

TO: MAYOR & COUNCILLORS
FROM: GENERAL MANAGER CORPORATE SERVICES
SUBJECT: **SU: CIVIC INNOVATION LAB INITIATIVES**
PURPOSE: To provide Council with an update on Civic Innovation Lab initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the report titled 'SU: Civic Innovation Lab Initiatives' dated January 13, 2026, be received for information.

1.0 POLICY SECTION

The City of Burnaby's ongoing support of, and involvement with, the Civic Innovation Lab is pursuant to:

- The executed contribution agreement between the City of Burnaby, Simon Fraser University, and the Civic Innovation Lab Society;
- The Burnaby Strategic Plan and the Core Value of Innovation, "We seek out creative approaches to improve our services"; and
- The City's operational goal of enhancing collaborative partnerships with educational institutions.

2.0 BACKGROUND

At its meeting of March 7, 2022, Council approved the formation of a jointly controlled, non-profit Society with Simon Fraser University (SFU), the Civic Innovation Lab Society (the 'Lab'). The Lab was officially incorporated under the *B.C. Societies Act* on May 16, 2022. The Lab's mandate is to research and develop innovative solutions to civic issues and challenges, in addition to providing educational advancement through collaborative learning and research opportunities.

The governing board of the Lab operates with equal representation from the City and SFU, with current membership outlined below in Table 1. The Chair position rotates annually between a City and SFU representative. Councillor Tetrault is the appointed Council liaison to the Lab, named at Council's December 8, 2022 meeting.

Table 1.

Name	Org.	Organizational Position	Board Position
Dugan O’Neil	SFU	Vice-President, Research and Innovation	Chair
Leon Gous	COB	Chief Administrative Officer	Vice-Chair
Juli Halliwell	COB	General Manager Corporate Services	Treasurer
Mary O’Brien	SFU	Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies	Secretary

Council last received an update on Lab initiatives at its December 2, 2024 meeting. Additional project specific updates are brought forward to Council on an as-needed basis.

3.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

The Civic Innovation Lab operates within a Board-approved set of research priority areas, outlined below in Table 2.

Table 2.

Research Priority Areas
Climate Action: Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction, Adaption, and Mitigation
Mobility: Accelerating the Shift to Sustainable Transportation Options
Smart Data Collection: Harnessing Data Collection Methods and Feedback Loops
Equity and Intersectionality: Advancing Social Justice and Inclusion
Truth and Reconciliation: Furthering the ongoing process of Truth, Reconciliation and Decolonization.

Within this broad framework, the Lab engages with SFU researchers and staff, City staff, and local non-profit organizations to identify and undertake projects that benefit the well-being of Burnaby residents and contribute to the operational goals of both founding partners.

Since its founding the Lab has been involved in over 30 projects, with 18 currently active. These projects span 15 SFU departments and 10 municipal divisions, involving 25 researchers and over 100 students engaged. Several projects also engage directly with Burnaby community members and with other educational institutions as secondary partners, including the University of British Columbia and the University of Northern British Columbia.

A summary of select projects is provided in Attachment 1 to this report. Additional information is also available in Attachment 2 to this report - Civic Innovation Lab 2024-2025 Annual Report. Staff note that some project details have evolved since the Annual Report was published. Further updates on Lab initiatives will be brought forward to Council as needed on a project-specific basis and via an annual update report.

4.0 COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A number of current Civic Innovation Lab projects engage directly with Burnaby community members or will do so at a later stage in the project. The level and type of this engagement varies with each project but generally takes the shape of targeted surveys (consult), public events (inform/involve), and knowledge co-generation activities (collaborate/empower).

An example of the latter engagement is the direct involvement of Burnaby community members living with dementia and their care partners in assessing selected sections of the local pedestrian environment for cognitive accessibility. More information on this project, the Dementia-Inclusive Streets And Community Access, Participation And Engagement (DemSCAPE), is included in Attachment 1 of this report.

5.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The City's 2026 financial contributions to the Civic Innovation Lab were submitted as part of the regular 2026 annual budgeting process for Council's consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Juli Halliwell, General Manager Corporate Services

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Overview of Key Civic Innovation Lab Initiatives

Attachment 2 – Civic Innovation Lab 2024-2025 Annual Report

REPORT CONTRIBUTORS

This report was prepared by Rebekah Mahaffey, Executive Director Civic Innovation Lab and reviewed by Kilim Park and Abdul Zahird, Research Project Managers Civic Innovation Lab, and Lisa Dotto, Manager Administrative Support.