

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.

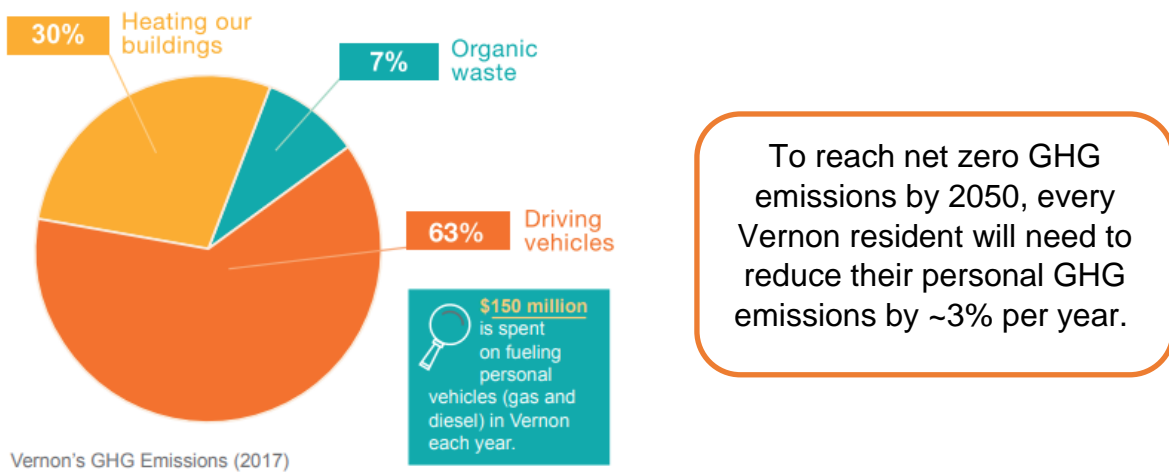


Figure 1: Vernon's 2017 GHG Emissions

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. Many outreach strategies therefore include financial rebates programs and coaching services to help residents reduce costs and successfully navigate the complexities of energy retrofits.

The 2025 Outreach Strategy is centred around 16 climate action community program solutions, as outlined in this strategy (Table 1). These programs will help to remove barriers to greenhouse gas reduction actions, enhance community resiliency, and inspire residents to act on the goals outlined in the Climate Action Plan. Seven of the recommended programs in Table 1 are new in 2025 and nine are existing programs that will be rolled into climate action outreach and communications.

The appendix section includes the overall community outreach vision and objectives with frequently asked questions regarding implementation of the Climate Action Plan.

Climate Action Community Outreach Program Solutions

Table 1 summarizes 16 climate action community outreach program solutions, including 9 existing programs and 7 new programs. The new 2025 programs are highlighted in green. Additional information on each program is provided following Table 1.

Table 1: Climate Action Community Outreach Programs

Focus Areas	Community Climate Action Program Solutions	
Low-carbon transportation	1	Provide equitable e-bike rebates to reduce purchase price
	2	Coordinate GoByBike Week events to promote cycling
	3	Deliver the shared electric bike and kick scooter program
	4	Promote and incentivize public transit
Low-carbon building	5	Provide building energy retrofit rebates to lower costs
	6	Coordinate coaching services to homeowners to simplify building energy retrofit processes
	7	Collaborate with building industry stakeholders to enhance capacity around low-carbon building solutions
Community resiliency	8	Deliver community workshops for residents to learn simple, effective ways to adapt to severe weather events
	9	Deliver FireSmart assessments, workshops, and recourses
Youth climate careers	10	Support high school climate education programming
	11	Sponsor youth climate employment opportunities
Green business planning	12	Coordinate coaching services for businesses / non-profits to enhance green business practices
Community tree canopy	13	Enhance the City's existing Tree Voucher program to increase planting of shade trees on private property in Vernon
Organic waste composting	14	Promote residential curbside composting, the community compost drop-off bin, and yard waste compost at the landfill.
Community Sustainability Grant	15	Continue to offer up to \$2000 in funding for residents, community groups, and non-profits to develop community sustainability projects.
Ambassador Program	16	Activate the Climate Action Ambassador Program and re-engage past volunteers to champion climate action in the community.

Low-Carbon Transportation Program Solutions

1. Equitable E-bike Rebates

The City of Vernon is joining the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure's (MOTI) E-Bike Rebate Program in 2025 to help lower purchase costs for income qualified residents. The provincial e-bike rebate program was initially launched in 2024 and is scheduled to re-open in early 2025. There are currently over 490 people from Vernon on the waitlist for the BC E-Bike Rebate Program. The City of Vernon will 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 two rebate amounts based on income (i.e., \$1000 for incomes between \$38,951 and \$51,130; and \$1400 for incomes under \$38,951).

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 & Sustainability 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.

3. Shared Electric Bike and Kick Scooter Program

Since 2021, the City of Vernon has been working with the Province to test a shared electric bike and kick scooter program. The program provides low-carbon transportation alternatives and increases people's capacity to ride public transit because by making it easier to get to and from bus stops. The shared program is coordinated through a smartphone app and people can jump on and off the bikes and scooters anywhere within the program boundaries, paying with their credit card through the app.

4. Public Transit

The City works closely with BC Transit, the Regional District and District of Coldstream to coordinate and promote public transit in the Greater Vernon area. Riding the bus is perhaps one of the simplest low-carbon, affordable transportation options that people can quickly adopt to reduce their transportation GHG emissions. Transit is promoted in a variety of ways and in 2025 we will be looking for further opportunities to encourage people to ride the bus more often.

Low-carbon Buildings Program Solutions

5. Building Energy Retrofit Rebates

The City of Vernon joined CleanBC's Municipal Rebate Top-ups in January 2025 to provide additional rebates for Vernon residents who qualify for CleanBC's other related building energy retrofit rebates. The Municipal Top-up amounts include \$2000 for electric heat pumps for space heating, \$1000 for electric heat pump for water heating, and \$500 for electrical service upgrades. CleanBC fully administers the program and invoices the City of Vernon for the top-up amounts as they are granted.

6. Energy Retrofit Coaching Services

The City aims to contract a third-party to provide 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. Options for retrofitting existing buildings with low-carbon heating equipment, enhancing windows and insulation, and installing solar panels will be researched and discussed with homeowners. Financing options (e.g., rebates), technical resources, and local contractor information will be made available to help simplify the process.

7. Industry Collaboration on Low-carbon Buildings

There is a need to collaborate with the local building industry to enhance capacity around low-carbon building design and retrofits. As such, the City will be looking for opportunities to coordinate industry collaborations and raise awareness with industry stakeholders about Vernon's Climate Action Plan, the BC Step Codes, building energy retrofit resources (e.g., rebates, coaching services), and low-carbon building technology options.

Community Resiliency Program Solutions

8. Community Climate Resiliency Workshops

Building on the success of the 2024 'Build Your Own Home Air Filter Workshop', the City will be developing 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.).

9. FireSmart Program

The City of Vernon has a team of staff that coordinate and deliver FireSmart home assessments, training, workshops and events. We will continue to these services to

increase the community's resiliency to wildfire events. This team is also working to manage landscaping and vegetation on public lands and also utilizes fire sensors and cameras to reduce wildfire risks in the City.

Youth Climate Career Program Solutions

10. 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. The City is a proud sponsor of the CARE Youth Summit and staff and Council participate as youth mentors, project judges, and event volunteers.

11. Partially Fund Local Youth Climate Jobs

Youth Climate Corps BC (YCCBC) coordinates job opportunities for cohorts of 4-5 youth to help implement local government climate action plans. In partnership with the City of Vernon, YCCBC will bring this employment program to Vernon in 2025. YCCBC will directly employ the youth (they won't be employed by the City of Vernon) and they will work from home and in the community. Youth are between the ages of 17-30 and are employed for 4-6 months. City Administration will work with the local YCCBC supervisor 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.).

Other Climate Action Program Solutions

12. Green Business Planning Services

To support local businesses in their green business journeys, the City will contract a third-party to provide free coaching services for small-med businesses and non-profit organizations to create/enhance green business plans. Green business certification options will also be presented for businesses to consider in order to align with third-party green business standards to validate and report on their green business performance.

13. Grow the City's Tree Canopy with the Tree Voucher Program

Historically, the Tree Voucher Program has provided \$25 discounts for the purchase of trees to plant on private lands in Vernon. In 2025, this program will be enhanced with greater financial incentives and additional marketing. Residents will be guided to source

drought tolerant, non-invasive, and low-risk fire species. The program is typically delivered twice per year (spring and fall intakes).

14. Organic Waste Composting

The City of Vernon provides curbside organic waste compost collection services to residences in Vernon through its contracted service provider, Emterra Environmental. Standardized organics collection carts and education materials are provided to households for this program. There is also a community compost drop-off bin at the Curling Rink for residents without curbside composting. In 2025, we will look for additional opportunities to promote the importance of composting to increase uptake and proper use of the composting system.

15. Community Sustainability Grants

The City of Vernon's Sustainability Grants are available to Vernon residents and organizations who want to develop community engagement initiatives that address climate change and environmentally sustainability in our community. Vernon residents, students, schools, community groups, and non-profit organizations are eligible to apply. For-profit businesses and corporations are not eligible. Up to \$2000 will be awarded per grant. The program is typically open for application twice per year (i.e., spring and fall intakes).

16. Climate Action Ambassador Program

The Climate Action Ambassador Program was created by the City of Vernon to help develop and implement Vernon's Climate Action Plan. Volunteers have been trained on the CAP and its main implementation goals and actions. They are encouraged to share their knowledge amongst their network of family, friends and colleagues to help increase actions towards Vernon's climate action targets. This program has been less active since the COVID-19 pandemic and in 2025 we active this group and collaborate to increase ambassador action across the community.

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) Key Messages and Frequently Asked Questions

Table 2 below provides responses to frequently asked questions about the Climate Action Plan and its implementation. Additional key messages will be developed for specific program 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, and 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. Key messages will be continuously enhanced and customized to guide climate action community outreach and communications.

Table 2: Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Climate Action Plan Implementation

Question	Answer
<p>What does the Climate Action Plan include?</p>	<p>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.</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>Which department leads implementation of the CAP?</p>	<p>The Long Range Planning & Sustainability department within the Planning & Community Services Division at the City.</p>
<p>Who is involved in implementing CAP?</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Why are we taking climate action now and what are the benefits?</p>	<p>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.</p>
<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)

Question	Answer
<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 connect with the City on this?</p>	<p>We want to hear from you! Please reach out for more info and to share your climate action stories by emailing sustainability@vernon.ca.</p>
<p>Are we reducing GHG emissions in Vernon?</p>	<p>Since 2017, GHG emission levels have been trending down, with the COVID-19 pandemic creating the largest annual reduction in 2020.</p>