



**COUNCILWOMAN
SHONTEL M. LEWIS**

DENVER DISTRICT 8

Civic Assemblies – Budget & Policy Committee

Monday, October 27th

Civic Assemblies: Background

What is a civic assembly?

A Civic Assembly brings together a diverse group of residents, selected through a civic lottery. Delegates are given time, information, and support to learn about the issue, hear from the full range of perspectives, deliberate together, and craft informed recommendations that reflect broad community support. Denver would be the first major U.S. city to commission a Civic Assembly, modeling democratic innovation for the country!



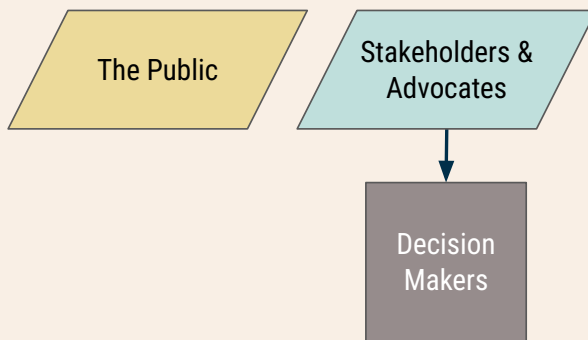
[Video explanation of civic assembly concept](#)

Why A Civic Assembly

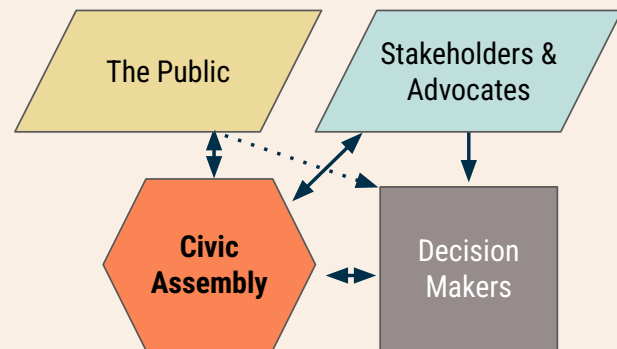


Unlike traditional political processes that may be dominated by interest groups or polarized rhetoric, a Civic Assembly is grounded in representative democratic deliberation.

Traditional Process



Adding a Civic Assembly



Benefits of a Civic Assembly

Of the 700+ cases documented by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Civic Assemblies accomplishments include:

Creating Breakthrough Common Ground, developing recommendations with 70% or greater support from a demographically representative ‘mini-public’ of community members

Building Trust Across Divides amid polarization and contentious political issues, creating space for honest, respectful conversations.

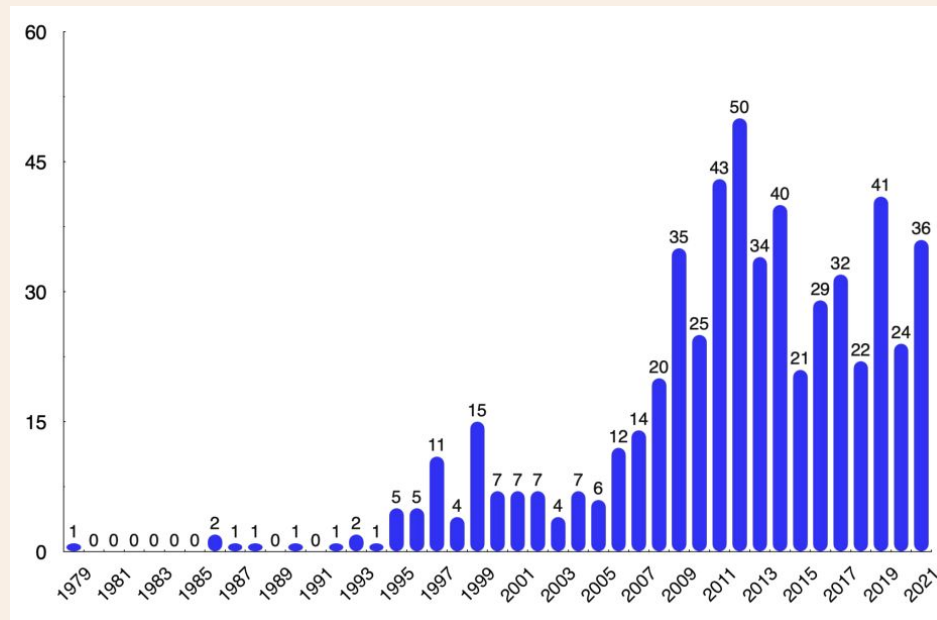
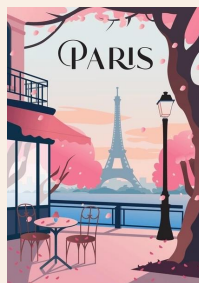
Enabling Comprehensive Solutions: balancing immediate needs with future consequences to create resilient solutions on complex topics.

Civic Assemblies around the World

United States

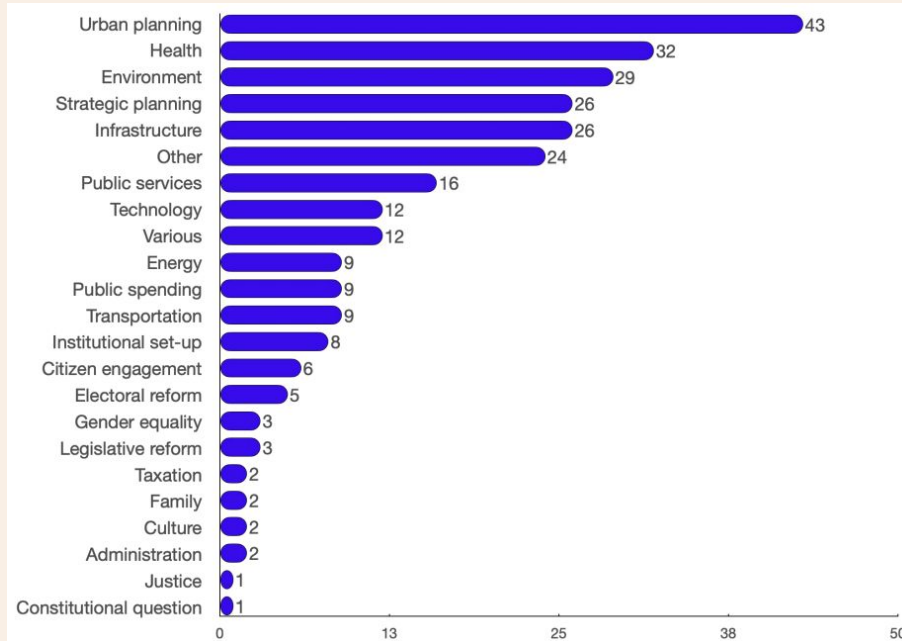


Internationally

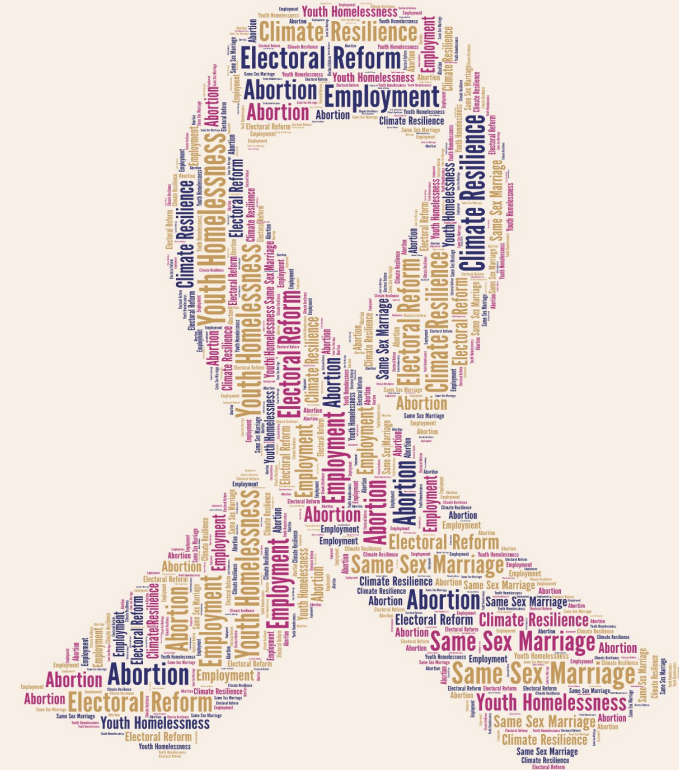


Graph by OECD shows numbers of civic assemblies held worldwide

Past Topics of Civic Assemblies



Graph details variety of topics civic assemblies have focused on. Report by OECD



Civic Assemblies: **How they work**

Key Elements

WHO

1

Participants are
selected by
Civic Lottery



WHAT

2

Enough time and supports
for **Learning and In-depth
Deliberation**



HOW

3

*Recommendations
created with
**Super Majority
Agreement***



Selection By Civic Lottery

Two step process for fairly selecting a representative assembly:



#1

Invitations sent to
random households in
the target area



#2

Recipients opt in

Learning & High Quality Deliberation

The right conditions to make sense of complex issues—together



Expert Testimony

Drawn from diverse perspectives and sources



Enough Time

Typically 4–8 days to learn, reflect, and deliberate



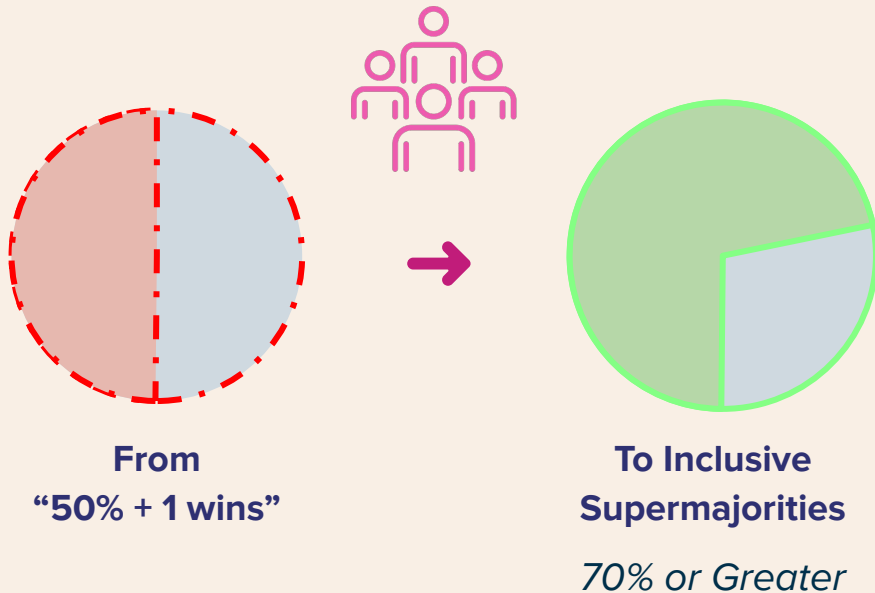
Professional Facilitation

Ensures respectful, balanced dialogue

These conditions help make sure assembly delegates:

- Understand & weigh tradeoffs of an issue
- Engage the full range of viewpoints and evidence
- Foster creative, collaborative solutions

Recommendation by Supermajority



By requiring supermajority support for final recommendations, we ensure:

- Practical, innovative, and lasting policy solutions
- Inclusive recommendations often bridging political and ideological divides
- Increased legitimacy by building public trust and broadening acceptance of the outcome

Public Engagement, Civic Lottery, Info Committee



Participants will be paid a stipend to cover 50 hours of work



An Independent Information Committee will work to provide a balanced mix of viewpoints in the testimony based on surveys of the public



Testimony will include that of activists, academics, businesses, and community members



Design, Planning, and Preparation

What is an Information Committee?



An independent committee that curates presenters and briefing materials based on input from the public & stakeholders

- Housing experts
- Developers
- Nonprofits
- Advocacy groups
- City staff
- Affected residents

The process of forming the Information Committee and gathering input can serve as an important form of public engagement, ensuring advocates are fully heard.

Example Schedule for the Assembly

Weekend #1

Build trust among the group, learn about the big picture, and identify key values



Weekend #2:

Case studies, small group work, and listen to expert testimony



Weekend #3:

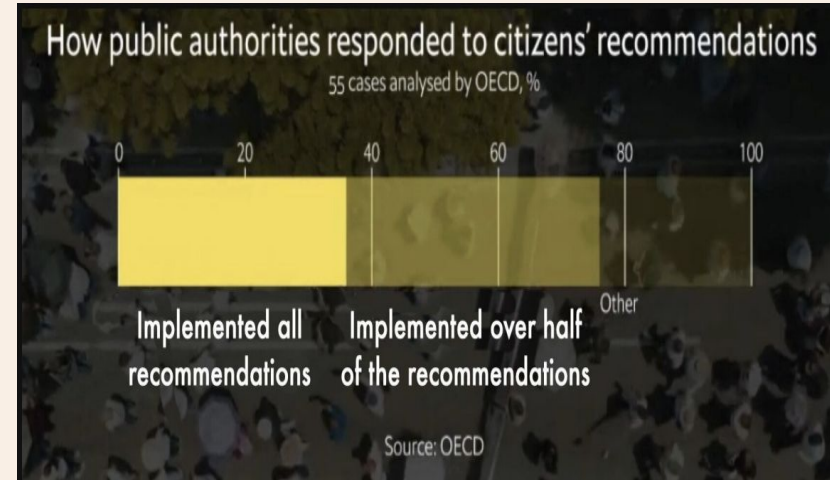
Q&A, prioritize and refine ideas, and deliberate & vote on decision

After The Assembly: Legislative Implementation



Steps for legislative Implementation

1. Formal Council Resolution or vote
2. Public commitment on the part of the Mayor and/or City Council to explain why certain parts of the recommendation were not followed-through
3. Pathway to ballot measure
4. City leadership makes commitments



In Summary: Why We Love a Civic Assembly



A randomized selection is **more representative** than a meeting of the most passionate individuals who habitually show up to City Council public comment

Decisions made by community involve **cultural and historical nuances** that a consultant might not recognize

It's easier to **bridge divides** on policy opinions when we are sharing a space and recognizing one another's common humanity

Co-governance! This is the spirit of democracy!



In Summary: Why We Love a Civic Assembly



“The [Fort Collins Civic Assembly] came together to deliberate long and hard and, very fairly, came up with a recommended solution that we feel is probably a better one that fits most of Fort Collins than if the City Council had just listened to several different activist groups that are highly engaged.”

– Mayor Jeni Arndt, City of Fort Collins, CO ([full video testimony](#))



Questions?

Appendix

Potential Timeline – Affordable Housing Civic Assembly Proposal In Denver



NOV 2025 - FEB 2026

CCD sends
~30,000
invites out to
community
members

SPRING 2026

~60 responders
are randomly
selected

~55 hours
between March
& May listening
to testimony
from community

SUMMER 2026

Assembly
reports findings
to City Council
and the Mayor's
Office

Next,

City leadership
acts on the
recommendations
of the Civic
Assembly

Estimated Costs



COSTS

- Delegate stipends
- Civic tech and public engagement
- Process design, facilitation, and staffing
- Logistics management and coordination
- Civic Lottery design, mailings, and selection
- Delegate support (childcare, meals, accessibility)
- Communications, synthesis, and reporting

ESTIMATES

Total Costs: \$350,000–450,000

50–75 Delegates

50-60 Hours of Deliberation

Delegate Costs Breakdown

50 Delegates	Minimum	Living
	wage: \$48,225	wage: \$88,225
75 Delegates	Minimum wage:	Living wage:
	\$72,338	\$132,338

Sources, Resources, & Partners



SOURCES

- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Report on Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions (2020): https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/innovative-citizen-participation-and-new-democratic-institutions_339306da-en/full-report.html

RESOURCES

- Paris Climate Assembly: <https://missionspubliques.org/pf/citizens-assembly-on-climate/?lang=en>
- Ireland Civic Assembly: <https://citizensassembly.ie/>

PARTNERS

- American Public Trust: <https://www.americanpublictrust.org/>
- Healthy Democracy: <https://healthydemocracy.org/>
- National Civic League: <https://www.nationalcivicleague.org/>
- National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation: <https://www.ncdd.org/>
- The Civic Canopy: <https://www.civicanopy.org/>