

PODCAST SUMMARIES

Kali Holahan RPP, MCIP Communications Committee Chair
Steffi Sunny PIBC Candidate & Communications Committee Member

CityChangers – Defensive Urbanism: Who’s Defending Whom?

Run time: 24 minutes

Hosts: Mariano Trevino and Karl Dickinson

Guests: Cara Chellew, Rebecca Rutt and Kenneth Balfelt

Podcast link

<https://citychangers.org/podcast-defensive-urbanism/>

Podcast summary

How truly public are our public spaces?

This episode explores the rise of ‘defensive urbanism’ in our cities and ask what it would take to stop designing people out of public space and start designing them back in.

The CityChangers Podcast discusses topics on inspiring liveable, equitable, sustainable cities and showcases success stories and, importantly, the failures, and delves into the strategies that contribute to positive urban transformations. Each episode features a new thought leader, expert, or visionary who share their experiences and expertise in making cities better places to live, work, and thrive.

Why Planners Should Listen

This is a short and intriguing listen where the “CityChangers” discuss the concept of

‘defensive urbanism’ and briefly explore the history of this concept, tracing back to its link to crime prevention theories in the 1970s.

Cara Chellew, a PhD candidate at McGill University, discusses the gap between the ideal and actual inclusivity of public spaces. Cara explains that defensive urbanism uses sensory elements like touch, light, and sound to make spaces uncomfortable. Examples include spikes, metal protrusions, and flashing lights to deter people from seeking refuge. She further discusses the contradiction of defensive elements in spaces meant to be accessible and inclusive and highlights the exclusionary nature of defensive urbanism. For example, surface modifications to prevent skateboarding can also be inaccessible to wheelchair users, lack of washrooms affects elderly people, parents with young children, and others.

Rebecca Rutt, an associate professor at the University of Copenhagen, shares the story of Fauci Park as an example of designing people into public spaces rather than designing them out and discusses the history of community activism in the area.

This podcast will inspire you to think about the intricate details that we often miss while designing public spaces and the necessity for public spaces to have an inclusive atmosphere.

If you feel like exploring more on this topic, feel free to check out Rebecca Rutt’s research paper “Whose Park? The forty-year fight for Folkets Park under Copenhagen’s evolving urban managerialism”.

Trend Talk Series: The Future of Public Sector Planning

Run time: 24 minutes

Host: Joe DeAngelis, AICP, Research Manager at the American Planning Association

Guest: Sue Schwartz, FAICP, President of the American Planning Association

Podcast link

<https://planning.org/podcast/the-future-of-public-sector-planning-with-apa-president-sue-schwartz-faicp/>

Podcast Summary

In this episode of the Trend Talk series, a companion podcast for APA’s 2025 Trend Report for Planners, Joe DeAngelis and Sue Schwartz share an enlightening conversation on the evolving landscape of public sector planning and delve into current hiring challenges, the impact of political polarization on community engagement, and the importance of personal resiliency for planners.

Why Planners Should Listen

This podcast about public sector planning is an easy, lighthearted listen. The host and guest talk about the current landscape of public sector planning, along with the demographic shifts within the public sector workforce that are occurring alongside technological and social changes. They dive into how these shifts impact hiring in a post-COVID world, where hybrid work environments (blending digital and in-person experiences) are now the norm.

The conversation highlights how these changes not only affect hiring and employee expectations but also influence public expectations around consultation processes. Planners are increasingly being asked to think outside the box, moving beyond traditional formats like open houses and ‘dotmocracy’. Sue praises planners for being uniquely trained to view the interconnectedness of various facets while still seeing the big picture impacts. She poses an important question: *How can we create a calmer, more positive, and safe environment where the public can not only provide feedback but engage in meaningful conversations to shape future paths forward?*

