

CLIMATE RESILIENCE FOR NON-PROFITS: TECHNICAL REPORT

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We respectfully and with gratitude work on the shared, unceded Traditional Coast Salish Lands of the Squamish (Skwxwú7mesh), Tsleil-Waututh (səl' ilwətaʔ), Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm) and Kwikwetlem (kʷikwəłəm) Nations (in Vancouver and Burnaby respectfully) and the qíçəy̓ (Katzie), Kwantlen, Kwikwetlem (kʷikwəłəm), Qayqayt, Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm), numerous Stó:lō Nations, Semiahmoo and Tsawwassen (in Surrey).

We acknowledge the sovereignty and equality of Indigenous nations and are guided by aspirations to remake Canada into a decolonial state comprised of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who function with respect for one another. Given that the majority of higher education institutions in Canada are on unceded traditional territories of Indigenous peoples, and inequities from colonization are ongoing in Canadian society, we see community-engaged research as an actionable strategy for change that aims to make visible Indigenous ways of knowing that have traditionally been excluded across research settings and institutions.

Our Thanks

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We also want to acknowledge and thank the DTES community more broadly. This report is grounded in the strength, creativity, and care that community members demonstrate every day. It is our hope that the work presented here contributes to building a safer, more resilient future for all who live, work, and gather in the DTES.

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Forward

For many years, we've had the privilege of working alongside many of the non-profit social service organizations that operate in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES). Working out of 312 Main, a centre for social and economic innovation that houses numerous social service organizations, every day we see the incredible work non-profits and community groups do to support the neighbourhood's residents — work rooted in care, resilience, and solidarity. But we can see the impact that increasing social challenges with decreased resources are having on these organizations and the people that run them — community members are struggling, workers are burning out, non-profits are cutting programs, and climate change is only making things worse.

The crisis doesn't just threaten ecosystems — it's already affecting health and safety. Seniors, people on low or fixed incomes, those with pre-existing conditions, and folks facing stigma and marginalization are least equipped to adapt, yet are the most exposed. Nowhere is this truer than the DTES, a neighbourhood already carrying the weight of housing insecurity, poverty, and the drug-poisoning crisis.

Residents face hotter temperatures but have access to less trees and green space to cool down in. When wildfire smoke pollutes the air, residents without air conditioning aren't able to close their windows. And those without access to housing are, and will continue to, endure increasingly extreme conditions without protection or access to resources.

At the same time, the DTES is also a place of resilience, with peer-led networks, traditions of collective organizing, and non-profit and grassroots organizations that show up daily. Organizations are participating in build-your-own air filter programming, building cooling kits, checking in on friends during extreme weather alerts, and finding innovative ways to survive in an increasingly turbulent climate.

That's why the *Climate Resilience Roadmap for Non-Profits: From Crisis to Collective Power in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside* was created: to strengthen the sector's ability to work together in more aligned ways with organizations and community members to anticipate, respond to, and recover from climate-related challenges.

At its heart, the Climate Resilience Roadmap is a practical, community-informed framework for action intended to support social service sectors in the DTES as well as in communities across Canada and beyond. Through co-creation workshops, the roadmap translates the lived expertise of DTES organizations into a collective plan for resilience. Beyond the DTES, the resources and tools offered through this roadmap can be shared across BC and Canada, and in other jurisdictions facing similar conditions.

This project begins with a simple truth: climate resilience must be built from within. The DTES is on the frontlines of multiple crises, but it is also home to enduring strengths and deep networks of care. The Climate Resilience Roadmap builds on that strength, offering a pathway for organizations, governments, and community members to work together for the challenges ahead in order to create a stronger and more resilient community.

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Executive Summary

It was quite brutal. I had to keep taking a cold shower, almost every hour, or every 2 hours, because it got so hot in my room. I heard that they were having a big forest fire and it was taking longer to put out. You can smell the fire, even with the windows closed... I went through 3 puffers in one day. And that's way too much, the doctor said. By the time I got on the elevator, I collapsed. They found me lying on the floor. When I came to, I was like, 'How'd I end up in the hospital? How the heck did I get here?'. During the heatwave, it was hard for anybody to take care of themselves. A lot of these people are under addiction. Where I work, we had 15 overdoses within an hour. And non-stop, because none of these kids are drinking water or having something to eat before they use.

- DJ O'Brian - an outreach and harm reduction worker in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and member of the Sts'ailes Nation¹

Despite having substantial research on its impacts, years of intentional inaction have led to climate change being one of society's biggest challenges. Vancouver's DTES is among the city's most climate-vulnerable neighbourhoods. Residents face disproportionate risks from extreme heat, poor air quality from wildfire smoke, and intense rainfall and flooding. These environmental hazards compound existing social challenges such as chronic housing instability, poverty, and high rates of mental health and substance use issues.

The tragic events of the Summer 2021 heat dome is a devastating example. According to the 2022 Report to the Chief Coroner of British Columbia, 619 people died in BC - 91% of those who died were registered with a chronic disease, 67% were aged 70 or older, and a disproportionate number of fatalities were among residents of materially or socially deprived areas. Systemic inequities and historical marginalization deepen these risks, leaving many residents with a limited capacity to adapt.

Non-profit organizations – already operating with constrained resources – form the backbone of the DTES social safety net. A recent study showed that non-profits in BC are significantly strained for financial resources and capacity while trying to meet the demands from their growing clientele. As climate hazards intensify, these frontline groups are facing, and will increasingly face, even greater pressure to provide vital services, safeguard health and safety, and respond swiftly to crises. Strengthening their capacity is urgent and essential.

The *Climate Resilience Roadmap for Non-Profits: From Crisis to Collective Power in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside* is a collaboration between Vancity Community Foundation, SFU's Community-Engaged Research Initiative (CERi), and ACT - Action on Climate Team, that responds directly to this challenge. Grounded in community-engaged research, the project convened frontline social sector organizations—including Hogan's Alley Society, PHS Community Services Society, First United Church Community Ministry Society, and Lookout Housing and Health Society—to co-develop practical, context-specific strategies for building resilience from strengths and gaps within the community. It examined how climate change is affecting the Downtown Eastside (DTES), to collectively anticipate how climate hazards may intensify in the future and impact the work of frontline organizations.

¹Climate Disaster Project. (n.d.). "It was hard for anybody to take care of themselves" [Testimony]. Retrieved October 2, 2025, from <https://climatedisasterproject.com/testimony/it-was-hard-for-anybody-to-take-care-of-themselves/>

Key Priorities

Building climate resilience in the DTES requires strengthening and advancing three interconnected areas:

- **Organizations:** Non-profit or charitable societies that provide social services to DTES residents.

These organizations provide direct services (housing, health, employment, programming) to constituents in the DTES and must adapt their operational and funding models during climate emergencies.

- **Residents:** Low-income residents of the DTES who rely on housing, programming, and services from non-profit and charitable organizations.

Residents of the DTES have different needs and vulnerabilities that need to be accounted for in an equitable climate response.

- **Community:** The network of neighbourhood systems that connect and support the non-profit organizational sector and DTES residents together.

This community of networks (both formal and informal) are key in ensuring that services and essential programs reach neighbourhood residents in an equitable manner during emergencies. Includes funders, government, front-line workers, health organizations, businesses, community centers, resident/advocacy groups, and more.

A Vision of DTES Resilience

This roadmap envisions a DTES that stands as a model of climate resilience and community strength, where:

- Non-profits are prepared, resourced, and unified in their responses to climate change.
- Residents have access to safe, cool spaces, green infrastructure, and meaningful roles in resilience planning.
- Organizations and residents operate as a cohesive, coordinated network during climate emergencies.
- Climate resilience is permanently embedded in the mission of social service organizations, transforming short-term projects into systemic change.

Strategies

The roadmap outlines:

- **Short-term actions (12–18 months):** Hiring a shared Climate Resilience Coordinator, embedding climate costs into non-profit budgets, pooling procurement and storage of emergency supplies, and developing neighbourhood-level emergency protocols.
- **Long-term strategies (2–5 years):** Establishing a dedicated Climate Resilience Hub, retrofitting and designing climate-ready housing, expanding green spaces and shading infrastructure, and creating resident-led climate response teams.

While rooted in the DTES, this roadmap offers a **scalable model** for equity-deserving communities across Canada. By centering justice, equity, and community knowledge, it positions the non-profit sector as a leader in climate adaptation — shaping policy, inspiring sector-wide leadership, and transforming narratives to place historically marginalized communities at the centre of climate planning.

The *Climate Resilience Roadmap for Non-Profits* affirms that resilience that combines scientific analysis with place-based knowledge can and must grow from within. Despite facing overlapping crises, the DTES holds deep strengths in care networks, peer leadership, and community organizing. Building on this foundation — and on the prior work and commitments of the Vancouver Climate Justice Charter, the DTES SRO Collaborative, the Coordinated Community Response Network (CCRN), the City of Vancouver's Resilient Vancouver Strategy and Resilient Neighbourhoods Program, and the Climate Equity Action and Resilience (CLEAR) group — this roadmap charts a path toward a more just, prepared, and climate-ready future.

Expanding the Vision: Inspiring Change Beyond the DTES

The *Climate Resilience Roadmap for Non-Profits* has the potential to become a blueprint for other communities across Canada. The social, economic, and environmental challenges facing the DTES are similar in nearly all of the country's under-resourced neighbourhoods. And the impacts from climate change will be equally devastating to these communities if appropriate and sustainable action isn't properly organized, funded, and implemented. Its broader influence could include:

- Scalability: Providing a flexible framework that can be adapted to other urban environments grappling with intersectional social and climate challenges.
- Informing Policy: Shaping the way governments and funders support and partner with non-profit led climate action.
- Sectoral Leadership: Positioning the non-profit sector at the forefront, and on the frontlines, of community climate resilience planning.
- Narrative Transformation: Placing equity-deserving and historically marginalized communities at the centre of climate planning and action, shifting the broader conversation toward justice and inclusion.

PART 1: FOUNDATIONAL OVERVIEW

Understanding Disproportionate Climate Risks and Vulnerabilities

Actions on climate change – either reducing risks or emissions – have the potential to unravel systemic marginalization and inequities. Best available science shows how already vulnerable systems, populations, infrastructure, and ecosystems have the greatest exposure and risk to climate changes; such as flood, heat, smoke, and extreme weather. Recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports show that climate impacts are occurring more frequently and severely at even lower temperatures than predicted. Vulnerable populations already experiencing poverty, health issues, and marginalization are therefore at greater risk to real and projected impacts of climate change.

In Vancouver, projected climate impacts and risks in the city are expected to increase in frequency and severity. The City of Vancouver is preparing for increases in frequency and severity of heat, air pollution and heavy rainfall over the next few years.² Apart from these, the likelihood for other hazards, like power outages, extreme cold, and disease is also expected to increase.³

Figure 1 shows the projected climate impacts for Metro Vancouver.

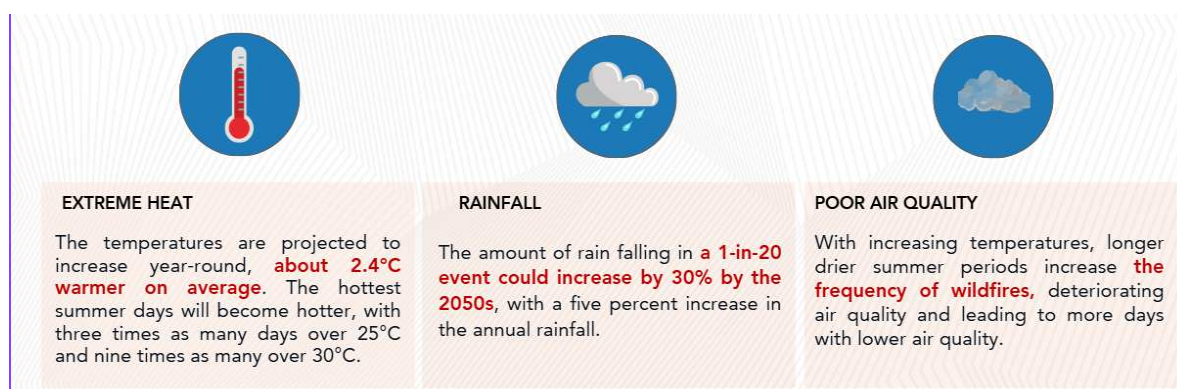


Figure 1 Climate Projections for Metro Vancouver (Source: Climate Adaptation Strategy, City of Vancouver)

² City of Vancouver. 2024. Climate change adaptation strategy: 2024-2025 update and action plan. City of Vancouver.

³ City of Vancouver. (2024, October 15). Hazard and risk explorer. Retrieved from ArcGIS Storymaps: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/108cc3ef8d3349dba94ae9adfb89423b>

Climate vulnerability refers to the degree to which a community or ecosystem can cope with adverse climate effects. It consists of three main components: exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity.

- **Exposure** is the extent to which populations, infrastructure or ecosystems are likely to be affected by climate related hazards like floods or heatwaves.
- **Sensitivity** is the degree to which the system is susceptible to harm from these hazards (based on factors like geography, demographics, and/or health predispositions).
- **Adaptive capacity** is the potential or ability of the system to adjust and respond to climate challenges (e.g. ability to cope, minimize harm, and/or seize new opportunities).

However, these impacts are not experienced uniformly across all communities. Despite a focus on equity in climate action, City of Vancouver residents face significant disparities in both the real and projected impacts of climate change. The tragic events of the Summer 2021 heat dome, where 619 people died, highlight this issue. According to the 2022 Report to the Chief Coroner of British Columbia, 91% of those who died were registered with a chronic disease, 67% were aged 70 or older, and a disproportionate number of fatalities were among residents of materially or socially deprived areas.⁴ These differences, or "spatial disparities," render some areas and populations more vulnerable, or at greater risk, to specific climate-related events. Figure 2 illustrates some of the factors contributing to these vulnerabilities. **Climate impacts exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, leading to asymmetric and disproportionate impacts between and within communities. Low-income neighbourhoods, people with health challenges, and marginalized populations with limited power are especially affected.**

Factors contributing to vulnerability

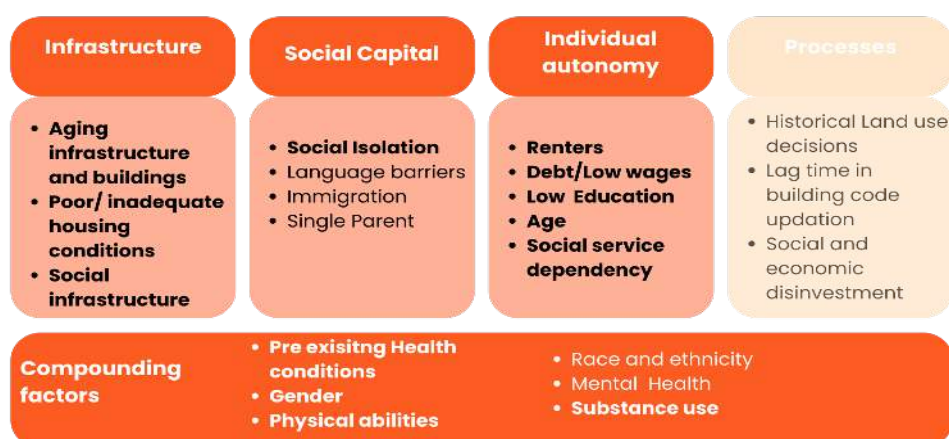


Figure 2 Factors determining social vulnerability in a neighbourhood

⁴ Extreme Heat Death Review Panel. Extreme Heat and Human Mortality: A Review of Heat-Related Deaths in B.C. in Summer 2021. (2022)

Downtown Eastside Context

In Vancouver, the DTES is one of the neighbourhoods grappling with numerous complex challenges. Many residents struggle with mental health challenges, including battling an opioid crisis and a toxic drug supply, and other intersecting forms of marginalization, such as limited employment opportunities, low median income, poverty, housing insecurity, and intergenerational trauma.⁵ This neighbourhood and population are highly climate-vulnerable, lacking access to resources, tools, and infrastructure to adapt to the real and projected impacts of climate change. Figure 3 illustrates that this neighbourhood has a high concentration of residents who are already disproportionately facing systemic barriers. This poses challenges during extreme weather events such as heat domes and air quality from wildfire smoke.

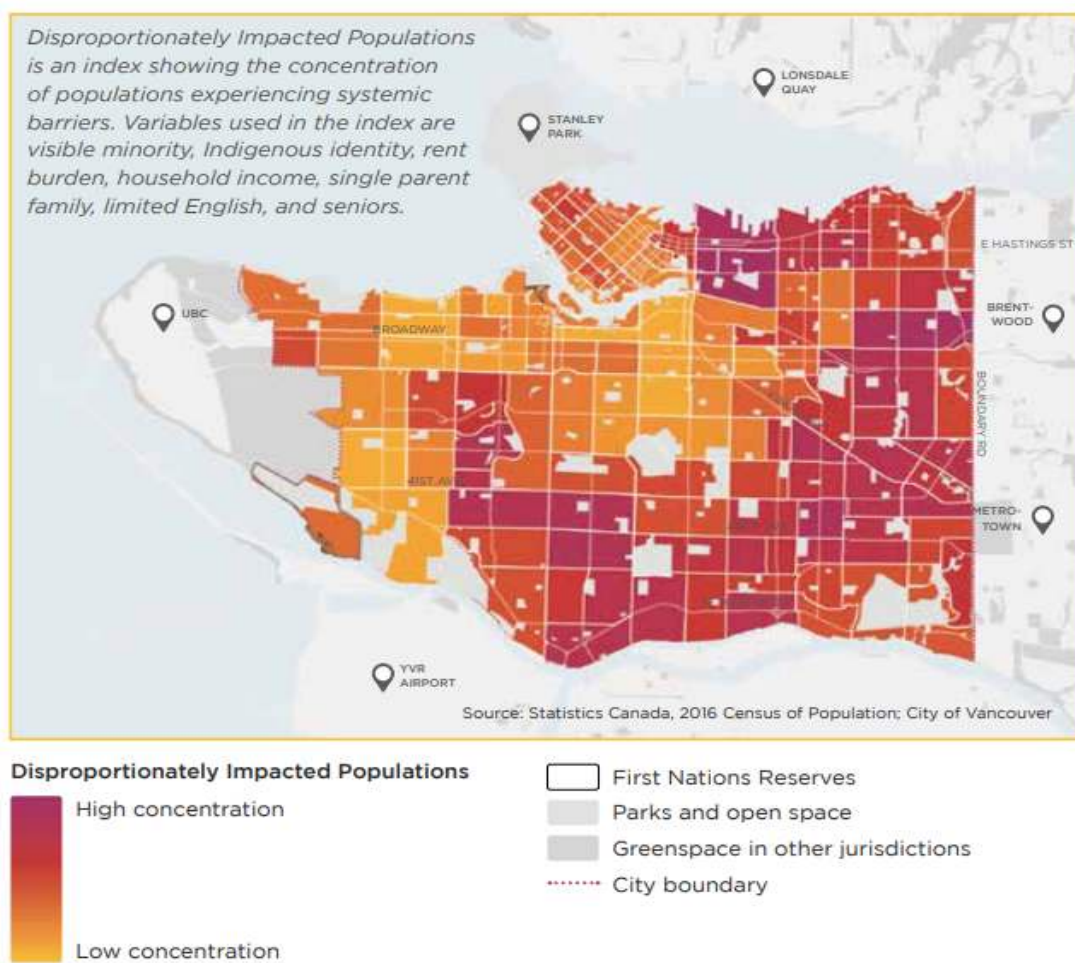


Figure 3 Disproportionately impacted populations and neighbourhoods in Vancouver (Source: Vancouver Plan, 2022)

In addition, factors like the coastal geography and lack of green space in the neighbourhood means that it is highly exposed to multiple hazards, such as floods, extreme heat, and poor air quality, that are expected to become more intense and severe under a rapidly changing climate. Figure 4 illustrates these multiple hazards.

⁵ UBC Sustainability Hub, Union Gospel Mission. (2023). *Unhoused Under Pressure*. Vancouver: The University of British Columbia.

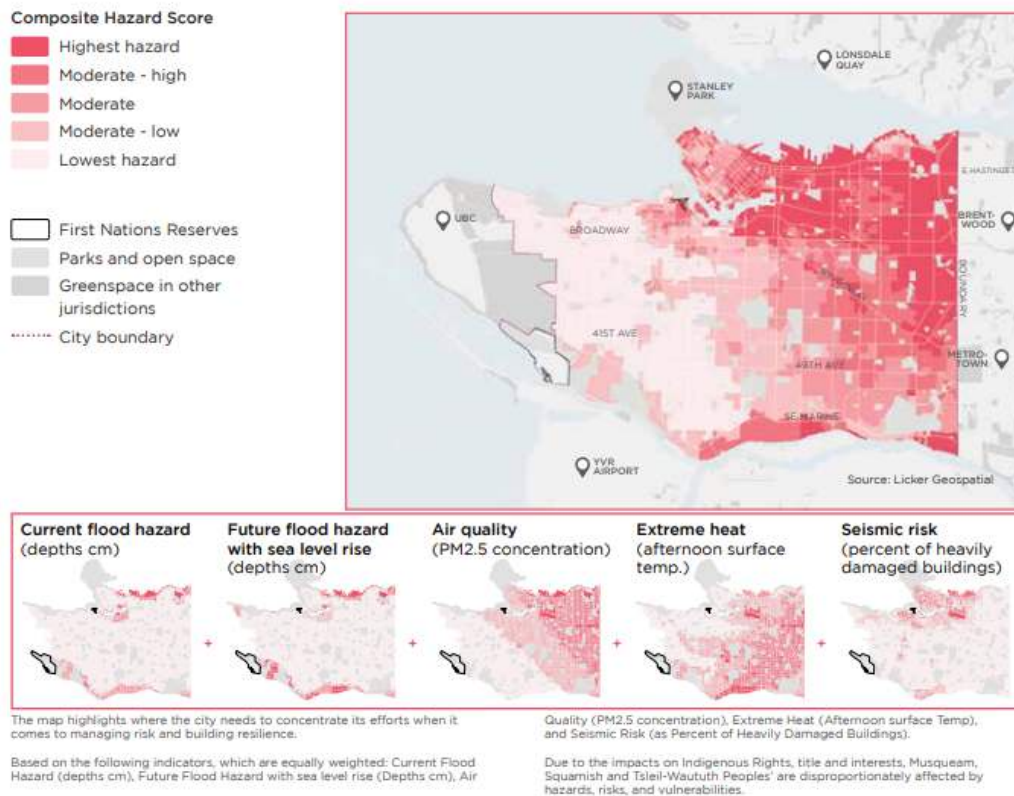


Figure 4 Overlapping hazards and risks under current conditions (Source: Vancouver Plan, 2022)

Through policies like the City of Vancouver's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, Space to Thrive: Vancouver's Social Infrastructure Strategy and the Resilient Vancouver Strategy, the City, health authorities and researchers have put considerable effort into understanding the vulnerabilities, key climate risks, and adaptive strategies in the neighbourhood. This work has helped frame high-level strategies to increase the adaptive capacities of its residents. **The core challenge is not the absence of strategies, but the lack of sustained funding directed toward implementation, as well as insufficient support for the advocacy, community organizing, and coalition-building needed to turn these strategies into systemic change.**

The DTES faces multiple overlapping risks and requires both capacity and financing to strengthen adaptive measures and build long-term resilience. While several plans and strategies already outline important resilience-building opportunities across the city,⁶ most remain broad or focused on municipal systems rather than neighbourhood realities. Many are not resourced or tailored to the unique conditions of the DTES, and few address the day-to-day capacity and funding constraints of frontline non-profits. While there are low-barrier resources like the Resilient Neighbourhoods Toolkit, developed in partnership with community organizations, there are still limitations in integrating these into action.

Existing strategic planning and funding mechanisms for non-profits are often inadequate for continuing climate action and resilience planning. Inconsistent and unclear access to emergency funding causes difficulty in hiring or maintaining adequate staffing during crises. These factors create a dissonance between policy, planning, and implementation: interventions are identified on paper but often left unrealized or disconnected from the needs of organizations and residents.

⁶ We have included these as key interventions that can support the advancement of a productive and resilient roadmap for the DTES.

These policies need to be integrated into the core mission and daily operations of organizations, rather than treated as an add-on or extra responsibility.

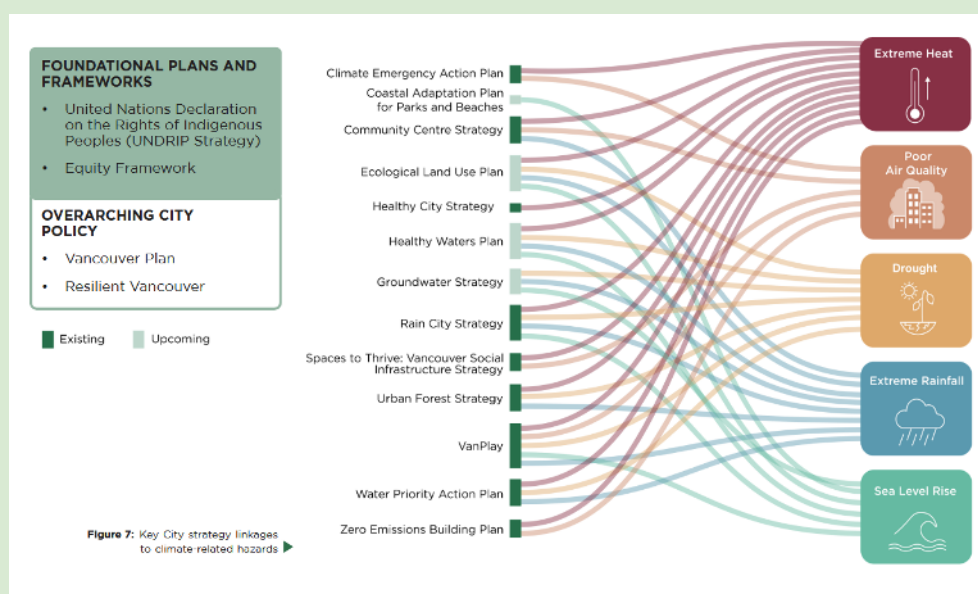
Current approaches overlook the embedded capacities, strengths, and resilience of both service providers and residents themselves. Informal support networks with shared values of care, trust, and a commitment to looking out for one another are strengths that build resilience – often faster and more flexibly than formal systems. Several existing programs and services support the well-being and resilience of the community. Many of the community-led initiatives demonstrate ingenuity and adaptability within the community. While there are systemic and compounding vulnerabilities in the neighbourhood, the community also has many inherent strengths that can be utilised to ensure the resilience of the neighbourhood and residents.

Climate Action for Vancouver: Policy Jurisdictions

At the municipal level, Vancouver's key policies – the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, Vancouver Plan, and Resilient Vancouver Strategy – work together with other policies to address climate resilience.

At the provincial level, the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (MoEMCR) and Ministry of Energy and Climate Solutions (MoECS) are two key ministries primarily responsible for climate action. The MoEMCR is responsible for coordinating mitigation, preparedness, response and other emergency management activities. The MoECS is responsible for the energy sector and aligning the energy policies of the province with the broader climate goals. The Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy (2022), the guiding document for climate action in the province, outlines actions to enhance BC's capacities to respond to climate-induced emergencies.

This work aligns with the national Climate Adaptation Strategy (2023) from the federal Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, which provides an overarching policy framework for adaptation and mitigation across Canada.



Key city strategy linkages to climate related hazards (Source: Vancouver Climate adaptation strategy, 2024)

Co-Creation with Community Partners

To address these gaps, SFU CERi, ACT and VCF convened representatives from four social service non-profit organizations, **Hogan's Alley Society, PHS Community Services Society, Lookout Housing and Health Society, and First United Church Community Ministry Society**. Together, challenges, needs, strengths and opportunities for advancing resiliency in the DTES were considered.

Three co-creation workshops were designed to understand projected climate impacts and to co-design pragmatic strategies for organizations and residents. The workshops followed community-engaged research (CER) methods, prioritizing CER ethics and engaging local knowledge in co-creation and implementation. This process included **the active involvement of social service non-profit organizations in the research process, ensuring that the research design and outcomes address their specific needs.**

The three workshops were designed around the following four broad questions:

How is climate change already impacting DTES residents and the operational and financial stability of support organizations? What impacts are projected over the next 1, 5, and 10 years?

What risks do these impacts pose to social sector organizations and their services?

What best practices and resources are needed to co-create a practical and effective Climate Resilience Roadmap?

How can leading communication, advocacy, and financing practices be used to support climate readiness in the DTES?

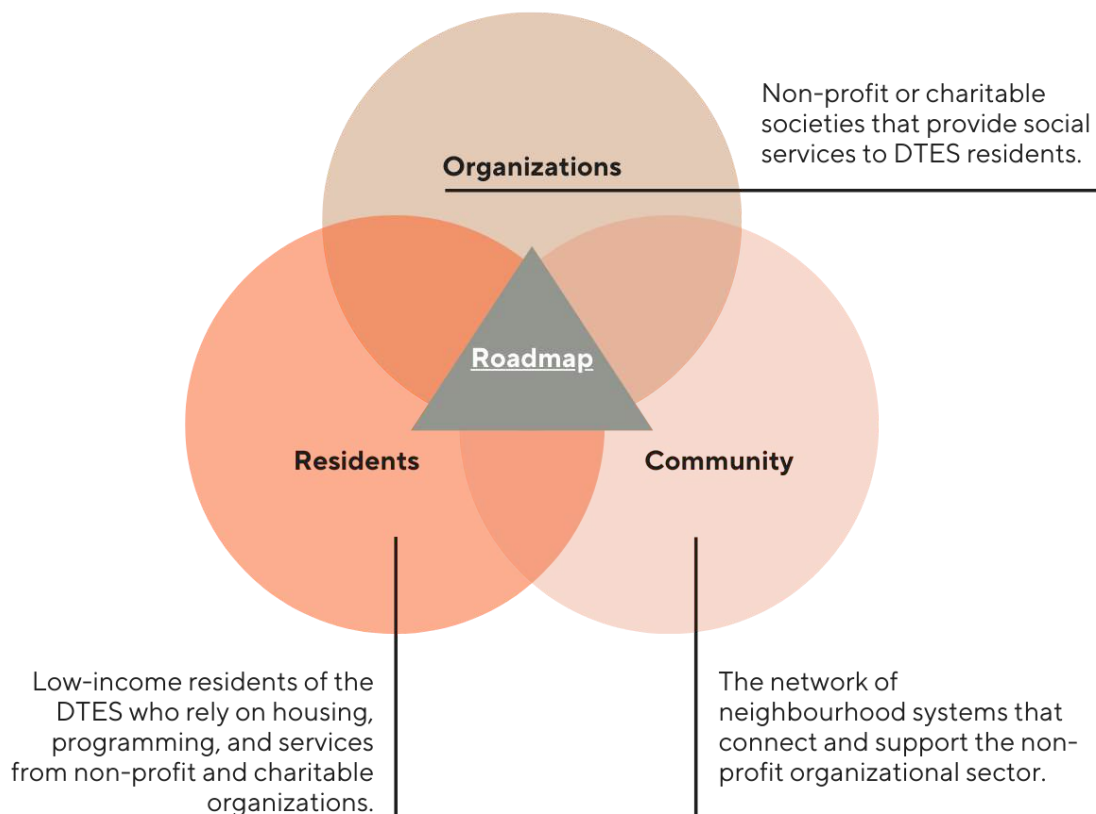
The outcome was a roadmap to support the social service non-profits in the DTES with strategies that can minimize the risk, build the adaptive capacities and resilience, and are transferable to communities beyond the neighbourhood.



PART 2: CLIMATE RESILIENCE ROADMAP

Envisioning a Climate-Ready Downtown Eastside

Building climate resilience in the DTES requires a multi-layered approach strengthening organizations, services and residents. Effective adaptation cannot rely on ad hoc projects or piecemeal measures; it must be embedded into structures that sustain community life. Through the workshops, partners shared hopes for a climate-resilient DTES in five years. This vision defined success for residents, organizations, and the community.



Vision for Organizations

Organizations are confident and collaborative, equipped with climate-adaptive infrastructure and environment-friendly emergency materials.

Organizations are supported by stable, long-term funding that allows them to be proactive in planning for emergencies. Rather than operating in silos, organizations are working from a shared climate vision, aligned in strategy and equipped to respond effectively to emerging challenges with clarity and resilience. There is more peer organizing and involvement in times of emergencies that organizations collaborate with and leverage in these circumstances.

Vision for Residents

Residents feel empowered, supported, safe and connected.

Residents have access to safe shelter, crisis support, and fulfilling jobs that contribute to a sustainable world and reflect their skills and needs. With access to better training and more resources, people have the capacity to care for themselves and one another. Community gardens and green spaces are thriving, offering places to grow food, build relationships, and gather in joy and solidarity. Timely and accurate information on emergencies is communicated effectively to residents through multiple channels and formats. A central climate hub anchors these efforts, providing consistent, trusted access to resources and support.

Vision for Community

The DTES community is building a resilient, connected future rooted in shared care and climate justice.

The broader community functions as a unified, responsive network. Knowledge, tools, and resources flow freely through collective systems that prioritize equity and inclusion. There are spaces for collaboration to spark new ideas and mobilize collective action. Collective emergency plans are in place and ready to activate, with frontline staff and local leaders trained and empowered to guide the way.

Advancing a Climate-Ready DTES

Based on needs, gaps, and opportunities, strategies were identified to build strengths and address weaknesses to support non-profit organizations in building their collaborative, organizational, and community-led capacities. Short-term strategies focus on practical approaches that could be undertaken in the next 12-18 months; longer-term strategies span over 2 to 5 years. **The focus is to build on the existing needs and capacities of non-profits, ensuring their service delivery can partner with local government and other providers, such as health authorities, to bolster and advance community climate resilience.**

Figure 5 gives a snapshot of the top priority strategies for building business continuity and organizational resilience, increasing the adaptive capacity of residents and ensuring sustainable service provision to the community. Short-term strategies range from sharing climate budgeting tools and storage space for supplies such as fans, water bottles, sunscreen, and wildfire smoke masks, to leadership training among informal networks. Long-term strategies range from establishing a neighbourhood climate hub to creating more green spaces and empowering community-led initiatives. Table 1 gives an overview of the different audiences and how the roadmap will be of use to each of the groups.

How could this roadmap be utilized? Audience and Use Cases

<u>Primary Audience:</u> DTES Community Partners	<u>Secondary Audience:</u> Local Government & Institutions	<u>Tertiary Audience:</u> Broader Public & Funders
Roadmap serves as tool to help align efforts, share strategies, and strengthen collaboration.	The roadmap provides community-grounded insights to inform policy, funding, and service delivery, ensuring resilience planning reflects DTES realities	The roadmap communicates the DTES's vision, strengths, and needs, making the case for investment and broader solidarity
• Housing providers • Non-profits • Service providers • Community organizations • Resident-led groups • Indigenous organizations • Peer networks based in the Downtown Eastside	• City of Vancouver • Metro Vancouver • BC Housing • Vancouver Coastal Health • Emergency management agencies, and local universities (SFU, UBC, etc.)	• Philanthropic foundations • Granting agencies • Journalist • Allies in other neighbourhoods and jurisdictions

Table 1

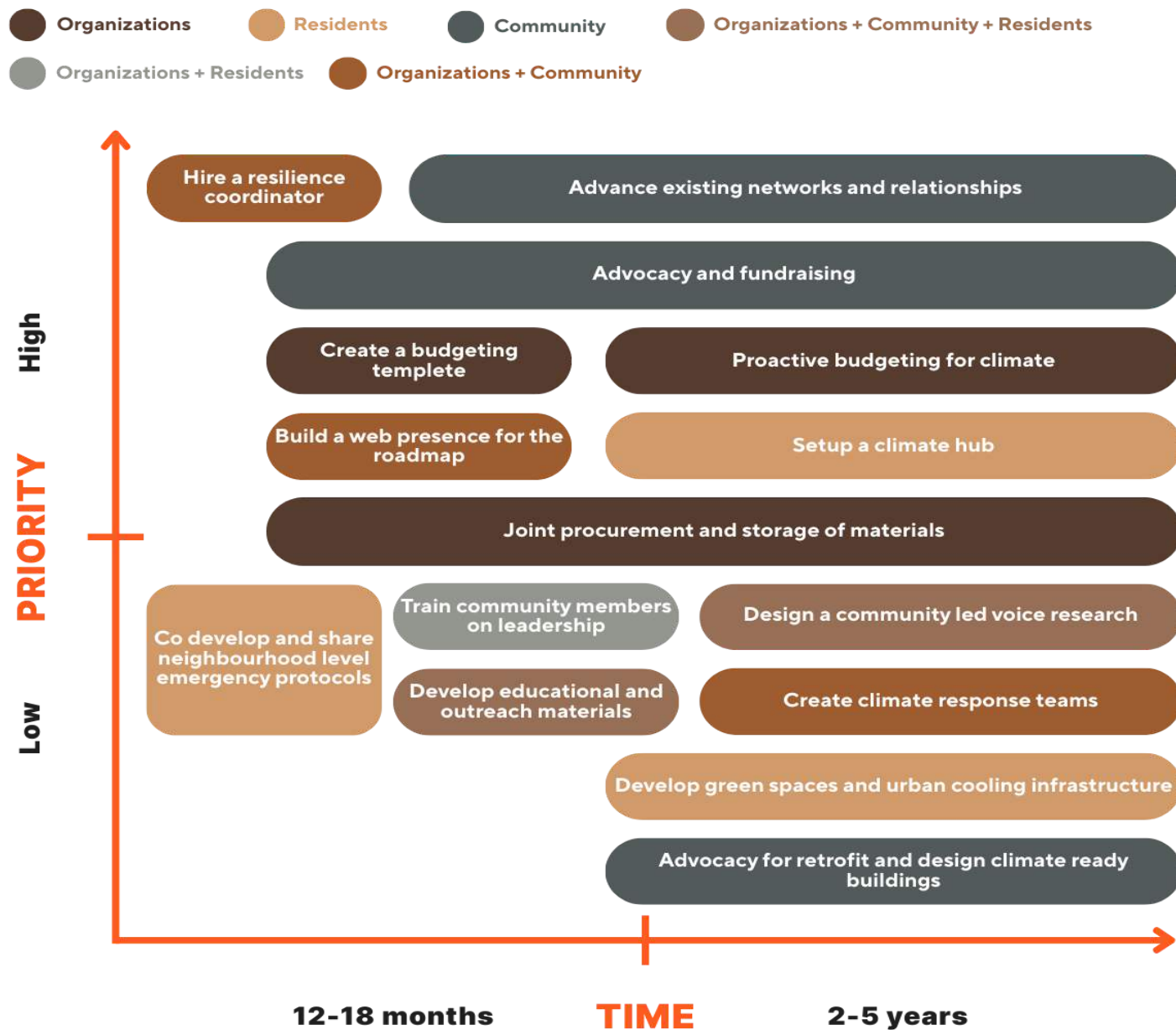


Figure 5: Prioritized strategies for long term and short term climate resilience.

Centring DTES Strengths and Voices in Climate Action

Engaging peer workers, dedicated volunteers, health communicators, frontline staff, outreach workers, and trusted community leaders who already have strong relationships in the DTES, is critical for the effective implementation of this work. Building on existing networks and assets within the community can enhance communications and rapid response during emergencies. For instance, embedding climate strategies into the existing structures of community networks, and integrating peer-to-peer training sessions on strategies to communicate and build resilience to seasonal climate risks (heat, smoke, flooding) into their agendas and processes, can support crucial outreach to frontline staff across organizations. In addition, public infrastructure like St. Paul's Hospital, which is already a key centre in the community, have the potential to function as climate safety hubs for the community.

Short-Term Strategies & Actions (Next 12–18 months)

*Below are **ready-to-launch** climate resiliency strategies and actions that span across service provision, business continuity, and residents, require few resources, and have relatively short implementation timelines (~1.5 years). Existing strengths and resources have been identified that help to advance the strategy in practice.*

Strategy: Advocacy and Fundraising for Climate

Non-profits play a critical role in frontline climate response and community care, yet existing strategic planning and funding mechanisms are often inadequate for sustained climate action. Inconsistent and unclear access to emergency or adaptation funding makes it difficult to hire and retain staff, plan ahead, or invest in long-term resilience. Strengthening advocacy and access to sustainable funding is essential for ensuring that non-profits can prepare for, respond to, and recover from climate emergencies.

- **Action:** Create an open-source, collaborative platform that not only compiles climate-related funding opportunities, but also supports collective advocacy for equitable, long-term investment in community-based climate resilience.
 - ◆ Form a cross-sector coalition of non-profits, funders, and advocacy organizations to coordinate efforts and champion sustained government and philanthropic investment in community-based climate adaptation.
 - ◆ Map and analyze existing funding databases (regional, provincial, and national) to identify gaps and barriers for social-service and frontline organizations.
 - ◆ Develop and maintain an open-access directory of climate adaptation grants, capacity-building funds, and emergency response supports tailored to non-profits.
 - ◆ Establish a shared communication channel to circulate timely updates on funding opportunities, policy changes, and advocacy actions.

- ◆ Create a coordinated advocacy strategy to engage policymakers, funders, and networks around equitable, long-term funding models for community climate resilience.

Existing Resources:

[Climate Change Resource Guide \(Vantage Point\)](#) – This resource guide from Vantage Point provides a non-exhaustive list of grant funding streams and other relevant resources available to BC non-profits.

[Heat Responses in Vancouver \(Women Transforming Cities\)](#) – This open source database provides a list of funding and grant streams at city and provincial levels that can be accessed by non-profits in times of heat emergencies.

Strategies: Proactive Budgeting for Climate

Non-profit organizations already absorb the costs of climate mitigation, preparedness, and emergency response, but these expenses are often folded into overstretched program budgets, reduced due to limited funding, or reallocated during crises. The challenge is not a lack of strategic prioritization within organizations (many already attempt to budget for climate impacts) but a lack of funding structures and templates that explicitly allow, resource, and normalize climate-related costs.

To build sustainable and resilient climate action pathways, funders must recognize climate response as a core operational need rather than an add-on. Long-term, flexible core funding with explicit climate-related line items would prevent organizations from having to “recreate” emergency funding streams every season and would acknowledge advocacy, preparedness, and mitigation as essential components of service delivery.

- **Action:** Develop a shared budgeting template that makes visible the climate-related costs organizations are *already* carrying (preparedness, response, mitigation, advocacy) so funders can clearly see what is currently hidden inside program budgets.
 - ◆ Advocate collectively for funders to adopt climate line items within core funding agreements. This includes highlighting that advocacy and climate-readiness work require *new* investment unless funders proactively enable and resource these items.
 - ◆ Create a sector-wide communication channel to share existing templates, protocols, and examples that show how climate work is currently embedded but under-resourced.
 - ◆ Establish a peer support process to help organizations align climate budgeting practices and strengthen collective advocacy for funder-level change.
 - ◆ Position advocacy as an essential budget category, (not an optional add-on) emphasizing that without explicit funder endorsement, organizations are forced to scale back or eliminate this critical work.

Strategy: Advance Existing Networks and Relationships

Some of the biggest assets and shared resources in the DTES are the existing networks, both formal and informal, that support the community. Building on these networks and relationships and strengthening their capacities is a key action, both in emergency response as well as long-term climate adaptation.

- **Action:** Embed climate resilience into peer-to-peer training and coordination circles
 - ◆ Document existing practices for climate resilience within partner organizations that are not codified
 - ◆ Share protocols and best practices from partner organizations
 - ◆ Establish a virtual climate hub for compiling and sharing resources, protocols and best practices for nonprofit organizations.
 - ◆ Create training manuals and workshops for staff to prepare for climate emergencies
 - ◆ Hire a Climate Resilience Coordinator to work with partner organizations to assess capacity constraints and customize resources
 - ◆ Ensure coordinator attends meetings with organizations and find cross-organizational synergies
 - ◆ Present the roadmap to community networks and governmental partners
- **Alignment with existing policies and strategies**
 - ◆ *Resilient Vancouver Strategy* (2019) 1.4.B: Create a Capacity Building Action Plan and Non-profit Partnering Framework
 - ◆ *Climate Change Adaptation Strategy* (2024) E.17: Continue to work with partners and expand networks. Collaborate with Vancouver Coastal Health on a forum for regional adaptation practitioners and with the Resilient Vancouver Strategy team on a regional hub for practitioners
 - ◆ *Vancouver Plan* (2022) 8.3.6: Work with community groups to identify actions to decrease the risk of heat related illness. Actions could include identification of community or building cool refuges, volunteer heat registries, patrols and improving access to drinking water

Existing resources: [Non-Profit Action Plan Template for climate adaptation and emergency preparedness](#)

The template developed by Public Health Association of British Columbia and Vancouver Coastal Health, provides a strong starting point for organizations. These could be customized specifically for DTES organizations, mapping current partnerships and assets and ensuring the tools are practical for groups with limited staff and resources. Training and facilitation could be offered to help organizations apply the templates in real time, building both organizational and neighbourhood-level readiness.

Strategy: Joint Procurement and Storage for Supplies

Density and space constraints is another key concern in the DTES. During climate emergencies, lack of reliable storage spaces for relevant supplies such as fans, water bottles, sunscreen, and air conditioners constrain the ability to deliver proactive services in a timely manner. From an environmental perspective, reactive emergency response tends to be more wasteful (e.g. investing in water bottles rather than water urns). Shared storage would allow for more proactive and less wasteful solutions, and privilege more local suppliers.

- **Action:** Invest in joint procurement and storage for proactive responses and more environmentally-friendly and cost-effective emergency supplies
 - ◆ Identify and partner with social enterprises providing eco-friendly alternatives for response materials and disposal
 - ◆ Draft a policy for collectively procuring emergency response materials among social service non-profit organizations
 - ◆ Map existing storage facilities and practices in the DTES that can be used as shared space for storing supplies. This would include existing storage facilities of the partner organizations, as well as informal or makeshift storage areas in the neighbourhood that can be utilised
- **Alignment with existing policies and strategies**
 - ◆ Spaces to Thrive (2021) 1C⁷: Support capacity of social non-profits to plan, secure, and manage spaces and resources
 - ◆ Spaces to Thrive (2021) 3C: Support non-profit applicants to renovate and maintain social-serving spaces
 - ◆ Spaces to Thrive (2021) 6A2: Identify, retain and build on spaces, amenities or infrastructure that could strengthen networks and support community response to and recovery from emergencies or disasters
 - ◆ Downtown Eastside Plan (2014) 10.1.2: Promote a social procurement policy for the DTES in partnership with key stakeholders

Existing resources: [City of Vancouver Storefronts Report](#)

According to the vacant storefronts study by the City of Vancouver, the DTES has a high concentration of persistent vacancies (5+ years) compared to the rest of the city.⁸ Utilising these storefronts could be a positive way of ensuring that nonprofits in the DTES have a space for the procurement and storage of response materials.

Strategy: Hire a Climate Resilience Coordinator

A lack of capacity is one of the key issues most DTES social service non-profit organizations face. The Climate Resilience Coordinator will be supported by Vancity Community

⁷ City of Vancouver. (2021). Spaces to thrive: Vancouver Social Infrastructure strategy

⁸ City of Vancouver. 2025. Storefronts report. Vancouver

Foundation and SFU CERi and will be a shared resource across the different DTES organizations. The coordinator will help organizations with identifying funding, compiling best practices, mapping strategies, and coordinating across organizations. They will also support the implementation and progress monitoring of the roadmap action items.

- **Action:** Hire a Climate Resilience Coordinator to organize climate strategies across different organizations
 - ◆ Create a job description and workplan for the role
 - ◆ Source matching funds and grants for hiring

Strategy: Neighbourhood-Level Emergency Protocols

Concurrent crises in the DTES, including short term (e.g. COVID-19, extreme heat), and ongoing (e.g. opioid epidemic, homelessness) crises, intensify under climate hazards like heatwaves and smoke, disproportionately impacting already vulnerable populations in the neighbourhood. There is a need for proactive and coordinated emergency responses at a neighbourhood level.

- **Action:** Develop protocols for collective and coordinated neighbourhood responses during climate emergencies
 - ◆ Share protocols for extreme weather response across organizations and look for opportunities to align protocols
 - ◆ Conduct regular calls among organizations before and during heat and smoke seasons to check-in on the needs and challenges faced by community
- **Alignment with existing policies and strategies**
 - ◆ Spaces to Thrive (2021) 6A3: Strengthen the non-profit network of food infrastructure, including spaces for growing, preparation and distribution of food in day-to-day programming by community organizations and during disaster response recovery, and beyond.
 - ◆ Resilient Vancouver Strategy (2019) 1.2.B: Support a community-led Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood Disaster Response and Recovery planning process.

Existing Resources:

[Resilient Neighbourhoods Toolkit](#): A toolkit designed for community organizations looking to support their neighbourhood and improve the resilience of their respective neighbourhoods during emergencies.

Strategy: Educational and Outreach Materials

Inclusive and accessible communication of awareness materials are essential to help community members to prepare for climate emergencies. In a neighbourhood as diverse as the DTES, outreach in multiple languages and physical formats are important to enhance the climate resiliency of the community.

- **Action:** Coordinate seasonal campaigns on smoke, heat, and emergency resilience
 - ◆ Contextualize alerts and preparedness guides from the City and province to the needs of the DTES community. This would involve distributing information in multiple languages and physical formats, with an emphasis on the impacts on specific vulnerable groups
 - ◆ Explore how capacities in existing campaigns and programs can be utilised to include seasonal resilience
- **Alignment with existing policies and strategies**
 - ◆ Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2024) E3.2: Enhance public communications around each of the climate-related hazards to improve the reach and relevance of City messaging by leveraging community partners and translating materials
 - ◆ Resilient Vancouver Strategy (2019) 1.3.C: Apply an intersectional lens to revise emergency and resilience education and engagement materials
 - ◆ The City of Vancouver conducts seasonal readiness calls to share information with community organizations and support them in taking necessary actions

Existing resources: The City of Vancouver has [fact sheets and preparedness guides](#) in multiple languages available for the different hazards impacting the city. The City also has pre-recorded emergency preparedness workshops accessible through the Vancouver Public Library.

Strategy: Leadership Training for Community Members

Vulnerable neighbourhoods and residents are often portrayed as passive or unable to co-create responses due to housing insecurity, social stigma, resource constraints, and gaps in emergency preparedness.

- **Action:** Design and implement programs to empower community members in climate response roles
 - ◆ Develop training and paid leadership roles within organizations for residents to step into during crises
 - ◆ Advocate for low-barrier jobs/roles for community members
 - ◆ Connect with pre-existing community leadership and advocacy projects (e.g. DTES SRO Collaborative, Climate Equity Action and Resilience)
 - ◆ Collaborate with social service non-profit organizations about how to best empower their community members
- **Alignment with existing policies and strategies**
 - ◆ Vancouver Plan (2022) 10.4.1: Create employment (especially low-barrier jobs) through inclusive, social impact hiring and local employment opportunities

- ◆ Resilient Vancouver Strategy (2019) 2.1.B: Leverage resiliency initiatives to strengthen civic literacy and access for underrepresented groups

Climate Resilience in Practice:

SRO Extreme Heat Preparedness and Response Initiative

The heat preparedness project by DTES SRO Collaborative is a key example of coordinated heat response among Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotel tenants, the City of Vancouver, and other community organizations. The initiative focused on heat preparedness and response for tenants in 30 privately owned SROs and 10 Chinese Benevolent Society buildings across the DTES. Through the project, volunteer tenants were given training in providing first aid, distributing water and cool kits, and conducting wellness checks.

2022 Community-Led Extreme Heat Resilience

This report from the City of Vancouver is a compilation of some of the key community-led initiatives for extreme heat resilience under the Resilient Neighbourhoods Program. Some of the actions include wellness checks, distributing cool kits, distributing fans and evaporative coolers, setting up cooling stations, assistance in transporting people to cooling centres, training of community members, and awareness campaigns.

Long-Term Strategies and Actions (2–5 years)

These projects require substantial investment, coordination and policy shifts (~3-5+ years to implement), but require groundwork for implementation to begin within a year.

Strategy: Form Climate Response Teams

In the long term, there is a need for organizations to have internal dedicated response teams and have the capacity to collaborate across organizations during emergencies. Organizations should have more flexibility and agency in using funding for long-term climate adaptation programs and strategies.

- **Action:** Build internal teams in organizations dedicated to responding to climate needs
 - ◆ Create a list of capacities and resources required for setting up response teams within organizations. This involves listing existing capacities and staffing that can be integrated
 - ◆ Support mandatory emergency preparedness onboarding training for staff
 - ◆ Institute regular drills for staff to prepare for emergencies
 - ◆ Support peer-leadership training, mentorship, stipends, and skill-building for community members so they can be part of the response teams

Strategy: Establish a Climate Hub

The DTES does not have a response centre specifically designed for the community's needs. A climate hub would be a one-stop-place where different supports for the community to cope with climate change can be consolidated. It would also act as a centre where people can go to be trained, eventually contributing to capacity building in the community.

- **Action:** Establish a DTES climate response and resilience hub for sharing resources and information, coordinating response and providing services in safety for community members
 - ◆ Conduct a feasibility study for the potential locations for the climate hub
 - ◆ Map out existing physical and natural assets that community members and organizations can access for climate support
 - ◆ Map potential hub partners and spaces
 - ◆ Advocate to all levels of government for capital and operational investments
 - ◆ Provide training for residents to be community response personnel

Strategy: Green Spaces and Urban Cooling Infrastructure

Lack of green cover and accessible open spaces is a key issue faced by the DTES community. The neighbourhood has the lowest canopy cover in the city.⁹ Insufficient access to safe cooling and ventilation spaces also leads to displacement risks and isolation. Green spaces and parks are key community infrastructure that provide respite to residents during

⁹ City of Vancouver and Vancouver Park Board. 2025. Urban Forest Strategy: 2025 Update.

emergencies, especially heatwaves. These spaces also work as important community infrastructure for mobilising communities.

- **Action:** Invest in park development, greenspace, and natural shading
 - ◆ Advocate for developing existing parks and open spaces that can be used within the community
 - ◆ Design and implement contextual nature-based shading solutions in the neighbourhood
 - ◆ Engage community members in an ongoing participatory mapping to crowdsource community/informal spaces which can be used for activation in response and resiliency efforts
- **Alignment with existing policies and strategies**

Urban Forest Strategy (2025) Action 23: Enhance the sustainability of the park stewardship programs by securing funding, pursuing grants, resourcing, and measuring success through volunteer engagement and goal setting

Existing Resources

[VanMap Viewer](#) from the City of Vancouver maps urban forest covers, green spaces and trees in the city. Urban Forestry Strategy (2025) also maps existing and potential ecological corridors within the city.

Strategy: Advocacy for Retrofit and Design Climate-Ready Buildings

Aging infrastructure and its maintenance are key issues in the DTES. Most of the buildings are not equipped to handle the impacts of climate change, especially in terms of heating and cooling.

- **Action:** Join the existing efforts in retrofits (such as those led by Tenant Resource & Advisory Centre (TRAC) to implement mandatory requirements for climate responsive building design and HVAC in new social and supportive housing¹⁰
 - ◆ Incentivise contractors and landlords to do collective retrofits to older DTES social and supportive housing
 - ◆ Access subsidized cooling programs to respond to the needs of older buildings and SROs
 - ◆ Advocate to the government to fund retrofits in older buildings and address the need to manage the potential for retrofits to cause renovictions. Update emergency systems in older buildings

¹⁰ There are already several initiatives addressing various facets of retrofits like the BC Housing Energy Efficiency Retrofit program and Rental Apartment Retrofit Accelerator (RARA) program. There is also research from organizations like Tenant Resource and Advisory Council (TRAC) on the impacts of retrofits, including renovictions. While retrofits are time and resource intensive measures that might be outside the purview and capacity of this work, joining with advocacy efforts can become the base for equitable actioning of retrofits and climate responsive design of buildings.

- ◆ Develop detailed templates from preexisting projects that have built climate response design and resident well-being into their buildings

Strategy: Community-Led Voices

A key aspiration for community-led research is that it convenes residents to share their ideas on making the neighbourhood more resilient. As a community that is often over-researched, while at the same time being underrepresented, it is imperative that residents have more control over the narratives shaping the neighbourhood.

Action: Develop resident-led research to take leadership roles on climate resilience

- ◆ Develop a ground-up strategy for amplifying DTES voices in policy advocacy

Leverage current actions like political organizing and roundtables with peers, non-profits, and governmental agencies (including health authorities). Advocate for the adoption of ideas and strategies that effectively translate resident voices into policy and action.

Existing Resources

*Support ongoing engagement mechanisms like resident advisory circles and peer-led storytelling; like the **Vancouver Injection Drug Users Study (VIDUS)** project.*

[A Climate Justice Charter for Vancouver](#) is an important resource that provides a high-level vision for the City and the wider community on the pathways to achieve climate justice. The Charter's framework was proposed by the Climate Equity Working Group (CEWG), which consisted of people who have lived experience with systemic inequities and work to address racial and climate justice. Additionally, interviews and further engagement was conducted to include diverse perspectives.

PART 3: ROADMAP AT A GLANCE

Strategies	Actions	Category	Key activities
Short-Term Strategies & Actions (Next 12–18 months)			
Advocacy and fundraising for climate action	Create an open-source central platform for identifying accessible climate-related funding	Organizational	→ Identify the existing databases that provide details on funders for climate action → Compile grants and funding streams that non-profits can access for climate adaptation actions → Create a communication channel for timely alerts on grant deadlines → Provide assistance in applying for grants and funding opportunities
Proactive budgeting for climate	Develop a shared budgeting template that makes visible the climate-related costs organizations are <i>already</i> carrying so funders can clearly see what is currently hidden inside program budgets.	Organizational	→ Advocate for funders to add climate line items to core funding → Create a shared channel for climate-budget templates and examples → Build peer support processes to align climate budgeting and advocacy → Position advocacy as an essential, not optional, budget category
Advance existing networks and relationships	Embed climate resilience into peer-to-peer training and coordination circles	Organizational	→ Document existing practices for climate resilience within partner organizations that are not codified → Establish a virtual climate hub for compiling and sharing resources, protocols and best practices for non-profit organizations → Share protocols and best practices from partner organizations → Create training manuals and workshops for staff to prepare for climate emergencies → Hire a Climate Resilience Coordinator to work with partner organizations to assess capacity constraints and customize resources → Ensure coordinator attends meetings with organizations and find cross-organizational synergies → Present the roadmap to community networks and governmental partners
Joint procurement	Invest in joint procurement and storage of	Organizational	→ Identify and partner with social enterprises providing eco-friendly alternatives for response materials and disposal

and storage of materials	environmentally friendly and cost-effective emergency materials		→ Draft a policy for collectively procuring emergency response materials among social service nonprofit organizations → Map existing storage facilities and practices in the DTES that can be used as shared space for storing supplies. This would include existing storage facilities of the partner organizations, as well as informal or makeshift storage areas in the neighbourhood that can be utilised
Hire a Climate Resilience Coordinator	Hire a climate resilience coordinator to organize climate strategies across different organizations	Community	→ Create a job description and workplan for the role → Source matching funds and grants for hiring
Neighbourhood level emergency protocols	Develop protocols for collective and coordinated neighbourhood responses during climate emergencies	Community	→ Share protocols for extreme weather response across organizations and look for opportunities to align protocols → Conduct regular calls among organizations before and during heat and smoke seasons to check-in on the needs and challenges faced by community
Educational and outreach materials	Coordinate seasonal campaigns on smoke, heat, and emergency resilience	Residents	→ Contextualize alerts and preparedness guides from the City and province to the needs of the DTES community. This would involve distributing information in multiple languages and physical formats, with an emphasis on the impacts on specific vulnerable groups → Explore how capacities in existing campaigns and programs can be utilised to include seasonal resilience
Leadership training for community members	Design and implement programs to empower community members in climate response roles	Residents	→ Develop training and paid leadership roles within organizations for residents to step into during crises → Advocate for low-barrier jobs/roles for community members → Connect with pre-existing community leadership and advocacy projects → Collaborate with social service non-profit organizations about how to best empower their community members
Long-Term Strategies and Actions (2–5 years)			
Climate response teams	Build internal teams in organizations dedicated to responding to climate needs	Organizational	→ Create a list of capacities and resources required for setting up response teams within organizations. This involves listing existing capacities and staffing that can be integrated → Support mandatory emergency preparedness onboarding training for staff → Institute regular drills for staff to prepare for emergencies → Support peer-leadership training, mentorship, stipends, and skill-building for community members so they can be part of the response teams

Establish a climate hub	Establish a DTES climate response and resilience hub for sharing resources and information, coordinating response and providing services in safety for community members	Community	→ Conduct a feasibility study for the potential locations for the climate hub → Map out existing physical and natural assets that community members and organizations can access for climate support → Map potential hub partners and spaces → Advocate to all levels of government for capital and operational investments → Provide training for residents to be community response personnel
Green spaces and urban cooling infrastructure	Invest in park development, greenspace, and natural shading	Community	→ Advocate for developing existing parks and open spaces that can be used within the community → Design and implement contextual nature-based shading solutions in the neighbourhood → Engage community members in an ongoing participatory mapping to crowdsource community/informal spaces which can be used for activation in response and resiliency efforts
Advocacy for retrofit and design climate ready buildings	Join the existing efforts in retrofits to implement mandatory requirements for climate responsive building design and HVAC in new social and supportive housing	Community	→ Incentivise contractors and landlords to do collective retrofits to older DTES social and supportive housing → Access subsidized cooling programs to respond to the needs of older buildings and SROs → Advocate to the government to fund retrofits in older buildings → Update emergency systems in older buildings → Develop detailed templates from preexisting projects that have built climate response design and resident well-being into their buildings
Community-led voice	Develop resident-led research to take leadership roles on climate resilience	Residents	→ Develop a ground-up strategy for amplifying DTES voices in policy advocacy

Implementations and Next Steps

The development process of the roadmap was deeply collaborative and informed by the experiences of social service operators and our guests. Every step of the way, the challenges and opportunities identified were heard, analyzed, and used as the springboard to collaboratively imagine a better, climate-proof future for one of the most hard-hit yet resilient neighbourhoods and determine realistic, actionable steps to implement this vision.

- Alicea Yiu, Development Manager, Lookout Housing and Health Society

This roadmap is not a prescriptive document with fixed actions to achieve climate action, but rather a collaborative live document that will be updated as pathways of implementation emerge going forward. The immediate next steps in implementation will be to:

- Publish the roadmap in community-friendly formats
- Secure funding for, and hire, a Climate Resilience Coordinator to support the implementation of the roadmap
- Advance the creation of virtual resource library for nonprofit organizations
- Advocate for the creation of Climate Hub to support the DTES community
- Launch relevant working groups to advance the short-term strategies
- Advocate and find funding for priority strategies
- Convene with partner organizations to finalise their levels of involvement

Conclusion

Climate change is no longer a threat for some distant future of humanity but a reality that requires urgent action. Rather than seeing it as a stand alone issue, it is imperative that we approach it as something that impacts our day-to-day lives in a number of ways. When intersecting with the multiple and increasing disparities in our communities, climate change and its impacts are felt much more by residents who are already struggling with finances, health, and marginalization. A justice-centered approach is crucial to address climate change in community and neighbourhood contexts.

The Climate Resilience Roadmap is a step towards building the long-term empowerment and resilience for DTES non-profit organizations and residents as they confront severe climate challenges in their community. While there are limitations on how this roadmap addresses equitable climate action, it works to provide an entry point towards building climate justice, emergency preparedness, and enhancing public safety. By centering the community and its strengths, this document outlines practical pathways to mobilize proactive responses and collaboration that strengthens resilience across service provision, operational continuity, and residents. This roadmap aims to showcase how a neighbourhood confronting complex and interacting challenges can still advance toward building greater climate resilience.

The Climate Resilience Roadmap articulates a shared vision of what a climate-ready future looks like for the DTES: one where organizations are equipped, residents are supported, and networks and systems are collaborative and just.

Appendices

Appendix A – Climate Projections for Metro Vancouver

Extreme heat: Temperatures are projected to increase year-round, about 2.4°C warmer on average. The hottest summer days will become hotter, with three times as many days over 25°C and nine times as many over 30°C. Heatwaves will become more frequent (four times that in the past) and longer (from three to six days on average), with both warmer day and nighttime temperatures.¹¹ It is also projected that by 2050, hot days will be 4 degrees hotter and heat waves will become more frequent.¹² There is a projected increase from 34°C to 38°C in the 1-in-20 hottest temperature days by 2050. This will cause an increase in the cooling demands for buildings by 6 times than the current levels, which lead to implications on future energy supply.¹³

Poor air quality: With increasing temperatures and longer drier periods, the frequency of wildfires are projected to increase, which will deteriorate the air quality. This could lead to an increase in the number of days with poor air quality and also higher concentrations of ground ozone levels.¹⁴

Rainfall: A modest 5% increase in annual precipitation is projected in our region by the 2050s, though indications of when that precipitation will occur are projected to change in important ways. The amount of rain falling in a 1-in-20 event could increase by 30% by the 2050s.

¹¹ City of Vancouver (2024) Climate Change Adaptation Strategy: 2024-2025 update and action plan. City of Vancouver

¹² City of Vancouver (2017). Resilient Vancouver Strategy. City of Vancouver

¹³ Metro Vancouver (2016). Climate Projections for Metro Vancouver. Metro Vancouver

¹⁴ City of Vancouver (2024). Climate Change Adaptation Strategy: 2024-2025 Update and Action Plan. City of Vancouver

Appendix B - Co-Creation Workshops with Community Partners

Profiles of Partner Organizations

Four DTES organizations that provide a wide range of services to the community members participated in the creation of the *Climate Resilience Roadmap for Non-Profits*

1. [Hogan's Alley Society](#)

The Hogan's Alley Society (HAS) is a non-profit organization composed of civil rights activists, business professionals, community organizations, artists, writers and academics committed to daylighting the presence of Black history in Vancouver and throughout British Columbia. Their work centres around three strategic pillars: culturally informed housing, non-profit housing development, and community engagement. With a primary focus on housing support and cultural programming HAS has been working with the City of Vancouver to ensure that the re-development of the Hogan's Alley block represents the legacy of the Strathcona's Black community, which was displaced by the construction of the viaducts.

HAS is the lead operating partner of Nora Hendrix Place, a 52-home temporary modular social housing development on the Hogan's Alley Block, which prioritizes Black and Indigenous people who are at risk of or currently homeless. The Hogan's Alley community land trust aims to provide affordable housing, small and social enterprise spaces, cultural amenities, and other infrastructure elements that will redress displacement and prevent gentrification that has disproportionately impacted Black communities across Canada. A key part of the development is the Black Cultural Center, which will serve the unique needs of People of African descent across the Lower Mainland.

2. [PHS Community Services Society](#)

PHS Community Services Society provides housing, healthcare, harm reduction, and health promotion for some of the most vulnerable and under-served people in Vancouver's DTES and Victoria. PHS provides more than 1,700 units of diverse supportive housing in Vancouver and Victoria (with 11 buildings in Downtown Vancouver), including modular housing, highly supportive low-barrier homes, and shelters. Most of its buildings in the DTES have 24/7 mental health supports, on-site social workers, and some level of health outreach.

Apart from housing, PHS also runs programs and services for harm reduction in the community like the PHS food program, indigenous health services, community managed alcohol program, community transitional care team, safe injection sites, community clinics, home support, medication management, etc., to name a few.

3. [First United Church Community Ministry Society](#)

Established 140 years ago, First United focuses on social justice and providing essential services to residents of Vancouver's DTES. A prominent frontline service provider in the DTES, First United runs various support programs like the meal program, community help desk, showers and washrooms, tax program, legal advocacy, multi-faith guidance, and spiritual care through the community ministry.

First United is also currently redeveloping their site into an 11-storey building in partnership with Lu'ma Native housing. The building will be a universally accessible

multi-storey, purpose-built facility with four floors of amenities from First United and seven floors of below-market housing operated by Lu'ma Native Housing for Indigenous people.

4. [Lookout Housing and Health Society](#)

Lookout Housing and Health Society is a non-profit organization offering a range of programs in housing and health for vulnerable adults. They operate in 22 municipalities in Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland, providing housing, emergency shelters, health services, resource centres, skill building, and community outreach programs. They also run services like medical clinics, food banks, needle distribution and community cleanup, HIV and Hep C supports, social enterprises, numerous peer, employment, and recovery programs.

Co-Creation Methodology

The roadmap was designed through a series of co-creation workshops with the partner social service non-profit organizations. The workshop followed [community-engaged research \(CER\) ethics](#), which includes the active involvement of community organizations in the research process, ensuring the research design and outcomes address their specific needs. Through the three workshops, the organizations elaborated on the challenges, gaps, needs, opportunities, and strengths of the DTES as a community in working towards climate adaptation.

Research Framework

To understand how climate change will affect non-profit organizations in the DTES and the communities they serve, we developed a research framework grounded in existing adaptation plans and sector reports (outlined in Table 1). This framework identifies three critical and interconnected areas of resilience: **service provision, business continuity, and community residents**. Together, these categories capture the operational, organizational, and human dimensions of climate impacts, providing a structured lens for assessing risks and opportunities for adaptation.

1. **Service Provision** - Organizations carry out a diverse range of essential services and programs such as providing housing, overdose prevention sites, community engagement and health services. How can organizations proactively optimize and/or assess services needed to buffer against a range of climate hazards?
2. **Business Continuity** - Climate impacts can cause major disruptions to business operations and place financial strain on operational costs. In severe cases, organizations may experience power outages and network failure, which would impact access to online servers and services (e.g. disruption to remote work, building functions like elevators). Are there systems and/or protocols for major disruptions to business?
3. **Community Residents** – Community residents have diverse needs and vulnerabilities, which should be accounted for in robust and equitable climate response. Community residents who have limited means to adjust their home may need or request additional equipment to cope with climate impacts, such as cooling appliances. Community residents may also require relief from climate impacts such as extreme heat or wildfire smoke in shelters or amenity rooms. What are the ways climate impacts will affect community members and their needs?

This research framework not only served as a conceptual tool but also guided the design of our process. In reviewing the policy and academic literature, the three categories – service provision, business continuity, and community members – provided a lens for identifying how non-profits are represented (or overlooked) in existing climate adaptation strategies. This allowed us to map gaps in the policy landscape, such as limited attention to continuity planning for social service non-profit organizations or insufficient focus on client vulnerabilities in adaptation plans.

The same framework was also used to structure our co-creation sessions with community partners. By organizing discussions around these three categories, we created a common language that helped diverse organizations reflect on their own experiences, identify challenges, and propose practical solutions. For example, discussions focused on how service delivery could adapt to extreme heat events and explored business continuity measures in the face of power outages and funding instability. Anchoring the conversations in this framework ensured that partner input was systematically captured across organizational, operational, and community dimensions – while leaving space for participants to raise cross-cutting issues such as equity, collaboration, and policy advocacy.

Objectives of each workshop

- **Workshop 1:** Reflect on projected climate impacts and hazards — what risks are posed? Use a strengths-based approach to identify existing assets, programs and strategies that can be amplified and particular gaps needed to be addressed to support DTES climate resilience.
- **Workshop 2:** Co-develop key criteria for scenarios for action that emphasizes different risk priorities and different forms of collaborative responses among participating organizations. Identify gaps and needs to refine for contextual decision-making.
- **Workshop 3:** Discuss scenarios and collaborative solutions to advance organizational resilience to climate change in the DTES. Co-develop an implementation and knowledge mobilization plan. Outline how strategies will be funded and implemented and how knowledge will be shared, with whom, and through which channels. Identify potential barriers to knowledge use and strategies to overcome them.

Asset mapping

To ground the roadmap in a strength-based approach, participants identified the assets, practices, and networks that already exist within the DTES. This exercise surfaced the tangible and intangible resources that can be leveraged to build climate resilience from within the community. The assets mapping was done based on the three categories: organizations, residents and community.

Some of the key shared assets identified in the workshops were:

- **Physical infrastructure:** water stations, vehicles, personal protective equipment, and building access
- **Human resources:** peer workers, volunteers, staff, and community leaders
- **Existing policies and procedures:** wellness checks, budgeting models
- **Informal networks:** agile and responsive community supports

- **Advocacy networks:** relationships with local government and health authorities
- **Existing services:** resilient and adaptive services and programs
- **Shared values:** care, trust, and mutual support

Appendix C: Existing Strategies and Policy Actions

Table 1 below provides a snapshot of analyses, planning, and reporting activities that have taken place over the past five years.

Table 1 A review of relevant climate-related documents (2020-2025).

Resource	Scale	Key points/themes/topics
Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (CCAS 2024) <i>City of Vancouver</i>	City	• Puts forth policies to mainstream climate adaptation into city practices, collaborating with key partners to leverage funding and building community awareness on climate change hazards and responses. • Key action categories: robust infrastructure; resilient buildings; prepared and connected communities; healthy natural areas and green spaces; coastline preparedness; enabling actions
Vancouver Plan (2022) <i>City of Vancouver</i>	City	• This “unified” long-term land use plan has an emphasis on partnerships, communication, and outreach, social infrastructure in the context of climate change. • Key policy directions: area planning to reduce carbon footprint in denser urban settings; zero waste and sustainable consumption; natural climate solutions; public health considerations for new builds and retrofits
Resilient Vancouver Strategy (2019) <i>City of Vancouver</i>	City	• Prioritizes community preparedness, adaptability, and collaboration within the city. • Key policy directions: calling for creating partnership frameworks; assessing resilience and integrating emergency management and business continuity planning at municipal level; civic literacy, education and access for underrepresented groups
Preliminary Strategic Climate Risk Assessment for BC (2019) <i>Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy</i>	Provincial	• Risk assessments and consequence scenarios for flooding, extreme heat, wildfire, and storm surge based on high emission projections. • Consequences measured on factors such as health, social functioning, loss of natural resources, economic vitality, and costs to the government.

BEEP Guide: Business and Employer Emergency Preparedness (2017) <i>City of Vancouver</i>	City	This preparedness guide provides a template for a three-stage risk assessment that can be undertaken by businesses and organisations to reduce the impacts during an earthquake, heat or flooding emergency.
Spaces to Thrive (2021) <i>City of Vancouver</i>	City	- Spaces to Thrive is the City of Vancouver's first policy framework and financial strategy for social infrastructure. The policy focuses on equity, reconciliation, and resilience. Key policy directions: partnerships and capacity support; plan to meet priorities and goals; supporting existing social infrastructure; enabling new social infrastructure; innovate for efficiency; improve ecosystem health
Hazard Risk Vulnerability Assessment (2024) <i>City of Vancouver</i>	City	- The HRVA's Social Vulnerability Index employs four key indicators: social capital, financial agency, housing security, and personal autonomy, to provide a comprehensive summary of at-risk populations and neighbourhoods. Hazards covered: Earthquake; extreme heat; wildfire smoke; coastal flooding
Unhoused Under Pressure (2023) <i>University of British Columbia (UBC) Sustainability Hub</i>	Neighbourhood	- Identifies compounding factors (e.g. pre-existing health conditions, gender, substance use, disinvestment, exposure) that are contributing towards the social vulnerability of communities in the DTES. - Summarises the climate commitments in various plans and contextualises them to the realities of the DTES to identify the gaps.
DIY Passive Cooling Techniques for Residents of Vancouver Downtown Eastside <i>University of British Columbia (UBC) Sustainability Hub, Union Gospel Mission</i>	Neighbourhood	The document outlines some of the short term, low cost and proactive measures that can be taken by the residents. It also provides a template for the phased-out action plan for implementing and monitoring these DIY initiatives.
SRO Extreme Heat Preparedness and Response Initiative Final Report (2022)	Neighbourhood	Study on how extreme heat impacts residents of 13 SROs in the DTES, the preparedness measures they took and suggestions for future.

DTES SRO Collaborative		The study sheds light into specific impacts (for e.g.; lack of ventilation and tenants being forced to sleep outside due to indoor heat) of increased heat on people living in inadequate housing environments like SROs.
Community Health and Climate Change: Mapping Exposure, Sensitivity, and Adaptive Capacity to Four Health-Related Climate Hazards (2021) Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH)	City, Regional	The assessment by VCH provides risk and vulnerability maps for high temperatures, wildfire smoke, flooding, and ground level ozone. The assessment also uses similar indicators as the HRVA (2024), with two additional categories – social cohesion and institutional mechanisms like hazard specific plans and policies.
DRR Pathways Technical Report: Neighbourhood Social Vulnerability in the City of Vancouver (2022) Geological Survey of Canada	City	A neighbourhood social vulnerability assessment for Vancouver for earthquakes. The vulnerability in this case is assessed on three themes - reduced financial capacity, greater social service dependency and housing, and shelter challenges. The indicators developed were specific to the seismic retrofit program in Vancouver.
DRR Pathways: Social Infrastructure and Community resilience (2022) Geological Survey of Canada	Provincial, City	Part of the resilience pathways report, this article gives an overview of the role of social and community infrastructure disaster risk reduction, with examples from Vancouver.
Vantage Point Climate Change Adaptation for Non-Profit Partners Project Resources (2024) Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) Public Health Association of British Columbia(PHABC), Spur Communications	Regional	- Templates and planning guides for non-profits to prepare for climate extremes, adaptation and mitigation. Key Resources: CCAPP Low-Cost High Priority Actions, CCAPP Nonprofit Action Plan Guide, Non-Profit Action Plan Template, Questions For Your Board, Climate Change Resource Guide

Aboriginal Health, Healing, and Wellness in the DTES Study (2017)	Neighbourhood	The research provides an in-depth analysis of critical factors including organizational infrastructure, peer and volunteer support mechanisms, cultural support programs, employment conditions, availability of health and healing spaces, and the funding landscape of organisations operating in the DTES.
312 Main's Resilient Neighbourhood Project (2019) 312 Main and City of Vancouver's Resilient Neighbourhood Pilot Program	Neighbourhood	A peer-developed framework for understanding and responding to the unique assets and challenges that additional shocks and stresses will bring to the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood.

Appendix D: Policies from Existing Strategies and Plans Aligned with the Climate Resilience Roadmap*

Strategy/plan	Policy/Action/	Category/Theme
Resilient Vancouver Strategy (2019)	1.4.A: Evaluate resilience of food assets and meal providers and services in high-risk neighbourhoods.	Organizational
Resilient Vancouver Strategy (2019)	1.4.B: Create a Capacity Building Action Plan and Non-profit Partnering Framework.	Organizational
Resilient Vancouver Strategy (2019)	2.3.B: Connect emergency management and business continuity planning processes.	Organizational
Urban Forest Strategy (2025)	Action 23: Enhance the sustainability of the park stewardship programs by securing funding, pursuing grants, resourcing, and measuring success through volunteer engagement and goal setting.	Community
Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2024)	B.6: Complete an assessment of nonmarket housing buildings with the goal of identifying short- and long-term cooling options. Address air filtration where possible.	Community
Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2024)	E.17: Continue to work with partners and expand networks. Collaborate with Vancouver Coastal Health on a forum for regional adaptation practitioners and with the Resilient Vancouver Strategy team on a regional hub for practitioners.	Community
Vancouver Plan (2022)	8.3.6: Work with community groups to identify actions to decrease the risk of heat related illness. Actions could include identification of community or building cool refuges, volunteer heat registries, patrols and improving access to drinking water.	Community
Vancouver Plan (2022)	9.6.1: Partner with community organizations, non-profits, event organizers, and local businesses to co-manage public spaces in their neighbourhoods; and develop outreach, education, and communication tools, as part of an inclusive public space management approach.	Community

Resilient Vancouver Strategy (2019)	1.1.D: Identify and support participatory budgeting opportunities.	Community
Resilient Vancouver Strategy (2019)	1.2.B: Support a community-led DTES Neighbourhood Disaster Response and Recovery planning process.	Community
Vancouver Plan (2022)	10.4.1: Create employment (especially low-barrier jobs) through inclusive, social impact hiring, and local employment opportunities.	Community, Residents
Vancouver Plan (2022)	9.5.3: Explore the use of public spaces as response hubs, to support Vancouverites in times of earthquakes, flooding, or other natural disasters.	Community
Vancouver Plan (2022)	1.3.1: Work with non-profit providers, provincial and federal governments to provide a diverse range of housing options, emergency services, and supports to people experiencing and at risk of homelessness.	Residents
Vancouver Plan (2022)	3.3.3: Focus on people and communities disproportionately impacted by climate change and environmental degradation in area-based planning to understand cascading impacts and improve conditions.	Residents
Resilient Vancouver Strategy (2019)	2.1.B: Leverage resilience initiatives to strengthen civic literacy and access for underrepresented groups.	Residents
Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2024)	HA1.1: Continue working with health, housing, and community-based partners to increase support for seniors and people with disabilities as part of the Resilient Neighbourhoods Program during extreme heat and poor air quality events.	Residents

**This is a non-exhaustive list.*

Appendix E: Identified Gaps in Climate Action

Taken together, efforts to better understand and buffer the DTES neighbourhood from the impacts of climate change and to identify strategies to increase the adaptive capacities of its residents have helped to frame some high-level solutions.

However, few focus on increasing the capacities of the social service sector that support these community members, nor the adaptive capacities of the residents themselves. Building climate resilience in the DTES requires a multi-layered approach that strengthens organizations, services, and residents alike. Effective adaptation cannot rely on ad-hoc or piecemeal measures – it must be embedded into the structures that sustain community life. Below are key gaps identified in reviewing existing policies:

Limited funding accessibility: Few tangible measures exist to improve funding access for grassroots and non-profit organizations leading climate resilience efforts.

Neighbourhood-level neglect: Policies such as the City of Vancouver's *Climate Change Adaptation Strategy* focus on costs to local governments, with little attention to neighbourhood-scale needs or community-level continuity planning.

Overlooked role of social services: Business continuity is framed primarily from a government perspective, with little recognition of the social service organizations that expand services during emergencies.

Disempowered framing of residents: Vulnerable neighbourhoods and residents are often portrayed as passive or unable to co-create responses due to housing insecurity, social stigma, resource constraints, and gaps in emergency preparedness.

Impractical preparedness templates: Existing risk assessment and preparedness tools are too time-intensive and fail to account for the limited staffing and capacity of grassroots and non-profit groups.

Added burden on organizations: Restricted funding and inflexible service models make climate adaptation feel like an additional burden, despite organizations already expanding emergency responses year after year.

Unrecognized community strengths: Current approaches overlook the embedded capacities, strengths, and resilience of both service providers and residents themselves.

Our co-creation workshops surfaced gaps and challenges associated with the three areas of resilience: **organizations, community, and residents**

1. Organizations

Organizations are not-for-profit societies, legally incorporated under the Societies Act in the province of British Columbia, or charities registered with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) under the Income Tax Act, that provide social services to DTES residents.

The existing strategic planning and funding mechanisms for non-profits are often inadequate for continuing climate action. Inconsistent and unclear access to emergency funding causes difficulty in hiring or maintaining adequate staffing during

crises. These factors can be major deterrents in continuity of operations for non-profits.

2. Community

Community is defined as the network of neighbourhood systems that connect and support the non-profit sector and DTES residents together.

Inadequate community infrastructure often limits the delivery and access to effective emergency responses. The existing aging infrastructure has many structural vulnerabilities and maintenance issues that impact the provision of services. There is also insufficient proactive integration and coordination among service providers. From an environmental perspective, current emergency response uses materials and methods that are not eco-friendly, which also results in an increase in waste generated.

3. Residents

Residents are defined as low-income residents of the DTES who rely on housing and services from non-profits and charities.

Concurrent crises in the DTES, including short-term (e.g. COVID-19 and extreme heat) and ongoing (e.g. opioid epidemic, homelessness), intensifies vulnerabilities of the community residents. When climate hazards like heatwaves and smoke compound these crises, it further worsens the impacts on communities. Insufficient access to safe cooling and ventilation spaces leads to displacement risks and isolation. The limited adoption of technology within the community also impacts the communication and connectivity, further increasing their vulnerabilities.

Appendix F - Tools and Resources

Below are a list of resources and toolkits that are available online related to different aspects of climate action.

Resource	Description
Vantage Point Resources	This resource guide from Vantage Point provides a non-exhaustive list of grant funding streams and other relevant resources available to BC nonprofits.
Stretched Thin: 2025 State of BC's Non-Profit Sector	The report, based on a survey across 500 respondents, details the challenges faced by non-profits in BC.
Non-profit Template for Climate Adaptation and Emergency Preparedness	A template that can be customized specifically for DTES organizations, mapping current partnerships, and assets and ensuring the tools are practical for groups with limited staff and resources.
City of Vancouver Fact Sheets and Preparedness Guides	The City of Vancouver has fact sheets and preparedness guides in multiple languages available for the different hazards impacting the city. The City also has pre-recorded emergency preparedness workshops accessible through the Vancouver Public Library.
Resilient Neighbourhoods Toolkit	A toolkit designed for community organizations looking to support their neighbourhood.
2022 Community-Led Extreme Heat Resilience	The following report summarizes extreme heat planning and actions led by community-based organizations with support from the City, as part of the Resilient Neighbourhoods Program.
DTES Research Access Portal	Database from UBC that provides access to research and related materials relevant to the DTES.
Climate Equity Action & Resilience Project	The Climate Equity, Action, and Resilience (CLEAR) project is a partnership between UBC and DTES organizations to make research related to climate change more accessible, identify collaborative climate-related research projects, add capacity to local organizations and residents advocating for just climate policy and action.
A Climate Justice Charter for Vancouver	An important resource that provides a high level vision for the City and the wider community on the pathways to achieve climate justice. The Charter's framework was proposed by the Climate Equity Working Group (CEWG), which consisted of people who have lived experience with systemic inequities and work to address racial and climate justice. Additionally, interviews and further engagement was conducted to include diverse perspectives.
Extreme Heat and Wildfire Smoke Response Plan Organizational Assessment	A guide to help non-profit housing providers develop an Extreme Heat and Wildfire Smoke Response Plan for their organization.
Heat Check in Training Video by Vancouver Coastal Health	A short video that goes through practice scenarios to learn the basic steps of an heat check-in.
BC Housing	A suite of Extreme Heat and Wildfire Smoke Resources for social housing providers.
Fountains and Misting Stations	Map of drinking fountains, handwashing, and misting stations in Vancouver.
Cooling Stations	Map of cooling stations in Strathcona and DTES.

SRO Collaborative	Tenant based initiative in privately owned SROs providing cooling kits, culturally appropriate food, and drinks to tenants in SROs. Also provides training to tenants to be first responders and volunteers.
Save Your Skin Foundation	Sunscreen dispensers and sunscreen supply programs.
DTES Neighbourhood House [cooling space, cooling kits, information, shading measures and misters]	Engaged in heat outreach among 650 people by partnering with 10 community organisations and used their facility to provide a cooling space by extending opening hours. Distributed water along with translated heat information along Hastings Street, especially in newer encampments and Crab Park encampment and created handouts for residents with cooling tips. Set up shade tarps and misters around Hastings Urban Farm.
SFU Breathe Project	A community health initiative that empowers people to build low-cost air cleaners and access clean air resources to protect against wildfire smoke, heat, and airborne threats.
UBC SALA pop-up water fountains	Students designed pop-up water fountains and misters for the 2022 Powell Street Festival under the guidance of Associate Professor Mari Fujita, celebrating Japanese Canadian culture and addressing water inequity in Vancouver's DTES. The project, "Fuki no Mizu," highlights water's significance as a life resource and political tool, inspired by the fuki plant's symbolism of hope and healing.
DIY Passive Cooling Techniques for Residents of Vancouver Downtown Eastside	Technical compilation of three passive cooling techniques that can be implemented in smaller living spaces like SROs for immediate cooling.
Women Transforming Cities Mega Database	This open source database provides a list of funding and grant streams at city and provincial level that can be accessed by non-profits in times of heat emergencies.
Realising Resilient Buildings in BC	This toolkit developed by BC housing for local governments provides recommendations for designing buildings resilient to different hazards in BC.
BCNPHA Services and Programs	This website provides a comprehensive list of the services and programs from BCNPHA on improving the buildings, including information on relevant rebates on building service retrofits.

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