

Building the New Urban Agenda: Listening to the Local

Oct. 5, 2022 - Livable Cities Forum

Materials and Links

- About [CUI x Local](#)
 - CUIxWindsor report: [Windsor Blooms](#)
 - CUIxCalgary report: [Calgary Transforms](#)
 - CUIxEdmonton report : [Edmonton Activates](#)
 - CUIxVictoria report : [Victoria Nurtures](#)
- [Link to the presentation](#)

Panel Discussion

Moderator

Kathy Witcher, Executive Director, [UDI \(Urban Development Institute - Capital Region\)](#)

Panel

Maureen Sawa, CEO, [Greater Victoria Public Library](#)

Fran Hunt – Jinnouchi, Executive Director, [Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness \(ACEH\) Society](#)

Dr. Michael Schwandt, [Medical Health Officer, Vancouver Coastal Health](#)

Notes from the Session

What did we learn during covid?

Maureen:

- [Palaces for the People](#)
- Pivot / Pivot quickly
- From focus in in-person physical service to only being able to deliver online
- It is amazing what you can do fast when you have no choice
- Business as normal quickly became business as possible
- Covid shone a spotlight on the many people who were not digital comfortable
 - Seniors – they could not get the support and help that they used to receive
 - Telephone became the most powerful tool
- Vulnerability of the people who are homeless or home vulnerable and how much they relied on our public space

- How can we do to make our spaces more flexible and open
- Emphasis on open spaces / Movable shelves / Pick-up services → Adjustments to spaces
- The disruption of regular services provided the opportunity to improve our public services

Michael:

- What we can do when we work together / What can we learn from communities.
- Just do it approach to working together
- Necessary creativity being embraced / What we were able to do together / Openness to working together when the doors got closed.
- Listening to communities. Learning in novel situations. Listening from the ground level.
 - o We learned how to promote vaccination
 - o What does it mean to socially isolate in one community or another?

Fran:

- Indigenous alcohol harm reduction program // we were struggling to support it.
- Opening an indigenous-led housing shelter
- Indigenous alcohol harm reduction program
 - learned that we could adapt quite quickly being as effective or even more effective
- Grown from 15 to 87 staff
- We learned how much we can do, but also how often we were left out outside of the conversation (e.g. surveys)
- The biggest loss was the cultural and spiritual connection. Rarely they would bring up some of the challenges related to food or shelter.

What is working, what is not and what is next?

Michael:

- The tyranny of the urgency
- How non-for-profits are funded often requires an immediate focus. It doesn't facilitate the process to enable deep work.

Fran:

- We have all become aware about the safety needs
- Culturally supportive housing – deeply rooted in decolonized harm reduction practice and deeply rooted in place.

- Having our activities contained allowed to provide services in a much more effective way.
- Integrative support framework.
- Health and housing
- We all came out of covid with some wounds and at some point we will have to work on them.
 - o Those hard feelings and perspectives have not been addressed.
 - o Work to heal and to have those conversations.

Maureen:

- The relationships at work have been really damaged.
- Large branches can accommodate a lot of services.
- When libraries were closed one of the main issues was the closure of public washrooms. We were constantly to
- Public libraries had been fulfilling
- Edmonton – the infrastructure is not supporting vulnerable people.
- From a cities perspective there is no recognition from the city.
- There are pieces that we are working collaborative, but it is not enough.
- Toronto using public libraries as food distribution spots
- Halifax using public libraries as vaccination hubs
- We are still in a crisis management in terms of the ways in which we are thinking

What kinds of cooperation are needed?

Fran:

- Something happened too quickly with just good intentions.
- Money was handed to people in need. This money was used and what happened is that it turned into multiple addictions. CERB program had a detrimental effect on some of our community members suffering from addiction to alcohol who suddenly received more money than they normally received through other programs.
- Seek out to those who have the knowledge

Maureen:

- Project planning often drops the most important piece at the end: evaluation and learning
- [South Island Prosperity Partnership](#)

- Don't leave out the non-for-profit organizations

Michael :

- Bringing different components all together.

Kathy:

- Each institutional layer is creating policies. The layers of policy makes it sometimes impossible to actually take lean actions.

Contributions from the Audience

- **Housing in Halifax when covid hits.**

- o Taking people from encampments taken to hotels. Once the people were in hotel rooms the people were able to actually address some of the deeper issues.
- o Police salaries.
- o People who are homeless have been oppressed in many multiple ways.
- o With the hurricane we did it. But we don't do it for many populations.
- o When covid started we took care of the homeless. Now that covid has finished, those support systems have been taken away.
- o How do we keep the momentum going?

There should be a collection of the experiences that took place across the city to show what is possible.

- **Extreme lending approach**

- o Provide cameras that are very expensive
- o People being able to identify heat loss in their loss
- o What else can we share?
- o Up until covid we were providing passes to museums
- o ID clinics – individuals who have no IDs get some help in getting a personal ID
- o Libraries – we are so neutral. People do not feel shame in coming to a library or to access public services in the library.

- **What we can do when we work together and we are not restricted**

- o During covid we could access funds to buy food for people and donate it. But with this amazing work we need to be in a "crisis" situation. If we are not in a crisis the rational does not

- o During covid we were able to support organisations on the ground in a way that was unfettered and it would be great to maintain this level of trust with the non for profit world.

- o How do we get the general public to understand what we are talking about? Housing-first

- § We know it is going to take 6-8 months to build relationships. We start there.

- § We want to be good neighbours. Building relationships – neighbours have now provided letters of support for our new wellness center.

- § Created committees / Getting prepared together

- o Where we must go is: **Where do we intersect to make the best possible work?**

- o The ownness is on us as a housing provider. How are we going to work to incorporate them into the community?

- o It is relational.

- o Starting in the places where you intersect.

Just housing will not work for the people who are more vulnerable in the population. Because if you only provide them a roof you are giving them a place to overdose. We need many other levels of support.

- How do you want to be addressed?

- Need to slowly change the dialogue, the discourse and the stigma.

How do we actually change the conversation? We cannot do more because we have an infrastructure deficit.