

# **REPORT**

## ***Mayor's Office***

**To:** Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council  
**Date:** May 12, 2025

**From:** Mayor's Youth Climate Leadership Team  
**File:** Doc#2691123

**Item #:** 2025-139

**Subject: Mayor's Youth Climate Leadership Team 2025 Project Plan**

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1. THAT phase one and two of the 2025 Youth Climate Leadership Team project plan as attached to the report titled "Mayor's Youth Climate Leadership Team 2025 Project Plan" dated May 12, 2025 from the Mayor's Youth Climate Leadership Team, be approved.*
  - 2. THAT up to \$20,000 be approved from the Climate Action Reserve Fund to fund the implementation of the 2025 Youth Climate Leadership Team project plan.*
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### **PURPOSE**

To seek Council's approval of the proposed 2025 Youth Climate Leadership Team project plan and budget.

### **BACKGROUND**

In 2019, the City of New Westminster declared a Climate Emergency and committed to achieving a zero carbon future by 2050. To this end, Council adopted the Seven Bold Steps for Climate Action - a framework that guides the City's climate efforts.

To support this work, the Mayor's Youth Climate Leadership Team (YCLT) was launched in November 2024. The YCLT is a group of passionate and engaged New

Westminster youth dedicated to advancing local climate solutions. The YCLT aims to build youth leadership while contributing meaningfully to the City's climate goals.

Working alongside the Mayor and guided by City staff, YCLT members explore the City's Climate Action strategies, develop innovative ideas, and help turn them into tangible projects that benefit the community.

## **DISCUSSION**

Since the launch of the YCLT in November 2024, members have been developing project ideas that support the City's climate action goals. In 2025, YCLT members formed two groups, one who chose to focus on urban water management, specifically, the daylighting of lost streams, and another that was inspired by the opportunity to address both climate adaptation and environmental restoration in a visible, community-based way through creative communications. More recently, these two teams bridged their projects to enhance each other's goals.

As the impacts of climate change become more severe, including extreme temperatures and increased rainfall, impermeable urban surfaces like concrete and turf contribute to local flooding and heat island effects. Historically, many local streams were buried to accommodate urban development and make way for roads and infrastructure. Reintroducing natural water flow above ground helps mitigate climate impacts by improving drainage, restoring ecosystems, and enhancing public spaces. The YCLT's project aims to demonstrate an opportunity to enhance the public realm and improve the local environment through reimagining urban spaces where water can once again flow naturally. At the same time, they plan to use this site as a nexus for developing better and more creative communication to the broader community about climate change and climate impacts.

### Project Overview

YCLT identified 'Glen Brook', a buried creek connected to the Glenbrook Ravine, as a project opportunity. While the Glen Brook was piped underground in 1912, the creek once flowed through Terry Hughes Park, the Justice Institute of BC, təməsew̓txw Aquatic and Community Centre, and through the Glenbrook Ravine to join as a tributary to the Fraser River. Through their research, the youth have proposed to honour its memory and improve rainwater management at the surface.

Drawing inspiration from [The Hidden Streams of New Westminster Project](#) created by Douglas College students, the youth are looking towards a future where Glen Brook can be daylighted. This 2025 project, while not a full restoration, represents a first step in demonstrating the potential and sharing this journey with the community.

YCLT envisions this project to be completed in two simultaneous phases; with a sub-group of YCLT leading each. The two phases include:

### *Phase 1 – Restoring hidden waters*

The youth have collaborated with City staff to pinpoint an area in Terry Hughes Park prone to excessive ponding as an opportunity to slow and absorb rainwater into the ground. This project seeks to honour the legacy of the lost Glen Brook by integrating natural stormwater management, enhancing biodiversity, and developing a vibrant and resilient public space. The youth envision plantings, natural elements such as boulders and logs, and interpretive signage that tell the story of Glen Brook. Attachment 1 provides more details on the two potential sites within Terry Hughes Park for this demonstration area.

### *Phase 2 – Sharing the journey*

In this phase, the focus is on storytelling, education, and community awareness. YCLT members are developing an awareness and outreach strategy to share the process, purpose, and broader benefits of reintroducing natural water flow above ground. This includes highlighting the ecological, cultural, and climate resilience impacts of the project through creative and accessible tools such as signage, pop-up booths, and digital storytelling to inspire public interest, stewardship, and support. More details on this phase can be found in Attachment 2.

By connecting people to the natural systems that exist beneath their feet, this project helps to foster a deeper understanding of the role urban ecology plays in building a resilient future, while enabling youth leadership and community pride.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Pending Council approval, the YCLT will begin implementing the project phases working alongside staff to prepare and construct the Terry Hughes Park site and launching the public awareness campaign. Staff will continue to support the YCLT members with technical guidance and interdepartmental coordination until the projects anticipated completion and wrap up in November 2025.

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

This project directly supports the City's climate emergency response and aligns with the Seven Bold Steps for Climate Action, particularly; Bold Step 7: Quality People-Centered Public Realm. By enhancing natural infrastructure and improving surface water flow through restored green space, the project helps reduce the urban heat island effect, manage stormwater more sustainably, and increase climate resilience in the built environment.

Furthermore, by engaging youth in hands-on restoration and public education, this initiative fosters long-term environmental stewardship and supports community-wide awareness led by the youth of New Westminster.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

While the detailed plans for both phases of this YCLT project are still evolving, a preliminary budget of up to \$20K has been estimated which will be covered within existing approved budget, to be used for equipment and materials to daylight a stream and to produce promotional materials such as signage and digital messaging.

Initial staff support was provided during the group's formation, and ongoing staff time needs for this project are anticipated to be accommodated within existing work plans.

The project has been reviewed through the Climate Action Decision Making Framework and deemed viable for this funding source.

**INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON**

Staff from multiple departments/divisions collaborated on this report, including: Energy and Climate Action, Parks and Recreation, Engineering Services, Mayor's Office and Legislative Services. Additionally, staff from Finance and Communications were consulted in drafting this report. These departments/divisions are also involved in delivering the work outlined in the attachments.

**OPTIONS**

Three options are provided for Council's consideration:

1. THAT phase one and two of the 2025 Youth Climate Leadership Team project plan as attached to the report titled "*Mayor's Youth Climate Leadership Team 2025 Project Plan*" dated May 12, 2025 from the Mayor's Youth Climate Leadership Team, be approved.
2. THAT up to \$20,000 be approved from the Climate Action Reserve to fund the implementation of the 2025 Youth Climate Leadership Team project plan.
3. Provide staff with alternate direction.

Options 1 and 2 are recommended.

**CONCLUSION**

The approval of the 2025 Youth Climate Leadership project plan will result in exemplifying youth leadership in advancing local climate action through creative, place-based solutions. By restoring hidden water systems and engaging the community in a shared learning journey, the YCLT is helping to reimagine the role of natural infrastructure in a resilient, livable city and also foster a sense of connection and stewardship in the community.

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment 1 - Phase 1 Overview
- Attachment 2 - Phase 2 Overview

## **APPROVALS**

This report was prepared by:

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This report was approved by:

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