

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

TO: *MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS*

SUBJECT: ZERO EMISSIONS BUILDING RETROFIT STRATEGY UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the report titled “Zero Emissions Building Retrofit Strategy Update” dated February 9, 2026, of the Environment Committee meeting, be received for information.

REPORT

The Environment Committee, at its meeting held on February 9, 2026, received and adopted the attached report providing an update on the implementation of the Zero Emissions Building Retrofit Strategy to date.

On behalf of the Environment
Committee,

Councillor J. Keithley
Chair

Councillor M. Santiago
Vice Chair

TO: ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (EC)
FROM: GENERAL MANAGER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
SUBJECT: **ZERO EMISSIONS BUILDING RETROFIT STRATEGY UPDATE**
PURPOSE: To provide an update on the implementation of the Zero Emissions Building Retrofit Strategy to date.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the report titled “Zero Emissions Building Retrofit Strategy Update” dated February 9, 2026, be received for information.

1.0 POLICY SECTION

The Zero Emissions Building Retrofit Strategy supports the following City policies:

- Burnaby 2050 Official Community Plan (2025);
- Corporate Strategic Plan (2022);
- Climate Action Framework (2020);
- Community Energy and Emissions Plan (2016); and
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2016).

2.0 BACKGROUND

The Zero Emissions (ZE) Building Retrofit Strategy (the Strategy) was adopted by Council on October 30, 2023. The Strategy outlines the City’s actions to support building owners and occupants in retrofitting their buildings to provide greater thermal comfort, use more efficient, lower-carbon energy sources, and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

The Zero Emissions Building Retrofit Taskforce (Taskforce), a project of the Urban Resilient Futures Initiative (URF), provided recommendations to City staff on the development of the Strategy that ultimately shaped the Strategy’s objectives and actions.

This report provides an update to the advancement of the Strategy since its adoption.

3.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

3.1 Zero Emission Building Retrofit Landscape

The wide-scale adoption of zero emission building retrofits requires an alignment of actions by home and business owners, all orders of government, utilities, industry and the education sector. The low-carbon energy landscape in British Columbia is rapidly evolving.

In recent years, several program and policy developments have impacted the building retrofit sector. The elimination of the BC consumer carbon tax, and the discontinuation

of the Canada Greener Homes grants and loans have reduced the financial incentives for zero emission building retrofits.

Despite this, key provincial programs have been introduced over the last five years to support the uptake of building retrofits across the province. The BC Retrofit Accelerator (2024) provides rebates and support for a well identified gap in market rental, non-profit housing, commercial, and strata-owned buildings. The BC Home Energy Planner (2025) helps homeowners assess their home's energy performance and identify retrofit opportunities. The CleanBC Better Homes rebates (2022 onward) have expanded to include income-qualified families, apartment renters, and condominium owners.

Together with the former Canada Green Homes grant, these programs have supported nearly 30,000 heat pump installations in BC, including those in Burnaby (Attachment 1-Figure 1). Heat pump sales in BC have now surpassed gas furnace sales, indicating a significant shift towards low-carbon heating and cooling technologies (Attachment 1-Figure 2).

The strong market trend is driven by the ongoing availability of rebates and increasing demand for reliable thermal comfort as summer temperatures intensify. To sustain this momentum, local government continues to play a crucial role in providing community-level support needed to complement the policy development and incentives offered from other levels of government.

3.2 Update on the Zero Emission Building Retrofit Strategy Implementation

The ZE Building Retrofit Strategy sets out four objectives that are key to overcoming barriers to retrofit adoption: Education and Outreach, Policies and Bylaws, Incentives, and Advocacy. Twelve of the actions in the Strategy have been completed to date. An additional 18 actions are currently underway or ongoing (Attachment 2). City staff have advanced actions in support of each of the Strategy's objectives as follows:

Education and Outreach

- Launched an online centralized retrofit information platform to improve resident access to resources for their retrofit journey. The website has had close to 1,000 views since its launch. Social media outreach has reached more than 12,000 views. (Action 1.1.1);
- Reached over 8,000 patrons of City Hall through targeted heat pump, energy efficiency and residential thermal comfort displays during tax season (2023-2025). (Action 1.1.5);
- Partnered with Landlord BC to distribute targeted retrofit support information on the BC Retrofit Accelerator. Fourteen rental buildings have expressed interest in participating in the retrofit program to date. (Action 1.1.2);
- Partnered with CleanBC to host a webinar on low-carbon heat pumps, building residents' understanding of the thermal and financial benefits of heat pumps, and providing a platform for residents to speak with Provincial representatives. (Action 1.3.1).

Policy and Bylaws

- Amended the Burnaby Zoning Bylaw to explicitly allow heat pumps and other outdoor equipment in suitable locations (like side yards) without requiring variances. This removes unnecessary regulatory barriers, reduces extra costs and delays for residents, and ensures that outdoor structures are sited safely and consistently. (Action 3.3.1 & 3.3.2).
- Codified support for zero emission building retrofits in the Burnaby 2050 Official Community Plan (OCP) under Objective 5.2 to prioritize low-carbon upgrades and fuel switching through land use, development, and permitting, aligning with City programs and incentives to accelerate building decarbonization while supporting climate resilience and affordability. (Action 3.3.3).

Incentives and Process Support

- Developed the framework for a revised Heating Permit and an accompanying information guide to streamline three separate permits into a single unified heating permit. This one permit simplifies the process, saves time, improves clarity and supports residents in completing heating and cooling system upgrades. It is set to launch in 2026. (Action 2.3.1);
- Launched the following guides for residents, property owners and contractors: [Air Source Heat Pump Retrofit Information](#) and the [Mechanical Equipment Installation and Retrofit Guide for multi-family strata buildings](#), providing clearer guidance and supporting compliance with permitting and bylaw requirements. (Action 2.3.2);
- Reduced wait-times for residential permits for new homes by up to 85%, including for low-carbon and energy efficient retrofits, through the streamlined Development Approval Process (DAP). As of September 2025, residential permits are fully online. (Action 2.3.3).

Advocacy

- Contributed to cross-jurisdictional committees and topic-specific engagement sessions (i.e. CleanBC Review meetings organized by Metro Vancouver and by Community Energy Association) to communicate support for retrofit-enabling provincial policy, incentives and rebates. (Actions 4.1, 4.3, 4.4).

Work completed to date has advanced progress across all four objectives highlighted in the Strategy. As extreme weather events become more frequent, demand for high-efficiency thermal comfort solutions, such as heat pumps, will continue to grow, reinforcing the need for a coordinated municipal approach. The next phase of work will build on this momentum by strengthening internal capacity, enhancing cross-departmental collaboration, and supporting continued expansion of building retrofits in Burnaby.

4.0 NEXT STEPS

More work is scheduled for completion in 2026 to increase the adoption of zero emission building retrofits in Burnaby, including:

- Enhancing internal staff knowledge on retrofit programs, including developing educational materials and delivering presentations to Building staff;

- Designing a retrofit toolkit to help support residents to take action;
- Promoting participation in the Building Benchmarking BC program and amplifying its benefits;
- Working with industry leaders on targeted outreach on available retrofit support programs;
- Supporting the launch of the revised Heating Permit and an accompanying information guide to streamline three separate permits into a single unified heating permit;
- Collaborating with other departments to showcase the success stories of retrofitted City facilities;
- Continuing to provide clarity on permitting processes for zero emission retrofit work;
- Continuing to work with Marketing and Communications to promote the benefits of building retrofits in the community; and
- Continuing participation in the Community Energy Association's Retrofit Peer Network to learn from other municipalities and stay updated on government policies and initiatives.

5.0 COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Communication and community engagement are essential in strengthening public's understanding of building retrofits. Staff will continue to work with Corporate Service – Marketing and Communications to implement the plans and strategies developed to date to deliver effective messaging.

6.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Progress made on the Strategy is currently being completed using base budget. Several actions in the Strategy will require additional budget to advance. These include participating in existing retrofit support and incentive programs and developing tailored educational support and resources for capacity building and awareness-raising initiatives. Staff will bring forward budget requests in the future to advance these actions.

Respectfully submitted,

E.W. Kozak, General Manager Planning and Development

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Supplemental Data on Trends

Attachment 2 – ZE Building Retrofit Strategy Progress

REPORT CONTRIBUTORS

This report was prepared by Darseen Pooni and Joanna Cheng, Climate Action and Environment Specialists, and reviewed by Erica Lay, Manager Climate Action and Environment; Wendy Tse, Director Community Planning; and Lee-Ann Garnett, Deputy General Manager Planning and Development.