



# New Westminster Community Energy and Emissions Plan Engagement Summary

May 2022



SUSTAINABILITY  
SOLUTIONSGROUP



NEW WESTMINSTER

## Engagement Objectives

As part of the Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP) development process, New Westminster community members and industry representatives were engaged to gather input on climate action initiatives that would support the City's climate emergency targets.

Pivotal to the success of the CEEP and future sustainability of the city is a recognition of our community's interests and perspectives regarding this important initiative. The City and Sustainability Solutions Group (SSG) conducted a variety of engagement activities to gather feedback, which will help the project team identify specific projects, actions, and strategic initiatives that the City can take to achieve its emission reduction targets.

### What Was the Process?

The process of developing the City's low-carbon targets and actions required three critical steps:

1. A technical analysis by SSG and the City to update New Westminster's greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory and plot a business-as-planned scenario;
2. Focus group and industry engagement to refine climate targets; and

3. Engagement with the community.

Industry and community engagement was conducted through various engagement activities (see Figure 1), where participants outlined their priorities for climate action and identified specific initiatives the community can take to address the climate emergency.

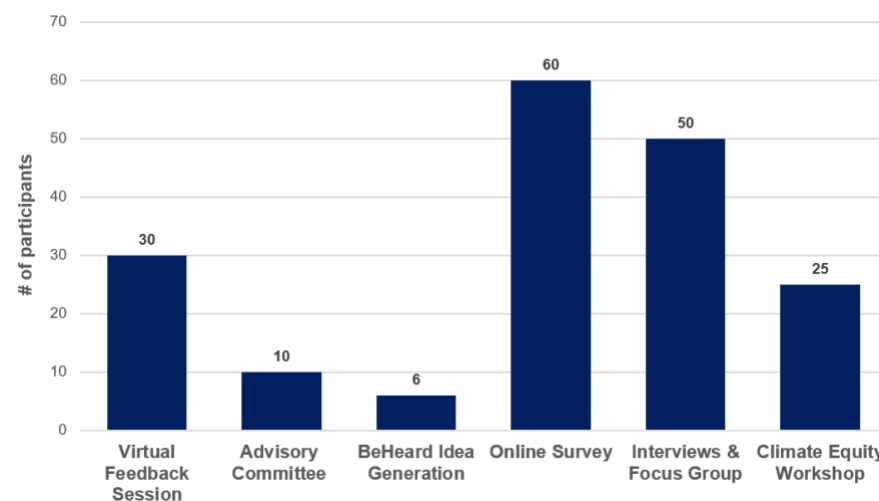


Figure 1. Participation in CEEP-related engagements.

As SSG and the City began developing the CEEP in the fall of 2021. A community survey was launched asking for input on tactics for implementing the Plan. A virtual community workshop in October 2021 focused on the same topic.

A workshop with industry professionals and organizations from the housing and development sectors focused on buildings and the built environment. Attendees included:

- Greater Vancouver Homebuilders Association,
- Urban Development Institute,
- University of British Columbia,
- Mantle Developments,
- Metro Vancouver.
- BC Non-Profit Housing Association,
- FRESCO Energy Efficiency,
- Energy Save New West,
- Local housing developers,
- Local contractors/builders, and
- Local heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) tradespeople.

Select interviews occurred separately with city departments, Energy Save New Westminster, and Kruger Paper. These interviews followed the themes and questions of the focus groups but more specific to their work in building renovations and industrial processes.

Addressing the needs and priorities of vulnerable and at-risk community members is an emerging priority. In early 2022, members of the Community Action Network (CAN) participated in a workshop focused on addressing equity in

climate action. CAN is a partnership with the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition to ensure that people with lived and living experience in poverty and homelessness are valued, respected, and supported in the engagement process and that their contributions are reflected in decision making and initiative development.

Figure 2 provides an overview of the timeline for the community engagement and shows participation in various CEEP related engagements.

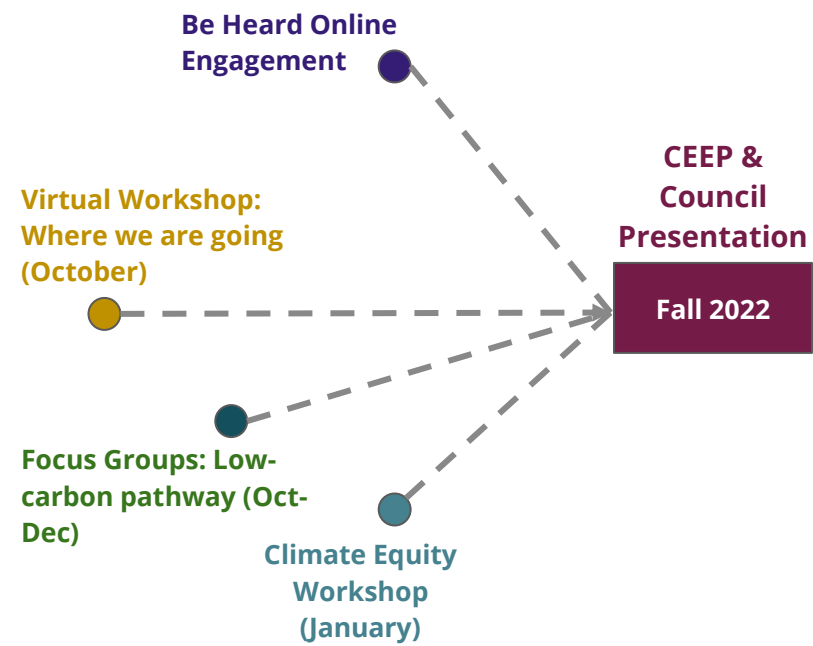


Figure 2. Engagement process.

# What we Heard

## Virtual Community Workshop

On October 6th, 2021, the City hosted a virtual community workshop on the Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP). The purpose of the workshop was to introduce the CEEP project, provide a summary of the City's current energy and emissions profile, and gather input on potential actions the City can take to achieve the goals of the Seven Bold Steps.

Since the CEEP focuses on reducing community-wide emissions, the workshop focused on gathering participant input on possible actions to support Bold Step #2 – Car Light Community, Bold Step #3 – Carbon Free Homes and Buildings, and Bold Step #5 – Carbon Free Energy. Overall, there was support for many of the actions proposed. Feedback was also received on additional actions that could be considered.

The key themes that emerged where:

- Receiving approval from strata organizations is challenging and deters owners from making improvements.

- Incentives and rebates for energy retrofits can help reduce energy consumption and improve accessibility to affordable housing operators.
- Participants expressed interest in initiatives that support fuel-switching for both vehicles and space heating.
- Prioritize increasing active transportation to achieve GHG emissions rather than relying on uptake of electric vehicles

## Interviews & Focus Group

Housing and development industry representatives, as well as major industry, were engaged to ensure the pathway to net-zero GHG emissions was achievable in the New Westminster context. Feedback included:

- 1. Building energy performance for new construction.** Builders felt that plans to rapidly advance step-code construction (proposed for 2025) are too sudden and net-zero construction still needs more practice before becoming widespread. They recommended delaying these targets towards 2030.
- 2. Building retrofit timelines.** Many stakeholder members supported the aspirational targets for retrofitting buildings but noted supply chain and workforce capacity would prevent them from

meeting the targets without significant technological improvements and labour supply.

- 3. Building retrofit outcomes.** Stakeholders noted that achieving a 50% reduction for heating demand in retrofitted buildings will be very difficult and costly especially for smaller/single detached buildings. They recommended adjusting the target to 20–30%, which is more in line with industry practice.
- 4. Industry/hydrogen/electricity.** Heavy industry in New Westminster is currently dependent on natural gas. Some industrial processes that require less heat can be electrified, but hydrocarbon combustion is still critical. The recommendation is to use more hydrogen and renewable natural gas after 2040.
- 5. Transportation.** Respondents felt that the City should focus its efforts on funding public and active transport instead of electric vehicles. Electric vehicles will not be accessible to low-income populations for many years, and more active transportation comes with more health and community co-benefits. Respondents also noted the COVID-19 pandemic has proven long commute distances are not always necessary. The recommendation was to make the modal split target more ambitious.

## Climate Equity Workshop

The City held a workshop with representatives of equity-seeking groups on January 25<sup>th</sup> 2022 to better understand how equity can be incorporated into the CEEP.

Community members and organizations in affordable housing, mental health, seniors, and youth services workshopped climate targets and priority actions for including equity in the City's climate action plan.

The feedback is summarized below:

- 1. City policies and incentives:** City policies often do not reach equity-denied groups because of financial barriers. Incentives for renewable energy/carbon free energy often only apply to homeowners and building owners. Respondents pointed out that low-income community members often do not have access to a credit card so they cannot participate in bike-share or car-share programs.
- 2. Community scale interventions and infrastructure spending:** Funding for more bike lanes, better transit, discounted bikes or transit passes, or more public space would allow low-income residents to better participate in climate action. Equity-denied groups highlighted community

gardens with local fruit trees as particularly accessible.

- 3. Building renovations:** Renters will not be able to retrofit their buildings or apartments and rely on decisions made by building owners. This means many low-income residents live in buildings with drafty windows, infestations, flooding, or poor insulation. For this reason, the City should incentivize building owners to retrofit, while maintaining affordability for tenants.
- 4. Future extreme climate events:** Climate extremes (heat waves and cold waves) affect ageing populations and vulnerable people disproportionately. Many New Westminster residents live without air conditioning, and more emergency relief buildings are needed

### Priority Actions for Equity-Seeking Groups

Equity-seeking groups identified the following priorities for the City's climate action plan:

- More emphasis on good state of repair for rental buildings;
- Availability of used bikes and reduced rate e-bikes for low-income populations;
- Free transit for high school/middle school students;
- Reduced energy/electricity rates for low income households;

- Partnerships to provide electric vehicles for community associations serving equity-denied populations; and
- More community gardens/fruit-bearing trees in the city.

## CEEP Community Survey

### Context

The CEEP Community Survey was open to the public using the Be Heard platform from January 10 to February 8, 2022.

The purpose of the survey was to gather feedback on low-carbon initiatives that will influence New Westminster's near-term climate actions and implementation of the Seven Bold Steps. Note that the survey did not cover all of the bold steps. Bold Steps 1 and 2, Carbon-Free Corporation and Pollution-free Vehicles, are covered under the Corporate Energy and Emissions Reduction Strategy (CEERS) and the draft eMobility Strategy.

The survey had 58 respondents, though not every respondent answered every question.

## Questions - Buildings

### Q1 Which of the following energy efficiency improvements are you interested in making to a New Westminster property?

When asked what types of energy improvements they would make, most respondents opted for installing solar panels. Of the 57 respondents, 38 chose solar panels. Heat pumps were the second most popular choice at 32 respondents.

About half of respondents also included improved home insulation, efficient doors and windows, and replacing older appliances with more efficient models.

Only 16 respondents opted for more efficient water faucets/toilets.

A breakdown of the responses follows:

- 27 for improving home insulation;
- 28 for installing more efficient doors and windows;
- 16 for installing low-flow showers, faucets, and toilets;
- 22 for replacing older appliances with more efficient options;
- 38 for installing solar panels on the roof, ground, or in a community setting;

- 32 for converting to an electric heat pump;
- 4 for none of the above.

The question invited respondents to add their own options. These included mini-split heat pumps in condos/apartments to replace baseboard heaters to improve quality of life and lower emissions; home composting and community gardens to mitigate waste emissions; air sealing; gas absorption heat pumps or hybrid systems as opposed to air-source; electric heat pump water heaters; and solar windows and shingles.

### Q2 What supports would you need to make the changes you indicated in the previous question?

When asked what respondents would need to carry out their preferred home improvements, the most cited response was financial support (38 of 53 respondents). Of the 38 respondents who selected financial support, 20 of them either only selected financial support or selected it over education programs. Presumably the message here is that many respondents are aware of the available technology but lack the financial means to implement it.

The question invited respondents to include their own answers. Among the answers provided, five of them dealt with financial concerns. These included needing more

information on city and provincial rebates and more information on how savings from new technologies stack up against the initial investment cost of installing them and disposing of old infrastructure.

Of the respondents, 28 also selected education programs about home improvement technology, while 23 selected the agreement of a building owner or strata.

Respondents who provided their own answers also expressed concern about how landlords and strata councils can hamper home improvement efforts. These answers indicate there are people in New Westminster who would like to implement home improvement technologies but are being prevented from doing so by overarching bodies. Two respondents called for more pressure to be placed on landlords and more codes and regulations to facilitate these improvements.

Though only 10 respondents sought more information on how to implement new technologies themselves, one respondent asked for support accessing contractors who can competently advise on which technologies best suit particular homes and then install the technology at a reasonable cost.

Q3 Please rank the carbon-free buildings priorities you think the City should focus on in the next five years, with 1 being the top priority and 5 being the lowest priority.

This ranking question drew 56 respondents. Though the top ranked three options came in very close to one another, the highest ranked option at 2.25 was to create guidelines to encourage very low to zero-emission construction. Low-interest financing programs was the second ranked option at 2.4, and policy to support landlords to transition rental buildings to lower-emitting alternatives was ranked third at 2.87.

Programs to help builders choose low-emissions materials was ranked fourth at 3.11, and community rooftop and terrace gardens were ranked fifth at 4.0.



Q4 The City could facilitate training programs to ensure local builders and contractors have the skills to be part of the transition to a sustainable future. For example, reducing building emissions will require building energy auditors and carpenters who are familiar with energy-efficient building standards and equipment. Given Canada's commitment to reducing emissions, there is significant potential for job growth in industries such as these. Should the City support (fund, subsidize, and promote) programs that train people to have these and other skills that will be required to help New Westminster transition to a low-emissions future?

Of all respondents, 57 answered this question and the majority (32) said yes, the City should facilitate training programs and ensure local builders have the skills required to install and maintain new technologies, while 14 said no. It should be noted that about half of the 11 respondents who chose "other" wrote that the City may not be the best positioned body to facilitate such programs.

Q5 How supportive are you of increasing the supply of renewable energy in New Westminster by 2050 by installing solar panels on roofs, community solar gardens, etc.?

Of the 57 people who responded to this question, 37 stated they were fully in support of increasing renewable energy within the community. Only one expressed that they did not support this at all.

Of those who would support renewable energy expansion if they had more information, 7 expressed a need for more information about the technology, 8 wanted more information about the benefits to the community, and 15 wanted to know how renewable energy would affect their finances and household.

Those who wrote their own responses weren't necessarily opposed to renewable energy. Some had concerns about the viability of solar energy in New Westminster's cloudy climate, others about prioritizing renewable energy over reducing emissions from buildings, and others about whether the municipality is the best positioned to run a renewable energy utility.

Q6 Out of the 6 actions listed below, please choose up to 5 renewable energy priorities you think the City should focus on in the next five years, with 1 being your top priority and 5 being the lowest priority.

Out of the 6 possible options, 3 were ranked highest and very close together. Having developers install rooftop solar ranked highest at 2.47, offering rebates for solar panels ranked second at 2.74, and ensuring roofs are structurally sound enough for solar panels ranked third at 2.98.

Blending renewable natural gas into the energy supply ranked fourth at 3.28.

Offering community generated solar energy to low-income households at a reduced rate ranked fifth at 3.33.

Hydrogen fuel cells ranked sixth at 4.2.

### Questions -Transportation

Q7 What is your main mode of transportation to get around New Westminster?

Of the 57 respondents who answered this question, half (28) own and use their own vehicle to get around the city.

The next largest proportion of respondents (18) are predominantly pedestrians.

The remaining respondents take public transit (4), ride their bikes (3), or use a combination of the above (4).

Q8 How often do you take public transportation?

Of the 57 respondents who answered this question, only 1 takes transit daily. On the other hand, only 4 respondents never take public transit.

When combined, 17 respondents take public transit a few times a week or weekly. Another 14 take public transit a few times a month, while 17 take it a few times a year.

Four respondents stated they used to take transit more often but reduced their trips because of the pandemic.

Q9 If you do not often take public transportation, what would encourage you to take it / take it more?

The pandemic influences people's decision making when it comes to taking transit more often. Of the 51 people who answered this question, 17 said they would take more trips if COVID-19 transmission rates were to come down.

However, 19 people said they would take more trips if buses ran more frequently.

Of the respondents, 10 said they would need stops closer to their home and destination, and 9 need lower cost. This question invited respondents to write in their own answers. This question drew the highest number of and most varied answers.

Fifteen respondents wrote in their own answers. Their answers included needs like increased ferry availability in Queensborough, reduced travel time to their destination and faster intercity/regional transit (perhaps an extension of the Skytrain), and better bus shelters that protect riders from the weather.

Others transport too many heavy items in life or work to make transit viable.

Others think their electric vehicles negate their transportation impacts and are therefore absolved of the need to integrate transit as a low-emission option.

### Q10 How often do you ride a bike in New Westminster?

Of the 57 respondents who answered this question, only 3 bike daily. Another 19 never bike.

When combined, 8 respondents ride a few times a week or weekly, another 7 ride a few times a month, while 13 ride a few times a year.

Some respondents who wrote in their own answers cited a desire for an e-bike, either because they are of advanced age or have health problems and could use the assist, or because streets in New Westminster are so hilly.

### Q11 If you do not often ride your bike in New Westminster, what would encourage you to ride more?

Of the 55 respondents who answered this question, 29 stated that increased protected bike lanes would incentivize them to ride more. Another 22 would want better protection against bike theft. Thirteen said they either can't ride a bike or that nothing will incentivize them to do so.

Thirty-nine respondents would benefit from some sort of e-bike access; these respondents are almost evenly divided between those who would like rebates to buy their own e-bikes and those who would want a bike-share program.

One respondent brought up a need for better regulations around e-bikes and scooters to allow e-bike riders more assured access to protected spaces off main roads. She cited an incident where her husband was ticketed for riding a slow-speed e-scooter in the bike lane. He is unable to drive a car and the scooter gave him mobility, but the incident was so distressing that he sold the e-scooter.

This points to a need for clearer communication and regulation around shared space for push bikes and e-bikes/scooters.

Some residents still wish to ride without a helmet.

One respondent asked for increased ferry trips in and out of Queensborough, which speaks to a need for better support for multi-modal transit.

Another asked for a bike lock subsidy, which also speaks to protection from bike theft.

**Q12 Please rank your priorities related to transportation and land use that you think the City should focus on within the next five years, with 1 being your top priority and 4 being the lowest priority.**

Fifty-six respondents answered this question. More safety for cyclists and pedestrians at intersections ranked highest at 1.8. Covered and secured bike garages at high-frequency destinations ranked second at 2.04, which also speaks to a need for improved support for multi-modal transportation.

A zero-emissions zone in New Westminster ranked third at 2.61, while more benches and protected seating ranked fourth at 2.8.

## Next Steps

Staff are currently drafting the CEEP and integrating community and stakeholder engagement.

A draft CEEP will be published on the Be Heard website where residents can view, comment, and provide feedback.

The draft will be reviewed and updated before a finalized version is brought to Council for adoption in fall 2022.