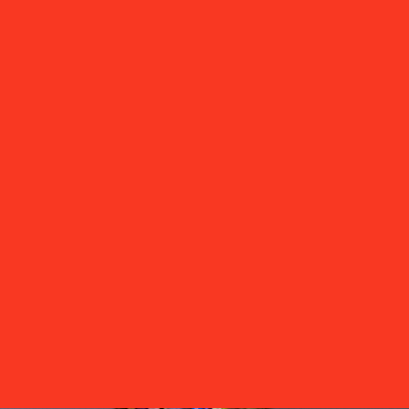
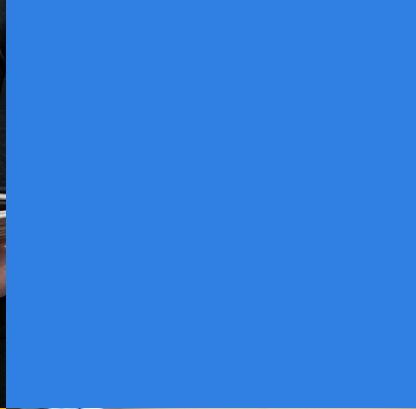
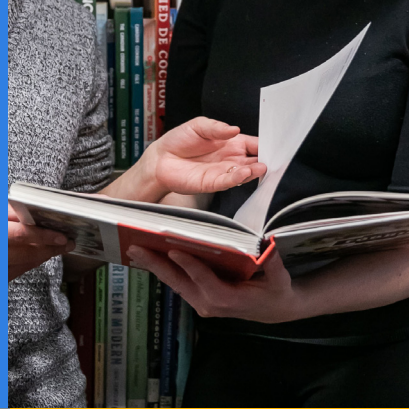


STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2023



Message from the Mayor

Vancouver is a great city that cares about our people, our environment and our neighbourhoods. We are always seeking opportunities for our citizens to live, work and prosper. As we strive to meet the needs of our growing city, we know that libraries are an essential part of our success. As one of our most valued civic resources, Vancouver Public Library enriches our lives and helps to build informed, caring, and resilient communities.

Our libraries are vital in building livable, sustainable and inclusive communities. They play a key role in our city's social fabric, providing gathering places for the community. Regardless of whether someone has newly arrived, or has spent their entire life in Vancouver, VPL creates meaningful connections for everyone and contributes to diverse and caring neighbourhoods.

I am proud of the work done to create this visionary strategic plan that will frame the future of VPL. With such an important role to play in our city, I look forward to seeing the Library build itself into an even stronger and more vital community resource for all.

Kennedy Stewart
Mayor of Vancouver



**Kennedy
Stewart**
Mayor of
Vancouver

Welcome from the Chief Librarian and Board Chair

This 2020–2023 strategic plan is the result of months of listening and reflecting on the part of our Board and staff. We heard from thousands of people in Vancouver how important it is that VPL continues to be Vancouver's institution for lifelong learning, and the critical role we play in helping to reduce social isolation. This has become even more evident as we face the impacts of the global pandemic. In light of the dramatic changes brought on by COVID–19, VPL has taken the time to reassess and validate the goals we first identified in 2019, and concluded that all of the goals remain relevant to our community. Some priority areas, such as leveraging technology, bridging the digital divide, and creating community connections, will be even more critical.

Public libraries are needed now more than ever. They enable us to explore ideas, expand our thinking, and help us learn from one another as we tackle difficult issues. In person or digitally, VPL is here for everyone in Vancouver to celebrate possibilities and discover the future together.



**Christina
de Castell**
Chief Librarian



Jennifer Chan
Board Chair

Introduction

Situated on the unceded lands of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, Vancouver Public Library (VPL) is one of Vancouver’s oldest public institutions. We strive to meet our community’s changing needs and aspirations. We are a place to share stories and ideas, through books, creativity supported by technology, and conversations we have with each other. We continually explore ways to expand our reach through our digital offerings. We are committed to building connections within our diverse communities and offering opportunities to learn and create together

VPL is a home for stories and ideas, for learning and for entertainment – as libraries have always been. We are proud of our staff and our work with community partners that enables us to deliver thousands of programs every year, helping to share the diverse voices of our city across our 21 locations and digital channels. With more than 2.3 million items in our collection, VPL helps make access to information and learning more equitable across the city, in person and online.

VISION

An Informed, Engaged, and Connected City.

MISSION

A free place for everyone to discover, create, and share ideas and information.

VALUES

Diversity
Access for all
Intellectual freedom
Learning and curiosity
Patron-centred services
Community-led planning
Community partnerships
Innovation and creativity
Respectful spaces and communication
Effective use of resources
Sustainability

PRIORITIZING TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Our conversations with the public and key stakeholders highlighted the need to bring Indigenous history, languages and cultures into library spaces and to continue sharing Indigenous voices through our collections and programming. Truth and Reconciliation is a priority for VPL.

VPL is committed to being a place to learn about the history and cultures of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. This includes learning about the truths of the historic and ongoing impact of colonization and the importance of movement toward reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. Through ten years of learning from each Indigenous Storyteller in Residence at VPL, expanding our programs and collections, seeking out opportunities and addressing barriers, this work has become an integral part of what we do. We look forward to continuing to find ways to enhance understanding and appreciation of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. VPL has a strong desire to engage with Indigenous communities, particularly the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, on whose unceded lands our work takes place.

DEVELOPING GOALS THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF VANCOUVER

This plan is based on what we heard from the community and learned from our research. We heard that VPL must continue to find ways to meet the needs of seniors, newcomers, children, youth, low-income, and Indigenous communities. Each of these groups has aspirations and challenges that VPL can support.

VPL typically welcomes over 18,000 people in our locations every day and thousands more digitally. We will welcome even more in the years ahead as we open expanded and revitalized spaces to serve our growing city. The needs, values, and dreams you’ve shared with us through this process will shape VPL’s work over the next four years, and help us plan for the years to come.

Strategic Planning Process

The 2020–2023 Strategic Plan will continue the journey to achieve our vision of an Informed, Engaged, and Connected City. Through community consultations, staff conversations, and environmental scans, we verified that our previous plan met the expectations of our patrons, and set us in the right direction. With this plan, we will build on our past successes.

Through an external landscape assessment we sought to understand the forces affecting Vancouver today, including trends relating to demographics, technology, economy, society, and culture. This gave us insight into the unique challenges and needs within our city, and shaped our thoughts about how to address them through VPL’s strategic initiatives.

A strategic assessment of our organization allowed us to look critically at our performance, benchmark our progress, and identify ways to improve. This helped us learn from the past and prepare for the future.

Most importantly, we conducted meaningful engagement with the public, staff, the VPL Board, City Council, and key external stakeholders. With inclusion as a focus, we actively sought perspectives from community members who we might have missed through standard consultation practices. We endeavoured to move beyond capturing preconceived ideas about libraries, and invited the community to see their opinions and experiences as important in shaping their library’s future.

In total, we received input from over 5,000 individuals and organizations.

Recognizing that the impacts of COVID–19 will be felt for years, we re–assessed our plan with the VPL Board, and concluded that while much has changed in our environment, the role of the Library to support learning and connection will remain vital.

HOW DID VPL GATHER INPUT?

Public engagement activities and a city–wide survey in 2019 brought us the voices of diverse groups with a range of backgrounds and experiences. Library staff hosted in–person conversations with the public at community events, patrons at library branches, and members of Vancouver’s more marginalized populations through community visits. This future focused plan was also informed by direct conversations and activities with children and teens.

Through discussions with community leaders, we gained insights on potential collaborations with VPL as well as the challenges our city faces today and in the future. We spoke with the Mayor and City Councillors to learn about their priorities and what they’ve learned about the needs of residents and businesses in Vancouver.

Through workshops and conversations, staff described their positive work experiences, as well as the challenges and opportunities they face. They told us what they see in the community, and identified ways to make the Library a better place for everyone.



Our Strategic Priorities

Our strategic priorities encompass the areas where we will focus our efforts over the next four years. They are anchored by our belief in, and celebration of, our diverse city.

Learning & Creativity, Shared Spaces & Experiences, and Belonging & Connection support our vision of an Informed, Engaged and Connected City. Organizational Strength provides us with the tools to achieve that vision. The four priorities co-exist as interconnected themes that define VPL's role in Vancouver, with our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation woven throughout.





LEARNING & CREATIVITY

OFFER FREE ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS, RESOURCES, PROGRAMMING, AND EXPERTISE TO SUPPORT LIFELONG LEARNING, CREATIVITY, AND AN INFORMED COMMUNITY.

LEARNING & CREATIVITY GOALS:

Champion early literacy and opportunities for lifelong learning.

Bridge the digital divide and support creativity through accessible technology.

Provide relevant physical and digital collections in diverse formats and languages.

80% of our survey respondents deemed supporting literacy, fostering a love of reading, and supporting early literacy and language development in children as extremely important.

From early literacy to lifelong learning, VPL’s focus is on continued growth and improvement for everyone in Vancouver. Supporting early literacy in children is a core component of our work, and we deliver more than 5,000 programs for children every year. Digital literacy – the ability to use technology to access, evaluate, create, and communicate information – is critical to participation in society and access to services. Our decades of experience delivering information literacy training have given us the flexibility to support our community’s diverse needs. We recognize the language diversity of our patrons and provide multilingual collections throughout the city. All community members deserve access to learning and creativity, whether that’s through our print and digital collections, our children’s literacy programs, or using our recording studios to bring ideas to life. We are passionate about, and committed to, lifelong learning and helping everyone reach their potential.

WAYS WE WILL ACHIEVE THESE GOALS INCLUDE:

- Evolve our digital literacy programming as technology changes, so that everyone can be connected and access critical services.
- Expand the breadth and depth of digital content such as e-books, e-audiobooks, streaming video platforms and online learning opportunities.
- Introduce a featured area for Indigenous collections at the Central Library.
- Create enriched early literacy spaces that incorporate the latest early childhood education research to support interactive learning between children and caregivers.
- Expand the Sun Life Financial Musical Instrument Lending Library to neighbourhoods across Vancouver.



We will continue to play an active role in supporting and promoting literacy in all its forms, from early childhood through to the adult years. We will help to bridge the digital divide by providing technology and training that ensures no one feels isolated due to lack of skills, and through opportunities to support creativity through technology. We will work to reflect the city's diversity through the 2.3 million items offered in our physical and digital collections. Exploring new ways to offer our collections and services, and exploring new collections, will remain the core of what we do.

WE HEARD...

Providing services for children, seniors, newcomers, and people with disabilities is a priority in Vancouver.

Early literacy for children remains a top community priority. Fostering creativity was identified as important more often by children and teens.

Our community believes that VPL should provide access for people who may not be familiar or confident with digital resources, as well as those who rely on free resources for connecting, learning, and creativity. Helping seniors to overcome digital literacy barriers is critical to ensuring access to services and for reducing social isolation. More people than ever are using our digital collections, and they are a valuable resource for people with disabilities.

We heard that newcomers to the city benefit from VPL's collections in 17 languages.

Collections by Indigenous authors are important to Vancouver so that everyone can learn more about the history, culture, and experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada, before and after colonization.

Everything the public told us points to VPL's role as more than a repository of information. Our community needs and wants us to be a place for sharing knowledge and resources in all formats, ensuring everyone in Vancouver has equitable access to the resources and information they need to thrive.

"VPL supports children and families from all walks of life by providing services and programs that help develop a love of reading and learning."

"Since retirement, I have used a wide range of library resources, including books, DVDs and all aspects of the digital library, on a daily basis."



SHARED SPACES & EXPERIENCES

PROVIDE WELCOMING AND ACCESSIBLE PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL SPACES THAT ENABLE VANCOUVER RESIDENTS TO ENGAGE WITH INFORMATION, IDEAS, AND EACH OTHER.

SHARED SPACES & EXPERIENCES GOALS:

Reflect and celebrate Indigenous cultures and history.

Develop welcoming, accessible, and sustainable facilities that meet current and future needs and expectations.

Provide patron-centred experiences and make it easy to use VPL's services.

As one of the few truly free indoor public places in Vancouver, VPL is more vital now than ever. The loss of welcoming communal spaces, where we interact with those whose experiences and perspectives differ from our own, is increasingly impacting the city's social fabric. In an era of shrinking homes, the Library meets a need for a quiet place to study and work, while also providing meeting rooms and shared spaces for those who want to connect with others. We look forward to fully restoring our services when COVID-19 restrictions end. With more than 6.4 million people coming through our doors every year at locations across

Vancouver, VPL fills a critical need as a place that supports strong and resilient communities. Additionally, with over 7.4 million visits annually to VPL.ca, our digital resources connect patrons to the library from home, work, and away, allowing for shared experiences beyond our physical locations.

The presence of Indigenous languages and cultures within VPL spaces, with a focus on Musqueam, Squamish and Tseil-Waututh Nations, is critical for us to create an inclusive environment.

Providing a great library experience means that our facilities and services, whether physical or digital, are easy to navigate for everyone and built for the future.

WAYS WE WILL ACHIEVE THESE GOALS INCLUDE:

- In consultation with Musqueam, Squamish, and Tseil-Waututh Nations, develop a naming strategy that considers hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ and Sḵw̓x̓w̓7mesh languages.
- Increase physical accessibility through upgrades to library facilities and systems.
- Apply lessons learned during the pandemic as we improve our disaster and emergency planning.
- Explore new and more flexible ways to deliver services, such as express kiosks and borrowing hotspots.
- Continue to explore the future of library spaces and services as we work to redevelop the Oakridge branch as part of the new Civic Centre.

When asked whether VPL is a welcoming and accessible space, 80% of respondents rated us highly, and 11% told us we have work to do.

As we develop new branches and revitalize existing locations, we will prepare for the future by planning safe, healthy, and flexible spaces. Our services must be easy to use and available through the channels each patron prefers. We will look for ways to remove barriers to access, whether they are related to technology, language, culture, physical or perceptual ability, or geography. We will seek ways to recognize the cultures and First Peoples of this land through collaboration with Indigenous artists, creators, and community groups. We will communicate the vibrant diverse character of Vancouver, and our pride in our city and library, through the spaces and experiences we share.

WE HEARD...

Providing a community hub for social connections and expanding our digital resources are equally important to Vancouver, as they ensure that everyone can safely maintain in-person connections as well as equitable access to the online world. As we evolve, we need to continue to provide a quiet place to read, study, and work.

Our community values our physical locations as centres for learning, working, and socializing in our neighbourhoods. We heard that our physical spaces need to remain welcoming and accessible for all, especially seniors, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups.

VPL's services need to be user friendly and keep pace with the digital age.

Residents also told us that they want us to strengthen our efforts toward Truth, Reconciliation and decolonization, including the promotion of Indigenous cultures and languages in our spaces, ensuring that everyone sees themselves reflected and welcomed at VPL.



“Keep supporting newcomers to Vancouver, creating a safe space for individuals experiencing homelessness, and connecting patrons to the digital world through digital literacy programs and access to technology.”



BELONGING & CONNECTION

FOSTER A CONNECTED COMMUNITY BY PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION, SHARING, AND INFORMED CIVIC DIALOGUE.

BELONGING & CONNECTION GOALS:

Reduce social isolation and provide affordable access.

Enhance understanding and appreciation of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing.

Engage and celebrate the diverse cultures and languages of Vancouver.

Establish the Library as a forum for civic conversation and understanding.

Our services and programs encourage people to learn about, and from, each other. Our partnerships with a wide range of organizations help us deliver meaningful opportunities for connection and ways to expand our perspectives.

VPL's over 2,500 programs for adults bring together people of different cultures, ages, and income levels, providing free access to resources for learning and connection. Celebrating and amplifying diverse voices and exploring shared concerns helps to increase understanding of those around us and build a more equitable city.

COVID-19 has exacerbated existing issues of affordability and social isolation. As many in Vancouver struggle with these challenges,

finding ways to remove and reduce barriers to access will become ever more important. We will leverage partnerships and seek out new ways to support people who are facing poverty, mental health challenges, and issues of affordability. We will explore how we can meet the needs of our various linguistic and cultural communities in ways that foster a sense of belonging in Vancouver. Through partnership and programming we will expand the opportunities for everyone to learn more about Truth and Reconciliation and Indigenous cultures. We will reaffirm the Library as a forum for civic dialogue and connection that can help our community increase understanding, through initiatives that celebrate diversity, tackle difficult conversations, and help build connections.

WAYS WE WILL ACHIEVE THESE GOALS INCLUDE:

- Investigate ways to reduce financial barriers to library use, such as elimination of overdue fines.
- Offer book clubs, events, and programs that help people engage in respectful conversation around difficult and polarizing topics.
- Continue our work to reduce discrimination and misinformation.
- Develop partnerships with community-based organizations to connect at risk patrons to mental health services.
- Continue to encourage understanding of Truth and Reconciliation and celebrate Indigenous cultures through programs such as the Indigenous Storyteller in Residence.



WE HEARD...

Social isolation is a growing concern in Vancouver, made even more profound by the pandemic. People are missing a sense of personal connection, they may feel trapped by their circumstances, and they seek a stronger community. This loss tends to be felt by newcomers, seniors, and marginalized populations the most. Residents are looking to VPL to help alleviate the impacts of isolation and, at the same time, contribute to addressing social issues that surround us.

People are concerned about polarization and misinformation; they told us that spaces that provide opportunities for dialogue are a priority.

We heard that VPL should remain a place to congregate without pressure to consume, and that we should continue to facilitate free and solutions-oriented conversations that build toward shared goals. People want to live in a city that embraces diversity, and they believe that VPL can be a catalyst for realizing this vision.

VPL supporting residents' learning about Indigenous history and cultures, and taking action toward Truth, Reconciliation and decolonization is of key importance.

We also heard that we play an important role in supporting the City of Vancouver's equity, diversity and inclusion priorities. This includes ongoing work to improve accessibility, active support of IBPOC and LGBTQ2+ communities, and seeking ways to increase cross-cultural understanding.

“Provide public space for dialogue and debate on hot topics – citizenry needs to be allowed to explore important issues, even if they are not easy to discuss.”

“We all have differences and we all have similarities and I'd like for all of us to be able to share our stories.”

4

ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH

ENSURE WE ARE READY TO DELIVER THE SERVICES OUR COMMUNITY NEEDS, AND VPL IS RECOGNIZED AS VITAL TO VANCOUVER.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH GOALS:

<p>Ensure VPL staff have the support and resources to adapt to a transformed work environment.</p>	<p>Foster an inclusive workplace that reflects the diversity of our community.</p>	<p>Increase public awareness and usage of VPL services.</p>
---	---	--

We are proud of the VPL team and know that we have the capabilities needed to implement our strategic plan. We want to tell our story to the many communities of Vancouver and connect with them about VPL's place in their lives. Across 21 locations, our diverse staff and strong patron relationships have helped us achieve service satisfaction levels of 92%. We are honoured by the value Vancouver residents place in their library.

We will ensure our staff have the support to implement this plan and the resources they need to adapt

to changes to our environment brought by the pandemic. We will continue evolving and growing to meet the changing needs of Vancouver and better reflect its diversity. Our staff, systems, and policies need to be strong, resilient, and responsive to our community. By developing and implementing integrated marketing and communications strategies with increasing personalization, we will connect people with the inspiration and resources they seek for lifelong learning and growth.

WAYS WE WILL ACHIEVE THESE GOALS INCLUDE:

- Provide training and resources for staff that enable them to meet the changing needs of library patrons and our transformed work environment.
- Expand resources so we are ready to support the public in times of emergency, climate change preparedness, and post-disaster recovery.
- Communicate the breadth of programs and services offered by VPL through relevant and customized promotion.
- Provide opportunities for members of equity-seeking groups to explore library careers and develop an inclusive environment.
- Learn from the City of Vancouver's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion work.



WE HEARD...

Throughout our public engagement process, we heard overwhelmingly that residents are satisfied with and value what VPL offers, but many are not familiar with the full breadth of programs and services available. In our staff engagement we heard that staff want to be ready for the future, including preparation for climate emergencies. VPL's staff are proud of their work. They want the expertise and tools to deliver excellent patron-centred services with confidence.

We heard that our organizational strength is enhanced when our staff reflect the diversity of our city and understand how their work contributes to our goals.

Vancouver residents and other Vancouver organizations told us that they want a deeper relationship with VPL. People want to be kept informed of our services and activities, and value the personalized service we provide. They want to hear about our progress toward realizing our vision and creating value for them and their communities. Vancouver wants to know how we're making a difference.

“The staff at VPL are world class – whether it's helping with Indigenous genealogy, circulation, reader's advisory, literacy, digital skills – VPL delivers on its mandate because of the staff.”

Measuring Our Performance

Measuring and reporting on our performance is critical to ensuring accountability to our patrons, the City, stakeholders, and the general public. VPL has established transparent measurement and reporting processes, and we will continue to report on progress toward the goals we've set for ourselves for 2020–2023. By using a combination of quantitative and qualitative information in addition to financial indicators, we will provide a holistic picture of how we are working to achieve our vision of an Informed, Engaged, and Connected City.

KEY MEASURES OF LIBRARY-WIDE PERFORMANCE INCLUDE:

- physical and digital visits
- collection use
- number of active cardholders
- patron satisfaction
- public perceptions

VPL has historically tracked these measures, providing solid trends and benchmarks. Additionally, we will track indicators specific to each of our strategic priorities and goals. Examples of these include:

- program attendance
- activities related to important topics such as Truth and Reconciliation and civic dialogue
- staff training participation rates

Measurement and reporting alone is not enough to ensure success. VPL is also committed to evaluating our activities to identify what's working well, what's not, and why, so that we can make adjustments as necessary. We will review both short-term outputs and longer-term outcomes to assess how well we are achieving our goals. Collaborating with other community organizations will enable us to evaluate impacts on broader societal issues, such as reducing social isolation.

We will continue to evaluate our progress on addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, and are committed to strengthening and assessing the impact of relationships with key community partners with whom we share common goals.



VPL At a Glance

(2019 Data)



MORE THAN **270,000**
ACTIVE LIBRARY
CARD HOLDERS



MORE THAN
2.3 MILLION
ITEMS AVAILABLE



OVER **9.7 MILLION**
ITEMS BORROWED



7.4 MILLION
VISITS TO VPL.CA



6.4 MILLION VISITS
THROUGH OUR DOORS



OVER **247,000**
PEOPLE ATTENDED
A FREE PROGRAM



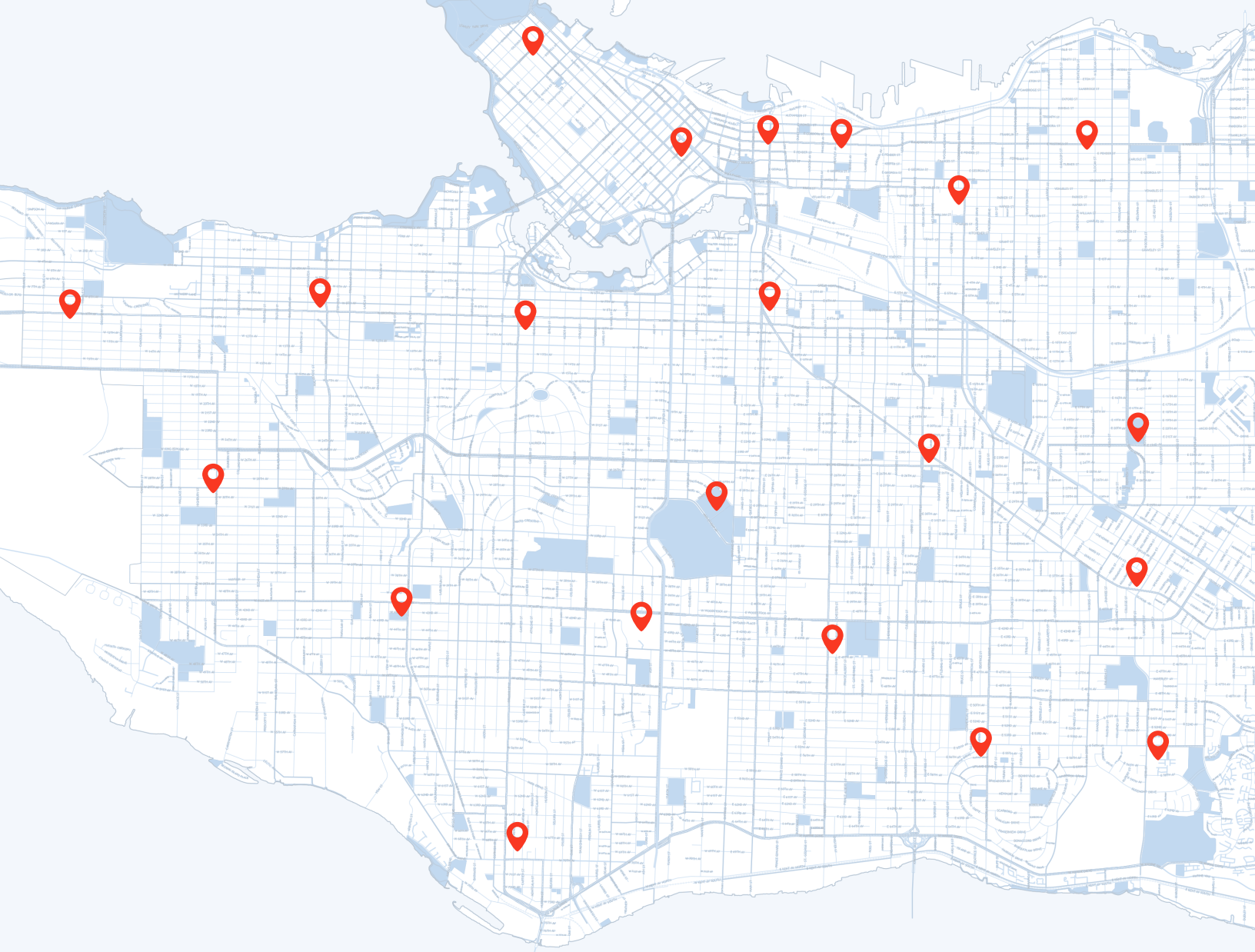
95% OF VANCOUVER
RESIDENTS BELIEVE VPL IS
AN IMPORTANT PART OF
THEIR COMMUNITY¹

¹ Vancouver Public Library,
2019 Public Survey



92% ARE SATISFIED WITH
VPL'S SERVICES²

² City of Vancouver, 2019 Civic Service
Satisfaction Survey



PROUDLY SERVING VANCOUVER AT 21 LOCATIONS
AND ONLINE AT VPL.CA

