

# REPORT

## *Community Services*

**To:** Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council      **Date:** November 18, 2024

**From:** Blair Fryer, Acting Director, Community Services      **File:**

**Item #:** 2024-636

**Subject:** **Community Advisory Assembly Update and Reports**

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. **THAT** the Community Advisory Assembly update report and attached group-generated reports about road reallocation and climate action be received for information; and
  2. **THAT** staff from Transportation and Climate Action be directed to report back to the Assembly members about how they will consider and incorporate the group's feedback in their work.
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### **PURPOSE**

To provide an update to Council on the work of the Community Advisory Assembly pilot project, and share two summary reports developed for City staff as a result of the Assembly's discussions on road reallocation and climate action.

### **BACKGROUND**

The City's Community Advisory Assembly is a pilot project that is trying a new model for committee-style public engagement. The group has been meeting monthly since January 2024, with the exception of a summer break in July and August, following an open call for applications from New Westminster residents and a masked selection process based on applicants' demographic profiles. More information about the application and selection process can be found on the [Assembly startup webpage](#) on

the City’s website. Details about the Assembly meeting schedule and meeting minutes are available [on this page](#).

The [Assembly’s Terms of Reference](#), as adopted by group members and by Council, outline that the Assembly will provide regular updates to City Council on their work through reports and delegations. This report is intended as one of the regular updates.

The Assembly’s role is to advise City Council and City staff across all departments on plans and actions related to Council’s Strategic Priorities, and other current City projects, plans, and policies.

Topics for the Assembly to discuss are identified by City staff based on current workplans, and key principles: a) that residents will be impacted; and b) that the Assembly will have a genuine and meaningful opportunity to help shape the outcomes. The Assembly has also had the opportunity to suggest topics for discussion.

Below is a summary of the Assembly meetings held to date, the location of each meeting, and the primary meeting topics:

Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Main Meeting Topic
Thursday, January 25	Council Chambers at City Hall	Assembly onboarding and pre-term evaluations
Saturday, February 24	Queensborough Community Centre	Community Belonging and Connecting
Wednesday, March 13	New Westminster Public Library, Main Branch	Community Belonging and Connecting
Saturday, April 20	Sapperton Community Hall	Community Belonging and Connecting and road reallocation
Tuesday, May 14	Century House	Road reallocation and Assembly member ideas for future topics
Saturday, June 15	təməsewtxw Aquatic and Community Centre	Climate action and intersectionality (topic chosen by the Assembly)
Thursday, September 26	Century House	Cultural observances
Saturday, October 26	Queensborough Community Centre	Cultural observances

At the May 6, 2024 Council meeting, several Assembly members presented to Council the first set of recommendations developed by the group. The recommendations were focused on strengthening community belonging and connecting, which is Council’s central strategic priority for the term. Staff are currently working on a report back to Council and the Assembly with a high-level feasibility review of these recommendations.

Since presenting to Council in May, the Assembly has concluded discussions on two additional topics: road reallocation, and climate change and intersectionality. The

Assembly's discussions have been summarized in reports that are intended as advice for City staff as they further work in these areas. These reports are being shared with Council by way of update on the group's work and process.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Road Reallocation Discussion Process and Report to Staff**

At their April and May 2024 meetings, the Community Advisory Assembly learned about and discussed the City's climate action goal of reallocating road space to people-centred public uses. As outlined in the Seven Bold Steps, "a minimum of 10% of street space that currently only serves motor vehicles, excluding transit, will be reallocated for sustainable transportation or public gathering by 2030."

This topic was brought forward to the Assembly by City staff, with the goal for the group to discuss and provide advice on how to introduce road reallocation projects to the community in positive ways. In staff's experience, climate action efforts and the concept of road reallocation are broadly supported by the community. However, place-specific road reallocation projects are often met with resistance from some community members.

Assembly members received a presentation from Transportation staff and had the opportunity to ask questions about how the City is approaching road reallocation, including an overview of the Council-approved Active Transportation Network Plan. Assembly members then discussed concerns and benefits of reallocating road space, and brainstormed recommendations to City staff to increase public understanding and support for these projects.

Following the Assembly discussions, the third-party Assembly facilitators drafted a summary report for the group's review. The draft report was circulated by email to Assembly members, who were invited to provide feedback and suggested revisions. No changes were suggested. At the start of the Assembly's June meeting, the facilitators reviewed the draft recommendations and offered another opportunity for changes. There were no comments, and nearly all Assembly members in attendance approved sending the summary report to City staff.

Attachment 1 is the road reallocation summary report as approved by the Assembly.

### **Climate Action Discussion Process and Report to Staff**

As part of the Assembly's May meeting, members brainstormed and discussed in small groups potential topics for the Assembly to cover in one or two future meetings. In small groups, Assembly members shared their ideas for topics and each small group developed a list of 3-5 topics they most wanted the whole group to consider. Following the small group discussions, all members in attendance used dot stickers to choose their top topics from the list proposed.

The topic that received the most support was climate change, in connection with its impacts on different vulnerable communities, or intersectionality. This Assembly-chosen topic was the focus of the June meeting. Staff from the City's Climate Action team attended the meeting as active listeners and committed to report back how they might incorporate the Assembly's discussions into the City's work on climate.

At the June meeting, Assembly members were asked to reflect on their own experiences of climate change in relation to different, intersecting aspects of their identity. Rounds of dialogue were held, with each round focused on members who shared an aspect of common identity, such as youth, elders, racialized and Indigenous members, and those with experience of disability, neuro-divergence and/or mental health. Through the rounds of discussion, members were asked to speak to the following questions:

- How does this group experience the impacts of climate change?
- How does this group experience the benefits of climate action?
- What climate solutions are emerging from this group?

Through the discussion, other aspects of identity emerged as themes: newcomers to Canada, parents, LGBTQ2S+, and lower-income groups.

Similar to the process with the road reallocation discussion, following the Assembly's discussions on climate change, the facilitators drafted a summary report for the group's review. The report was circulated by email and reviewed at the start of the September meeting. At that time, members identified a few additions to the report. With the understanding the additions would be made, the Assembly members approved the report to be finalized, shared with City staff and provided to Council for information.

Attachment 2 is the climate change and intersectionality summary report as approved by the Assembly.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Pending Council's approval, staff from Transportation and Climate Action will reconnect with Assembly members to report back on how they may be able to incorporate the group's input into their work. For the road reallocation suggestions, in particular, input from other City divisions will be required to report back; for example, the Communications division.

Further Assembly meetings are scheduled on November 21 and December 11. The Assembly is also planning to present to Council again before the end of the year, on their recommendations for how the City can equitably acknowledge cultural observances. A final meeting of the pilot term is currently being planned for January 2025, and this will likely include a wrap-up celebration with members of Council invited to attend.

Following the end of the Community Advisory Assembly pilot year, a formal evaluation of the pilot project and Assembly model will proceed that includes input from Council, City staff, the Assembly Steering Committee, facilitators, and Assembly members. The evaluation results and recommendations for the future of the Assembly initiative will come forward to Council in 2025.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

No immediate financial implications are anticipated as a result of the Assembly discussions on road reallocation and climate action.

**INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON**

The Community Advisory Assembly process is led by the Public Engagement team, with support from Legislative Services. Staff from multiple departments are supporting the Assembly’s work as subject-matter experts depending on the topic under discussion.

**OPTIONS**

There are three options provided for Council’s consideration:

- 1. THAT the Community Advisory Assembly update report and attached group-generated reports about road reallocation and climate action be received for information;
- 2. THAT staff from Transportation and Climate Action be directed to report back to the Assembly members about how they will consider and incorporate the group’s feedback in their work;
- 3. THAT Council provide staff with other direction.

Staff recommend options 1 and 2.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – Reallocation of Road Space: Summary of Assembly Discussions, June 2024

Attachment 2 – Climate Change and Intersectionality: Summary of Assembly Discussions, September 2024

**APPROVALS**

This report was prepared by:

Jennifer Miller, Acting Deputy Director, Community Services

This report was reviewed by:

Assembly facilitator (contractor) Aftab Erfan  
Erica Tiffany, Transportation Planning Supervisor  
Mike Anderson, Manager, Transportation  
Leya Behra, Deputy Director, Climate Action

This report was approved by:

Blair Fryer, Acting Director, Community Services  
Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer