

SFU

MORRIS J. WOSK
CENTRE FOR DIALOGUE

Council Overview:

Burnaby Citizens' Assembly on Livable and Resilient Neighbourhoods

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Part of the Urban Resilient
Futures Burnaby initiative



City of
Burnaby

Vancity

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?**