

2025 Climate Action Community Outreach Strategy



Introduction

Vernon's Climate Action Plan (CAP) sets out a path where the whole community works together to reduce emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change.

Driving fossil fuel powered vehicles is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in our community, followed by heating/cooling buildings, and landfilling organic waste (Fig. 1). Vernon's CAP presents climate-friendly actions, such as riding the bus or biking, heating buildings and water with electricity, and composting food waste. These initiatives will help draw down GHG emissions, while building a healthy and resilient city.

Of the total 309,407 tonnes of GHG emissions generated community-wide in 2017, 99% were generated by the community-at-large and 1% were generated by City of Vernon services and operations. It is important for the City to lead the way on climate action, but it is critical that every citizen looks for ways to reduce their carbon footprint.

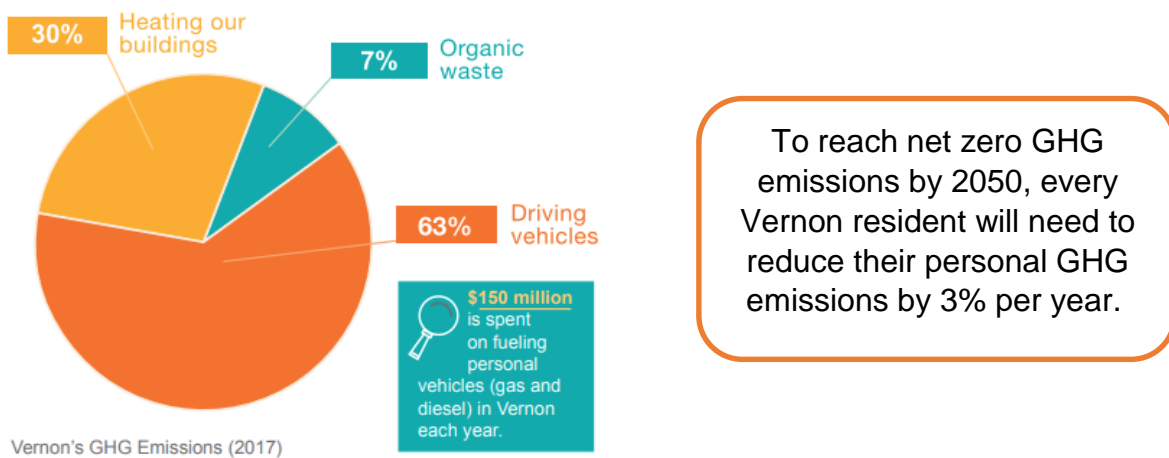


Figure 1: Vernon's 2017 GHG Emissions

Successful community outreach that drives behaviour change requires delivering specific, programmed solutions to help residents overcome barriers and facilitate their uptake of climate action. For example, the costs of purchasing a heat pump and the complexities of home energy retrofit processes are common barriers to climate action and many outreach strategies include financial rebates programs and coaching services to help residents reduce costs and successfully navigate the complexities of energy retrofits.

The proposed 2025 Outreach Strategy is therefore centred around the following climate action community program solutions (Table 2) that will support greenhouse gas reductions, remove barriers, and inspire residents to act on the CAP goals that were prioritized in the 2023-2026 Council Strategic Plan. Eight of the recommended programs are new and two are existing (i.e., GoByBike Week and Tree Voucher program), with recommendations to enhance these programs with additional funding.

Table 1: Summary of Climate Action Community Outreach Programs

Active transportation solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide equitable e-bike rebates to reduce purchase price • Coordinate GoByBike Week events to promote cycling
Low-carbon building solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide building energy retrofit rebates to lower costs • Offer coaching services to simplify retrofit processes • Collaborate with building industry groups to enhance capacity around low-carbon building solutions
Climate resiliency workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver community workshops for residents to learn simple, effective ways to adapt to severe weather events
Green business planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate free consulting services for businesses / non-profits to enhance green business practices
Youth climate careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support high school climate education programming • Sponsor youth climate employment opportunities
Grow the community tree canopy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the City’s existing Tree Voucher program to increase planting of shade trees in Vernon

Up to \$720,000 from BC’s Local Government Climate Action Program (LGCAP) is recommend to fund the development and implementation of these outreach program solutions. Specific program budget estimates are presented with the program details in the subsequent section. The individual program budgets may be adapted as program details and demands are determined.

The appendix section includes the overall community outreach vision and objectives, the general approach for implementing the objectives, target audience segmentation, key messages, and an inventory of communication channels and marketing materials that can be used to launch and promote the outreach programs.

Recommended Community Outreach Program Solutions

1. Equitable E-bike Rebates

The City of Vernon has the opportunity to join the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure’s (MOTI) E-Bike Rebate Program in November, 2024. There are currently over 490 people from Vernon on the waitlist for the BC E-Bike Rebate Program, which is scheduled to re-open before the end of 2024. Provincial funding is limited and the City of Vernon can invest additional funding into the BC program to ensure more people from Vernon get access to e-bike rebates this year. MOTI fully administers the rebate program and they provide three rebate amounts based on income (\$350, \$1000, \$1400 for high, med, and low-income levels, respectively).

Budget estimate & impact: \$110,000 to fund approximately 78 rebates in Vernon (assuming \$1400 rebate amount only). Seventy-eight new e-bikes on the road

could reduce GHG emissions by approximately 64.9 tonnes per year (average e-bike rider saves 16 kg CO_{2e} per week, according to analysis done by UBC on existing BC e-bike rebate programs).

2. GoByBikeBC Events

GoByBikeBC events bring together hundreds of people on the cycling paths throughout the city. You can log your KMs, track your emissions reduction, meet new people, and win prizes at community cycling celebrations. The Transportation Department does not have capacity to coordinate GoByBikeBC events while they complete the Transportation Plan (TP), so it is recommended that Long Range Planning Department leads this initiative in 2025. It is important to note that the Transportation Plan revisions will address development of active transportation infrastructure, such as multi-use paths, safe bike storage, and public e-bike charging to facilitate cycling.

Budget estimate & impact: \$20,000 for event hosting grants, contractor coordination support, and event materials and prizes. Approximately 12,000 kg of CO_{2e} reduction was achieved in Vernon 2024 GoByBikeBC weeks.

3. Building Energy Retrofit Rebates

The City of Vernon has the opportunity to join CleanBC's Municipal Rebate Top-ups in January 2025 to provide additional rebates for Vernon residents who qualify for CleanBC's building energy retrofit rebates. The Municipal Top-up amounts include \$2000 for an electric heat pump, \$1500 for electrical service upgrades, and \$1000 for electric heat pump water heaters. CleanBC fully administers the program and invoices the City of Vernon for the top-up amounts as they are granted.

Budget estimate & impact: \$110,000 to fund at least 55 rebates in Vernon (assuming \$2000 rebate amount only), which would reduce GHG emissions by roughly 110 tonnes CO_{2e} / year (average heat pump saves 2 tonnes CO_{2e} /yr).

4. Energy Retrofit Coaching Services

Contract a third-party to provide a set number of coaching hours to help homeowners navigate the complexities of home energy retrofit processes. Lack of knowledge and time to research and pursue home energy retrofits is a major barrier to climate action.

Budget estimate & impact: \$110,000 to fund coaching services for approximately 220 households. Assuming this would lead to the installation of 220 new electric heat pumps in Vernon homes, this could reduce GHG emissions by approximately 440 tonnes CO_{2e} / year (exclusive of the emission reductions estimated above for the building energy rebate program).

5. Industry Collaboration on Low-carbon Buildings

Coordinate industry collaborations to raise awareness and build capacity around low-carbon building design and retrofits. Inform industry stakeholders of Vernon's Climate Action Plan, the BC Step Codes, building energy retrofit resources (e.g., rebates, coaching services), and low-carbon building technology options.

Budget estimate & impact: \$10,000 for hosting industry workshops and to develop industry information resources.

6. Community Climate Resiliency Workshops

Building on the success of the 2024 'Build Your Own Home Air Filter Workshop', develop a series of similar workshops to bring residents together to create resources to adapt to climate change emergencies (e.g. evacuation go-bags, home cooling kits, installing smart thermostats and weather stripping to save energy, etc.).

Budget estimate & impact: \$20,000 to fund 4-6 workshops in 2025, for up to 200 participants.

7. Green Business Planning Services

Contract a third-party to provide free consulting for small-med businesses and non-profit organizations to create/enhance green business plans and consider green business certifications.

Budget estimate & impact: \$30,000 to fund planning sessions for approximately 40 organizations.

8. Sponsor Youth Climate Action Education

The Climate Action Ripple Effect (CARE) program engages over 400 high school students in creating climate action projects. Youth are mentored by community members, they receive school credit for their projects, and they present their projects publicly at the annual CARE Youth Summit. Including the teachers, mentors and other community members that were involved, CARE 2024 engaged over 600 people in climate action.

Budget estimate & impact: The City of Vernon donated \$20,000 to School District 22 in 2024 for CARE; a \$20,000 sponsorship is recommended again for 2025.

9. Partially Fund Local Youth Climate Jobs

Youth Climate Corps BC (YCCBC) received \$3 million from the BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy to provide job opportunities for cohorts of 4-5 youth to help implement local government climate action plans. With support from a local partner (often the municipality), YCCBC can bring this employment program to any community. YCCBC directly employs a local youth manager to recruit/supervise the youth. They work from home and in the community (the City doesn't provide office space). Youth are between the ages of 17-30 and are employed for 6 months. City Administration will meet regularly with the local YCCBC manager to coordinate the community outreach tasks that the youth will help to deliver (e.g., GoByBikeBC events, CARE mentorships, resiliency workshops, community event displays, developing program marketing materials, etc.).

Budget estimate & impact: \$50,000 will provide joint-funding with YCCBC to hire 4-5 youth, plus a local YCCBC manager, who will be dedicated to supporting the implementation of the community outreach strategy program solutions.

10. Enhance the City of Vernon's Tree Voucher Program

Historically, the Tree Voucher Program has provided \$25 discounts for approximately 20 households (roughly \$500 per year). There is significant potential to grow the program, simply by increasing the voucher dollar amount, or furthermore by sourcing and giving away trees for free to Vernon residents to plant on their own property. City Administration will explore both of these options for the 2025 program, which is typically delivered twice per year (spring and fall intakes).

Budget estimate & impact: \$15,000 to grow the Tree Voucher program. A single tree can absorb up to 150 kg of CO₂ per year, while providing shade to cool microclimates, and enhancing the landscape aesthetically.

Additional Implementation Expenses

Hire a Project Coordinator for community outreach

In order to successfully implement the 2025 Outreach Strategy, it is recommended that a full-time, 2-year temporary Project Coordinator role be established in the Long Range Planning & Sustainability Department in early 2025. Funding for this salary expense is recommended from the LGCAP.

Budget estimate: \$160,000 to cover 2 years of salary.

Source a temporary contractor to support program development

Prior to the Project Coordinator being recruited, a contractor can be sourced to help develop the more urgent climate action community outreach programs and the communication and marketing materials needed to launch and promote the programs.

Budget estimate: \$50,000.

Event Supplies

Attending community events, meetings, and presentations is important for promoting and discussing the climate action outreach programs, gathering input from the community, sharing success stories, and delivering resources to residents. Figure 2 shows an example of the City's climate action booth at the 2024 Sunshine Festival. Additional supplies are needed to support the activation of outreach campaigns at community events, such as a tent, handouts, displays, signage, eco-friendly prizes, team t-shirts, and storage bins.

Budget estimate: \$15,000.



Figure 2: Climate action booth at the 2024 Sunshine Festival

Appendices

a) Climate Action Community Outreach Vision, Objectives, and Outcomes

The overarching vision of the CAP is for Vernon to be a leader in climate action, with no net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and resilient to the changing climate.

The vision for the 2025 Climate Action Community Outreach Strategy is to develop strong climate awareness that animates community members and organizations to mitigate GHG emissions and adapt to changing climate conditions.

Outreach objectives include:

1. Build public awareness of the COV's CAP and its calls to action;
2. Engage the general community in voluntarily taking recommended climate actions; and,
3. Target specific groups with vulnerabilities and particular exposure to climate risk to identify their needs and priorities and opportunities to address them.

The desired outcomes from outreach objectives:

1. High public awareness that the City of Vernon has a Climate Action Plan
2. High public awareness of expected climate impacts and key adaptation calls to action
3. High public awareness of need to lower emissions and calls to action
4. Individuals are undertaking household level climate adaptation & reducing GHGs
5. Businesses are undertaking company adaptation actions & reducing GHGs
6. Community groups are undertaking community level adaptation actions
7. Participation in submitting success stories and metrics on voluntary climate action
8. Participation in City initiatives to measure GHG reductions and recognize efforts
9. Greater community resilience and empowerment to address climate challenges
10. Strong brand value for the City of Vernon

b) Approach to achieving outreach vision, objectives, and outcomes

Successful implementation of the CAP requires comprehensive communication and outreach campaigns to engage with all segments of the Vernon community. Our approach is to listen to the community, meet them where they are, understand their challenges, and leverage the momentum of existing climate action to animate the community.

Communication and outreach campaigns will deliver inclusive and inspiring solutions to remove barriers and develop a strong culture and capacity around climate action.

As shown on the Adoption Curve diagram below (Fig. 2), initial outreach will focus on the climate innovators and early adopters in the community to learn from them and amplify their efforts to create a groundswell of action. Longer-term outreach will gradually move up the curve to engage the early and later majorities.

ADOPTION CURVE

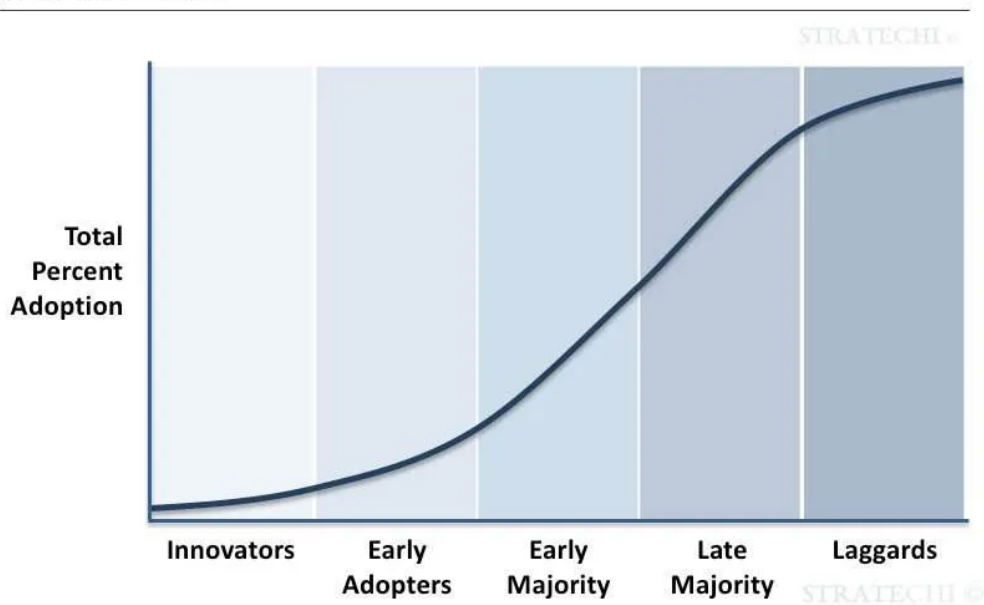


Figure 3: Adoption Curve*

(*Source: <https://www.stratechi.com/adoption-curves/>)

As specific campaigns are designed and delivered, Bennet’s Hierarchy (Fig. 3) for evaluating extension programs will be applied to ensure campaigns adhere to the seven levels of program evaluation.

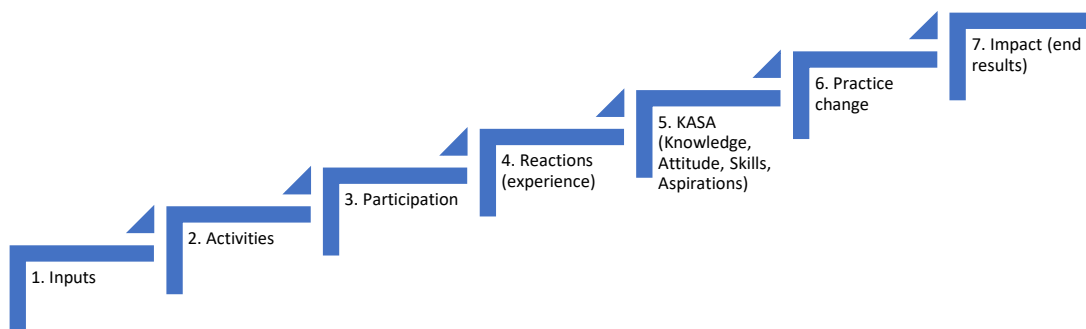


Figure 4: Bennet's Hierarchy

c) Target Audience Segmentation

Outreach with diverse communities in Vernon is important for successful implementation of the CAP. A tailored approach to outreach will be centred around each of the six main audience segmentations in Table 2. This is not an exhaustive list of audiences.

Table 2: Target Audiences for Engagement

Target Audience	Examples
1. General Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Vernon residents and visitors
2. Interest Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate Action Advisory Committee City Administration Ambassador program ESS volunteers CAN!, SENS, OK Climate Hub members
3. Neighborhood groups and organizations, incl. religious organizations and newcomer organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Predator Ridge Homeowners Assn United Church Okanagan Sikh Temple Vernon & District Immigrant Service Society Welcome wagon folk Real estate agents (often 1st face for newcomers) Landlords or other orgs supporting / greeting tenants new to Vernon
4. Organizations representing various communities and interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth organizations Rotary Club NO Optimist Club Sports groups Unions and worker organizations
5. Organizations representing vulnerable communities with high exposure to climate risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VDICSS, Venture Training, Humane Animal Rescue Team (HART), Friendship Centre, etc. Social Planning Council of Vernon and partner orgs (incl. serving low income and unhoused) Friendship Centre, Metis Association Nexus BC, United Way
6. Local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downtown Business Association Vernon Chamber of Commerce Construction sector (retrofits) Individual businesses
7. Community engagement organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Science Centre Allan Brooks Nature Centre Vernon Museum Okanagan Regional Library Vernon Public Art Gallery
8. Institutional partners and stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School District 22, Vernon Teachers Association RDNO OKIB

d) Key Messages and Frequently Asked Questions

Key messages will be developed for specific audiences and outreach initiatives to ensure the messages resonate with the audience and that they are clear, concise, memorable, and action-oriented. Messages will highlight the co-benefits of taking the desired action and how it positively impacts individuals, communities, or the environment. Local, compelling, real-world climate action stories will be shared to demonstrate how climate actions are happening and that they are realistic for people in Vernon. A general set of key messages are included in Table 3 to guide climate outreach. These will be continuously enhanced and custom messages will be created for specific outreach initiatives, as they are implemented.

Table 3: Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Climate Action Plan Implementation

Question	Answer
What does the Climate Action Plan include?	Vernon’s 2021 CAP identifies the main sources of GHG emissions in Vernon (i.e., vehicles, buildings, and organic waste), sets targets for GHG reduction (i.e., 100% reduction by 2050), and identifies a robust set of goals and actions across eight focus areas (i.e., health & wellbeing, core services & infrastructure, governance, land use & transportation, ecosystem health & biodiversity, buildings & real estate, economic development, and agriculture & food security). The appendices include an implementation strategy, community and corporate GHG reports, and climate mitigation and adaptation assessments do to inform the CAP.
Which department is leading implementation of the CAP?	For more information on the CAP, please contact the Long Range Planning and Sustainability department within the Planning and Community Services Division at the City. Email: sustainability@vernon.ca
Who is involved in implementing CAP?	The Climate Action Plan involves every department at the City of Vernon. Each department has a role to play in reducing corporate GHG emissions and ensuring City infrastructure, programs and assets are ready and resilience to our changing climate. The Plan also involves every resident in the Vernon community. We all have a part to play in taking steps to increase the resilience of our homes and businesses to the changing climate, and to reducing our GHG emissions.
Why are we taking climate action now and what are the benefits?	The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change, reports that climate change is widespread, rapid, and intensifying and urges that the time to take action at all levels is now. We know that if we continue with business-as-usual scenario we can expect the climate in Vernon to warm by 6 degrees Celsius or more in the next 80 years. This means that Vernon will be at higher risk of drought, wildfire, smoke, extreme weather events and flooding. If we act now we can slow the process of warming and increase our resilience to climate impacts.

Question	Answer
<p>What is the CAP asking me to do as an individual?</p>	<p>The CAP encourages each individual to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) consider ways to reduce GHG emissions (e.g., travel by bus, bike, scooter, skateboard or walking; turn down your thermostat; heat homes and water with electricity; grown your own food; buy local; or compost) 2) consider ways to prepare for the impacts of the changing climate (e.g., have an emergency evacuation bag; FireSmart your property, learn how to filter smoky air in your home)
<p>What is the CAP asking me to do as a local business?</p>	<p>The CAP encourages every local business to assess where it can reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and improve resilience to climate impacts. This may include upgrading your building energy systems, setting up a composting system, moving to low-emission fleet vehicles, or encouraging your staff to bus, cycle or carpool to work.</p>
<p>What is the CAP recommending I do as a community group or organization?</p>	<p>The CAP encourages every local organization to assess where it can reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and improve resilience to climate impacts. This may include exploring service models, the potential for active transportation and local and sustainable procurement. The CAP also encourages each organization to consider business continuity in an emergency and take steps to reduce exposure to risk for staff, land, buildings, inventory and other assets. If your organization supports community members that are at high risk to extreme weather or emergencies, it may be helpful to plan for these situations.</p>
<p>How do I report my climate actions to the City?</p>	<p>We want to hear from you! Please share your climate action stories by emailing sustainability@vernon.ca.</p>
<p>Where can I get a copy of the CAP?</p>	<p>A digital copy of Vernon’s Climate Action Plan is available for download at: https://www.vernon.ca/homes-building/environment-sustainability/climate-action</p>
<p>Are we reducing GHG emissions in Vernon?</p>	<p>Since 2017, GHG emission levels have been trending down, with COVID-19 creating the largest annual reduction in 2020.</p>

e) Communication Channels & Marketing Materials

The following communication channels and marketing materials will be considered for launching climate action programs and ongoing promotion of programs and campaigns. Additional channels and marketing materials will be considered and continuously improved. The budget estimates for each outreach program include funding to develop these types of communication and marketing materials.

Available communication channels:

- Vernon.ca
- TourismVernon.com

- City of Vernon social media channels
- City of Vernon email news notices
- City of Vernon advisory committees / Tourism Commission
- City of Vernon printed materials (e.g., Active Living Guide, Visitors' Guide, bike maps)
- Radio and print media
- Paid advertising
- Community and business events
- City Council, Council Advisory Committee, and City Administration meetings
- Community bulletin boards (physical and online)
- Other organizations' community channels (e.g., Social Planning Council, Downtown Vernon Association, Chamber of Commerce, RDNO, etc.)

Potential marketing materials:

- Electronic and printed documents (climate action program guide, brochures, posters)
- Graphics, logos, branding for programs
- Videos and animations
- Workshops and verbal presentations (in person or online webinars)
- Media releases
- Website content
- Social media posts
- Arts and cultural initiatives (e.g., visual, written and performance arts)
- Climate Ambassadors program