

Green Team 2011 Strategic Plan

December 2010

City of Courtenay Green Team

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1. Introduction

In 2007 the City of Courtenay signed on to the Climate Action Charter; this is an agreement between the Province of B.C. and local governments that climate change is a concern and requires the action of all sectors of society, including local governments, their communities and individuals. Complimentary legislation includes Bill 27¹, which requires that all local governments include a community-wide greenhouse gas reduction target and supporting policies and strategies in their Official Community Plan.

To respond to the Climate Action Charter, the City conducted a Corporate Action Strategy in which a number of action areas were identified.² This strategy was created by 22 staff members, who were originally referred to as the Green Team. This original team has morphed into a corporate-focused greenhouse gas reduction committee which is now referred to as the Corporate Climate Action Committee.

It became apparent that a special sub-committee devoted to the promotion of green initiatives among staff and public relations was required. And so the current Green Team was formed.

1.1 Mission

The mission for the original City of Courtenay Green Team is as follows:

"We will champion the City's corporate culture on environmental awareness by promoting green initiatives. This will be achieved by creating action oriented strategic plans that will include a framework for reducing greenhouse gases, water use and energy consumption for the benefit of the community and future generations."

This multi-objective vision has now been split between the two parallel committees.

Corporate Climate Action Committee will *"develop action oriented strategic plans that will include a framework for reducing greenhouse gases, water use and energy consumption for the benefit of the community and future generations."*

Examples of the activities undertaken by the Corporate Climate Action Committee include exploring opportunities for facilities and fleet efficiency improvements and monitoring the implementation of the Corporate Strategy on these topic areas.

The Green Team will *"Champion the City's corporate culture on environmental awareness by promoting green initiatives."*

Examples of activities undertaken by the Green Team includes raising awareness of the corporate initiatives and raising staff and public awareness on a range of environment-related topics.

This plan outlines the future direction for the Green Team in 2011.

¹ Local Government (Green Communities) Statutes Amendment Act, 2008.

² See City of Courtenay Corporate Climate Action Strategy, 2009.

2. Green Team Goals

The Green Team will know it has succeeded when:

- ✓ Corporate culture strongly supports environmental initiatives as business as usual, and not a 'special interest' topic
- ✓ All City of Courtenay staff are familiar with the Green Team, its function and activities
- ✓ The public is familiar with the Green Team, its function and activities
- ✓ The City of Courtenay as a whole has reduced its environmental impact, including greenhouse gas emissions

To measure the Green Team's success, it will:

- ✓ Determine indicators and a baseline set of data on current staff awareness of and support for environmental initiatives. This may be achieved through a survey.
- ✓ Determine indicators and baseline set of data on current public awareness of and support for environmental initiatives. This may be achieved through an on-line survey.
- ✓ Produce an annual report on the achievement of annual objectives.
- ✓ Revisit at five year intervals the indicators and baseline set of data on both staff and public awareness of and support for environmental initiatives.

All annual reports and indicators will be made available to either staff or the public (as appropriate) for educational purposes. This plan will be a living document that will be subject to change as needed.

3. Context

3.1 Past activities

The Green Team PR subcommittee was formed in the Spring of 2010. The committee participated in Earth Day 2010, working to increase community engagement by distributing seeds, as well as promoting the City's Climate Action initiatives. The Green Team subcommittee has also placed articles in the Inside Courtenay staff newsletter, as well as newspaper ads promoting climate action awareness.

Activities by the Green Team in previous years included participating in Earth Day 2009, as well as the "1000 Trees in Courtenay" program, a residential tree planting program.

3.2 Opportunities and Challenges

The Green Team (GT) has identified a number of opportunities and challenges that will influence its ability to fulfill its mission and achieve its goals. The GT will endeavor to use the opportunities available to it and work at addressing the challenges wherever possible.

Opportunities:

- **Resources:** Small amount of committed funding (\$5000/annually).
- **Public interest:** there is a wide range, but strongly supportive individuals have come forward.
- **Staff interest:** there is a wide range, but there is interest. Supporters of an environmentally conscious corporate culture could unite and lobby.
- **Research available:** Effective strategies do exist to influence behavior change (e.g. Community Based Social Marketing techniques).
- **Connecting to other initiatives:**
 - o Green Team to connect and deliver with Wellness Committee on some topics.
 - o Link Green Team activities to other environmental initiatives within the City (E.g. Official Community Plan, Planning for Climate Change provisions).
 - o CVRD and other local governments are working on the same initiatives internally.
 - o Integrate Green Team initiatives/message beyond the work place to influence people's personal lives.
- **Empowerment** to individuals by providing them information and token gifts that are consistent with the message and may provide incentive to take part in a promoted activity. Empowerment also to the Green Team to show that good behaviours are possible, by leading by example.
- **Promotion** of City's successes.

Challenges:

- **Apathy/disinterest** on environmental issues: Belief that it is not important, is too big an issue to tackle, that individual actions do not matter, bad habits, is not the responsibility of local government and/or that it is a good use of staff time.
- **Vocally unsupportive staff** may make it difficult for those who tentatively support initiatives, or want to learn more, to voice their opinion.
- **Leading by example:** can be difficult to consistently lead a low impact lifestyle and Green Team members may be judged for this.
- **Time commitments:**
 - o Of possibly interested staff which may limit their engagement.
 - o Of the Green Team to other projects.
- **Low profile** of the Green Team: and confusion between its function and the Climate Action Committee.
- **Cross departmental communication** of environment related projects, successes, challenges, etc. Lack of cross departmental communication is a challenge for a number of other reasons as well including efficacy of one's job.
- **Disproportionate representation from all facilities:** E.g. City Hall had the highest response rate of the survey by a large margin

4 Implementation

4.1 Approach

The Green team will undertake an approach that demonstrates the following:

- *Relevant and useful information to intended audience.* Studies have shown that individuals are more likely to connect to messages that are framed in a way that is relevant and implementable to them. The Green Team conducted a staff survey in September 2010 that will influence the target messages in 2011.
- *Well thought out and quality program/message delivery over quantity.* Staff have indicated through Wellness Committee surveys that they would prefer fewer high quality initiatives over many less well thought out initiatives.
- *Focused, coordinated message delivery.* Studies have shown that behavior change is more likely if the message is clear, 'digestible', focused, and consistent with complimentary messages (e.g. CVRD messages on waste reduction).
- *Flexible, adaptable and evaluative approaches.* Timing is often key to successful message delivery. It's important that the Green Team remain vigilant to the attitudes and interests of the staff and public and strategically build on any topics/events that may be at the political forefront. The Green Team will also be open to constructive feedback and will continue to strive to improve its methods in achieving its goals.
- *Project-oriented.* Best practices in corporate culture change reveal that committees with a similar function are more likely to achieve their goals when there was a project to support their work. Therefore in addition to awareness raising, the GT will undertake the work of a specific project that will be of use to a department or identified segment of staff.

4.2 Tasks

The Green Team will focus its efforts in the following four areas:

1. Awareness raising and behavior change:

Who: Green Team will distribute resources and provide workshops on specific topics to interested staff.

What: Workshops, an email distribution list and quarterly newsletters and prizes will be used.

- Workshops will be hands on and aim to offer a 'do it yourself' skill set. Outside resources/experts will be brought in as necessary.
- Emails will be sent out weekly two months preceding the event on tips, 'did you know?' and local implications of the topic area.

- Each quarterly newsletter will include a standardized section on GT activities featuring a section on upcoming workshops, past workshops and a 'think piece'. Product profiles may also be featured. The timeline for newsletter submissions is as follows:
 - o Friday, January 28 – Spring newsletter, published late February
 - o Friday, April 29 – Summer newsletter, published late May
 - o Friday, July 29 – Fall newsletter, published late August
 - o Friday, October 28 – Winter newsletter, published late November
- Prizes will be used to re-enforce and incentivize the behavior.

When: Four focused topic areas will be presented through the above media throughout the year. This will give the GT time to provide well thought out, quality programs and messages, and to coordinate with other initiatives (e.g. CVRD activities).

The four topic areas for 2011 are:

1. Composting³
2. Gardening
3. Cycling
4. Safe, chemical-free products

2. Public outreach

Earth Day celebrations

The GT has a history of providing resources in an engaging format at the Earth Day event, held annually at Simms Park the Saturday following Earth Day (April 20th). Details on the implementation of 2011 Earth Day participation is presented in Table 2.

Public outreach communications

For 2011, the GT is primarily interested in focusing its attentions on corporate outreach and behavior change. The GT will explore opportunities to expand programming and message delivery to the public in the future.

For 2011, the GT will look into ways to use the Climate Action webpage on the City's website to promote the internal staff initiatives to show that the City is doing its part.

³ City facility composting will begin in 2011 at City Hall, the Lewis Centre, Public Works and the Filberg Centre. Each of the facilities will have a composting 'champion' who will see to the management of their composting arrangement. For instance, the Lewis Centre has decided that they have too few staff to justify a composting facility, and therefore will collect organic materials and work and take them home to their personal composters. Because it is the GT's responsibility to ensure its collection, management and soil harvesting, GT will connect with the champions of each of the facilities throughout 2011 to ensure that they are on track. The GT's involvement in this function will likely cease to be necessary by 2012 once composting becomes regular part of waste disposal and facilities maintenance.

3. Specific projects to promote green corporate culture

The City has developed a Green Purchasing Policy as part of its Corporate Climate Action Plan. However, it appears that not all staff who engage in purchasing have been following the policies. The GT will work with key purchasers to identify how the policies contained in the Plan can be made accessible and relevant to them.

A new purchasing manager will begin employment in February and purchasing will become its own department. These changes provide an opportunity to operationalize on a mass scale the City's green purchasing policies.

The GT will meet with the new purchasing manager and discuss these ideas with him in February.

This project has the opportunity to link to the GT topic area – 'chemical free products'.

This purchasing policy project also will provide the opportunity to promote corporate culture change within the organization more broadly. In addition to working on this project, the GT will work with department heads to consistently and continuously promote the message of environmental responsibility in each of staff's duties. The opportunity to present our ideas at some of the monthly manager meetings has been identified.

4. Additional functions

The GT explored its potential role a number of areas that had been previously identified: School outreach and pilot testing of new 'green' technologies.

School outreach: As part of their job duties, Nancy and Allan will be presenting to high schools climate change science and ecological impacts with an emphasis on the local context. The GT decided that its role will be to support Nancy and Allan by providing feedback on their materials, but not to engage on the role directly.

The GT will revisit in the future the possibility of connecting with school-based Green Teams.

Piloting of new technologies: The GT remains open to ideas and will table opportunities as they arise. The current opportunity that is being explored is the use of an electric vehicle for city public works operations.

5. Green Team Process

5.1 Schedule of meetings

To ensure that adequate time is given to plan for each of the quarterly thematic topic areas the following schedule will be followed:

Topic	Table ideas	Prepare for event	Event
Gardening	January – newsletter Jan 28	February/ table ideas for Earth Day	March/ prepare for Earth Day event
Cycling	April – newsletter April 29 / Earth Day event	May	Late May
Composting	July – newsletter July 29	August	September
Chemical free products	October – newsletter October 28	November	December

5.2 Interface with other environment-focused committees

The December 2010 amendments to the City’s Official Community Plan included provisions to initiate a community task force on greenhouse gas reductions and an interjurisdictional technical advisory committee on the same aim. The Green Team and the Corporate Climate Action Committee will be essential resources to this well engaged process. How these two internal committees will complement the new public-oriented committees will be determined shortly in the New Year.