Weicker to the Dun and Bradstreet Hoover's database in 2012.

⁶⁰ The 2008 BC211 Redbook directory listed an estimated 174 social services in the Downtown Eastside. More recent BC211 data are not available.

⁶¹ It should be noted that a total of 1,254 businesses were licensed compared to the estimated 2,800 businesses found to be operating in the area in 2012 according to the Dun and Bradstreet data. The differences in data could relate to different classifications or definitions of businesses which may be clustered in the same address and licensed under single names, rather than individually. In addition, it is believed there are businesses trading without licenses in certain areas, either in homes and warehouse/factory style buildings.



On a more granular level, the top five lines of businesses in the Downtown Eastside in 2012 are: business services, eating places, legal services, business consulting and grocery stores.⁶²

Change in Economic Sectors

Between 2012 and 2002, there has been little change in the number of employees in Downtown Eastside, and an increase in number of businesses. Details of the implications drawn from the comparison between 2002 and 2012 included:⁶³

- The biggest decreases in business type were retail and wholesale.
- The biggest decreases in employees were wholesale, retail and manufacturing.
- The biggest increases in business type were business services and professional services.
- The biggest increases in employees were professional services, finance and insurance services.

⁶² Dun and Bradstreet, 2012.

⁶³ Vancouver Economic Commission (2012) and Messrs Ference Weicker (2002).

Economic Development

A 2002 study reviewed the opportunities for economic development in the Downtown Eastside.⁶⁴ The study 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
- Social enterprise

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.

More recently, there are signs of growing interest in the DTES by investors and developers. New commercial activities and retail outlets are being seen in the western sector resulting in less vacant storefronts along Hastings, Pender and Keefer Streets. Enquiries are being made about the possibility of new or renovated premises being created in older buildings.

⁶⁴ Study was commissioned through the Vancouver Agreement and conducted by Messrs Ference Weicker, commissioned by Vancouver Economic Commission.

*Obstacles to Economic Development*⁶⁵

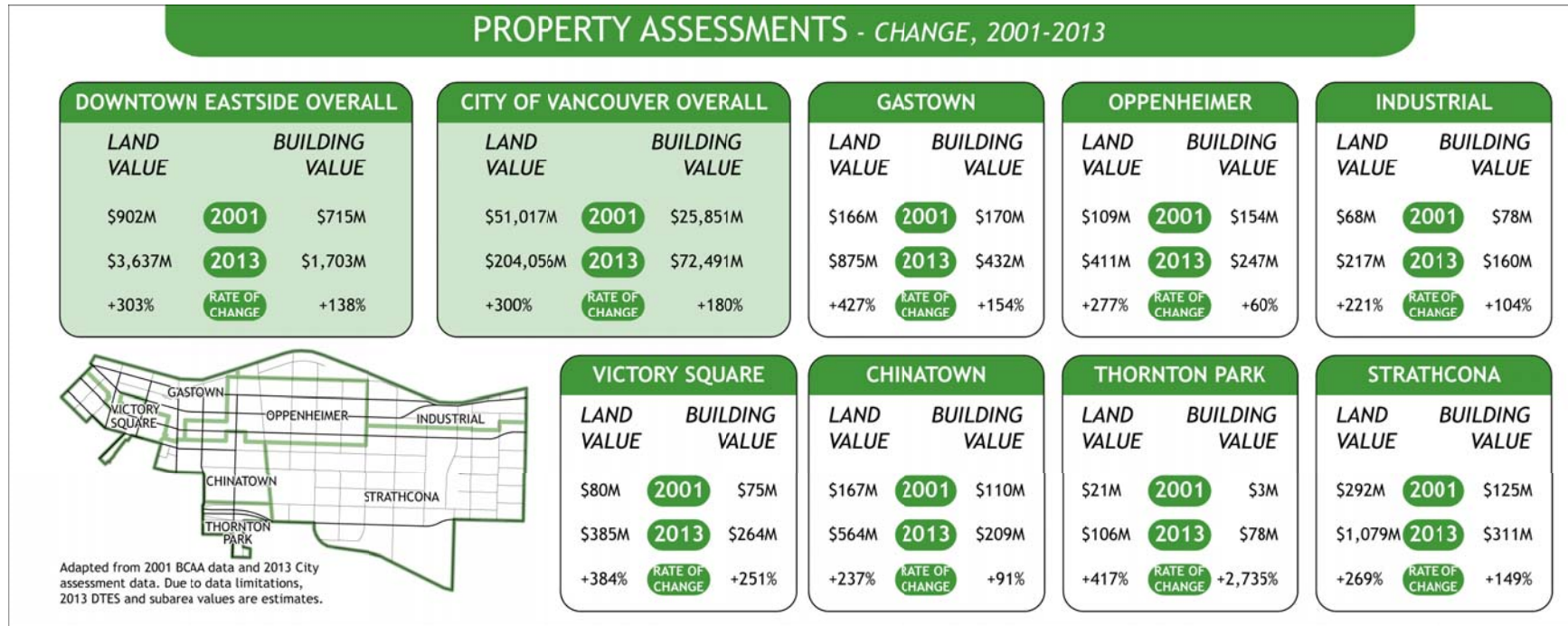
- **Safety and Security Concerns**
Business, visitors and residents say safety and security concerns are major obstacles to economic development.
- **High Cost of Upgrading Buildings**
The cost of renovating older buildings to modern standards and the low market rents received in return, has reduced investment in Downtown Eastside properties.
- **High Vacancy Rates**
High commercial vacancies contribute to economic decline. Many vacant buildings do not meet occupancy standards and are not actively marketed.
- **Small Local Market**
Unemployment, low incomes and a small residential base limits the local market.
- **Physical Separation**
Deteriorating links between Downtown Eastside neighbourhoods as well as with adjacent parts of the city means less business and little strategic cooperation.
- **Rent and Property Costs**
Increasing assessment values contribute to rising rents and property costs for business owners.

The Vancouver Economic Commission is conducting a 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 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 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.

⁶⁵ Adapted from Vancouver Agreement, Economic Revitalization Plan, 2004, with information on rent and property costs added by Downtown Eastside Planning Team, 2013.

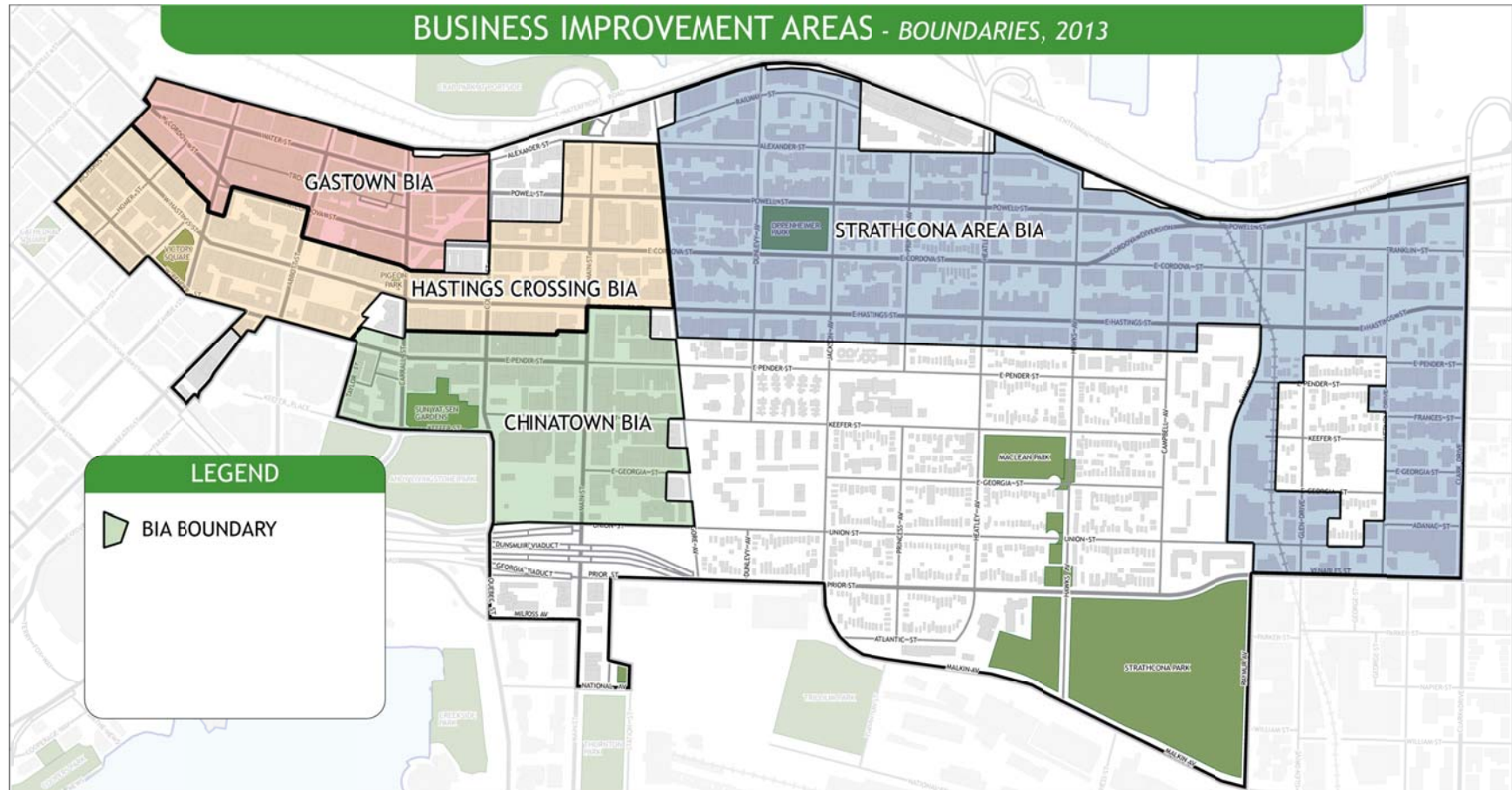
Change in Property Values

The map below estimates change in property and building values from 2001 to 2013, based on assessment data. While land in the Downtown Eastside has increased in value at a similar rate to the city as a whole, building values have not increased at the same rate.



Business Improvement Associations

There are four Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) in the Downtown Eastside.



3.2 A Sustainable Natural Environment

The Greenest City Action plan is the guiding strategy for Vancouver's sustainability initiatives, some of which may influence the future sustainability and economic growth of the Downtown Eastside. The Downtown Eastside is a possible location for a green enterprise zone, which would include the Downtown Eastside and False Creek Flats with a possible partnership with the Vancouver Port Authority. A green enterprise zone is a designated area with innovative sustainable land use planning and a concentration of green businesses.



At a local level, many organizations in the Downtown Eastside work to further municipal and regional sustainability goals:

- The Strathcona Business Improvement Association has a zero waste challenge.
- SOLEFoods, of United We Can, runs two urban farms in the Downtown Eastside.
- Cycleback provides bicycle repair training to Downtown Eastside residents.
- United We Can, the Recycling Centre, provides informal job opportunities to Downtown Eastside residents. Residents can collect recyclable materials (binning) and exchange them for money.

3.3 A Well-Planned Built Environment

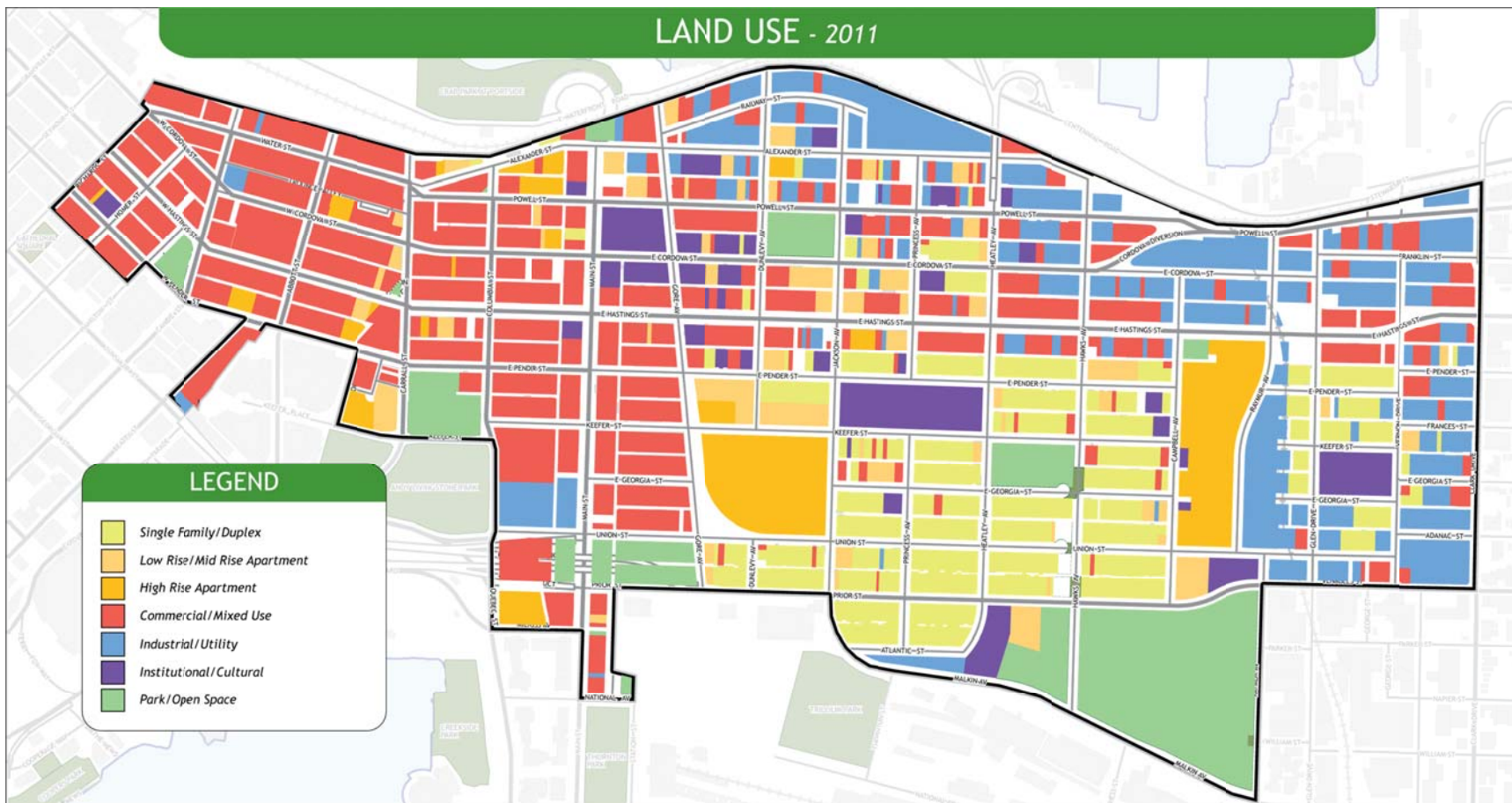
Land Use

In 2012, total land area of Downtown Eastside totalled over 13 million square feet.⁶⁶ The majority of land is used for residential purposes, followed by industrial and commercial. This broad mix of land uses is indicative of the unique character of Downtown Eastside and its diversity, which is not typical of most neighbourhoods in the city.

Land Class Group	Land (sq ft)	Percentage of Total
Residential	5,235,424	38%
Industrial	2,402,374	18%
Commercial	2,507,462	17%
Open Space	940,247	16%
Institutional	2,161,612	7%
Vacant + under construction	519,786	4%
Total	13,766,905	100%

⁶⁶ City of Vancouver. Research and Data Services. 2012.

LAND USE - 2011



Sub-Area Zoning and Allowed Uses

Each of the seven sub-areas in the Downtown Eastside has a distinct character.

District schedules outline allowable heights, densities and use. Floor space ratio (FSR) is used for measuring density—land area to square foot floor area in a building. The DEOD zoning is particularly important to note due to the social housing requirement for residential buildings above 1.0 FSR.

Chinatown

HA-1			
HEIGHT	All sites	50' maximum	Allowable
	Sites with heritage buildings	Relaxable to 75'	Discretionary
FSR	Not specified in Zoning. Maximum achievable affected by Design Guidelines		
HA-1A			
HEIGHT	All sites	90' maximum	Allowable
		120' maximum	Discretionary - Rezoning Policy
	Main St. Sub-Area	150' maximum	Discretionary - Rezoning Policy
	Sites with heritage buildings	Existing height, possible additions	Discretionary
FSR	Not specified in Zoning. Maximum achievable affected by Design Guidelines		

Gastown

HA-2			
HEIGHT	All sites	75' maximum	Allowable
	Sites with heritage buildings	Existing height, possible additions	Discretionary
FSR	Not specified in Zoning. Maximum achievable affected by Design Guidelines		

Industrial Area

M-1 and M-2			
HEIGHT	All sites	Maximum 100'	Allowable
		Greater than 100'	Discretionary
FSR	All uses	Maximum 1.0 FSR	Allowable
	Manufacturing, Wholesale, Transport. & Storage	Maximum 5.0 FSR	Allowable

Oppenheimer

Downtown Eastside Oppenheimer District (DEOD) - Sub-area 1, Main+ Hastings (DEOD ODP)			
HEIGHT	All Sites	98' Maximum	Discretionary
		Greater than 98'	Discretionary
FSR	All uses	Maximum 1.0 FSR	Discretionary
	Above 1.0 FSR	Maximum 5.0 FSR with 20% social housing; residential and/or live-work not to exceed 3.0 FSR	Discretionary
	Above 1.0 FSR	Maximum 2.5 FSR with 20% social housing	Discretionary
Downtown Eastside Oppenheimer District (DEOD) - All other Sub-areas			
HEIGHT	All Sites	50' Maximum	Discretionary
		Greater than 50'	Discretionary
FSR	All uses	Maximum 1.0 FSR	Discretionary
	Above 1.0 FSR	Maximum 2.5 FSR with 20% social housing	Discretionary

Strathcona

RT-3			
HEIGHT	All Sites	Maximum 35'	Allowable
		Height averaging or below grade	Discretionary
FSR	All uses	Maximum 0.6 FSR	Allowable
	Dwellings	Maximum 0.75 FSR	Discretionary
	Infill	Maximum 0.95 FSR	Discretionary

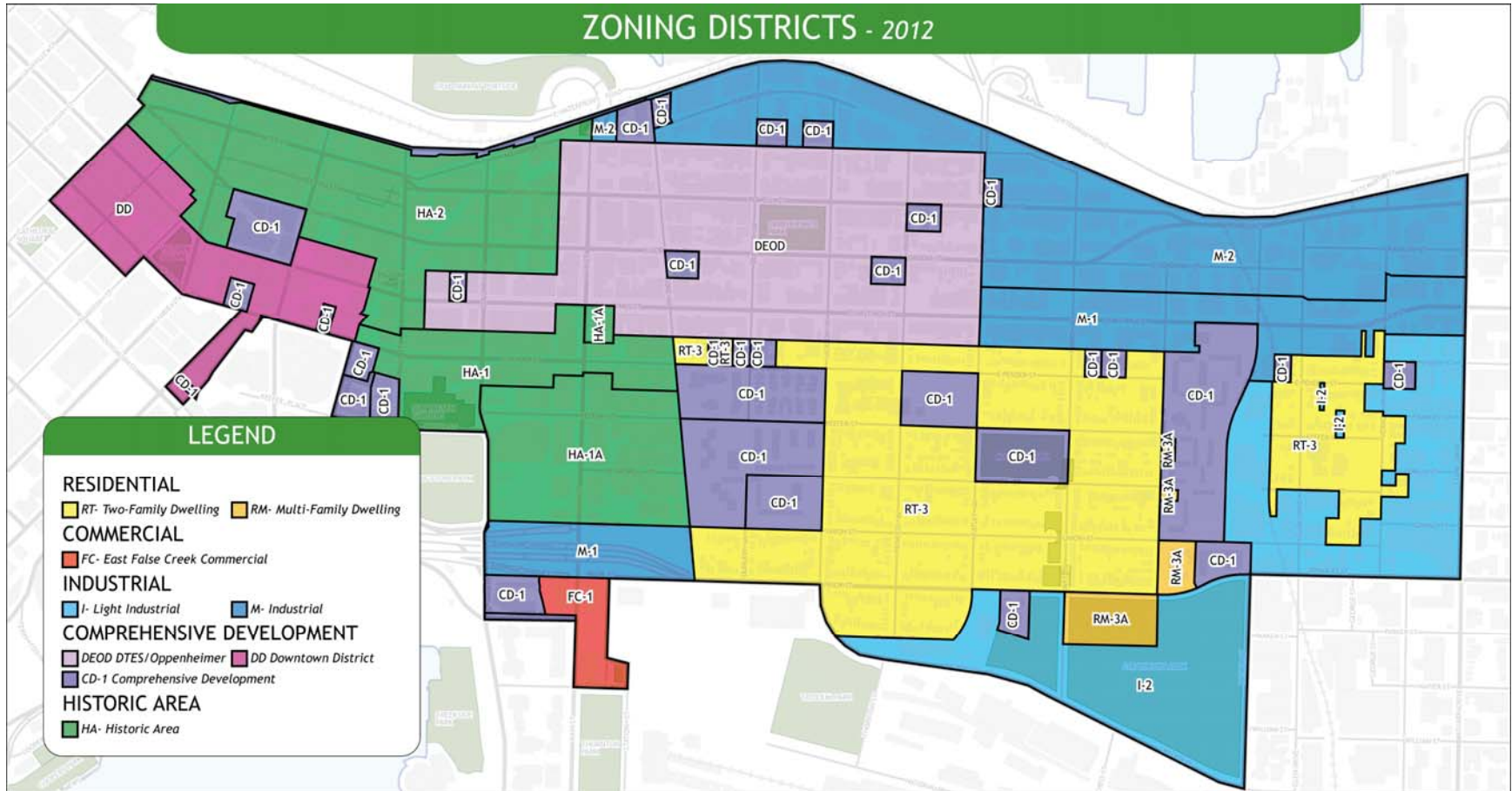
Thornton Park

FC-1			
HEIGHT	All Sites	Maximum 50'	Allowable
		Maximum 275'	Discretionary
FSR	All uses - a variety of combinations	Up to 5.0 FSR	Allowable

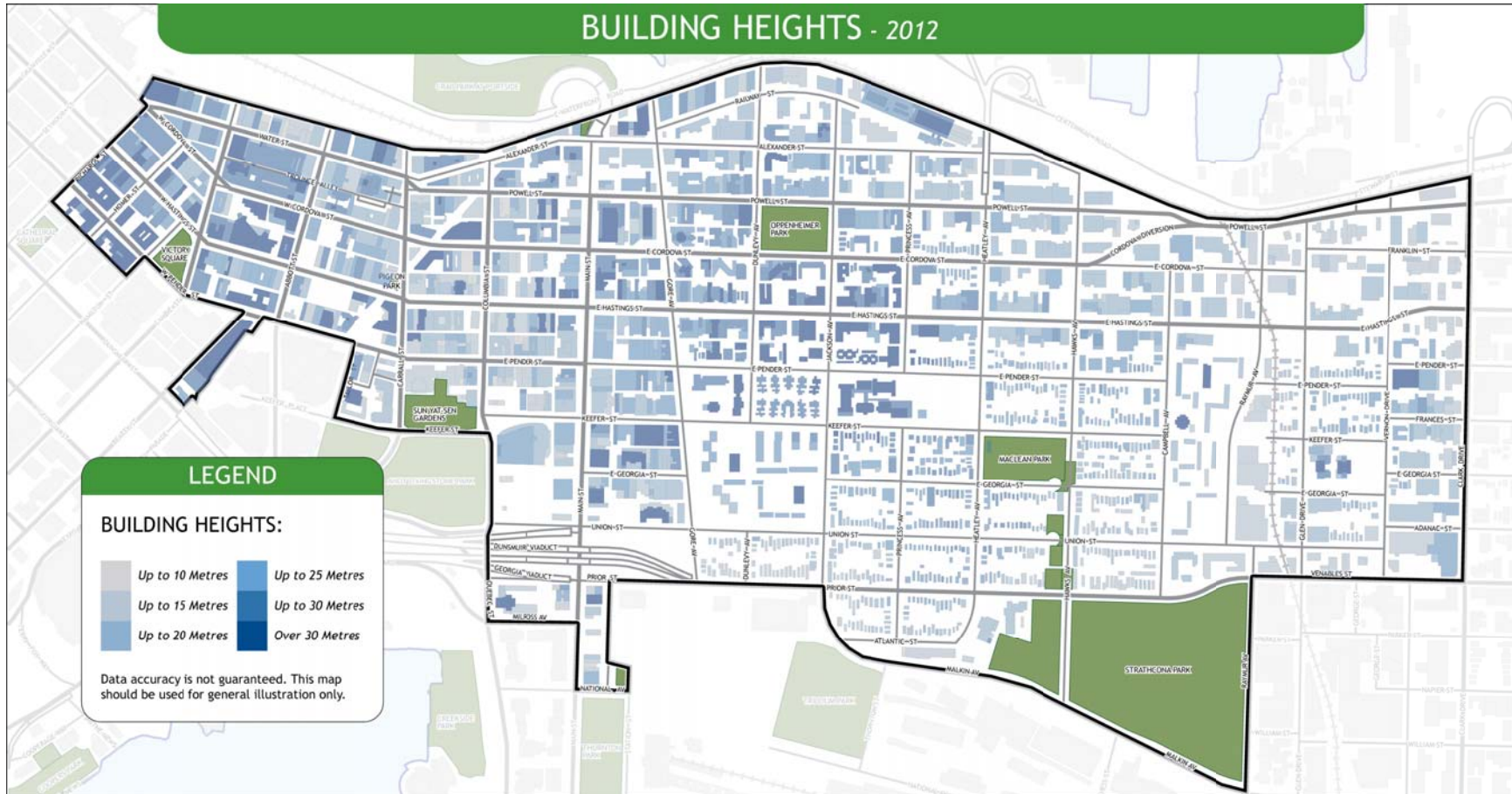
Victory Square

Downtown District (DD) - Sub-area C2 (Downtown District Official Development Plan)			
HEIGHT	All sites	70' maximum	Discretionary
	Social housing development	100' maximum	Discretionary
	Market housing development with social housing on site	100' maximum	Discretionary
	Sites with heritage buildings	Existing height, possible additions	Discretionary
FSR	All sites	5.0 FSR overall (3.0 FSR for residential and/or live/work)	Discretionary
	Development with 2/3 social housing	5.0 residential (except where retail continuity is required at grade)	Discretionary

ZONING DISTRICTS - 2012



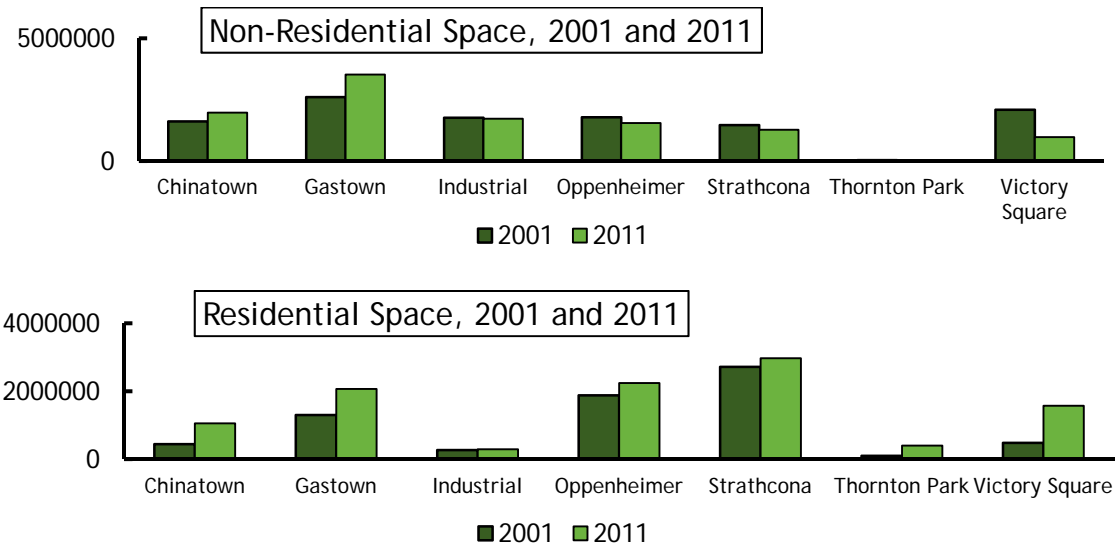
Building Heights



Building Floor Space

The building floor space in the Downtown Eastside amounted to approximately 20 million square feet in 2012, with the major floor space allocated to commercial floor space (11 million square feet) followed by residential floor space (9 million square feet).⁶⁷

Commercial floor space has increased in Chinatown and Gastown, and it has decreased in all other sub-areas. Residential floor space has increased in all sub-areas, except for Industrial.



⁶⁷ City of Vancouver. Research and Data Services. 2012.

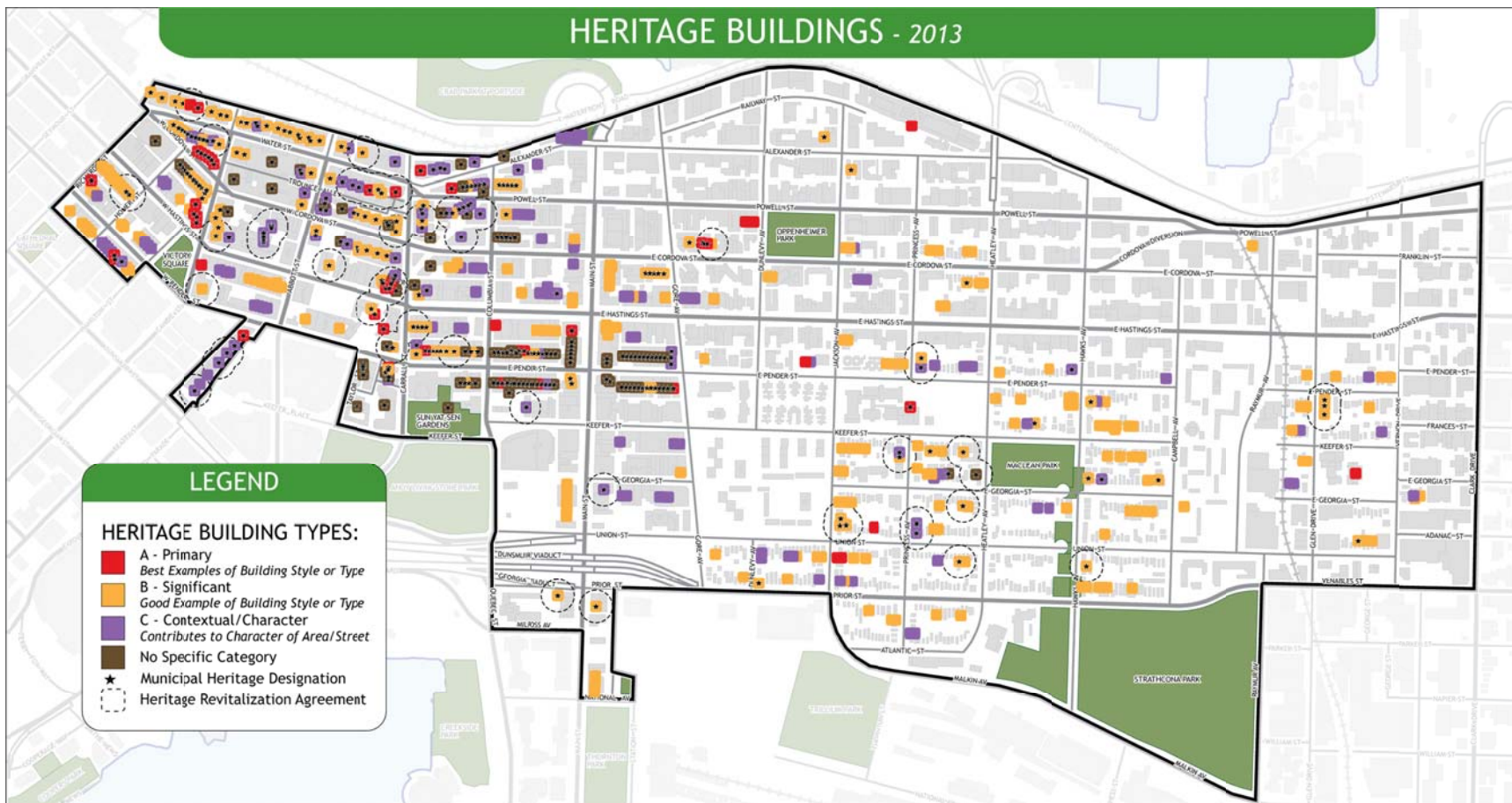
Heritage and Culture

Beyond land use, a built environment that is beautiful and welcoming contributes to our sense of well-being. The Downtown Eastside has a rich cultural heritage, which is reflected in the art (see section 1.10) throughout the neighbourhood, such as the Chinatown Gate and the many murals.

Downtown Eastside is unique being the original summer trading settlement for the Coast Salish Nation on the Burrard Inlet and more recently, the site of early settlement of new immigrant residents which established Gastown, Japantown, Chinatown and Strathcona. Accordingly the heritage assets of Downtown Eastside are believed to be significant, both in terms of the spiritual memories and intangible values to the communities and, the tangible built form of various structures in the area. 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. The heritage properties are depicted on the following map. The high proportion of heritage stock in the area is an enormous asset but could also be regarded as a challenge due to the age and condition of many buildings, which are deteriorating over time.

Associated with this aging building stock is the increased vulnerability of the Downtown Eastside from earthquake events due to the potential for structural failure and possible building collapse. In addition, the low level topography of the Downtown Eastside (particularly in the north south linkage along Carrall Street between Burrard Inlet and False Creek suggests the area is vulnerable to rising water levels due to potential sea level rise, impacting infrastructure and basements over the next thirty years.

HERITAGE BUILDINGS - 2013



3.4 A Vibrant Social Environment

As explored in the **Healthy People** and **Healthy Communities** chapters, many factors contribute to a thriving social environment. For all residents to thrive, they need to have their basic needs met and more. Without improving the lives of the community's most vulnerable residents, it is impossible to have a healthy community *for all*. How our communities connect and communicate is also fundamental. The Downtown Eastside is experiencing major changes in its social fabric as new people move into the new developments and renovated buildings, and as more businesses open in the neighbourhood. This is causing changes in the community, especially felt by vulnerable residents who are most affected by the sense of displacement and discrimination.

A Social Impact Assessment (SIA) is being conducted and its outcomes will be integrated into the Local Area Plan. The SIA will inform the actions and policies of the Local Area Plan to assist with mitigating development impacts on the Downtown Eastside's low income population. In the summer of 2012, workshops were held to explore how the Downtown Eastside low income community is being affected by changes in the neighbourhood. Assets, gaps, hopes and fears were discussed in seven key areas, which align with the local area planning process themes:

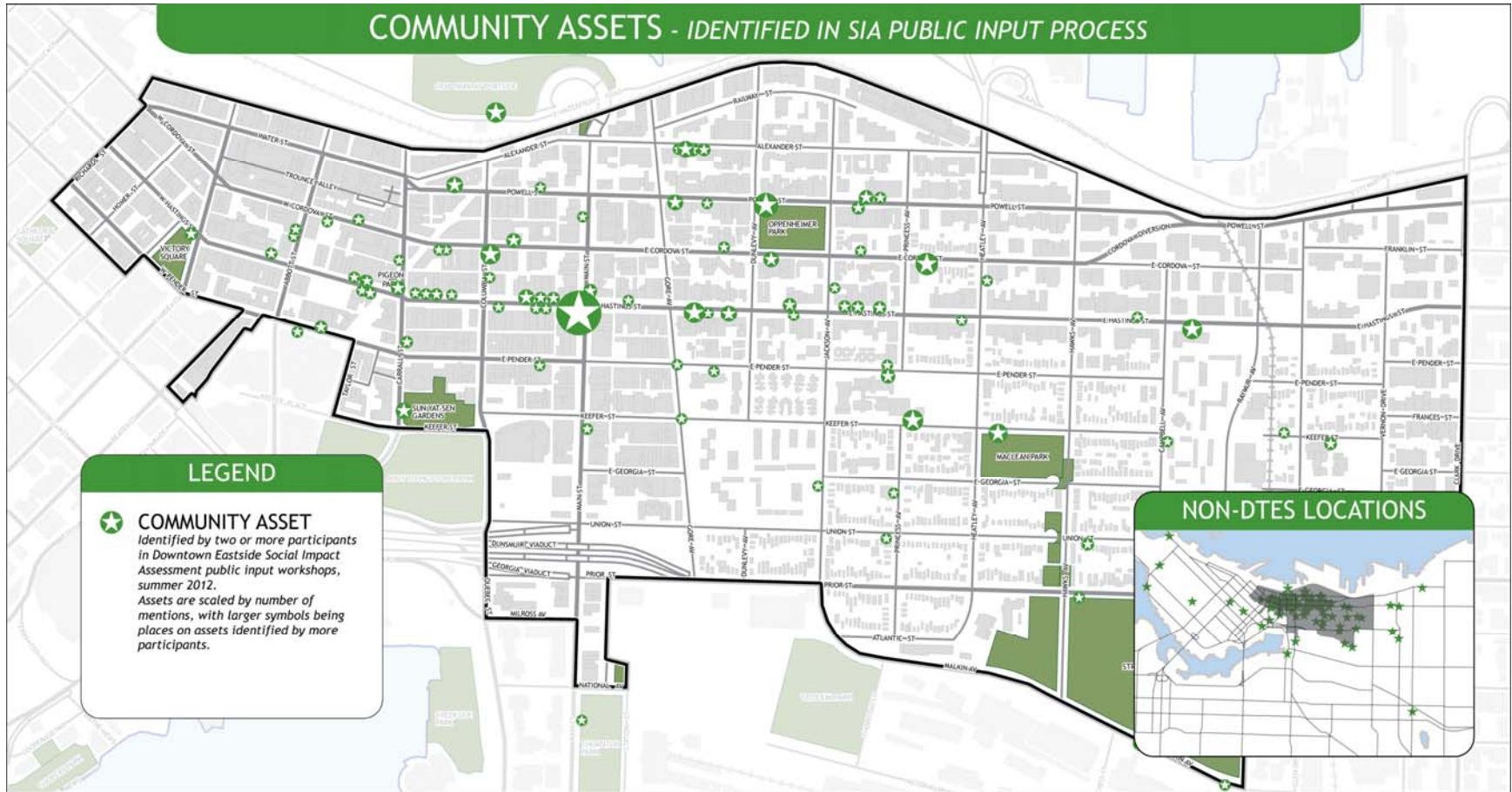
1. Our Homes
2. Our Livelihoods
3. Our Places
4. Our Wellbeing: General
5. Our Wellbeing: Food Access and Security
6. Our Wellbeing: Healthy and Social Services
7. Our Wellbeing: Inclusion, Belonging and Safety

Some of the most frequently mentioned key assets identified by the community include:

- Carnegie Centre
- Openheimer Park
- Home
- Union Gospel Mission
- First United Church
- Strathcona Community Centre
- CRAB Park
- Downtown Eastside Women's Centre
- Ray-Cam Co-operative Centre
- MacLean Park

The map on the next page illustrates these assets and others identified by workshop participants through the public input process.

COMMUNITY ASSETS - IDENTIFIED IN SIA PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS



Appendix A: Vulnerable Populations in the Downtown Eastside

As noted in the introduction to this document, achieving a healthy and equitable city for all peoples in the Downtown Eastside requires dispelling stereotypes about vulnerable populations while at the same time identifying those to whom special attention must be paid. This section outlines some particular areas of concern for members of these communities.

Women

Women aged 15 and over in the Downtown Eastside have a significantly lower labour force participation rate (42 per cent) than both women city-wide (62 per cent) and males in the Downtown Eastside (49 per cent). Despite this, the median annual income of female residents (\$18,601) is slightly higher than male residents (\$17,949), but it is much lower than female median income citywide (\$30,053).

In 2006, there were 460 female-headed lone-parent families in the Downtown Eastside, primarily concentrated in the Oppenheimer and Strathcona sub-areas. Seventeen per cent of all Downtown Eastside census families fall into this category, compared to 13 per cent of families citywide.⁶⁸

Women in the Downtown Eastside face significant health and shelter-related challenges. Though female residents of the Downtown Eastside have a higher life expectancy than male residents (85 vs. 74 years),⁶⁹ a number of distinct health issues have been identified:

- Female injection drug users have a 40 per cent higher incidence of HIV than that of male injection drug users⁷⁰
- Women report higher usage of many health services, such as pharmacies, nursing care, physician care, ambulances, and mental health and outreach services⁷¹
- Women are more likely to report poor treatment by health care staff and greater difficulty keeping health-related appointments⁷²
- Maternal health is a significant concern as the Downtown Eastside has higher rates of stillbirth, infant death, low birth weight, pre-term births, births to mothers under 20 years of age, and births to mothers 35 years of age or older than the provincial averages.⁷³

⁶⁸ Census, 2006.

⁶⁹ BC Ministry of Health, Downtown Eastside Core Health Services Profile, July 2011.

⁷⁰ City of Vancouver Social Planning Department. A Social Profile and Assessment of the Social and Health Needs of Low Income Residents in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, 2004.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ BC Ministry of Health, Downtown Eastside Core Health Services Profile, July 2011.

In a 2008 demographic study of Downtown Eastside SRO and social housing tenants, women were a minority in both types of housing, but were considerably more likely to reside in social housing (44 per cent of respondents) than in SROs (20 per cent of respondents). Female SRO residents are among the most vulnerable populations in the neighbourhood. In the 2008 study, they were much more likely to suffer from a variety of health conditions, declining health and addictions, and to report higher usage of several health services, supervised injection sites, and community centers than male SRO residents and both male and female social housing residents. The top ranked identified needs reported by female SRO residents were housing, health and income, while the top needs reported by female social housing residents were income, health and emotional support.⁷⁵

Though not confined to the Downtown Eastside, the estimated number of women who are homeless has slightly increased in recent years from 333 (22 per cent of City of Vancouver homeless population) in 2010 to 347 (26 per cent) in 2012.⁷⁷ Abuse and family breakdown has been identified as the largest cause of homelessness among women.⁷⁸

Women in the Downtown Eastside may face multiple barriers such as precarious housing, addiction and/or involvement in the sex trade, and are particularly vulnerable to violence and exploitation. Women who are members of other marginalized or vulnerable groups, such as Aboriginal women, may experience intersecting vulnerabilities and multiple forms of marginalization.

Women experience physical, mental, emotional and sexual violence. The missing and murdered women taken from the neighbourhood since the 1980s number more than 60,⁷⁹ and women continue to be particularly vulnerable. The Vancouver Police Department's SisterWatch Project is intended to combat violence against women through coordination, public outreach, a tip line and town hall meetings.⁸⁰

Children and Youth

As a result of the prevalence of low income persons (see section 1.1), child poverty is a significant issue. The proportion of children under six years of age living in low income families in the Downtown Eastside is more than twice that of the City of Vancouver, also discussed in section 1.6. It is well known that children who experience persistent poverty in their early years face higher risks of health problems, developmental delays and behavioural disorders and are also more likely to have low incomes in adulthood.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Downtown Eastside Demographic Study of SRO and Social Housing Tenants, April 2008; VANDU. Me, I'm Living it, 2009.

⁷⁷ City of Vancouver. Vancouver 2012 Homeless Count Results: Presentation to Council, May 29, 2012.

⁷⁸ City of Vancouver Social Planning Department. A Social Profile and Assessment of the Social and Health Needs of Low Income Residents in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, 2004.

⁷⁹ W. T. Oppal. Forsaken, The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry Volume 1, 2012.

⁸⁰ Vancouver Police Department Project Sister Watch website.

⁸¹ An indicator of the challenges children face in the Downtown Eastside is the high proportion of vulnerabilities (measured using the Early Development Instrument) in kindergarten children affecting school readiness seen in section 1.6. SPARC. The Cost of Poverty in BC, 2011.

In addition to young people living with their families or guardians in the Downtown Eastside, there are also youth and young adults living on their own in SROs, supportive housing units and on the streets of the Downtown Eastside. In the 2012 Homeless Count, there were 164 homeless youth under the age of 25 in Vancouver—12 per cent of the total number of people counted.

Seniors

Seniors are a rapidly growing population throughout Vancouver and across Canada. The Downtown Eastside has long been home to a higher than average proportion of adults over the age of 65. In 2006, there were 3,740 seniors in the Downtown Eastside, including nearly 700 aged 85 and over. Altogether, seniors make up about 21 per cent of the population, compared with 13 per cent city-wide.⁸²

Seniors living in the Downtown Eastside face greater levels of poverty than other areas of Vancouver. While seniors' incomes have been increasing on a national level and the percentage of seniors with low incomes has declined sharply,⁸³ well over half of Downtown Eastside seniors remain low income.⁸⁴

Around 1,800 seniors live alone in the Downtown Eastside, and they are more likely to be low income than are seniors living in families.⁸⁵ Seniors aged 65 and over in the Downtown Eastside are more than twice as likely to live alone than seniors living in other parts of the city (55 per cent in the Downtown Eastside vs. 29 per cent city-wide).⁸⁶ These seniors are also more likely to be isolated from their communities and prone to accidents and falls.⁸⁷

Though only a small number of seniors are fully homeless, seniors are especially vulnerable to the risk of homelessness. A high percentage of the seniors who are homeless and seniors who live in SROs report poor health status, including medical conditions, mental illness, physical disabilities and addictions.⁸⁸

Seniors who speak limited or no English face additional challenges to their health and independence, including difficulty accessing translation and culturally-appropriate services.⁸⁹ Within the Downtown Eastside, a large number of Chinese-speaking seniors live in or near Chinatown and rely heavily on its shops, services and social networks to meet their everyday needs.

Aboriginal Elders are highly impacted by poverty, health issues and the effects of residential schools.⁹⁰ A number of Aboriginal groups that provide support for Elders are concentrated in the Downtown Eastside.

⁸² Census, 2006.

⁸³ City of Vancouver Social Policy Group. *Seniors in Vancouver*, October 2010.

⁸⁴ Census, 2006.

⁸⁵ City of Vancouver Social Policy Group. *Seniors in Vancouver*, October 2010.

⁸⁶ Census, 2006.

⁸⁷ City of Vancouver Social Planning Department. *A Social Profile and Assessment of the Social and Health Needs of Low Income Residents in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside*, 2004.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ City of Vancouver Social Policy Group. *Seniors in Vancouver*, October 2010.

Aboriginal People

Even given a higher population in the Downtown Eastside, Aboriginal people are routinely overrepresented in vulnerable groups:

- Aboriginal people comprise 15 per cent of SRO residents in the Downtown Eastside.⁹¹
- In 2012, 32 per cent of the sheltered and unsheltered homeless were Aboriginal.⁹²
- A quarter of the Downtown Eastside's injection drug users are estimated to identify as Aboriginal.⁹³

Aboriginal People in the Downtown Eastside are also disproportionately affected by health challenges, including:

- greater risk of HIV infection, particularly among drug users;
- higher rates of diabetes, particularly among Aboriginal women;
- higher rates of alcoholism.⁹⁴

Aboriginal women are among the most marginalized in the Downtown Eastside and are particularly vulnerable to violence. One third of the missing and murdered women taken from the Downtown Eastside were Aboriginal.⁹⁵ Aboriginal women disproportionately experience violence and marginalization, and are overrepresented in the survival sex trade.

New Immigrants

While the Downtown Eastside has relatively fewer new immigrants than the City of Vancouver as a whole, new immigrants face particular challenges. These newcomers often struggle to enter the job market and find affordable housing, and a disproportionate number of recent immigrant households are considered to be at high risk of homelessness as they spend more than 50% of their income on housing.⁹⁶

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ) People

While it is not known how many LGBTQ identifying people live in the Downtown Eastside, it is clear that there is a disproportionate number of LGBTQ homeless or street-involved youth. A 2002 survey of homeless or at risk of homeless youth in

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Downtown Eastside Demographic Study of SRO and Social Housing Tenants, April 2008.

⁹² City of Vancouver Homeless Count, 2012.

⁹³ Canadian Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use. Vancouver Drug Use Epidemiology, June 2005.

⁹⁴ City of Vancouver Social Planning Department. A Social Profile and Assessment of the Social and Health Needs of Low Income Residents in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, 2004.

⁹⁵ W. T. Oppal. Forsaken, The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry Volume 1, 2012.

⁹⁶ Hiebert et al, 'The Housing Situation and Needs of Recent Immigrants in the Vancouver Metropolitan Area,' Metropolis British Columbia Working Paper Series.

Vancouver found that 33 per cent of youth 19 and younger and 24 per cent of youth 19 to 25 years old identified as LGBTQ⁹⁷, much higher than the number of LGBTQ-identifying youth in the entire population.⁹⁸ LGBTQ street youth are more likely to be sexually exploited than their heterosexual peers.⁹⁹

Low Income Singles

Many Downtown Eastside residents live alone (46 per cent vs. 17 per cent citywide). The proportion of people living alone ranges from a low of 21 per cent in Strathcona, where much of the housing stock is in the form of detached houses and self-contained apartments, to a high of 78 per cent in Victory Square, where many residents live in Single Room Occupancy buildings.

The median income for people living alone in the Downtown Eastside is less than half that of people living alone across the city.¹⁰⁰ Low income people living alone are particularly vulnerable as they must rely on a single income and cannot pool resources with other household members. Obtaining affordable and adequate housing can be a serious challenge, especially for those who are on income assistance.

Low Income Families

Though the Downtown Eastside is characterized by a large population of older adults living alone, there are many families with and without children that call the area home. Most families live in the Strathcona neighbourhood where housing units are larger. Families living in the Downtown Eastside have lower median incomes than families living in other areas of Vancouver and more than a quarter fall below the low income threshold after tax.¹⁰¹ Over 45 per cent of female headed lone-parent families in the Downtown Eastside are low income. Although there are far fewer of them, male headed lone-parent families fare slightly worse, with half falling under the low income threshold.¹⁰²

Obtaining affordable housing that is large enough for several people is challenging for low income families, especially in the Downtown Eastside, where much of the affordable and non-market housing stock is geared toward single adults and seniors. In 2011, there were 886 units of non-market housing for families in the Downtown Eastside, amounting to just 13 per cent of total non-market stock in the neighbourhood.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ McCreary Centre Society, *No Place to Call Home: A Profile of Street Youth in British Columbia and Between the Cracks: Homeless Youth in Vancouver*. 2002. In 2009, 66 per cent of street involved youth reported the Downtown Eastside as their place of residence. B. S. Rachels. *High Rates of Homelessness Among a Cohort of Street-Involved Youth*, 2009.

⁹⁸ A 2008 McCreary Centre Society Adolescent Health Survey found that less than 3 per cent of BC youth in grades 7 to 12 identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual. An estimate of youth identifying as transgender is unavailable from this survey.

⁹⁹ Jenna Owsianik. *Out of the closet and onto the streets: Young, gay and homeless in Vancouver*, 2011.

¹⁰⁰ 2006 Census

¹⁰¹ Census, 2006.

¹⁰² Census, 2006.

¹⁰³ City of Vancouver. *Downtown Eastside Key Housing Facts*, 2012,

Renters

The Downtown Eastside is overwhelmingly a neighbourhood of renters. Almost 90 per cent of households are rented, compared to slightly over half city-wide.¹⁰⁵

Renters are a socio-economically varied group and the above numbers include higher-income renters in the neighbourhood's newer condo buildings and converted loft apartments. Overall, renters in the Downtown Eastside are more likely than both owners in the neighbourhood and renters throughout the city to spend more than 30 per cent of their household income on housing.¹⁰⁶

In contrast to other neighbourhoods in the city with high renter populations, the Downtown Eastside has a significant number of renters living in Single-Room Occupancy buildings (SROs). These renters are typically very low income and face a unique set of barriers with regard to housing affordability and security. For low income renters experiencing affordability challenges in the Downtown Eastside, there are few places to turn for lower cost housing.

Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Tenants

SRO units in rooming houses and residential hotels are a very basic and low cost form of housing provided by the private and public market. Rooms are usually about ten by ten feet in size and do not have private bathrooms or cooking facilities beyond hotplates. While SROs used to exist in several Vancouver neighbourhoods, the remaining units are overwhelmingly concentrated in the Downtown Eastside. As of 2011, there were 3,975 market SRO units and 1,522 non-market units in 155 buildings in the Downtown Eastside, illustrated in section 1.4.¹⁰⁷ Many SROs are run-down and suffer from pest and rodent infestations, and inspections routinely reveal unsafe living conditions.¹⁰⁸

Residents of SROs are typically very low income and are unable to afford self-contained units in the conventional rental market. In a 2008 survey, 77 per cent reported annual incomes of \$15,000 or less.¹⁰⁹ Unless they can obtain non-market housing, SROs are often the last option before homelessness.¹¹⁰ Private SRO residents are vulnerable to rent increases that can exceed the shelter component of social assistance income or otherwise impact their ability to afford the unit. The proportion of SRO units renting at

¹⁰⁵ Census, 2006.

¹⁰⁶ Census, 2006. The 30% mark is a commonly accepted definition of housing affordability. Households spending at above this threshold are considered to be at risk.

¹⁰⁷ City of Vancouver Housing Policy. 2009 Survey of Low-Income Housing in the Downtown Core, April 2010.

¹⁰⁸ Downtown Eastside Demographic Study of SRO and Social Housing Tenants, April 2008.

¹⁰⁹ Downtown Eastside Demographic Study of SRO and Social Housing Tenants, April 2008.

¹¹⁰ City of Vancouver. Downtown Eastside Community Monitoring Report, 2005/06.

or below the social assistance shelter rate has been decreasing—in 2011, 27 per cent of private SROs were renting at this rate. All public SRO units rent at \$375.¹¹¹

Living in substandard housing impacts health and wellbeing.¹¹² In a 2008 survey, a third of SRO residents surveyed had a mental health illness and a third had a drug addiction.

Homeless People

While homelessness is a serious issue across Metro Vancouver, a significant number of homeless people reside in the Downtown Eastside, with many more traveling to the neighbourhood on a regular basis to access support services that may not be available in their own communities.¹¹³

In 2012, the Downtown Eastside homeless population was estimated to be around 846 people.¹¹⁴ Most homeless people struggle with mental and physical health issues. Many people not currently homeless are at risk of homelessness.

People with Disabilities

People with physical disabilities face significant barriers to employment and to obtaining housing that is both affordable and accessible. A single person on disability assistance receives \$531.42 support and \$375 for shelter per month. There are 3,193 residents receiving disability assistance in the V6A postal code;¹¹⁵ cases include people deemed unable to work as a result of mental and physical barriers.

People affected by Mental Illness

Mental health issues are prevalent in the Downtown Eastside, but it is difficult to determine how many residents are affected. Mental illness may go undiagnosed and are often inextricably linked with poverty and substance abuse. It is estimated that one in five residents suffer from mental illness.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Total SRO units include public and private. All public units rent at the social assistance shelter rate (\$375) and 27% of private SRO units rent at this rate—together 47 per cent of Downtown Eastside units rent at the shelter rate. The average rent of a private SRO is \$416. City of Vancouver. Downtown Eastside Key Housing Facts, 2012.

¹¹² Hwang SW, Wilkins R, Tjepkema M, O'Campo PJ, Dunn JR. Mortality among residents of shelters, rooming houses, and hotels in Canada: 11 year follow-up study. *BMJ* 2009;339:b4036.

¹¹³ City of Vancouver Social Planning Department. A Social Profile and Assessment of the Social and Health Needs of Low Income Residents in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, 2004.

¹¹⁴ The homeless count represents an undercount of the total population. Homeless people in shelters and on the street are counted. Some people may be missed in the count. Those who are staying with friends, family or in a car are unlikely to be captured in this count.

¹¹⁵ V6A does not include Victory Square and parts of Gastown. Its boundaries are Clark, Carrall and Great Northern Way. Ministry of Social Development, 2013.

¹¹⁶ City of Vancouver. Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside, October 2005.

As compared to people living in other parts of Vancouver and throughout the province, residents of the Downtown Eastside have a higher rate of depression and anxiety.¹¹⁷ In 2009-10, 7,588 Downtown Eastside residents received mental health and/or substance use services from a general practitioner and mental health issues were the most common reason for hospitalization.¹¹⁸

Drug Users

An estimated 4,700 injection drug users resided in the Downtown Eastside in 2003.¹¹⁹ These individuals are among the most vulnerable in the Downtown Eastside as they often face multiple barriers to health and life stability. As seen in section 1.5, there are proportionally more alcohol and drug-related deaths in the Downtown Eastside Local Health Area than across the City.¹²⁰

Many drug users are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Among participants in a large, ongoing study of Vancouver drug users, almost 70 per cent lived in unstable housing (including shelter/hostel, treatment/recovery house, jail, SRO, and street) in 2007, including 25 per cent who were outright homeless.¹²¹

Survival Sex Workers

Survival sex workers—those whose urgent need for food, money or other basic needs prevent them from exercising their right to refuse to perform sexual acts—are among the most marginalized populations in our society. Sex workers identify as male, female and/or transgender, and come from a variety of backgrounds. It is difficult to determine exact numbers, but there may be 1,500 to 2,000 street level sex workers in Vancouver, with many working in the Downtown Eastside.¹²² The stigma of sex work makes these individuals more vulnerable to violence and marginalization, and prevents these individuals from accessing health care services.¹²³

¹¹⁷ BC Ministry of Health. Downtown Eastside Core Health Services Profile, July 2011.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Capture recapture analysis performed by Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH), 2003.

¹²⁰ Vancouver Coastal Health, 2012.

¹²¹ City of Vancouver Social Planning Department. A Social Profile and Assessment of the Social and Health Needs of Low Income Residents in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, 2004.

¹²² Sarah Stenabaugh, 'Silent Cries: Vancouver sex workers continue to fight for services and support', Megaphone Magazine, 2009; MAKa Project.

¹²³ Lisa Lazarus et al, "Occupational Stigma as Primary Barrier to Health Care for Street-Based Sex Workers in Canada", Cult Health Sex 2012.

Glossary

Aboriginal Identity: 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.

Cultural Workers: 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.

Extreme Weather Response Shelter: 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.

Home Language: Refers to the language spoken most often or on a regular basis at home by the individual at the time of the census.

Homeless person: A person who does not pay rent for a home. A homeless person may sleep in a shelter, the street, a car, a friend's house or other location.

Household: 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.

Immigrant: 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.

Informal Economy: Economic sectors that are not taxed or monitored and at times discouraged. It includes work such as binning and vending.

Live/Work: 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.

Local Area Planning Process (LAPP): A community plan for a thirty year period, defining the desired future for the communities, the priorities, the actions and projects required to achieve improved quality of life for the people of the Downtown Eastside.

Low Income: There are multiple measures of low income used in this report. They include:

- Low Income Cut Off (LICO): Relative measure of low income status. Describes a household that spends over 20 percentage points on a median goods basket. LIM varies by family size, community size and tax.

- Low Income Measure (LIM): Relative measure of low income status. Describes a household that earns less than half of median income.
- Market Basket Measure (MBM): Absolute measure of low income status. The disposable income needed for a basket of goods.

Low Income Household: 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.

Mode of Transportation: 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). The Census of Population tracks mode of transportation according to commute to work.

Neighbourhood House (Association of Neighbourhood Houses of British Columbia): A non-profit organization that provides programs and services that are locally-based but also supportive of Metro Vancouver and provincial initiatives.

Private Household: Person or group of persons occupying the same dwelling.

Single Occupancy Room (SRO): SRO units are small rooms, usually in privately owned and managed buildings, with shared bathrooms. Most of the buildings containing SROs were built before the First World War.¹²⁴

Single-Detached House: 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.

Social Assistance: Also known as welfare. A government transfer managed by the Ministry of Human and Social Development. Types of social assistance include: child in home of relative, expected to work, expected to work (medical condition), long term care, medical services only, no employment options, old age security, persons with persistent multiple barriers and persons with disabilities.

Social Enterprise: A business that operates with the intention of improving social, economic and/or environmental wellbeing.

Social Housing: Social housing is housing owned or operated by a non-profit or government with a range of rents up to low end of market.

Social Impact Assessment (SIA): A study to review the impact of future development on the existing low income residents of the Downtown Eastside. Involved community input, literature reviews and data analysis.

Supportive Housing: Housing linked to support services and often, but not always funded by government. Supportive housing may be market or non-market housing. Services can include meals, housekeeping, personal care, lifeskills training and support, and other services. Supportive housing can be provided to individuals living in their own apartments/rooms in social housing projects

¹²⁴ Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside. City of Vancouver. 2005.

or SROs and who receive supports on an individual basis, or to groups of people who have similar needs and who live in a building which has been designed to provide the common facilities and staff offices need by the particular population.¹²⁵

Tenure: 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).

Vulnerable: A population at great risk of poor health conditions and wellbeing. Risk may be due to socio-economic conditions, gender, ethnicity and a host of other facts. Chapter 1 (Healthy People) describes vulnerable groups in the Downtown Eastside.

Welfare: See *Social Assistance*.

¹²⁵ Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside. City of Vancouver. 2005.

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For updates on the Local Area Planning process, please visit the City of Vancouver Downtown Eastside Local Area Plan webpage:
vancouver.ca/dteslapp

