

To:	Warden Milne and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	July 25, 2024
Subject / Report No:	CAOR-CW-16-24
Title:	Climate Change Initiatives Update
Prepared by:	Rebecca Danard
Reviewed by:	Randy Scherzer
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	

Recommendation

1. That the report **CAOR-CW-16-24 Climate Change Initiatives Update** be received for information.

Executive Summary

This report provides an update about the Climate Change Initiatives undertaken by staff July 2023 - June 2024. This report recaps the projects described in the publication “Climate Change Initiatives Snapshot 2023 – 2024” that is attached to this report. The publication will be distributed to partners, supporters, stakeholders and other interested parties. It will also be available on our website. Climate projects of our member municipalities are included in the publication, but not summarized in this report.

Background and Discussion

Leading by Example – Corporate Actions

Staff are incorporating net-zero readiness into new capital construction projects, such as the [Rockwood Terrace redevelopment](#), Durham Paramedic Base, and new affordable housing units in Dundalk. Rooftop solar PV is also being considered for these buildings. Staff are applying to FCM’s Green Municipal Fund to support this work.

Staff continue to collect and analyze energy usage in County buildings. The [Energy Conservation and Demand Management Plan](#) has been updated. Staff hosted an energy workshop with 20+ facility managers to explore the energy efficiency opportunities in municipal facilities. Staff are participating in the [Strategic Energy Management](#) program by the IESO. Staff

used an Enbridge gas incentive program to complete energy audits in County-owned multi-unit residential buildings in Hanover and Owen Sound.

Staff are planning the installation of 20 EV chargers at County facilities in 2024-2025. This project was planned for 2023, but paused to await the opening of the Federal ZEVIP funding. This funding is now open and staff are working on the funding application.

Staff have launched a County Green Team to advance initiatives across departments. One of the projects of the Green Team is installing three Food Cyclers at County facilities to divert food waste. The Green Team is also in the process of launching a commuter survey to determine ways we can better support and encourage sustainable commuting for County staff.

Current activities address the following corporate actions in [Going Green in Grey](#):

- Action 1: Energy efficient new buildings
- Action 2: Retrofit existing buildings
- Action 4: Solar power installation
- Action 6: Reduce single passenger commuting
- Action 8: Zero emission fleet vehicle adoption
- Action 9: Corporate waste reduction
- Action 11: Develop a municipal climate lens
- Action 13: Culture of Conservation

Nature-Based Solutions & Agriculture

In partnership with NeighbourWoods North, the Transform the Lawn project demonstrates naturalization of urban areas to increase biodiversity including a tiny forest of native trees and shrubs, a rain garden, and pollinator gardens. In spring 2024, an additional 18 fruit trees were planted. Since 2022, 4 community planting events, engaging 75+ volunteers have been completed.

In collaboration with Grey Agricultural Services, the [Experimental Acres](#) program supports local farmers in piloting new, regenerative practices. Since 2023, Experimental Acres has supported 12 farms, directly impacting practices on roughly 175 acres of farmland.

Waste & Organics Diversion

In 2024, Grey County initiated a Community of Practice with municipal staff from across the County to complete a regional waste management assessment and to identify potential opportunities to collaborate on waste management services as identified in the County's Strategic Plan and the waste actions in [Going Green in Grey](#). The purpose of this group is to facilitate the transition to the new blue-box system, improve efficiency, share best practices, and to explore potential opportunities to divert more waste from landfills. The Waste Management Community of Practice will prepare a future report to both County Council and local municipal councils identifying potential opportunities to further collaborate on waste management services.

Zero-Emission Vehicles & Transportation

The Rural ReCharge aims to install Level 2 and Level 3 chargers in Durham, Markdale, Meaford, Owen Sound, Shallow Lake, Springmount, and Thornbury. The project is a collaboration between Grey (including member municipalities), Bruce, Dufferin, Wellington,

Huron and Perth Counties. All costs associated with installing, operating and maintaining these chargers will be borne by Ivy Charging Network – an estimated total investment of \$1,170,000. Applications were made to the provincial ChargeON funding in January 2024 – staff are still awaiting decisions on this funding. Should any of the proposed sites not be funded by the province, an application will be made to the federal ZEVIP funding.

[Grey Transit Route](#) provides reliable, affordable transit between and beyond Grey County communities, which provided 28,000 rides in 2023.

Buildings & Development

In 2024, Grey County launched the [Tri-County Green Development Standards](#) project to create consistent development standards that are informed by best practices, existing building credential programs, and local input from municipalities, development industry and other stakeholders. This is a collaboration with Dufferin and Wellington Counties and secured a contribution of \$450,000 from the federal Codes Acceleration Fund. The first round of consultation with municipal staff, the development industry and other stakeholders is now complete. Staff expect to have a draft of the standards ready for review and revision in Fall 2024.

In partnership with the Clean Air Partnership, the Community Energy Efficiency Financing initiative will determine the feasibility and possible program design to advance residential retrofits in the County. A future staff report will be presented to County Council summarizing the findings and potential opportunities identified by the feasibility study. Depending on direction from Council, this could lead to an application to FCM's Green Municipal fund to advance this program.

Climate Adaptation

Developing a climate adaptation plan is a priority in the [Corporate Strategic Plan](#). In 2024, Grey County was accepted into the Ontario Resource Centre for Climate Adaptation's [Outreach & Engagement Program](#). This program will allow staff to create a working group of community stakeholders investing in creating and implementing a comprehensive community climate adaptation plan. Staff recommend following the ICLEI Canada's Building Adaptive and Resilient Communities (BARC) milestone process to initiate, research, create, implement, and monitor Grey County's adaptation plan.

While the adaptation plan is in development, planning staff are updating technical guidance to ensure that new developments consider the impacts of climate change (such as increased rainfall).

Outreach & Engagement

In 2023, staff participated in 15+ community events, resulting in 650+ climate-related interactions and presented to 300+ residents, including 100+ youth. At these events, staff distributed 250 tree seedlings to residents at community events to raise awareness about the climate benefits of planting trees. Staff have increased the content available through the County website and launched a monthly climate action newsletter with 300+ subscribers and growing. Staff recommend [subscribing to our newsletter](#) if you have not done so already.

In September 2023 Grey County co-hosted Giiwe Sharing Circle with M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre. In partnership with the Sustainability Project, Grey County co-hosted the [Grey Bruce Youth Climate Action Conference](#), with 10 local schools, 60 students, and 50+ community volunteers. The third annual Youth Climate Action Conference will be held in November 2024 in partnership with Learning for a Sustainable Future, the Bluewater District School Board, the Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board, and the Sustainability Project. This event will engage 125 grade 6-8 students and their educators from 25 schools in the region.

Staff are supporting Town of Blue Mountains in the launch of the [Youth Climate Action Fund](#) as one of 100 communities worldwide to receive \$50,000 USD to distribute microgrants of up to \$6,500 to youth aged 15 to 24 from across the Saugeen Ojibway Nation traditional territory.

Staff are working with a group of community partners to explore the feasibility of a local Green Economy Hub. Interested businesses and organizations are invited to join a [Pilot Cohort](#) that will provide resources, tools, coaching, networking and recognition, to support them on their sustainability journey.

Staff continue to convene regular meetings with staff from member municipalities (Climate Action and Waste Management) and staff from public sector organizations (Climate Action).

Financial and Resource Implications

The key driver for climate action in Grey County is the allocation of adequate staff resources. This enables effective collaboration with local municipalities and community partners on climate change initiatives. A dedicated climate change team is essential for advancing these initiatives and achieving the targets set forth in the 'Going Green in Grey' plan.

Resources for the projects described in this report have already been allocated in capital and/or operating budgets. Staff have also been able to secure external funding to support some of the projects. No new resources are requested at this time.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal (list)
 - AODA Compliance (describe)
 - Contribution to Climate Change Action Plan Targets

The projects described above contribute to the following community actions:

Action 1: Forest, Habitat and Biodiversity Protection and Expansion

Action 3: Capacity Building in Sustainable Agriculture

Action 5: Waste Diversion

Action 7: Zero-Emission Vehicles

Action 11: Green Standards for New Buildings

Action 12: Residential Buildings Energy Efficiency Retrofit

Action 13: Non-residential Buildings Energy Efficiency Retrofit

Action 16: Climate Adaptation Plan

Action 19: Climate Action Engagement Program

External (list)

Appendices and Attachments

[Attachment 1 - Going Green in Grey - Grey County Climate Change Action Plan - 2022-2050](#)

Attachment 2 - Climate Change Initiatives Snapshot 2023 – 2024