

TO: MAYOR & COUNCIL
FROM: GENERAL MANAGER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
SUBJECT: **OCP – BURNABY CITIZENS’ ASSEMBLY ON LIVABLE AND RESILIENT NEIGHBOURHOODS**
PURPOSE: To inform Council about the upcoming Burnaby Citizens’ Assembly on Livable and Resilient Neighbourhoods and how it will inform the Official Community Plan development and to convey the attached Council Overview.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the report titled “OCP – Burnaby Citizens’ Assembly on Livable and Resilient Neighbourhoods” dated September 25, 2023, be received for information.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER’S COMMENTS

I concur with the recommendation of the General Manager Planning and Development.

1.0 POLICY SECTION

In accordance with the *Local Government Act*, a local government may establish an official community plan (OCP) as a statement of objectives and policies to guide decisions on planning and land use management. During the development of an OCP, opportunities must be provided for consultation with people, organizations, and authorities who may be affected by the OCP.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Burnaby 2050 – Official Community Plan

On June 1, 2022 the Planning and Development Committee received a report titled “Official Community Plan (OCP) – Project Initiation, Process, and Upcoming Next Steps” which described the scope of the OCP update as well as the timeline and engagement objectives.

Since that time staff have rolled out two public engagement campaigns - one during the summer of 2022 and one during the late-spring and early summer of 2023. As part of these campaigns thousands of Burnaby residents, business-owners, and others were engaged through a broad array of engagement activities and formats including Pop-Up events, an online survey, community partner focus sessions, Visioning Dialogue events, and more. The What We Heard Report for the first Phase of this engagement (Summer 2022) was received by Planning and Development Committee on February 8, 2023. The

What We Learned Report from the second Phase (Summer 2023) will be brought to Council in October of 2023.

Additional public engagement phase are planned for 2024 and 2025. The Citizens’ Assembly on Livable and Resilient Neighbourhoods will be one *additional* engagement tactic that will complement the many other engagement activities planned for Burnaby 2050.

2.2 Urban Resilient Futures

On September 20, 2021 Council authorized staff to partner with SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue and Vancity on the Urban Resilient Futures Initiative. That report indicated that the Urban Resilient Futures Initiative would include “the development of a Citizens’ Assembly on climate initiatives and resilience, including the development of recommendations by the Assembly, and the commitment by Council to take into consideration and respond to recommendations provided by the Assembly.” It also specified that, “the engagement planned through the Citizens’ Assembly will complement, but not replace the public engagement processes required for the City of Burnaby to update its Official Community Plan (OCP).”

A number of the Urban Resilient Futures Initiative outcomes have already been completed, including the Zero Emission Building Retrofit Taskforce and the Neighbourhood Climate Action Projects and Awareness Campaign.

3.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

3.1 Citizens’ Assembly

A Citizens’ Assembly is an engagement or public participation technique that brings together a group of people selected at random from the general public to create a “mini public” that is representative of the demographics of the larger public. The selected members of the Assembly then have the opportunity to learn, deliberate, debate, and deeply consider public policy questions and make recommendations to decision-makers. Described in greater detail in the attached Council Overview (Attachment 1), the Citizens’ Assembly process addresses “critical shortcomings in conventional engagement” by:

- Seeking out participants who reflect the full diversity of the broader community;
- Creating conditions for learning and informed input;
- Building empathy to reduce interest-based polarization; and
- Presenting recommendations to decision-makers that improve the quality and legitimacy of government action.

Using a Citizens’ Assembly as component of the Burnaby 2050 Official Community Plan engagement process is an opportunity to engage deeply with residents on critical and challenging policy questions that require the time to learn and understand different perspectives, and work through different alternatives and their trade-offs. It’s also an

opportunity to demonstrate leadership and innovation in community engagement among BC local governments.

3.2 Citizens’ Assembly Council Overview

As described in the Council Overview (Attachment 1) SFU Centre for Dialogue will lead the Citizens’ Assembly process with input and support from the Burnaby OCP staff team. The Centre for Dialogue will design and convene the Citizens’ Assembly with “editorial autonomy” similar to the arm’s length relationship established between the Centre for Dialogue and City of Burnaby during the *Your Voice, Your Home* process. This autonomy and distance from the City supports greater democratic legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of the public.

The Citizens’ Assembly process will include the following key components:

- **Advisory Committee:** This impartial body will oversee the integrity and balance of the Assembly process. Their role will be advising the Centre for Dialogue on elements of the process design.
- **Civic Lottery:** The Centre for Dialogue will use a multi-stage selection process to select 40-50 participants to sit on the Assembly. This process will use random sampling with specific demographic recruitment criteria to ensure the final group represents Burnaby’s diversity.
- **Assembly Sessions:** The Assembly will meet over 7-8 Saturdays through Q1 and Q2 of 2024. They will begin with a learning and visioning phase, move into a deliberation phase, and conclude with a recommendations phase.
- **Recommendations:** Before the recommendations are finalized, they will first be circulated to key experts as well as the public for further input. Following their deliberations the Assembly will provide a set of OCP policy recommendations to Council which will be considered by the OCP staff team along with all other engagement data as an input into the development of the OCP. Once the final recommendations are received, Burnaby City Council will provide a formal, public response to each recommendation. The Assembly will also reconvene to provide feedback on the draft version of the OCP during the public comment period in early 2025.

This project will take place between August of 2023 and August of 2024; the timeline for the Citizens’ Assembly is described in detail on page 4 of the Attachment.

3.3 Council Engagement with the Citizens’ Assembly

There are several potential opportunities for City Council to engage with the Citizen’s Assembly process, described on page 6 of the Attachment. These include: providing early input into the goals, participating in interviews to inform Assembly design, receiving progress updates, engaging with the Assembly itself, and responding to the Assembly’s recommendations.

3.4 Next Steps

Staff will continue to work with the Centre for Dialogue to design the Citizens’ Assembly through this fall. Staff will play a key role in ensuring that the Assembly topics support the City’s decision-making needs and are grounded in evidence. The Assembly Advisory Committee will help to ensure the way issues are discussed are balanced and invite multiple perspectives, and the Assembly members will also provide input into the issues they would like to prioritize. Some of the policy topics the Assembly may consider include:

- Responding to climate change through land use and transportation policy;
- Improving resilience to climate change and natural hazards through the OCP;
- The trade-offs between different housing and employment growth scenarios;
- Improving housing choices across the City of Burnaby; and
- The factors that will support livability and help residents to thrive as the City grows and changes.

While the Citizens’ Assembly provides an opportunity to engage very deeply on a set of topics, the general public will also have the opportunity to engage on the same set of topics through the OCP’s robust engagement program.

4.0 COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Centre for Dialogue will be the lead spokesperson for the Citizens’ Assembly, however, all communication about the work of the Citizens’ Assembly will be coordinated with the City of Burnaby to ensure alignment with the OCP communications and engagement program. The Centre for Dialogue will notify the public about the upcoming Civic Lottery and host information about the Citizens’ Assembly on their website.

5.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Starting in 2021 the City of Burnaby committed to contributing \$150,000 to the Urban Resilient Futures Initiative over the course of three years. The City’s funding commitment was fulfilled in the 2023 fiscal year.

Respectfully submitted,

E. W. Kozak, General Manager Planning and Development

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Council Overview: Burnaby Citizens’ Assembly on Livable and Resilient Neighbourhoods, August 23, 2023

REPORT CONTRIBUTORS

This report was prepared by Erin Rennie, Planner 3 and reviewed by Lee-Ann Garnett, Deputy General Manager Planning and Development.

SFU

MORRIS J. WOSK
CENTRE FOR DIALOGUE

Council Overview:

Burnaby Citizens' Assembly on Livable and Resilient Neighbourhoods

Last Updated: August 23, 2023



Cover photo by [Alfred Shum](#), Writ3Click Photography

Part of the Urban Resilient
Futures Burnaby initiative



THE OPPORTUNITY OF A GENERATION



Your Voice, Your Home Community Recommendations Workshop (City of Burnaby, 2019).

Burnaby, BC’s third largest city, is embarking on the development of a new Official Community Plan to guide and manage growth between now and 2050. On paper, this means tackling issues such as land use, transportation, housing, the environment, community facilities and services, and social and economic planning. In practice, this once-in-a-generation document carries significant hope and risk, with the need to create the framework that will transition Burnaby to a zero-emissions city, welcome more than 100,000 new residents, and tackle the cost of living in one of the world’s most unaffordable housing markets. To shape this work, Burnaby has identified guiding principles, stating that the Official Community Plan should be: visionary; creative and fun; evidence-based and data-driven; benefitting from a “systems thinking” approach; climate-focussed; and innovative and forward-thinking.

A CITIZENS’ ASSEMBLY ON LIVABLE AND RESILIENT NEIGHBOURHOODS

On September 20, 2021, Burnaby City Council, on the [recommendation of the Chief Administrative Officer](#), [authorized staff](#) to join the Urban Resilient Futures Burnaby initiative and enter into an MoU with the program’s founding partners, SFU’s Morris J Wosk Centre for Dialogue and Vancity. Council’s endorsement included a commitment to participate in a “Citizens’ Assembly on Livable and Resilient Neighbourhoods and Official Community Plan” in which Council would consider and respond to recommendations from the Assembly. This commitment extends the City of Burnaby’s ongoing leadership in participatory democracy among its peers in Metro Vancouver, as demonstrated through the IAP2-recognized *Your Voice, Your Home* initiative and the Mayor’s Task Force on Community Housing.

The subsequent MoU confirmed that the Assembly will be designed and convened with editorial autonomy by SFU's Morris J Wosk Centre for Dialogue, a national leader in deliberative democracy and public participation. This is similar to the collaborative but arm's length relationship established between the Centre for Dialogue and City of Burnaby during the *Your Voice, Your Home* public engagement process and follows OECD-cited best practices for Citizens' Assemblies. An Advisory Committee will assist the Centre for Dialogue in making editorial decisions in a fair, impartial and transparent manner, based on strategic integration with the City's decision-making needs, as well as input from community voices and technical experts.

WHAT IS A CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY?

Internationally, the OECD has identified a “deliberative wave” of citizens' assemblies and similar processes that are transforming how cities and other levels of government engage residents on complex issues. These processes use modern engagement approaches to address critical shortcomings in conventional engagement by:

- Seeking out participants who reflect the full diversity of their communities;
- Creating conditions for learning and informed input;
- Building empathy to reduce interest-based polarization; and
- Presenting actionable recommendations to decision-makers that can increase the quality, democratic legitimacy and social consensus for City actions.

The Burnaby Citizens' Assembly on Livable and Resilient Neighbourhoods will adhere to these high standards as set out by the OECD. The Assembly will be a representative body of 40-50 residents who will meet over 7-8 Saturdays to learn, work through trade-offs, find hidden consensus and create recommendations for Burnaby's new Official Community Plan. Throughout the Assembly, the Centre for Dialogue will work in close partnership with the City to create an evidence-informed process that supports the City's OCP decision-making and integrates with City-led engagement activities. The Assembly will not replace the broad-based public engagement processes led by the City of Burnaby, but will help to deepen engagement so that residents better understand the constraints faced by decision-makers. Members from the wider community will have opportunities to interact with the Assembly, helping to spread evidence-based discussion more widely. This work will take place in ways that invest deeply in community relationships, advances accessibility and inclusion, and supports the City's commitments to Truth and Reconciliation.

HOW WILL THE BURNABY CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY WORK?

The Burnaby Citizens' Assembly on Livable and Resilient Neighbourhoods will be designed and delivered in the following phases:

Phase	Time Period
Strategy & Design	Q4 2023
Civic Lottery	Late 2023 / Early 2024
Assembly Learning & Visioning	Q1 2024
Assembly Deliberation	Q2 2024
Assembly Recommendations	Q2 2024
Response and Follow-Through	Summer 2024 Onward

*Timings approximate

Strategy & Design

The Strategy & Design Phase of the Assembly will include a number of steps, including:

- Seeking strategic input from Burnaby City Council
- Developing protocols for working collaboratively with staff and Council
- Conducting scoping research in the community
- Forming an Advisory Committee
- Convening a co-design workshop to receive expert input from City staff
- Establishing a dedicated communications presence
- Finalizing civic lottery selection criteria and Assembly discussion topics
- Creating evidence-based discussion materials

In addition to input from the City of Burnaby, the design of the Assembly will be informed by experts, community groups, proponents of specific viewpoints, Indigenous perspectives, and members of equity-seeking communities. Scoping research during this phase may include some combination of interviews, a media scan, co-design workshops, and/or a review of findings from the City's Official Community Plan engagement.

Civic Lottery

A Civic Lottery will be used to select 40-50 residents to sit on the Assembly, who together will broadly reflect the demographic diversity of Burnaby based on census data. In the first stage of this process, 10,000 to 20,000 households will receive an invitation by mail to participate in the Civic Lottery. Those residents who respond will then be entered into the second stage of the Civic Lottery, where the final Assembly participants will be selected in a manner that satisfies demographic recruitment criteria while giving all volunteers as equal a chance as possible to be

selected¹. This process will result in a “mini public” that is highly representative of the diversity of Burnaby. To support equity in participation, funding will be available to offset expenses or lost income that would prevent Assembly Members from attending (e.g. honoraria, child or elder care expenses, etc.).

Criteria used for the Civic Lottery may include demographics such as:

- Age
- Gender identity
- Renter/homeowner status
- Location of residence
- Level of education
- Ethnicity and/or language spoken at home

Assembly Learning & Visioning

The Assembly will start with a phase for learning and visioning to connect members with evidence-based information and diverse perspectives, including discussion materials and presentations from experts and proponents. These initial meetings will also build upon the early phases of City-led engagement for the Official Community Plan and will develop guiding principles for decision-making. At defined moments in the Assembly, members will interact with the wider community to spark broad public interest, generate ideas and model dialogue as an alternative to polarized debate.

Assembly Deliberation & Recommendations

Next, the Assembly will enter a deliberation phase where members examine municipal policy options and work through trade-offs in relation to their values. City Council will also be invited to interact with the Assembly during this phase. Before finalizing its recommendations, the Assembly will seek feedback on its emerging directions from experts, city representatives, community stakeholders and all Burnaby residents so that they can optimize their final recommendations to reflect specific needs within the community, as well as the real-world constraints faced by decision-makers.

Response and Follow-Through

The Centre for Dialogue will assist representatives from the Assembly in sharing their recommendations with the wider community and decision-makers. Burnaby City Council has committed to provide a formal, public response to each recommendation. When the City releases its draft Official Community Plan, the Centre for Dialogue has committed to reconvene representatives from the Assembly to review and provide feedback on this draft.

¹ Software is typically used for this stage in the Civic Lottery. The logic of this software is published transparently in the pre-eminent journal Nature: (<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-021-03788-6>).

OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT WITH ASSEMBLY



Engagement with Council will be critical to ensure the Assembly design supports Burnaby's OCP process, create opportunities for the Assembly to understand the decision-making constraints faced by Council, and provide Council with access to high-quality community feedback through the Assembly. Options for Council engagement include:

- Providing feedback on the Assembly goals and strategic alignment
- Participating in one-on-one interviews to inform Assembly design
- Receiving progress updates at future Council meetings
- Engaging with Assembly members at key milestones
- Providing feedback to the Assembly's draft recommendations
- Formally responding to the Assembly's final recommendations

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL FEEDBACK

The Centre for Dialogue greatly appreciates all feedback from Council so that the Assembly can be as useful and successful as possible. The Centre also requests specific feedback on the following areas:

- **What would Council like to learn from the Citizens' Assembly?**
- **What demographics does Council feel are important to include in the Civic Lottery?**
- **How would Council like to interact with the Assembly while it is meeting?**
- **How would Council like to receive and respond to the Assembly's final recommendations?**