

## Civic Assemblies – Budget & Policy Committee

Monday, October 27th

# Civic Assemblies: Background





**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!



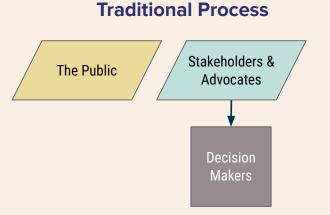
Video explanation of civic assembly concept

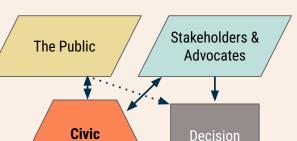
## Why A Civic Assembly



Makers

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





**Assembly** 

**Adding 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**



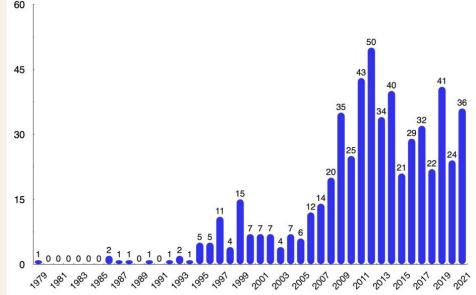




#### **Internationally**





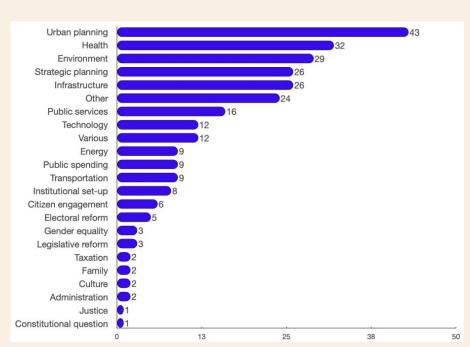




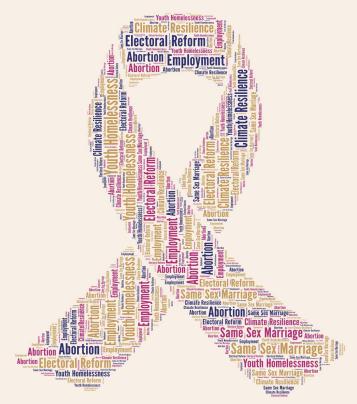
Graph by OECD shows numbers of civic assemblies held worldwide







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



# Civic Assemblies: How they work

### **Key Elements**



#### **WHO**

Participants are selected by Civic Lottery



#### **WHAT**

Enough time and supports for Learning and In-depth

Deliberation



#### **HOW**

3
Recommendations
created with
Super Majority
Agreement







#### Two step process for fairly selecting a representative assembly:



#### #1

Invitations sent to random households in the target area



#### #2

Recipients opt in





#### 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



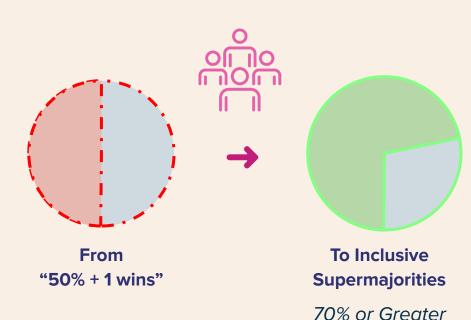
Professional Facilitation
Ensures respectful, balanced
dialogue

## 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







#### 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

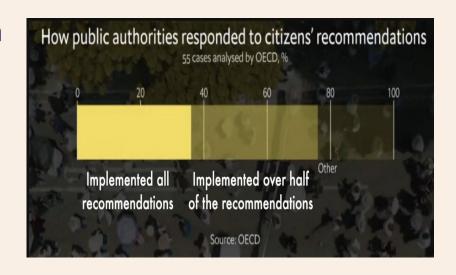


### After The Assembly: Legislative Implementation



#### **Steps for legislative Implementation**

- 1. Formal Council Resolution or vote
- 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

OF NUER DISTRICT

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 (<u>full</u> <u>video testimony</u>)



## 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: <a href="https://missionspubliques.org/pf/citizens-assembly-on-climate/?lang=en">https://missionspubliques.org/pf/citizens-assembly-on-climate/?lang=en</a>
- Ireland Civic Assembly: <a href="https://citizensassembly.ie/">https://citizensassembly.ie/</a>

#### **PARTNERS**

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