

Economics of Douglas Park

Site 1 Comprehensive Plan - Part 3

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Cover page image: Marina Miller, 2026

Introduction

This report explores the economic profile for the area around Douglas Park, located in the South Cambie area of Vancouver. By understanding the business and employment conditions for this area, we can gather useful context for potential redevelopment of Douglas Park (Site 1 in the larger comprehensive land use proposal). The audience for this report is potential developers for the Douglas Park site, and will accompany other reports covering other topics like site conditions, housing, sustainability, and more. The final comprehensive development plan will explore opportunities related to long-term land uses, density, transportation, community services and public open space within the site.

Site context

Douglas Park is located in Vancouver's South Cambie Area, and falls within the Cambie Corridor plan introduced in 2011. The park also falls within the 800 metre buffer zone of King Edward SkyTrain Station, which makes it part of British Columbia's legislated [Transit Oriented Areas](#) (TOAs). Vancouver also just approved its first Official Development Plan (ODP) which is the most up-to-date guiding legislation for land use goals and regulations which apply to Site 1.

Douglas Park is a neighbourhood park and community hub bordered by West 20th to the north, West 22nd to the south, Laurel Street to the east, and Heather Street to the west. The 13-acre site [became an official city park in 1926](#). It has Indigenous histories, being located on the territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh peoples. It was also used for logging, recreation, and as a Chinese market garden.



Surrounding neighbourhoods include Riley Park, Shaughnessy, and corridors along Oak Street, Cambie Street, and King Edward Avenue. The surrounding area includes mature residential streets, trees, institutional uses, local shopping areas, transit connections, and community amenities. Because of its location, Douglas Park functions as both public open space and important neighbourhood infrastructure. It includes a 21,000-square-foot community centre with childcare, arts, and fitness amenities.

In the scenario of residential development on the Douglas Park site, one of the key dimensions to analyze is economics. This report explores the current conditions and planning implications of the neighbourhood's businesses and employment. The analysis discusses both neighbourhood, city, and regional scales.

Planning Framework

There are a few relevant plans and policies regarding future economic development of the site neighbourhood and the city as a whole. Economics are highly linked to land use planning, as it affects/is affected by employment rates, incomes, household makeup, market and spending trends, real estate trends, and more.

Official Development Plan

Vancouver's newly approved [Official Development Plan](#) (2026) guides and legislates land uses and design, and overall how a city develops in the long-term. It includes a section of goals and policies around the city's economy, jobs, and businesses. One of the most relevant high-level goals when considering development in Douglas Park is that the City wants to “encourage a diverse and accessible mix of local serving and small businesses and jobs in all neighbourhoods.”

The 2016 Census found that 20 percent of Vancouver residents lived below the poverty line. To advance accessible and equitable economic opportunities, the City wants to enable access to services and spaces to meet people's needs for healthy, happy, fulfilled lives, while respecting the planet's ecological boundaries (Official Development Plan, 2026). It should be noted that Vancouver conducted an [Employment Lands and Economy Review \(ELER\)](#) in 2020. It is comprehensive research which informed the ODP.

Cambie Corridor Plan

Land development within the [Cambie Corridor](#) and TOAs allow for more building density, and any development moving forward must balance the objectives of city plans, zoning regulations, and best practices for design and function. Being within a TOA surrounding the King Edward SkyTrain Station, the neighbourhood in which Douglas Park is located should become a compact, transit-oriented community providing a mix of diverse housing options and amenities to optimize the opportunity created by rapid transit. This vision is supported by TOA guidelines, the Metro 2050 Growth Strategy, the ODP, and the Cambie Corridor Plan. The Cambie Corridor Plan promotes improving accessibility for users of “all ages and abilities” (AAA), and strengthening connections to surrounding neighbourhoods and destinations, which ties into business and employment patterns and success.

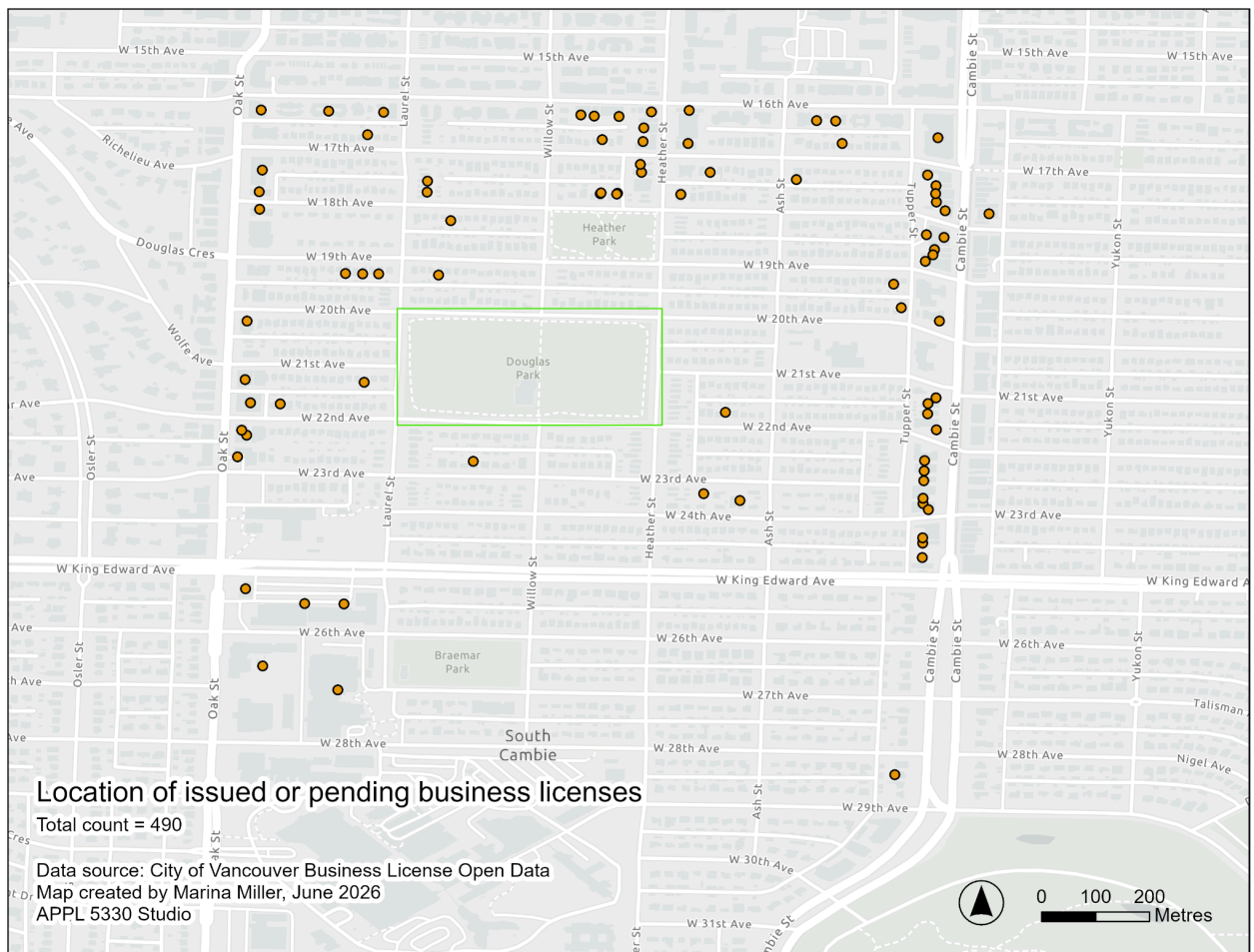
Community Economic Development Strategy

Vancouver's [Community Economic Development Strategy](#) (2016) includes a broad goal to “create broad, inclusive opportunities for residents to thrive. It does this by putting community assets to work in creative ways and unlocking the potential of partnerships and collaboration.”

Retail and Business

Before being a public park, the Douglas Park site itself had economic activities taking place on it. This included logging camps and Chinese market gardens before it became a park in 1926.

Today, the main economic activities taking place on the site are at the community centre. This includes things like recreation classes and childcare. In the modern age of Douglas Park, the most retail and business activities take place on the surrounding main roads.



Map 1. Location of issued or pending business licenses in the Douglas Park area (count = 490). Created by Marina Miller, 2026. Data source: City of Vancouver Open Data.

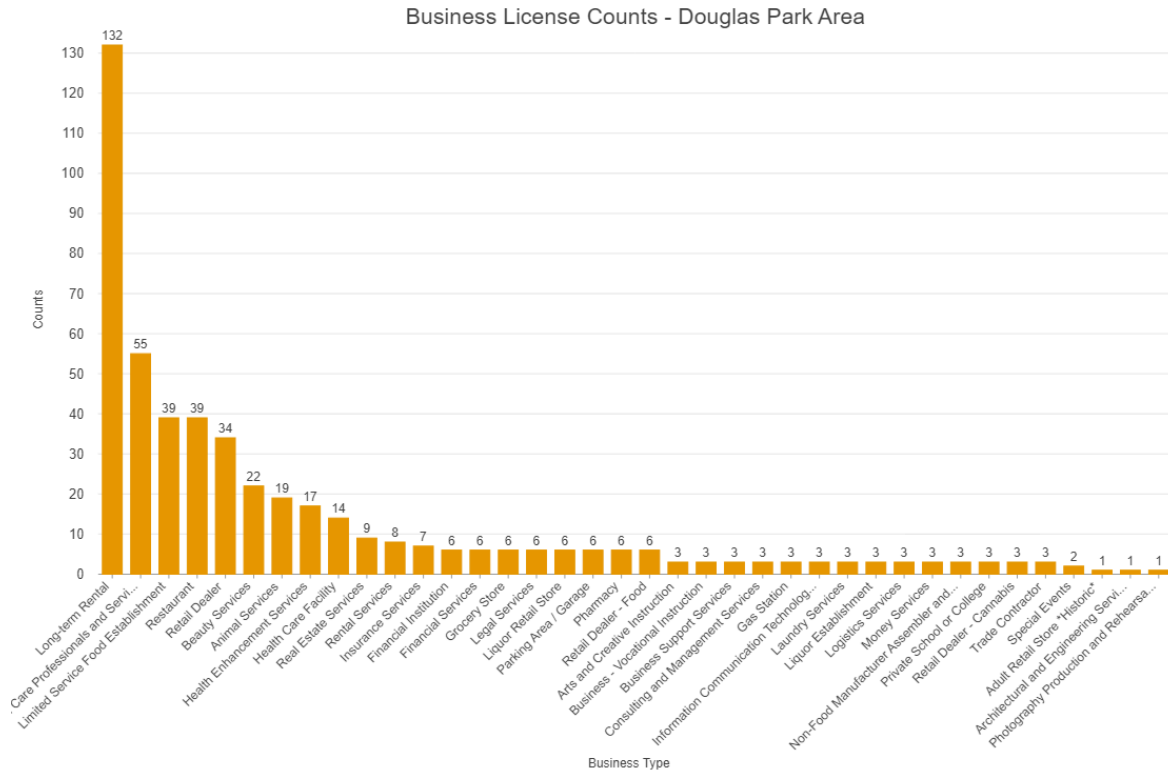


Chart 1. Business license counts and types in the Douglas Park area. Created by Marina Miller, 2026. Data source: Vancouver Business Licenses Open Data. The geographic boundary is the same as Map 1.

The analysis from Map 1 and Chart 1 can give us a sense of which businesses in the neighbourhood are immediately community-serving. When we say community-serving (or local-serving), we mean businesses which play an important role in allowing local residents to live and shop in the same area so they depend less on cars (Source: Canada Lands Company). It can also be defined more specifically as small businesses and services that primarily cater to the daily needs of residents in a specific neighborhood rather than drawing customers from across the city (Source: Lafayette Land Use Code).

Looking at the different types and counts in Chart 1, we can see that the highest count businesses (besides rental businesses) appear to be community-services. There are care services, food, retail, beauty, animal services, and health at the top of the list. This helps create a more complete community, where residents can walk to access daily needs and services. Though, a limitation of this analysis is that it does not break down into prices for the services; it's possible that there may be more boutique pet stores and beauty salons for example, which most residents can't afford, and they travel farther for things in their price range.

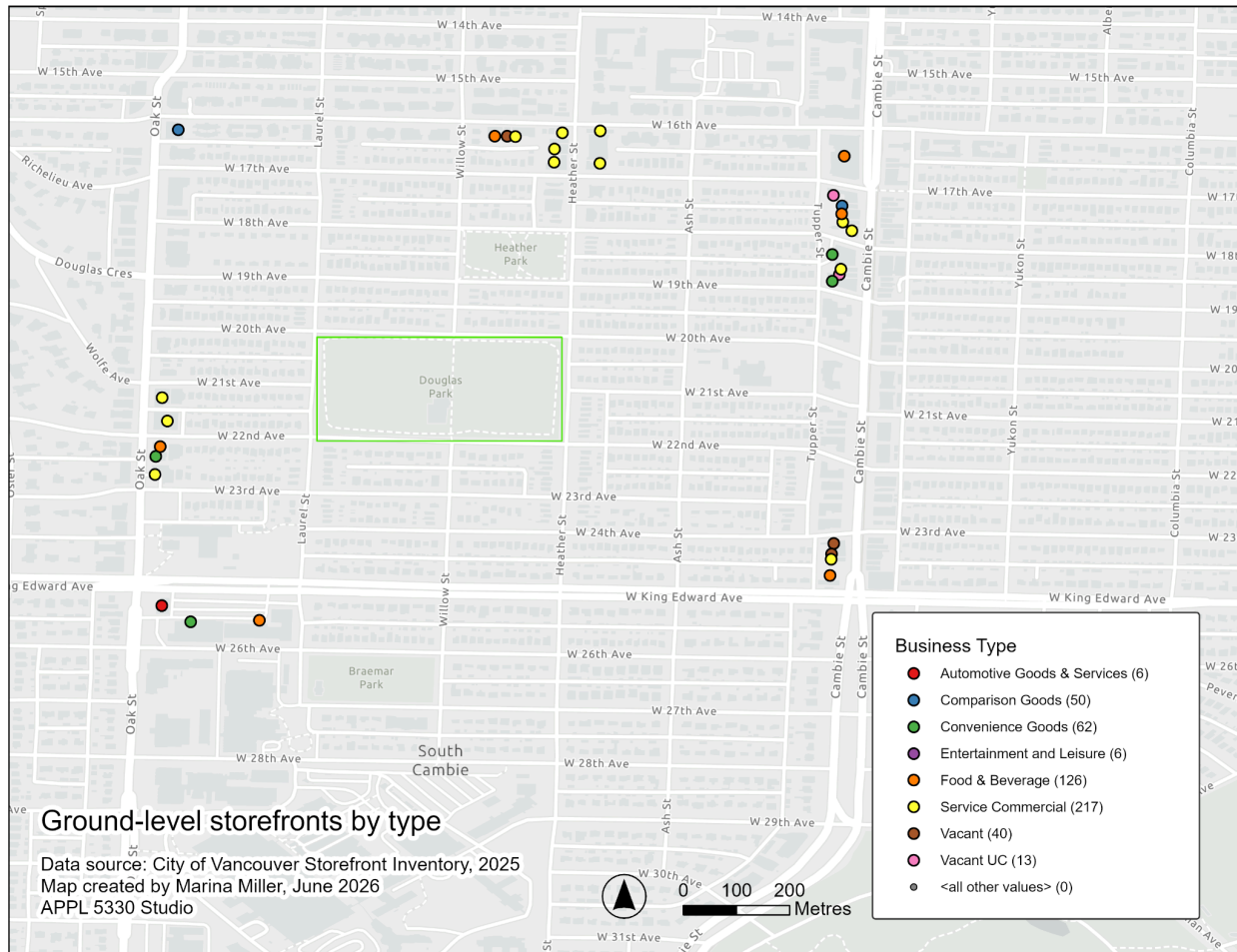
Several of the business licenses are registered in the residential area, indicating there may be some at-home businesses.

According to the most [up-to-date data](#), there are no small-scale neighbourhood retail businesses in this area, i.e. nonconforming retail which is now in a newer residential or other land use designation. There used to be a few which are now identified as demolished (See grey points in the figure to the right. Source: UBC, 2019).



Vancouver's ODP includes a couple relevant policies regarding businesses in this neighbourhood:

- 1.9.2: “Support opportunities to add stores, shops, work from home options, homebased businesses, and the informal economy to help meet the needs of a growing population. Explore new job space in single developments, clustered, or co-located with community uses.”
- 2.4.2: “Ensure the residential density needed to support local-serving retail, particularly close to shopping streets, to increase the local customer base, support commercial area success, and reduce development pressure on existing high streets.”



Map 2. Location of ground-level storefronts by type in the Douglas Park area. Created by Marina Miller, 2026. Data source: City of Vancouver Open Data.

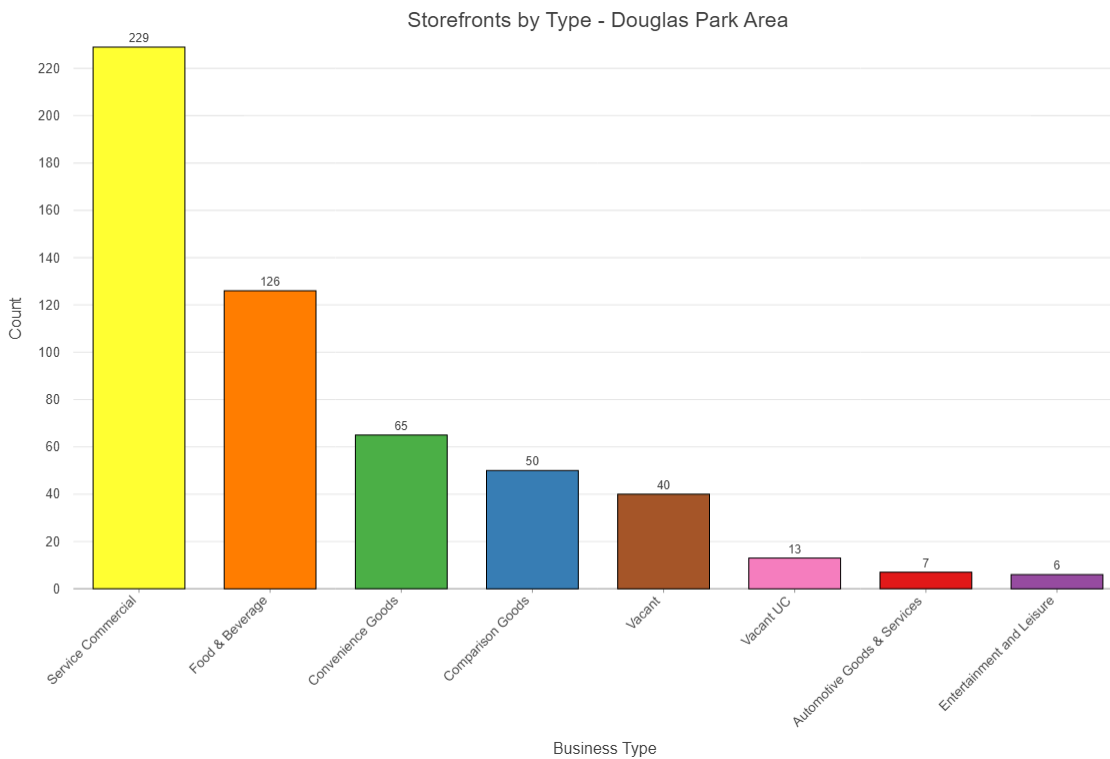
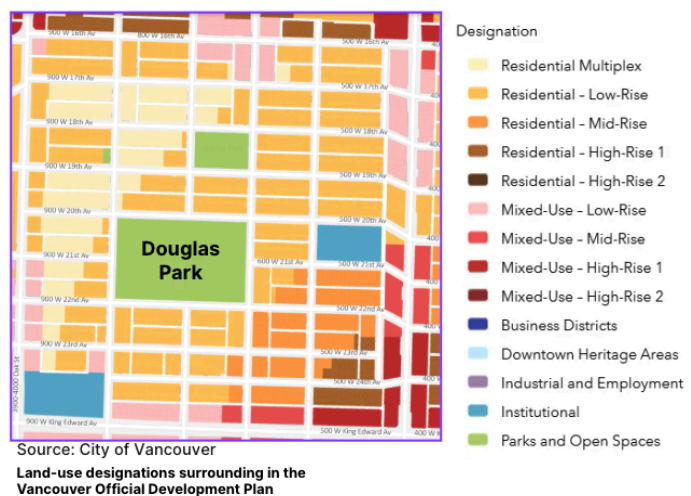


Chart 2. Ground-level storefronts by count and type in the Douglas Park area. Created by Marina Miller, 2026. Data source: Vancouver Storefront Inventory 2025. The geographic boundary is the same as Map 2.

As mentioned when analyzing Map 1 and Chart 1, when we analyze the ground-level storefronts in the area (Map 2 and Chart 2), we can see there is a fair amount of community-serving businesses which make sense for storefronts as they’re accessible from the street. However, over 200 of the storefronts are categorized as “Service Commercial”, not all of which are necessarily community-serving.

There is potential for growth in the number of businesses in the neighbourhood. Vancouver’s ODP Land Use Designations, incorporating TOA tiers, doesn’t just describe what residential density is allowed, but where mixed use and commercial areas can be. As higher and more dense housing is built, especially along the main roads, we can expect to see more ground-level storefronts serving the community and beyond, in line with Vancouver’s direction for mixed-use development.



It is unlikely to see new storefronts within the blocks immediately surrounding Douglas Park, so the scenario where the park site is redeveloped could provide the opportunity to integrate small-scale commercial uses. This could be as simple as an on-site cafe integrated with a revitalized community centre.

There is one Business Improvement Area (BIA) bordering the park's neighbourhood, the [Cambie Village Business Association](#). They represent over 400 businesses, helping promote them, host events, enhance the streetscape, provide services, and more. Assuming this association continues into the future, it will become responsible for even more businesses and visitors as properties within the TOA densify and diversify.

Employment

Demographic context

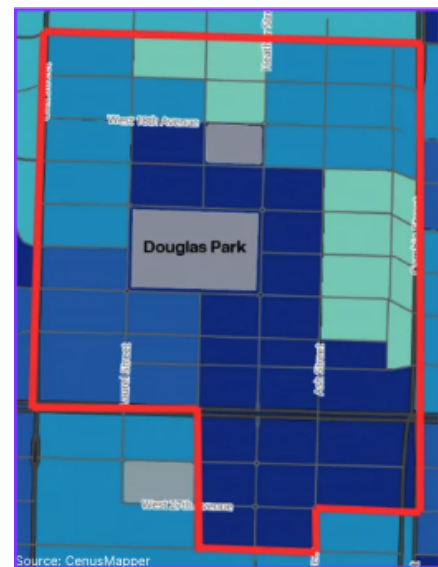
The community profile for Douglas Park can be analyzed via census dissemination areas (see image to the right, sourced from Census Mapper). Based on nine 2021 Census dissemination areas around the park, the immediate study area has approximately 6,010 residents, 2,710 private households, and an average household size of about 2.2 people.

The age profile shows the area serves a mix of user groups. Children aged 0 to 14 make up about 13.8% of the local population, adults aged 15 to 64 make up 73.3%, and seniors aged 65 and over make up 12.8%. This means Douglas Park supports families with children, youth, working-age adults, and older residents.

The household profile is also mixed, with one-person (34.7%), two-person (34.3%), and three or more person households (31.7%). Approximately 56.4% are owned and 43.6% are rented. Notably, 75.3% of occupied dwellings in the selected area are apartment-type units, though a large portion of these are on Cambie Street and Oak Street.

Neighbourhood Employment

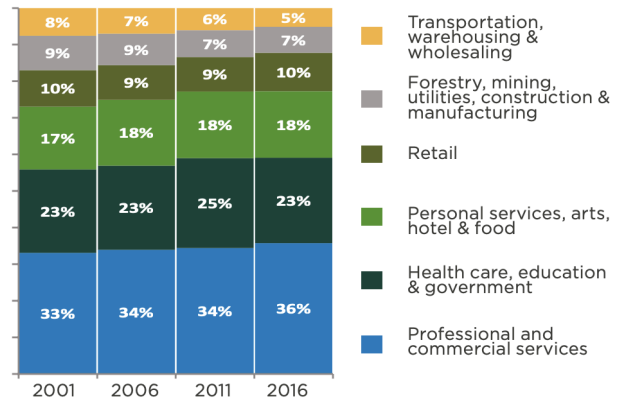
As mentioned, there are hundreds of businesses in the immediate neighbourhood of Douglas Park. Many of the business licenses are registered in the residential area, indicating there may be some at-home businesses. Additionally, several people are employed by the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Park Board to operate the [Douglas Park Community Centre](#).



Employment in the City of Vancouver

Vancouver is home to [one third](#) of the region’s jobs, with the largest employment sectors being professional, scientific and technical services; health care and social assistance; accommodation and food services; and retail trade, which together account for 49% of all jobs in the city. Industries like film and video game production have skyrocketed in the last twenty years, redefining the economic landscape.

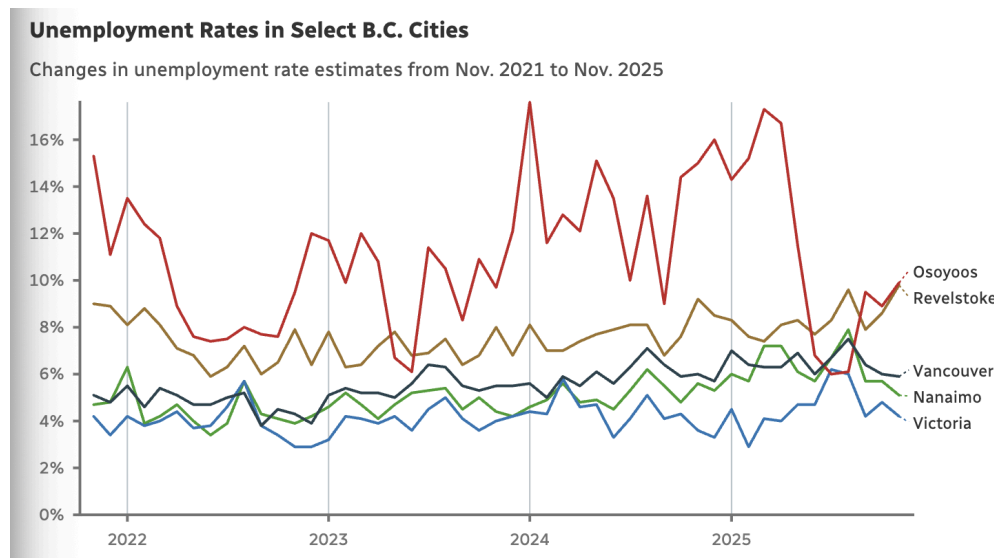
FIGURE 1. HISTORICAL TRENDS IN EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS IN VANCOUVER, 2001 - 2016



Source: Statistics Canada Census, 2001 - 2016: Jobs by NAICS. Sector groups defined by City staff as outlined in Note 4 in the [Appendix](#).

Regarding land use, 10% of Vancouver’s land allows for “jobs only”, and 50% of jobs are located on only 10% of land as well. There are approximately 80,000 businesses in the city, 54% being singly self-employed and 46% having one or more employees. A majority of employees in Vancouver work in larger businesses, but as we saw in Map 1, some business licenses are registered within single family homes.

The [unemployment rate](#) in Vancouver was 6.7% as of May 2026, which is [similar](#) to the region as a whole and has risen since 2021. [Income](#) in Vancouver increased much faster than inflation before and during the first year of the pandemic. Part of this is attributed to government income support programs which have since ended. Overall, Vancouver has a higher incidence of low-income and an inequitable income distribution compared to other cities.



(Graph Source: CBC, 2026)

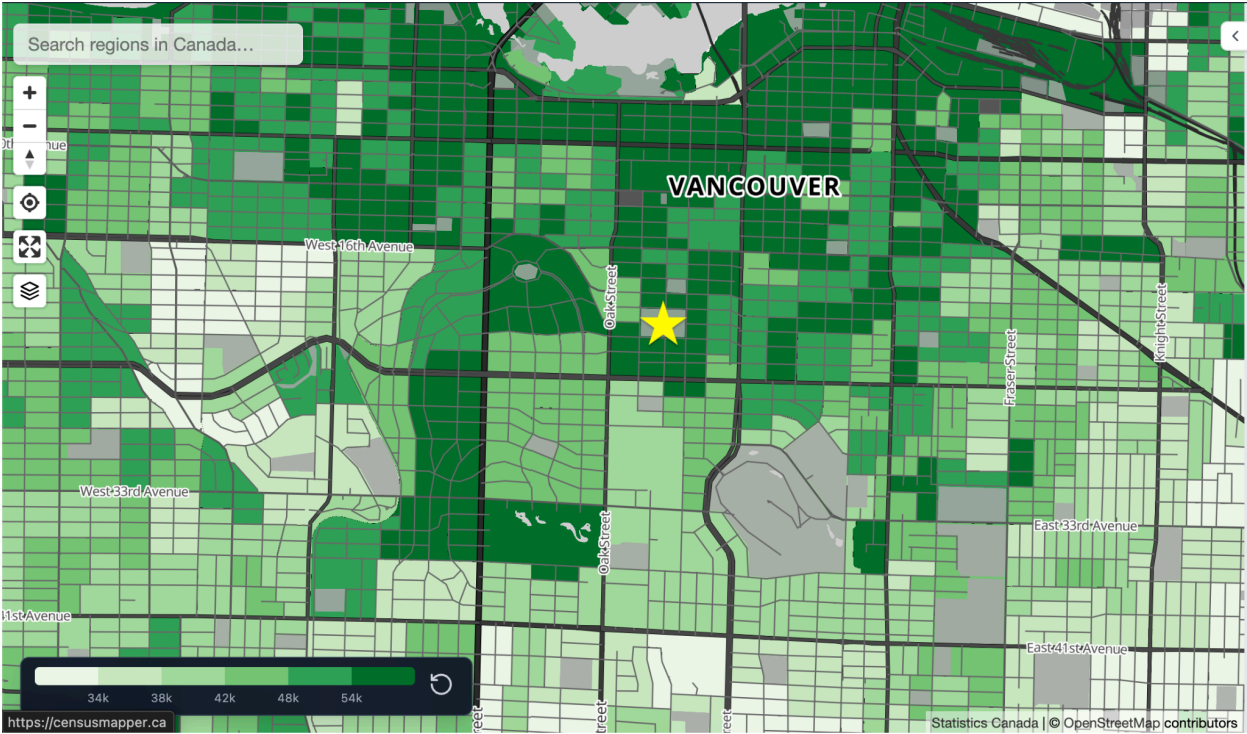
In the immediate years after the pandemic, employment sectors recovered at varying rates. Accommodation and food services lagged, while other office-based employment has shown significant growth. A big part of this was the ability to [work from home](#). In the past couple years, some organizations and industries have been changing policies to push more back-to-office. All of these trends and factors should be considered for development on Douglas Park, as it will affect the profile of likely buyers/renters, and what types of amenities they desire.

Census indicator	Applies to	2016 Census (2015 income)	2021 Census (2020 income)	Rate of change
Median individual income	People age 15+ in private households with income	\$32,896	\$42,000	28% increase
Median household income	Private households ⁶	\$65,423	\$82,000	25% increase
Median family income	Economic families ⁷ in private households	\$90,921	\$113,000	24% increase

Data source: Statistics Canada, 2016 and 2021 Census of Population

Table 2 Median individual, household and family income for the City of Vancouver, 2015 and 2020

(Table Source: City of Vancouver)

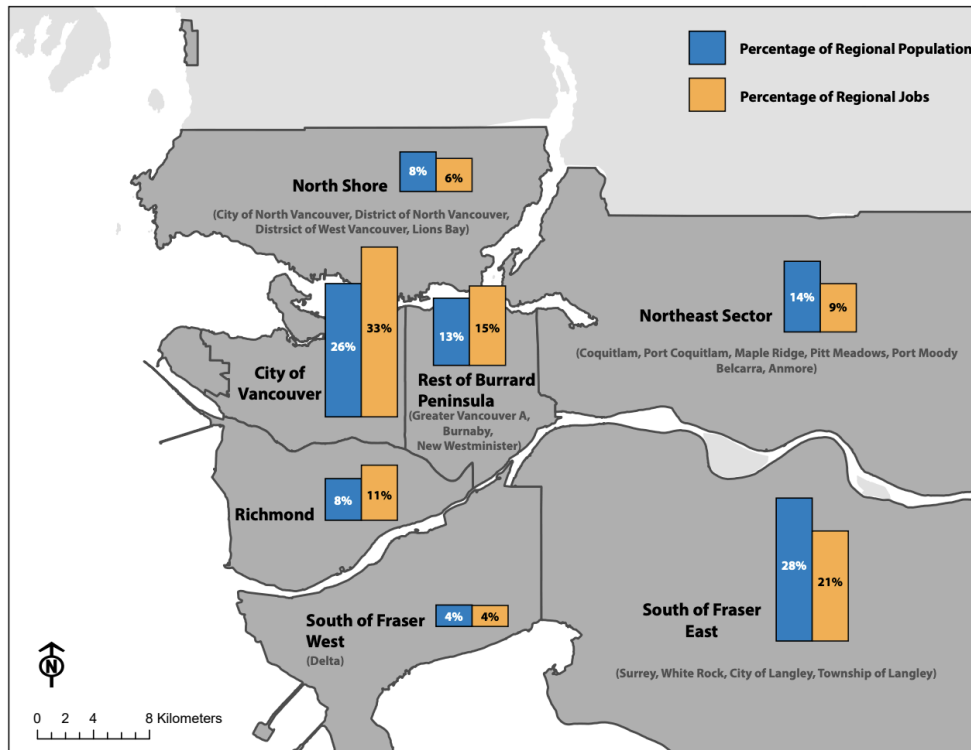


Map 3. Incomes in the Douglas Park area (star symbol) compared to surrounding neighbourhoods. Source: Census Mapper, 2021 Census Data.

Regional and Provincial Employment

The GDP of [Metro Vancouver](#) represents 61% of the provincial GDP, with the largest sector contributions coming from the finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE) sector. The city of Vancouver has a population of 631,388 (26% of the region) and 377,000 jobs (33% of the jobs in Metro Vancouver).

FIGURE 1. PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION AND JOBS BY SUB-REGION ACROSS METRO VANCOUVER



Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census: Jobs by NAICS (2 digit). Note that this data does not include jobs "with no fixed workplace address". See Note 1 in the [Appendix](#).

(Map Source: City of Vancouver)

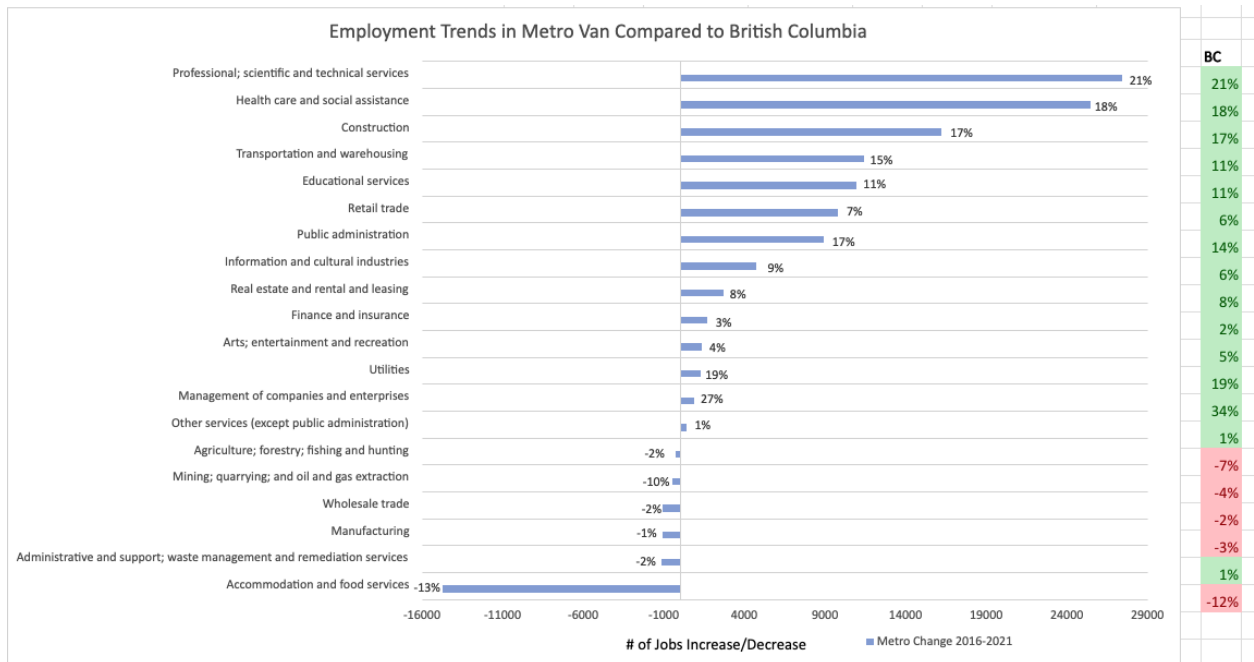


Chart 3. Employment Trends in metro Vancouver Compared to British Columbia. Marina Miller, 2026. Data Source: Provided by Matt Bourke for APPL 5330, derived from Statistics Canada 2016 Census. Note that this data does not include jobs “with no fixed workplace address”.

It is important to understand regional and provincial employment to get wider context for what’s going on in Vancouver, and therefore the Douglas Park area. Chart 3 shows the growth or decrease in job types (by industry) between 2016-2021. In this period, the largest increase happened in Professional, Health Care, and Construction, followed closely behind by Transport/Warehousing and Education.

One industry stands out as having the highest decrease, which was Accommodation and Food services (18%), telling us there is possibly a lower demand for this, or there are automations in place for certain jobs for example. However, in Vancouver, this industry increased by 23%, telling us that this industry is more important and growing more in the city than the region & province as a whole. This makes sense, as Vancouver is the metropolitan centre for entertainment, arts, culture, and food.

Planning Implications

Understanding the business and employment conditions for an area, city, and region is important when considering land development and community placemaking. Developers are seeking to balance the desires of the market, i.e. the buyers and renters, while balancing regulatory constraints from the city and province, and considering the bottom line at all times so that it's financially feasible. Economics play a major role in all of this, from influencing how people are spending their money, to travelling to work and whether residents of a new development would be well-served by local businesses. For example, if there was a trend towards more working from home, developers may consider including more at-home office spaces in developed units.

More planning implications from an economic lens include:

- **Transit-Oriented Development:** Closely tied to economics is transit, as it affects people's ability to get to work and other places. Douglas Park lies inside the third tier of a SkyTrain Transit Oriented Area, which required a minimum allowable density from the City's regulations of up to 3.0 FAR and a minimum allowable height of up to 8 storeys. Development must adhere to these, and consider associated guidelines as defined by the province and the City. Additionally, development should consider the potential effects of TOA legislation and the new Vancouver ODP on land values, property taxes, lease rates for businesses, etc.
- **Complete communities:** Douglas Park/Site 1 is 13 acres, which is a significant amount of largely undeveloped land relative to the neighbourhood. Development should carefully consider how this site can incorporate principles of complete communities, such as walkability and active transportation support. A core goal of Metro Vancouver's long-term plan is to "create resilient, healthy, connected, and complete communities that service the projected population, housing, and employment growth over the coming decades" (Source: Vancouver ODP). Transportation 2040, the Complete Streets Framework, Active Transportation Design Guidelines, and Transit-Oriented Development Guidelines promote safe, accessible and sustainable mobility by prioritizing walking, cycling, transit use, and universal accessibility. Complete streets are intended to safely accommodate users of all ages and abilities while improving the public realm, reducing reliance on private vehicles, and engaging residents actively in public spaces.
- **Employment lands:** The economic structure of a neighbourhood can help planners with both short and long term decision making for employment. It can inform how much land is needed for employment through zoning, whether regulations are ensuring room for growth, and which applications to fast-track. Additionally, understanding things like employment rates and income can influence social and financial policy. In the case of

Douglas Park, it would not be an employment-only site, but could contribute some more employment than it currently does.

- **Community-serving services and commercial:** Development should assess whether additional residents in the neighbourhood would necessitate or benefit from small-scale commercial, childcare, or community-serving employment uses on site. This relates to the point above on employment land, but thinks more from the perspective of residents who are using services such as childcare or recreation.

Conclusion

The economic analysis of Douglas Park highlights its role at multiple scales: within the immediate neighbourhood, within the South Cambie neighborhood, within the Cambie Corridor, and in the wider city, region, and province. Douglas Park (Site 1) is most notably located within the third tier of a provincially legislated Transit-Oriented Area, meaning it offers great potential for redevelopment which balances new housing density and economic services. The existing economic landscape is characterized by relatively high incomes, some home businesses, a mix of local-serving storefronts, and proximity to key transit infrastructure. Any future redevelopment must align with the objectives outlined in Vancouver's Official Development Plan, the Cambie Corridor Plan, and other policies which each touch on economics.

Planning for a new development on Site 1 should consider integrating employment-generating spaces and essential community services, such as childcare or small-scale commercial, to create a more complete community. This approach minimizes reliance on private vehicles and fosters a resilient environment where residents can live, work, and access daily necessities locally. By leveraging the site's proximity to the King Edward SkyTrain Station and adhering to TOA legislation, development could create a site that is both economically viable and socially inclusive. Successful development needs to balance market realities and projections, regulatory frameworks, and a commitment to accessible economic opportunities for current and new residents of the neighbourhood. Looking at Douglas Park from an economic lens is critical, as its development will shape the fabric of both the immediate and wider area regarding employment and business.

Generative AI Statement: Google Gemini was used in the research phase to help find relevant documents on local employment and business information. Google Gemini in Google Docs was used on June 22 to draft the Conclusion section of the paper, which was edited manually for accuracy and tone of voice. No other GenAI was used to create this report.

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