

# THE CITY OF COURTENAY: CHANGING FOR OUR CLIMATE

CITY OF COURTENAY STANDS UP  
AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE IN  
BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Photo:  
Boomer Jerritt

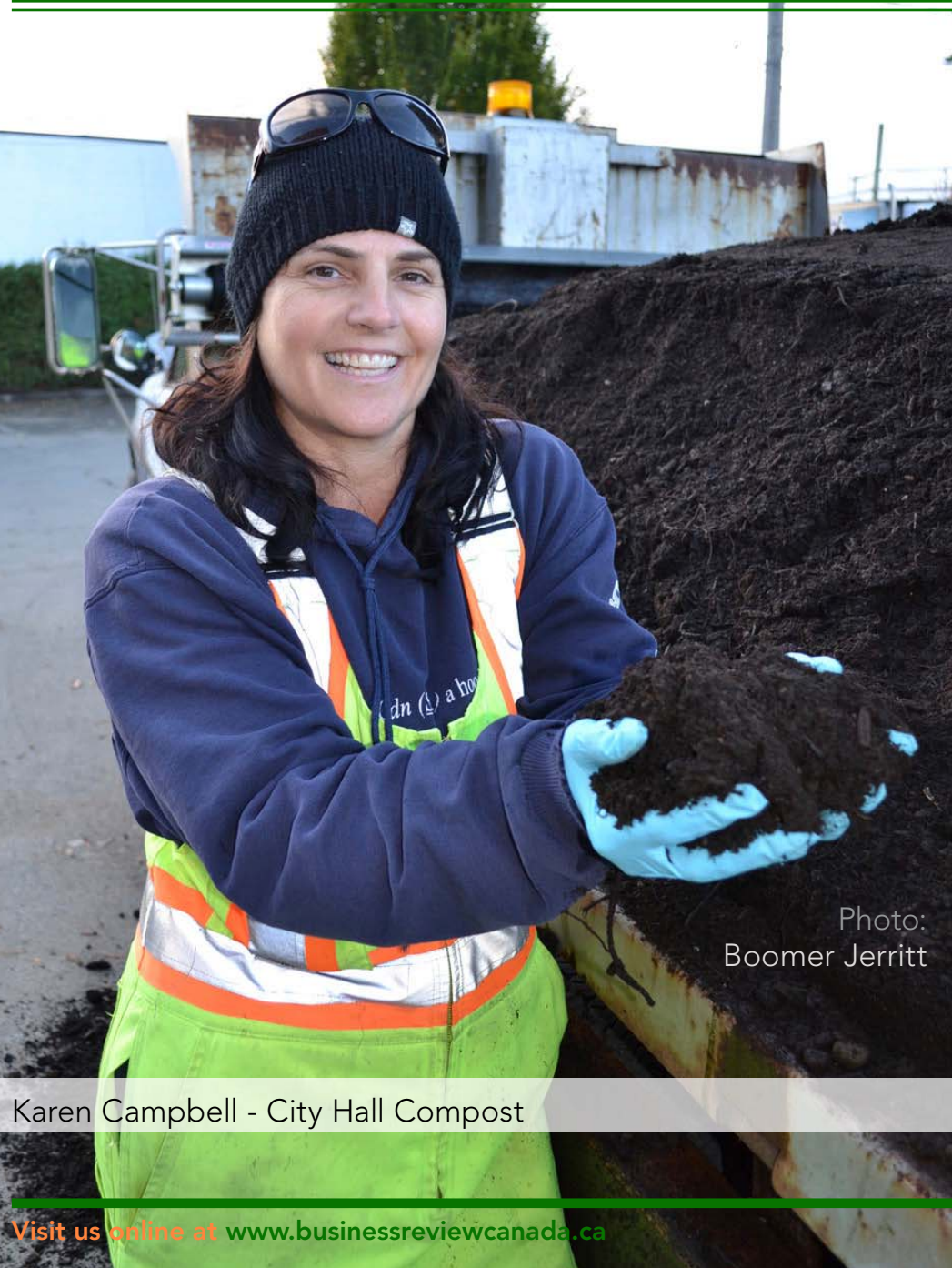


Photo:  
Boomer Jerritt

Karen Campbell - City Hall Compost

**B** RITISH COLUMBIA IS NOT A province content to take climate change lying down. Canada's westernmost region drew up a Climate Action Charter and the Local Government (Green Communities) Statutes Amendment Act, also known as "Bill 27," as a call to arms for its cities and districts to lower greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and fight climate change together as a unified force. The Charter applies to local government corporate emissions. Bill 27 applies to the regulation of land development and public infrastructure projects through the overarching policy framework required for each BC community – the Official Community Plan. To date, 179 of British Columbia's 188 municipalities have signed the voluntary charter and all communities have to adhere to the Bill 27 requirements as of 2010. Among those is the City of Courtenay, the largest community in the Comox Valley on the eastern coast of Vancouver Island. Courtenay signed on to the Charter in 2007,

and has been working ever since to develop innovative strategies and actions for reducing its carbon footprint.

### ESTABLISHING A CORPORATE PLAN

The City of Courtenay has outlined three main goals in regards to climate change and its participation in British Columbia's Climate Action Charter: to become carbon neutral in respect to municipal operations by 2012, to measure and report on the community's greenhouse gas emissions profile, and to create a complete, compact, and more energy efficient community. The City

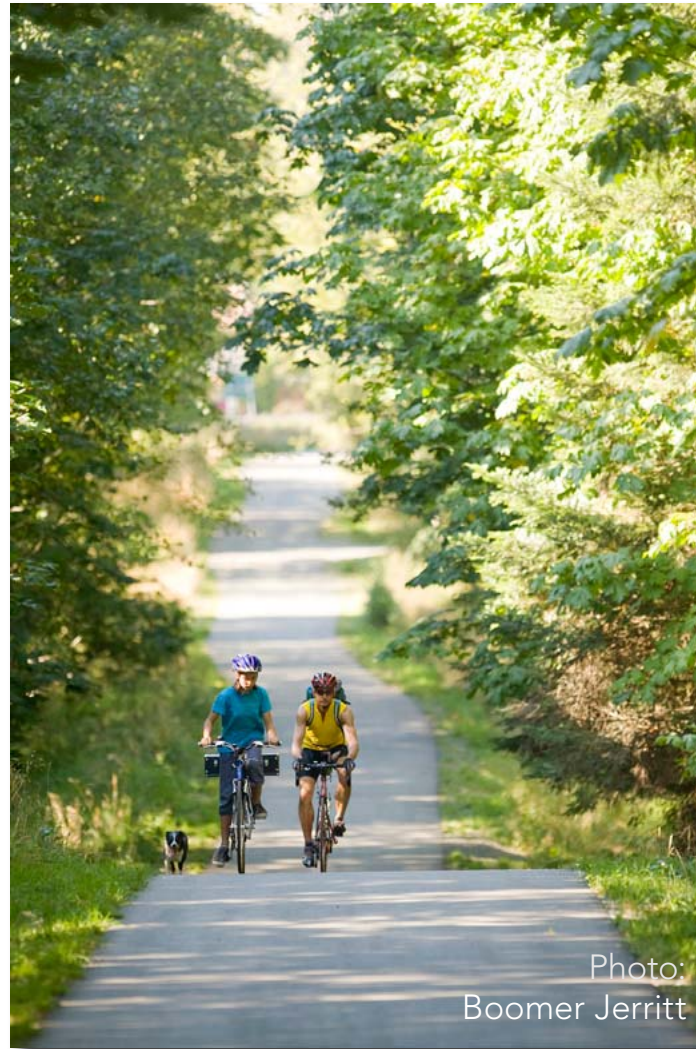


Photo:  
Boomer Jerritt

Alternative transportation to reduce carbon emissions

has wasted no time in tackling those goals. By 2008 it had introduced a Corporate Energy and GHG Emissions Inventory to analyze its current Corporate emissions; the City then assembled two committees to help in identifying a Corporate plan of action: The corporate Climate Action Committee and the Green Team.

Corporate projects that Courtenay has taken on thus far include retrofitting existing buildings to meet newer energy efficient standards, as well as adopting modern green designs for new city facilities, upgrading fuel efficiency for the City's fleet, and computer-based irrigation

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### SUPPLIER STATS

**Emterra  
Environmental**

Employees: 800

Industry: Recycling  
& Waste Mgmt

Services:  
Recycling, Waste  
Collection &  
Recovery

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Maintaining a green environment

systems regulated by the weather.

The Green Team has been put in place to help promote the benefits of going green to staff and the public.

“The Green Team provides a supportive role to the Climate Action Committee by informing people about how they can live

### SUPPLIER STATS

**Company Name**

Employees: xxx

Industry: Road  
Transportation

Services:  
Transport,  
Logistics,  
Warehousing

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lower impact lives more generally,” says City of Courtenay environmental planner Nancy Hofer of the Green Team. “Ideas can apply in their workspace and at home. Things such as waste reduction strategies, buying local and chemical free living. The Green Team also has a presence at the community level, for events like Earth Day and Bike to Work Week. The intent of the Green Team is to nurture a ‘green

culture’ to build support for the capital projects.”

Demonstrating leadership is important to getting buy-in from the community, especially when deciding on policies. One example is water reduction, which is a hot topic in the Comox Valley despite its location in a temperate rainforest. New development increases demand on existing water infrastructure, with conservation touted as a major part of the solution.

Outdoor pool





Mike Bell - City Hall irrigation

“It’s disconcerting for a taxpayer to see the City’s sprinklers on when it’s pouring rain, or during periods when the community is under water restrictions,” notes Sandy Gray, the City of Courtenay’s Chief Administrative Officer. “We’ve had a centralized computer irrigation system in place for many years which allows our staff to control irrigation across the City’s public lands. It can detect precipitation levels to determine whether irrigation is actually needed.”

The City believes that these types of systems don’t just help the environment; they can also foster a sense of goodwill within the community by showing how each organization, each individual, can do their part.

#### THE COMMUNITY CHOOSING ITS OWN PATH

Courtenay’s Corporate environmental goals are outlined by the larger parameters of British Columbia’s charter, but Bill 27 allows communities to decide how and by how much to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. For example, many

municipalities have committed to B.C.'s general recommendation of a 33 per cent reduction in GHG emissions by the year 2020. Courtenay has adopted an official energy reduction goal of “a minimum of 20 per cent.”

The City wished to take a practical approach, setting goals that could be met – and exceeded – in the long run.

“A pragmatic approach was chosen in order to provide a feasible, conservative goal prior to committing to it,” Hofer notes. “Our population is growing, at about 2 per cent annually in recent years. Any advancement we do make in reducing may be hidden by the fact that

“A LOT OF PEOPLE TALK ABOUT ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND CONSERVATION – BUT UNTIL YOU HAVE A SUPPORTIVE STAFF AND MUNICIPALITY, IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO MOVE FORWARD ON ANY OF THESE INITIATIVES.”

**ALLAN GORNALL, SUSTAINABILITY PLANNER**

growth generally results in more greenhouse gas emissions,” she notes.

The City of Courtenay has adopted a solid and comprehensive policy framework informed by

best practices from other communities. These choices represent consensus on the directions that development must take if it is to support a low carbon future for the community.

The Plan includes an emphasis on low carbon, active forms of mobility like cycling and walking, water and energy efficient compact development, continued environmental protection of sensitive



Allan Gornall, Sustainability Planner

environmental features and using a ‘design like nature’ approach to infrastructure such as using bio-swales and raingardens for stormwater management.

“One of our challenges will be knowing if we’re achieving our targets. The Province periodically releases

community-wide greenhouse gas emission profiles for each community in the Province. We haven’t had one in a number of years though, so it has been difficult to quantify if there is a measurable reduction in any of our community-wide actions,” Hofer adds.

### SUCCESSES PRESENT AND FUTURE

Within a few short years, the City of Courtenay has already celebrated many successes in green improvements. “One of the most successful partnerships that we have established is with Fortis BC (a natural gas provider) to retrofit our outdoor pool with solar heating,” says Courtenay Sustainability Planner Allan Gornall. This system, also coupled with a high efficiency thermal pool cover, is expected to see substantial financial and GHG savings each year.

Another successful initiative is the installation of in-cab heaters. “We noticed that where fuel was being used the most was cold mornings when individuals



Sandy T Gray, Chief Administrative Officer






would fire up the vehicles to heat up and defrost the cab,” notes Gornall. “We’ve installed cab heaters with an automatic timer so that when the workers come in, the cab is warm and ready without having to turn the engines on and wait.” The City also has plans to acquire a Nissan Leaf electric vehicle within the year, further bolstering the eco-consciousness of its fleet, and is undergoing a \$5.4 million renovation of its Lewis Recreation Center with eco-friendly upgrades.

But there is still much to be done – a task that



Nancy Hofer, Environmental Planner    Solar power

can be difficult without support. “A lot of people talk about energy efficiency and conservation,” says Gornall. “But until you have a supportive staff and municipality, it is very difficult to move forward on any of these initiatives.” Getting 100 per cent buy-in will continue to be a challenge.

“We’re moving in the right direction though,” notes Gray. “Our two committees, dedicated sustainability staff and public pressure help ensure that we don’t forget the goals and path we’ve set for ourselves as a corporation and as a community.” 

## STATISTICS

City of  
**COURTENAY**

**Name:**  
City of Courtenay

**Country:**  
Canada

**Employees:** 331

**Est:** 1915

**Type:** Public

**Industry:**  
Municipality

**Premiere service:**  
Municipal services

**Mayor:**  
Larry Jangula

**Website:**  
[www.courtenay.ca](http://www.courtenay.ca)