

session title

Small but Mighty: Engaging Small Communities to Realize Big Visions

With the current pandemic, jobs are increasingly mobile making small cities more desirable. Forward-thinking communities that expanded their public realm were better equipped to attract new residents and mitigate the impacts of the pandemic. Through case studies, this session will explore strategies for inclusive engagement, conceptualizing, and implementing bold designs in smaller cities.

learning objectives

- Explore inclusive engagement techniques catered to small town politics and places where “everyone knows everyone” and change is in everyone’s “backyard.”
- Introduce funding and implementation strategies that enable municipalities with less annual income to realize bold design without limiting quality or content.
- Discuss design, presentation, and communication techniques that are well suited to small communities where developing personal relationships is critical to building trust and acceptance.
- Understand how smaller communities are using previously implemented or planned open spaces to mitigate the pandemic and lessen the impact on their businesses and communities.

the speakers



Erin Lonoff AICP | Principal | HR&A Advisors Inc.
elonoff@hraadvisors.com

Working at the intersection of the public and private sectors, Erin leverages her experience in urban planning and real estate to contribute to the vitality of cities and the public realm. Her work includes supporting design and funding strategies of parks and public spaces such as Panoway on Wayzata Bay, St. Paul's River Learning Center, and Rochester's Heart of the City. Erin brings experience in coupling investment planning with inclusive growth strategies. She recently supported Cleveland's Shaker Square redesign and a management strategy for Indianapolis' downtown public spaces, developing operations and governance approaches that align with community equity goals.



Susannah Ross | Landscape Architect | Agency Landscape + Planning
susannah@agencylp.com

Susannah has extensive experience managing complex urban landscape design and construction. She is passionate about the design of public open spaces in urban settings. She enjoys exploring the potential of landscape design to enrich the daily life, health and well-being of city dwellers and urban ecology, and to shape the core identity of a city. She welcomes the challenge of designing to meet a diverse set of interests in a complex physical context. Prior to joining Agency, Susannah was a Senior Associate with Sasaki, where she worked for 16 years. Prior to that she was a software user interface designer.



Scott Jordan ASLA | Principal | Civitas Inc.
sjordan@civitasinc.com

Scott is a Principal at Civitas, a Denver based landscape architecture and urban design firm. Responsible for the day-to-day operations of the office, he plays a prominent role in establishing, maintaining, and curating the culture of the interdisciplinary practice. Scott has spent that past few years focusing on major waterfront park designs for the City of Wayzata, Minnesota (population 5,000) and the City of Post Falls, Idaho (population 30,000). Scott projects have received awards from ASLA, AIA, APA, Waterfront Center, ULI, and Fast Companies Innovation by Design Award.

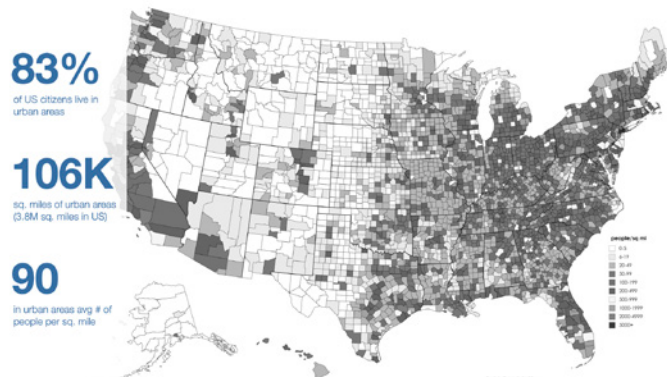
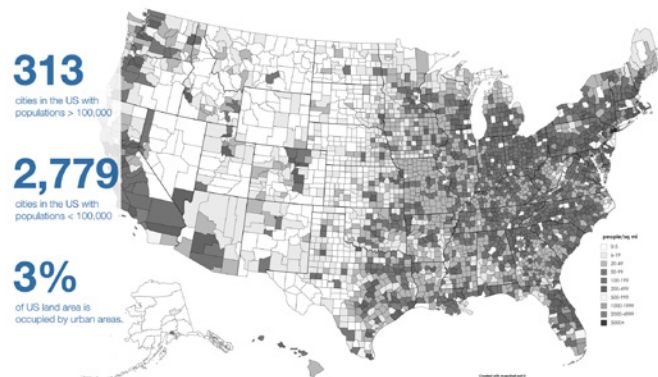
the context



what do we mean when we say small city?

- globally **2.1B people** live in cities with a population **less than 100,000**
- **313 US cities** have a population **greater than 100,000**
- **2,779 US cities** have a populations **less than 100,000**
- **83%** of the US population **lives in urban areas**

notes:



the post COVID reality

how did we get here?

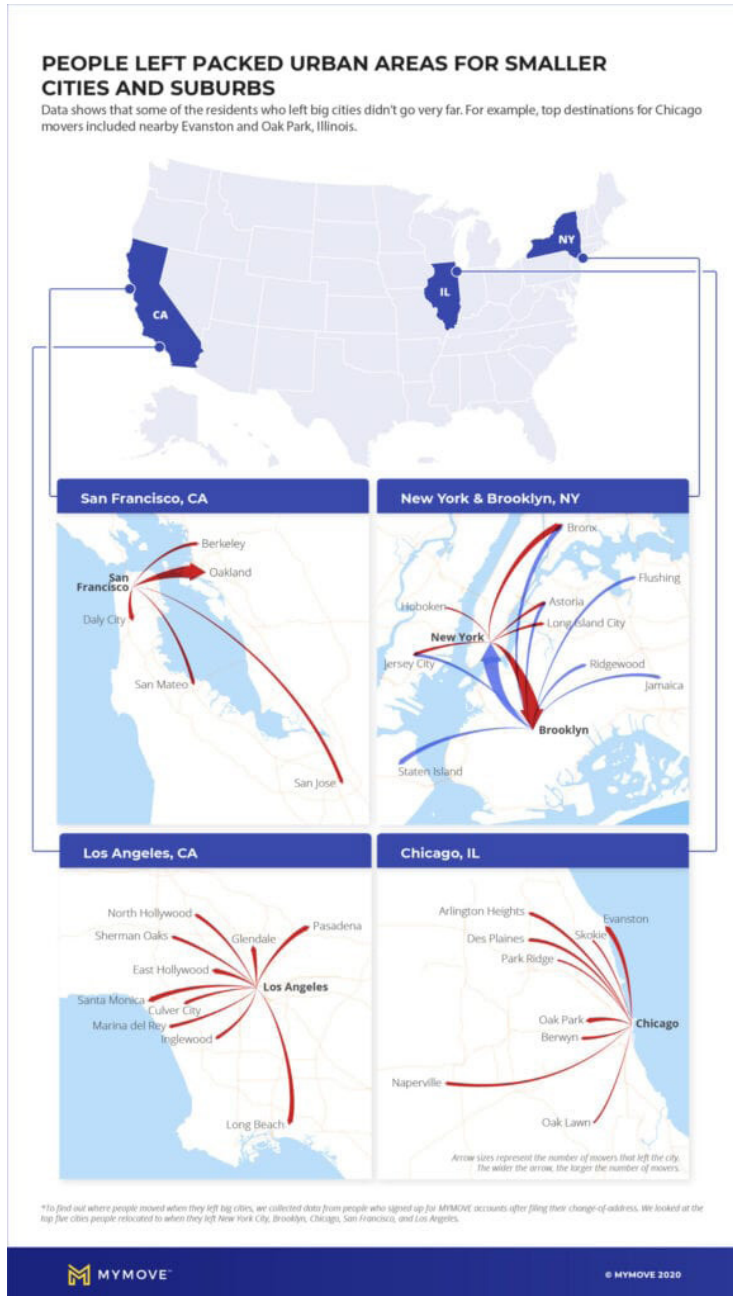
~40% of US jobs can be done remotely

- Remote work is here to stay: 75% of pandemic remote workers want to continue remote work at least half the time.
- Millennials (~72M people in the US) are hitting prime home-buying age (mid-30s), spurring significant housing demand
- Suburbs, exurbs, and vacation towns home prices are booming with new home buyers who can work remotely, but this growth has not been even:
 - Expensive metro areas (e.g. NYC, San Francisco) saw suburban home value growth
 - More affordable metro areas (e.g. Kansas City, Cleveland) saw more even urban/suburban home value growth.
 - Vacation home sales were up 50% in 2020
- Small cities have been jumping on this opportunity, offering incentives to get remote workers to their cities

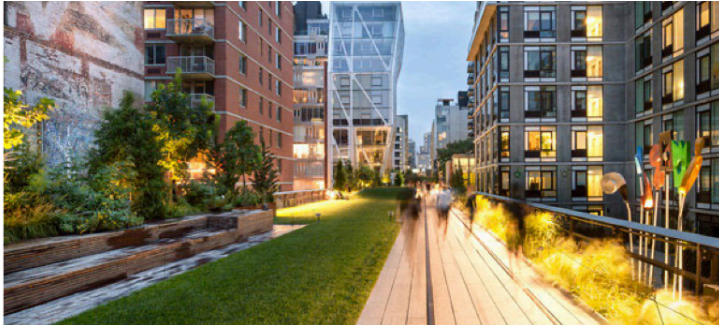
why does this matter for park planning?

- Park investments make small cities attractive places for home-buyers coming from major cities and urban areas

notes:



implications of a global society



how has globalization and social media affected small cities

- provided a broader context to think big
- heightened expectations of traditional park amenities
- established a more complex understanding of what a park can be
- increased the value placed on natural systems
- Introduced a more inclusive approach to placemaking

notes:



ithaca, ny | ithaca commons

pop. 30,000



the setting

- thriving college town with pedestrian mall at its heart suffering from: aging infrastructure and surface elements and dated, inflexible design elements incompatible with contemporary site usage
- challenge of the design is to promote local culture, horticulture, retail, daily social gathering, and special events all in one compact space

engagement techniques

- in a city with many educated, informed opinions, establish a client committee composed of key players
- pay special attention to business owners--explain how project will allow continuous retail access and utility service
- tackle tree removal head on: a City full of “tree-huggers” embraced the open views provided upon their removal
- maintain strong project management, engineering, and business liaison capacities on site during construction

funding mechanisms

- \$4.5 million TIGER grant awarded by Federal Transit Administration given the mall's function as a walkway between two large bus hubs

notes:

sarasota, fl | the bay park

pop. 56,000



the setting

- Project to transform city-owned site--covered in surface parking lots--into a more inclusive and welcoming community waterfront destination
- design team charged with showing how a series of community-driven principles, established in previous visioning sessions, guided the effort

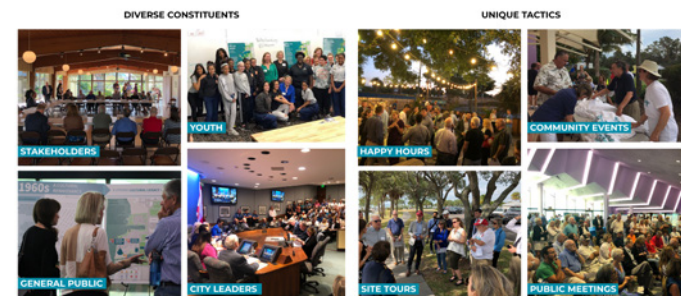
engagement techniques

- challenge to get representative voices from across the community, not just the very vocal adjacent condo owners
- community open houses, online engagement, stakeholder focus groups, site tours, community forums and youth engagement, young professional charrettes are just a few ways the design team facilitated the conversation
- the depth of technical information must be presented using accessible language and graphics.

funding mechanisms

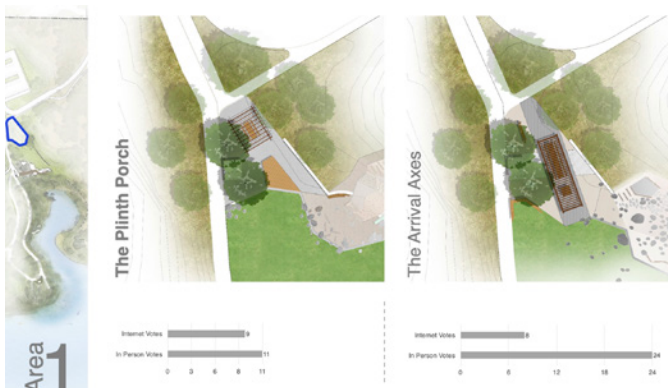
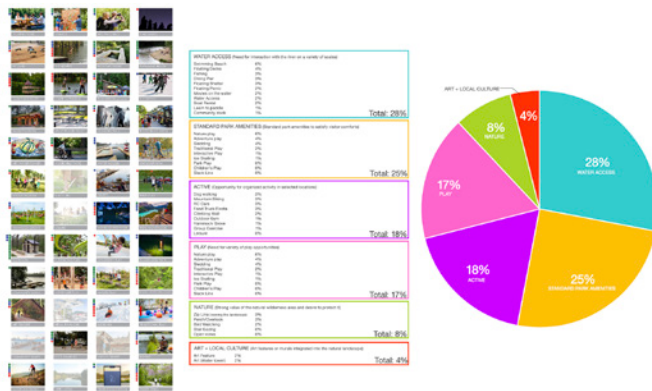
- primary principle of the project going in was that it be financially feasible and a long term sustainable success
- Funding has come from a variety of sources:
 - State and Federal Sources
 - Development Impact
 - City Capital Support
 - Tax Increment Financing
 - Philanthropy

notes:



post fall, id | black bay park

pop. 36,000



context

- post falls is a blue collar lumber town and bedroom community for spokane and couer d'alene set along the spokane river
- park visioning process looked to capitalize on 66 acres of relatively untouched natural area to improve community health, recreation, and engagement with the river

engagement techniques

- As one of the first community based parks plan for the community, the design team developed a variety of simple engagement techniques for first-time participants
 - 5 community meetings
 - 3 online surveys
 - 5 council presentation
- engagement activities utilized techniques that challenged to community to dream, while pandering to their inherent practical blue-collar sensibilities

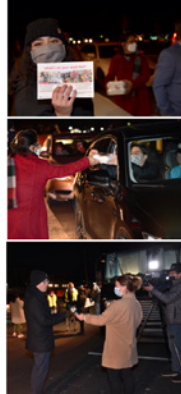
funding mechanisms

- bold community led vision was broken into multiple phases developed through community discourse
- phasing enables opportunities to realize funding through multiple grant cycles

notes:

springdale, ar | jones campus vision

pop. 80,000



context

- springdale is the most diverse community in northwest arkansas (12,000 marshallese and 30,000 latinX)
- the jones campus vision re-imagines the 52 acre campus to remain relevant in the ever-changing northwest arkansas

engagement techniques

- developed through an extensive community-based design process that emphasized engaging and empowering the lower-income ethnically diverse populations of Springdale
 - local minority chefs hosted drive through dinner events
 - virtual and on-line meetings
 - facebook live events
 - one-on-one, affinity group, and tenant meetings
 - online surveys
 - extensive social media and direct contact

funding mechanisms

- walton family foundation design excellence grant
- self-funding through endowment draws
- extensive grant applications
- capital campaign

notes:



wayzata, mn | panoway

pop. 5,000



context

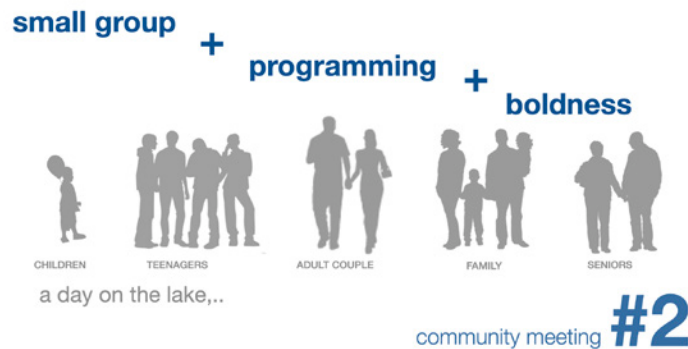
- wayzata is a suburb of minneapolis, that has been attempting to reconnect with their lakefront for over 60 years
- the panoway project expanded upon the city-wide framework plan completed by others

engagement techniques

- Developed through inclusive community engagement, the outcome was a community focused on improving their most valuable natural resource, and creating a lakefront experience.
 - 4 community meetings (social gathering, small group imagination session, open forum, and table sessions)
 - 9 steering committee meetings
 - 6 council work sessions
 - 11 council presentation

funding mechanisms

- project broken into multiple phases to enable funding
- phase 1 - funded through 6 revenue streams (primarily city funded)
- phase 2 - funded through state bond issue and a capital campaign



notes:

