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(Writer standing by.)

>> SPEAKER: Nicole, can people hear me now?

>> SPEAKER: Yes.

>> SPEAKER: I think I'm muted. Mindy, can you hear me?

>> SPEAKER: I can hear you.

>> SPEAKER: Okay. Okay, the numbers are still ticking up. We have, um, almost 200 people in now. Okay, we are now live, I am informed by our technical people, and this is Mike McGinn. I'm the Executive Director of America Walks, and today's webinar, the inaugural edition for 2021, Main Street, and I'm joined here by Mindy Fullilove, and first of all, I just want to start off by saying it's a great book. I really encourage people to read it. It's very conversational, and there were a lot of insights in it, and far more than what we'll be able to get to in this

one hour, so I definitely encourage you to read the book. The book is, um, Mindy visited Main Streets in 178 cities in 14 countries, and the idea was to look at them and view them as, um, how Main Streets are places where people gather and become a force for community. Mindy is a social psychiatrist, an MD. She's board certified and explores the ties between environment and mental health. She's also been a community advocate. In 2004, she helped start Climb, which was a successful community-based initiative in upper Manhattan that promoted physical, social, and civic activity by northern Manhattan residents, along with other community activists, she also founded the University of Orange, which is a somewhat different kind of university, but it's based on the premise that anything you need to know, you can learn in Orange, New Jersey, and it's a, um, a community-based learning process, which underlies a lot of what we'll be talking about.

She's also the professor at the new school, author of many books. One of the things about this book is, you know, because Mindy's a social psychiatrist, she's looking at the intersection, um, between the emotional and the physical and the commercial. So, we're going to talk about that. Now, before we dive in with Mindy,

I'm supposed to show you some slides, so that's what I'm going to do next. Your facilitator is Nicole Smith, who's joining you. I'm the relatively new Executive Director of America Walks, and I'll weave in some of my biography in the questions and answers in the conversation, I am sure of that. We are really grateful to our sponsors, the Centers for Disease Control in particular, because it turns out that places where people can walk and move are fabulous for physical health and for preventing disease, and we're also, um, grateful to our other sponsors as well. If you'd like to become one, reach out to me so we can do more of this. In the same vein, we rely on donations as well to keep this place going. We support local activists around this country in their work, not just through our webinars, but through our walking college, through technical assistance programs, through community change grants, and, um, there's a lot of time and effort into putting on this series, so your dollars would be really great. If you have a question for us, there's a place in your panel to do so, and put the questions in, Nicole will filter them through to us, and we'll see if we can weave them into the conversation.

I just marched right into the introduction, um,

and, you know, just as a little more introduction, then I'll turn it off to the slides, you know, rather than a presentation, Mindy suggested we hold a conversation about her book, and as a starting point for that, she's written a number of books, but one of the, the book that she discusses in this most recent book is something called Root Shock, and that looked at the dynamics of urban renewal, again from the perspective of a social psychiatrist, and, you know, Root Shock is a, I think I stopped showing the screen, and it's Mindy and I now, um, Root Shock's a gardening term of the damage that can be done when you transplant a plant from one place to another and the ability of the plant to recover from it, and she's talking about it in the context of urban renewal, but welcome, Mindy. You know, before we start talking about the healing power of Main Streets, it seems that we're undergoing a whole lot of root shocks right now.

>> SPEAKER: In our bodies, shocking events. Um, a colleague of mine said the other day that quoting an author, quoting another author, I am I and my circumstances, and I think that's, you know, from the perspective of psychiatry, that's what social psychiatry is about. I'm not just me, like an

individual atom running around, I'm myself and, you know, whatever's going on in my life, and, so, when something, like, huge happens in our lives, we get to rethink. We have to rethink. We have to experience it, we have to talk about it, which is why it's such a useful place to start. I think we have several levels of root shock going on at this point that are, not just a few people in our neighborhood that's being destroyed by our boom renewal, not to mention the other millions of species that are threatened by extinction. If you think about COVID, that's the whole world. If you think about, you know, this challenge to democracy, that's not just the U.S., but we're connected to all the other countries. All the other countries are reeling, that this could happen in the U.S., which we have prided ourselves on being the home of democracy. So, and these are all interconnected, they're not isolated, and that's, so, I think it really throws into question what's the nature of the world we're living in and what are we going to do about it. So, I think we've lost, in very important ways, the world we had before, and we have to figure out a new world. We are being transplanted into the future.

>> SPEAKER: You know, a couple of thoughts about

that. One is, um, and that was, to me, I really enjoyed reading that analysis and, you know, addressing that concept. I ran for office, I became a mayor, I've been an advocate for a long time, and one of the things I kind of learned was you, and I was very much a, you know, I was also a lawyer before then, what are the right policies that we need to adopt, and one of the things I learned was that politics runs on emotion, not policy. You'd like to think it runs on this kind of linear rationality, right? If we do this, if we do X, Y will happen, so we just need to do these right things, and it doesn't really quite work that way, you know, because we are human beings, and we have these feelings, and that pushes us in directions.

>> SPEAKER: They do. Our feelings are very important, and, you know, what do we do about them?

>> SPEAKER: That's the politician's trick, of course, is to figure out how to tap into the emotion. Now, policies and ideas can drive emotions, but they don't, they're separate things.

>> SPEAKER: And you'd really rather not have the whole world driven by emotions. You'd rather not have it be so reactive, but in periods of root shock as profound as this one that we are in, you're very much

going to see things driven by emotion, because people are scared out of their wits, and what makes it worse, Mike, is that here we are in climate change, and people are saying, oh, there's no climate change, and that makes it worse, because climate change is something we know in our bodies, so we know at other levels than whatever it is we want to say, we know there's climate change, like, the crocuses in my yard used to come up end of March, now they come up end of February, so I see that with my eyes, I planted those crocuses, right? Now, they come up a month earlier. Everybody has those experiences. So, if we are having experiences that the climate is changing, but we're saying, no, there's no climate change, that creates a cognitive dissonance and makes people very anxious. How do they hold those two things apart? Pretty difficult. So, politicians are going to have lots of room to manipulate the emotions.

>> SPEAKER: Yeah. Yeah. So, you know, one of the theses of the book is that Main Streets are a place that can bring people together as a way to address these issues, right, and that there's a focus here, not just on the physical environment, but also on, you know, the social and cultural environment as well, and there's a phrase you used, there's a couple of phrases you used

that really stuck with me. One was the idea of, um, the idea that Main Streets are, I'm looking at my note, a machine for living and factories of invention. So, I'd love to hear more about that. Explore that idea a little bit, the machine for living.

>> SPEAKER: It's the famous French architect who talks about the house as a machine for living, and that you want to design a house so that it makes your living efficient, and, so, I took the term from him, the idea that Main Streets are a machine for living. How do Main Streets facilitate our being societies? So, you know, from, you know, going to so many Main Streets over 11 years, a lot of ideas about how they do that, but the main thing is that they're this amalgam of this social, the civic, and the commercial organized around public space, and there's something about that set of elements that's quite delightful to people, and, so, it's a pleasure to go to Main Street and encounter that set of things. So, we go to Main Streets to promote our living on many levels. We learn about our culture, we see our friends, we get some ice cream, we go to the post office. That's a machine for living. The chores and the delights of our society are available to us in that space. The factory of invention is an idea I got

from Thomas Edison. I live in West Orange, New Jersey, and so did Thomas Edison, and he created, um, what he called a factory of invention, which was literally, the product of the factory was inventions. So, he died with a thousand plus patents, but he had to make it efficient, so he had to have all the people he needed to take an idea from idea to reality, so he had a big machine shop and a small machine shop and a recording studio and a chem lab and a movie theater all in this, like, campus. It's the coolest place in the world. It's now a national historical park. I love to take visitors there. It's just so fascinating, but I think Main Streets in general, they are a factory of invention. One thing people have talked about a lot in COVID is coffee shops, how much invention goes on in coffee shops, and coffee shops are just always on Main Streets and are, in a way, their own kind of Main Street. So, what does it take to have an invention? You have to have a new idea, and how do you have a new idea? You just bump into something, and what better place to bump into something that'll make you have a new idea than Main Street.

>> SPEAKER: Well, you know, it kind of brings me back to the idea of the university, right? Which is

that you have multiple disciplines in close proximity to each other, and it's the ideas where the disciplines collide which, you know, the places where the disciplines collide might give us new ideas, which brings us back to the University of Orange, doesn't it, and that sense of people, you know, sitting down and meeting each other. I think that is one of the other, you know, talking about root shocks, that's kind of one of the other root shocks here, is that, you know, I feel this as somebody who, I'm not sure whether I'm an extrovert or an introvert. Before I was mayor, I thought I was an extrovert, then I became mayor and I concluded I'm an introvert, and now that the pandemic has hit, I've concluded again I'm an extrovert. Like, I'm maintaining my strong ties with certain people, but it's that large number of modest interactions that informed my understanding of the city that is gone now, and I feel that.

>> SPEAKER: As a psychiatrist, let me assure you, you are an extrovert.

(Laughing.)

>> SPEAKER: You probably didn't want that many citizens in your face, that's another thing, but you are an extrovert, no question about it. Didn't mean

to make you blush, but you are an extrovert.

>> SPEAKER: No, that's just the lighting in the room. I'm not blushing.

>> SPEAKER: Yeah, okay. The sunset.

>> SPEAKER: But that kind of gets to one of the things, and I think that's one of the things you talk about on the Main Streets, is the way in which they are places, I really like the idea of that things are permitted on the Main Street that are not permitted other places. We know we're allowed to do those things there, because it's the Main Street, and it's designed to accommodate a wide range of activities as well, you know, that allows that. Do you want to explain a little bit to people?

>> SPEAKER: Well, of course, it's the French word for setting, and in psychiatry, and the reason that I like the word so much is we talk about the setting as part of the therapy. So, if I'm a psychiatrist working in my office, the milia of my office is part of what's going on, so if I were a psychoanalyst, like Freud, I would organize a sofa where people could lie down, and my chair where they couldn't see me, and that would be the milia of the treatment. When I worked at a day hospital, the rooms that we had as part of our day

hospital, that was the milia, and the organization of the milia was part of the treatment. So, that's how I come to think of the word and use the word. So, Main Street is a milia, it's a setting, and in, it's something that's evolved over so many years, from when people would have markets, and then it evolved slowly as we become a market economy, so it's the heart of the market economy and reflects all the different layers of kind of improving it, improving it as a tool, and then what is it a tool for? It's a machine for living. So, that's, Main Streets are that kind of milia, that how do you support all the things people need to have in a market economy? Main Street.

>> SPEAKER: Yeah, but it supports more than that as well, right, and that's one of the things you're talking about, right? It's the coffee shop, it's the gate, it's, um, the protests, it's any number of other things. It's, you know, it's, obviously, eating and drinking and commerce, but there's a social aspect to it as well. I guess part of the reason I like the idea of milia is because I immediately thought of talking to our kids about having an inside voice and an outside voice, right? Like, use your inside voice, please, but that's milia, and that there's a freedom within the Main

Street, and that it's a place where people are allowed to do more. Not everybody, not all the time, and not certain things, but, certainly, a lot more than you would expect to see on a residential street or another type of district.

>> SPEAKER: But, Mike, you touch on something that's actually really important to our understanding of Main Streets. I said it's all the things we need in our market economy, and you said, yeah, but it's more than that, and I guess what I meant to say was, in a market economy, you need all those things you then went on to say, and that's important, because, um, if we think of Main Streets as just the commercial, we haven't understood them. So, when people do a Main Street project and they worry about the stores, they're actually missing most of the power of Main Street. So, I think that's important, what you said, and then, like, yeah, you're right, market economies need all these things, we need people to be sociable, we need them to have protests, right? Our society rests on democracy, you have to be able to protest, not riot and not invade, not terrorize people, not try to disrupt legitimate voting process, but protests. Very important. So, yeah, if somebody asked me, oh, I have a Main Street

that's in trouble, could you help us fix it, I would really start from this idea that it's an amalgam. So, it is commercial, but it's also civic, it's also social, it's also the public space, and you could work in all those aspects to make your Main Street stronger.

>> SPEAKER: There's a, um, a property owner and mall, guy who runs malls in the Seattle area, and he took a mall in a, like Forest Park, which is a bedroom community for Seattle, which had no downtown, but had a mall, and he had the anchor tenant, which was third place books, but he also invited the community, it was a failed mall that he picked up, he invited the community college in to run classes, he got the post office into the fall, and he ended up turning the center of the mall into, with a stage and the food court into an event space that a separate 501-C-3 ran. So, it was really interesting that in a place that was completely organized around commerce, he worked to bring in the other pieces and handed over control for what went on to the stage for entertainment away from mall owners. Very successful place. People in the community loved it. So, it was just kind of an illustration of, when you take it out, you try to figure out how to put it back in to really get that.

>> SPEAKER: Even when malls decide to bring those things in, they're bringing them inside their boundaries, which they police.

>> SPEAKER: Right.

>> SPEAKER: And, so, a lot of the things you could see on a Main Street, you know, somebody sleeping off drinking too much, for example, or somebody panhandling, you won't see in that kind of private space. So, it's taken some of the wisdom of Main Street, but not that aspect of it that's public that belongs to we, the people. That actually is so interesting in terms of the dynamics of Main Streets.

>> SPEAKER: Well, you talk in the book about, you have a way of thinking about Main Streets, that, you know, there's a physical description of it, what you call the box, the circle, the line, and the network, and I would love to just kind of walk through these elements for, um, the attendees of the webinar, and we'll start with the box. I mean, we have an image of the Main Street, like, when you say the word Main Street, we all probably have a physical image in our head, so I'll turn it to you to talk about the box and that image of the Main Street.

>> SPEAKER: Yeah. So, it's officially box,

circle, line, tangle.

>> SPEAKER: I'm sorry.

>> SPEAKER: No, no, no. Network is what's implied by tangled, but we'll get to tangle in a second, but starting with box, so, the box is the official, like, civic, commercial, social corridor of Main Street, so the five or the six blocks that have stores and city hall, whatever they have, movie theater, facing each other, and it's the, it's a little bit, brings to mind the French gardening use of ala, so something that is a pathway that has trees on both sides, so it's highly structured, and it's that that we think of as Main Street, so it's like a box. It has two sides, a floor, a ceiling, which is the sky, and it has a beginning and an end. Then the line is really the street, the public, the street that runs through the box and comes from somewhere and goes somewhere, and incredibly important, because Main Streets thrive on everything about it is it's a place you go to and a place you leave. That's the whole, it's dynamic, so the line is very important, but the box is put somewhere, and one of the things we found that was important was what's the circle of the embedding area, what's it like.

A favorite little Main Street, like, thing of mine is a place that actually put parking lots all around its little, tiny downtown, and, somehow, it manages to hang on, but much better to have your Main Street in the middle of a bunch of neighborhoods that are all also thriving. Now, the tangle is really the spaghetti of streets, each one of which can have a little Main Street, and then but also connected by the lines, right? And the lines, at least in our area, I don't know about Seattle, but they look like spaghetti, so that's why it's called a tangle, because where I live, there's a spaghetti of streets, and it is definitely, like, a network, like, a network of connections, so, where the nodes, the Main Street centers and then the lines that get you from one to another, the whole thing is like a nervous system. So, that's how I read the space of Main Street, and each level is very important for making a healthy Main Street.

>> SPEAKER: Well, you know, the box, the thing about the box is that, to me, when I read that, it is smaller than people think, like, one of the things we saw is people always, people love the idea that there should be street-level businesses in their neighborhood, but there, oftentimes, isn't enough

demand to support it. It wants to congregate into a specific place, but then the other thing about the box is it sends all the signals that this is the place to do all the different things, so that idea of milia, this is the place you're allowed to do that, and I think we've all had that feeling of you know when you've left Main Street. It only takes a couple blocks, and you're off Main Street, you know, it's over.

>> SPEAKER: It's often actually punk waited, so you'll often see a gas station at the end of Main Street.

>> SPEAKER: Yeah, right, but I think it also speaks to the fact that the physical design of the Main Street does matter. I'm intentionally leaning a little bit hard in this conversation on the social dynamics aspect of the Main Street, because that really matters, but the physical design does actually matter, because it is a box, that buildings are brought up to the street front, it's very clear where pedestrians are supposed to be and allowed to be and expected to be interacting, and Main Streets that don't respect that physical design struggle as Main Streets, if there are too many gaps, if there are too many parking lots, if there are too many setbacks and the like.

>> SPEAKER: Yep, and when you think about it, um,

it's really hundreds of years of design thinking to evolve this form. How many other forms did they go through till they said, oh, this is the way to do it, and that's kind of really cool. I was in a conversation where they were like, what about art and cities? And I was like, you know what, in a way, you could say that Main Streets are the most important piece of art in a city, because they represent the legacy of hundreds of years of thinking of how do we bring people together, and think of the design of a storefront, how many great architects thought about how do you design a storefront, and then they evolve it, but it's a beautiful piece of art, a Main Street is.

>> SPEAKER: Well, and a lot of the, um, I think of a couple of other things. One, I was reading that in refugee camps, which are setup on a grid pattern, an intersection will become the market. There's an intersection that will become the public square, you know, and these are in camps that are, unfortunately, there for long periods of time, but it doesn't take that long for it to spring up, and it didn't need a planner or an architect, it was an expression of how people live with each other that I find fascinating as well, that, in a way, we don't have to be told how to design such

places, you know, any more than we need to be told how to, you know, play tag or something or sit close to each other when we have a meal as opposed to sit more spread out when we're not eating. Like, we don't need to be told these things, this is, something innate in us is how we interact with the world wants this place, this gathering place. So, I'm, maybe, talking too much, so you just react to me, tell me where I got it wrong or anything, but I feel, sometimes, like we think we can pick out the pieces, the physical pieces that make the place work, you know, but there should be more transparency on the street, for example, you want windows, not blank walls, and I think those are all true, but we then think that if we dictate all that, we'll get the right thing, or not, or that we've dictated the wrong things, like the amount of parking you have to put on to your Main Street, so we end up with strip malls and parking lots in the heart of what used to be a more dense place that was built before those requirements existed.

>> SPEAKER: Really, a lot of stuff you just said.

>> SPEAKER: I know. I can't help myself sometimes.

>> SPEAKER: Yeah, it was very rich. So, the idea

that we like to gather, so, a great urbanest wrote people like to go where people are. So, um, we have a Climb project promoting parts in northern Manhattan, and we'd have a party, and we'd be really glad to get 2,000 people to come, have a wonderful party, but then I'd walk past 181st Street, one of the local Main Streets, and there would be 10,000 people, just because it was the Main Street and it was Saturday, and that's where everybody was, they weren't at our party. So, I think people like to go where people are, but then I would say that, you know, the thing about architecture as an art form is it helps us. So, yeah, I want to go there, but I also like big windows and to see inside. So, they're like, yeah, people also like that, so they can tell us other things we like, like, we like to see, um, in many cultures, people like buildings to be decorated.

>> SPEAKER: Yeah.

>> SPEAKER: So, you know, you have a little bee or a gargoyle or this or that, it's fun, or, um, it turns out that, you know, buildings that are small, not necessarily the building, but the pieces that you rent that are small allow all kinds of people who don't have much money to be entrepreneurs, and I just read an

article about Japan that said that there are thousand-year-old businesses in Japan.

>> SPEAKER: Yeah.

>> SPEAKER: Unbelievable, right? They're small, and they do specialized things, like they make special rice cakes, and that's all they do. They make rice cakes, and their family has been doing it for a thousand years, and, um, that's cool, right? Then we say, but then we have a bad idea, like, oh, these are too small, let's make it big, bring in a big box store, and then we kill the Main Street. So, it's kind of a back and forth between our good ideas and our bad ideas. Like, oh, let's put in a lot of parking lots, because if it's easy for people to park, they'll come. They're not coming for parking, they're coming to see the people, so if you put in parking and push out where people can see each other, it's not going to help.

>> SPEAKER: You know, so, I was the mayor of Seattle, and it turned out that in Seattle, they actually had a plan, like many other cities, I suppose, that when the malls came in, that the way the downtown would compete would be mimicking the mall, and, so, the downtown would be encircled by freeways, so that you could have good driving access to downtown and there

be, you know, parking garages, and you could come drive to the parking. Now, at some point, a citizen revolt occurred, and they did not, you know, complete the highway network in Seattle, although quite a bit of highways were built, and now, you know, downtown, we still hear laments about parking, the business community really believes we need more parking, but it's not that, you know, downtown Seattle turned out to be pretty successful, in part because it held on to a lot of its old character. Um, we've been talking about a bunch of things, but I want to move the conversation to this next idea, which is how do you then decide what should go in a place? Like, how does a community decide? I was suggesting, you know, maybe, it's completely organic, not planned, but there is, in fact, some element of planning that has to occur and, um, you know, one of the things that your dad, um, was an organizer, and one of the things he told you was, um, you have to say what you're for, not just what you're against, what you're for. So, how does that affect, like, the work you've seen on Main Streets?

>> SPEAKER: I would say I think it affects it all too little. I think that most of the work that I've seen is only about how do you support commerce, and it's

not about Main Street as a machine for the living of the whole society. So, the thinking is very narrow and not very creative. So, they get really involved with, um, there shouldn't be signs in the window, because then people can't see inside, or all the stores should act like a mall and support each other and have sales together, and that's about as creative as the thinking gets about Main Streets. So, um, but the question, you know, it's often driven, something you may have encountered in Seattle, but, certainly, a big issue here in New Jersey, um, how do we replace property taxes? What can we do to raise money for the city? So, um, so, they want the businesses to make more money, so, hence, what they're for is businesses that will make more money. So, they're very excited about tearing down the old buildings and putting up big box stores. Now, this is, in this era, incredibly stupid, because the Internet is going to wipe out the big box stores, I think. So, it's really the small, charming, interesting stores, the store that only sells very fabulous rice cakes, you know, a very small space that somebody who's an immigrant, but has brought something wonderful from their country, that's what we should be really promoting on Main Street, is that kind of

excitement, but that comes from really being for the diversity of the city. Like, how does, what have we got, and, um, and cities don't start to think about Main Streets that way.

>> SPEAKER: I think one of the things that's been really fascinating about the pandemic is the way in which, you know, municipalities have allowed streets to be used for multiple purposes in a way they didn't before, right? Like, when we were talking about parking earlier and, um, one of the questions in the chat is about, you know, how do we talk about the parking, you know, with business districts, by the way, I have a huge amount, I spent, probably, way too much of my life talking about parking, but I keep doing it, um, but what you saw, you know, like, one of the things we launched in Seattle when I was mayor was food trucks, and they were, a lot of the opposition actually came from, once you got past the regulatory and health concerns, there was concerns from the existing brick and mortar businesses of we don't want the competition from the food truck, but now that you have the pandemic, those businesses are like, we want to open up on to the street, we want to use the street space for dining, etc., etc., and just the recognition. So, to me,

that's really fascinating, and one thing I wonder is the degree to which it happened across the country, I mean, that would be a good, if there's somebody out there collecting data, that would be a really great piece of data to collect, um, you know, the degree to which many cities did it, but I saw cities locally that basically turned their Main Street into the equivalent of a plaza during the pandemic, because that was the way to survive. So, in that moment, that was what made that place unique, was the gathering place that you could walk to as opposed to the place you could drive to.

>> SPEAKER: Um, my daughter lives nearby where I live, in Jersey City, which is the second largest city in New Jersey, and, so, one of the Main Streets there is Newark Avenue, which I wrote about in the book. I love Newark Avenue, but a lot of restaurants on Newark Avenue, and, so, we're going to walk it in the coming weeks, partly because there's so many different ways in which restaurants moved into the street, and she said it's like this whole, I haven't seen it, but it's, like, a whole, the diversity of what restaurants invented, so that they could, people could dine outside is really great. As a physician, some of it scared me. We ate

out at a place where they had made, like, plastic huts, and they could zip up and fit inside and be warm, and I think people were going into these huts with their family, but they were going in one family after another. I was like, guys, don't you understand about the droplets, that they're in the air and you can't go in there? I was really terrified. Like, bad idea, but we just sat outside, and they had heating elements, and it was really fine.

>> SPEAKER: Can you think of examples, I mean, I can think of examples, but can you think of examples of community planning processes that looked at more than just the commercial part of the street and what effect that had on the health of the Main Street?

>> SPEAKER: Well, you know, that's such a big question. The answer is, I mean, the answer to the question is are there such is always yes, and if I participated, it was because somebody wanted to think a little bigger, but I think for the most part, that's not what's going on. You've been a mayor, so, yeah, what you got?

>> SPEAKER: Okay.

(Laughing.)

>> SPEAKER: That works for me. You know, in our

city, Columbia City, it's not really a city, it's a neighborhood, but with a very cool old business district built around the street car line and, you know, say 25 or 30 years ago, the neighborhood was really not in good shape, and, um, but the community came together, you know, a lot of empty stores, a lot of drug dealing on the streets, and it was a poorer neighborhood and predominantly black neighborhood, it was where folks that, um, as red lining opened up, that's where, actually, people were pushed out of the central district down towards this neighborhood, and, um, as red lining ended, you know, the lines opened up, and they did a couple of different things. One was they actually did, they tried to imagine what their neighborhood should be, and they took some of the empty, boarded up stores, and they painted them with the scenes they wanted to see. They put in a bakery, they put in a butcher shop, and for the, you know, they just painted it all up, this is what it should look like, and, um, they also, um, organized a beep walk, which was, for the restaurants that were still going, all of them would host music one night a month, and you could come to the neighborhood and go to the music, and it was driven as much by, I think by the neighborhood, like, trying to

figure out how can we make our place a great place that we want to go to, as well as the what would we like to see in our neighborhood.

We did a thing in Seattle, I was mayor during the last recession, we did a thing where we connected with artists and property owners, and artists were given storefronts to, um, just use, to display. There were some challenges, they had to get over the hump on figuring out, um, you know, insurance issues or the like, and the city put in some money to help, you know, facilitate, make the whole thing work smoothly, but the idea was it was better to have a storefront with something in it than an empty storefront, even if it wasn't making much money, as a way to get artists, and one of the stores was a guy had a pinball collection, he moved a pinball collection into a store to display it, and now it's the pinball museum, which is actually, you go in there and you plunk down your money, and you get to play as many of the pinball machines as you want, and they serve beer and wine as well. So, these were, you know, to me, these were examples of the community saying what would we like to see in a neighborhood or people being more creative and open towards filling their storefronts to make it happen. So, you know, my

take on it, and I'm pretty sure, I'm trying to remember the examples I read in your book, I think there were examples in your book, times when you actually just invite everyone in the community to come in and say what would we like to see in our Main Street, whether, and it can be anything, and if a city government can pick out the four or five things they could do right away that don't cost much money, maybe just paint or, you know, making sure you send the utilities down, you know, your garbage collectors down to, maybe, clean a place up, like, there's little things you can do that make people feel more engaged in a community and that their community's listening, and that can become sticky, and they'll stick around to do more. That's kind of my experience.

>> SPEAKER: You know, um, those are great stories, and also, a lot of cities are going to have a lot of empty storefronts, so they should be calling you up to say what are we going to do post-COVID, right? We're going to go outside, and half the businesses we used to go to aren't going to be there. How many small businesses have closed all across America? So, Main Streets, many of them have been really emptied out. So, how do we help? How do we reanimate Main Streets?

So, I'm just going to tell everybody, call you, but there's a fundamental deep contradiction between, um, you know, in America, which is that what they want are the people who are equated with money, either they have money or they're going to make money, and we don't want the other people, and, so, a lot of our Main Street development is around how do you get rid of the people that you see as worthless, and how do you get the people you see as worthwhile, and, you know, talk about root shock, so that's, like, um, you know, such a painful part of how American system works. You said we don't have red lining anymore, but I would say we do have it, not red lining in exactly the same way, but the paradigm of red lining was you invest, so new buildings for white people, so we change our definition of white and, you know, so, forget about them strictly as racial markers, but as wealth markers, we want to build new buildings for wealthy people. That's what developers want to do. Developers fought hard to make sure government wouldn't build housing, because they wanted that market exclusively for themselves, which means nobody's building housing for the poor, so we're in a housing famine all across the nation, and we're about to go into a housing crisis like we've never seen. So, that's the

red lining paradigm, and in a way, the really deep issue facing our whole society is how do we break out of that paradigm and how do we say, listen, everybody in the society, basically, every living creature in every society is worthwhile, is needed, is necessary, that we need vibrant ecosystems, not simply more money. It's not just more money, more money.

>> SPEAKER: Yes, 100 percent, and I think your point about the red lining paradigm, like, what is worthy of investment and what is not worthy of investment was the underlying question in red lining, right? They literally said these red places are not worthy of your investment, and that's, I think that still occurs today, right? Like, where the money should flow, what new apartment building is worthy of something, and it's also disqualifying, if you'll, you know, we also exclude, explicitly exclude things from certain places. Like, there are neighborhoods where you cannot build an apartment building, because, you know, it would have the wrong sort of people, and, so, what you tend to see is, oftentimes then, you know, that's squeezed into certain places, and it's larger than it might be than if you had, you know, small-scale development over a broad area, you tend to get intense

development in a small area. So, you know, so, part of that paradigm is, one, you know, being able to invest everywhere or fairly or equally or the places that need it the most, invest in the things that are needed the most. I mean, I'll make a pitch, investing in sidewalks is better than highways. If you're listening, Pete Buttegeig, it's better -- if, because, you know, that's, we've done that, we've, um, squashed business districts and then made it hard for new businesses to open in those places.

>> SPEAKER: Yeah.

>> SPEAKER: You know. Um, so, this is another, we have so many good questions, this is one that really, um, jumped out at me. I think it's really an important one, because it's something that's happening here in Seattle as well. You know, what we saw in Seattle, you know, was an abandonment of downtown, to a great degree, and then abandonment of the neighborhood business districts, there are lots that can't survive, you mentioned that, but also, um, just, which leads to more, um, this past year, riots have defaced the art that is the Main Street. Can you speak to the psychological and other impacts of that on us? Someone said that we damage the very Main Streets where we live and work.

>> SPEAKER: Um, you know, riot has become such a loaded word.

>> SPEAKER: Hasn't it? Yeah.

>> SPEAKER: So, and I think we're forced actually to be very specific. What are you talking about? A lot of journalists have been saying, you know, what do we call what happened? Is it a riot? Is it a protest? Is it an insurrection? What do we call it? And I think that's actually really useful. So, but let's, so, what was happening, if we think about over the summer, like, after the murder of George Floyd, um, 99 percent of that was protests, and there were occasional real other kinds of furry being displayed. So, for example, the, a protest is different from a riot. Now, if we think about the destruction of the police station in Minneapolis, you know, I think that's a very interesting question, and I haven't seen a study of it, but from the Minneapolis people I've spoken to, I think that that actually led to some fairly deep and much needed soul-searching about race relations in Minneapolis, which have been terrible. So, I think, um, it was disturbing to people, but made them ask good questions and have good conversations. So, how do we turn a crisis and something that's harmful into an

opportunity? And we are certainly faced with that same crisis and opportunity.

>> SPEAKER: Graffiti can be repainted, and I'm personally very, very hopeful that our Main Streets and downtowns post-pandemic are going to recover. I would say that really built-up demand from young people to be young people, and I think we're going to see, you know, there's a really, you know, maybe, even I, you know, the newly discovered extrovert, or rediscovered extrovert is going to get out to see people, and I think downtowns are going to really recover from this. There's a couple of other questions I want to get to, and I also want to be respectful of the hour. One question asked is how applicable are the examples from major areas, like Seattle, to single Main Street towns competing with other Main Street towns without the benefit of urban-wide or regional planning. I guess what I would say is that even though Seattle's downtown is a big city downtown, and that's its own unique creature, you know, neighborhood business districts actually have a fair bit in common with, you know, smaller towns. Maybe not as uncommon with the rural town, but I think this also gets to the concept you were raising, Mindy, about the circle, the context that a

place fits in. The way I've always thought about it is that places have to have a reason for being, and --

>> SPEAKER: As I mentioned in the book, I had the opportunity to visit Sulk Center in Minnesota, which is the Main Street that Sinclair Lewis wrote about, so writing a book about Main Street, it was very important for me to go see his Main Street, and, you know, it was basically all out of business, and, you know, sort of, like, why? Why was this all out of business? And it really had to do with exactly what you said with the circle, which is that Sulk Center served a very large circle of farmers, and that disappeared. Didn't belong to Sulk Center anymore. So, it had, and, you know, there was the ubiquitous Walmart by the highway, so what was left for Main Street to do with Sulk Center, and that's a big question. So --

>> SPEAKER: Yeah, I don't think --

>> SPEAKER: The box, circle, line, tangle is very applicable, if you think about it structurally, wherever you go, you can think about box, circle, line, tangle, and come up with some really great, creative new ideas, as opposed to saying, well, can you take Seattle to the small place, maybe not, but you can take box, circle, line to Seattle and to the small place and

have great ideas.

>> SPEAKER: Yeah. The tangle is different, but, and the circles are different, but the, yeah, the concepts are the same, and I do think that, you know, that's one of the reasons malls have been so damaging. The mall circle is the driving range, the distance someone can drive, whereas the circle for the Main Street oftentimes was walking, you know, as well as driving, and, so, it makes it harder to have enough people in the circle to support the box, and also that they can displace each other. If you can, you know, I think that's one of the reasons why you have so many dead malls, it's just too easy to build another better mall within that same circle or in an overlapping circle with the other one and take its territory, so to speak, and then the other mall is struggling, because its circle was taken away, if that makes sense.

>> SPEAKER: It does, but there is another thing, which is that malls are kind of, I mean, they're also damaging, because only having commerce is like anything that takes diversity out of the ecosystem, it's a deadly force, so putting all the commerce in one place is very hard on people.

>> SPEAKER: Yeah.

>> SPEAKER: People do other things besides shop.

>> SPEAKER: Yeah. I think we're touching on some of the other questions, but one of the questions asked about, and I think this is, to me, one of the most important things about this conversation, is the idea that Main Streets can be a place that we can find some unity and meaning and purpose in our communities in the face of the root shock, and, so, um, that was the question. I'm trying to find it, but how do we find unity in these times? So, I'm suggesting an answer, but, you know, nest it within the content of your book and the context of your work as well.

>> SPEAKER: I have a colleague at the University of Orange who, um, leads our Music City Program, and we have an annual Music City Festival, which brings together the musical communities of the city of Orange. There are many, but, obviously, we couldn't do that in COVID, so the Music City team decided they would do an outdoor music festival, and what they did was work with restaurants to hire musicians to sort of play, like, by the restaurant, and then they did this all over the city of Orange, New Jersey, where anything you wanted to know about the American city, you could learn, if you came to visit us, and it was a fabulous night, sort

of all the different musicians by all the different restaurants, and, um, I think, you know, you have to see and feel the, um, the greatness of the American people in order to move towards unity. It's sort of how do we make it comfortable for people to walk away from the computer, stop reading the conspiracy theories, and listen to some really great music on the street.

>> SPEAKER: Well, if I'll say anything, and I've said a fair bit, is, for me personally, the work, I've attended way too many evening meetings in my life, you know, my kids don't like walking with me in the street, because who knows who I'll start talking to and have a conversation about what's going on in the neighborhood, but I've always found that doing the work of trying to connect with my neighbors or the other advocates in town, it got me out of my own, you know, social and demographic bubble into others, which was tremendously good for me as a personal, but it just felt, it was rewarding to do that, so I just think we're going to have a ton of work to get back together again and, you know, having a conversation with your neighbor about sidewalks or parking even hopefully can be a lot easier than some other conversations that we've been

having in this country, because, you know, the shared sense of place, boy, it brings up so many other topics, the way in which we've sorted ourselves out, sorting ourselves out, um, in where we live by our ideologies and view points and understanding, but I think Main Streets can, I think how we try to work on Main Streets and improve them, um, makes a difference. I just got to keep saying, stop, you know, I'd say the biggest thing we could do for Main Streets, like, it's not going to be magic either, like, there are places, places do need to have enough, um, economic activity in their circle or connected with them in the network to make it a place, but let's stop investing in the things that break up the circles and pull the focus away. That would just be a nice start, and then let's all get to work on, you know, talking to our neighbors about what we really want to see in a place and supporting all of it. I'm getting on the stump here, Mindy. Stop me at anytime.

>> SPEAKER: I just want to say, in conclusion, build great sidewalks, bring taco trucks in, have some street music, and, you know, one thing will lead to another.

>> SPEAKER: Right, and fill those empty

storefronts, even if it's not going to make you some money, because it'll be better for everybody, you know, and the city needs to help people do that. Okay, we need to close, and I need to show slides again. So, here we go. Thank you, Mindy, before I show the slides. I really appreciate the conversation. Okay, so, everybody, thanks again. To all of our sponsors. Do not forget to donate. We'd love to have you on. You're going to be on our newsletter. We might ask you again. We really love all of you for giving us the support. We're building our mailing list, we're building our donor base, we're building our connections to local advocates. If you are a local advocate, if you do something in your community to try to make it better, let us know who you are and what you do. We'd love to hear from you so that we can make sure we're connected with you. There's a lot going on with the new administration about how money will be invested, what will be prioritized. We're trying to track some of those changes so that we can let you know, so you can weigh in on the federal policies that, um, can help you make your local places better, and thank you all for attending. We have another one, um, coming up next month, what can a body do, how we meet the built world,

and, um, looking forward to this one as well. Unfortunately, I don't have to host it, so somebody else will do it, but please join us for the next one, and thank you, all of you, for, um, joining us today. Really appreciate it. Nicole, waiting on the cue from you.

>> SPEAKER: You can log off.