



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF COURTENAY

## STAFF REPORT

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**To:** Council  
**From:** Director of Engineering Services  
**Subject:** Home Energy Navigator Program

**File No.:** 5335-20  
**Date:** November 8, 2023

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**PURPOSE:** To seek council support for the City of Courtenay to participate in the Home Energy Navigator program, in collaboration with the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD).

### BACKGROUND:

As a signatory of the BC Climate Action Charter, the City of Courtenay seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with city operations, and community wide sources. According to the Community Wide Emissions Inventory prepared in 2021, residential buildings represent the second greatest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the City of Courtenay, followed by transportation emissions.

Rebate programs are available to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from residential homes. These programs are offered by a number of organizations including: the provincial and federal government, BC Hydro, and FortisBC. Some homeowners may face barriers accessing these rebates, including: uncertainty about project eligibility, unfamiliarity managing home renovations, and inexperience with rebate submission requirements. The CVRD seeks to eliminate these barriers by launching the Home Energy Navigator (HEN) program in early 2024.

The HEN program provides start-to-finish retrofit support. Key features:

- Provides information, advice, and guidance without pressure to implement retrofits.
- Reduces barriers to completing upgrades, especially converting from fossil fuel to electrical heat pump space heating
- Works with residents to overcome barriers to completing upgrades.
- Advises on the renovation approach to incorporate House-as-a-system concepts
- Provides objective advice throughout the retrofit process, including quote review and context to understand differences between quotes.
- Provide guidance and confirmation that proposed upgrades are eligible for rebates, and assistance in completing rebate submissions.

The CVRD is using funds received as part of the Local Governmental Climate Action plan (LGCAP) to offer the HEN program to residents in the electoral areas. The City of Courtenay has been invited to collaborate and contribute, to extend service to residents within the City of Courtenay.

### DISCUSSION:

The HEN program was developed by City Green Solutions (City Green) in collaboration with the Capital Regional District (CRD), City of Vancouver (COV), and Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN). City Green is a non-profit organization with a mission to support energy and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions in homes and buildings across BC. City Green will administer the program on behalf of local governments who offer the program to their residents.

The HEN program was designed with an equity-based approach to ensure it is accessible by minimizing financial, technological and knowledge barriers. Upon registration, users are introduced to a single point of contact to simplify the process, and receive support in an accessible way.

City Green offers as much support as residents request. The needs of each resident will vary, and as a result, the amount of support received will vary. Local governments offering the HEN program, are only billed for the hours used by residents. To date, implementation of the HEN program in the CRD, COV, and RDN found that an average of 5.5 hours of support was needed per home.

The table below summarizes the average costs per home:

Homeowner Support Categories	Average Hours per Home	Avg \$ per Home
Client Services	0.50	\$ 25.00
Virtual Home Energy Check-Up	2.00	\$ 200.00
Retrofit Support (Review, Plan, Compare, Select)	2.00	\$ 150.00
Rebate, Financing, & Documentation Support	1.00	\$ 75.00
<b>Average per Home</b>	<b>5.50</b>	<b>\$ 425.00</b>

The HEN program is an opportunity to collaborate regionally. All local governments in the region have been invited to join the program, so the program may be made available to their residents. The City of Courtenay can be seamlessly integrated into the HEN program that will be launched by the CVRD in January 2024.

The success of the HEN program depends on residents becoming aware, and seeking service to support their home energy improvements. City Green plans to engage with specialized consulting teams in web development and marketing to generate awareness and interest in the program.

#### **POLICY ANALYSIS:**

The City of Courtenay OCP identified climate action as one of the four cardinal directions with a target of reducing community-wide GHG emissions by 45% (from 2016 levels by 2030). Enrolment in the HEN program directly aligns with this goal by removing barriers to residents participating in meaningful climate actions in their homes.

The CVRD Board of Directors approved the Residential Emissions Reduction Action Plan (RERAP) at the October 17, 2023 board meeting. The objective of this plan is to reduce GHGs within the community. Launching a home energy concierge program is a key strategy in the RERAP prioritized by CVRD staff which also received approval for implementation.

As a climate action signatory and through participation in the Local Government Climate Action Program (LGCAP), our organization has committed to reduce GHGs and meet the provincial reduction targets. Enrolling in the HEN program will ensure we are working towards the goals of the CleanBC Roadmap to 2030 through reducing building GHG emissions within the community.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

CVRD has allocated \$50,000 to the HEN program. To ensure residents are aware of the program, a portion of the funds allocated by the CVRD are dedicated to a communications campaign.

It is proposed that the City of Courtenay match the funding provided by the CVRD, and allocate \$50,000 to offer the service to City of Courtenay residents. Actual costs to support the HEN program will depend on resident demand, with the proposed budget setting a cap on spending. Through monitoring the program effectiveness, future budgeting can be adjusted to match demand.

This program is eligible to be covered by the provincial funds provided by the Local Government Climate Action Program. This funding allocation has been proposed in the 2024 budget.

**ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:**

The contract with City Green will be administered by the CVRD. City Green will work with interested residents to deliver start-to-finish home retrofit support through information, advice, and guidance. City Green will work to advertise to residents.

Staff from Engineering Services will work with staff from the CVRD to track the use and effectiveness of the program as data is gathered by City Green. Occasional support from Communications staff will be needed to share advertisements through the City of Courtenay’s social media platforms.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:**

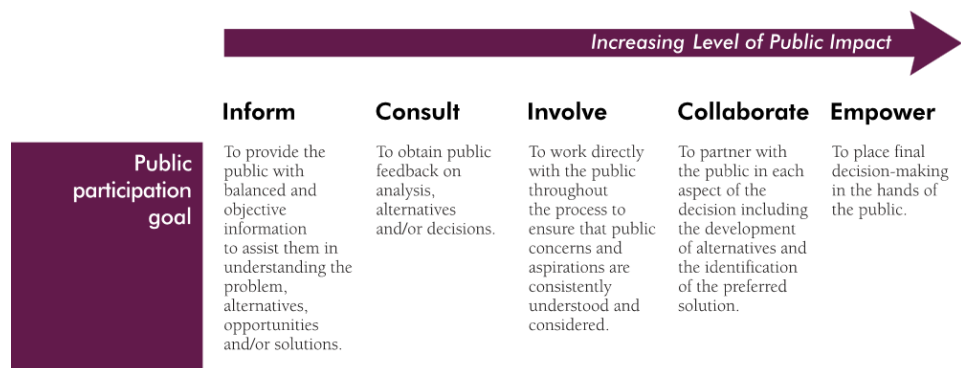
This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Natural Environment - Integrate climate change commitment into our governance work: Include climate change lens in staff reports
- Social Infrastructure - Develop measures and criteria to track progress for the OCP's four cardinal directions: reconciliation, community well-being, equity, and climate action
- Municipal Infrastructure - Continued regional collaboration: Regional Growth Strategy, Liquid Waste Management Plan, South Sewer Conveyance, organics/solid waste, air quality, and regional parks
- Choose an item.

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

The success of the HEN Program depends on residents becoming aware of the program, and seeking service to support their home energy improvements. To ensure residents are aware of the program, a portion of the funds allocated by the CVRD are dedicated to a communications campaign that seeks to inform residents.

The HEN program seeks to overcome obstacles, and empower residents to complete energy efficient upgrades. Staff would inform and empower the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



**OPTIONS:**

1. THAT Council support participation in the home energy navigator program, in collaboration with the Comox Valley Regional District.
2. THAT Council provide alternative direction to staff.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Council Presentation – Home Energy Navigator Summary
2. City Green – Home Energy Navigator Summary Presentation

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