

**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.