



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

COMMITTEE REPORT

To: Chair and Members of the Planning Committee
From: Karen Chisholme, Climate Change and Sustainability Manager
Date: Thursday, September 09, 2021
Subject: **Climate Change - Five yr work plan and cost estimate.docx**

Background:

Future Focused – a climate change mitigation plan for the County of Wellington was endorsed by Council on February 25, 2021 with the recommendation,

That, staff prepare a 5-year work plan and cost estimate, for Council’s approval, to guide the implementation of Future Focused until 2027.

To that end, the attached work plan and cost estimate has been prepared for consideration. This five-year work plan and cost estimate projects the priority, timing and cost of various recommendations in the Future Focused plan. Like the County’s 10-year budget, this programme work plan and cost estimate is subject to change as new information, priorities and opportunities become available. Going forward, items directly related to programmes and responsibilities of established County departments will be accounted for in department annual budgets and follow established processes to refine costs and vet priorities with other initiatives.

The 5-year work plan and cost estimate has been prepared in collaboration with other departments including Treasury. The plan is broken down into programme areas and provides rationale for prioritized actions.

With governments acting on climate change with increasing urgency, there are new partnership and funding opportunities arising regularly. It is important that the County of Wellington remain flexible and prepared to act on these opportunities where they align with our priorities in order to optimize our programme delivery and reduce costs.

Recommendation:

That the five-year work plan and costs be included in the County’s 2022 Budget and 10-Year Plan process.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Chisholme
Climate Change and Sustainability Manager

Incl.: Future Focused – Five-year Work Plan and Cost Estimate

Future Focused – Five-year Work Plan and Cost Estimate

Background

Future Focused – a climate change mitigation plan for the County of Wellington was endorsed by Council on February 25, 2021. Recommendations in the Council Report also included development of a five-year work plan and cost estimate to be presented to Council for approval.

This five-year work plan and cost estimate projects the priority, timing and cost of various recommendations in the Future Focused plan. Like the County's 10-year budget, this programme work plan and cost estimate is subject to change as new information, priorities and opportunities become available. Going forward, items directly related to programmes and responsibilities of established County departments will be accounted for in department annual budgets (e.g. energy efficiency measures in social housing units will be shown in the Social Housing department annual budget). It is suggested that items contributing to the objectives of the Future Focused mitigation plan be uniquely identified in annual budgets and the 10-year budget forecast.

5-year Work Plan and Cost Estimate Process

This 5-year work plan and cost estimate was developed with input from applicable department managers from Social Housing, Solid Waste, Facilities Management, Our Food Future, Roads (fleet management), Museum, Libraries and Treasury. Recommendations from the Future Focused mitigation plan were reviewed and timelines and estimated costs were established.

The compiled 5-year work plan and costs were reviewed by the Treasurer, Director of Planning and CAO prior to presentation to Planning Committee.

Programme Areas

Four sectors were examined in the Future Focused plan; Buildings, Transportation and Street Lighting, Agriculture and Solid Waste. Actions to reduce greenhouse gases from both Corporate and Community sources were recommended along with additional work to address climate change impacts in the County, to continue to provide a high level of service and administration of the climate change work. These activities can be divided into six programme areas (Buildings, Transportation, Agriculture, Solid Waste, Community Engagement, Plan Development) as described below and shown in Figure 1.

Buildings – The community buildings programme area will include two main areas of focus. First, a green energy retrofit programme will address energy efficiency improvement in existing building stock. Starting with low-rise residential buildings, a programme will be developed to support homeowners in undertaking deep energy retrofits in their home. This will require engagement with the local renovation industry to understand potential local barriers to implementation and strategies to make this process as easy as possible for the homeowner. This programme will include options for financing. There are a number of options homeowners can access to finance home retrofits, including community efficiency financing programmes which are currently eligible for funding through Federation of Canadian Municipalities (see details in Appendix A). Once a programme is developed there will be a need for outreach support to engage with interested homeowners and assist them through the retrofit process.

Building off of the home energy efficiency programme, a programme to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from other building types (commercial, industrial, institutional, agricultural, etc.) will be developed. Energy retrofit programmes will be ongoing throughout the lifespan of the Future Focused plan.

Second, green development standards will be developed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from new development. This work will require engagement with various stakeholder to ensure the standards are realistic and incentives, if desirable, are appropriate to the needs of the local industry and regulators. Partnership opportunities exist with neighbouring municipalities to develop consistent standards. Consistency between standards from jurisdiction to jurisdiction has been viewed favourably by the development industry as it avoids re-learning and re-tooling their approach across jurisdictions. The green building standards will be reviewed and updated every five years or as legislation changes. Once in place, implementation of the green building standard within the community will fall primarily to County Planning staff and member municipality Chief Building Officials. New buildings owned by the County of Wellington will follow the same standard. The Construction and Property Manager will largely implement the green building standards for new buildings owned by the County of Wellington.

Corporately, the focus in the near-term will be on improving energy efficiency in social housing buildings. Climate change staff will provide support to Social Housing as they develop plans to improve energy efficiency through building upgrades (e.g. building envelope improvements, HVAC upgrades, etc.). Support may include emissions analysis to forecast improvements from various undertakings, prioritization based on building performance, assisting the development of business cases, assisting with funding applications and reviewing requests for proposals, etc. Similar support will be provided throughout the development of the Continuum of Care facility and other new buildings.

In order to make significant gains in energy efficiency, building audits must be completed. It is expected that actions in addition to those noted in this five-year cost estimate will be identified through this process.

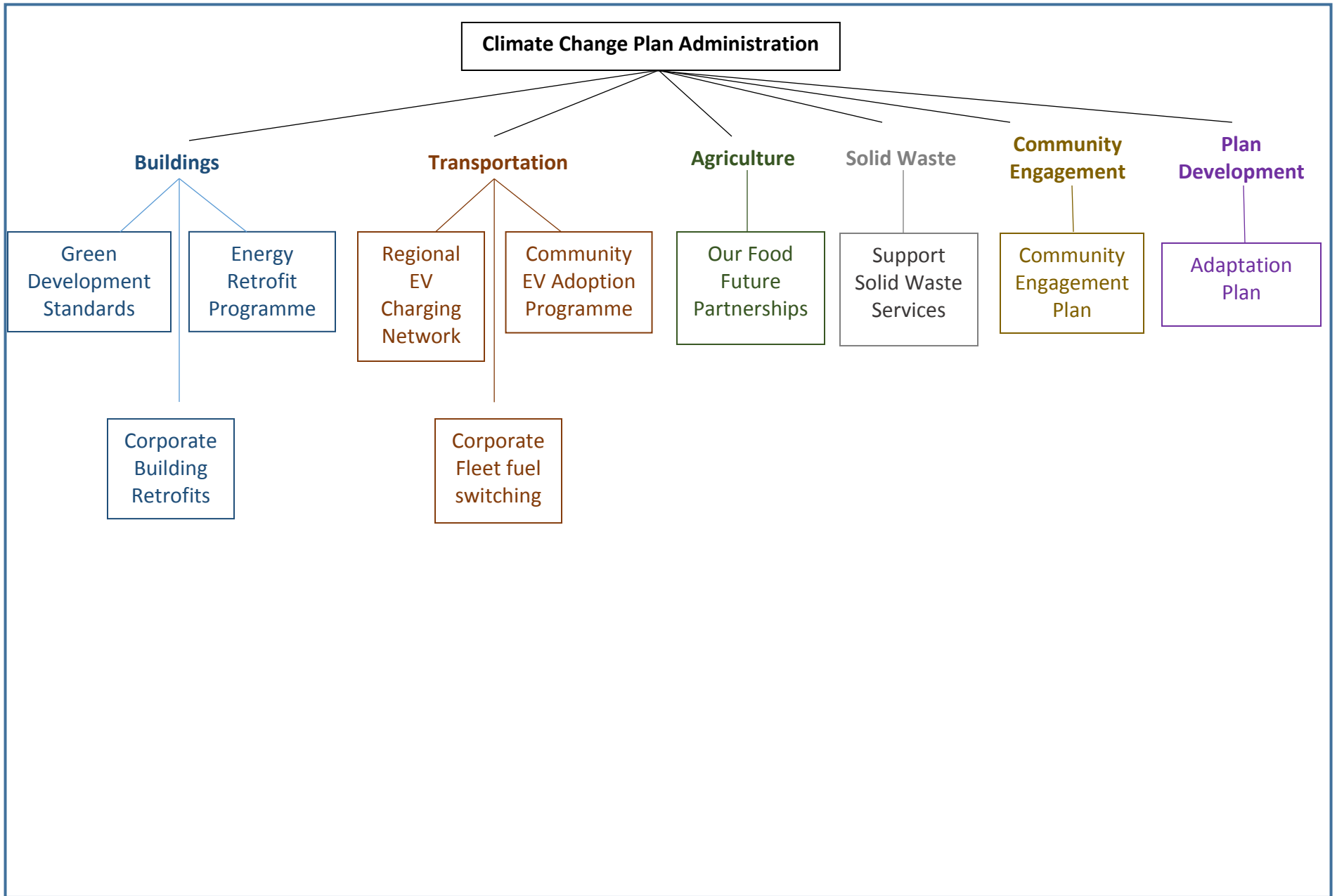


Figure 1: Climate Change Programme Areas Structure

Transportation – The near-term focus of programmes in transportation will be converting light duty vehicles to electric (EV). This will require two undertakings:

1. Increase availability of EV chargers in the community.
2. Increase EV adoption.

Work is already underway regarding increasing availability of EV chargers. The County has partnered with neighbouring municipalities (Guelph, Dufferin, Perth, Huron, Grey and Bruce) along with Our Energy Guelph, Nuclear Innovation Initiative and Grey-Bruce Public Health to develop a regional EV charging network to support visitor destinations (restaurants, attractions, recreation, shopping, etc.). This approach will leverage individual municipal efforts, create a connected region and increase the availability and visibility of EVs for local residents. Once the plan is complete, efforts will focus on engaging with EV charger suppliers to install chargers in the County according to the plan. As EV adoption increases, the plan may require updating to meet demand.

The second phase will focus on EV adoption by the community. This will require outreach and education to increase the visibility of EVs and break down barriers to adoption. Partnerships with local dealerships and services (e.g. Plug'n Drive) will increase the profile of EVs available. This phase will focus on personal EV adoption as well as fleets, including school buses and regional transportation.

It is anticipated that the EV adoption programme will be ongoing throughout the lifespan of the Future Focused plan. Climate Change staff are currently exploring partnership opportunities with Dufferin County to develop a community EV adoption campaign which will include an application for funding (up to \$300,000) from Natural Resources Canada. This one-time investment of approximately \$20,000 has been included in the 2022 cost estimate. Engagement in subsequent years is anticipated to be a much smaller scale.

Once more information is known about alternatives to diesel fuel, additional programming will be developed.

Corporate initiatives for transportation will consist of a transition to electric half-tonne pickup trucks and smaller projects (e.g. active transportation options, promotion of carpooling and remote working, etc.) as opportunities arise. Major initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the County of Wellington's fleet will be planned once alternatives to diesel are available.

Agriculture – The Green Legacy Programme and Rural Water Quality Programme already support climate change action on the farm and rural properties. These programmes will be reviewed for additional opportunities to support reducing greenhouse gases and sequestering carbon in rural landscapes. Increased investment in these programmes may include: incentives for new actions under the Rural Water Quality Programme, additional incentive money available for existing action in the Rural Water Quality Programme, data acquisition and

sharing, follow-up services or monitoring to evaluate uptake, marketing tree planting on large corporate grounds, growing larger tree stock through Green Legacy, piloting pollinator plant growing and planting, roadside tree plantings and more windbreaks, etc.

The Federal Government is exploring legislation regarding carbon offsetting. On-farm climate change action efforts will be supported through this legislation. The agriculture programme area will need to pivot to address agriculture sector needs as this legislation comes into practice. Until such a time, the focus in agriculture will be partnerships with Our Food Future.

Particular areas of cross-over with Our Food Future are in regards to carbon offsetting, improving data acquisition, supporting sustainable farming certifications and food distribution, packaging and processing facility development. Our Food Future and the climate change office are currently investigating a funding opportunity to establish a living lab, driven by farmers, where agricultural climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts can be studied. Space in the agriculture programme area should be maintained to allow staff to pivot to these opportunistic initiatives.

Solid Waste – Climate change action related to solid waste have largely been incorporated into the Solid Waste Services Strategy. As data from newly implemented programmes becomes available, staff will work across departments to tweak and adjust programme delivery to address gaps and improve outcomes. Opportunities to form partnerships to explore alternative approaches to solid waste management will be sought out as they arise (e.g. opportunities to support circularity).

Community Engagement – There are many opportunities to collaborate with the County Museum and Libraries to develop learning and engagement opportunities for the community. Similar opportunities exist with local school boards who have expressed interest in partnering in this regard.

Community engagement efforts will focus on the development (and delivery) of an engagement strategy (including strategies to engage with youth, Indigenous communities and hard to reach communities) and establishing and supporting Communities of Practice for industry, businesses and agriculture. These activities will be ongoing throughout the lifespan of the Future Focused Plan.

Plan Development – There is a need to support the development of the County's Asset Management Plan with the development of a climate change adaptation plan. The adaptation plan will examine the climate change risks and vulnerabilities in the County and proposed recommendations to address those threats. The development of the adaptation plan will likely take 18 to 24 months of focused work. Once completed it is anticipated that the implementation of the plan will be spread across County departments including climate change, similar to the Future Focused plan.

Prior to the closing of the Future Focused plan in 2030, the plan will be reviewed, new targets set and new recommendations proposed to continue the County's work towards the goal of net zero emissions.

Climate Change Plan Administration

Administrative tasks associated with the climate change plans will be undertaken by climate change staff. The cost estimate includes two new contract positions (one position to focus on data management and community engagement and a shared position with Our Food Future to focus on agriculture).

Administration of the programme includes development of energy tracker/database and emissions calculator, data collection and analysis, grant/funding applications, strategic partnership building and industry contributions, policy development, monitoring and reporting progress, establishing and directing advisory groups, supporting member municipalities with their climate change initiatives, budgeting, and reporting and accounting for sustainability and green initiatives. Administration of the programme is ongoing.