

REPORT

Energy and Climate Action

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: January 27, 2025

From: Lisa Spitale
Chief Administrative Officer
File: 09.1742.02

Item #: 2025-29

Subject: 2024 Seven Bold Steps and Environment Progress Report

RECOMMENDATION

1. *THAT the 2024 Seven Bold Steps and Environment Progress Report, dated January 27, 2025 from the Chief Administrative Officer be received for information.*
 2. *THAT staff continue to advance the Seven Bold Steps and Environment Progress Report project towards delivery of a public facing online dashboard to share progress on the Seven Bold Steps for Climate Action.*
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PURPOSE

To provide an update on the Seven Bold Steps and Environment Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) endorsed by Council on July 12, 2021, and to seek approval to continue with delivery of a public facing online dashboard to share progress on the Seven Bold Steps for Climate Action.

BACKGROUND

The City of New Westminster declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 which set an overarching goal of moving the City towards a zero carbon future by 2050. To this end, Council adopted the Seven Bold Steps for Climate Action, along with ten-year targets (Attachment 1), and approved the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, highlighting climate action and the environment as a key focus for implementation. To measure progress towards the City's climate action and environment goals staff developed a suite of key

performance indicators (KPIs) which were endorsed by Council in July 2021. Since then, staff have been establishing monitoring and tracking processes, collecting data, refining KPIs and observing trends.

DISCUSSION

The 2024 Seven Bold Steps and Environment Key Performance Indicators Progress Report summary table is in Attachment 2 and the full report is included in Attachment 3. A two-page snapshot of progress is included in Attachment 4.

Summary of Progress

Overall, progress is being made across each Bold Step and community-wide carbon emissions decreased by 10.7% from 2010 to 2022. However significant sustained emission reductions, enabled by the application of a climate lens in decision-making, are needed to achieve the 2030 and 2050 targets and overarching climate and environment goals. Attachment 2 provides a consolidated snapshot of progress for each Bold Step and Environment KPI, and key observations are summarized here:

Step 1: Carbon free corporation

City operations account for 1.1% of total community-wide emissions, primarily from services like emergency response, waste management, recreation, parks, trails, and road maintenance. From 2010 to 2022, carbon emissions from City operations dropped by 29.8%. While emissions from City operations have decreased, greater efforts are needed to meet the 2030 net-zero carbon emissions target.

Step 2: Car light community

Transportation is the second largest source of carbon emissions in the community, primarily from personal vehicle use. To help curb emissions, the City aims for 60% of all trips to be made by sustainable modes - walking, transit, and cycling - by 2030. Between 2011 and 2017, sustainable trips increased from 27.9% to 35.5%. While supportive indicators like SkyTrain boardings and bus service hours dipped during the COVID-19 pandemic, they have generally rebounded back to pre-pandemic levels. Significant shifts in how we move around the community are needed to achieve this Bold Step target.

Step 3: Carbon free homes and buildings

Fossil fuels used to heat, cool, and operate buildings remains the community's largest source of carbon emissions. Emissions from buildings are strongly linked to energy source (e.g. electricity or natural gas) and total energy use (influenced by factors such as weather, energy efficiency, etc.). Building carbon emissions per capita are reducing, demonstrating that energy efficiency measures, sustainable construction practices, and the transition to cleaner energy sources are having a positive impact. Policy efforts, such as the implementation of upper tiers of the Energy and Zero Carbon Step Codes will show their impact in the data over time.

Step 4: Pollution free vehicles

Electric vehicle (EV) sales have rapidly increased over the past five years as more EV models become available. The percentage of kilometres driven by zero emission vehicles registered to New Westminster residents increased from 1.13% to 1.75% between 2020 and 2021. To support residents in choosing EVs over internal combustion engine vehicles, the City is continuing to expand public charging infrastructure and enable private charging opportunities. Supporting access to charging and continuing to implement the eMobility strategy is crucial to reaching the Bold Step target of 50% of kilometres driven by New Westminster registered vehicle owners to be by zero emissions vehicles by 2030.

Step 5: Carbon free energy

New Westminster is uniquely positioned to enable the transition to low carbon energy through our municipal electric utility, which provides nearly 100% clean renewable energy to the community. The total amount of electricity distributed by the Electrical Utility in 2023 was 480,202 MWh, an increase of 3.56% since the 2020 baseline year. This reflects a growth in the demand for carbon-free energy as the population grows and buildings and vehicles are electrified. The City will continue investing in a smart electrical grid to support future demand and work towards the goal of a zero-emissions future by 2050.

Step 6: Robust urban forest

Trees are critical urban infrastructure, improving the livability of our city by absorbing carbon dioxide, providing shade, helping manage storm water, improving air quality, and supporting biodiversity through the preservation of wildlife habitat. Since the implementation of the Urban Forest Management Strategy in 2016, the City has added 2,464 new trees on public land through tree planting and by preventing unnecessary removal of healthy mature trees. An additional 1,420 new trees have been sold to residents through City tree sales over the same period. Furthermore, following the implementation of the Tree Protection and Regulation Bylaw, at least 1,627 trees have been planted to compensate for the loss of protected trees on private properties. Accelerated and sustained tree planting initiatives will be required to reach UFMS tree planting targets by 2030. Achieving planting targets supports the goal of growing the City's urban forest to reach a canopy cover of 27%.

Step 7: Quality people-centred urban realm

Well-designed people-centred public spaces can improve urban heat resilience, stormwater management, and promote community connectedness, making cities more adaptable to climate impacts. The City continues to make progress towards reallocating street space for sustainable transportation and public gathering. As of 2024, 1% of the street space has been reallocated through projects that are supported by existing City strategies. Continued implementation of initiatives through these strategies will support the City in reaching the goal of 10% by 2030.

Environment

Protecting and conserving natural resources, such as water, soil, plants, and animals is a key priority for the City. New Westminster has been replacing old storm sewers with new ones that keep rainwater and wastewater separate. Now, half of the City's sewer system is separated, helping prevent the system from being overwhelmed during heavy rainfall. The City's daily water use per capita continues to decline, consistently staying below the Metro Vancouver regional average. In 2023, the City achieved a single-family waste diversion rate of 68.5%, exceeding Metro Vancouver's 2022 rate of 64%.

Staff continue to focus resources and advance actions that have a high potential to reduce carbon emissions and increase climate resilience through implementation of plans and strategies such as the Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP), Corporate and Energy and Emissions Reduction Strategy (CEERS), Urban Forest Management Strategy, and eMobility Strategy. Many initiatives have been completed or are underway related to each of the Seven Bold Steps, highlighted in Attachment 3. With respect to the current trends related to progress in each of the target areas, it's important to note that there may be a lag between implementing these climate action initiatives and the realization of the intended results.

Data Collection Limitations

The data in this progress report reflects the most recent information available to staff as of December 2024. The initial years of monitoring the Seven Bold Step and Environment KPIs are crucial for building a foundation to track and understand progress. Staff continue to establish tracking systems, integrate data, and validate baselines. Since the 2021 baseline report, several baselines have been updated to reflect new best practices and available data, although we are reliant on other agencies for reporting on certain indicators. As data is collected and new information emerges, KPIs will be refined. Limitations can be addressed through thoughtful planning, technology investment, and continuous improvement. Regular reviews of information and process will ensure our climate action initiatives stay on track and enable the City to adapt as opportunities arise.

NEXT STEPS

Pending Council approval of the recommendations outlined in this report, staff will undertake the following actions:

- Publish the 2024 Seven Bold Steps and Environment Key Performance Indicators Progress Report on the City's climate action web page; and
- Explore the creation of a digital public dashboard, working towards initiating a one-year pilot by end of 2025 to enhance the City's ability to monitor progress, streamline reporting and increase transparency.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are significant environmental, organizational, and strategic implications associated with tracking and reporting progress on the City’s Seven Bold Steps and environmental goals, including:

- Emissions Reductions: Reporting allows the City to assess whether its climate action efforts are reducing emissions as intended. Without these reports, it is difficult to quantify the impact of various strategies and plans that are in place.
- Benchmarking: Regular progress reports ensure that climate goals are not only set, but reviewed, measured and adjusted as needed.
- Resource allocation: Regular reporting allows for timely reallocation of resources, to ensure that funds are being allocated to high impact efforts efficiently.
- Demonstrating commitment: Regular reporting demonstrates to the community, various levels of government, and other interest groups, that the City is committed to addressing and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Regular monitoring and tracking of the CEEP, CEERS, and the eMobility Strategy are also essential to ensuring achievement of the Seven Bold Steps and reaching the carbon emission reduction targets set out in the City’s Climate Emergency Declaration.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Through the 2024 budget, \$20,000 was approved in the City’s Capital Budget to support the development of a public-facing dashboard. Due to limited staff resources in 2024, the full approved 2024 budget will be carried forward to 2025 and staff have been assigned to advance this project in 2025. Preliminary research has identified that additional funding may be required to support the development of a long-term data collection and reporting software which will produce a public facing dashboard. Should additional funding be required, Staff will apply the Climate Action Decision Making Framework to determine if funding could be allocated from the Climate Action Reserve Fund and report to Council with an updated project cost.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

The Climate Action Division has consulted with the Electrical Utility, Buildings Division, Engineering (Utilities, Transportation, Civic Buildings & Properties, Public Works), Parks and Recreation, Communications, and Finance Department in drafting this report.

OPTIONS

The following options are presented for Council’s consideration:

1. THAT the 2024 Seven Bold Steps and Environment Progress Report, dated January 27, 2025 from the Chief Administrative Officer be received for information.
2. THAT staff continue to advance the Seven Bold Steps and Environment Progress Report project towards delivery of a public facing online dashboard to share progress on the Seven Bold Steps for Climate Action.
3. THAT Council provide staff with alternative direction.

Staff recommend options 1 and 2.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Seven Bold Steps and Associated 10-Year Targets
- Attachment 2 – Seven Bold Steps and Environment Key Performance Indicators 2024 Progress Table
- Attachment 3 – Seven Bold Steps and Environment Key Performance Indicators 2024 Report
- Attachment 4 – Seven Bold Steps and Environment 2024 Snapshot of Progress

APPROVALS

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This report was approved by:
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