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Multi-functional Spaces

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Series III of The Solutions Agenda
A research / practitioner partnership between Professor Ann Dale, Canada Research Chair in Sustainable Community Development, and Sustainability Solutions Group

Participants

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Gary Hiscox, Architect planner with CMHC and worked as Manager of Granville Island
Kim Mushynsky, Chief Administrative Officer for the Village of Port Clements
Rebecca Foon, Director, Sustainability Solutions Group
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Dialogue

Ann Dale

Welcome everyone, to our third conversation in the Solutions Agenda research project. This project brings together key innovators on select themes every two months. Today, we will be talking about multi-functional spaces, why they are important to sustainable communities and their vitality.

I would like to invite our three colleagues and the research team to introduce themselves.

Shona Fulcher

Hi all, Shona Fulcher here from the Centre for Social Innovation in Toronto. Looking forward to a great e-panel.

Gary Hiscox

Hi, Gary here. I am/was an architect planner with CMHC who managed Granville Island for 5 years back in the eighties.

Kim Mushynsky

Hello I am Kim Mushynsky, I am the Administrator for the Village of Port Clements, we operate out of a Multi-purpose building.

Robert Newell

My name is Rob Newell, and I work with Ann in her Canada Research Chair in Sustainable Community Development program. Much of the work we do looks at innovative methods of communicating research and sustainability ideas to the broader public, and I look forward to exploring this topic of multi-functional spaces through the e-Dialogue system.

Rebecca Foon

My name is Rebecca Foon - my background is in urban planning and I am a sustainability consultant with Sustainability Solutions Group (SSG). I am very much looking forward to this discussion!

Yuill Herbert

My name is Yuill Herbert - I also work with Sustainability Solutions Group and Ann on this project. I am very lucky to have bought lots of tea at Granville Island, toured around Port Clements (which is very beautiful by the way) and worked out of the Centre for Social Innovation at various times. All remarkable places!
Ann Dale

Welcome, Gary, Shona, and Kim. Thank you for agreeing to discuss your experiences, planning, managing and designing multi-functional places.

Let's jump in with our first question. Can you tell us about your project and what

led you to consider a multiple use space?

Gary Hiscox

I have not really thought about this for perhaps twenty years and it is imperative to say I was not responsible for the idea for Granville Island. I was the third manager who was responsible for continuing the implementation of the idea which was proving to be more successful than anyone thought possible. But it was running into trouble because of its success. I saw my responsibility as one of sorting out the problem, restating the mission and moving forward - to feed off and build the community which had been created. I guess one might call it leadership. It was the most demanding challenge that I had experienced yet was able to rise to the occasion to do it. I was relieved yet rewarded by the experience as I moved on five years later to another challenge.

Shona Fulcher

Well I can answer that question many ways. The Centre of Social Innovation has been around since 2004 and came about as an audacious experiment from a group of 6 visionary social entrepreneurs who's joint experience ranged from Not for Profit, to Government to Socially Entrepreneurial Real Estate and who as a group saw an opportunity to create a new kind of workspace that offered economies of scale, diversity and breadth, and share knowledge and community as a means of re-shaping our existing norms of work and creating opportunities for sharing, expanded networks and ecosystems of knowledge, and innovation.

Kim Mushynsky

The Municipal buildings were very old and the amount of upgrades required exceeded the value of the buildings. In addition, we were at risk of losing our Elementary school. Declining enrollment meant that we had 40 children enrolled in a very old school that was meant for 150 students. The school needed major repairs for seismic and mechanical upgrades and they were considering closing it and relocating our students to the next closest community.

Robert Newell

Kim, I understand that the multiplex building in Port Clements has served as a place where people of all ages gather for various purposes.

Would you be able to discuss what other functions the building has, along with the school?

Kim Mushynsky

There were various older buildings around town that were inefficient. We decided that combining everything under one roof was a logical answer in a community the size of Port Clements. We have the public library (which is a shared space with our Elementary school), a Senior's room, a community kitchen, Municipal Offices and Council Chambers, a community gym and a Daycare center as well as the Elementary school all under one roof.

Yuill Herbert

Was it difficult to convince different organizations each with a different mandate (school, municipality) to join forces at the same time?

Kim Mushynsky

Ironically the biggest hurdle, once the School Board looked at the numbers and realized that being a part of this project was going to cost them less than the options they were considering, was convincing the Public library that they could share a space with the Elementary school and that that would work out.

Ann Dale

Interesting, because libraries are in the midst of renewing their mandate, and they can be such creative knowledge hubs and as well, build social capital in the communities in which they are embedded?

Robert Newell

The irony definitely stands out there. It seems that a library and an elementary school would be a great fit for sharing the same roof. Ultimately, it makes one wonder if one of the challenges to creating multi-functional spaces is this concept of "turf wars", so to speak, i.e. even though the functions are congruent, some institutions would simply like their own space.

Kim Mushynsky

I agree with the "turf war" concept. It seemed like everyone focused on what might not work (some of the books would belong to the school, some would belong to the library - what if the books got mixed up, how would you track who

had what book for what purpose - school or public...) instead of on efficient use of space. Our public library is open 10 hours per week - why wouldn't you want an alternate use for that space!

Yuill Herbert

Here is a picture of the building on Port Clements:



Shona Fulcher

Kim, this concept of "Turf Wars" was the main argument that CSI (Centre for Social Innovation) also experienced at the beginning. In fact there was such an overriding agreement that ‘not for profits’ in a single space would compete not collaborate that our Executive Director, Tonya Surman, actually had to convince a bank to open an account for us even though she had deposits cheques from 14 organizations. Banks were so sure the business model was not sound they refused to take the risk... that was 9 years and 3 locations ago.

Ann Dale

Gary, Granville Island, according to an interview I had with Jim MacNeill, who was the Federal Minister of the Environment under Minister Basford, was an unprecedented cooperation between the feds, the province and municipal authorities?

Gary Hiscox

Yes, I think it fair to say that there was excellent cooperation between the feds and the city - the province were not involved in the evolution of GI but of course they funded Emily Carr School of ART.

It is my understanding that Granville Island, like Harbourfront in Toronto and The Old Port in Montreal was, in the fifties a declining industrial area in the centre of the city. Federal money had been invested in Toronto by the Federal Gov. to fix that problem, $250 million if I recall accurately and Ron Basford who was the Minister of Urban Affairs, the Liberal member of Parliament for the area in which GI was located realized that GI had many of the same problems that were being experienced by Harbourfront and felt that there was an opportunity for the Federal Gov to invest in GI and further the goals of his Department.

The land under GI was owned by the Federal Government since it had been created in 1917 (I recall) by filling in a sandbar in False Creek. It was 17ha in area and was managed by a Fed Dept. cannot remember which, probably Ports. The purpose of the project was to create land to enable a model industrial subdivision to be built for resource based industries where raw material could be brought by sea to be converted into products, such as lumber, saws, chains, drill bits and so on for transportation off the island by train. This process informed the physical patterns of the island. Most buildings were simple heavy lumber framed structures at right angles to the water connecting to a railway line at the other end of the building.

After the 2nd WW, the economics of industrial development changed, mainly due to transportation, trucks, so that it was more cost effective for those uses if indeed any existed at that time to move to industrial parks in the suburbs, much like the problem facing the centre of our urban areas and big box stores. I guess, folks at that time were faced with the vocal problem of a deteriorating physical stock what do you do....try and reverse the economics of industrial development, knock the buildings down and reuse the land for, park or housing like Songhees in Victoria or reuse what was there for some other purpose.

I understand that Basford got the support of Cabinet to address the problem, who then transferred the responsibility to CMHC, a Fed Crown Corporation that reported to Basford under the auspices of the local CMHC Regional Director. After much community debate of which I have little knowledge, a pair of young architects who were practicing in Vancouver came up with the idea for GI as we know it. A development plan was prepared and was agreed upon by the City of Vancouver. This was known as the Reference Document.

Yuill Herbert

Shona, how did those six social entrepreneurs come together? Was their motivation ultimately profit driven would you say or more to achieve social change through innovation?

Shona Fulcher

The Centre for Social Innovation is a registered Not for Profit so it was definitely an opportunity to create something new, and to create space for innovation. All of the entrepreneurs who made up our original board believed that in order to successfully tackle the looming problems of the future we needed to create new and more robust ways to tackle them, and that fundamentally collaboration not competition is the key to substantive, innovative, affective systems change. They are all entrepreneurs at heart and wanted to create new answers.

Shona Fulcher

Kim, Have the different groups in your space experienced any unexpected value from sharing one location, any unexpected synergies?

Kim Mushynsky

There are some kind of cute synergies - we do movie nights in the Senior's Room monthly and the community kitchen is right there for a convenient venue for selling snacks/popcorn/whatever for the movie goers.

We also recently did an all island youth art show in the Multi-plex and we probably experienced more traffic for the art show than if it was held in a separate building because all the school kids attended, but all library goers walked past it, anyone with Municipal business viewed it as they entered the building and even if someone hadn't come specifically for the art, everyone stopped and looked at it.

Rebecca Foon

This is such a lovely story, fascinating to see how the multi-functional space brings together a diversity of people (school kids, seniors, library goer's) - helping to build community - and it must be easier to organize these events than if they were all in separate buildings. Probably allows for a better turn out for the events as well!

Ann Dale

This leads nicely into what the co-benefits are that you have observed from sharing space in each of your projects? Can each of you also focus on the innovation(s) that have been gained?

Gary Hiscox

The idea was to create a community which would occupy the buildings for marine uses providing services to boaters, arts and cultural uses like theatres or educational facilities, small clean industries like collapsible canoe builders or glass fabricators or printers or lute makers you name it, artist studios to make and sell their wares, a community centre to support the adjacent False Creek housing development being undertaken by the City, open spaces for folks to wander around, for those industries that wanted to stay like the cement plant due to its locational advantage adjacent to downtown experiencing much development and maybe a public market to sell locally produced food.

This was all happening in the sixties, long before the present day emphasis of 100km diet.

The project was approved by the City and Treasury. $25million was set aside by the Feds for the project. $19.5million was expended and the balance returned to GRF. One third of $19.5million was expended on buying up leases, one third on infrastructure such as roadways, repairing docks, lighting and street furniture to support rain cover between the buildings and the public realm and one third on the upgrade of buildings for their new uses. Buildings were released for the prescribed new uses either in an as is condition or upgraded. The island is self funded and receives no further direct public funding.

Broad principles were established not necessarily stated, I recall, that the island was for locals and that it would only provide opportunity for those uses not found generally in the City. It was a unique place. The island would not be a predator upon what went on off island. It was not intended that clothes or fashion items for example would be traded there. There was a notion that it would be an incubator for arts and craft activities. It was not intended that housing in the conventional sense would be located there. It was not intended to be a "festival market" as we know many private mixed-use redevelopment projects.

An office was created on the island under the auspices of CMHC to implement the project...to lease buildings as blocks like the Maritime Market or Kids Only Market or entities within each building like arts studios or the Public Market. Staff were hired to maintain the island such as collect garbage or keep the Public Market clean or to paint buildings. Service contracts were let each year or for

specific jobs to keep the island in good repair such as landscaping or buildings or streets. A Trust was formed of politically appointed persons, knowledgeable in their field to advise the local CMHC site office. They had no authority, only persuasion.

The island became and still is a local success much revered where we all take our relatives when they come to visit us. In fact it was so successful that by the eighties traffic jams were the norm each working lunchtime and on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays. It became a public embarrassment for the Feds...why couldn't the parking problem be fixed. Allegations of overbearing management of the Public Market emerged. In response a privately funded parking structure was proposed which was required but not given by CMHC.

As a result of this decision, the Trust resigned as does the Manager of the Island and the person responsible for Public Market.

A new manager is appointed who reorganized the traffic flow of traffic on the island, converted three of the undeveloped buildings for paid parking as an alternative for those who are unable to find free parking and initiated a review of the operation of the Public Market. Strategies are developed for alternative ways of getting to the island.

A new Trust was formed chaired by an individual experienced in and understood building community.

Rebecca Foon

It also seems like the Centre for Social Innovation has been expanding quite dramatically over the last few years. I assume this has resulted in an even more diverse network being created in Toronto and elsewhere - I would love to hear more about how this all came about.

Shona Fulcher

Rebecca, thank you for your question.

Yes, when I started with CSI in 2010 we had one location we now have 4 locations including our newest location in NYC which opened on May 1st of this year.

The expansion came about out of need and desire we started with 5000 square feet in 2004 and by 2007 had 24000 square feet and a waiting list.
And the opportunity for a heritage building in Toronto came about and we decided it was time to expand. But as you might have guessed as a not for profit

we didn't have a lot of assets to back up our sale offer so with the input of our amazing board of directors we decided to leverage what we did have, and that was social capital and community engagement. We knew that people wanted to be involved with CSI and to support it so we created a financial vehicle called Community Bonds where we went to our networks and communities and offered them and opportunity to invest in CSI. We raised 2 million dollars in 4 months and this coupled with a loan guarantee from the city allowed us to purchase a 6.4 million dollar building and expand our space and networks concurrently.

We opened our Regent Park Space in 2012 working in partnership with Artscape and Daniels Corporation to move into and emergent neighbourhood in Toronto to spread our model and mission to an even greater diversity of people.

And NYC came to us, and it was just too wonderful and opportunity to pass up.

And there have also been large strategic gains to our expansion. There is a sweet spot for a sustainable business model in size and our original expansion helped us to achieve that, but also as our community grows in size it also grows in knowledge and depth, and our mission is to catalyze innovation so this is an important leap for our community as well.

Also with our growth we have been able to create more platform support and programming to accelerate our member successes and this too has been a great gain for us.

A few examples below

- The Community Bond
- CSI Catalyst
- Catapult Microloan Fund

Rebecca Foon

Congratulations - this is very exciting!

And, it is a powerful example of a transformational model around workspace - that has been very successful.

Gary Hiscox

The development plan for the island, the Reference Document, was reexamined to identify all of the uses on the island to identify any shortfall. It was apparent that there was no clearly stated mission for the island and that the focus on the arts and cultural component had not matured.

The mission statement was developed in collaboration with the Trust, the authors of the Reference Document and staff.

Staff was reorganized and hired to manage the leases, control monies coming in and going out, manage the operations and maintenance and a new position formed responsible for public affairs and programming. The manager assumed the responsibility for managing staff, keeping the Trust informed and directing new opportunities to continue building out the island.

The mission statement became and important guiding tool used daily where all tenants and employees were expected to know and to use it as such.

The commercial side of the island was strong. There were some 250 businesses operating on the island. More buildings were upgraded using revenues derived from the leases mainly for arts and crafts purposes. Communication tools were developed to let the public and staff know what the administrators of the island were thinking. Community events were undertaken such as having the Vancouver Symphony play in the out doors in the summer, celebrating anniversaries with tenants or encouraging local groups to pursue their aims. The Vancouver Readers and Writers Society was supported as was the Comedy Festival. Anything was pursued that reinforced the cultural side of the island, that emphasized the local nature of the island and minimized the reliance on cars as a means of getting there. The strengthening of the cultural dimension of the island reinforced the success of the private and not for profit operations.

Kim Mushynsky

I can't speak for large urban areas but in small communities the financial logic of multi-purpose buildings is so overwhelming that I find it hard to wrap my mind around people getting hung up on competition issues. The activities that take place in a multiplex are all going to happen in the community anyway - how can one logically argue that they are somehow going to be damaged by occupying one space where every tenant realizes financial gain by shared janitorial, shared washrooms, shared electrical...

Robert Newell

I've been thinking on this comment, Kim, in regard to the differences between creating a multi-functional space in an urban or a smaller community. From the social perspective (rather than the economic), I imagine this would influence the success of the space as well. I remember from your bio how you noted that the lines between professional life and everyday life can blur in a smaller community, which makes me think that, for smaller communities, this might be conducive to

bringing people together through shared spaces and operating a community hub. And, this sounds like this is the case looking at your examples of joint community functions.

Yuill Herbert

CSI was one of the first shared workspaces but there are others in Vancouver – the HiVE - and all over the place, i.e., the HUB. What do you think have been the successes and challenges of promoting that new form of collaboration?

Robert Newell

I really like the model of shared work space, and I have had the opportunity to visit the Hive in Vancouver several times in which I believe has a similar model to CSI (Shona perhaps you could shed some light on the differences, if you know of any?). One of the things that I have noticed about the value of shared workspaces, through talking with people that work in them and those who don't (and are working at home), is that they break isolation. So, even if those in the workspaces aren't working in the exact same field, and "turf" isn't a big issue, simply being around others that are engaged in work seems to help one's productivity.

I talked with someone who worked from home that hired a person just to, more or less, hang out with them (and work on their own stuff) while they worked as they found that another presence was motivating.

Kim Mushynsky

I would also think that shared work spaces could capitalize on things like joint copy stations so that all the separate businesses/organizations didn't have to purchase copiers and would actually have access to better quality equipment than each individual place could afford if they all needed to be independent.

Shona Fulcher

Well I just got back from the Non-Profit Centres Network Co-Working conference in Denver so I think I can answer one of the challenges with great surety... who empties the dishwasher??? I am only being slightly facetious, one of the challenges to a shared space is to create culture and structure that helps create a sense of ownership within the community for the space. This is particularly challenging because for most people most of their work lives have been in

locations where they had not input into the operations of the space. And to add to that a successful shared space must hold the balance between culture and process very carefully. Culture is what will really govern the success of your spaces but process must be there to back it up.

- **Successes** - there are so many successes to this kind of workspace. Let's start with the least often mentioned but one of the most important - **Happiness**! The Centre for Social innovation is a happier healthier place to work than your average cubicle jungle.

- **Passion** - being surrounded by like-minded people who are passionate about what they do is a natural catalyst for excellence.

- **Network expansion** - This cannot be undersold. I have yet to see a question that the extended network at CSI cannot handle and the value of that much knowledge all gathered in one virtual location is immeasurable.

Add into that shared knowledge. Targeted programming, financial opportunities and more and its just a very smart way to work.

Robert Newell

This is a really interesting point, Shona, about the day-to-day operations aspect being one of those potential challenges. I also see that this might create a number of opportunities in terms of ensuring that the members of the shared space are working together in some capacity. To clarify, I see the creation of rotations lists and schedules for people to do this operation as almost a first step to introducing one another and having people activity discuss plans for keeping a work place running. Perhaps, without these, there could be more of a risk of people coming to work, sitting in there own space, and not engaging with others in the space?

Shona Fulcher

Yes, it's like any party you've ever been to, all the really interesting stuff happens in the kitchen. We were able to create rosters and list when we were only 14 organizations but now we are over 400 and must rely and culture, modeling and good solid orientations, on boarding and expectation setting. And a little humour and fun never hurt either.

But yes, shared task are always opportunities for collaboration and its getting the members to see this too that makes an impact.

Yuill Herbert

I'm curious to know what kind of conflicts you have experienced- either from diverse interests clashing, resource scarcities or others... and how they have been resolved- through mediation, legally or otherwise?

Shona Fulcher

I think this is a very important question, and one I was also asked in Denver last week.

I think it is impossible in a shared space, co-location space to not experience conflicts, particularly when for many people in the space this is a new kind of workspace for them. CSI handles conflicts by tackling them head on, and by this I mean we insist that all members attend a CSI 101 orientation session at the beginning of their membership and part of what we do in this orientation is to discuss the expectations for the workspace and what to do if they find themselves in conflict. And importantly, our first line of conflict resolution is to ask them to deal with it amongst directly with the person they are in conflict with. Believe it or not this resolves most of the conflicts that member can have with each other.

If they are unable to resolve their issue they would then bring it to me and if it continues we take it through our conflict protocol all the way to the board if necessary. Thus far that has never been necessary.

The conflicts that I have experienced are about space usage and disagreements on how space should be used and these have been minor and easily rectified. Our community really does take to heart that the space is shared and that means creating space for others as well as oneself.

Kim Mushynsky

I agree that the concept of shared space etiquette represents both a challenge (making sure everyone is like minded and participates in the activities that keep the space clean and enjoyable) and an opportunity to bring people together and while coming together for that purpose other benefits can synergistically happen.

Yuill Herbert

Kim, are you able to be more explicit about the financial benefits - commenting specifically on the savings that have resulted?

Kim Mushynsky

Well we have multiple users that can share one janitor - making them more efficient and therefore less costly because they flow smoothly from one work space to the next - not having to leave one building, go to the next, etc. Also we share washrooms - less building costs, less use of resources such as water/sewer - less things to clean again. The library gets used 5 days per week and two evenings instead of two separate libraries which need all the same resources, one being used two afternoons and two evenings per week and one being used during school hours. We can flip uses as needed (so the Senior's room can be used by the Senior's as needed but can then be used by the Yoga group, by the rec. committee to have movies, etc - just maximizing the use of a space that requires heating, lighting, etc., whether or not it is in use).

Yuill Herbert

Gary, what were the other possible uses and do you know why this particular approach caught the imagination of the City and/or CMHC?

Gary Hiscox

My sense was that many in the community had views on how the island should be rehabbed, many felt that it should have been a park, probably others for housing. It was Hotson Bakker Architects who had the idea of renovating the buildings for all of the uses, the challenge was just who would reuse the buildings. The province saw an opportunity for an art school, local entrepreneurs thought a maritime market would work, the Kids Market, restaurants and so on. Not sure how the Public Market came about.

Robert Newell

I also see how Granville Island's vibrancy and festival culture seem to have influenced the surrounding areas in Vancouver, for example, the more newly developed walkway that has been developed from False Creek to Granville Island and water taxi transportation to the island.

This being said, Granville Island is a well-established and large district embedded in a large urban area. So, I wonder if this sort of development of adjacent pedestrian space can be applicable to smaller communities. Kim, perhaps you could shed some light on this. Have parks and pathways developed around the multiplex as a result of it being there and having many community uses?

Rebecca Foon

Shona, it seems that one major benefit for organizations/individuals working out of CSI is that they are exposed to a diverse network of individuals/ors also working out of the space, all sharing a similar world view and ethic. Does CSI host networking events regularly – and have you noticed organizations begin to work/collaborate together within the space?

Shona Fulcher

We do have regular networking events. We run a once a month networking event on the first Thursday of each month called *Six Degrees of Social Innovation* which is targeted not just at members but at the extended networks of social innovators in Toronto. This has been a very successful event. We also promote structured and unstructured networking within the spaces regularly through our Community Animation staff and programming. Our Community Animators are staff members who's focus is to get to know community members so that they can see and encourage opportunities for networking amongst the community. We also run events that bring members together in social settings to encourage more organic collaboration opportunities. These are things like salad club weekly, bagel bonding, Friday night innovation drinks etc. and the goal of these is for them to be by the members for the members with support from staff.

But we do also like to say that everyone is a Community Animator too meaning it is all staff's responsibility to support the growth and success of the community.

Kim Mushynsky

I worked for Community Futures for a couple of years and we poked around a bit at the concept of an incubator multi-purpose building for like minded entrepreneurs because in an area as small as Haida Gwaii we really felt that businesses would benefit from things such as one accountant located on site to assist with getting people's books in order which is sometimes daunting for new businesses and one marketing person to provide that service - so we saw it as bringing together all the varied resources to help a business get off the ground. Unfortunately we never got this model up and running but I still feel the idea has great merit. Entrepreneurs might be really good at whatever their particular business is but there are so many aspects to running a successful business which could be outside their scope.

Yuill Herbert

Perhaps the first rural CSI on Haida Gwaii???

Kim Mushynsky

I hope some day :)

Ann Dale

What social co-benefits have all of you observed, Kim touched on a few? Gary, what do you think the impact on Granville Island will be with the Emily Carr school moving?

As well, Gary, have you observed economic co-benefits of these diverse groups co-locating?

Gary Hiscox

To Ann, I think it is a shame that Eccad is moving off the island but the problem is that as any successful entity on the island succeeds and wants to get bigger this is difficult to achieve, firstly is there any suitable space and secondly there was always a notion the Buildings on GI would be "fine grained" and that change would be accretive. You will recall we did expand into an adjacent old building and there was debate whether it was a good idea but we wanted to hold them. I am not aware of the details of the recent discussion of the move to new premises off island. The environment or ambiance for the school will sure be different for staff, faculty and students and the Island will lose an important dimension of students.

May be Eccad want a muscle building, an ego building in a new spot where all of the uses in the school can be combined. The interesting question is who will take the Eccad buildings and what happens to the lease with the Province which probably has a number of years to run...I am not privy to these aspects.

Ann Dale

I would like to add to this, in Ottawa, we have the Lansdowne Park redevelopment, a 55 hectare site, that we tried to convince the City to model after Granville Island. After heroic efforts by community groups, and no a slap suit against one of its leaders, we lost to condos, a sports stadium, and very little green space left and a smallish farmer's market. The developers won big time, which is why I emphasized the unprecedented cooperation behind Granville Island, and the 'grand vision'!

Rebecca Foon

Do you think the Granville Island model (idea) is transferable?

Gary Hiscox

I think this is a very significant question. Is Granville Island successful because the Government did it with? Remember it used fed money to get it started but it is, however, self sufficient for its day-to-day operation.

If we assess Granville Island in the context of commonly held notions of how our society works, that is the use of GDP as a measure of growth and or success then GI is not transferable. Who else takes money from the profit of commercialism and applies it to arts and cultural activities other than the commercial model of "Festival Markets" of which there are many around the world usually on waterfronts where private developers will provide opportunity for arts and cultural activities to act as a draw to bring people into the project to further commercial ends - a throw away so to speak.

Granville Island was not created on that premise since cultural stuff was valued equally as commercial stuff. BUT can any private developer function that way, what might the motivation be.

However if you look at Granville Island in the context of a stable state economy to use Rob Dietz and Dan O'Neill vision set down in "Enough is Enough, building a sustainable economy in a world of finite resources" Granville Island makes perfect sense in my view. But it requires a different view of how the world goes round. I think we are on our way to this inevitable end, as is demonstrated by communities putting more emphasis on sharing such as in a very small way the intelligence of coop car companies.

Ann Dale

Have you observed any spin-off benefits to adjacent buildings, to your community?

Gary, and others, can you also comment on the role of leadership in your projects?

Gary Hiscox

To Ann, this is one of the most significant dimensions of a project like Granville Island. The island has had a very positive impact on its context which has

brought about the regeneration of other buildings off the island which either trade on the name...Granville Island this that or the other or mimics what goes on there. The island has a limited capacity where there is more demand than can be accommodated. This in turn challenges community services adjacent to the island such as traffic circulation as one example.

As an architect planner steeped in urban renewal and development it was heartening to be involved in a project where public money has acted as vehicle for change in a positive sense. The pay back of GI is in the factors of many.

However as time passes change occurs and I wonder whether the Island is sustainable in the manner in which it was created.

Yuill Herbert

This is very interesting on a number of levels. It really provides a compelling argument for public investment in what is now seen as the role of private developers. Interestingly we have had another one of these e-Dialogues on the question of growth!

Kim Mushynsky

I think one of the challenges is that public investment often has a totally different focus than private investment which tends to be more profit oriented. I think that although multipurpose buildings do have a good financial argument for their existence we are still battling the fact that much of the good is "soft" and hard to quantify in dollars so it is harder to sell to the private investment sector.

I think leadership is critical. You need a strong individual (or group) to carry something of this nature from concept to reality. Port Clements formed a Multiplex Society in 2000 and then held a Referendum in 2001 to gauge the town's support. 73% voted in favour of the concept and in 2009 the Multiplex opened. Leadership, along with Community support, were key in making this project work.

Shona Fulcher

Kim, I couldn't agree more. The Centre for Social Innovation is built on the idea that we are a leaderful organization which means that responsibility and ownership are a necessity from Board level to volunteer level and it is this engagement that has allowed CSI to grow and flourish doing more with less.

And, CSI is also blessed with a talented and visionary leader in Tonya Surman

who has provided the drive, inspiration, aspiration and prodigious knowledge to guide CSI from 14 organizations to 400, the value of her leadership can't be overstated.

Gary Hiscox

Ann....I like this question, it is crucial and the way I went at it was to develop the mission statement and I have talked about this in earlier notes.

This statement became the tool, a daily tool to run the island. Everyone on the Island knew what the mission was and to use it ...the trust, staff businesses, the public, everyone...to be mindful of the mission.

The four staff reporting to me knew the mission, we met weekly, they were experts in their field. I did my very best not to micro manage them, they knew their job better than I but I challenged them on principles aggressively.

We communicated the mission widely through as many vehicles as we could with the help of a wonderful consultant whom we were privileged to have work with us and but challenging to manage.

I managed the island by walking around a lot talking to tenants, staff and so on. If I saw a piece of litter on the ground I picked it up knew someone was watching.

Engage with people, listen the folks are ones resource...this is difficult to do if you are not confident or do not have a point of view.

And finally know what the island is all about...this is difficult because it so difficult to define.

Ann Dale

What other spaces in Canada do you know about, and any ideas for convincing more communities to adopt this kind of planning?

Rebecca Foon

Although not Canada, the High Line in New York, I find to be a very inspiring urban design that brings together community, art, food, ecology through innovative urban design. The High Line is a public park built on an historic freight rail line elevated above the streets on Manhattan’s West Side – so it almost feels as though you are floating on top of NYC. Friends of the High Line fought for the High Line’s preservation and transformation at a time when the historic structure

was under the threat of demolition and now the non-profit conservancy is working with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation to make sure the High Line is maintained.

Friends of the High Line have integrated art commissions into the public space including site-specific commissions, exhibitions, performances, video programs, and a series of billboard interventions. They also offer education programs with schools to highlight the native ecology on the highline and the overall design features.

Shona Fulcher

The Highline is amazing! Such a wonderful re-imagining of fallow space.

Yuill Herbert

The Port Authority in Halifax has some similar aspects to GI, but they are of more secondary purpose and I think to give them a social licence. I can't think of any other buildings like Port Clements...

Kim Mushynsky

The Village of Masset (also on Haida Gwaii) is looking at Port's model as both their Elementary and High Schools are old and significantly over-sized for the current enrolment. The Elementary School was set up as a temporary space in the early 1970's and has just carried on in spite of never being designed as a permanent space. They also have to find a new home for their public library so ironically they are pretty much in the same boat we were a dozen years ago.

Robert Newell

I would like to share an example located in Winnipeg, The Exchange District. I feel it shares similarities with Granville Island in the way that is a city space that harbours retail, residence, post-secondary education, green space, and is a location for festivals. Another particularly interesting similarity is that it is also rich in historical and heritage value, and tours are run through the area to highlight the heritage. This makes me wonder if historical spots in large urban spaces could be particularly good areas to develop multi-functional spaces as retail can exist with the education (i.e., interpretive signage and tours) and they can be attractive areas due to historical (and thus cultural) significance for gathering community.

Rebecca Foon

Artscape based out of Toronto is an interesting model. Artscape has developed many multi-tenant spaces for the arts and culture sector, transforming a portfolio of underutilized buildings across Toronto into dynamic community spaces (including workspaces for galleries, theatres, not-for-profit organization and live/workspaces for hundreds of artists). The projects have been catalysts for the regeneration of neighbourhoods including the Distillery District and Toronto Island.

The Distillery District is a very vibrant hub in Toronto bringing together food, local crafts arts and many diverse not-for-profit organizations that are doing very innovative work locally.

Ann Dale

I cannot thank you enough for your participation today, you have shared so generously your experiences. But importantly, you have raised some critical social questions that we will endeavour to respond to when compiling the Solutions Agenda in about 12 months from now, which we will share with everyone once it is published. In the end, maybe it really is all about relationships, spaces and places to make connections, to share, and collaboration. Because social innovation is inherently collaborate and that is what we do desperately need in today's complicated world. You guys are on the forefront of this change.

Any last comments?

Gary Hiscox

A development that I admire is the Rec Centre as it is known in West Vancouver. This is a costly building, to the outrage of many locally, that accommodates an upgraded swimming pool or leisure centre as they say in the UK, a weight room, a physical rehab centre, activity rooms and community health offices linked by a huge enclosed public space with the skating rink next door and a seniors centre building. It is heartening to see people using this building. I do not think that West Vancouverites realized how badly they needed this facility. A great place to work there gym for a couple of hours, get your annual flu shot sit down with a cup of coffee and chat to your mates or wave to your neighbours...and then there are all of those mums with their kids.

Yuill Herbert

Great to hear more about these remarkable stories, each of which could and should be replicated across Canada!

Shona Fulcher

Thank you Ann for moderating and thank you everyone else for sharing. So many interesting projects and so much knowledge!
Thank you for inviting me to take part.
Have a great week.

Kim Mushynsky

This was a very interesting format for holding a discussion. Thank you for inviting me to participate.

Robert Newell

Agreed! Thank you for sharing these innovations and your experiences. The diversity of these initiatives show that multi-functional spaces can be effective for different types of functions and successful in communities of different sizes.

Many thanks for this conversation!

Rebecca Foon

Thank you all so much for participating in this e-Dialogue – I really enjoyed our conversation!

Gary Hiscox

Thanks for this...what a gas, Gary.