



SHIFT: EQUITY Planning Conference

Halifax, NS
March 6 & 7 2020



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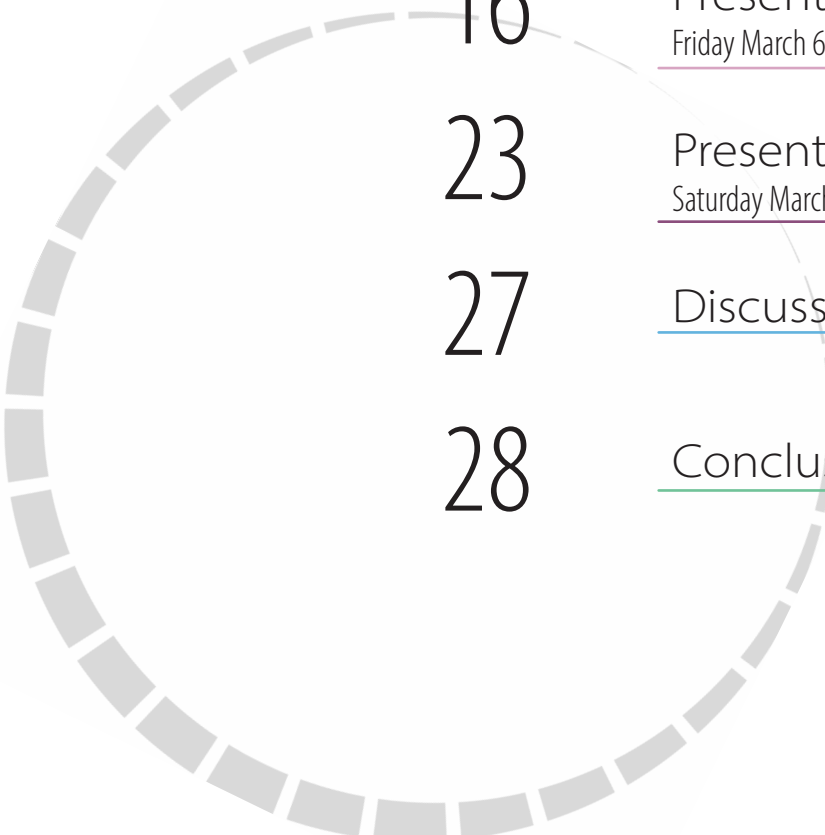
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SHIFT: EQUITY Planning Conference



A FREE public conference dedicated to advancing conversations about (in)equity & accessibility in cities, towns, and rural places.

Register through eventbrite!
(<https://tinyurl.com/rlyzotom>)

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Day 1, Alderney Landing Theatre

2 Ochterloney Street, Dartmouth, NS
Friday March 6, 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM



Lezlie Lowe, Journalist & Author of No Place to Go: How Public Toilets Fail our Private Needs



Houssam Elokda, Happy City Health & Happiness Through Urban Design

Day 2, Halifax North Memorial Library

2285 Gottingen Street, Halifax, NS
Saturday March 7, 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM



Ted Rutland, Concordia University Displacing Blackness in the North End of Halifax



David Wachsmuth, McGill University Impact of Airbnb in the Halifax Rental Market



@PlanningCon



@dalshiftconference



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Full conference schedule available at:
<https://dalhousieplanningconference.webs.com/>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The SHIFT: Equity Conference is a FREE public conference dedicated to advancing conversations about (in)equity, accessibility & engagement in cities, towns, & rural places. The event took place over the course of three days from March 5-7, 2020. This three day event is organized annually by Dalhousie Master of Planning students. This year brought planning professionals from across the country to present their work related to equity, diversity, and accessibility. Local planning professionals, members of the academic community, and interested citizens all came to engage with each other at this event. The roster of keynote speakers this year included Housman Elokda, Lezlie Lowe, Ted Rutland, and David Wachsmuth, representing planning initiatives being conducted across the country. Many of these keynote speakers also joined planning colleagues and other significant stakeholders to engage in a variety of riveting panel discussions. This conference carried the Equity theme over from the 2019 conference due to the importance of the topics that were presented, and it was evident from the conversations that took place, and the diversity of age, demographic, and professions that were represented that important conversations were started and ideally will continue following this event.

The SHIFT Equity Conference programming took place in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. We are all Treaty people.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The conference organizers would like to extend a big thank you to the speakers, our volunteers, and to all who attended for making the SHIFT: Equity Conference a reality. The keynote speakers and panelists addressed the opportunities and continued challenges that are being faced by citizens across the county dealing with equity issues. We are grateful for their insight and the work they continue to do in this field. Without the help of our volunteers, the majority of whom are students in the Bachelor of Community Design program at Dalhousie, this conference would not have been possible. Thank you for your time before, during, and after the event to make this a reality. This conference was supported and directed by the expert guidance of Ren Thomas, thank you for your wisdom, feedback, and laughter. We would finally like to thank our classmates for all their support from fundraising, to hosting events, volunteering their time, and attending the event. Events of this magnitude do not happen without the support of the community and we are so appreciative of the support from the Dalhousie, Planning, and Halifax communities for ensuring this event is a huge success every year. THANK YOU!




INTRODUCTION

The SHIFT Conference is an annual planning conference organized by the Master of Planning students at Dalhousie University. Every year the conference attracts students, professionals, academics as well as members of the public in the pursuit of exploring relevant planning themes in the Halifax Regional Municipality. The 2019 SHIFT Planning Conference discussed the subject of equity in planning and the role that advocacy planning has in planning practices. At the end of the 2019 conference, it was determined that the theme of equity was too large to be covered in just one conference, which resulted in the decision to make equity the theme of the conference one again in 2020. The 2020 Shift Conference took place over a three-date period, beginning on the evening of Thursday, March 5th and then continuing on Friday, March 6th and Saturday, March 7th. For the 2020 conference, equity-related topics ranged from short-term rentals' impact on affordability to accessibility in the public realm regarding public toilets. The following report will describe the events of the conference, including a Pecha Kucha, lectures, panel discussions, a networking event and even a film screening. The report aims to reflect on the successes of the conference as well as expose possible areas of improvement to build a successful conference in 2021.



SCHEDULE

SEAHORSE TAVERN, HALIFAX
THURSDAY MARCH 5



Pecha Kucha
Shift Equity Conference

When: March 5th, 2020
6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Where: Seahorse Tavern
2037 Gottingen Street

What: Speakers talking on a variety of equity and urban planning issues

Topics include:

- Video as a medium for storytelling
- Placemaking
- Energy Poverty
- Air BNB
- Shoreline And Land-water Connections
- And Many More!

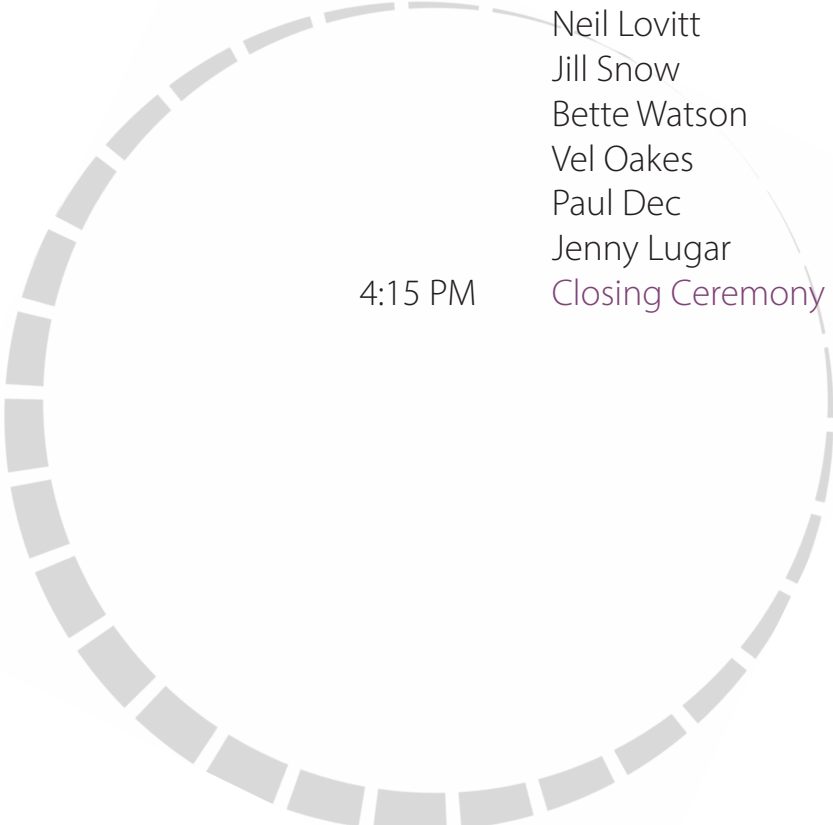
SCHEDULE

ALDERNEY THEATRE, DARTMOUTH
FRIDAY MARCH 6

- 
- 8:30 AM **Registration**
 - 9:00 AM **Opening Ceremony**
Dalhousie Elder in Residence Geri Musqua-Leblanc
Mayor Mike Savage
 - 9:30 AM **Keynote Speaker - Happy City**
Houssam Elokda
 - 10:30 AM **Break**
 - 10:45 AM **Panel Discussion - Accessibility**
Amanda Casey
Angela Henderson
Lezlie Lowe
Sebastian Salazar
 - 12:15 PM **Lunch**
 - 1:30 PM **Keynote Speaker - Public Washroom Accessibility**
Lezlie Lowe
 - 2:30 PM **Break**
 - 3:00 PM **Who Gives a Shift? - Youth Panel Discussion**
Andre Anderson
Josh Creighton
Ashley Hill
Ellen Smith
 - 4:00 PM **Closing Ceremony**
 - 4:30 PM **Networking Event - Celtic Corner**
 - 7:00 PM **Film Screening and Q&A Panel**
There's Something in the Water
Ingrid Waldron
Dorene Bernard
Michelle Paul
Darlene Gilbert
Benita Bunjun

SCHEDULE

NORTH END MEMORIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY, HALIFAX
SATURDAY MARCH 7

- 
- 9:00 AM Registration
 - 9:30 AM Keynote Speaker - Inequity and Exclusion
Ted Rutland
 - 10:30 AM Break
 - 10:45 AM Panel Discussion - Inequity and Exclusion
Ingrid Waldron
Irvine Carvery
Mapfumo Chidzonga
Dorene Bernard
 - 12:15 PM Lunch
 - 1:15 PM Keynote Speaker - Effects of Airbnb on Affordable
Housing
David Wachsmuth
 - 2:30 PM Break
 - 2:45 PM Panel Discussion - Housing Affordability
Claudia Jahn
Neil Lovitt
Jill Snow
Bette Watson
Vel Oakes
Paul Dec
Jenny Lugar
 - 4:15 PM Closing Ceremony



PRESENTATIONS

THURSDAY MARCH 5

PECHA KUCHA EVENT

Lauren Weseluck
Brendan Lamb
Nelson Nolan
Kieran Stepan
Giovanni Akeson
Alyson Dobrota
Hanna Daltrop
David Wachsmuth

A Pecha Kucha event at the Seahorse Tavern kicked off the Shift conference on Thursday evening. The evening was filled with interesting conversation, engaging presentations, and networking opportunities. The idea behind the Pecha Kucha event is to have many people share their ideas and work within the course of one evening. Therefore, 20 slides are shown for 20 seconds each, allowing approximately 7 minutes per presenter. The presentations were fast-paced and concise. There were a total of 8 presentations on various themes of planning and equity.

The evening started with a presentation from PLANifax, Lauren Weseluck and Brendan Lamb. PLANifax is a non-profit organization based in Halifax with a focus on community engagement and education through video format. Lauren and Brendan explored video as a medium of storytelling. Next, Nelson Nolan from the Town of Bridgewater discussed energy poverty and Bridgewater's affordable housing program. Then, Kieran Stepan from the Planning and Design Centre explored the concept of open streets. Before the networking intermission, Giovanni Akeson presented on inclusion and sledge hockey. Following the intermission, Alyson Dobrota from PBJ Design discussed placemaking in the city. Then, Hanna Daltrop from Lightship Strategies explored indigenous planning. Lastly, one of the keynote speakers from the conference David Wachsmuth ended the night off with a presentation on urban governance.





PRESENTATIONS

FRIDAY MARCH 6

OPENING CEREMONY

Gerri Musqua-LeBlanc & Mayor Mike Savage

The conference began with the opening ceremonies which consisted of a blessing from the Elder Gerri Musqua-LeBlanc and an address from Mayor Mike Savage. Gerri Musqua-LeBlanc is a coordinator for Dalhousie's Elders in Residence program and is from the Keeseekoose First Nation. Both speakers reflected on the importance of the topic of equity. Mayor Savage was happy that this topic was being re-visited for the second year.





KEYNOTE SPEAKER

HOUSSAM ELOKDA

HAPPY CITIES

Houssam Elokda is the Operations Manager and Master planning Lead at Happy City, a Vancouver-based urban design and planning consultancy dedicated to making cities happier, healthier and more inclusive. His work is influenced by his experiences as an Egyptian, a Canadian, a Muslim and a husband. How do our cities influence the way we move, feel and behave? In turn, how can we harness the influence of cities to improve the wellbeing of all its citizens? Houssam works with governments and developers around the world to explore these questions and create actionable solutions. His work with Happy City has taken him around the world to places such as Cairo, Dubai, Rotterdam, and even Bridgewater, Nova Scotia. Before all of that, Houssam was an advocate for better city building in Halifax, working with local organizations such as It's More Than Buses and Fusion Halifax.

His keynote focused on the work his consulting firm is engaged, what makes a happy city. Using the Chicago heat wave of 1995 as an example the effects of happiness in the city was demonstrating. An epidemiological assessment of the death toll around the city following the tragedy revealed that the common thread among the majority of the victims was that they were alone, without anyone to help. This trend is particularly evident when comparing the neighbourhoods of Englewood and Auburn Gresham. Auburn Gresham has a dense commercial area, with plenty of foot traffic connection and social interactions. While, Englewood had long distances between amenities, not many schools, and was cut through by major roads and highways creating a disconnected layout and saw many more deaths than Auburn Gresham.

Drawing from this example and the rest of the work done at Happy City, there several factors identified that affect what makes people happy. After you core needs are met, the key to happiness is social connectedness and leads to consistent levels of meaning, belonging, and joy comes from social relationships. Long commutes make people more stressed, reducing productivity and increasing divorce rates. Cyclists and pedestrians are happier commuters and a community with nearby amenities is more likely to have more walking/cycling commuters. However, trends recently are pushing low-income people to the outskirts of communities where amenities are farther apart, where vehicles become more of a necessity, furthering affordability struggles. Children have become victims of this car dependency as roads are unsafe and homes are farther from schools, reducing the number of kids walking to school. While, dense commercial areas, with many opportunities for social mixing increases interactions and happiness, vertical residential density can have the opposite affect, isolating people. Leading to people in high rise buildings in general feeling crowded, but also lonelier. Built form creates conditions for people to socially thrive. A significant component is how long people stay in their house/ community, as it can re-shift focus on how easy/more likely it is to create bonds.

Houssam also discussed differences between who is in the room versus who should be in the room for discussion of changing the system. New voices means we need to redistribute power. While, redistributing power is difficult but necessary; it helps make cities that are shaped by everyone so there is greater satisfaction. Vancouver's indigenous reconciliation is an example of this as a block of land in downtown has been given back to indigenous groups. They don't yet know what indigenous urbanism looks like because they have never had the opportunity to develop in this manner before.

ACCESSIBILITY PANEL

Amanda Casey
Angela Henderson
Lezlie Lowe
Sebastian Salazar

Moderated by: Tim Rissesco

The accessibility panel discussed physical accessibility to places, access to services, and mental health aspects of urban spaces. The panelists included Sebastian Salazar, Angela Henderson, Amanda Casey, and Lezlie Lowe. Sebastian Salazar is an urban planner who is currently the Community Liaison for the City of Fredericton. This role allows him to partner with many community initiatives in increasing social inclusion and strengthening social cohesion. Sebastian is intent on understanding the challenges of integration for diverse cultural communities and gender and sexual minorities. Angela Henderson is a Canadian artist, designer, and educator. Her practice emerges from a continuous investigation of the built environment, focusing on absence as a generative condition. Angela explores the interplay between imaginary and material configuration within civic space. Amanda Casey is an associate professor within the Department of Human Kinetics at St. Francis Xavier University. Her applied research program involves designing, implementing, and evaluating community-based participatory action research in the field of disability and health. Amanda focuses on the principles of universal design and seeks to foster evidence-based practice that promotes health equity for at-risk populations including people with autism and intellectual disability. Lastly, Lezlie Lowe is a freelance journalist, a King's College faculty member, and is the author of *No Places to Go: How Public Toilets Fail our Private Needs*. She has been a finalist and multiple winner at the Radio Television Digital News Association, the Atlantic Journalism Awards, and the Canadian Association of Journalist awards. Lezlie is a failed urban planner, and has an abiding passion for equity in public spaces.

The first day of the conference was taking place in Downtown Dartmouth. Therefore, it was the perfect opportunity for Tim Rissesco, the Executive Director of the Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission, to moderate the panel and ask accessibility questions. These questions included (1) how do we create spaces that are inclusive for everyone?, (2) many of our commercial properties in downtown Dartmouth are old, our property owners and business owners understand that it is both good for business and the right thing to do, to make their physical spaces accessible to all, but face incredible costs to retrofit their properties; what assistance is available to them?, (3) how do we combat social isolation?, and (4) in Dartmouth, we have neighbours that face social isolation and mental health challenges; what are some ways that you have tried to resolve this in your community?

This allowed the panel conversation to come to life as panelists provided tangible solutions to current accessibility problems in Downtown Dartmouth.





KEYNOTE SPEAKER

LEZLIE LOW

PUBLIC WASHROOM ACCESSIBILITY

Lezlie Lowe is a freelance journalist, a King's College faculty member, and is the author of *No Places to Go: How Public Toilets Fail our Private Needs*. In this keynote presentation, Lowe started off by describing everyday things that we see, but do not think about. For example, roadkill, everyone has seen a deer on the side of the road, but where does it go? The place those animals go is hidden, similar to public bathrooms. Then, Lowe discussed having a hard time leaving the house with small children, due to their bathroom needs. Children need bathrooms more frequently and urgently than adults. This brought us to Lowe's concept of 'bathroom privilege', variables that influence an individual's ability to access public bathrooms. An individual's gender, race, class, health, ability, and housing all impact their ability to access public bathrooms. Lowe also discussed men's versus women's bathrooms as they are usually the same size despite urinals taking up less space. Although men typically have more toilets/urinals, women need to use the bath more frequently, have more reasons to use the bathroom, and take longer to go to the bathroom. Lowe's solution to this problem is to dedicate a larger area to women's bathrooms than men's.

Lowe did a short reading from her book *No Places to Go: How Public Toilets Fail our Private Needs*. The reading was from chapter 6, illustrating the myth of the universal user. Bathrooms are not neutral spaces and there is no universal user. Lowe ended the presentation with discussing the public perception of bathrooms. The public perceive bathrooms as spaces that are 'dirty' and therefore are not talked about or changed. Issues with property value make people not want public bathrooms near their houses. And overall, public washrooms are about status, who deserves to be using the city and accessing bathrooms.

Following the presentation, there was a question period where Lowe answered many questions from the audience. The questions surrounding public washroom specifics in Halifax, the Portland Loo, solutions Halifax could adopt, and public bathroom safety.

YOUTH PANEL

Andre Anderson
Josh Creighton
Ashley Hill
Ellen Smith

Moderated by: Derico Symonds

The Friday afternoon portion of the conference featured a panel that was not included in the 2019 SHIFT conference, made up exclusively of youth. The members were made up of four young adults, all active in their community in their own regard. Derico Symonds, a community leader in the North End who has been conducting youth, community and social justice work for over 15 years, moderated the panel. The members included Ashley Hill, the Manager of Youth Programs with the Black Business Initiative. Another panelist Josh Creighton is lifelong resident of the North End and member of several community organizations, including the YMCA and Leave Out the Violence. Completing the well-rounded panel was Ellen Smith, Chair of the Halifax Youth Advisory Committee and Andre Anderson founder of Forty Four Consulting, a company seeking to create tangible economic advantages for marginalized groups.

The panel discussed social justices within the community and youths role in shaping communities. Each member brought a unique perspective based upon his or her life experiences and advocacy work to create a holistic, insightful discussion. Moderator Derico Symonds asked intriguing questions centred on how we can ensure all voices are heard in the shaping of communities. Specific questions included how to engage youth in the planning and decision-making process as well as planning that included the views of marginalized community members. The answers that arose from the panel included the need for municipalities to engage youth on a more meaningful level. The panelists stated that youth often feel like their opinions do not matter, and cities need to do a better job of engaging younger community members. The panelists also concluded that there is a need to empower marginalized communities in the planning process rather than making decisions for the community.



FILM SCREENING

THERE IS SOMETHING IN THE WATER

Q & A Panel
Ingrid Waldron
Dorene Bernard
Michelle Paul
Darlene Gilbert
Benita Bunjun

On Friday evening, a film showing took place of the documentary *There is Something in the Water*. Ellen Page brings attention to the injustices and injuries caused by environmental racism in her home province of Nova Scotia. This is an urgent documentary on Indigenous and African Nova Scotian women fighting to protect their communities, their land, and their futures. The film explores the communities of Shelburne, Boat Harbour, and Stewiacke.

Following the film showing, a panel discussion took place with the grassroots grandmothers, Indigenous women who were fighting to protect their land of Boat Harbour in the documentary. The panel was moderated by Dr. Ingrid Waldron, a Dalhousie professor who was a key contributor to the film. The panel discussed the impact of the film on the community of Boat Harbour, the biggest challenges, and the response from the Indigenous community. Following the panel discussion, there was a question period where members of the panel answered questions from the audience. Only one audience member asked a question: what does ally-ship look like? The response was to really show up, and when you show up to come with respect. Your intention is what the Indigenous community will see and remember. Bring your spirit!





PRESENTATIONS

SATURDAY MARCH 7



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

TED RUTLAND

Displacing Blackness Planning, Power, and Race in Twentieth Century Halifax

Dr. Ted Rutland is an Associate Professor in the Concordia University Department of Geography, Planning and Environment. His research examines how cities are understood and governed in modernity, and how white supremacy shapes urban thought and practice. His 2018 book, *Displacing Blackness: Planning, Power, and Race in Twentieth Century Halifax*, examines how anti-Black racism shaped urban planning practices across more than a century in Halifax, Nova Scotia. His current research focuses on Montréal, and a series of issues related to housing, urban security, and policing.

Ted was one of the keynotes on March 7th, which occurred at the North End Public Library. His talk surrounded the history of racism in the North End, particularly on Gottingen Street. His talk described the intersection between planning & policing and how planning can become the police by using land use planning to destroy minority neighbourhoods. Ted's talk shifted to actions that planners had taken in the past to police the North End, which included fencing off gathering spaces, adding a bigger police presence in the area and deciding not to build public housing in the area to avoid concentrated poverty. All of these planning decisions lead to an increase in problems in the area as opposed to solutions. He finished by offering some alternatives, which included making reparations with the community and ensuring that the resources get sent to those hurt by the actions of the planners.

Following the presentation, there was a question period where the crowd asked many engaging questions. The questions surrounded topics such as historical perceptions of density and how non-profit housing projects could be more effective.

INEQUALITY & EXCLUSION

Ingrid Waldron
Irvine Carvery
Mapfumo Chidzonga
Dorene Bernard

Moderated by: Ted Rutland

PANEL

The Saturday morning portion of the conference featured a captivating keynote presentation by Concordia Associate Professor Ted Rutland on Inequity and Exclusion. Following the keynote presentation, Professor Rutland had the opportunity to moderate a panel discussion on the same topic, Inequity and Exclusion. While the keynote presentation revealed planning's role in facilitating inequity, the panel was made up of community members who experienced the negative impacts of planning on a day to day basis. The members included Dr. Ingrid Waldron, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Health at Dalhousie University. Dr. Waldren is well known for her work around racial inequality and environmental racism. Other panel members included Irvine Cavery, a former Africville resident and president of the Africville Genealogy Society, and Mapfumo Chidzonga, a dedicated community engagement advisor specializing in diversity and inclusion in the HRM. Lastly, the panel featured Dorene Bernard, who is a Mi'kmaq Elder and water protector.

This panel discussed issues such as racism, social justice, meaningful public engagement with diverse communities, building upon Rutland's keynote presentation. As the moderator, Ted Rutland facilitated discussion regarding each panel member's experience with racism and social injustices linked to planning and policymaking. The audience heard heartbreaking accounts of injustice from all of the panel members; examples include Irvine Cavery and Dorene Bernard. Irvine recounted how his home, Africville, was torn down as a result of racist planning practices and no community engagement. Elder Dorene Bernard discussed the traumatizing experience of residential schools, and how policy practices led to a loss of her culture. Further interesting perspectives were provided by Mapfumo Chidzonga, stating that while he was African, he was not African Nova Scotian, which meant that he did not fully understand the struggles that Black Nova Scotians experienced. The firsthand accounts gave way to lessons that should be learned from the hardships experienced by the panel members. Perhaps one of the greatest lessons that the audience took away from the discussion was that outsiders would never truly understand the struggles of marginalized communities, as they have not lived through them. Because of this it is vital that community members dictate the decision making process for planning and policy within their respective communities.





KEYNOTE SPEAKER

DAVID WACHSMUTH

Short-Term Rentals and Impact on Housing: What's the Problem

David Wachsmuth is the Canada Research Chair in Urban Governance at McGill University, where he is also an Assistant Professor in the School of Urban Planning. He directs UPGo, the Urban Politics and Governance research group at McGill, where he leads a team of researchers investigating pressing urban governance problems related to economic development, environmental sustainability, and housing markets. He is the co-lead of the Adapting Urban Environments for the Future theme of the McGill Sustainability Systems Initiative, where he is part of a broad interdisciplinary team developing new ways of conceptualizing, measuring, and improving urban sustainability. A major focus of his work has been explaining a transition in policy and planning from identifying the city as a global sustainability problem to identifying the city as a solution to global sustainability problems. He is one of the world's leading experts on the impacts of short-term rental platforms such as Airbnb on cities around the world and consults widely with municipalities and community organizations on designing appropriate regulations.

David was the second keynote speaker on March 7th, and he talked about the impacts of short-term rentals on housing. His presentation began by talking about his methods and about the effects that short-term rentals have had on cities globally. Some of the questions that he answered included: What happens if a gigantic new revenue stream is introduced into the residential housing market? How do single room occupancies interact with housing availability? And what predicts positive or negative neighbourhood sentiment toward short term rentals? In answering these questions David gave examples of cities around the world to back up his arguments. David then shifted his discussion to Halifax specifically. In Halifax, he gave estimates for how much housing is being lost to short term rentals and where short term rentals are being concentrated in the province. David concluded his presentation by offering suggestions to planners on how to better regulate short term rentals to prevent housing shortages.

During the question period, there was a wide range of questions about short term rentals and housing. Some of the questions surrounded building more housing and short term rental registration.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PANEL

Claudia Jahn
Neil Lovitt
Jill Snow
Bette Watson
Paul Dec
Jenny Lugar
Moderated by: David Wachsmuth

The affordable housing panel consisted of several housing advocates from different backgrounds and perspectives. It was the busiest panel of the weekend, with six panelists contributing. There were consultants, government employees, and non-profit advocates included in the discussion. The panel was moderated by David Wachsmuth, the final keynote speaker of the conference as well. The discussion invoked lively discussion around housing affordability concerns, such as expanded understandings of what adequate and affordable housing is. Different programs use different measure to determine affordability such as, Is the house adequate, enough rooms, affordable, and is there housing alternative that costs no more than the 30% of their income. Affordable housing must also serve your needs because if someone must leave their community, friends, and family to access affordable housing then that's not the goal. Also, conditions of street, sidewalks (walkability, public transport, bike-able), and whether it is close to services and amenities are important factors to consider. Another question was identifying whether Halifax is currently in a housing crisis, and the role of different actors in the affordable housing movement. There are many factors that contribute to whether it would be considered a crisis. But, low vacancy rates in areas where they were systemically low, and the impact on the most vulnerable lead several of the panelists to concur that the city was indeed in a housing crisis. Finally, understanding the roles of different actors in addressing affordable housing was discussed. The problem is that we need to understand what level we can deal with locally and what we cannot and what the scope is. For some groups of the community, they have been in housing crisis for a long time, but the only reason why we are talking about it now is that it's starting to affect the middle class. As planners and decision makers, we must try to educate and correct views of community members to understand the issues we are facing when we try to address this issue. Community members are in the field every day and are a wealth of knowledge. You just need to approach them and work with them to understand their own concerns and tell them about yours. Make sure you allow time for trust and relationship building to do things together rather than competing with them.



DISCUSSION

The 2020 SHIFT Equity conference shed light on many important topics regarding equity in the planning process. The 2020 conference had many successes as well as areas that could be improved upon for next year.

One major success was this year's attendance compared to previous years. The insightful topics and captivating keynote speakers contributed to increased attendance over the 2019 conference for both Friday, March 6th and Saturday, March 7th. The turnout for the Friday portion was roughly 150 attendees; the Saturday portion of the conference saw slightly over 100 attendees. Additionally, the conference received increased publicity through a segment in The Chronicle Herald Newspaper as well as several high profile events that garnered increased public attention. The film screening of "There's something in the Water," during the Friday night portion of the conference was nearly full. The film starring actress Ellen Page depicted the struggle of marginalized Nova Scotian communities with environmental racism. The film experienced significant public support and was a great addition to the SHIFT conference. Another celebrated event of the conference was David Wachsmuth's Keynote presentation discussing Airbnb's effect on affordable housing. The presentation took place on Saturday, March 7th and was standing room only. The film screening and Airbnb keynote revealed that while all topics are important when discussing equity, to grow public attendance, it is crucial to discuss relevant issues for a Halifax and Nova Scotian context. Environmental racism is an incredibly current issue with events such as Boat Harbour and Alton Gas currently taking place. Additionally, housing affordability is an ongoing issue in Halifax as a result of population growth and new development.

While SHIFT had many triumphs, following the completion of the conference, potential areas of improvement were revealed. The main issues centred on small logistical complications such as water at coffee breaks as well as ensuring water jugs were present. Regarding food, lunch options could be expanded to include more accessible food, such as Vegan and Gluten-Free options. While the events of the conference were mostly a success, it may be beneficial to create prompting questions for the panel to help facilitate discussion. Additionally, some events were more popular than others, revealing it is important to schedule events with less interest in the morning to raise attendance; an example is the Youth Panel. The panel was held in the afternoon with a small audience. Perhaps if it were held in the morning, the crowd would likely have been more significant.

Overall the 2020 SHIFT Equity Conference experienced many successes, as well as a few areas that may need improvement; together, they have the potential to contribute to an even more successful 2021 SHIFT Conference.

CONCLUSION

This year's SHIFT Conference was the second half of a two-year focus on equity. The topic was too important to cover effectively in a single weekend so the decision was made to extend the topic. The conversations, thought-provoking questions, and high attendance proved the need for another year of focus on equity. The conversations about equity were continued and expanded upon from the previous year. We learned a lot from everyone who participated in the conference and imagine that this knowledge also was imparted on those that attended. We hope that this knowledge will continue to be used to make our city a more equitable place in its planning work and beyond. The organizing committee is proud of the diverse array of speakers from both within and outside the planning realm, who each provided their unique perspectives on equity. This conference was held just before the 2020 COVID-19 global pandemic and we hope that all have survived the physical and mental strain of this crisis. This unfortunate situation has evoked the decision to move next year's conference online with a focus on connection. This should be a relevant and engaging conversation to continue our learning moving forward.