



City of Maple Ridge

New tool helps make climate planning real

When the Maple Ridge city council asked for an update on community greenhouse gas emissions, the results were surprising and concerning.

As a result, Council asked staff to come back with more options to reduce community greenhouse gases. They also wanted to better align reduction targets in their Official Community Plan (OCP) with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's goal to keep warming within 1.5 degrees Celcius.

Before consulting on changes to GHG targets, staff at the City of Maple Ridge wanted a way to make the numbers "real" and help people visualize the story they told. That's when they turned to the Community Energy Association's new Climate Action Planner Tool.

CEA's interactive climate planner tool creates draft energy and emissions inventories for any local government or Islands Trust Area in B.C. It then allows simplified modelling to see the effectiveness of implementing actions to meet GHG reduction targets.

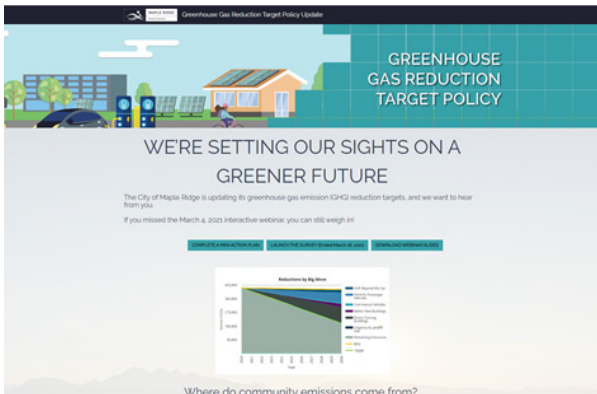
With COVID-19 creating a barrier to in-person open houses, staff held an online session, raising awareness through social media, newspaper ads, and engaged a local community group

(Maple Ridge Climate Hub) to contact their membership. The virtual session showed citizens how to use the tool and, along with asking them to fill out a survey, asked them to submit a mini Climate Action Plan using the tool.

One of the pleasant surprises was how the tool encouraged more discussion and interaction with staff.



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ABOVE: Maple Ridge's online Citizen Engagement Hub

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Before the public session, staff held a “mock” workshop internally to test the approach.

Several people from the Sustainability, Planning, Engineering and Building departments attended the online session, and half of the session was dedicated to questions and answers. The practice was valuable, and staff came away more knowledgeable about the level of change needed to achieve GHG reductions.

While the City received only a handful of Climate Action Plans using the survey, there was a great turnout for the session, a lively discussion, and a much larger return of surveys than normal.

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Sources:

<https://bcclimateleaders.ca/>
<https://ghgtargets.mapleridge.ca/>
<https://www.communityenergy.ca/climate-action-planner/>

Benefits

- Increase awareness for staff and participants, by helping them better visualize emissions and ways to reduce them.
- Improve understanding for residents of what it would take, in terms of policy and action, to reach the 2030 climate target.
- Encourage discussion and create a new way to hear from citizens to inform policy.

Lessons learned

- Staff found it well worth the time and effort to do a test session first to learn about timing and the best way to set out roles during the session.
- Having a dedicated support person for the tool was important to allow the facilitator/speaker to focus on presenting and running the Zoom session.
- Ensuring the facilitator is knowledgeable about the the “Big Moves” section of the BC Climate Leaders Playbook and how these moves relate to their own municipal policies and actions was critical for a rich Q&A session. The BC Climate Leaders Playbook is a resource informed by science and designed specifically for local government elected officials who want to lead and support bold, timely climate action in their community. The playbook is a complementary resource to the tool that staff found particularly helpful when talking about policy impacts.
- The Climate Action Planner tool uses 2007 baseline data. A complication was that the baseline year for the targets at the City of Maple Ridge was 2010. The target then had to be extrapolated, which caused some confusion for the non-mathematicians.
- As the Climate Action Planner tool can currently forecast out to 2030, City Staff hope it will be extended to forecast out to 2050, to continue climate planning and conversations.