



City of Kingston
Report to Environment, Infrastructure & Transportation Policies Committee
Report Number EITP-26-001

To: Chair and Members of the Environment, Infrastructure & Transportation Policies Committee

From: Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Growth & Development Services

Resource Staff: Julie Salter-Keane, Manager, Climate Leadership

Date of Meeting: December 9, 2025

Subject: Better Homes Kingston Relaunch

Council Strategic Plan Alignment:

Theme: 2. Lead Environmental Stewardship and Climate Action

Goal: 2.2 Support climate action and sustainability for residents, businesses and partners.

Executive Summary:

Council's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan [2.2.3 A](#) includes a commitment to evaluate and report on the potential to extend the Better Homes Kingston (BHK) program beyond the initial four years. Report Number EITP-24-020 outlined preliminary information and plans to extend the program following the completion of the pilot, which has now concluded. This report provides recommendations required to enable the Better Homes Kingston program to relaunch in 2026.

The Better Homes Kingston (BHK) pilot program was highly successful, completing 368 projects from April 2022 to April 2025, deploying more than \$10.86 million in funding for home energy retrofits. While less projects in total were completed than the original milestone of 500, the program met its objectives by achieving significant environmental impacts, as participating homes realized an average 66% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions - more than triple the minimum emissions performance threshold of 20% - equating to an annual reduction of 1,460 tonnes. This high level of participation and average impact was primarily driven by the combination of a GHG-based tiered incentive structure and the availability of 0% interest property assessed clean energy (PACE) financing. Over \$7 million in financing was deployed, which was crucial as 36% of participants indicated they would not have completed any measures without financing. Furthermore, the Energy Coach service was widely praised for

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simplifying the complex process and bridging homeowner knowledge gaps. Economically, the pilot stimulated the local green economy, generating over 130 local jobs by engaging 161 local contractors, while achieving cost-effective community GHG reductions at \$95 per ton and providing homeowners with average annual savings exceeding \$766.

As presented in report 25-192, the 2024 Community Greenhouse Emission Inventory identifies Residential emissions as comprising 14.7% total community emissions, which is a significant share. These emissions are primarily due to the use of natural gas, as well as the growing emissions factors (EF) of the grid, which has more than doubled since 2018.

The City of Kingston and Utilities Kingston propose a new partnership to help deliver electricity and natural gas demand side management (DSM) incentives, available to Utilities Kingston customers, who are currently ineligible for home energy incentives available to the remainder of Kingston households, through the provincially mandated [Home Renovation Savings Program](#), offered by Enbridge Gas and Save on Energy. This report is recommending a budget amendment for the proposed program to be funded from contributions to the Environment Reserve Fund. Utilities Kingston will bring a report to Council in January 2026 outlining the proposed partnership, and how funding will be utilized as incentives for DSM through Better Homes Kingston. A Service-Level Agreement will be created with the City and Utilities Kingston to provide financial incentives, program administration support, and co-marketing for the program offerings. This proposed partnership with the City to support the *Climate Leadership Plan (2021)* goal of a 30% reduction of Community GHG emissions by 2030, and collectively further the goals of Utilities Kingston's *Climate Action Leadership Plan, Pillar 2 - Supporting Climate Action: Empowering customers through education, incentives, and programs that encourage sustainable choices*.

With the introduction of cost of borrowing associated with the loan financing that will be offered through the continuation of the program, it is unclear what the uptake will be. It is anticipated that demand from participants will be reduced. However, with available incentives offered in partnership with Utilities Kingston, the ongoing customer support offered by the Energy Coach through the established Service Level Agreement with Sustainable Kingston, it is anticipated that the program will continue to have sustained interest from eligible homeowners, with a particular focus on projects with significant cost savings potential for households requiring financing to enable home energy upgrades.

To continue progress towards the 20-year goal to retrofit 25 – 50% of Kingston's pre-1991 construction one-family homes by 2040 achieving an average carbon reduction impact of 30% per home, it is recommended that the program resume in early 2026 to continue the momentum of the successful pilot.

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Recommendation:

That the Environment, Infrastructure & Transportation Policies Committee recommend to Council:

That Council approve a service level agreement between the City of Kingston and Sustainable Kingston that identifies the services to be provided by Sustainable Kingston and the associated funding issued by the City of Kingston for those services related the Better Homes Kingston program; and

That Council approve the appropriate agreements with Utilities Kingston that identifies the services to be provided in administering and promoting the Better Homes Kingston program; and

That the Manager, Climate Leadership be delegated the authority to execute Property Owner Agreements required to administer the Better Homes Kingston program, with said authority to be added to By-Law Number 2025-157, Delegation of Authority By-Law, as part of future amendments; and

That Council direct staff to report back to the Environment, Infrastructure & Transportation Policies Committee in Q1 2026 with amendments to By-Law Number 2021-23, A By-Law to Authorize the Undertaking of Energy Efficiency and Water Conservation Works on Private Residential Property as Local Improvements under the Better Homes Kingston Energy Retrofit Program; and

That Council authorize the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer to close the project budget of \$18,475,000 for the initial energy retrofit project and return funds to the original approved funding source, as outlined in Report Number EITP 26-001, after consideration for any final adjustments from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities; and

That Council approve a capital budget amendment of \$1,250,000 for the next phase of the Better Homes Kingston project to be funded through the use of municipal cashflow until recovered through loan repayments; and

That Council approve a capital budget amendment of \$225,000 for program rebates and administration of the Better Home Kingston project to be funded from the Municipal Capital Reserve Fund; and

That Council approve a capital budget amendment of \$260,800 for the Better Homes Kingston (Utilities Kingston incentive stream) to be funded from the Environment Reserve Fund.

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Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

**Paige Agnew, Commissioner,
Growth & Development Services**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**Lanie Hurdle, Chief
Administrative Officer**

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Jennifer Campbell, Commissioner, Community Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Neil Carbone, Commissioner, Corporate & Emergency Services	Not required
David Fell, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jenna Morley, City Solicitor	Not required
Ian Semple, Commissioner, Transportation & Infrastructure Services	Not required

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Options/Discussion:

Pilot Completion and Program Continuation

The Better Homes Kingston (BHK) pilot program proved highly successful, completing 368 retrofit projects between April 2022 and April 2025 and deploying over \$10.86 million in funding. The program met its environmental objectives, with participating homes achieving an average 66% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions - more than triple the minimum performance threshold of 20%. This strong impact and high participation were largely driven by a tiered incentive structure based on GHG reductions, alongside the availability of 0% interest property-assessed clean energy (PACE) financing. More than \$7 million in PACE financing was issued, and notably, 36% of participants reported they would not have undertaken any upgrades without this support. The Energy Coach service also played a key role, earning praise for simplifying the retrofit process and helping homeowners navigate technical decisions. The pilot boosted the local green economy by generating over 130 jobs and engaging 161 local contractors. It also delivered cost-effective community GHG reductions at \$95 per tonne and provided homeowners with average annual energy savings exceeding \$766.

As required by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), Community Efficiency Financing (CEF), a third-party program impact report and program evaluation was completed mid-2025 (Exhibit A). The report verified program environmental impacts, financial metrics, key performance indicators, and provided specific recommendations for future program development.

Council recently approved \$5.75M for the FCM 20-year term debenture through report 25-003 on October 21, 2025. FCM’s final project reconciliation and related disbursements, including the debenture issuance, will occur on December 12, 2025. A recommendation to delegate authority to the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer to close the initial phase of this project is included in this report, subject to final disbursement adjustments to be made by the FCM, including additional FCM funds received to support future loan risk mitigation. Below is a summary of the funding utilized and estimated return of funds to the original funding source prior to any final FCM adjustments:

Funding Source	Estimated Actual	Budget	Estimated Budget Return
FCM debenture	\$5,749,188	\$10,000,000	\$4,250,812
FCM grant	\$3,023,656	\$5,000,000	\$1,976,344
City of Kingston Homeowner Loan portion	\$1,257,711	\$2,500,000	\$1,242,289
Municipal Capital	\$387,914	975,000	\$587,086

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Reserve Fund			
Total	\$10,418,469	\$18,475,000	\$8,056,531

The program paused intake of new applicants in Q4 of 2024, ensuring that all eligible projects could be completed prior to the pilot implementation period ending on April 30th, 2025. Since intake was halted, approximately 300 Kingston homeowners have joined the program waitlist, signaling strong, sustained demand for ongoing financing and support to complete home energy upgrades across the community.

The extension of Better Homes Kingston is necessary to carry momentum toward the programs 20-year goal: to retrofit 25 – 50% of Kingston’s pre-1991 construction one-family homes by 2040 achieving an average carbon reduction impact of 30% per home.

Public Engagement & Program Evaluation

To capture program engagement, and feedback on proposed changes, a survey and series of focus groups were conducted during the Better Homes Kingston pilot wrap-up period. A report is available on the City’s Get Involved platform providing an overview of survey results and focus group reporting for [Better Homes Kingston Relaunch](#).

Who we heard from:

- **296 participants** completed the Better Homes Kingston surveys (275 homeowners, 21 contractors)
- **31 participants** in focus groups
- **1,819 participants** visited the project page to learn more about the Better Homes Kingston engagement and planned relaunch
- **24 participants** engaged with the City for the first time on Get Involved Kingston

Highlights included strong support for continuing the program, with particular focus on the need for financing and reducing upfront cost barriers, customer support from the Energy Coach, and assistance in access to skilled contractors who understand the program. A small administrative fee was supported when bundled into financing to avoid upfront cost barriers, as well as a simplified and expedited process depending on the scope of a project.

Utilities Kingston Energy Efficiency Upgrade Incentive Program Stream

Enbridge Gas currently provides prescriptive incentives for certain home energy retrofits through the [Home Renovation Savings](#) Program through a delivery partnership with the Electricity System Operator (IESO [About us | Save on Energy](#)). Currently, these incentives are offered only to Enbridge Gas residential customers with active accounts that primarily heat their home

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with a natural gas furnace and therefore are not available to Utilities Kingston natural gas customers, as well as several other local distribution companies in Ontario.

The Ministry of Energy, Conservation and Parks has directed the local distribution companies (LDCs) to examine offerings with matched incentives to their customers, who are currently excluded from province wide offerings, while providing residents with an easily accessible platform to apply for these incentives.

As Better Homes Kingston has fully developed intake process, a web-platform for customer relations and program administration, and infrastructure to support the integration of this offering, and as the timeline for relaunch aligns for early 2026, a partnership is proposed between the City of Kingston and Utilities Kingston. The new program stream will offer matched incentives to Utilities Kingston customers, while also offering supplemental value of program financing and support from Sustainable Kingston's Energy Coaching services, to enable quick and effective implementation. This will level the playing field for all residents of Kingston and provide additional support to all residents interested in improving their homes energy efficiency.

This new program stream will allow for a more streamlined, simplified process, not requiring home energy assessments for certain projects, reducing cost, complexity, and timelines, while providing essential support to ensure homeowners are educated and prepared to complete appropriate upgrades for their individual homes. Utilities Kingston will bring a report to Council in January 2026 outlining the proposed partnership, with a recommendation included in this report to utilize funding from the Environment Reserve Fund as incentives for Utilities Kingston natural gas customers undertaking qualifying energy efficiency upgrades through Better Homes Kingston, allowing all residents of the City of Kingston equal access to incentives offered under SaveONEnergy's Home Renovation Savings Program. A Service-Level Agreement will be created with the City and Utilities Kingston to provide financial incentives, program administration support, and co-marketing for the program offerings.

Program Scope for 2026

The recommended 2026 program budget of \$1.475M provides capacity to support the completion of approximately 65 projects through available financing, based on average loan values observed during the pilot. As performance incentives will not be offered by the City due to budget constraints, project scopes and total costs are anticipated to be lower than those undertaken during the pilot phase. This adjustment may enable a greater number of projects to be completed within the allocated funding, thereby maximizing participation and ensuring efficient use of limited resources.

These projects may also be eligible for incentives through Better Homes Kingston (UK incentive stream), the Home Renovation Savings Program (Enbridge Gas customers who heat their home with natural gas), or the Home Renovations Savings Program for customers who heat their homes with electricity or alternative fuel sources (propane, wood, etc.) offered by the

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Independent Electricity System Operator. Staff plan to report back to Council when all funding for 2026 has been allocated, with plans for future program scale-up. To meet the programs 20-year goal - retrofit 25 – 50% of Kingston’s pre-1991 construction one-family homes by 2040 achieving an average carbon reduction impact of 30% per home - between 200-400 projects need to be completed each year. Staff will review the opportunity to allocate further funding in 2027 to finance additional loans in support of the target, however, with a lack of incentives for deep energy retrofits, the program is less likely to meet its long-term goal, impacting the overall community emissions reduction targets in the Climate Leadership Plan (2021).

As the average 66% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions was more than double the highest-level performance threshold for eligible incentives in the pilot (\$5000 for 30%+ GHG emissions reduction), modelling was conducted based on actual pilot data to raise the performance threshold levels to strategically incentivise higher impact projects. The proposed incentive levels would be:

- **Tier 1:**
 - ≥80% GHG reduction. About 30% of projects qualify.
- **Tier 2:**
 - 65%–79% GHG reduction. About 44% of projects would qualify.
- **Tier 3:**
 - 50%–64% GHG reduction. About 15% of projects would qualify.
- **No Incentive:**
 - <50% GHG reduction. This restricts rewards to projects making the largest impacts while still offering entry at significant reduction levels.

It is proposed that \$1.25M available capital is dedicated to financing loans in 2026, to enable support for those participants who require this financing to complete necessary home energy upgrades. This will likely lead to a reduction in the scope of work and relative impact of projects in the program.

Programmatic Changes

Most notably, the program will introduce a cost of borrowing associated with the financing offered to participating homeowners. While the available interest rate is not yet known, as it will depend on Bank of Canada rates when loans are issued in 2026, the current rate forecast has been trending downwards, with the overnight rate offered by the Bank of Canada currently sitting at 2.25% as of October 29th, 2025, with the next rate decision scheduled for December 10th, 2025. While there could be moderate variance from the current rate by mid 2026, the current rate and 2025 trend towards a relatively low cost of borrowing poses a high value-proposition for prospective applicants.

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Furthermore, earlier in Q3 of 2025, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) Canada Greener Homes Loan initiative was ended, which previously provided up to \$40,000.00 in 0% interest loans to support home energy upgrades. Due to this competitive financing stream ending, and the current rate forecast, sustained demand for the core financing offering of Better Homes Kingston is anticipated.

To create long-term sustainability for the program, those accessing financing will be subject to an administrative fee of \$450.00 for program administration costs. These fees will be subsidized for equity deserving applicants, following the existing criteria through the Municipal Fee Assistance Program (MFAP). In aligning with MFAP, eligible Better Homes Kingston participants will gain access to an enhanced equity stream of the program, as well as expanding access and awareness to the many additional benefits of MFAP, of which less than half of eligible households are currently accessing. As MFAP income thresholds are updated annually, the Better Homes Kingston program will follow this schedule to ensure accessibility is maximized for low-moderate income homeowners.

It is estimated that up to 15-20% of participants could qualify for the equity stream based on demographic information and participant survey completion from the program pilot, with the total cost to subsidize the participation of low-moderate income homeowners in the program coming to approximately \$30,000.00. This cost includes the rebate for the required home energy assessments, access to program financing, and comprehensive support from the Energy Coach at no cost to the applicant. As the cost of a home energy assessment is a clear barrier to entry for the program, and as the standard \$600.00 offered through the HRSP across Ontario has not been increased in more than 5 years, low-income households would be eligible for a rebate of \$800.00, which comes closer to the true cost of these assessments.

Finally, to overcome the barriers associated with cash flowing major capital projects associated with home energy retrofits, 75% of the loan amount would be disbursed upfront to eligible homeowners, reducing the need for bridge financing from other sources, which typically carries interest. As is currently required, paid invoices would need to be received clearly showing initial disbursement totals have been spent on approved scope of work before additional upfront deposits are made.

Other low-income focused home repair programs such as the Kingston Frontenac Renovates Program pays contractors directly, eliminating the need for low-income participants to cashflow essential upgrades. This model of contractor direct payment is widely used across Canada in other Municipal PACE programs, including numerous programs in Nova Scotia, British Columbia, and Alberta. This model should be considered for long-term financial accessibility and program streamlining.

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Strategic Marketing

In late 2025 and into 2026, Ontario's electricity system is experiencing increases in both carbon intensity and commodity prices due to shifts in generation mix and cost pressures within the supply system. Refurbishments at major nuclear facilities and reduced import availability have led to greater reliance on natural gas generation, resulting in a measurable rise in grid emissions intensity. Concurrently, the Ontario Energy Board has approved rate increases reflecting higher underlying supply costs, with average commodity prices up roughly 29 percent year-over-year, driven by growing nuclear capital expenditures and higher-cost gas-fired generation used for peak production. While government rebates and pricing programs will partially offset consumer impacts, the province faces a period of elevated electricity costs and emissions until new or refurbished low-carbon capacity restores balance to the grid. Due to these increases in emissions intensity and cost of electricity in Ontario, it remains critical to target households with already high energy cost burden, homes heating with fuel oil and propane, and to focus on energy efficiency.

Strategic marketing will be completed to identify and attract homeowners who have a high home energy cost burden, defined as those households that spend 6% or more of their after-tax income to pay for their home energy consumption (in some cases high home energy cost burden can surpass 10-15% of after-tax income). However, many Kingston residents who experience high energy cost burden do not own their homes and are therefore limited by the improvements they can make. Better Homes Kingston will remain open to rental properties, provided they meet the determined eligibility criteria for the program.

Financial Offerings

Financial constraints and the completion of BHK pilot program, Better Homes Kingston will no longer be able to offer tiered performance-based incentives based on actual GHG emissions and or energy reductions. While this will likely impact the scope of individual projects, reducing the program to a core offering of competitive interest financing and integrated customer support may tailor the program more towards those who need support the most.

Other program changes will be made as follows:

- **Loan Limit Increase:** Increase maximum loan limit to \$50,000.00 or 15% of the property value assessment (up from the pilot's \$40,000 maximum).
 - 11% of participants indicated the maximum amount for financing was not enough to cover their entire project.
- **Disbursement Increase:** Increase initial loan disbursements to general participants from 30% to 50% upfront to reduce the need for homeowners to seek bridge financing.
 - Consider roll-out of contractor direct payment model, like established Kingston Frontenac Renovates program.
 - Low-income households would receive 75% of the loan amount disbursed upfront to overcome cash-flow barriers and reduce the need for bridge financing.

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- **Rebate for Assessments:** when required, a \$600.00 rebate towards the cost of the home energy assessments will be offered. A rebate of \$800 will be offered to qualifying low-income households.
- **Internal Partnerships:** Align with MFAP for equity-deserving participants and continue collaboration with Housing and Social Services staff through the Kingston Frontenac Renovates Program for eligible households.

Residential Resilience Financing

In anticipation of a prospective funding stream from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, focused on residential resilience financing (to be referred to as RRF), a program design study has been initiated to prepare and position the City to apply by mid 2026, when the application period is anticipated to open. Residential resilience financing is identified as a key action in Kingston's Climate Adaptation Plan (2025), Strategy 17: Encourage property owners and developers to improve the resilience of residential and commercial buildings through retrofits and/or design and material upgrades. Through offering funding and support to undertake residential resilience retrofits, the City will help residents proactively address the risks of extreme weather, reducing financial burdens on homeowners, improving public health and safety, and supporting long-term affordability and sustainability of housing stock. Funding resilience retrofits help homeowners safeguard their properties from extreme heat and cold, flooding, fire, and windstorms, minimizing damage and disruption from these climate impacts. These types of retrofits are commonly referred to as weather-ready upgrades. This support will proactively prepare communities, lowering the chance of costly losses and emergency interventions resulting from climate impacts.

As the Better Homes Kingston program continuity is planned, rollout of a RRF stream can augment current offerings, and ensure that energy efficiency and resilience are considered holistically, with critical support for homeowners in navigating program offerings, maximizing impact of their investments, and ensuring investment by the City target homes facing the greatest climatic risks. More information will be presented to Council in 2026 on the program design studies development, and funding application when available.

Climate Risk Considerations

To date, the Better Homes Kingston program will continue to reduce GHG emissions at the Community level, and with the potential for a residential resilience focused stream, may offer financing to support, precipitation, and extreme temperature focused upgrades for Kingston homes.

Existing Policy/By-Law

None

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Financial Considerations

This report recommends the closure of the current BHK program budget of \$18,475,000. Anticipated FCM disbursements will include additional funds to support future loan risk mitigation, to be incorporated into the return of funds upon project closure. A budget amendment of \$1.25M is recommended, funded through the use of municipal cashflow until recovered from homeowner loan repayments, and \$225K for the rebates and administration to support the BHK 2026 program with an estimated 65 projects to be completed. The Energy Efficiency Upgrade Incentive partnership between Utilities Kingston and the city is recommending a budget amendment of approximately \$260K with funding from the Environment Reserve Fund, which receives annual contributions from the appliance rental business.

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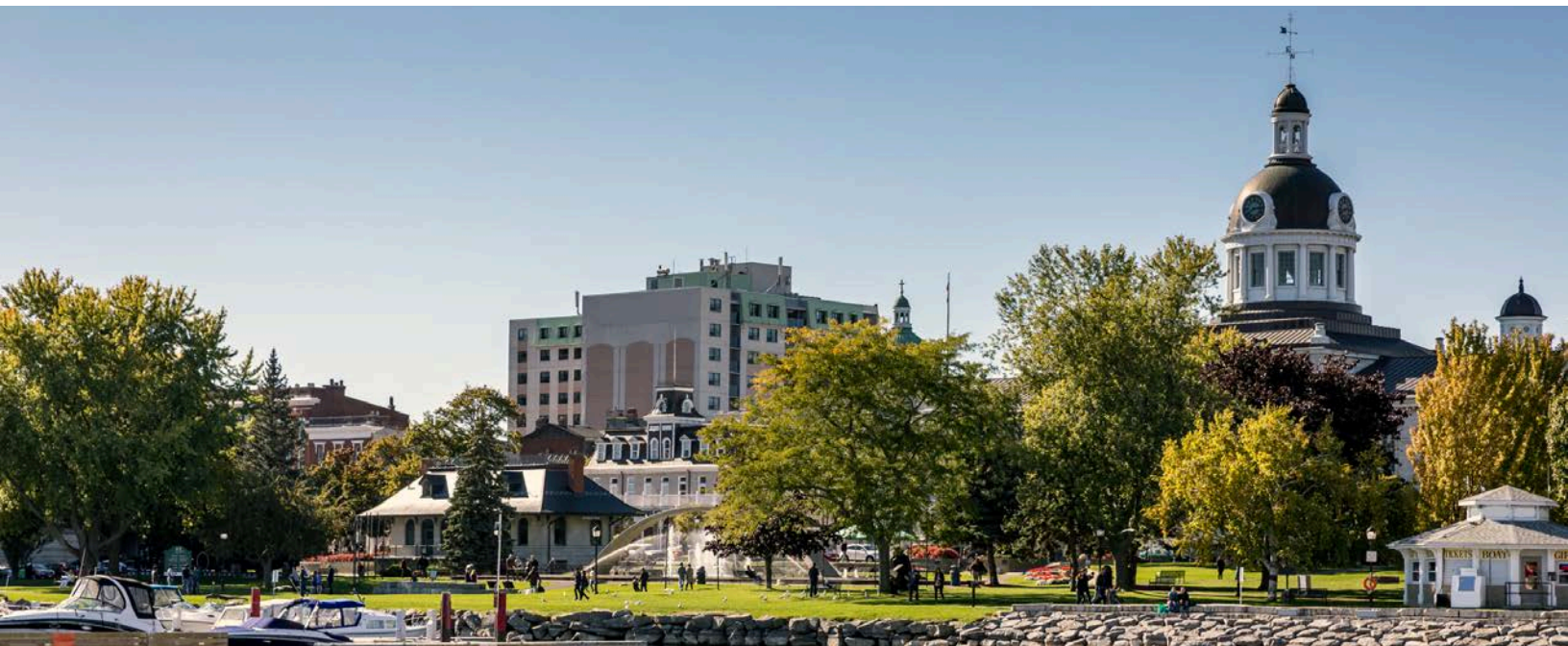
Corey Martin, Manager, Asset Management & Climate Action, Engineering, Utilities Kingston

Exhibits Attached:

Exhibit A Program Impact Report



**BETTER HOMES
KINGSTON PROGRAM
IMPACT REPORT**



Prepared for: **City of Kingston**
Prepared by: **SwitchPACE CIC**

September 2025

FCM File Reference: GMF17788

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Impact Report represents the culmination of efforts invested by many people and organizations, some of which are listed below, that made the Better Homes Kingston Program possible;

City of Kingston: Mayor Paterson and Kingston City Council, Soren Christianson, Julie Salter-Keane, Christine Patton, Jeff Walker and other City staff

Sustainable Kingston: Wes Kerr, Jessica Kocur

FCM: Project Officers

Special Thanks: Cedric Pepelea (CP Consulting)

And most importantly...all the residents of the City of Kingston whom undertook energy efficiency retrofits to reduce their carbon emissions. Thank you.



Better Homes
Kingston



DISCLAIMER

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This report was prepared by SwitchPACE Community Interest Corporation, with assistance from the City of Kingston.



**Better Homes
Kingston**

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1.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Since its launch on April 11, 2022, the Better Homes Kingston program has enabled over **368 deep energy retrofits** totaling more than \$10.86 million.

The program met the pilot phase objectives by using a GHG reduction incentive, combined with a coaching service with program partner Sustainable Kingston. This prompted homeowners to undertake deep energy retrofits. There were 1,218 different project types implemented in the 368 homes. These projects included combinations of heat pumps, insulation, doors and windows, solar, air sealing, and other efficiency measures.

On average, homeowners invested over \$29,000 in energy efficiency improvements, resulting in a **66% GHG reduction per home**, which was three times the program's minimum performance threshold goal.

The program also introduced a municipal financing component aimed at reducing upfront cost barriers for homeowners. Over **\$7.0 million in Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing** was applied, supporting the development of a sustainable municipal financing model based on PACE - a variant of Local Improvement Charge (LIC) financing. According to program data, 36% of participants would not have installed any measures without the financing option, while others undertook broader retrofits as a result of the financing.

The Better Homes Kingston Program observed broad participation throughout the community. More than **161 local contractors** carried out upgrades, generating over 130 jobs within the local green economy. Additional economic impacts included an average annual savings exceeding \$766 per home and a **4.9% Return On Investment**. The positive ROI occurred despite changes in the carbon price market that made natural gas less expensive, which could reduce heat pump adoption; however, over 85% of homeowners chose to install heat pumps, thereby decreasing reliance on oil and natural gas.

The program employed a community-based approach to GHG reduction. With an average cost of **\$95 per ton** to the City for GHG reductions, the initiative demonstrated cost-effectiveness, job creation, and utility bill savings for participating homeowners.

1.2 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



1218
COMPLETED JOBS



\$10.86M
COMPLETED JOBS VALUE



368
HOMES RETROFITTED



368
PRE AND POST HOME ENERGY ASSESSMENTS COMPLETED



\$7.01M
PACE FINANCED JOBS



\$1.78M
INCENTIVES FROM CITY



\$20,669
AVERAGE LOAN AMOUNT



1,460
ANNUAL GHGS REDUCED (TONNES)



23,040
ANNUAL ENERGY SAVINGS (GJ)



66%
AVERAGE GHG REDUCTION PER HOME WHICH WAS TRIPLE THE MINIMUM EMISSIONS POLICY THRESHOLD

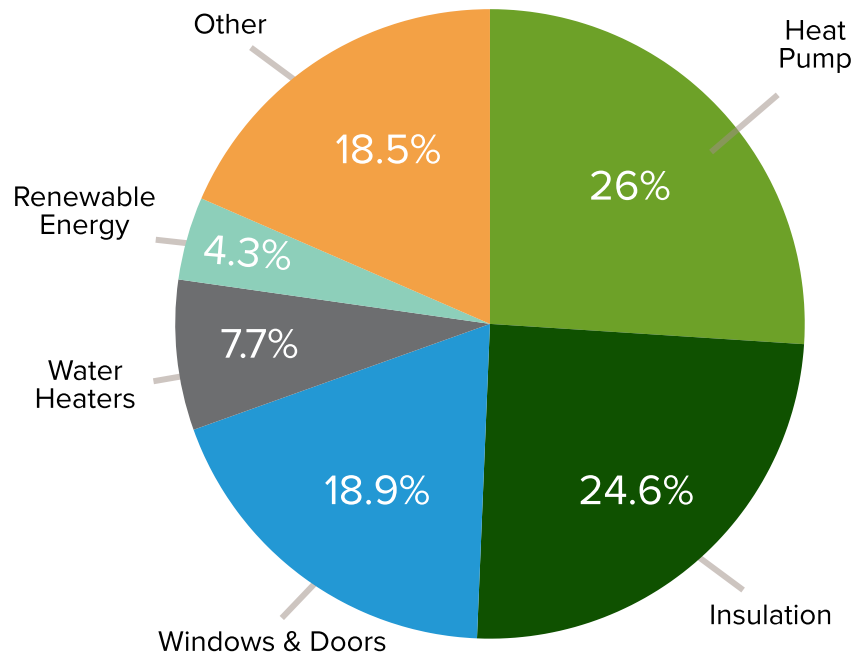


0
INSTANCES OF BAD DEBT



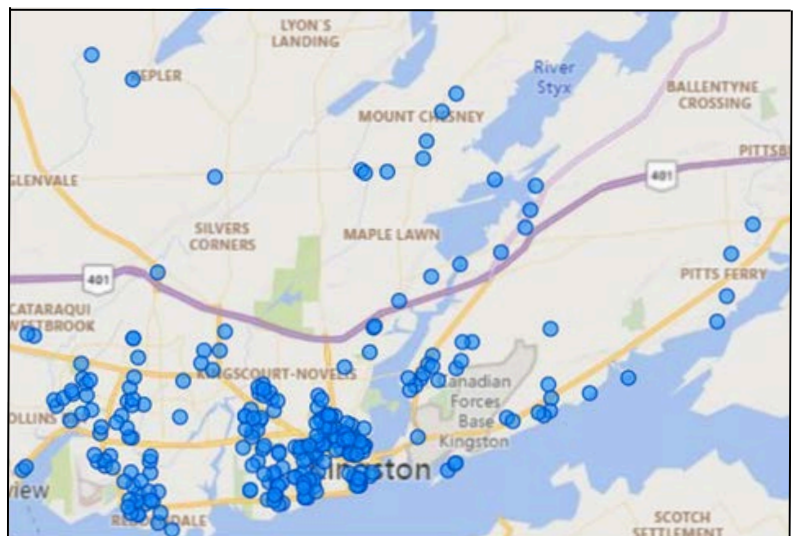
\$95/ton
COST TO CITY TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY BASED REDUCTIONS

ENERGY EFFICIENCY JOBS COMPLETED



Quote From Participant

"I was just talking about this coaching program with a colleague about 20 mins ago, we agreed it was the reason we made it through. Hope it's going well at your end, still!"



The Better Homes Kingston Program saw wide uptake and interest across the municipality

1.2 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

ALLOCATION OF \$10.86M PROJECT BUNDLES

ECONOMIC IMPACTS



\$766

AVERAGE ANNUAL SAVINGS



161

LOCAL CONTRACTORS COMPLETING JOBS



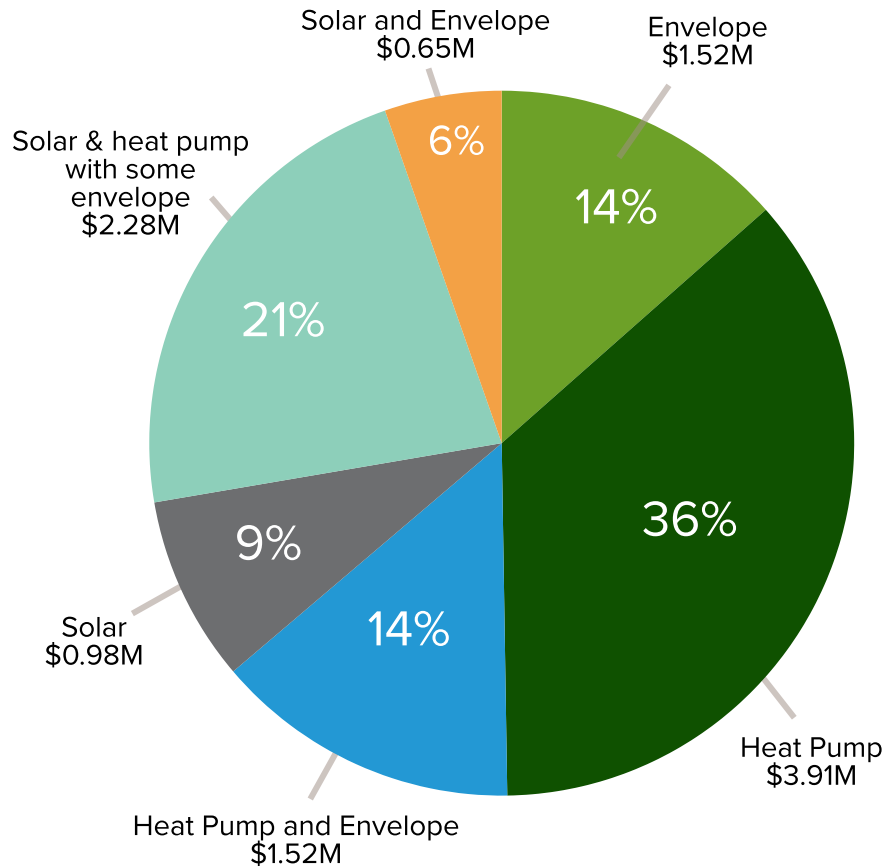
130

LOCAL JOBS CREATED



4.9%

AVERAGE RETURN ON INVESTMENT



DEEP ENERGY RETROFITS WERE THE NORM

The City of Kingston’s Better Homes Program provided an extra incentive for homeowners to conduct deep energy retrofits. 42% of homeowners did multiple jobs within a single retrofit project. This was an indicator of a successful policy innovation to encourage deep energy retrofits, as well as switching off fossil fuel use from gas and oil via heat pump conversions.

59% of participants would have completed fewer or less costly upgrades without the program’s financing options.

ECONOMIC IMPACT - HOMEOWNERS

Homeowners spent on average \$29,510 on their retrofit, this includes DIY projects as well as homeowners who choose to self finance. The homeowners were coached to access not only the Better Homes Kingston incentive, but also any federal or provincial rebates that were stackable. The City provided over \$1.78M in incentives and helped homeowners access \$1.12M in Federal Canada Greener Homes incentives. Assuming a 2.5% escalation in energy costs per year homeowners Return On Investment averaged >4.9%.

349 out of 368 projects received the full \$5,000 Better Homes Kingston GHG incentive.

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC IMPACT

Energy retrofits are a labor intensive industry that must be procured locally. The program had over 161 different Kingston contractors involved. It is estimated that the Better Homes Kingston program created the equivalent of 130 fulltime equivalent jobs in Kingston.

Contractor Quote

“Being a part of the contractor list definitely helped drive business!”

1.3 LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES

The Better Homes Kingston program's success was linked to many best practices and a few innovations which are discussed throughout this Impact Report. In addition to these insights some of the key highlights on lessons learned and unexpected challenges include:

LAUNCHING WITH IMPACT AND COMMITMENT

The Better Homes Kingston team excelled in generating community awareness and support for the program both before and during its initial launch. With City Council support, the program fostered a high level of anticipation and excitement within the community, leading to early participation that surpassed initial expectations and forecasts. The team employed a coordinated, strategic approach to community-based marketing.

The significant interest in the program initially strained resources, but the program team managed this effectively. This challenge was viewed positively, as the team maintained a proactive and solution-oriented attitude, successfully addressing early bottlenecks and embracing the opportunity to scale quickly.

The City Council made an early financial commitment, without any external funding, to support the early development and launch of the program. This commitment was key in signaling the importance and faith in the program internally as well as providing financial resources.

STRONG INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION

The internal stakeholder interviews consistently highlighted the importance of strong interdepartmental teamwork and communication. Successfully launching a new PACE program requires significant resources from various municipal departments, including legal, communications, finance, tax, clerk's office, and the climate leadership division, among others. As the program lead, the Climate Leadership Division effectively coordinated the launch and operations, with ongoing support from other departments.

The communication and coordination between departments were evident during the design and pre-launch stages, but more importantly, they continue to be crucial. This ongoing collaboration allows the program to quickly adapt and modify processes to address gaps or create efficiencies.

There were also linkages between the Climate Leadership Division and the City's Social Housing, Neighborhood Climate Action Champion Program and Utility departments. These demonstrate a well-rounded understanding of the co-benefits of the program and strong internal communication.

ANTICIPATE STAFF AND COUNCIL TURN-OVER

The development cycle for a PACE program is often lengthy; Kingston dedicated two years to program development prior to launch. The program's development is also complex. Given the involvement of multiple departments, and the extended timeline, some key personnel turnover was inevitable. Kingston effectively ensured that appropriate resources and qualified replacement hires were secured, preventing any disruption to the program's 2021 launch schedule. The robust teamwork and communication outlined above contributed to a seamless transition as new members joined the project. Staff turnover presents considerable challenges that should not be underestimated.



Peter Huigenbos, commissioner of business, environment and projects, from left, Chris Boivin, managing director of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and Kingscourt-Rideau District Coun. Mary Rita Holland hold a sign marking the launch of the Better Homes Kingston retrofit program on Monday. Photo by Elliot Ferguson.

1.3 LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES

The extended program development cycle also had implications with council turn-over. With 2 elections cycles within the development and early program launch timeline new Councilors were pro-actively given detailed program briefs from the Climate Leadership Division staff.

3RD PARTY ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT: SUSTAINABLE KINGSTON

The City of Kingston partnered with a local NGO, Sustainable Kingston, to help deliver the program. Sustainable Kingston provided the direct customer support through the **Energy Coach**. This partnership was highly integrated with internal City staff (and approvals) and was highly effective and adaptable to handle the surge in program interest. File management and data flows were well designed and coordinated with the city program partner.

The use of 3rd-party administrator and an Energy Coach is an emerging best practice in similar programs across Canada.



A DETAILED MARKET ASSESSMENT WASN'T NEEDED TO LAUNCH

The City invested significant time and money in a market study during the design phase. Analyzing census data, home ages, energy use, retrofit history, and costs under varying uptake scenarios. The study found up to 16,000 of Kingston's 30,000 single-family homes could be retrofitted, with over 6,000 offering high cost-effectiveness. This matches energy efficiency trends across Canada. With a pilot phase aiming to retrofit fewer than 500 homes in three years, the author believes such an extensive market study was unnecessary given Kingston's large and ongoing retrofit potential and the early stages it is in the market. It is recommended that other municipalities (with limited resources) developing programs focus design efforts on implementation, community engagement and replication of the Better Homes Kingston processes versus technical market studies too early.

KINGSTON'S LOCAL IMPROVEMENT CHARGE PROCESSES

The BHK program team continually seeks to enhance operational efficiencies and relieve departmental workloads in support of the program. One area undergoing adjustment and ongoing review is the internal by-law and LIC processes.

It should be noted that there is some variation across Ontario in how LICs are created and registered at each municipality. Implementing a more standardized approach to PACE program internal processes would offer significant benefits to the marketplace.

Soren Christianson, Project Manager
of the Climate Leadership Division at
the City

“Meeting participants where they are is key to the success of BHK. Spending a little extra time and money on real human support for participants pays back in dividends.”

2.1 PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL REVIEW

There was considerable policy and program groundwork done by the City of Kingston prior to implementing the Better Homes Program, including the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan’s commitment to demonstrate climate leadership. As well as a 2019 council motion to create a home energy retrofit program. In 2020 Kingston completed a Home Energy Retrofit Program Rationale and Design Study.

The City has an ambitious target to be net-zero by 2040, with a 30% reduction below 2011 levels by 2030 corporately, while also supporting homeowners to invest in low carbon retrofits. With 14% of Kingston’s overall emissions from residential homes the program could have a substantial impact on helping meet these climate goals. The design study identified the potential to support over 6,000 home retrofits over the next 12 years, while reducing homeowners energy costs from 10-50%. With over \$100M in annual home energy costs, the economic opportunity to save homeowners money while creating local economic retrofit activity was seen as a market transformation opportunity.

Prior to launch, the program had considerable awareness and support from Council, with well defined goals and objectives.

TABLE 1. SUMMARY FROM 2020 PROGRAM DESIGN

Goal	Retrofit 20-50% of Kingston’s pre-1991 construction one-family homes by 2040 achieving an average carbon reduction impact of 30% per home.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enable residents to contribute to achieving the goal of carbon neutrality in Kingston. To provide homeowners with a user-friendly retrofit program that enables them to reduce energy, emissions and potentially utility bills. Provide homeowners access to the expertise, financing and incentives to implement cost-effective energy efficiency upgrades within their home. To stimulate opportunities for local investment, job creation and have fewer energy dollars leave the local economy.
Program Delivery	Through area utility providers within their respective service areas along with an energy coach supporting homeowners with the process.
Housing Focus	One family homes (attached, detached, rowhouse) constructed pre-1991 and post 1990s homes with at least 20% /energy savings potential.

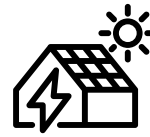
TABLE 2. 2020 FORECAST OF RETROFITTED HOMES VERSUS ACTUALS (FROM DESIGN STUDY)

	3rd Party Financing Forecasted	LIC Loans Forecasted	Total	Actual LIC Loans
Year 1	25-50	50-100	75-150	36
Year 2	50-100	100-150	150-250	153
Year 3	75-150	150-250	225-400	99 + 51*
Totals	150-300	300-500	450-800	339
Includes on-bill financing or equipment rental from utilities or loans from financial institutions				



*LIC’s underway during year 3

2.1 PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL REVIEW



The average size of solar systems 9.5 kW

TABLE 3. FORECASTED AND ACTUAL PROGRAM DELIVERED: PROJECT TYPE AND SIZE

FORECASTED JOB TYPES			ACTUAL			
Total	Energy Efficiency Retrofit	Solar	Total	Energy Efficiency Retrofit	Solar	Other
535	500	35	1218	848	52	318

Energy efficiency retrofit: heat pump, windows and doors, insulation

Other: Air sealing, heat recovery ventilator, toilets, drain water heat recovery, water heaters, etc.

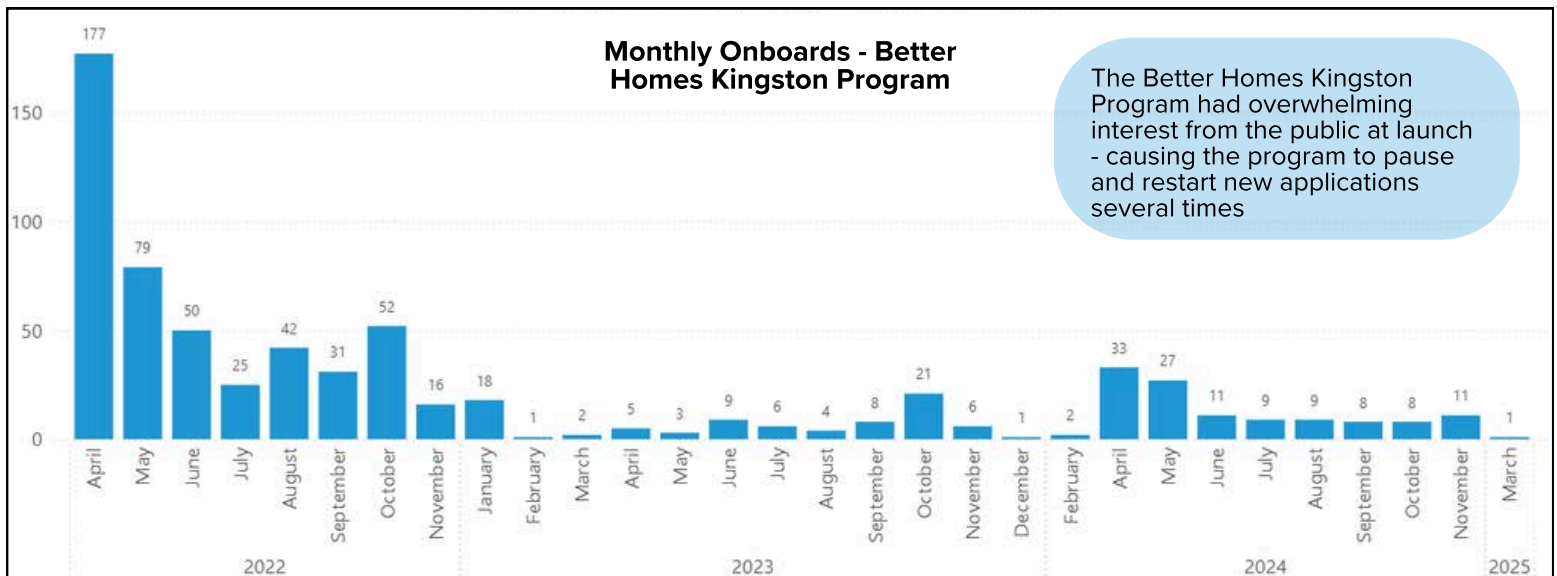
PROGRAM PROCESSES THAT WORKED

The Energy Coach

Prior to launch the City had identified and budgeted for a free energy coaching service. This was highly successful and a key ingredient to helping homeowners successfully navigate their retrofit projects. This service was outsourced to a third party organization, Sustainable Kingston. The City's implementation of an energy coaching service that was easily accessible to homeowners is a program best practice. Many homeowners had positive comments about the Energy Coach and how the local program offering was able to bridge gaps with both provincial and federal program offerings.

Managing Community Expectations

During the program development phase, the City did a commendable job in creating awareness and anticipation of the program. There was significant earned media, and the program ramp rate was a lot higher than originally anticipated. Due to the faster intake than anticipated, there were several program pauses and restarts. The Climate Leadership Division worked closely with the internal Communications Department to ensure appropriate messaging of news releases and management of community expectations during these program pauses and restarts.



The Better Homes Kingston Program had overwhelming interest from the public at launch - causing the program to pause and restart new applications several times

2.1 PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL REVIEW

Quote From Participant

“When we started this project, we hardly believed that the energy savings could be so substantial. We are thrilled. Thanks so much for all your help!”

PROGRAM PROCESSES THAT WORKED

30% Upfront Deposit Payment

The program successfully implemented a system to help homeowners pay for upfront deposits required by contractors. Deposit payments and post-project completion payments were issued directly to homeowners. Future programming should consider issuing these payments directly to contractors with no down payments to streamline administrative overhead.

City Incentive for GHG Reductions

The program successfully implemented an innovative GHG incentive system to encourage homeowners to implement deep energy retrofits. A tiered city incentive that was tied to reductions was successfully designed and deployed. The use of residential home energy evaluations were a key part of the incentive validation. More is discussed on this program innovation in Section 3.5.

PROGRAM PROCESSES THAT WERE CHALLENGED DUE TO THE FAST UPTAKE

Partnership with Utilities Kingston

Prior to launch, the City team had envisioned closer program delivery and marketing with the City’s utility (Utility Kingston). Due to the early program success and fast ramping of the program this partnership wasn’t needed or achieved. However, it is recommended that a future program consider more integration with the municipal utility to create more marketing opportunities and awareness on the benefits of electrification, efficiency, and renewables. A closer operating relationship will also allow more useful data to help with program delivery and validation.

LIC Financing Process to start loan repayments

Although all financed projects are successfully implementing the Local Improvement Charge (Property Assessed Clean Energy - PACE - Loan) and there have been zero instances of bad debt, the process and timeline for this could be improved. Staff are continuing their review of internal processes with the goal of further streamlining.

It is anticipated that with future programs there will be an interest rate charged for the efficiency loans. This will necessitate revisiting some of the internal processes.



2.2 MARKETING & OUTREACH

LESSON LEARNED:

Some of the most effective program marketing comes through optimizing customer experience to influence Word of Mouth!

38% of people first heard about the program through Word Of Mouth.

PROGRAM OUTREACH

The Better Homes Kingston program launched in April 2022 following strong community interest that developed organically during its planning stages. Even before launch, homeowners were reaching out to learn more, resulting in over one hundred sign-ups in the week before the program opened. By November 2022, the program was fully subscribed without the need for extensive marketing campaigns. Outreach efforts were focused and efficient, including a targeted postcard campaign to neighborhoods with high oil and propane use alongside social media promotion. Contractor engagement was handled through direct phone and email outreach, encouraging participation in training delivered through live and recorded sessions with quizzes to confirm completion, resulting in twenty-four contractors joining the program. Communication channels, including an email address, webpage, phone line, and application form, were established ahead of launch, making it easy for residents to access program information and support. Clear instructions and personalized coaching helped guide homeowners through the process, while the program's strong value proposition and dedicated staff support encouraged participation and reinforced word-of-mouth referrals, allowing the program to maintain steady momentum within the community.

Example of Better Homes Kingston Marketing Material



INFORMATION SESSIONS

Better Homes Kingston staff hosted a series of webinars and in-person sessions to support homeowner and contractor participation in the program. These included homeowner webinars, contractor training sessions, and library sessions focused on building systems and energy upgrades. Sessions were recorded to allow flexible access, ensuring residents and contractors could engage with program information on their own schedules. These presentations provided clear guidance on retrofit options and the program process, supporting homeowner understanding and helping maintain consistent communication as the program grew.

ACCESSIBILITY

To ensure the program was accessible to all residents, Better Homes Kingston adapted its approach throughout the program to support participation from all residents. While the online application worked well for many, some seniors and homeowners without internet access faced challenges. To address this, staff offered phone-based application support and completed forms on behalf of participants when needed. In-person meetings were arranged in cases where mobility or technology barriers existed, ensuring no homeowner was excluded. The program also increased initial disbursement amounts to help low-income homeowners manage upfront costs and maintained clear, accessible communication across phone, email, and in-person channels. Homeowner feedback on accessibility was gathered through surveys, guiding continuous improvements in how support was provided.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Better Homes Kingston received coverage through local newspapers, council meeting reports, and news releases, boosting awareness and supporting program uptake. As participation levels rose quickly, media promotion was intentionally reduced to manage enrollment capacity effectively. Earned media and strategic communications ensured community interest remained high, helping the program maintain visibility while managing resources efficiently.

2.3 STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Several key stakeholders had the chance to share their experience with the Better Homes Kingston program to gain insight into their perspective on the successes, challenges and lessons learned from the programs. All interviewees praised the program's ease and success, providing valuable insights for future programming. Appendix A provides excerpts of detailed responses from these stakeholders.

CONTRACTOR

Contractor feedback was consistently positive, with many emphasizing that the program created steady business and strengthened trust with homeowners. Accessible financing and a clear program structure made it easier for clients to commit to higher-efficiency upgrades, driving more work to local companies. One contractor noted the program "definitely drove business," while others added that without it, many homeowners would not have pursued larger projects like heat pumps or solar.

A recurring theme was the value of municipal outreach and marketing. Contractors said the City's efforts brought them qualified leads, while they also referred clients back into the program, creating a two-way flow of business. This integration of municipal promotion, contractor capacity, and homeowner financing was described as a key strength.

At the same time, contractors pointed to areas for improvement. Some felt that while energy coaching gave homeowners valuable background knowledge, recommendations did not always align with what was technically feasible, creating occasional unrealistic expectations. Solar contractors also noted that the program's GHG-based incentive structure favored heat pumps, meaning solar often had to be paired with other measures to qualify.

Overall, contractors viewed the program as a strong driver of business and a trust-building mechanism with the community. They valued the clear payment process, municipal marketing support, and collaboration with energy coaches, while suggesting that closer communication among program staff, coaches, and contractors could make delivery even smoother.

HOMEOWNERS

Homeowners consistently valued the program's combination of financing and support. The interest-free loans and clear repayment structure made upgrades feel manageable, removing a major barrier to action. Just as important, the energy coaching was described as one of the program's strongest features. Several homeowners highlighted how having a dedicated person to explain retrofit options, answer questions, and guide them through decisions gave them the confidence to proceed. One participant said they were "about ready to give up on the whole program until I got to meet with Wes," showing how hands-on support kept projects moving forward.

Alongside these strengths, participants pointed to areas where improvements would help. Some described the home energy assessments as inconsistent or not detailed enough to be useful in planning. Others noted that comparing options like heat pumps and furnaces was difficult without neutral, upfront information, leaving them to rely heavily on contractor advice. Even with these challenges, homeowners agreed that the program's combination of financing and personalized coaching was the feature that made deeper retrofits possible.



2.3 STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

MUNICIPAL STAFF AND CITY ADMINISTRATION

Municipal staff feedback centered strongly on the importance of communication and coordination. Staff noted that clear processes and constant alignment between finance, taxation, and project management were essential to keep loan disbursements and repayments seamless. A financial analyst with the City, reflected that “processes, always” were the biggest lesson learned, stressing the need for strong communication to ensure that disbursements, taxation, and financial records matched correctly.

Interviewees emphasized that this reliance on communication extended across program roles. Project Manager Soren Christianson was described as the main point of contact for participants, guiding them through applications and bridging Sustainable Kingston’s delivery role with the City’s financial and governance responsibilities. On the finance side, staff highlighted their role in reconciling payments and coordinating with taxation to track obligations, noting that accountability depended on constant information-sharing.

Another major theme across interviews was the importance of Sustainable Kingston as a delivery partner. Staff described the organization as essential, providing day-to-day homeowner support, energy coaching, and contractor coordination, while the City concentrated on bylaws, governance, and financial oversight. Stakeholders frequently highlighted the contributions of Wes Kerr, regarded as the program’s “project champion.” His leadership in delivering energy coaching sessions made one of the program’s most valued features accessible to homeowners, guiding them through retrofit options, clarifying technical details, and aligning projects with emissions reduction targets. Together, these functions were seen as the backbone of the program, working effectively because of strong lines of communication between all parties.

FUTURE RECCOMENDATIONS

Municipal staff expressed strong support for continuing a similar program if funding became available, noting its success in advancing municipal and provincial climate goals while offering meaningful incentives for residents. For future programs, staff recommended setting clear long-term objectives from the start, aligning with other rebate and financing programs to maximize homeowner benefit, and maintaining strong third-party partnerships to provide the technical expertise and administrative support municipalities may not have on their own.



**Better Homes
Kingston**

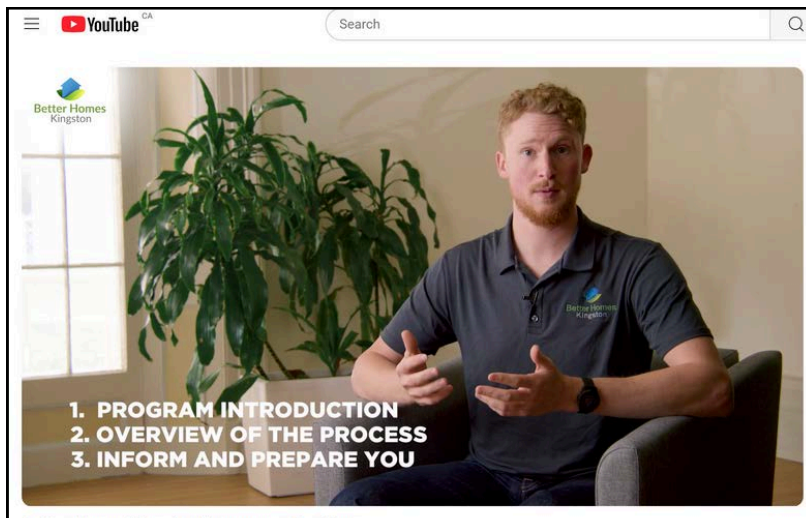


2.4 REVIEW OF MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

STRONG INTER-DEPARTMENT COORDINATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND TEAMWORK

A review was done of the program management processes and it was evident that there was strong collaboration across the organization (finance, legal, Climate Leadership Division staff, communications, etc) and top down support from Kingston Council. The program design work and preparatory stage took 2 years of collaborative effort prior to the 2021 launch.

The cross-departmental teamwork was a key element of program success - and despite staff turnover, allowed the program to manage risks and successfully overcome hurdles.



Soren Christianson, Project Manager
Climate Leadership City of Kingston

“You have to be willing to adapt and change the program as you implement. Best laid plans are important, but only through continuous improvement can you really scale and build a program with lasting impact.”

MARKETING AND MEDIA

The Program Management team did an outstanding job of creating community awareness and supporting marketing. The engagement and support of council during the program launch earned significant media attention. The Better Homes Kingston Program leadership made themselves readily available to the media as well as any community groups to discuss or present program objectives and benefits. Capitalizing on the earned media opportunities significantly reduced the City’s budget for paid advertising. Appendix B gives examples of the earned media attention - which is ongoing in 2025 with an anticipated relaunch in 2026.

AN AGILE FRAMEWORK

The City of Kingston’s program delivery team held regular reviews to identify issues and solve bottleneck problems. This agile framework for program delivery is to be commended, as the team solved many issues during the program operating phase. The program was challenged by a much higher interest and uptake of the program than initially anticipated.

A good example of the agile mentality, was the creation of a homeowner onboarding video, that significantly improved the initial onboarding call with the Energy Coach.



Put a Lid on It (temporarily) Better Homes Kingston Retrofit Program a Huge Success!

Applications for the abovementioned program have surpassed the initial program targets leading the City to temporarily pause application intake. Many will recall a program update on this Local Improvement Charge...

← Kingston Construction Association

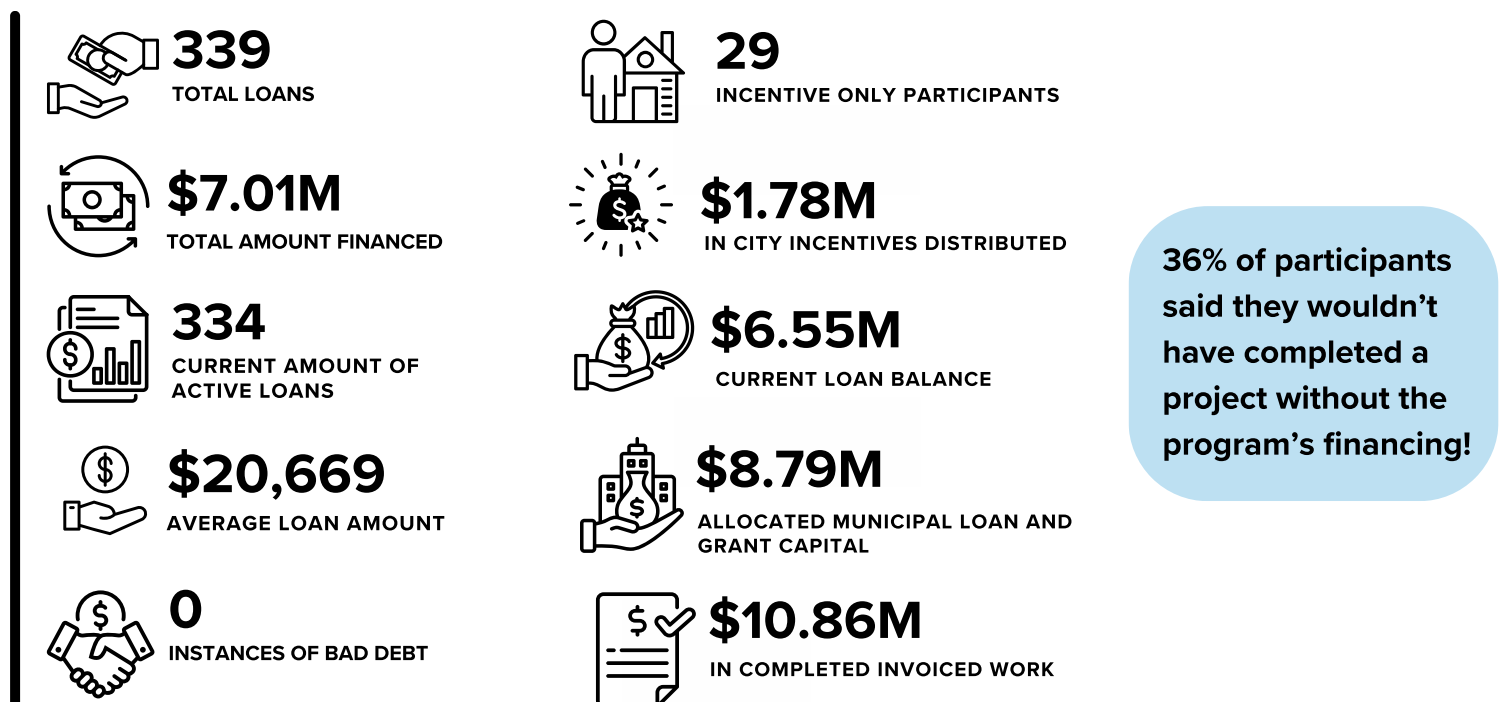
“Our tax department operates under the umbrella of finance but with very independent processes, which made clear communication critical. One of the key lessons learned was the need for strong coordination between project managers, applicant support, taxation, and finance to ensure funds were dispersed smoothly and reporting remained accurate.”

A Financial Analyst with
the City of Kingston

2.5 FINANCE LOAN MANAGEMENT

The Better Homes Kingston Program uses Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Financing for the loan security and homeowner retrofits. Homeowners were able to participate in the program with no money down and access 0% interest loans amortized up to 20 years. The program is also designed to provide up to a 30% down payment of approved project costs. PACE Loans are similar to traditional Local Improvement Charges (LICs), except the asset is owned by the homeowner and the investment made on private property.

The PACE financing model has proven to be effective with over \$7M in loans issued, with zero instances of bad debt after 2 years.



Overview of All Loans				
Completed Retrofits Financed	Average Project Cost	Average Incentive Provided by Kingston	Average Financed Amount	Average Cost Homeowner Pay Direct to Contractor
339	\$34,200	\$4,851	\$20,669	\$8,680

Table 4. Loan summary

2.5 FINANCE LOAN MANAGEMENT

In addition to the PACE loan issued by the municipality, other incentives were provided to homeowners. Low income qualifying homeowners were provided free Residential Energy Advisor services, that cost \$600. The municipality also provided a tiered incentive based on GHG reductions which topped out at \$5,000 per home. These program incentives were stackable with any provincial (Save-On-Energy) or federal (Canada Greener Homes) incentives.

Percentage GHG Reduction	Incentive
20-25%	\$1,000
26-30%	\$3,000
Over 30%	\$5,000

LOAN COLLECTION PROCESS

The loan collection process in Better Homes Kingston is tied to the property tax system through Local Improvement Charges, ensuring repayment security for the municipality. Homeowners received staged disbursements, with an initial advance, additional installments once receipts were submitted, and a final release after post-retrofit verification. Low-income households were given accelerated disbursements to avoid bridge financing pressures.

While this structure safeguarded the program’s integrity, it created a heavy administrative burden and some delays. Each homeowner had to be set up as a vendor in the City’s system, and repayment often did not begin until nearly a year after project completion. Staff identified simplifying vendor setup and exploring direct contractor payments as key improvements for future phases.

MAX LOAN VALUE TO ASSESSED VALUE RATIO

The City provided a maximum loan value which was the lesser of **10% of assessed value** up to a **maximum \$40,000**. It should be noted that Kingston property values have an unusually low assessment value (to real value), and this program policy maximum suppressed the maximum loans and average loan amounts. It is recommended that a future program increase the 10% ratio of assessed value.



2.6 DATA MANAGEMENT & HOMEOWNER PORTAL

The homeowner portal was both the public face of Better Homes Kingston and the core system supporting its operations. It brought all aspects of the program - application intake, project tracking, funding requests, and reporting into one place. By combining homeowner-facing tools with back-end data systems, the portal gave staff the ability to manage the program at scale while providing participants with a clear and supportive experience.

HOMEOWNER PORTAL - ADMINISTRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

From an administrative perspective, the portal was designed to save time and streamline work for City staff. Instead of relying on repeated follow-ups or manual tracking, staff could see every stage of a project on one page, from the initial application through to final disbursement. Automated functions handled routine steps such as generating notices to proceed, opening access to the homeowner portal, and prompting participants with reminders. Documents uploaded by homeowners flowed directly into the project page, reducing the need for staff to request, file, or organize all documents. This centralization meant staff could manage hundreds of active projects simultaneously, focusing their effort on higher-value tasks like eligibility review and coaching support rather than administrative processing. The result was a program that was more efficient, more accurate, and less dependent on staff capacity to move individual files forward.

HOMEOWNER PORTAL - PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVE

For homeowners, the same system simplified what might have felt like a daunting retrofit journey. Participants logged in to see a personalized timeline of steps, supported by clear instructions, orientation videos, and automatic reminders. They could upload audits, quotes, and invoices, and book coaching sessions directly through the portal, which kept everything in one place. This approach gave homeowners a straightforward guide that reduced confusion and built confidence, making the program feel accessible even to those with little prior experience.

The screenshot shows the 'Attachments' section of the Better Homes Kingston Homeowner Portal. The page title is 'City of Kingston' and the project name is 'Better Homes Kingston (BHK ID - BHK-0338)'. There are 14 attachments listed in a table with columns for File Name, Description, Attachment Type, Type, Uploaded By, and Uploaded Date/Time. The attachments include utility information, renovation upgrade reports, pre-HOIS documents, mortgage lender notices, contractor quotes, and invoices.

File Name	Description	Attachment Type	Type	Uploaded By	Uploaded Date/Time	Extracted Fields
Utility_Information.pdf	Utility Information	Utility Information		Parachute Admin	2024-02-28	
Renovation_Upgrade_Report.pdf	Renovation Upgrade Report	Renovation Upgrade Report		Parachute Admin	2023-12-04	
Pre_HOIS.pdf	Pre HOIS	Pre HOIS		Parachute Admin	2023-11-27	
Fwd_Better Homes Kingston Notification.msg	Mortgage Lender Notice	Mortgage Lender Notice		Soren Christianson	2022-08-19	
d836046bd54810aa63ebcb25c3bdb1c4.pdf	Pre HOIS	Pre HOIS		Parachute Admin	2023-11-09	
Contractor_Quote.pdf	Contractor Quote	Contractor Quote		Parachute Admin	2023-11-24	
Contractor_Invoice.pdf	Contractor Invoice	Contractor Invoice		Parachute Admin	2023-11-27	
Contractor Quote	Contractor Quote	Contractor Quote		Parachute Admin	2023-11-01	
c79c60925b0bd94bb2bbd41a13e73e2.pdf	Pre HOIS	Pre HOIS		Parachute Admin	2023-11-09	
11KKE0008HOIS_EN_.pdf	post-retro HOIS	Post HOIS		Kingston Energy Coach	2023-08-01	
11KKE0008HOIS_EN_.pdf	post-retro HOIS	Post HOIS		Kingston Energy Coach	2024-03-25	
11KKD0008SRUR_EN_.compressed.pdf	RUR	Renovation Upgrade Report		Kingston Energy Coach	2023-07-19	
11KKD0008HOIS_EN_.pdf	HOIS	Pre HOIS		Kingston Energy Coach	2023-07-19	

Scenshot of Better Homes Kingston Homeowner Portal

2.6 DATA MANAGEMENT & HOMEOWNER PORTAL

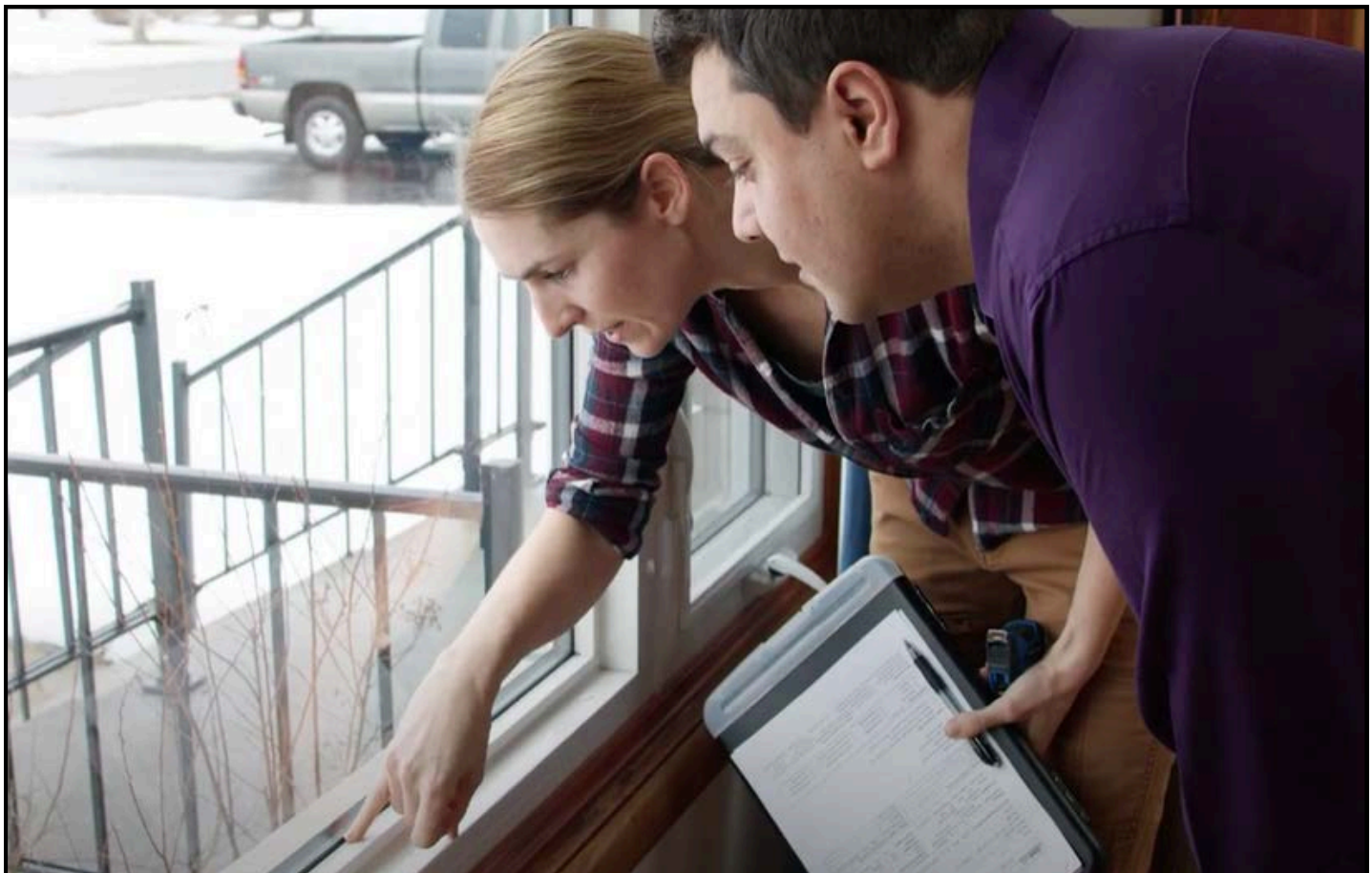


DATA MANAGEMENT

The Better Homes Kingston program partnered with Parachute to provide its technical infrastructure and data management system. The homeowner portal was connected to the City's DropZone through an API, which collected back-end data and files from the portal and made it available to municipal staff through a secure file-sharing platform. Document sharing and communication between Sustainable Kingston and the City were primarily managed through Microsoft SharePoint. Together, these systems created a secure and reliable framework for managing program data and supporting effective collaboration between partners.

INTEGRATION OF SYSTEMS

The strength of the portal lay in how it linked these two perspectives. Administrators gained a centralized, time-saving way to oversee projects and maintain accurate records, while homeowners experienced a clear, step-by-step process that supported them through complex retrofits. By integrating the back-end data management with a user-friendly front end, the portal became both a management tool and a participant support system, ensuring the program was easier to run and more approachable for the community.



3.1 ENVIRONMENTAL & ENERGY IMPACTS



368
ENERGY EFFICIENCY
PROJECTS COMPLETED



23,040
ANNUAL ENERGY
SAVINGS (GJ)



1,460
ANNUAL GHGS
REDUCED (TONNES)



66%
AVERAGE GHG REDUCTION
PER HOME WHICH WAS
TRIPLE THE MINIMUM
EMISSIONS THRESHOLD



\$95/ton
COST TO CITY TO SUPPORT
COMMUNITY BASED REDUCTIONS



>81%
HOMES TOOK ON
MULTIPLE PROJECTS



137
HOMEOWNERS
UNDERTAKING A DIY
IMPROVEMENT



52
SOLAR PROJECTS



318
HEAT PUMP PROJECTS

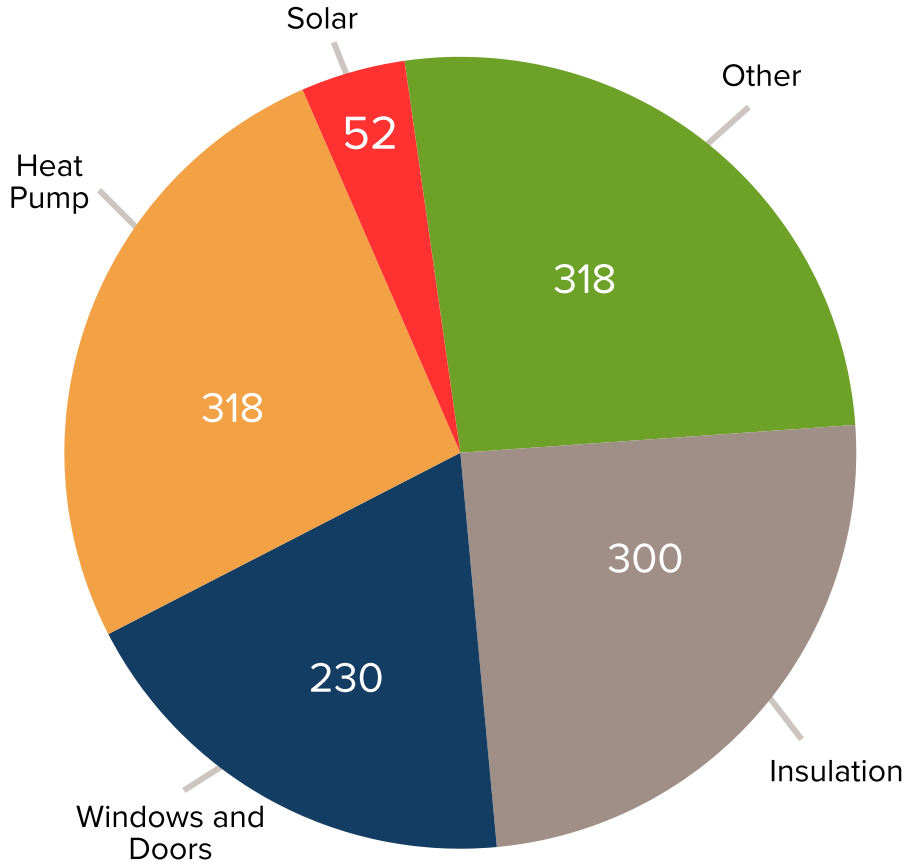


4
TOILETS



1
WIND TURBINE

PROJECT TYPES



The use of a tiered incentive to encourage deep energy retrofits and deep GHG reductions was extremely successful. **The average project more than tripled the minimum GHG reduction threshold which was 20%.** The GHG incentive, combined with the Energy Coach, led most homeowners to complete a bundle of projects that involved a combination of heat pumps, insulating, solar, and doors and windows or other project types.

84%

of all heat pump projects reduced or eliminated the use of gas



8%

eliminated oil use in their home



3.1 ENVIRONMENTAL & ENERGY IMPACTS

The Better Homes Kingston Program showed that deep retrofits can deliver far greater results than originally expected. By linking financing to a GHG-reduction threshold and pairing it with one-on-one energy coaching, the program moved homeowners beyond single upgrades into bundled projects that achieved lasting impact. This design more than tripled the minimum performance targets, with average projects cutting emissions by two-thirds.

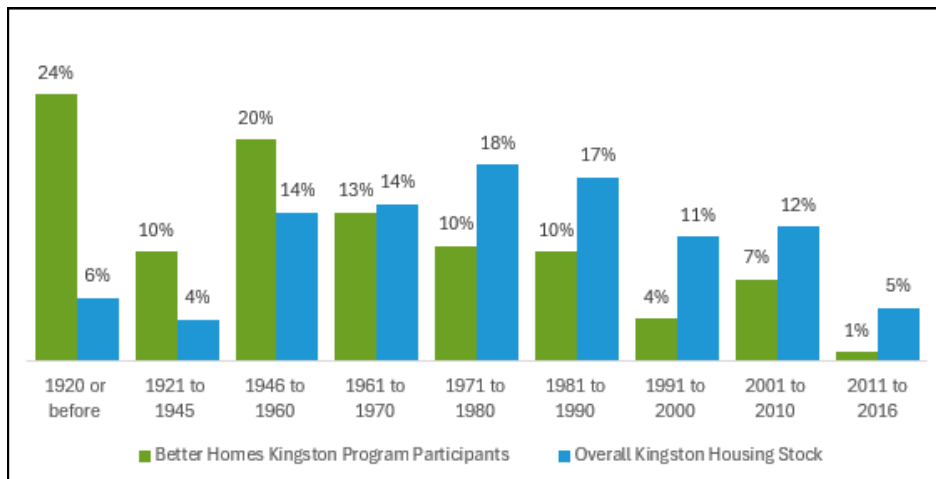
Heat pumps were central, but the program’s real strength came from encouraging combinations of measures. Homeowners who paired heat pumps with envelope improvements or solar achieved some of the deepest reductions, while also improving the comfort and resilience of their homes. This bundling approach created a local proof point: programs can drive households toward whole-home energy planning, not just piecemeal improvements.

The lessons from Kingston suggest that a combination of performance-based incentives, personalized coaching, and municipally led oversight can create retrofit outcomes that are deeper, more cost-effective, and more transformative than conventional rebate programs.

PROGRAM INCENTIVES PER % GHG REDUCTIONS

Percentage GHG Reduction	Incentive
20-25%	\$1,000
26-30%	\$3,000
Over 30%	\$5,000

95% of participants received the full BHK \$5,000 incentive



Program Reach: Kingston Program Participants vs General Age of Kingston Housing Stock

Another key outcome was the program’s ability to reach older homes, with a majority of participants living in houses built before 1960. These retrofits not only addressed some of Kingston’s least efficient buildings, they also provided a model for how municipalities can tackle aging housing stock as part of their climate strategy. By targeting energy waste where it was greatest, the program maximized environmental returns while directly improving housing quality for residents.



<\$95/ton COST TO CITY FOR COMMUNITY BASED GHG REDUCTIONS

An analysis was conducted to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the program in reducing GHG emissions. The program achieved community-based GHG reductions at a cost of \$95 per ton to the city. These costs included the cost of providing BHK incentives, which amounted to \$1.7 million, as well as the operating costs of the program over three years. If the GHG reduction incentives were removed from the program, with the same results, the program would cost less than \$35/ton to operationalize.

A future program is expected to have a similar or slightly higher cost effectiveness. It will have higher costs, associated with the borrowing cost of the municipality to on-lend to homeowners, but this will be offset by the rate charged to homeowners. Smaller GHG incentives for homeowners are unlikely to reduce program uptake. A future version of the program will also benefit from the already incurred one-time start-up costs.

3.2 HOMEOWNER SAVINGS

\$282,242

TOTAL 2025 ANNUAL SAVINGS BY HOMES IN KINGSTON

\$7.2M

LIFETIME ENERGY SAVINGS BY HOMES

\$766

HOMEOWNER ANNUAL SAVINGS

4.9%

HOMEOWNER RETURN ON INVESTMENT

With a robust energy data collection process in the Better Homes Kingston Program and models supported by energuide home energy evaluations, a cost savings model was used to predict actual costs savings based on energy performance, as well as with real-time energy and utility costs for oil, gas and electricity. With more than 90% of homeowners installing heat pumps, the relative impact of energy costs was critical for calculating savings associated with fuel switching.

With most homeowners doing bundles of different job types, which are accounted for in aggregate in the audits, the model disaggregated savings impacts, while not “double counting” these within individual job types.



\$1,684

AVERAGE ANNUAL SOLAR SAVINGS



\$271

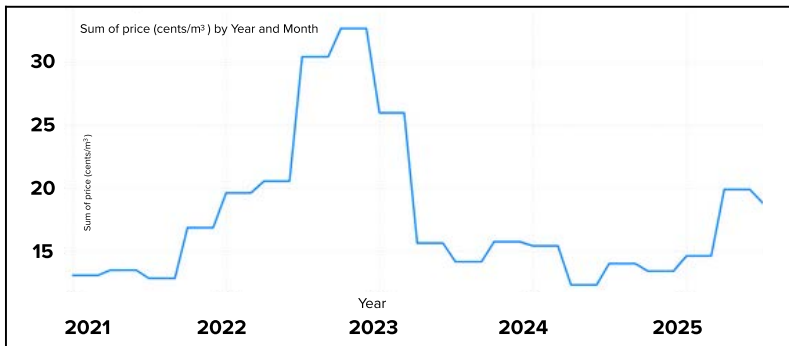
AVERAGE ANNUAL HEAT PUMP SAVINGS



\$595

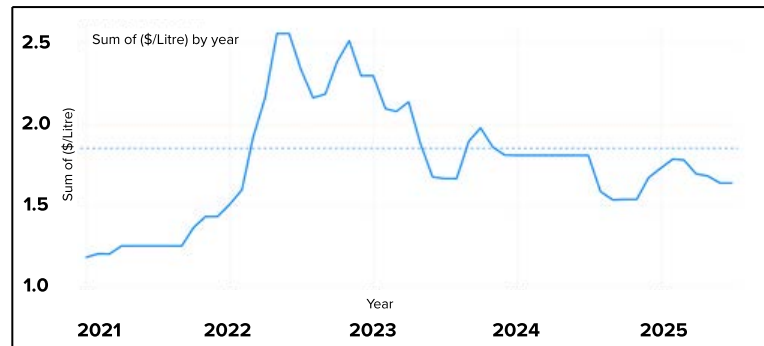
AVERAGE ANNUAL INSULATION SAVINGS

Ontario Natural Gas prices over the last 4 years



Savings model used an average cost of \$8.92/GJ for natural gas (delivered)

Ontario Oil Prices over the last four years



Savings model used an average cost of \$1.85/litre for oil heated homes



HEAT PUMP PROJECTS FUEL SWITCHING

80.5%
NATURAL GAS

8%
OIL

5%
PROPANE

6%
BASEBOARD ELECTRIC

With over 90% of projects involving the installation of heat pumps, the relative costs of energy in fuel switching from natural gas, oil, or propane heating to electricity is highly relevant to the homeowner savings outcomes.

Homeowners who switched off oil heating with a heat pump averaged very high savings and a return on investment exceeding 11%, versus those that switched from natural gas, which had a negative 1.0% ROI.

Savings model also used an electricity price of \$0.1477/kWh

3.2 HOMEOWNER SAVINGS

ONTARIO’S CHANGING ENERGY MARKET - IMPACT OF ELIMINATION OF FEDERAL CARBON TAX?

As in most markets, energy costs can vary widely, impacting homeowner motivations to invest in energy efficiency and renewables. A few dynamic factors of the Ontario market are worthy of commentary on the impacts on homeowner savings. Prior to launching the Better Homes Kingston Program a federal carbon tax was embedded within energy costs. With electricity a relatively low source of carbon (due to the high % of hydro and nuclear) and natural gas and oil having higher GHG intensity - the motivations for fuel switching via heat pumps were aligned with the City’s carbon reduction goals. With a predictable carbon price increase factor of natural gas (beyond its primary volatility) homeowners could be more assured of long-term savings with electrification via heat pump projects. Nevertheless, in the spring of 2025 there was a major federal policy change, eliminating the carbon tax ratcheting. In 2025 the carbon tax was expected to be \$95/t, with further increases to \$170/t by 2030. The elimination of the federal carbon tax significantly influenced the homeowners savings associated with fuel switching from natural gas, which were 80.5% of all heat pump installations.

TABLE 5. HOMEOWNER ANNUAL SAVINGS BY PROJECT TYPE

Project Type	Average Project Cost (after rebates and taxes)	Annual Savings (2025)	Monthly Payment	Homeowner ROI (After incentives)	Notes
Heat Pump (off oil)	\$19,400	\$2,270	\$80.83	11.7%	15 year equipment lifespan
Heat Pump (off natural gas)	\$22,182	-\$237	\$92.43	-1.1%	15 year equipment lifespan
Solar PV	\$29,472	\$1,684	\$122.80	7.5%	25 year equipment lifespan, ROI will be higher
Envelope (Doors & Windows, Air Sealing and Insulating)	\$6,671	\$595	27.80	8.9%	40 year lifespan, ROI will be higher

Quotes From Participants

“We are looking forward to enjoying our upgrades to the house with substantial energy cost savings to boot!”

“The lowering of our carbon footprint is something we really appreciate along with the lower gas bill”

High Uptake of Envelope Measures - A Program Success

The program was very successful in promoting deep energy retrofits, and encouraging homeowners to do multiple types of energy retrofits - in particular building envelope measures. Building envelope measures included high impact, low cost measures such as air-sealing, and insulating. The program’s Energy Coaching was highly instrumental in encouraging homeowners to undertake DIY air-sealing projects in addition to other envelope measures.

There were also a significant number of doors and window projects - that have much longer paybacks. The overall mix of envelope measures and cost-effectiveness was a highly successful program element.

Natural Gas Homes adopting Heat Pumps

Homes that used natural gas and installed heat pumps saw a slight increase in energy costs, and a negative “Return on Investment” - due to the relative costs of electricity versus natural gas in Ontario, as well as the increased use of electricity to provide a new service - air conditioning. It is recommended that future programs emphasize the benefits of heat pumps and cooling, especially in a warming climate.

3.3 LOCAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

The Better Homes Kingston Program became a powerful driver of local economic activity by ensuring that program investments flowed directly into the community. Energy efficiency retrofits are inherently labour-intensive, requiring a skilled workforce for every project. By engaging local contractors, the program kept dollars circulating within Kingston, supporting businesses, trades, and suppliers in the region.

What began with only a small group of contractors quickly expanded into a broad network delivering hundreds of retrofits. This steady pipeline of projects gave businesses the confidence to grow—hiring additional staff, training apprentices, and investing in new equipment. Through program training and standardized processes, contractors also built new technical capacity, strengthening the overall retrofit industry in Kingston and ensuring a skilled workforce for years to come.

The program helped transform the local energy efficiency retrofit market. By making energy retrofits more accessible through financing and coaching, Better Homes Kingston created lasting demand for upgrades such as heat pumps, insulation, and windows. This shift not only generated immediate employment but positioned the local economy for continued growth in the green building sector.

Together, these impacts extended well beyond environmental benefits. The program created jobs, supported business expansion, retained investment within the community, and accelerated Kingston’s transition to a stronger, greener economy.

Quote from Program Solar Contractor

“As a contractor, it was fantastic being able to offer the program to our clients. With Kingston offering financing it made things easier to sell and helped people actually move forward with big investments like solar.”

Quote from Program HVAC Contractor

“The program shakes the bushes for us, generates work for us, and gives us a chance to work with homeowners in Kingston. Overall, it’s a well-received program and we look forward to working with it more.”



161

**CONTRACTORS
DELIVERING RETROFITS**



130

**FULL TIME EQUIVALENT
JOBS CREATED**



\$7.2M

**ENERGY SAVINGS IN
COMMUNITY**



3.4 PROGRAM EQUITY



SUPPORTS AND REFERRALS

Alongside its primary offerings, the program positioned itself as a trusted resource for homeowners navigating a complex landscape of energy efficiency rebate programs. Staff regularly referred participants to other sources of support such as Save on Energy, the Oil to Heat Pump Affordability Program, and emergency repair funding, ensuring that even those who could not proceed through Better Homes Kingston had a path forward.

The team provided direction and advice to help homeowners move forward, even if they did not complete the program. This broader support network extended the program's reach and reinforced its role as a reliable entry point for home energy upgrades.



EQUITY AND INCLUSION

The program proactively supported vulnerable groups, particularly low-income homeowners and seniors, through both financial assistance and hands-on support. Full subsidies were offered for energy assessments for qualifying applicants, and the disbursement model was adapted to release up to 75% of funds before project completion to reduce the need for bridge financing. These measures aimed to make participation feasible for those with limited cash flow or access to credit.

Staff went beyond standard administration by making in-person visits, printing and delivering forms, and even issuing physical cheques when postal disruptions or digital barriers arose. Support was also extended to individuals facing cognitive or technological challenges, with team members coordinating directly with caregivers or family when needed. While these cases were often time-consuming, they were seen as essential to achieving true accessibility.

Clear communication was reinforced throughout the process, using repeated messaging to avoid confusion around key requirements such as agreement signing and eligibility timelines. Staff balanced their high level of assistance with efforts to maintain homeowner autonomy, being careful not to create dependency. This approach reflected a foundational principle of the program: meeting people where they are and adapting the delivery model to ensure no one was left behind due to circumstance.

LOCALLY ADMINISTERED FLEXIBILITY

The program's local administration was a central strength, allowing staff to adapt quickly, respond personally, and build trust with participants and contractors. Being embedded in the community enabled the team to offer support that was responsive to real-world challenges, whether that meant meeting homeowners in person, referencing local neighborhoods, or understanding context that would be lost in a centralized model.

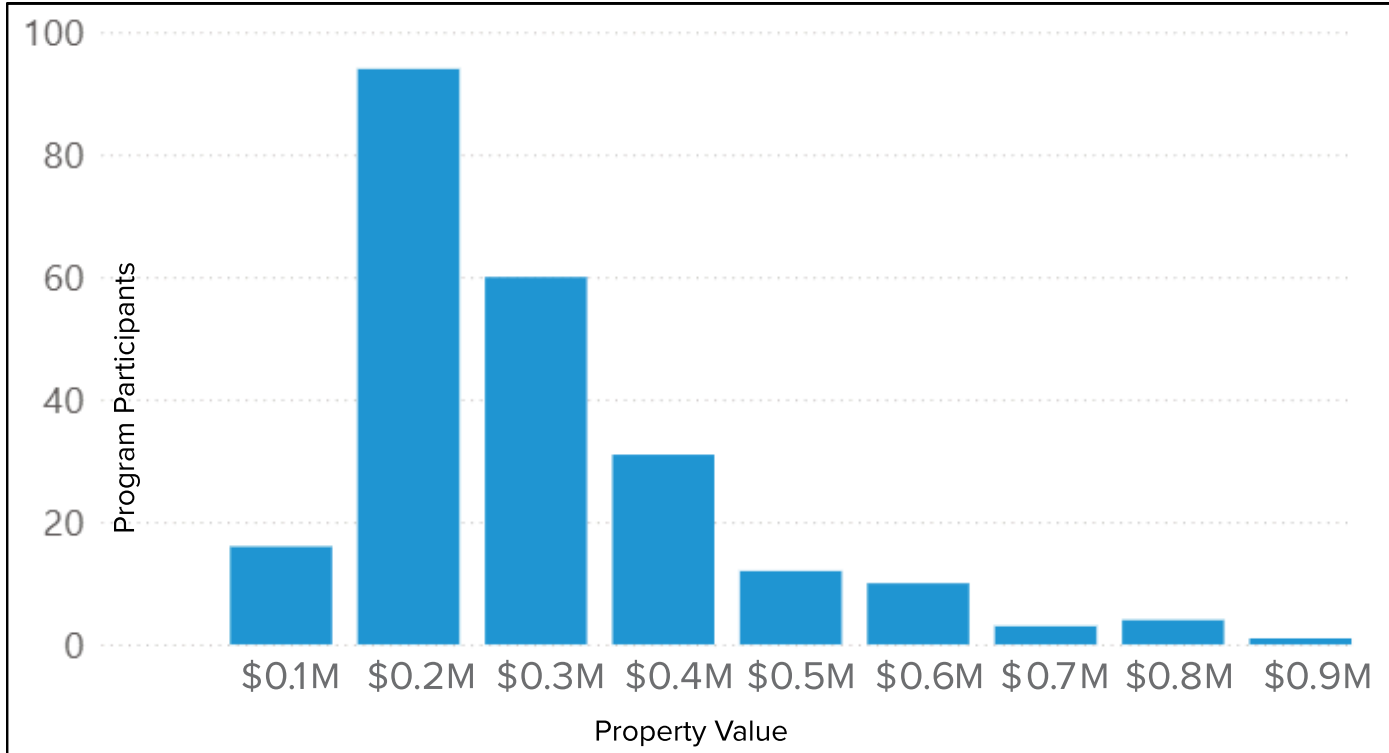
This proximity allowed staff to recognize when rigid processes needed adjustment and to make case-by-case decisions based on individual homeowner needs. Internal team meetings were used to review active projects and identify when flexibility was required, especially in complex or sensitive situations. While a small number of cases demanded significant time and resources, local delivery made this feasible and allowed the program to uphold its commitment to equitable access without compromising integrity.

The team's ability to act quickly, collaborate across departments, and rely on consistent internal communication helped streamline administration while preserving the human element of service. This localized structure created a delivery model rooted in trust, familiarity, and responsiveness - qualities that proved essential to both program success and homeowner satisfaction.

3.4 PROGRAM EQUITY

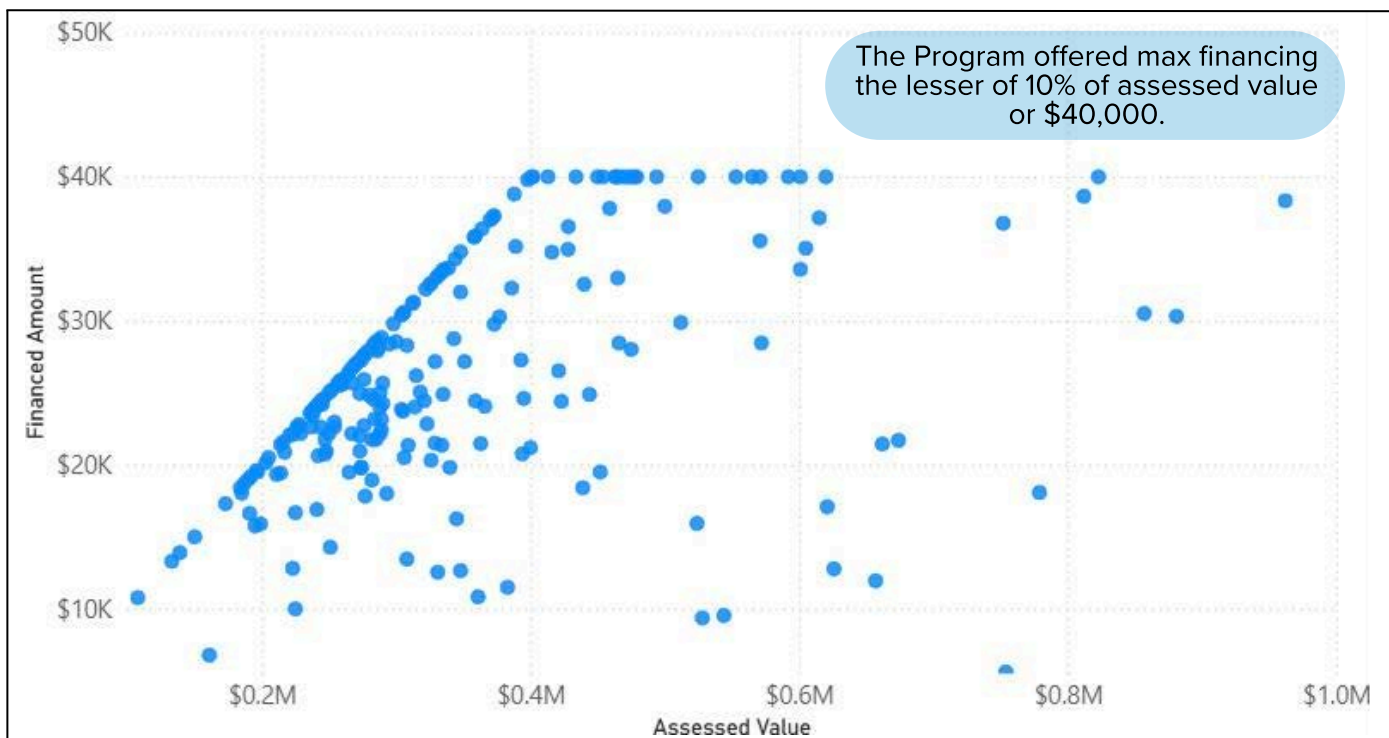


BETTER HOMES KINGSTON PARTICIPANTS BY PROPERTY ASSESSED VALUE



The graphs above show that homeowners across a broad range of assessed property values participated in the Better Homes Kingston program. The distribution of property values suggests that the program engaged participants from a variety of economic demographics.

PROPERTY VALUE AND PROJECT FINANCED VALUE



3.5 PROGRAM INNOVATION



GHG BASED INCENTIVE STRUCTURE

The Better Homes Kingston Program developed an innovative tiered incentive schedule to encourage homeowners to undertake deep retrofits that maximized GHG reductions. Over \$1.7M in grants were issued to the 368 homeowners that encouraged over 1,218 different upgrades. The average GHG reduction per home was 66%.

The incentive was coupled with an Energy Coaching service, which was a key element of increasing homeowner awareness and ambitions. It was also a key element that saw 37% of homeowners doing a DIY component of improvements - like low cost air sealing.

PROGRAM INCENTIVES PER % GHG REDUCTIONS

Percentage GHG Reduction	Incentive
20-25%	\$1,000
26-30%	\$3,000
Over 30%	\$5,000



DATA MANAGEMENT AND AN AGILE DELIVERY FRAMEWORK

The Better Homes Kingston Program team developed an innovative CRM and data management platform. This is discussed more in Section 3.6 (Data Management and Homeowner Portal), but the data platform successfully blended internal approval processes, homeowner file management, and external 3rd party administrator requirements. The custom built data platform combined a CRM function, program energy and environmental KPI's, and internal municipal workflow processes. Although continuing to be a work in progress, the fast tracked design and execution of this data platform within a municipal program context was highly innovative.

This was discussed more in Section 2.4 (Review of Management Processes), but the municipal program team had a highly innovative, agile mindset for the BHK program delivery and execution. This deserves special recognition, as the can do attitude was important in setting program goals while also adapting and pivoting to solve process execution issues. This agile mindset is critical in fostering program innovations discussed throughout this Impact Report.

3.6 PROJECT CHAMPIONS

The Better Homes Kingston Program was made possible through the expertise and dedication of a wide range of stakeholders and project champions. Its success relied on the collaboration of everyone involved in the design, implementation, and ongoing administration of the program, including municipal staff, contractors, councilors and many more.

CITY STAFF AND COUNCIL

City Council played a critical role in establishing the foundation of the program by approving the Local Improvement Charge (LIC) by-law, which enabled the innovative financing model. The City Council served as strong public champions, speaking at community events, promoting the program, and ensuring it remained a visible priority for Kingston residents.

City Climate Leadership staff managed the governance and administrative responsibilities required to keep the program running smoothly. Staff across finance, taxation, and climate reviewed homeowner eligibility, issued property owner agreements, and administered loan disbursements. Their work ensured accountability within municipal systems while connecting the program to Kingston's broader climate action objectives. This combination of political leadership and administrative expertise provided the structure and credibility that allowed the program to succeed.

CONTRACTORS

Contractors played a central role in the success of Better Homes Kingston by turning homeowner plans into completed retrofits. Over the life of the program, local contractors were responsible for installing the upgrades that delivered measurable energy savings and emissions reductions. Their participation in program training sessions ensured they understood both the technical requirements and the administrative processes, which allowed them to provide accurate quotes and guidance to homeowners. The authorized contractor list gave residents a trusted pool of service providers who were familiar with the program's standards and expectations.

Through their work, contractors not only completed high-quality installations but also acted as ambassadors of the program, helping homeowners understand their options and carry projects from design to completion. Their involvement ensured that the program could deliver on its promise of reducing greenhouse gas emissions while improving the comfort and efficiency of Kingston's housing stock.

Participant Quote

“Everyone we had contact with from the City of Kingston and Sustainable Kingston was remarkable! They were quick to respond, extremely helpful, and gave us a much better understanding of energy efficiency, our home, and what options were available. We could not be happier with the Better Home Kingston initiative!”



92% of Better Homes Kingston Participants are satisfied with the renovation contractors who performed work at their home.

3.6 PROJECT CHAMPIONS

SUSTAINABLE KINGSTON - A KEY LOCAL DELIVERY PARTNER

Sustainable Kingston acted as the delivery partner for Better Homes Kingston, working very closely with City staff to ensure the program's success. While the City developed and established the program and provided the governance framework, Sustainable Kingston managed the homeowner-facing operations that made it accessible and effective. Their team oversaw homeowner intake, operated the online portal, and facilitated energy coaching sessions that became one of the program's most valued features. **Energy Coaches** guided homeowners through their audits, explained technical reports, and ensured retrofit plans met the program's GHG-reduction criteria.

In partnership with the City, Sustainable Kingston also trained contractors on program requirements, provided quote templates, and monitored eligibility, ensuring consistency and clarity across all projects. This close collaboration meant that while the City maintained accountability and oversight, Sustainable Kingston provided the responsiveness and hands-on support needed to keep projects moving. Together, they created a delivery model that reduced confusion, built homeowner confidence, and ensured high-quality retrofits aligned with municipal climate goals.

"Wes, Thank you from the bottom of my heart for this terrific coaching session! You have generously clarified so many things and helped me so much in getting this house in shape. I am feeling very lucky indeed to have been accepted to this program. Thanks again."

98.5% of participants found Energy Coaching services to be helpful throughout their participation in the Better Homes Kingston Program,

97% of participants are satisfied with the support from program staff throughout the home upgrade process



4.1 ADVICE TO NEW PROGRAMS

This Impact Report has many useful lessons learned and advice to new programs. In addition to these, a few useful keys to Better Homes Kingston Program include:

BUILD A STRONG INTERDEPARTMENTAL TEAM

During the program development and execution it is key to involve several municipal departments. Involving legal, communications, and finance departments early in the program with the climate department was a key to the program's success.

COUNCIL SUPPORT AND BUILDING COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

Involving Council early in program development was strategically important. Giving Council an early "heads up" of what a program could look like allowed early financial commitments to be made, but also supported Council Champions who were key in creating community awareness.

With frequent reports and briefings on the ongoing program challenges and successes, support for the next phase of the Better Homes Kingston Program in 2026 looks likely.

HIRE AND DEVELOP DEDICATED STAFF

The City of Kingston made a strong commitment to the program's development by hiring a dedicated project manager to administrate the program. This reduced program risks, by allowing internal capacity to be built, as well as keep the launch timeline on track.

CONSULT WITH OTHER MUNICIPALITIES AND FCM'S COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

With over 30 PACE programs now operating from coast-to-coast in Canada there is significant municipal experience and expertise in the marketplace. The City of Kingston benefitted from collaborating with other municipalities to get a good understanding of program complexities and processes before launching in 2021. Kingston also built many new best practices of their own. City of Kingston staff are willing to "pay this forward" and encourage municipal readers to reach out for advice on processes, tools and further insights. In particular, back-office finance staff could benefit from this type of collaboration.

There are now significantly more materials and advice available to Canadian municipalities to implement a PACE program from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities than there were in 2020. FCM's Community Efficiency Financing program has a Community of Practice with over 60 members that provides a wealth of knowledge to implement a successful program.



4.2 NEXT STEPS

A SUCCESSFUL PILOT PHASE HAS LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR A LONG TERM PROGRAM

The Better Homes Kingston Program has been very successful, with high community interest leading to a large number of energy efficiency retrofits in the pilot phase. The pilot phase has laid important groundwork to continue the program and scale to over 6,000 retrofits over the next 12 years. Better Homes Kingston staff have been engaged with the community to get feedback on a re-launched program, to be presented to council in Q4 2025.



“We’re incredibly proud of what the community achieved through the pilot program,” says Soren Christianson, Project Manager of the Climate Leadership Division at the City. “Now, we’re looking ahead to 2026 and want to hear from residents and contractors to ensure the next phase is even more accessible, impactful and aligned with local needs.”

“We were asked by City Council on how to continue the program even before the pilot was completed, as well as expand it to new categories (rental properties, MURBs) showing a strong ongoing support for this priority area.” Soren Christianson, Project Manager

APPENDIX A - STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW EXCERPTS

Interview with Julie Salter-Keane, Climate Leadership Division Manager, City of Kingston

Any key lessons learned from the programs?

One key lesson learned during the initial launch of the program was the absence of delegated authority to place bylaws directly on the council agenda. At that time, the process required submitting a staff report outlining the bylaws and their intended purpose. With delegated authority now in place, we are able to bypass that step, placing the by-laws directly on the council agenda, resulting in a more streamlined and efficient process.

Any particular things that you think worked really well in the programming?

As a municipality, we are unable to endorse specific contractors; however, we recognized the importance of ensuring contractors were well-informed about our program. To support this, we offered training sessions designed to familiarize them with program requirements and processes. Upon completion, contractors were eligible to have their names included in our portal, enhancing visibility and alignment with our standards.

Who you see as the key partnerships or collaborations?

Externally, we partnered with Sustainable Kingston. Internally, key collaborations included our Finance and Legal departments. At the outset, when we were developing the LIC bylaw, Legal played a critical role in reviewing property owner documentation. Their support was exceptional, and they worked collaboratively with us throughout the process.

Interview with Insulation Contractor

What was your initial perception of the program? What is your perception now?

I think it's remained pretty consistent in my line of work. The program... shakes the bushes for us, generates some work for us, gets us a chance to work with homeowners in the Kingston area. Overall, a well-received program.

As a contractor, what was the benefit of the program from your perspective?

I guess probably two-fold. Obviously a benefit to my business from the standpoint of work levels, keeping my employees busy with these types of programs. And also too is again, huge benefits to the homeowners. I think in some cases without the program, they wouldn't entertain these kinds of improvements, unless there were some type of rebate or incentive programs to do this kind of stuff. All in all, a benefit on both sides for sure.

APPENDIX A - STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW EXCERPTS

Interview with Finance Department Staff, City of Kingston

What is your perception of the risk of the municipality loaning money to homeowners? Any processes to mitigate risk?

It hasn't been an issue. If we did have someone attempt to default, it would have to go to collections. Once it's on the tax roll, then it's attached to the property and there's really no risk of a default at that point. I understand the concern around advances; if you didn't issue an advance loan, there would be less risk of that happening.

What advice would you give to new programs?

It's all about process. It's always about process and finance. You need a seamless, efficient, end-to-end system because this isn't something we deal with often. Our long-term loans receivable account is usually very small, and suddenly this program became a big part of it. That required customizing our processes. I'd recommend making sure you have a complete process set up in advance. And while amortization software could help, we finance people will always make it work with a spreadsheet if we can.

Interview with Gabriel Nadeau - Registered Energy Advisor

What was your impression of the program?

The program stood out for the level of care applicants received. Homeowners got multiple coaching sessions where reports were explained, questions answered, and upgrades discussed in detail. This support gave them confidence to move ahead with retrofits.

What aspects worked particularly well?

The energy coaching model worked very well. It was unique compared to other programs and gave homeowners guidance they would not have received otherwise. The integration between my assessment work and the City's administration also went smoothly, and I did not hear complaints about the portal or process.

What advice would you give to future programs?

Keep the coaching model. It sets the program apart and ensures applicants are supported throughout the process.

APPENDIX A - STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW EXCERPTS

Interview with HVAC Contractor

What is your perception of the program?

The program definitely drove business. Financing options made it easier for homeowners to choose efficient heat pumps, and payments from the City were reliable and timely.

What worked well from your perspective?

The program's structure and marketing outreach brought steady, motivated leads. It gave me a chance to work with homeowners who might not otherwise have pursued these upgrades.

What could be improved?

Sometimes the recommendations from energy coaching did not match what was technically feasible in the field. This created unrealistic expectations for homeowners. Stronger communication between program staff, coaches, and contractors would help.

Interview with Tax Department Staff, City of Kingston

What aspects of the program worked well and what did not?

From my perspective, the processes generally worked well once they were in place. The integration with the municipal tax system allowed us to collect payments smoothly. What did not work as well in the early stages was coordinating across departments. It took time to align our taxation processes with program needs.

Were there any lessons learned from managing the financial side?

A key lesson was that strong communication between taxation, finance, and project staff is essential. Each area has its own procedures, and bringing them together under one program required regular coordination.

How did the loan collection and payment distribution processes function?

Overall, they were effective. Loan charges were integrated with the property tax software, which allowed us to manage accounts and property transfers consistently. The process worked, but it depended on clear communication and well-defined procedures.

What advice would you give to future programs?

Ensure early and ongoing collaboration between taxation, finance, and program delivery teams. That alignment is what makes repayment and reporting reliable over the long term.

APPENDIX A - STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW EXCERPTS

Interview with Homeowner

What aspects of the program worked well and what did not?

The financing support was helpful, but what really made the difference was the personal guidance I received. I was close to giving up until I met with Wes Kerr, who explained things clearly and kept me engaged. The part that did not work well was the home energy assessment, which was inaccurate and caused delays.

What is your overall impression of the program?

In the end, the program helped me complete upgrades with confidence, but it required patience to get through the assessment process.

What lessons should future programs take from your experience?

Dedicated staff support is key. Without someone there to guide me, I would not have finished.

Interview with Homeowner

What worked well for you in the program?

The energy coaching was the most valuable feature. Having someone walk me through the options and answer my questions gave me the confidence to move forward with improvements.

What challenges did you face?

Comparing furnace and heat pump systems was very difficult. It felt like comparing apples and oranges, and I would have liked more upfront, neutral guidance before meeting with contractors.

What benefits did the program provide?

The financing gave me the ability to complete multiple upgrades at once rather than delaying them. That combination of coaching and financial support made the whole process manageable.

What lessons did you take away?

Clear, unbiased information at the right time is essential to making informed retrofit decisions.

APPENDIX B - SAMPLES, MEDIA COVERAGE

MEDIA COVERAGE:

<https://kca.on.ca/put-a-lid-on-it-temporarily-better-homes-kingston-retrofit-program-a-huge-success>

<https://greenmunicipalfund.ca/resources/video-kingston-supports-homeowners-financing-program-energy-upgrades>

<https://www.thewhig.com/news/local-news/kingston-launches-better-homes-retrofit-program>

<https://www.thewhig.com/news/local-news/kingston-receives-15-million-for-home-energy-retrofit-program>

<https://www.kingstonist.com/news/better-homes-kingston-program-paused-due-to-overwhelming-interest>

<https://www.kingstondaily.ca/news/the-kingston-top-3/city-seeks-public-input-ahead-of-relaunch-of-better-homes-program>

