

## Executive Director's Report March 2017

### News:

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**March adventures:** I was honored and delighted to be able to travel to California for the International Downtown Association's West Coast Urban District Forum in Long Beach, California. Last year, I participated in a Top Issues Council – committees focused on researching issues of importance and relevance to IDA members. The council I was a part of focused on the topic of “Authenticity” – both in the sense of WHAT makes a city authentic and how do you MAINTAIN that authentic character as you grow. Our council presented in Atlanta in September and we were asked to present again in Long Beach. As part of the program, each council was responsible for drafting a report, which was published by the IDA.

In addition to presenting at the conference, I also attended the following workshops: Long Beach Bike Tour; Opening Plenary Session (covering advocacy issues, downtown trends, homelessness, and inclusion); Market Research: From Data to Insight to Action; Shared Mobility, Housing & Prosperity in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Downtown; Place-Based Marketing: Telling Our Story; Taste of Downtown; How BIDs Can Partner with Cities to Combat Homelessness; Defining Authenticity (presenter); and Advocacy Partners.

I toured Long Beach, took photos of their bike share program, public art, murals, and waterfront development. It was a fantastic learning experience.

Also while in Los Angeles, I had the pleasure of getting the grand tour of Downtown Santa Monica and also snapped many photos while there of public transportation infrastructure, trash receptacles, the public library, bike share, 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Promenade, downtown wayfinding maps, and more.

The crown jewel of my visit to L.A. was visiting with Don Shoup, a professor at UCLA who is most well-known for his book “The High Cost of Free Parking”. Shoup has such a loyal fan following that he has his own facebook group called the “Shoupistas” and he is regularly interviewed for

radio, TV, and newspapers across the country and globe. Maine will be welcoming Shoup in June as the keynote speaker for the Build Maine conference in Lewiston on June 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. Don has offered up his students to work with Portland Downtown on a parking project, but I have yet to be able to provide him with key data and reports due to missed deadlines from the parking consultant and the City. I remain committed to providing the parking & transportation committee with some level of analysis from Shoup, even if that means that I have to invite him in-person to 549 Congress Street while he is here in June.

### **Committee Cliff Notes**

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***Merchant:*** The committee discussed Maine Restaurant Week, Summer Kick-Off Weekend, reviewed committee goals, and received an update on the panhandling ad-hoc committee from Suzie Rephan.

***Marketing:*** The committee discussed Downtown Worker Appreciation Day and Summer Kick-Off Weekend.

***NLOC:*** The committee welcomed Clara Porter to present on the Safe Bars training program and reviewed calls for service and liquor license renewals.

***District & Community Services:*** Julie Sullivan from the City of Portland presented to the committee about the Portland Opportunity Crew, a pilot program aimed at offering day labor to panhandlers and connecting them with services. The committee also discussed graffiti, the panhandling ad-hoc committee, and the supplemental services agreement.

***Parking & Transportation:*** the committee received an update on the Park & Work Program from Amy Geren and reviewed & commented on the draft parking study.

***Panhandling Ad-hoc:*** On March 9, the City heard from Julie Sullivan, City of Portland, about the Portland Opportunity Crew pilot project and distributed contacts to the committee members for their focus group outreach. On March 23, the committee welcomed stakeholders from the business and economic development sector to talk about their experience with panhandling and the impact that it has had on their organizations

and/or members. On March 30, the committee welcomed stakeholders from the social service and nonprofit sector to discuss panhandling and how various initiatives might help address some of the root causes of panhandling, such as substance use, mental health issues, homelessness, etc.

## **Advocacy Issues**

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**Sound:** The City of Portland's Health & Human Services Committee discussed Portland Downtown's recommendations/advocacy letter at their March meeting. Public comment was scheduled for the April meeting. The committee has asked staff to conduct research and prepare memos and recommendations to the committee.

**Parking & Transportation:** With regard to the parking study - thus far, the City has received the existing supply & demand results from the consultant. The next two drafts that are expected in April include: future supply and demand analysis and recommendations.

Jessica Grondin has drafted an RFP for a multi-modal marketing campaign. I am awaiting confirmation as to when she will publicly post the RFP and start accepting proposals.

**Panhandling:** The public forum has been scheduled for Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup> at 4pm at the Maine Historical Society. Vern Malloch (City of Portland Police Department) will be in attendance to answer questions about current laws (ie. aggressive panhandling) and Julie Sullivan (Senior Advisor to the City Manager) will be present to answer questions about the Portland Opportunity Crew, a pilot program to offer day labor to panhandlers. Kim Volk and Ken Cianchette will lead the discussion, public comment will be taken, and we will open it up to further dialog should time allow. All board members are encouraged to attend.

## **Notes of interest**

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In March, I: attended day 2 of the **Portland Downtown board retreat** at Hyatt Portland Old Port, went to **Gulf of Maine Research Institute** for a Lunch & Learn with Amy Geren, met with **Townsquare Media** to discuss

OPF, volunteered at **Sunaana** music festival at Thompson's Point, hosted a meeting with local businesses to discuss ways to get local businesses more involved with OPF, had lunch with **Jessica Grondin** to discuss progress on the **multi-modal transportation marketing campaign RFP**, attended meeting at **City Manager's** office to discuss **graffiti**, traveled to California to meet with **Donald Shoup at UCLA** and to present at the **IDA's West Coast Urban District Forum** in Long Beach, was invited to **Creative Portland** to discuss their upcoming Cultural Plan initiative, met with stakeholders from City to clarify **food vendor licensing and rules** for OPF, welcomed **Terry Delargy from BDN** to discuss marketing opportunities across digital platforms, attended **Maine Voices Live** as an event series sponsor, attended and participated in a panel discussion at **Portland Unwrapped** (a Lift 360 event at the Custom House), hosted an attended **Portland Downtown's 1<sup>st</sup> annual Volunteer Appreciation Night** at the Top of the East at the Westin, facilitated the **office IT upgrade** alongside Danny from Brown Dog IT, met with **Nell Donaldson** to follow-up on the **parking study**, met with Charity West to discuss partnership and sponsorship opportunities with **Pride Portland**, went with Sally Newhall to **Portland Radio Group** to discuss OPF plans, attended and presented at the **City of Portland's Health & Human Services Committee** with regard to the **sound recommendations**, attended the **Cruise Consortium** meeting at CVB, invited Faith Buckley to the Portland Downtown office to discuss hosting her **Senior Transition Project (STP)**, attended **Maine Live** at USM's Hannaford Hall, met with **Christian MilNeil** to discuss parking and transportation initiatives in the City, and met with an app designer to explore possibilities for OPF. .