



Better Community, Better Climate

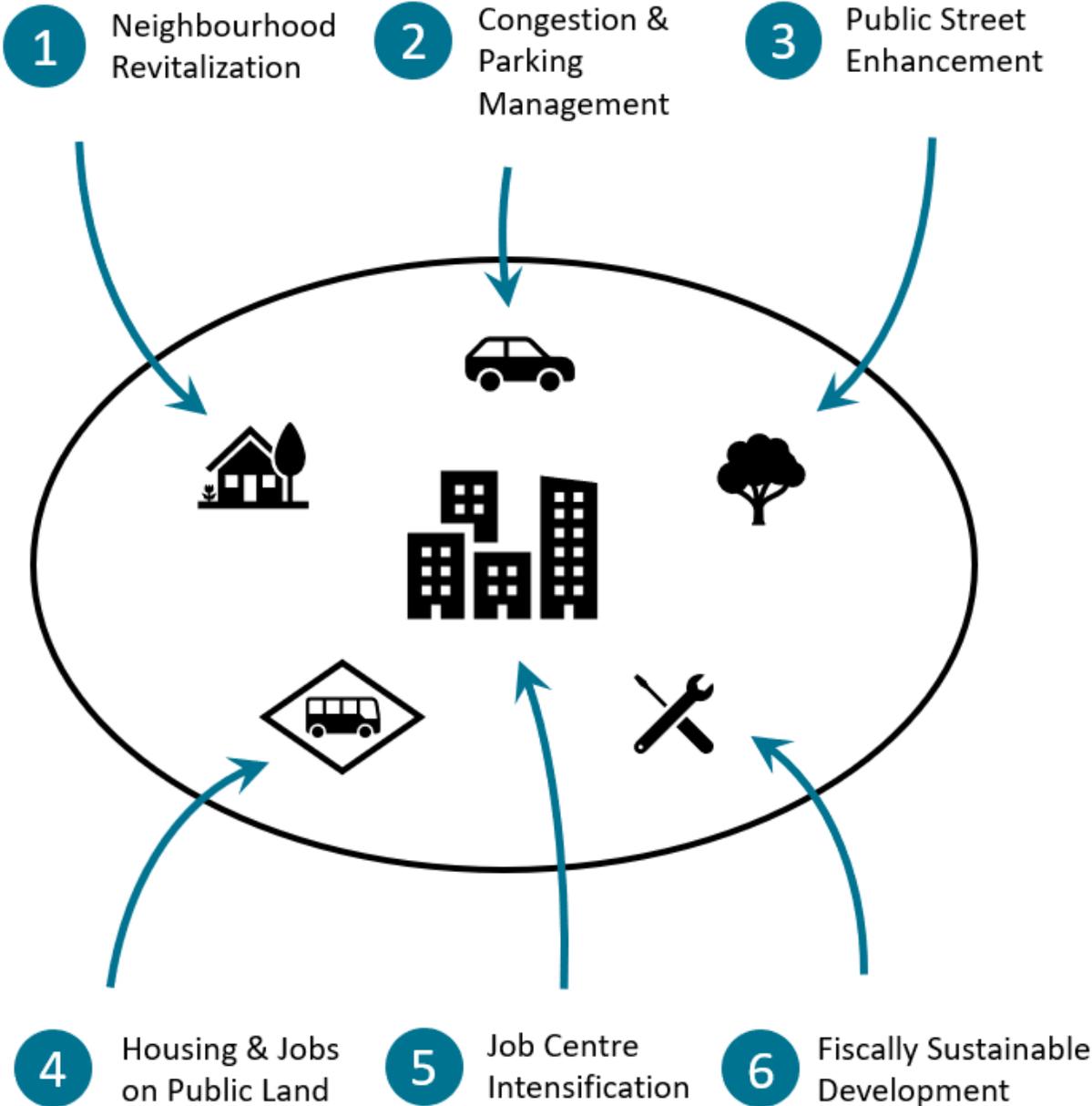
*2022 B.C local election candidates' guide
to solutions for people, pocketbooks and
the planet*

Renewable Cities is accelerating the transition to renewable, restorative, resilient cities through critical analysis, policy innovation, strategic communication and engagement. Our systems-thinking perspective is vital for solving our most complex problems, from affordability to congestion and climate. Renewable Cities is a special initiative of the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue at Simon Fraser University.

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Six Win-Win-Win Strategies

This guide presents six strategies that will help your constituents, your community and the planet.



Addressing British Columbians' Priorities

The six strategies align with what recent polls tell us about British Columbians top priorities.



Cost of living

- Lower transportation costs
- Better value for tax dollars
- Lower healthcare costs



Jobs and the economy

- More jobs closer to home
- More competitive economy
- Better access to customers and employees



Health care

- Less pollution
- Fewer accidents
- Better health, and effective health care



Housing

- Real, low-cost affordable housing solutions
- More kinds of housing options



Climate change and the environment

- Protected natural and agricultural lands
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions
- Reduced vulnerability to forest fires, heatwaves and floods



Safety and other social issues

Poverty, seniors, etc.

- Stronger sense of safety
- More equitable access to jobs and services
- Stronger community support networks
- Less social isolation and loneliness



Transportation

- More diverse, attractive options to get to jobs, shops and services
- Less traffic and congestion
- Lower transportation costs

Strategies We All Need

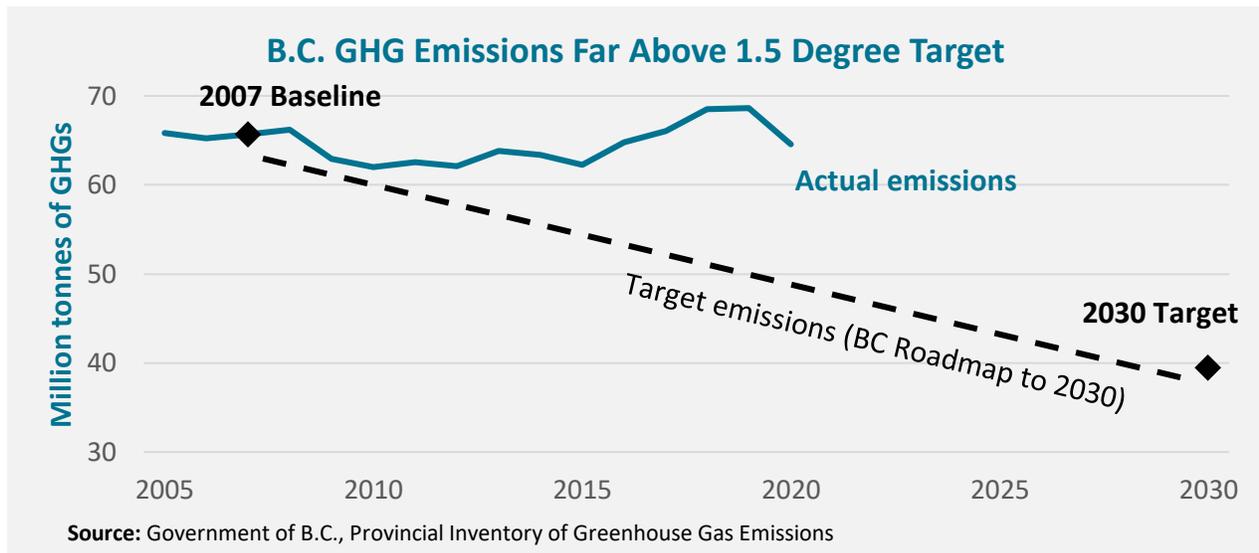
B.C. residents are hurting

Prices of everyday items are rising. Rents and mortgage payments are increasing. Growing health care demands are overwhelming the system. In some communities, safety is an on-going concern, and commute times and distances to work are long.

We only have so much time

Recent events have brought climate change impacts home from the forest fires to heatwaves and floods. As greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions rise, impacts will worsen. B.C. is failing to meet its GHG reduction commitments due in large part to transportation emissions, which rose 22% from 2007 to 2019. Motor vehicle-oriented urban growth is helping drive this trend.

From housing to healthcare, the story is similar: despite good intentions, we are not where we should be. Urgent action is needed.



Better communities, better climate

Municipal councils have an extraordinary opportunity to address British Columbians' priorities: moving decisively on land use. According to the International Panel on Climate Change, smart urban land use has the potential to reduce GHG emissions in urban transportation 20-50% and is the most important strategy wedge to address other public priorities. Urban land use is local governments' primary authority.

All local governments committed to creating "compact complete communities" along with the BC government under the 2007 Climate Action Charter. Taking action now can help us meet our climate targets and advance housing, health, safety and other goals, while actually reducing public *and* private spending.

1. Neighbourhood Revitalization

Help today’s small households improve affordability, support family and access shops and services without needing to drive.

Our Challenge: 56% of single-family homes now have only 1 or 2 people in them and this share is rising. Smaller households are one key factor driving the growth in housing costs that has far outstripped income growth since 1995, driving the current affordability crisis. When people can’t afford to live close to their job, they choose homes with longer commutes, and car ownership per household rises, increasing their costs along with greenhouse gas emissions.



Spotlight: Nelson, B.C.
Nelson allows for accessory dwelling units on single-family lots over 276 m² (two units if the lot is over 555 m²) and all downtown lots. In about 3 years, the community of about 10,000 saw 35 accessory dwelling units built.

Our Opportunity: Promote various types of affordable homes in all neighbourhoods, such as secondary suites, laneway homes, duplexes or even small apartments. Focus diverse types of housing closer to employment centres, shops and transit, creating more attractive and diverse transportation choices. Pre-zone for accessory rental units like suites and laneway homes, and use policy to set requirements for rentals and affordability. To maintain quality of life, ensure that privacy, noise, and parking are well-managed through design guidelines and bylaws.

Benefits:

-  Property taxes are spread across more than one household
-  More affordable housing
-  Improved business access to labour
-  Reduced travel-related GHGs
-  Less loneliness (e.g. for seniors)
-  Easier to support and live close to aging parents
-  More cycling and walking make for better health

2. Congestion and Parking Management

Tackle traffic and parking head-on in growing neighbourhoods to cut congestion, carbon and household costs.

Our Challenge: When housing is added to existing neighbourhoods, it is critical to move proactively to address traffic and parking issues. Adding density and diversity can reduce community-wide traffic by making walking, cycling and transit viable, but not if transit and active transportation investments to relieve congested streets lag behind growth.



Our Opportunity: Where neighbourhoods are intensifying, manage on-street parking using permits, meters, etc. to meet resident needs. Reduce required off-street parking stalls while increasing requirements for alternatives and securing transit and active transportation infrastructure investments.

Spotlight: Aspen, Colorado

In 1995, faced with high demand for street parking downtown, the city installed parking meters. A limited number of passes were provided to residents.

The transition included a marketing campaign, a set amount of free credit to each resident, one free violation to each motorist, and bylaw officers even paid for a free hour of parking for confused drivers.

Six months later, the program was supported 3-to-1 in the municipal election, businesses supported it to provide convenient parking for customers, and it raised funds for city programs.

Benefits:



More efficient use of public street space

Lower transportation costs



Convenient customer parking



Lower GHGs from vehicle ownership and use



Lower construction cost improves potential for affordability



Spots can be reserved or discounted for residents in need



Reduced traffic and congestion

Less conflict over parking

More resources for transit

3. Public Street Enhancement

Maximize the value of public streets to support recreation, cut pollution and reduce vulnerability to extreme heat and flooding

Our Challenge: Safety is a major issue on our streets. Motor vehicle accidents are the primary cause of death for people under 35. One quarter or more of land in a community is allocated to streets and vehicles dominate this space. At the same time, green space is critical to quality of life, active travel options and reducing extreme heat and flood events.



Spotlight: Arbutus Walk, Vancouver
Developed on the former Carling O’Keefe Brewery, the internal streets in this four-block development were converted to parks, so half the homes front on a park and all are within a minute’s walk of one. Lanes were changed to narrow streets for vehicle access.

Our Opportunity: As neighbourhoods grow, we can make residential streets healthier and safer places for living, playing and mobility. Manage traffic speed with curb bulges and roundabouts, create “shared streets” so drivers feel like visitors and kids can play safely, or transition select streets into linear parks with multi-use paths and heat and flood protection measures. Throughout the community, add trees in public spaces to reduce air pollution, slow traffic, provide shade and cooling and improve mental health.

Benefits:



Reduce stormwater management costs

Lower cooling costs



Easy access to parks

More social interaction

Less noise

Better mental health



Immediate access to green space



Good greenspace makes complete, compact communities attractive



Reduce urban heat islands

Rain is absorbed, reducing flooding

Provides habitat for birds



More walking, cycling and other forms of active transportation

4. Housing and Jobs on Transit Hubs and Nearby Public Land

Capitalize on under-used public land close to transit to support housing, access to jobs and new revenue for services like transit.

Our Challenge: Locating new housing and jobs close to transit is essential to reducing congestion, household transportation costs and GHGs. High value public land at transit hubs and in nearby areas is often extremely underused, from large surface parking lots to single storey buildings. This is a missed opportunity generate real value for taxpayer dollars and build better communities.



Our Opportunity: Stack affordable housing atop under-used public land on or near transit facilities and close to jobs and services at a scale appropriate for a neighbourhood from several storeys to high rises. Market housing and employment space may also be built, generating revenue to pay for affordable housing and other community amenities. Such investments can generate ridership and revenue for transit.

Spotlight: City of North Vancouver

The city is working with partners to redevelop a community centre and nearby city-owned lands into a renewed community centre, about 800 homes (including condos, rental units, non-profit housing and seniors assisted housing), retail and childcare space, a new park, and street improvements.

Part of the site will be leased for 99 years, providing revenue for the new community centre and other amenities.

Benefits:



Lower housing and transportation costs



More diverse and affordable housing



More commercial space close to customers and employees



Less pressure on rural and natural lands



More walkable communities for existing and new residents



Easy access to shops, services and recreation

5. Job Centre Intensification

Cut carbon, congestion and costs and protect farms, forests and field by increasing productivity of under-used employment land.

Our Challenge: Average commute distance and travel time has been steadily growing. Reducing the distance between homes and new job centres is critical to cutting transportation congestion, carbon and costs. Employment and industrial land is critical for our prosperity in many B.C. communities. Putting new industrial activity on the urban edge displaces natural lands, increases vulnerability to climate impacts, generates congestion and increases civic infrastructure costs for water, sewage and road expansion.



Spotlight: Tin Town, Courtenay

This industrial district includes over 30 aluminium-clad buildings, allowing each to have a mix of industrial/ commercial and residential space.

Spotlight: Riverbend, Burnaby

This 700,000 sq. ft. industrial building has two truck-accessible levels, making a large-scale distribution centre possible on a small, centrally-located site with excellent regional access.

Our Opportunity: Follow through on commitments to intensify activity on inefficiently used employment lands, including industrial, retail, and office lands. Remove regulatory barriers and enable business to grow without having to move. Encourage mixed use instead of retail-only development. Focus growth in central locations, including commercial and mixed use. Allow more flexibility for employment in strategically-located residential areas and manage the impact.

Benefits:



Supports reinvestment in existing assets

Enables business to grow on-site, delaying costly moves

Reduce upwards pressure on taxes and utility fees



Attracts new business with greater growth potential

Retains existing businesses



Reduce rural, farm and natural land loss

Lower transportation GHGs

Reduce vulnerability to climate impacts



Reduced freight and personal transportation congestion

6. Fiscally Sustainable Neighbourhood Development

Reduce pressure on taxes and fees by ensuring new development covers the full cost to build, maintain and operate infrastructure and services.

Our Challenge: A disproportionate share of growth across B.C. is low-density at the urban edge. There are no to low options for transit, cycling and walking, increasing congestion, carbon emissions and household costs. Expanding Infrastructure like sewage, water and roads and emergency services costs more in the vast majority of these areas than is generated in property taxes and utility fees, increasing civic infrastructure deficits.



Spotlight: Community Lifecycle Infrastructure Costing (CLIC) tool

In 2014, the Province developed the CLIC tool to assess lifecycle costs and benefits of different neighbourhood development scenarios. In a mid-sized community, the tool showed that a mixed-use neighbourhood with apartments next to downtown had 49% lower lifecycle costs, 56% lower taxes and fees, and 53% lower private costs than a mostly single-family area elsewhere in the city.

Our Opportunity: Support development that generates sufficient property taxes and utility fees to cover the costs of local services from fire to library and the cost of building, operating and replacing infrastructure. Phase out development that is growing civic infrastructure deficits, putting upwards pressure on property taxes and utility fees.

Benefits:



Less pressure on taxes and utility fees

Lower household costs



Improved municipal finances



Less pressure on rural, farm and natural lands

Lower emissions from driving as growth is accommodated in existing neighbourhoods

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