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Town of Aurora

## Memorandum

Planning and Development Services

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**Re:** Draft Home Energy Retrofit Program Design Study

**To:** Environmental Advisory Committee

**From:** Natalie Kehle, Program Manager – Energy and Environment

**Date:** February 23, 2026

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### Recommendation

1. That the memorandum regarding Draft Home Energy Retrofit Program Design Study be received; and
2. That the Environmental Advisory Committee comments regarding the Home Energy Retrofit Program Design Study be received and referred to staff for consideration and further action as appropriate.

### Background

#### Climate Change in Aurora

The Town is committed to lowering carbon emissions and mitigating climate risk to the community as part of its 2019 declaration of a climate emergency.

Carbon emissions from Aurora homes are the largest contributor to the Town's total carbon footprint, at 37 per cent. A home energy retrofit program was identified as an essential initiative under the Town's Community Energy Plan (CEP) in reducing community emissions. The CEP found that Aurora homes consumed more energy per square feet than other municipalities in York Region, and above provincial and national averages.

Currently, fewer than 1 per cent of homes undergo energy retrofits each year in Aurora, falling short of the 4 per cent needed to achieve Council-approved climate targets. Homeowners cite lack of knowledge and upfront costs as the main barriers.

The development of an Aurora home energy retrofit program is partially being funded by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Community Efficiency Financing (CEF) program. Program reporting deadlines to FCM are in March 2026.

## Analysis

The Home Energy Retrofit Program Feasibility Study (Feasibility Study) was developed and approved by Council in June 2025. The Feasibility Study looked at the opportunities and risks of a home energy retrofit program.

Several financing models were reviewed and assessed for suitability. Three loan models were found to be the most applicable to the Town for further consideration in a detailed design study. Regardless of the loan model, it was found that regional collaboration would be the most cost effective.

By approving the Feasibility Study, Council directed staff to continue into the detailed program design of a home energy retrofit program for Aurora.

Developing a home energy retrofit program for Aurora has centered on working collaboratively with municipal partners and filling in any existing market gaps. Several market changes have occurred since the approval of the Feasibility Study in mid-2025:

- The Federal Government of Canada's Greener Homes Loan Program has ended. The program provided zero-interest loans to homeowners for energy retrofits. A replacement program may be launched in the future.
- FCM's CEF program is no longer accepting capital loan program applications to support home energy retrofit loan programs. Future funding programs may open.
- Discussions are occurring with municipal partners, advocating for a regional home energy retrofit financing program.
- The York Region Greener Homes Program is under development, with collaboration from lower tier municipalities, including the Town of Aurora, and utility partners. The program is expected to launch in the first quarter of 2026, and proposed to offer the following:
  - o An energy coaching service to support residents in their retrofits journey.
  - o Virtual Home Energy Assessment Tool (vHEAT): which generates virtual home energy labels for low-rise homes in York Region (approximately 256,000 homes). The tool provides valuable insights into each homes existing energy performance and opportunities for retrofits.

- York Region Greener Homes web portal: a secure webservice for residents to easily manage the retrofit journey, accessing important home information, utility incentives and managing energy coach appointments.

The Town's objective for the second phase of this project is a multi-phased approach with an emphasis on education, municipal partner collaboration and monitoring in the short-term planning horizon. The program aims to fill gaps of existing programs and meet the needs of Aurora residents. The proposed program is a collaboration with our regional partners and community and implemented in a phased approach:

#### **Short term (1-3 years)**

- **Energy Retrofit Coaching:** support the York Region Greener Homes Program development, launch and promotion.
- **Outreach and Education:** community engagement activities on energy efficiency in residential buildings.
- **Performance Monitoring:** collect data on the program implementation like uptake, types of retrofits being performed, customer feedback, etc.
- **Advocacy and Collaboration:** continue dialogue, exploration, and advocacy with municipal partners on additional program opportunities and improvements.

#### **Medium term (3-5 years):**

**Aurora retrofit grant program for households with low income:** staff to develop a home energy retrofit grant program for income-qualifying Aurora homeowners. Council approval for a retrofit grant program will be sought in the medium term for this program.

#### **Long term (5-10 years):**

- **Financing Programs:** continue to engage with York Region and regional partners regarding the consideration of a regional cost-effective, low-risk financing program.
- **Emissions bylaws for existing buildings:** explore the option of a regional regulatory tool for existing buildings with a building performance standard.

## **Attachments**

1. Draft Aurora Home Energy Retrofit Design Study Presentation