

June 22 Council Community Forum Summary

On June 22, the City Council held its second community forum of 2026 at the Vancouver Arts Hub. The Council welcomed 46 community members to discuss how our community is addressing environmental sustainability and climate action. Feedback gathered during the meeting will help inform updates to the City's Climate Action Framework later this year.

Each table included a mix of community members, City Councilors, City staff and independent facilitators from Vancouver engagement consultant PointNorth. Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle circulated between conversations. Across five tables, facilitators invited community members to discuss four main questions:

- What do you love about Vancouver that you want to pass along to future generations?
- When you think about climate change, what are you concerned about?
- Thinking 15 years into the future, what would it look like if we're successful in addressing Vancouver's climate needs?
- The City has identified many actions to help us address climate change. As we plan for the future, what would you like our community to focus on?

Key Discussion Themes

Question #1: What do you love about Vancouver that you want to pass along to future generations?

Participants shared that they value Vancouver's natural beauty, strong sense of community, and the City's commitment to growing in positive ways. They hope future generations will enjoy the same welcoming community while also benefiting from improvements that make Vancouver more connected, inclusive, and accessible.

Nature and Outdoor Spaces

Many participants said that Vancouver's natural environment is one of its greatest strengths. They want future generations to enjoy the city's many parks and open spaces, which provide places to relax, play, and connect with nature. Several participants spoke about their appreciation for wildlife habitats and their desire to see the city grow alongside natural areas. People especially appreciate:

- Waterways, including the Columbia River, Salmon Creek, and Vancouver Lake
- The Burnt Bridge Creek Trail
- Easy access to the beaches, mountains, and other outdoor destinations
- Opportunities to ski, hike, bike, and enjoy outdoor activities

A Strong Sense of Community

Participants described Vancouver as a friendly, family-oriented city where people value relationships and time spent "in community." Multiple participants spoke about Vancouver's

“small town feel.” Many community members enjoy seeing familiar faces at community events, grocery stores, and in their neighborhoods. Participants said that they want future generations to continue enjoying community-building events, such as:

- Concerts and movies in the park
- Cultural celebrations
- School activities
- Park cleanups and tree-planting events

Looking to the Future

Multiple participants expressed pride in how Vancouver continues to grow and improve. They see the city as a place that is learning and working to become better. Some participants pointed to the Climate Action Framework and recently adopted Comprehensive Plan as examples of how the City is preparing for future growth. Looking ahead, they hope to see:

- Continued tree plantings and protection of green spaces
- More support for people experiencing homelessness
- More walkable neighborhoods
- Expanded transportation choices
- More opportunities and activities for teenagers and young people

Overall, participants hope future generations will inherit a Vancouver that keeps its natural beauty and close-knit community while continuing to grow in ways that make the city more welcoming, healthy, and accessible for everyone.

Question #2: When you think about climate change, what are you concerned about?

Participants shared a wide range of concerns about climate change. Their comments focused on impacts on nature, impacts on people, questions about climate policy, and the challenge of staying hopeful. While many participants are concerned about the future, they also identified positive steps already happening in Vancouver.

Impacts on Natural Systems

Many participants are concerned about the effects of climate change on Vancouver's natural environment. They worry that hotter temperatures will harm trees, native plants, and wildlife habitat. Several groups identified wildfires as a particular area of concern. With longer, more volatile fire seasons, some participants worry that Vancouver may experience urban wildfires in areas with denser brush or trees.

Several participants expressed mixed feelings toward growth. They lamented the habitat loss that often accompanies construction and the clear cutting of trees to make way for homes. They also expressed concern about declining bee and insect populations and a loss of biodiversity.

Water was another common topic of concern. Some shared that they are worried about our community's ability to provide drinking water for an increasing number of people. Others discussed harmful algal blooms, including those at Vancouver Lake and Salmon Creek, and the

risks they pose to people, animals, and local ecosystems. One group discussed their desire to see stronger protection of natural areas, including the Columbia River shoreline.

Impacts on People

Across all conversations, participants shared concerns about how climate change affects people's daily lives today and what it will mean for future generations. Many worry about children growing up in a world with more extreme weather, longer wildfire seasons, and increasing heat. Other concerns include:

- Food insecurity caused by impacts on farming
- Protecting people during heat waves and wildfires
- The needs of people experiencing homelessness during extreme weather
- Climate migration and increased competition for limited resources

Policy Concerns

Participants also shared concerns about how climate change is being addressed at the local, state, and national level. Although most participants expressed support for Vancouver's climate efforts, several said they worry about how changing federal policies may impact the community. These residents are concerned about federal land being opened for logging or drilling, land being sold for private development and the removal of requirements for native planting.

Many participants said they are proud to see the City and state leading on climate action, even as more work is needed. Two groups highlighted the City's Green Building Policy and Comprehensive Plan as examples of "steps in the right direction." Participants also expressed support for policies that would:

- Move Vancouver away from fossil fuels and toward renewable energy, such as solar and wind
- Speed up the transition to electric vehicles
- Encourage the installation of solar panels throughout the city, especially on warehouses and large commercial buildings

Many participants emphasized that leadership matters. They said community members want to see leaders carefully consider difficult decisions and clearly explain why climate actions are important. Some also questioned how Vancouver can make progress if other communities do not take similar action. These participants would like to see the City collaborate with the county and neighboring communities in addressing climate change.

Concern about Feelings of Fatalism

Some participants shared that climate change can leave them feeling discouraged or overwhelmed. They described feelings of pessimism, apathy, or worry that it may already be too late to make a difference. One participant shared that their four teenage children believe climate change cannot be solved. Other participants said they find hope in seeing people take action. One resident noted that more than 6000 people attended the 2026 Pollinator Festival. They said that these types of local efforts give them a sense of purpose and hope that progress is still possible.

Question #3: Thinking 15 years into the future, what would it look like if we're successful in addressing Vancouver's climate needs?

Participants imagine a future where Vancouver has successfully addressed its climate needs. In 2040, climate-friendly choices are affordable, convenient, and part of everyday life. Participants describe a community that is greener, healthier, and easier to get around. They imagine Vancouver as a City with policies that support long-term sustainability and a high quality of life for everyone. Participants' hopes for the future fall into three broad categories:

Changes in the Environment

Participants envision a city with many more trees, healthy natural spaces, and cleaner air. More trees along streets, in parks, and on private property help to reduce the number of heat islands and lower temperatures across all Vancouver neighborhoods. Participants also hope to see:

- More green spaces and resilient urban forests that can withstand climate impacts
- More native plants that support birds, pollinators, and other wildlife
- Increased planting on rooftops and upper floors of buildings

Changes in Behavior

Participants imagine a future where people can make climate-friendly choices more easily. They hope Vancouver will continue to grow while reducing pollution and meeting its goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2040. In this future, residents will be less reliant on fossil fuels for transportation, heating, or cooking. More people will walk, bike, and use public transit. Bike parking will be more readily available across the city. An improved transit system will offer expanded routes, later evening bus service, and better connections across the city. A safe, connected network of bike lanes, trails, and paths will link neighborhoods across Vancouver. A regional trail network will allow people to safely bike from Vancouver to Camas and Washougal.

Participants also envision more resilient food systems and a reduction in food insecurity. They hope Vancouver will expand community gardens, plant more fruit trees in neighborhoods, and replace some lawns with food-producing gardens. They imagine a future where community members will conserve resources, such as energy and water. They also see the City as a key driver of climate education, helping people plant trees, grow food at home and take action in their neighborhoods.

Changes in Policy

Participants believe that achieving this vision will require policies that support climate-friendly choices. Ideas include:

- Expand infrastructure and incentives for electric vehicles, such as more charging stations, dedicated parking spaces, discounts on car registration, or lower tolls
- Make energy-efficient, climate-friendly housing easier to build and more affordable
- Encourage water conservation by requiring drip irrigation and water-efficient landscaping
- Reduce reliance on carbon offsets while focusing on direct emission reductions
- Create stable, long-term funding for climate action

Question #4: The City has identified many actions to help us address climate change. As we plan for the future, what would you like our community to focus on?

Community members were divided when it came to what they would like to see the City focus on. Some said the City should focus first on actions that will have the greatest impact. Others want to see equal support for focus areas identified in the current Climate Action Framework.

These include:

- Equity and Green Economy
- Buildings and Energy
- Transportation and Land Use
- Natural Systems and Water Resources
- Solid Waste and Wastewater
- City Governance

Among those who identified a priority focus area, transportation and land use were the most frequently mentioned. Participants said that making it easier to walk, bike, and use public transit would naturally reduce emissions and encourage healthier travel choices. Others highlighted the importance of green building. They would like to see the City encourage construction of affordable, higher-density housing that is energy efficient and located near services and transit. Many emphasized the need for a stronger transit network with more routes and stops.

Participants also highlighted several other areas they would like the City to focus on, including many that were brought up earlier in the discussion. These include:

- Protect and expand the tree canopy
- Protect critical natural areas, wildlife habitat, and biodiversity
- Invest in renewable energy, including solar and wind
- Rethink solid waste and wastewater systems, including replacing the existing incinerator
- Increase community participation in climate planning

Next Steps

As the City works to update its Climate Action Framework, additional engagement is needed to better understand community priorities. Upcoming outreach at community events will offer many opportunities to reach those who live, work, visit or own a business in Vancouver. Future discussions with low- to middle-income homeowners will help the City better understand residential needs. It will also be helpful for the City to engage residents and community-based organizations in weighing potential tradeoffs.

City staff will bring proposed updates to the City Council for adoption later this year. To learn more about the Climate Action Framework or sign up for project updates, visit cityofvancouver.us/climate.