



CITY OF BURNABY
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
MIKE HURLEY
MAYOR

State of the City Address 2021

- Before we start, I would like to take a moment to recognize we are on the ancestral and unceded homelands of the hə́nqəmihə́m and Skwxw̓ ú7mesh speaking peoples, and to extend appreciation for the opportunity to hold a meeting on this territory.
- Thank you to the members of the Burnaby Board of Trade for inviting me here to give an important update on the state of our city.
- We have much to discuss today, but I'd like to begin with a few words about the COVID-19 pandemic.
- For more than a year, our lives have been disrupted by this virus.
- The impacts have rippled through our businesses, our communities and our families.
- I want to express my sincere condolences to those who have lost loved ones to this virus, and to those who are still recovering.
- As a community, we've endured incredibly trying times.
- But I want to emphasize that our darkest days are now behind us.
- There is light ahead.
- Every day, when I'm out in the community I see that light and determination.
- I see optimism.
- When I see young families, I'm thankful that we were able to keep so many of our residents working.
- And through it all, we leaned on our frontline workers, who worked tirelessly to keep us safe.
- Getting our immunizations has been a powerful experience for many of us.

- This spring, I was shopping at the Costco on Brighton with my wife when we were approached by the pharmacist who said they happened to have some extra doses of vaccine ready to go.
- It was not something I expected when I left home that day, but I know many of you may share the same feeling of relief that washed over me.
- And now, more than 80% of Burnaby residents have received at least one dose.
- We're proud to be able to contribute one of our civic facilities to this effort.
- Every day, hundreds of Burnaby residents continue to be vaccinated at the Christine Sinclair Community Centre.
- By the way, how exciting is it to finally have a civic facility named after the greatest women's soccer player of all time, one of Burnaby's greatest athletes?
- Last year, the City also provided resources and space for the province to set up a large-scale testing facility at Central Park.
- And throughout the pandemic, we've dedicated City staff to help the public navigate the rapidly shifting public health orders.
- Over the past 16 months, our call centre has fielded more than 9,000 calls, providing valuable support to people in need.
- In many cases, our staff were directly assisting people who were disadvantaged, or experiencing hardship.
- Throughout the pandemic, we've shown we can adapt quickly.
- Last month, we conducted a safe by-election to give people a chance to elect two new councillors.
- We provided 20 safe voting locations across the City, and provided 15 advance voting opportunities.
- This was no small undertaking, and I'm proud to say that the election ran smoothly.
- Congratulations to Alison Gu and Mike Hillman, who are joining us today in the audience.
- The councillors they replace, Councillors McDonnell and Volkow, left an incredible legacy of service to this City, but I know that our newest councillors are more than ready to help move our City forward.
- Speaking of moving forward, I know many of us are eager to continue moving ahead with B.C.'s Restart Plan.
- However, this isn't just a time to a return to normal.

- This is a time to aspire to something better.
- As much as the pandemic has put our lives on pause, it's given us a chance to learn from the experiences of marginalized folks in our society.
- As we build our city, we must do it thoughtfully, and address the inequities in our community.
- Burnaby is one of the most multi-cultural cities in Canada, and we've always found strength in our diversity.
- When we confront the big issues in our community, such as housing, transportation and climate change, we must do it in a way that is inclusive and safe for people of all races and cultures, as well as people across the gender spectrum.
- In many ways, the pandemic has taught us that we can respond quickly and effectively to big challenges.
- It illustrated how important it is for the community, businesses and city government to work together to accomplish our goals.
- As a City, it also highlighted the importance of our strong fiscal foundation, which allowed us to ease the burden on our community.
- For example, this year we were able to offer 0% rate increases on both water and sewer services, despite regional rates continuing to climb.
- We were also able to keep property tax increases among the lowest in the region.
- The increase for this year was 2.95 per cent – well below the rates of many neighbouring municipalities.
- These savings will keep more money in the pockets of businesses and families hard-hit by the pandemic.
- Despite that, businesses in some rate classes got an unpleasant surprise this year, and may have noticed a sharp increase in their 2021 property tax bill, compared to 2020.
- In 2020, due to the pandemic, the School Tax was reduced by 75% by the Province.
- This reduced the overall total commercial property tax bill in 2020 for most businesses by 25% on average.
- The provincial School Tax has been re-instated for 2021, returning the provincial property tax charges to 2019 levels.
- Meantime, the City continues to incorporate digital technology in our daily operations.

- I am excited to announce that later this year, we will be making it easier and more convenient for businesses to renew their annual licence.
- You will be able to create an online account for your business licence that enables you to make an application, renew and pay your annual licence, make updates and changes, as well as print your business licence.
- We'll have more to share on this in the coming months.
- It's important that we do all we can to help businesses succeed, and that's why I'm proud of the work we accomplished in partnership with the Burnaby Board of Trade over the last year.
- We worked with the Business Recovery Task Force to fast-track a program to let restaurants and other businesses convert parking or street space for patio and retail uses.
- It was a popular program that has livened up our streets and neighbourhoods.
- Dozens of businesses across Burnaby have joined the program.
- This spring, when indoor dining was put on hold, the Active Sidewalks, Open Businesses program proved to be a lifeline for local businesses.
- It's clear that we can learn some lessons from this experiment.
- The temporary patios and shared street space has made our city a livelier place.
- And it's easy to see how we can carry that momentum forward, through simple steps like making it easier for food trucks to do business in Burnaby.
- Other things we learned from the pandemic: the importance of quality child care.
- By providing easy access to child care, everyone wins.
- Employees feel confident returning to the office. And employers can find the staff they need.
- I know I'm preaching to the choir here, because this was one of the key recommendations included in the final report from the Business Recovery Task Force.
- I'm pleased to say that we're making good progress in addressing this issue.
- By working together with the provincial government and the school district, hundreds of new child care spaces are being added at school sites right across our community.
- That includes four new centres that opened over the past year at Montecito, Westridge, Cascade Heights and Capitol Hill schools.

- And as we continue to move forward with our Child Care Action Plan, we will open more sites across the City.
- So there will be more options, whether you live in a Metrotown condo with a five-year-old, or you're in Brentwood with a toddler.
- And we continue to work with the Board of Trade to implement the action items outlined by the Task Force.
- As we come out of the pandemic, I believe this will be a period of great renewal for the City of Burnaby.
- At a foundational level, we're starting in a position of strength.
- Despite the pandemic, new construction in 2020 in Burnaby was valued at almost one-and-a-half billion dollars. It was our second-highest year on record.
- I think this reflects the fact investors and developers have bought into our vision of building complete communities.
- By engaging in genuine conversations with residents and businesses, we've laid the groundwork for shared success.
- Much attention has been paid over the years to our major town centres, such as Brentwood and Lougheed.
- As these areas mature, we're focusing renewed energy on our emerging neighbourhoods.
- For example, we continue to engage the public as we update community plans for what we call Urban Villages.
- These include the Bainbridge neighbourhood, located around Sperling SkyTrain Station, and the Lochdale neighbourhood, located where Hastings Street turns into Barnet Highway.
- In the coming years, we will be updating the Community Plans for more of these Urban Villages.
- Built around transit hubs with a diverse mix of housing options, as well as commercial areas and green spaces, these Urban Villages will enable future residents to work, play and shop only steps from their front doors.
- These villages will also include important green space.
- We're lucky to have a City where 25% of the land is dedicated to parks and conservation areas.
- There are more than 150 parks in Burnaby.

- During the pandemic, we were reminded what an incredible asset these green spaces are.
- That's why as a City we are making it easier for people to bike, walk or take transit to their local parks.
- We have accelerated our program to build our network of sidewalks and Urban Trails throughout Burnaby.
- Personally, I feel like I've walked almost every sidewalk in Burnaby over the past year.
- But nothing frustrates me more than walking along a beautiful sidewalk, only to have it come to an abrupt end.
- We've already committed to building approximately 30 kilometres of new sidewalk and multi-use paths in 2021, prioritizing areas near schools, parks, community centres and transit.
- We know that this is a priority for Burnaby residents — they told us as much during consultations for our Transportation Plan update.
- And our staff have heard stories of how installing just one section of sidewalk can have a transformational impact on a neighbourhood.
- For example, on Winston Street, the new sidewalk has created a safe route for clients of the Greater Vancouver Food Bank to walk from Production Way SkyTrain Station.
- But you might be surprised that a new sidewalk can sometimes be a hard sell for people on a residential street.
- We've got broad support for our sidewalks program, but when the gravel shoulder you've parked for the last decade is about to be replaced with a sidewalk, sometimes people can have a change of heart.
- That's why it's important for us to connect with the community to let them know how important sidewalks are, on a local level, as well as for the community at large.
- It's about accessibility for everyone, including seniors, people who use mobility devices and young children.
- Building a walkable city is a key aspect of both our Transportation Plan, and our Climate Action Plan.
- Sidewalks connect our community, facilitate health and fitness and reduce the vehicle emissions that contribute to climate change.
- And as you know, when people are walking, they're more likely to stop and visit local stores, providing a boost to our local economy.

- I'm proud of the progress we're making on sidewalks, but we know it will take more than that to achieve our ambitious climate targets.
- That's why it is so encouraging to see Burnaby businesses signing onto important initiatives like the Building Benchmark BC program.
- Today, buildings account for almost 50 per cent of all carbon emissions city-wide in Burnaby.
- This pilot program helps property owners and managers better understand their buildings' energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.
- We've already signed up more than 30 city facilities to this benchmarking project, and the owners of 19 private buildings have also signed up to the program.
- Over the long term, this data will help participants save money by making targeted investments that reduce carbon emissions.
- In our push to cut carbon, there are great opportunities for local business.
- Our recent partnership with Aether Catalyst Solutions, a Burnaby company, is a great example.
- This year, we started using Aether's emissions abatement technology on select pieces of our equipment using small motors.
- I was surprised to learn that small motors, such as the ones in commercial lawn mowers, can produce as much pollution in a single hour as a 2017 Toyota Camry driving 300 miles.
- Aether's catalytic technology will help reduce the emissions generated by the City's municipal equipment.
- And the data generated from this pilot project will help the company further optimize its product.
- It's a fantastic win-win-win – for the City, the business, and the environment.
- As I mentioned earlier, I think we're entering an exciting phase for our city.
- Residents will soon be able to enjoy some incredible new recreation facilities in Burnaby.
- In Edmonds, a new arena is under construction that will be named Rosemary Brown Arena, in honour of the politician and social justice champion.
- When complete, the two NHL-sized ice sheets will provide an important amenity for recreation and competitive sports.

- At Burnaby Lake, we have unveiled the detailed designs for a new Burnaby Lake Sports Complex.
- This facility will replace CG Brown Pool and Burnaby Lake Arena with a spectacular new facility that will be a draw for residents all across Burnaby.
- Once complete, this facility will help transform the Burnaby Lake precinct into one of the top sports destinations in Canada.
- In addition to the world-class arena and swimming pool, fit to host major competitions, we're expanding the facilities on Burnaby Lake for rowing.
- Burnaby Lake is already considered one of the premier places to train singles in North America.
- We've already completed a number of upgrades, and will continue to expand this world-class facility.
- And as I mentioned earlier, the City is already getting huge value from the newest addition to our recreation portfolio.
- In February, we took over ownership of the former Fortius Sport & Health facility and we've renamed it the Christine Sinclair Community Centre.
- In addition to serving as a vaccination clinic, Burnaby residents have already had the opportunity to use the gym and take part in fitness classes at the new Community Centre.
- As we transition out of the pandemic, we'll have more news to share as we expand programming at this spectacular facility.
- If there's one message I'd like you to take home today, it's that the City is moving quickly to deliver on the priorities we've developed in partnership with the community.
- One lesson I've learned during my time as mayor is that when you engage in genuine dialogue with the public, you can get a mandate to move quickly on issues we all care about.
- Two years ago, we formed the Mayor's Task Force on Community Housing.
- Since then, on an issue that's often rife with controversy and polarized debate, Burnaby has moved quickly and decisively to respond to our affordability crisis.
- We adopted one of the most robust and progressive tenant assistance policies in Canada, ensuring people can stay in their neighbourhood at the same rent;
- We adopted BC's first rental-use zoning policy which requires a minimum of 20% below-market rental housing in most new developments, City-wide;

- We identified and initiated pre-zoning of five City-owned sites for more than 1,100 units of non-market and affordable housing, which would increase non-market housing in Burnaby by 20%;
- And we have partnered with BC Housing to open three shelters for people experiencing, or who were at risk of homelessness.
- It might sound counterintuitive, but we were able to move quickly on these actions because we took the time to slow down and have a conversation with the public.
- But we also realize that communication isn't just a one-time exercise.
- That's why, this past year, we returned to the Task Force and residents to ask: How are we doing so far?
- This input was vital as we finalized HOME: Burnaby's Housing and Homelessness Strategy this spring.
- This strategy is a 10-year roadmap for detailed actions on housing in our city.
- The vision is of Burnaby as a place where people can find a home, afford a home, and feel at home.
- I think that last piece is so important.
- Because when you're building a more equitable society for people who are disadvantaged, you have to start where they live.
- That's why we're so invested in finding ways to make housing more accessible to everyone in Burnaby.
- It takes more than just building more housing, it is about rethinking the way we design our communities.
- We need more housing types – so that when you downsize, you don't have to leave your neighbourhood.
- And when your family is growing, you can find an affordable option that provides the space you need.
- These are the types of actions which will help us address the inequalities that still exist in Burnaby.
- Because at the end of the day, we all need to ask ourselves: what kind of City do we want Burnaby to be?
- For many of us, Burnaby is already a fantastic place to live and work, with abundant green space and a thriving business community.

- For myself, I can take a stroll in the evening and feel safe while I explore our City.
- But I know my experience isn't universal, and that people of colour and women might not always feel the same way.
- It is important for that their voices are heard, action is taken to ensure that everyone feels safe in our community.
- That's why we drafted the Community Safety Plan last year, a comprehensive document which wraps up so many different initiatives to make our city safer.
- This plan covers everything from our earthquake strategy, to our pandemic response, to our plan to provide better lighting on city streets.
- One key initiative in this plan was the establishment by Burnaby RCMP of a Gang Enforcement and Education team.
- In addition to targeting and preventing gang violence, this unit works with at-risk youth to deter them from getting involved in gang life.
- This program has taken on even greater importance given the flare up in gang violence across Metro Vancouver this year.
- As a whole, I think that so much of what we are doing these days is serving to create a city that is not only safer, but also more active and enjoyable.
- Building out our network of sidewalks is making streets safer and is encouraging more people to get out to explore their neighbourhoods on foot.
- Building out our cycling network is also serving to make our neighbourhoods, Urban Villages and town centres more vibrant.
- At the same time, adding more "eyes on the street" will continue to improve safety for everyone.
- The city we are building is a Burnaby where we all feel a deep sense of connection:
 - To our local businesses.
 - To our neighbourhoods.
 - And to our green spaces.
- So many great things are happening in our city these days.
- And I've barely scratched the surface.
- So I encourage everyone to reach out, ask questions and learn more about our projects.

- We greatly value your ideas and your input as we work to ensure our community continues to thrive.
- Before I wrap up, I want to thank everyone in the community for stepping up and doing your part over the last year and a half.
- You looked out for each other and kept each other safe.
- And you stepped up when it mattered – notably by raising \$150,000 for the Greater Vancouver Food Bank this spring.
- I know that many members of the Board of Trade helped out with this essential fundraiser.
- From our frontline workers and essential staff, to the people who diligently followed Dr. Henry's guidance, everyone played a part in getting us to where we are today.
- I look forward to working with the Board of Trade, businesses and the community to build an even more successful and equitable city.
- Thank you again to the Burnaby Board of Trade for inviting me here to give this State of the City address and thank you to all of you for taking the time to attend or to watch via livestream.