

Mobilizing Climate Action: Lessons from the Oak Bay Coolkit Webinar Summary

February 6th, 2025

[Webinar Recording](#)

[Evaluation Report](#)

The Oak Bay Coolkit program is a joint initiative between the Collaborative for Advanced Landscape Planning at the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Forestry and the District of Oak Bay and is intended to mobilize individual and neighbourhood climate action through participation in a series of fun and interactive engagement activities, beginning with neighbourhood conversations, to local asset and climate vulnerability mapping, carbon footprint calculators, household and block sustainability ratings, visioning exercises and developing localized climate action plans. Chris Hyde-Lay, Manager of Park Services with the District of Oak Bay, provided an overview of the initiative, including lessons learned and project outcomes.

Presenters

- ☉ Chris Hyde-Lay, Manager of Park Services, District of Oak Bay

Key Findings

- ☉ The Coolkit was designed to be fun, localized, and encourage engagement across the neighborhood.
- ☉ The urban forest was the door into having meaningful conversations with the community. The free tree program created opportunities to enter into conversations about rain gardens, cool roofs, heat pumps, and larger climate conversations.
- ☉ To initiate and promote a Coolkit-type program, it's important to analyze the network of champions. Identify who in the community is supportive, look at your relationship with the community, and utilize those networks.

Presentation Overview

- ☉ Oak Bay District has a population of just over 18,000 and is relatively affluent.
- ☉ The Coolkit program originated out of University of British Columbia, championed by Dr. Stephen Sheperd.
- ☉ The program was promoted through social media (Instagram and Facebook), and local groups and volunteer networks were engaged.
- ☉ The five big moves promoted in the Coolkit include: Healthy ecosystems & resilient green infrastructure; energy efficient, low carbon, healthy homes; low carbon, safe, healthy transportation; healthy, sustainable gardening & local food; and sustainable lifestyle changes.

- ☉ In year one, workshops had about 30-40 participants. Over time, workshops focused on a variety of topics, including pollinator corridors, electric lawn equipment, and car share.
- ☉ Workshops sometimes featured guest speakers, and in one case reached as many as 200 participants.
- ☉ With each workshop, participants were asked to bring new people in.
- ☉ Workshops were successful and led to an uptake in solar and heat pump installation. One workshop focused on government grants to help enable uptake.
- ☉ Participants were keen on different topics. Energy efficiency was particularly popular. One resident reduced his footprint by 96% through improvements to his house.
- ☉ One of the workshops involved walking around neighborhoods with residents, asking them to re-envision the community. This included identifying the colour of roofs and layers of vegetation on lawns, habitat mapping, and other activities.
- ☉ The community was engaged, and held the municipality accountable by speaking to Council and requesting that the District do what they are asking the community to do. They requested more trees, but these transformations were not always financially viable. However, these conversations helped bring complete streets into the forefront. Now shade, rain gardens, nature etc. will be considered in infrastructure renewal projects.
- ☉ This project was time consuming for staff, in particular due to following up with community members.
- ☉ The program could have more extensively engaged with elementary schools.
- ☉ Next steps include exploring how yards can be an ecological benefit, so that as houses become more energy efficient, yards can complement this.
- ☉ Oak Bay is also currently implementing four pollinator corridors and continuing the free tree program.
- ☉ A neighborhood signage program is being explored to increase awareness. For example, if a resident has a permeable pavement driveway, their sign can say “This is a Coolkit Driveway”.

Additional Resources

- ☉ [Oak Bay Coolkit Program](#)
- ☉ [Energy Saving Enhancements Resident Report](#)

Contact Information

Please reach out to us at any time with questions, input, or for additional information.

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You can view our upcoming events [here](#).