



# RENOVATE THE PUBLIC HEARING INITIATIVE

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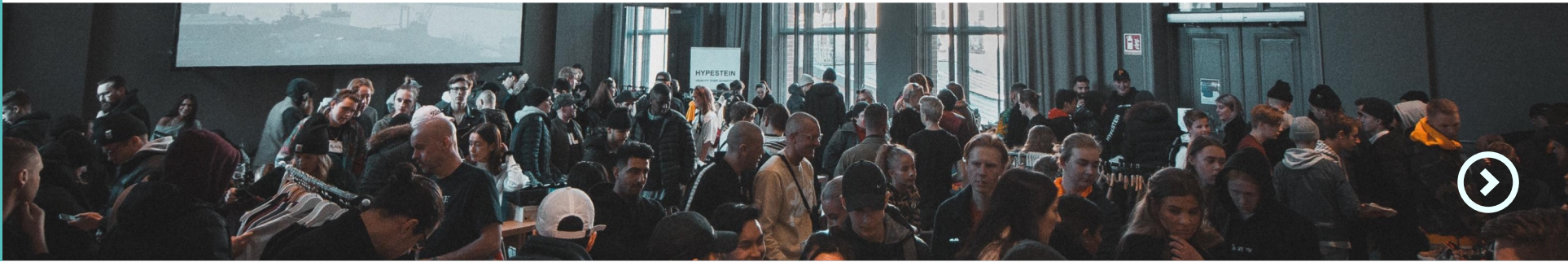
A PROJECT IN STRENGTHENING  
DEMOCRACY AT SFU MORRIS J WOSK'S  
CENTRE FOR DIALOGUE



Also available at <https://www.renovatethepublichearing.ca/media>

# Phase 1: What We Heard

- Importance of **public input** on land use decisions
- Consensus on **challenges** in public hearings
- Desire to deepen **public engagement**
- **Innovation** in community



# Project Partners



# History

*17th Century*

## **Enclosure Acts**

In England, judges settle local disputes through travelling courts and begin to have independence from the British monarch. The practice evolves into British Common Law, legal administration, and procedural due process.

*1630's*

## **New England**

New England Town Hall meetings emerge for deciding local issues and land use in the colonies.

*1770*

## **Nova Scotia**

Nova Scotia outlaws public meetings as British loyalists flee north. Some blame the New England Town Hall meetings for causing the US Revolutionary War.

# History

1865

## Indigenous Land Prohibitions

Indigenous leaders organize against BC government decisions to shrink reserves, prohibit Indigenous peoples from purchasing land, and encourage settlement and resource extraction in non-reserve lands. Indigenous leaders continue to organize and advocate for 150+ years.

1882

## Zoning Bylaw

San Francisco passes a zoning law banning Chinese laundries in residential neighborhoods. Similar zoning bylaws and race-based land covenants begin to appear across North America.

1914

## Town Planning Act, England

Thomas Adams forms the Town Planning Institute in England, which spreads across British Colonies through periodicals. The Union of BC Municipalities engages Adams to draft a Town Planning Act for the province

1925

## BC's First Female MLA & Town Planning Act

BC's first female MLA, Mary Ellen Smith, tables the second version of the Town Planning Act and it passes. Section 10 requires "all persons who might be affected by the proposed by-law the opportunity to be heard" prior to a decision. The Act is praised in planning periodicals.

# History

1957

## **Municipal Act**

The Municipal Act of BC replaces the Town Planning Act and contains similar language about public hearings. Court cases throughout the century will expand public hearing procedures beyond what is stated in the legislation.

1960's

## **Sunshine Laws**

"Sunshine" Laws spread throughout North America emphasizing open meetings, transparency, and disclosure to prevent corruption in decision-making.

1970

## **Urban Renewal and Hogans Alley**

The demolition of Hogan's Alley is one of many North American government decisions prioritizing public infrastructure over established minority communities.

1978

## **Racial Restrictive Covenants**

BC's Land Title Act amendment bans land covenants based on sex, race, nationality, ancestry, or place of origin. This is an example of law evolving to respond to the values of the era.

1985

## **Municipal Act Amendments**

Amendments to the Municipal Act include adding the ability to waive public hearings.

# History

## 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action include several that apply to local governments.

## 2019 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act

BC passes the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. DRIPA establishes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) as the Province's framework for reconciliation

## 2019 Development Approval Process Review

The Development Approval Process Review Final Report identifies opportunities in a "provincial review of public hearings and consideration of alternative options."

## 2021 Local Government Act Amendments

amendments clarify public hearings "are not required" for bylaw amendments that align with Official Community Plans (OCP) and give local governments the option to select alternative methods for public notices.

## 2023 Renovate the Public Hearing Initiative





**Should  
it stay  
or  
should  
it go?**



# Innovators Forum



Moving toward a culture  
of care



Accessibility  
Privacy and Safety



Trust, Legitimacy, &  
Accountability



# Trialing change

**We don't  
hear  
about it**

**Signage and  
notification  
review**

**It doesn't  
work for  
me**

**Accessibility  
audit and  
recommendations**

**Our input  
doesn't  
matter**

**City led  
upstream  
engagement**



# Trialing change

**Are they  
really  
listening?**

**Citizens  
Assembly at  
OCP**

**It's too  
political**

**Third Party  
Facilitation: The  
Montreal Method**

**Who is  
left out?**

**MOUs,  
UNDRIP and  
community  
building**



# What the data can tell us

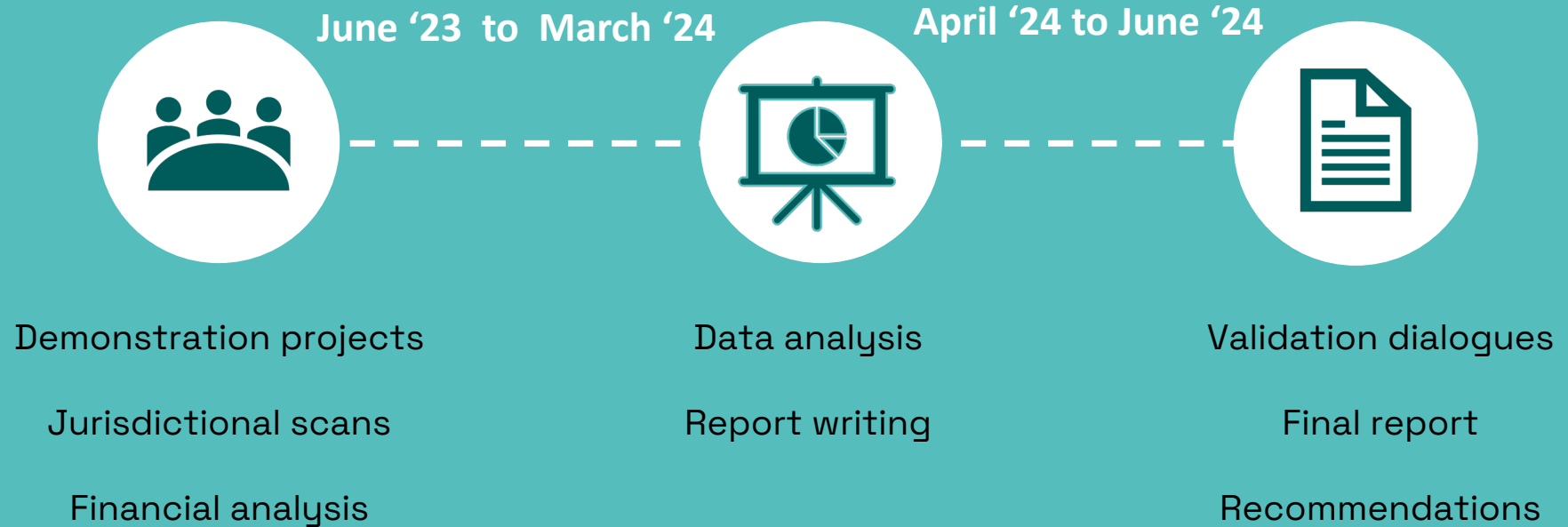
**Public Notification Bylaws &  
Rezoning Signage**

**Public Engagement Resources**

**Financial Analysis**



# Where we are headed



# RenovateThePublicHearing.CA

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