

2023

Civic Innovators: Renovate the Public Hearing Project Summaries



CityHive

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Land Acknowledgment

CityHive is based on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətaɫ (Tseil-Waututh) Nations. We also recognize the Katzie, Kwantlen, Kwikwetlem, Qayqayt, Semiahmoo, S'ólh Téméxw (Stó:lō), Stz'uminus, scəwaθenaʔɫ təməxʷ (Tsawwassen), and all Coast Salish peoples on whose land we do our work. This program was the first time we reached out to youth outside of the Lower Mainland and therefore would like to also extend our gratitude to the Esquimalt, Nisga'a, and Syilx, as some of our participants also joined in from these lands throughout the course of this program.

As we discuss Public Hearings and colonial institutions of government, many of us enter this conversation as settlers and uninvited guests on unceded territory. It is important for us to learn about those who have stewarded these lands for millennia and continue to steward these lands, as well as to acknowledge that the history of planning, place-making, and city-building has historically been, and continues to be exclusive, racist, and colonial.

I invite you to think about how the colonial structures currently in place continue to oppress and strip away rights not only from the original stewards of this land but also from the soil, water, animals, bugs, and birds who we share mutual lifepaths with. Following this reflection, I encourage you to take a civic action to undo some of the past harms of so-called Canada's colonization.

Executive Summary

Civic Innovators: Renovate the Public Hearing was a 3-month long cohort program for youth ages 18-30 across the Province of British Columbia (B.C.). Sessions ran between April 2023 and June 2023. The cohort was facilitated by two co-leads and two support facilitators. Throughout the program, members from different City Councils, non-profits, industry professionals, and engaged citizens were invited to speak on their experience with the Public Hearing process. Topics during the cohort focused on themes like Elected Perspectives, Indigenous Knowledge, The History of Public Hearings, and former research on public hearings. Other practical workshops were also provided on project management skills, giving and receiving feedback, and presentation skills.

The program was designed to follow CityHive's knowledge-to-action framework, support youth to activate their networks, and increase their understanding of civic governance and decision-making processes. This program feeds into the ongoing research through the Renovate the Public Hearing initiative at SFU's Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue

Some of the guiding questions for the program were:

1. What is the current state of Public Hearings in the Province of British Columbia?
2. What are the barriers that people face when engaging with Public Hearings?
3. Are there alternatives to the Public Hearing process?

The latter half of the program consisted of 'action sessions', where the cohort formed groups to investigate public hearings in B.C. and create an alternative to the current system.

This report summarizes the projects presented at the final event.

Program Goals and Objectives

Public input on planning decisions is an integral part of ensuring good relations between the public and government. The Public Hearing model has been hailed as the “cornerstone of democracy,”⁽¹⁾ due to their nature of allowing the public to voice their opinion on issues that matter most to them. However, in recent years the process surrounding housing developments has resulted in “low satisfaction, additional costs, lengthy delays, and sometimes trauma for those involved.”⁽²⁾ Through the Renovate the Public Hearing process, we seek to engage youth voices that can “identify improved laws and procedures that result in more housing that is affordable, support meaningful democratic engagement, advance principles of equity and Reconciliation, improve the efficiency and quality of decisions and strengthen communities.”⁽³⁾



01. Knowledge

Build knowledge of how local government operates, including jurisdiction, decision-making, and levers for change; Develop an understanding of how the public hearing currently operates and investigate different ways of working to heighten community engagement from various stakeholders.



02. Community Building

Bringing youth together to create connections across educational, professional and/or cultural silos through creative and experiential project development and learning together; Develop a cross-cultural understanding of varied lived experiences (including urban/rural) and how they relate to individual and collective experiences of public hearings and community engagement.



03. Action and Experimentation

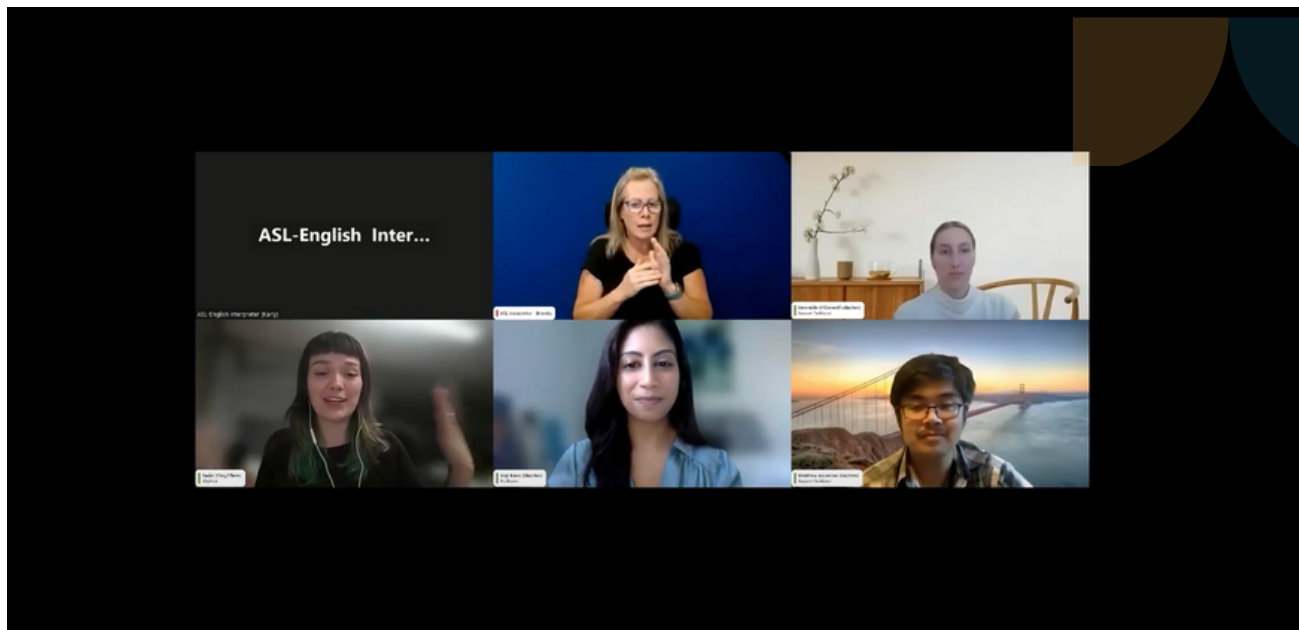
Inviting youth to the decision-making process and providing them with a forum where they can ideate and experiment in a safe environment to improve their civic landscape so that it better reflects their wants, desires, and cultural needs; Equipping the youth with knowledge to activate their communities and to continue to engage youth and other populations after the end of the program

1. Sherry R Arnstein, “A Ladder of Citizen Participation” (1969) 35:4 J Am Plan Assoc 216 at216. In Study Paper on Public Hearings: An Examination of Public Participation in the Adoption of Local Bylaws on Land Use and Planning, page 1.

2. <https://www.sfu.ca/dialogue/news/job-postings/Administrative-Coordinator.html>

3. <https://www.sfu.ca/dialogue/news/job-postings/Administrative-Coordinator.html>

WATCH: CIVIC INNOVATORS: RENOVATE THE PUBLIC HEARING COMMUNITY SHOWCASE



Many thanks to the Co-leads, Anji Rana and Sadie Gilker and Support Facilitators Emerald O'Donnell and Matthew Asuncion

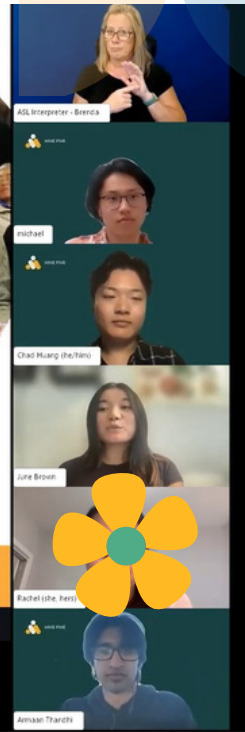
ASL Interpreting provided by Still Interpreting

Public Hearings: A Praxis for Access: Access, Outreach, Youth Engagement

Team name: HiveFive
Rachel Tong, June Brown, Chad Huang,
Armaan Thandhi, and Michael Ma

A PUBLIC HEARING IS...

- Platform for all residents to voice opinions on civic matters
- A way residents can be a part of democratic decision making



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Community-Led Public Hearings

Team name: Team Equinox
Maya Beakhouse, Amy Van Bergen, Tsz Him Hymns Chu, and Griffin Campbell

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. The main window displays a presentation slide with the following content:

- Thanks!** (in a red rounded rectangle)
- To CityHive for the opportunity to learn and dream together** (in a white rounded rectangle)
- CREDITS:** This presentation template was created by Slidesgo, including icons by Flaticon and infographics & images by Freepik
- An illustration of four diverse people (two men and two women) pushing a blue shopping cart. One woman is holding a red flag with a speech bubble icon.

On the right side, there is a vertical gallery view of participants:

- Early (ch/hes)
- ASL Interpreter - ...
- ASL Interpreter - Brenda
- Hymns Chu (ch/hes)
- Amy Van Bergen (ch/hes)
- Maya Beakhouse (ch/hes)
- Griffin Campbell (ch/hes)

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Rebuilding the Public Hearing through addressing its issues

Team: PARS

Pak Yin Lau, Amy Zeng, Renmart Buhay, Steven Sharma

“The hearing procedure tends to reflect only the known views of well identified members and interest groups” (Thomas A. Heberlein)

Age Group	In-person public hearing attendance	Online public hearing visits
25-34	~10%	~20%
35-44	~10%	~15%
45-54	~10%	~15%
55-64	~30%	~25%
65+	~40%	~30%

Ages <25 not available from all sources and excluded for comparison

ASL-English Inter...
ASL-English interpreter (Karly)
ASL Interpreter - Brenda
Steven Sharma (The Min Mio)
Pak Yin Lau
Amy Zeng (the her...)
Renmart Buhay

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Renovate the Public Hearing

Team name: Team Something
Denise Cheung, Frederique Lafontaine, and
Gurjashan Singh Dhummi

The image shows a screenshot of a presentation slide on the left and a video conference interface on the right. The slide is titled "RECOMMENDED PRACTICES" and lists four bullet points: "Ask don't assume", "Create conditions for youth to succeed", "Provide compensation", and "Be thoughtful in selecting spaces to meet". To the right of the list is a large graphic with the text "ENGAGE YOUTH IN REAL WORK WITH TANGIBLE OUTCOMES". The video conference interface shows three participants: "ASL Interpreter - Brenda", "Gurjashan Singh Dhummi (he/him)", and "Denise Cheung". A fourth participant, "Frederique Lafontaine", is visible in a smaller window at the bottom right. The presentation slide also shows "Page 12 / 25" and "61%" at the bottom.

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Acknowledgements



MORRIS J. WOSK
CENTRE FOR DIALOGUE

Thank you to the entire Renovate the Public Hearing team at Simon Fraser University (SFU) Centre for Dialogue for your support, all the guest speakers that came to our sessions, and you for reading this project summary!

Thank you to REFBC for their financial support to the CityHive program.



We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to make stronger democracies

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