



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: January 9, 2025
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Meeting Date: January 20, 2026
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TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager
SUBJECT: Washroom Strategic Framework and 2026 Actions

Recommendations

- A. THAT Council approve the Washroom Framework and 2026 Actions contained in Appendix A of this report.
- B. THAT Council direct staff to report back annually with implementation updates, outlining progress on approved actions and recommending priorities for the coming year.

Purpose and Executive Summary

This report seeks Council's approval of the Washroom Strategic Framework ("Framework") and 2026 Actions for implementation. The Framework would establish an overarching approach for the City of Vancouver's work to facilitate and support washroom access across the city.

If approved, the Framework will progress Council's priority to ensure that Vancouver has publicly accessible washrooms through:

- A holistic, collaborative approach across City departments and with external partners based on a shared vision and goals; and
- Annual implementable actions.

Prioritized 2026 actions focus on improving visibility, coordination, and partnerships across the city. City-wide actions will:

- Initiate work to integrate public washrooms into major capital projects;

- Explore alternative delivery models with community and private-sector partners;
- Pilot new technologies such as smart sensors and automated locks to improve operational efficiency, user experience, and asset maintenance; and
- Develop a unified dataset and wayfinding system to help residents and visitors easily locate open, accessible washrooms across Vancouver.

Prioritized 2026 actions in support of vulnerable communities will:

- Enhance wayfinding and signage to improve awareness of existing facilities;
- Pilot Portland Loos in the Downtown Eastside (in progress); and
- Continue to advocate for sustained provincial investment in attendant and community-based washrooms, recognizing that these services are essential to supporting vulnerable residents who have less reliable access to washrooms.

Should Council approve the recommendations, staff will continue to implement these Actions and will return to Council in Q4 2026 with an update on the initial 2026 Actions, and recommended actions for 2027 for consideration as part of the 2027 budget planning process.

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

- Older Persons Strategic Framework and 2025 Early Actions ([RTS 17637](#), February 5, 2025)
- Motion: Places to Be and Places to Go ([May 21, 2025](#))
- Vibrant Vancouver: City Council's Strategic Priorities 2023-2026 ([RTS 15933](#), October 31, 2023)
- Accessibility Strategy ([RTS 15313](#), July 19, 2022)
- Motion: Water and Washrooms as a Human Right ([March 10, 2020](#))
- Healthy City Strategy ([RTS 10493](#), October 29, 2014)

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

Context and Background

Washrooms are essential to the dignity, health, and well-being of all residents and visitors. The ability to find a nearby, clean, and safe facility shapes how people experience the city.

The City, Park Board and Vancouver Public Library maintain an extensive network of public washrooms across Vancouver. The Park Board operates 129 or 83% of Vancouver's current public washroom network and is led by the Parks Washroom Strategy adopted in 2020. While the majority of Vancouver's washrooms are guided by the Park Board policy framework, a new Citywide service approach would address access needs in a more holistic and coherent way, including intentionally planning for the needs of older adults, families with young children, people with chronic illnesses or disabilities, shift workers, and those experiencing homelessness.

Further, different parts of the city have different levels of need. In many areas, regular daytime

access through City or partner-operated facilities may be sufficient. In others, particularly areas with higher concentrations of vulnerable populations, enhanced models that integrate social or health supports and allow for overnight use may be required to ensure safe, reliable access.

Washroom access also advances key City priorities, including the *Vibrant Vancouver Strategy*, *Healthy City Strategy*, *Accessibility Strategy*, *Older Persons Framework*, and *Uplifting Chinatown* and *Uplifting Downtown Eastside* initiatives, as well as supports tourists and other visitors to the city.

Recent and Ongoing Efforts

The City provides washroom access through both direct operations and partnerships. Current sites and assets include:

- **10** automatic public toilets and **2** comfort stations operated by Engineering;
- **3** public washroom facilities within community centres operated by Arts, Culture and Community Services;
- **129** Park Board washroom facilities guided by Park Board Washroom Strategy;
- **21** Vancouver Public Library washroom facilities; and
- Several community-operated facilities supported through grants or in-kind contributions.

Recent actions include installation of Portland Loos at Crab Park and (upcoming) Main & Powell and Gastown, and continued support for 24/7 comfort stations at Main & Hastings, Pigeon Park, and attendant program continuation at Oppenheimer Park. The City also secured provincial funding through March 2026 to maintain social services at Aboriginal Front Door (390 Main St) and the Watari DTES Hub (320 Alexander St), both of which offer washroom access.

Park Board Washroom Strategy

Within its approved budgets, the Park Board has strategically redirected focus to improve washroom service levels and capital delivery across the city. These improvements include:

Service Level Improvements

- **Prioritized service where demand is highest:** Implemented a three-tier system so high-use parks receive more reliable opening hours and additional cleanings.
- **Improved cleanliness standards:** Established a regular deep-cleaning program across park washrooms.
- **Reduced misuse and improved issue reporting:** Optimized garbage placement and added 311 decals to support faster public reporting of problems.
- **Increased reliability and efficiency:** Installing automatic locking to improve consistency and redeploy staff time toward cleaning rather than manual locking/unlocking.
- **Improved access and inclusivity:** Moving to single-user, all-gender washrooms for all new and renewed facilities.
- **Improved public communication:** Standardized closure signage showing reason, expected duration, and nearest alternative washroom.

Capital Delivery Improvements

- **Expanded access:** Designing externally accessed washrooms into Park Board facilities where feasible.
- **Standardized delivery:** Working with REFM on a standardized washroom design to streamline delivery and reduce costs.
- **Integrated capital planning:** Coordinating with Engineering Services to incorporate washrooms into streetscape capital projects where appropriate.

Role of Partners

Meeting the full range of community needs requires a differentiated approach that recognizes the network of washrooms available, beyond just those enabled by the City:

1. In most neighbourhoods, reliable daytime washroom access can be achieved through City, Park Board, VPL, TransLink, and private providers (e.g. malls, cafes), supported by appropriate planning, investment, and coordination to ensure consistency and accessibility across the network.
2. In high-needs areas like the DTES, attendant-based operating models help keep washrooms usable. Sites such as Oppenheimer Park and comfort stations show reduced vandalism, improved availability, and greater community safety. These locations require integrated health, outreach, and social supports to create safe, inclusive environments. Attendant models in complex social contexts need provincial funding for operations and staffing, while the City can provide suitable facilities. Sustained provincial investment is essential to meet public health needs and maintain safety.

Within this multi-sector context, the City plays both a service provider and coordinator role, maintaining infrastructure and fostering partnerships across the public, private and non-profit sectors. Because enhanced models such as those outlined in Group 2 above intersect with provincial mandates around health, housing, and social services, continued partnership and investment from the Province are critical.

By aligning roles and responsibilities across jurisdictions, the City can ensure that public washrooms function not only as essential infrastructure but as a vital component of community well-being and effective public realm management.

Discussion

Despite the ongoing efforts to provide washroom access across the city, service gaps remain and there are opportunities to improve delivery, funding, operations and wayfinding. An overarching strategic framework will provide the structure and coherence needed to enable the City to better leverage partnerships across public, non-profit and private sectors to address gaps and plan for the future in alignment with policy and operational priorities.

To inform the development of a strategic framework, staff reviewed 311 feedback data, departmental operational data on existing washroom operations and public realm feces removal, and qualitative input gathered through related City initiatives such as the *Older Persons Framework* and other community engagement processes. These insights reinforced

the benefits that would derive from clearer coordination, consistent service standards, and a more proactive, data-driven approach to planning and investment.

Overview of the Framework

Staff have developed the proposed City of Vancouver Washroom Framework to provide strategic direction, foster collaboration among departments and partners, enhance coverage, ensure accountability, and guide operational decisions. The proposed Framework includes four enduring components: Vision, Mission, Strategic Objectives, and Guiding Principles. It is intended to serve as a consistent foundation for service planning and delivery.

To guide implementation, the Framework recognizes the three primary levers available to Council — investing, regulating, and partnering — as complementary ways to enhance washroom access for the public. In the current fiscal environment, actions will focus primarily on strengthening partnerships and investing in the most impactful initiatives within existing budgets, while identifying opportunities for future regulatory or funding tools to support long-term system improvements for future Council consideration.

This approach will enable the City to drive change while remaining adaptable and responsive to emerging trends and opportunities.

From Framework to Action

Specific tactical Actions will be explored and implemented each year using the Framework's guidance and through the annual budget process and the capital planning process. This approach enables the City to remain flexible and responsive to evolving contexts while advancing towards the Framework's long-term vision. The City's Strategy and Project Support Office will oversee and coordinate the implementation of actions across departments and jurisdictions.

An annual Actions Update to Council outlining actions aligned to implement the Framework will ensure accountability for its implementation.

Performance Indicators

Staff will determine operational metrics to support the Washroom Framework Objectives, both on the completion of annual actions and the impact in terms of washroom access and quality.

Next Steps

Should Council approve the Framework, staff would:

- Implement current initiatives in support of the identified 2026 Actions; and
- Return to Council in Q4 2026 with a progress update and recommended actions for the next year towards the Framework vision.

The Framework and subsequent implementation will be led and coordinated in collaboration with staff from across City departments, Park Board, VPL, and external community partners.

Financial Implications

The 2026 Actions as identified in the Washrooms Framework will be funded within the existing 2026 Operating Budget.

Staff will return in Q4 2026 with an update on implementation of 2026 Actions and recommended actions for the coming year for consideration as part of the 2027 Budget process.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report's recommendations.

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APPENDIX A WASHROOM FRAMEWORK AND 2026 ACTIONS

Washroom Framework

Vision	Mission
Everyone in Vancouver has reasonable access to a network of clean, safe, accessible and dignified washrooms when they need one.	The City of Vancouver <u>supports access</u> to a broader network of accessible, clean, and safe washrooms that enhance the quality of life for all residents and visitors, promoting health, hygiene, and inclusivity within our community.
Guiding Principles	
Operational and Financial Viability	Ensure that City-supported public washroom initiatives are cost-effective, sustainable, and supported by appropriate funding and staffing models.
Alignment to Jurisdictional Responsibility	Work within the City's jurisdiction to advance actions directly under City responsibility, while collaborating with other orders of government to align efforts and support the greatest impact through their respective authorities and resources.
Partnerships	Deliver washrooms for community in collaboration with other community partners such as other orders of government, private sector, NPOs, places of worship, etc.
Strategic and Contextual Placement	Distribute washrooms across the city to meet the specific needs of different communities and populations, including specific washroom area plans where necessary.

Commitment to Management and Maintenance		Maintain standards of cleanliness and functionality ensuring durability of the facilities with dedicated resources and management for City-supported public washrooms.
Equity		Ensure that public washrooms are accessible and safe for everyone.
Strategic Pillars		
A. The City will deliver public washrooms in an efficient and effective manner.	B. The City will work to broaden washroom access through partnership and advocacy.	C. The City will support the public to find available washrooms through wayfinding.
Strategic Objectives		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop sustainable funding and regulatory frameworks to support ongoing washroom operations, upgrades, and new construction. 2. Expand washroom network coverage to ensure equitable access across all neighbourhoods, prioritizing underserved areas and high-demand public spaces. 3. Implement standardized, inclusive, and sustainable design principles that reflect best practices in accessibility, durability and cost-effectiveness. 4. Deliver dignified washroom experiences through standardized 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen partnerships with other orders of government, businesses, and community organizations to broaden the range and availability of washrooms. 2. Leverage development and policy tools to integrate washroom provision into municipal regulations, infrastructure investments, and development approvals to ensure long-term expansion of facilities. 3. Facilitate consistent dialogue and collaboration across internal, and external jurisdictions to improve washroom access. 4. Work with the provincial and federal governments to create supportive 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure public and partner-provided washrooms are easy to locate through consistent, visible, and inclusive signage. 2. Offer accurate details about washroom locations and amenities through digital platforms. Promote the value of accessible washrooms as a core public amenity, increasing public understanding, trust, and use. 3. Monitor usage patterns and gaps to ensure signage, digital tools, and service delivery are responsive to community needs.

<p>maintenance, monitoring systems, and responsive repair protocols.</p> <p>5. Establish clear governance structures and inter-departmental coordination mechanisms to ensure consistent leadership and accountability for washroom delivery.</p>	<p>policies, rules, and possible funding so that partners can provide more washrooms as part of a shared responsibility for community well-being.</p>	
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2026 Actions

The following 2026 Actions advance the Washroom Framework through two complementary service categories: City-wide actions strengthen a coordinated network of public and publicly-accessible washrooms to meet everyday neighbourhood needs, while actions for vulnerable communities prioritize initiatives that leverage opportunities for sustained provincial investment to address complex hygiene, public health, and public safety needs. Staff will return in Q4 2026 with an update on 2026 Actions and an implementation plan for subsequent actions for Council's consideration.

City-Wide 2026 Actions

ACTION	RELATED STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME
CW 2026-1: Increase efficiency of operations by piloting emerging technologies (e.g., VPL's Brave Sensors, PB's auto-lock technology) in targeted high-use locations. Track performance, operating and capital impacts, and user satisfaction.	A3: Implement standardized, inclusive, and sustainable design principles that reflect best practices in accessibility, durability, and cost-effectiveness.	Generate real-world data on cost savings, reliability, and user experience to inform a broader cost-benefit analysis and build an evidence base for scaling across different urban contexts in the City.
CW 2026-2: Develop, for Council consideration, alternative models for publicly accessible washroom delivery in partnership with	B1: Strengthen partnerships with other orders of government, businesses, and community organizations to broaden the range and availability of washrooms.	Alternate models of delivery that utilize existing and external resources in a cost-effective manner.

community organizations, service agencies, and private-sector partners.		
CW 2026-3: Increase Wayfinding to support access: Capture all publicly available City-funded washrooms in the City's data systems as the central source of reliable information. Use this dataset to design and install visible wayfinding signage across the City, including directions, hours of operation, accessibility icons, linking to the live map. Prioritize signage at transit hubs, major intersections, and high pedestrian traffic areas.	C2: Offer accurate details about washroom locations and amenities through digital platforms.	A clear, recognizable, and reliable public signage system that connects residents, visitors, and vulnerable populations to nearby facilities, reducing barriers to access and improving dignity in the public realm.
CW 2026-4: Increase accessibility of private washrooms: Develop an information sheet outlining accessibility information or best practices for businesses with accessible washrooms (e.g., unobstructed pathways, clear signage, universal access). Distribute this material through the business licence renewal process (both email and mailed notices).	B2: Leverage development and policy tools to integrate washroom provision into municipal regulations, infrastructure investments, and development approvals to ensure long-term expansion of facilities.	All renewing businesses will receive clear, consistent guidance on accessibility for public washrooms, with links to City resources and standards.
CW 2026-5: Identify opportunities to increase washrooms through the Capital Plan: Integrate washroom planning into the City's capital program by reviewing upcoming facilities development to scope a publicly-accessible washroom at City facilities.	B3: Facilitate consistent dialogue and collaboration across internal and external jurisdictions to improve washroom access.	A coordinated list of capital projects with identified opportunities to include public washrooms at high priority sites.

Review future street and infrastructure projects for opportunities to install public washrooms, or to extend utilities at high-priority future washroom and/or water station sites. Staff to bring forward options through the capital planning process to support coordinated investment and delivery.		
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Washrooms for Vulnerable Communities 2026 Actions

ACTION	RELATED STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME
VC 2026-1: Increase wayfinding for the DTES washrooms: Develop, publish, and maintain a clear, user-friendly map and dataset of all City-funded washrooms available to the public in the DTES, capturing details on hours of operation, accessibility, staffing, and capacity. Use this dataset and gap assessment to guide the prioritization, design, and installation of visible wayfinding signage to City-funded publicly accessible washrooms in 2026. As resources allow in subsequent years, expand to include partner-operated and non-profit–provided washrooms that are open to broader public access, supported where feasible through minor grants or partnerships. Review existing	B1:Strengthen partnerships with other levels of government, businesses, and community organizations to broaden the range and availability of washrooms.	Residents, service providers, and vulnerable populations can quickly identify where facilities are located and when they are accessible, improving awareness and coordination of washroom access.

washroom access to identify opportunities for overnight service.		
VC 2026-2: Continue to explore viability of cost-effective infrastructure approach for DTES. Assess pilot of Portland Loo at Main and Powell to provide feasibility for other priority locations.	A4: Deliver dignified washroom experiences through standardized maintenance, monitoring systems, and responsive repair protocols.	Community members can continue to access operating and well maintained washrooms with support services in the DTES.
VC 2026-3: Develop short-term strategies for continued attendants at Pigeon Park, Oppenheimer Park and other key locations as needed to support washroom access in the context of complex social issues while advocating for provincial government support.	A4: Deliver dignified washroom experiences through standardized maintenance, monitoring systems, and responsive repair protocols.	Community members can continue to access operating and well maintained washrooms with support services in the DTES.
VC 2026-04: Advocate to the provincial government for sustained funding for programming at least two locations in the DTES that include delivering washrooms (e.g. 390 Main St). Engage DTES Parliamentary Secretary in advocacy efforts.	B4: Work with the provincial and federal governments to create supportive policies, rules, and possible funding so that partners can provide more washrooms as part of a shared responsibility for community well-being.	Continue to partner with the Province with the goal of developing a multi-year funding commitment for at least 2 key programs delivering washrooms in the DTES.

APPENDIX B WASHROOM ACCESS GAP ASSESSMENT

A gap assessment was conducted to review existing public washroom locations and identify areas in need of washroom access.

Figure 1. Inventory of Existing Public Washrooms

1. A number of different departments and organizations provide public washrooms, including the Vancouver Park Board, Vancouver Public Library, Engineering Services, and Arts Culture and Community Services.
2. Washroom strategy can benefit from increased coordination across these jurisdictions.

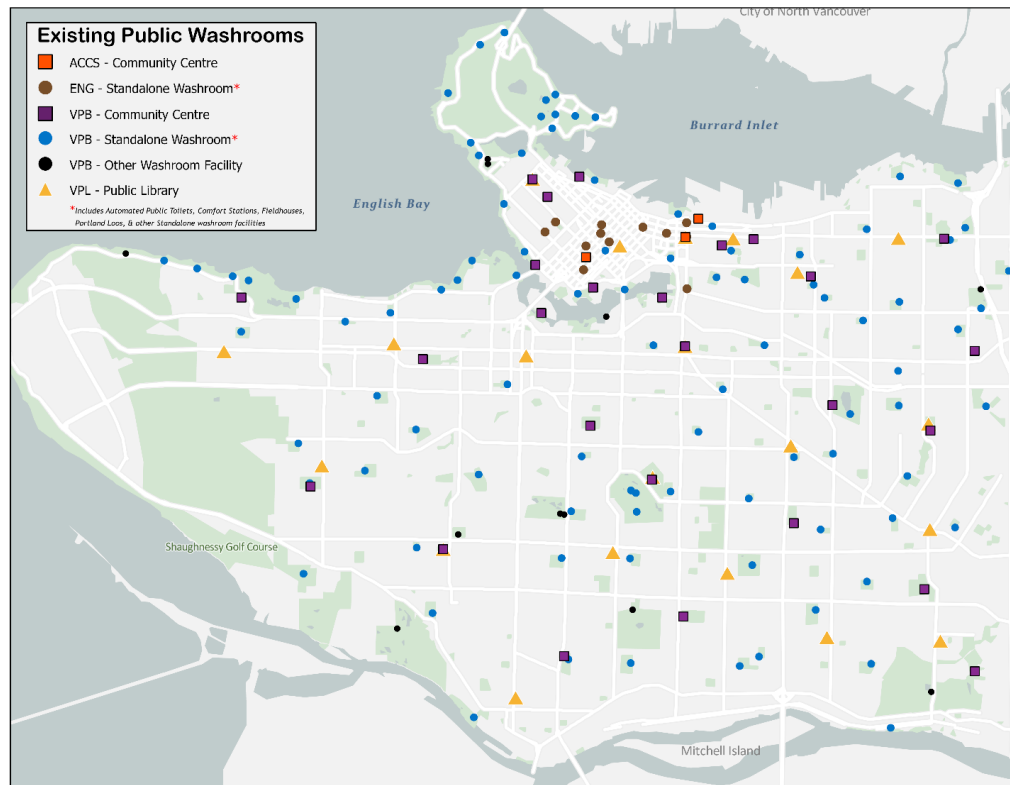


Figure 2. Existing Demand for Public Washrooms

The public washroom needs assessment informed where future facilities would be most beneficial. It identified that the following should be prioritized:

1. Locations near rapid transit stations and within village plan boundaries, recognizing these as zones slated for significant future growth and public amenities.
2. High-traffic beaches and destination parks, due to their consistent visitor volume and high vibrancy.
3. Areas where people tend to spend their time across the city, such as commercial activity, job space, parks, schools, transit frequency, and walkability,

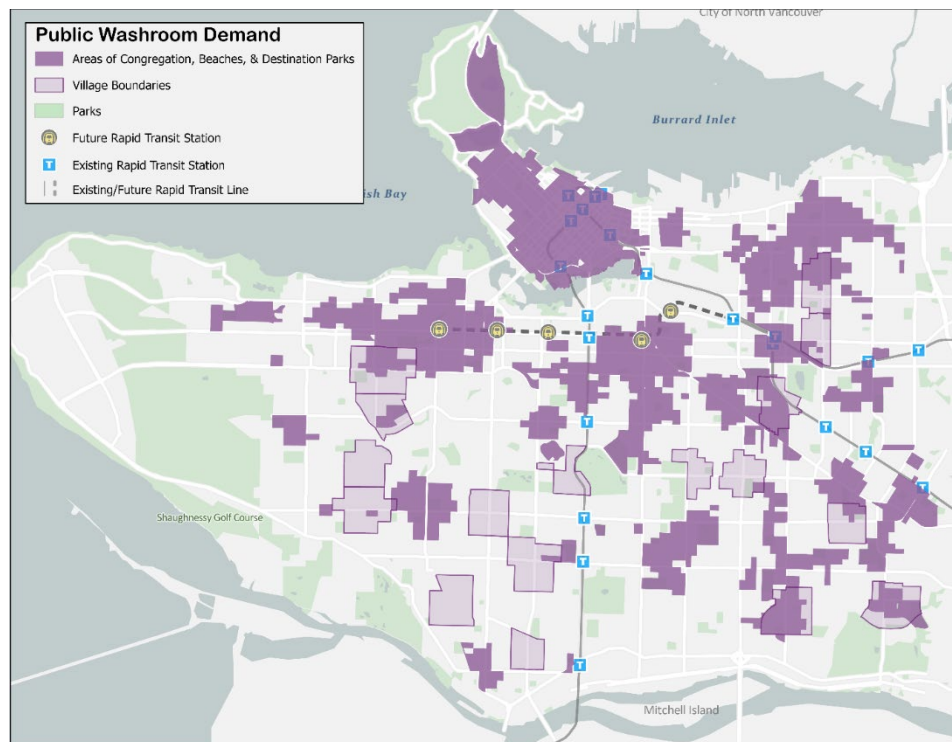


Figure 3. Priority Areas Network Analysis: Inventory Gaps & High Current Demand

An analysis identified areas of the city with high demand (Figure 2) that are more than 5- or 10-minutes walking distance from a public washroom, highlighting areas of need.

1. *Figure 3* does not accurately capture community demand in areas where various equity-denied communities are overrepresented (e.g. Downtown, Downtown Eastside). The map also does not highlight where a washroom may be temporarily damaged or inaccessible.

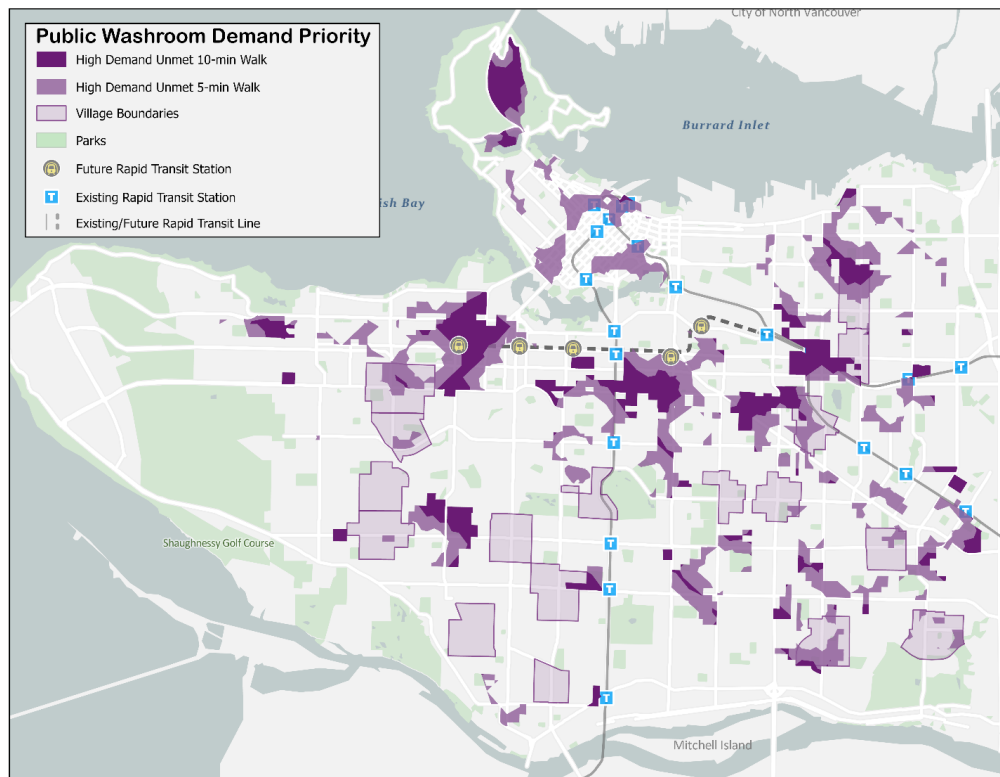


Figure 4. Map of Washroom Needs Connected to Complex Social Issues and Public Realm Management

Figure 4 below displays the relative density of Feces Cleanup incidents reported to 311 between January 1, 2024, and December 1, 2024.

1. In these areas, public washrooms that lack enhanced cleaning or integrated support services may not adequately meet the needs of individuals facing complex and intersecting challenges.
2. Publicly provided washroom infrastructure alone is not equipped to support these complex needs.
3. Staff may refer to Feces Cleanup Reports and other data to better understand local need, address urban issues, and adjust/deliver services.
4. Data may include multiple reports of singular incidents, animal waste incidents, and incidents on private property.
5. Multiple metrics are considered when complex social issues could result in high demand for hygiene and social supports, and/or public washrooms.
6. 311 Feces Reports alone undercount actual public feces incidents.

