Podcast Episode

Season 1, Episode 3: Innovation in Community-Centric Branding, Architecture + Design
From the WLI British Columbia Innovation Podcast Series

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00:00:05 --> 00:00:09: Thank you for tuning into the real estate and Evasion
00:00:09 --> 00:00:09: podcast.
00:00:09 --> 00:00:12: Brought to you by EU Li Women's leadership initiative.
00:00:12 --> 00:00:16: The utilized mission is to provide leadership and the responsible
00:00:17 --> 00:00:20: use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities
00:00:21 --> 00:00:21: worldwide.
00:00:21 --> 00:00:24: The Wli is the engine that drives you will IBC
00:00:24 --> 00:00:27: to be recognized as a leading organization,
00:00:27 --> 00:00:30: supporting women as leaders in the industry.
00:00:34 --> 00:00:35: Hello hello, this is Judy,
00:00:35 --> 00:00:37: host of the Innovation podcast,
00:00:37 --> 00:00:39: for EU LIBC's Women's Leadership Initiative,
00:00:39 --> 00:00:43: where we talk about everything and everyone taking part in
00:00:43 --> 00:00:47: innovation and what that means in the real estate business.
00:00:47 --> 00:00:50: And this episode, I'm chatting with HDMI's very own Melissa
00:00:50 --> 00:00:50: Higgs.
00:00:50 --> 00:00:54: Melissa is an architect who's passionate about creating innovative public
00:00:54 --> 00:00:56: spaces where communities come together.
00:00:56 --> 00:00:59: She's a believer in the power of architecture and design
00:01:00 --> 00:01:00: as a catalyst.
00:01:00 --> 00:01:02: For positive change in the world,
00:01:02 --> 00:01:05: her practice with HDMI is focused on designing buildings,
00:01:05 --> 00:01:08: brands, and shared experiences that connect people and community.
00:01:08 --> 00:01:10: Melissa, welcome to the channel.

00:01:10 --> 00:01:12: I'm very glad to be your host today.
00:01:12 --> 00:01:14: How are you? Oh, I'm great.
00:01:14 --> 00:01:15: I'm so happy to
00:01:15 --> 00:01:19: be here, Judy. Thanks for having me awesome so I
00:01:19 --> 00:01:21: would love to give you the floor to speak a
00:01:21 --> 00:01:23: little bit about yourself.
00:01:23 --> 00:01:26: I know I gave a little introduction but I'm sure
00:01:26 --> 00:01:29: a lot of people are interested in what HTML is
00:01:29 --> 00:01:32: all about the rebranding that you've done.
00:01:32 --> 00:01:34: And the sort of work that you do,
00:01:34 --> 00:01:36: and with with the practice.
00:01:36 --> 00:01:36: Yeah,
00:01:36 --> 00:01:39: great. Maybe I'll start a little bit about HCA now
00:01:39 --> 00:01:41: and a little bit about me,
00:01:41 --> 00:01:44: so I'm an architect and I'm a principal in one
00:01:44 --> 00:01:46: of seven principles at HC Me now and I feel
00:01:46 --> 00:01:50: really privileged and lucky to work on primarily public buildings.
00:01:50 --> 00:01:53: So I get to work on community centers,
00:01:53 --> 00:01:56: aquatic centers, libraries, and we do quite a bit of
00:01:56 --> 00:01:57: that work across the firm.
00:01:57 --> 00:01:59: We also do some education,
00:01:59 --> 00:02:01: so everywhere from you know,
00:02:01 --> 00:02:03: child care right up through elementary school.
00:02:03 --> 00:02:06: Schools post secondary and we do projects from small scale
00:02:06 --> 00:02:07: things to you know,
00:02:07 --> 00:02:08: really big significant community buildings,
00:02:08 --> 00:02:11: and I think the what ties it all together for
00:02:11 --> 00:02:12: us is really around.
00:02:12 --> 00:02:15: How do we find ways in all of our work
00:02:15 --> 00:02:18: at all scales to kind of maximize our impact through
00:02:18 --> 00:02:19: our work?
00:02:20 --> 00:02:22: Your team is made of so much more than architects.
00:02:22 --> 00:02:24: What can you tell me
00:02:24 --> 00:02:25: a little bit about that?
00:02:25 --> 00:02:27: Yeah, I'd love to. I mean,
00:02:27 --> 00:02:30: the the firm has been around for more than 40
00:02:30 --> 00:02:31: years actually.
00:02:31 --> 00:02:33: And we, you know, are kind of roots really started
00:02:33 --> 00:02:35: in more traditional architecture.
00:02:35 --> 00:02:37: So a small firm that was focused really on architecture
00:02:37 --> 00:02:40: and to some extent to urban planning and urban design

00:02:40 --> 00:02:41: and overtime,
00:02:41 --> 00:02:44: especially in the last kind of five to 10 years.
00:02:44 --> 00:02:47: We've really kind of changed our focus in our direction
00:02:47 --> 00:02:49: and it is really around that idea of creating kind
00:02:49 --> 00:02:51: of maximizing our impact.
00:02:51 --> 00:02:52: And I think you know.
00:02:52 --> 00:02:54: So we've evolved. I would say over the last ten
00:02:54 --> 00:02:57: years into being more of an interdisciplinary team and the
00:02:57 --> 00:02:57: catalyst,
00:02:57 --> 00:03:00: I think really, for that big change for us was
00:03:00 --> 00:03:00: this,
00:03:00 --> 00:03:03: you know, this desire to try to help communities to
00:03:03 --> 00:03:04: solve the kind of pressing issues.
00:03:04 --> 00:03:07: But I say maybe the big challenges that we're facing.
00:03:07 --> 00:03:09: And by that I think we mean,
00:03:09 --> 00:03:11: you know, they're really big things like loneliness,
00:03:11 --> 00:03:13: which I know Vancouver gets tagged with quite a bit,
00:03:13 --> 00:03:15: and I think a lot of urban centers do.
00:03:15 --> 00:03:17: There's this density and proximity,
00:03:17 --> 00:03:19: but maybe a lack of connection that leads to loneliness.
00:03:19 --> 00:03:22: You know the idea of health and mental Wellness?
00:03:22 --> 00:03:25: Resilience that both as individuals but also in a community
00:03:25 --> 00:03:26: scale.
00:03:26 --> 00:03:28: You know the climate crisis and you know they're really
00:03:28 --> 00:03:29: big things.
00:03:29 --> 00:03:32: Racism, discrimination, inequity, like. They're really wicked mixed up problems,
00:03:32 --> 00:03:34: and I think as architects you know,
00:03:34 --> 00:03:37: we're pretty well trained to deal with that kind of
00:03:37 --> 00:03:37: complexity,
00:03:37 --> 00:03:40: but I think we recognize that you know,
00:03:40 --> 00:03:42: to solve those kind of problems through our work,
00:03:42 --> 00:03:44: we just we need multiple voices,
00:03:44 --> 00:03:47: and we need different perspectives and lived experiences and really
00:03:47 --> 00:03:50: design ideas and different ways of thinking at the table
00:03:50 --> 00:03:52: to really kind of solve those problems.
00:03:52 --> 00:03:56: So yeah, we really changed our team and we have
00:03:56 --> 00:03:56: now,
00:03:56 --> 00:03:59: you know, quite a wide range of creatives at the
00:03:59 --> 00:03:59: firm.
00:03:59 --> 00:04:02: From architects, graphic designers, industrial interior design strategists,

00:04:02 --> 00:04:04: social environmental researchers, community engagement specialists.
00:04:04 --> 00:04:06: And, you know, we really try to work together to
00:04:07 --> 00:04:09: bring those different perspectives to the table.
00:04:09 --> 00:04:11: To kind of tackle those problems from,
00:04:11 --> 00:04:15: you know, from different or unique angles.
00:04:15 --> 00:04:15: It
00:04:15 --> 00:04:18: seems to be the discussion of R times today.
00:04:18 --> 00:04:21: Rethinking. Who is it? That's on this discussion table and
00:04:21 --> 00:04:23: who's really voicing the opinions?
00:04:23 --> 00:04:28: And are we actually capturing the voice of the diversity
00:04:28 --> 00:04:31: and inclusive nature of our communities?
00:04:31 --> 00:04:35: Could you share some insight on the artist in residence
00:04:35 --> 00:04:38: program that HMA takes part of or or or provides
00:04:38 --> 00:04:41: a platform for in your practice?
00:04:41 --> 00:04:44: I think that really highlights a lot of the interdisciplinary
00:04:44 --> 00:04:47: and collaborative approach that you take.
00:04:48 --> 00:04:50: I'd love to talk about that.
00:04:50 --> 00:04:51: About five years ago we haven't.
00:04:51 --> 00:04:53: We have a almost like a sub,
00:04:53 --> 00:04:56: but we have something called tilt which is our tilt
00:04:56 --> 00:04:56: Curiosity labs,
00:04:56 --> 00:04:59: which is a it encompasses a range of things,
00:04:59 --> 00:05:02: but the short, the short description of it would be.
00:05:02 --> 00:05:04: It's areas that we want to investigate that are not
00:05:04 --> 00:05:06: project or client driven.
00:05:06 --> 00:05:08: So giving us a little bit of a freedom to
00:05:08 --> 00:05:11: investigate issues or ideas in our cities that we want
00:05:11 --> 00:05:14: to dig into it and one of the initiatives that
00:05:14 --> 00:05:17: came that is run through tilt is artists and residents,
00:05:17 --> 00:05:18: and it's a pretty simple system.
00:05:18 --> 00:05:20: Where we offer a stipend and we have a an
00:05:20 --> 00:05:24: application process and we work with artists for usually around
00:05:24 --> 00:05:26: right now where it's about 10 weeks per artist in
00:05:26 --> 00:05:29: residence and they only ask really is that the artist
00:05:29 --> 00:05:31: share with our team so they are welcome to work
00:05:31 --> 00:05:32: in our space.
00:05:32 --> 00:05:34: A lot of artists need space to work,
00:05:34 --> 00:05:37: so we ask that they engage with us through their
00:05:37 --> 00:05:39: process so that we can learn from them and that
00:05:39 --> 00:05:40: they can learn,

00:05:40 --> 00:05:42: learn from us through the process and we it has
00:05:42 --> 00:05:43: been like Judy,
00:05:43 --> 00:05:46: it's just been so much more than I can imagine.
00:05:46 --> 00:05:49: Like one of one. They're so in so many standouts.
00:05:49 --> 00:05:51: But one of the standouts for me would be we
00:05:51 --> 00:05:51: worked,
00:05:51 --> 00:05:53: we had a woman come to us who is a
00:05:53 --> 00:05:55: choreographer and dancer.
00:05:55 --> 00:05:57: And she said, I want to work with you to
00:05:57 --> 00:05:59: think about how bodies experience space,
00:05:59 --> 00:06:00: because dancers have, you know,
00:06:00 --> 00:06:03: they experience and think about space in a different way.
00:06:03 --> 00:06:05: So I would like to choreograph a dance for one
00:06:05 --> 00:06:06: of your buildings.
00:06:06 --> 00:06:09: And so she choreographed dance for Aquatic Center in Surry
00:06:09 --> 00:06:10: called Grandview Heights Aquatic Center,
00:06:10 --> 00:06:13: where she tried to understand what the concepts basically the
00:06:13 --> 00:06:15: building was and then represented through dance.
00:06:15 --> 00:06:17: And it's just so it's just been incredible.
00:06:17 --> 00:06:19: We're working with an artist right now called David.
00:06:19 --> 00:06:22: Ellingsworth, he's just finishing up with us.
00:06:22 --> 00:06:25: We've we have worked with.
00:06:25 --> 00:06:27: Oh my gosh, names work for me right now.
00:06:27 --> 00:06:30: So many we've worked with a food based artist animal
00:06:30 --> 00:06:30: toy.
00:06:30 --> 00:06:31: We work with the woodcarver,
00:06:31 --> 00:06:34: we've worked with painters. We work with Ola Volo to
00:06:34 --> 00:06:35: do a mural.
00:06:35 --> 00:06:37: So I think and it actually changes us.
00:06:37 --> 00:06:39: I guess there you might ask,
00:06:39 --> 00:06:40: why do we do it?
00:06:40 --> 00:06:42: We do it to push ourselves and to see things
00:06:42 --> 00:06:43: through different perspectives.
00:06:43 --> 00:06:46: And it's one of those things that has really.
00:06:46 --> 00:06:48: It brings us together as a firm.
00:06:48 --> 00:06:50: It also we share the outcome and it gives the
00:06:50 --> 00:06:51: artist.
00:06:51 --> 00:06:53: Hopefully some kind of a platform for their work as
00:06:53 --> 00:06:53: well.
00:06:53 --> 00:06:55: So there's a, uh, hopefully,
00:06:55 --> 00:06:57: mutual benefit. But I think it just changes our thinking.

00:06:58 --> 00:07:03: It's it's very different when you commissioned those artists.
00:07:03 --> 00:07:05: Not to showcase their work,
00:07:05 --> 00:07:07: but rather learn from their work.
00:07:07 --> 00:07:09: There's so much inherent value.
00:07:09 --> 00:07:11: In that in that
00:07:11 --> 00:07:13: approach, yeah, it's it's been really,
00:07:13 --> 00:07:15: really rich, like beyond our expectations.
00:07:15 --> 00:07:19: I don't know if a lot of people know this
00:07:19 --> 00:07:21: who are listening to this podcast,
00:07:21 --> 00:07:25: but HDMI recently went through a very significant rebranding.
00:07:25 --> 00:07:27: I mean, the logo, communication,
00:07:27 --> 00:07:31: Web style, website style reads very different than the previous
00:07:31 --> 00:07:31: version,
00:07:31 --> 00:07:35: and I'd love some insight on your approach to branding
00:07:35 --> 00:07:36: and communication.
00:07:36 --> 00:07:39: And why. Take the pivot into this rebranded version.
00:07:39 --> 00:07:41: We're seeing today. Yeah,
00:07:41 --> 00:07:43: I'd love to and it it kind of ties into
00:07:43 --> 00:07:44: the conversation.
00:07:44 --> 00:07:47: We just had around around the fact that we were
00:07:47 --> 00:07:49: changing as a firm and changing who not as who
00:07:49 --> 00:07:51: we are but how we how we go about our
00:07:51 --> 00:07:53: practice and what we want to do.
00:07:53 --> 00:07:55: And so I think we realized that our previous brand
00:07:55 --> 00:07:57: really reflected it was still hanging on a little bit
00:07:57 --> 00:07:59: more to more traditional architectural practice.
00:07:59 --> 00:08:02: You know it had the name architecture and design in
00:08:02 --> 00:08:02: it,
00:08:02 --> 00:08:04: which was a move for us to acknowledge that we
00:08:04 --> 00:08:05: had other design types.
00:08:05 --> 00:08:07: But you know the actual logo itself was,
00:08:07 --> 00:08:09: you know there was black and white.
00:08:09 --> 00:08:11: It had quite kind of hard lines.
00:08:11 --> 00:08:13: Even the photography style. The way we kind of captured
00:08:13 --> 00:08:16: our our buildings and spaces and places was you didn't
00:08:16 --> 00:08:17: have a lot of people in it.
00:08:17 --> 00:08:20: It was much more traditional in terms of how architecture
00:08:20 --> 00:08:21: kind of shows up in magazines and things,
00:08:21 --> 00:08:24: and I think we we felt a little bit.
00:08:24 --> 00:08:26: Honestly like my analogy would be it felt a bit
00:08:26 --> 00:08:28: like we were wearing clothes that still fit us but

00:08:28 --> 00:08:30: didn't quite reflect who we were.
00:08:30 --> 00:08:31: Or maybe who we wanted to be.
00:08:31 --> 00:08:34: So yeah, it's been wonderful having our own internal kind
00:08:34 --> 00:08:35: of graphic design and branding team.
00:08:35 --> 00:08:37: And so some of the things you might see is
00:08:37 --> 00:08:40: that we kind of moved away from that kind of
00:08:40 --> 00:08:42: upper case firmness to sort of lower case.
00:08:42 --> 00:08:44: Letters that are a little bit less legible.
00:08:44 --> 00:08:46: They focus a little bit less on the names and
00:08:46 --> 00:08:47: more about the idea of.
00:08:47 --> 00:08:49: I think we're trying to reflect the idea of collaboration.
00:08:49 --> 00:08:52: You know, HC may have some market values we didn't
00:08:52 --> 00:08:52: want to,
00:08:52 --> 00:08:54: you know, move entirely away from that,
00:08:54 --> 00:08:56: but. You know we wanted to,
00:08:56 --> 00:08:58: just to be honest, we want to place ourselves differently
00:08:58 --> 00:09:00: in the industry and have people know about all these
00:09:00 --> 00:09:03: other things that we were doing that weren't really reflected
00:09:03 --> 00:09:04: in how we are showing up in the world.
00:09:04 --> 00:09:06: From a branding perspective. Uhm,
00:09:06 --> 00:09:08: yeah. So I think one of the things we've had
00:09:08 --> 00:09:10: for quite some time as this website experiment which was
00:09:10 --> 00:09:12: was kind of it was our old brand,
00:09:12 --> 00:09:13: but we would be kind of instead of having A
00:09:14 --> 00:09:16: traditional website that kind of showcased our work,
00:09:16 --> 00:09:17: we always had this quite.
00:09:17 --> 00:09:18: We started off with a question saying,
00:09:18 --> 00:09:20: you know, we'd show a photograph and say,
00:09:20 --> 00:09:22: you know, what would you like to see here?
00:09:22 --> 00:09:25: Or how do you feel about you know this issue?
00:09:25 --> 00:09:27: So we were we were we were getting to this
00:09:27 --> 00:09:30: idea of inviting people in to be more a part
00:09:30 --> 00:09:30: of US,
00:09:30 --> 00:09:32: and I think we reached the brand,
00:09:32 --> 00:09:35: hopefully really. Celebrates, I think a couple key things would
00:09:35 --> 00:09:37: be this idea that we wanted to acknowledge that there
00:09:37 --> 00:09:40: are so many people with individual curiosity's within the firm,
00:09:40 --> 00:09:42: and we wanted to kind of lead with that.
00:09:42 --> 00:09:44: I think there's been this long kind of myth that's
00:09:45 --> 00:09:46: been sold about architects.
00:09:46 --> 00:09:48: As you know, a single individual at the top of
00:09:48 --> 00:09:49: a pyramid,

00:09:49 --> 00:09:51: and you know one big idea that comes from one
00:09:51 --> 00:09:52: person.
00:09:52 --> 00:09:54: And in practice anybody who works with architects.
00:09:54 --> 00:09:56: Kind of, I hope, knows that that that's not the
00:09:56 --> 00:09:57: way it is.
00:09:57 --> 00:09:59: It's really about a collective of ideas.
00:09:59 --> 00:10:01: And then I think the other really big thing we
00:10:01 --> 00:10:03: wanted to showcase in the brand.
00:10:03 --> 00:10:04: Was that moments of real meaningful?
00:10:04 --> 00:10:07: Life happened in our in our community buildings and the
00:10:07 --> 00:10:09: spaces that we work on and we wanted to reflect
00:10:09 --> 00:10:12: that even in terms of how we document our buildings.
00:10:12 --> 00:10:14: And I think one of the interesting things we did
00:10:14 --> 00:10:16: was start kind of crowdsourcing photographs.
00:10:16 --> 00:10:18: Actually, where we, if we found images of our work
00:10:18 --> 00:10:19: through other people's Instagram feeds,
00:10:19 --> 00:10:22: would reach out and say hey we love this picture
00:10:22 --> 00:10:24: of the you know you and your family playing at
00:10:24 --> 00:10:27: this space or getting a book in this library.
00:10:27 --> 00:10:29: Are you OK if we use this image on our
00:10:29 --> 00:10:31: site and we just got all this kind of amazing
00:10:31 --> 00:10:33: richness of people actually being human and?
00:10:33 --> 00:10:35: And doing the things we want them to do in
00:10:35 --> 00:10:36: our buildings.
00:10:36 --> 00:10:38: Yes, I think the logo really is was a big
00:10:38 --> 00:10:39: way of reflecting that.
00:10:39 --> 00:10:41: It's much more playful. It's got warm colors in it,
00:10:41 --> 00:10:44: and I think I guess the last thing I would
00:10:44 --> 00:10:46: say is that it's I think what we want it
00:10:46 --> 00:10:46: to be.
00:10:46 --> 00:10:48: As kind of a promise to the communities that we
00:10:48 --> 00:10:49: serve,
00:10:49 --> 00:10:51: that that's how we want to engage with them.
00:10:51 --> 00:10:54: It's how we want to go through our design process.
00:10:54 --> 00:10:56: And then it's hopefully reflects,
00:10:56 --> 00:10:58: reflects that that that about us.
00:10:58 --> 00:10:59: I
00:10:59 --> 00:11:03: really like that. You've sort of taken an intangible quality
00:11:03 --> 00:11:04: and reflected that through,
00:11:04 --> 00:11:08: you know, graphics. Can you tell me how does that
00:11:08 --> 00:11:11: now get translated into the architecture?
00:11:11 --> 00:11:15: So I love that you guys have changed your approach

00:11:15 --> 00:11:19: with regards to I want to say almost post completion,
00:11:19 --> 00:11:24: right? Like you're, you're now crowdsourcing photos and you're crowdsourcing.
00:11:24 --> 00:11:27: Experiences, let's take let's rewind and say we're at the
00:11:27 --> 00:11:29: we're at the schematic stage of a drawing,
00:11:29 --> 00:11:31: and we're thinking about a building.
00:11:31 --> 00:11:33: How has that now rebranding and new approach?
00:11:33 --> 00:11:35: How does that manifest in that stage?
00:11:35 --> 00:11:36: That's such a great question,
00:11:36 --> 00:11:37: and I love
00:11:37 --> 00:11:39: that you asked, and I think you started that you
00:11:39 --> 00:11:41: started your question with the idea.
00:11:41 --> 00:11:43: I think of the intangible,
00:11:43 --> 00:11:44: like how do we like?
00:11:44 --> 00:11:46: How do we make that tangible?
00:11:46 --> 00:11:48: And I think that is something that when we when
00:11:48 --> 00:11:50: we talk about maximizing our impact,
00:11:50 --> 00:11:52: that's always the really challenging question.
00:11:52 --> 00:11:54: It's one we've we've been working actually for several years.
00:11:54 --> 00:11:57: Now on a framework called the fresh for calling it
00:11:57 --> 00:12:00: the social impact guide where we can figure out.
00:12:00 --> 00:12:02: OK, we we may have set out these visions and
00:12:02 --> 00:12:05: these values with the community about you know community building
00:12:05 --> 00:12:08: and connections and maybe perhaps making a welcoming,
00:12:08 --> 00:12:10: inclusive space. How do we know in the end that
00:12:10 --> 00:12:13: we have achieved that through through the work and we
00:12:13 --> 00:12:16: have all these great metrics for environmental performance of our
00:12:16 --> 00:12:18: building and for years. And you know,
00:12:18 --> 00:12:21: really proud of that and part of the whole industry
00:12:21 --> 00:12:22: for kind of shifting around.
00:12:22 --> 00:12:24: You know, lead and addressing the climate.
00:12:24 --> 00:12:27: Prices through those, those really tangible metrics,
00:12:27 --> 00:12:30: but we don't have a way of capturing the intangible
00:12:30 --> 00:12:33: things like the communications between people,
00:12:33 --> 00:12:35: how people's ability to access a building,
00:12:35 --> 00:12:37: so we're moving cultural barriers,
00:12:37 --> 00:12:39: removing social equity, and cost barriers.
00:12:39 --> 00:12:42: All the intangible barriers to people coming into buildings,
00:12:42 --> 00:12:45: and what that actually means at a community scale around
00:12:45 --> 00:12:47: addressing loneliness and community resilience.
00:12:47 --> 00:12:49: So we're trying really hard,

00:12:49 --> 00:12:51: actually, that's part of the answer.
00:12:51 --> 00:12:55: The question to develop a framework where we can actually
00:12:55 --> 00:12:55: track.
00:12:55 --> 00:12:57: Track things like access Inclusion,
00:12:57 --> 00:13:00: health and well being community resilience so our post occupancy
00:13:00 --> 00:13:02: work is actually going back and saying OK,
00:13:02 --> 00:13:05: we set a vision statement with the client and we
00:13:05 --> 00:13:07: had a series of principles.
00:13:07 --> 00:13:11: How can we measure those outcomes in let's say?
00:13:11 --> 00:13:12: Better attendance rates and better academic performance,
00:13:12 --> 00:13:14: perhaps at some of our high schools.
00:13:14 --> 00:13:15: If we have a before and after,
00:13:15 --> 00:13:17: we can check from a usage rates,
00:13:17 --> 00:13:19: but also just can we go back to the community
00:13:19 --> 00:13:21: and engage with them again?
00:13:21 --> 00:13:22: Two years five years after and say,
00:13:22 --> 00:13:25: you know, do you feel more connected to your community
00:13:25 --> 00:13:26: as a result of this building?
00:13:26 --> 00:13:28: So there's so? I guess part of the answer to
00:13:28 --> 00:13:29: the question is,
00:13:29 --> 00:13:30: it's around what are we trying?
00:13:30 --> 00:13:32: What are we trying to achieve?
00:13:32 --> 00:13:34: And I think it's been huge for us establishing and
00:13:34 --> 00:13:35: really getting our clients on board.
00:13:35 --> 00:13:37: And again, they're really lucky to work with community,
00:13:37 --> 00:13:40: you know, Parks and Recreation a lot of time there
00:13:40 --> 00:13:41: and libraries and.
00:13:41 --> 00:13:42: Certain culture folks. They're really.
00:13:42 --> 00:13:44: They're all about the impact in the and and you
00:13:44 --> 00:13:47: know the end result of that at a community scale.
00:13:47 --> 00:13:50: So they're really on board with working on that with
00:13:50 --> 00:13:50: us.
00:13:50 --> 00:13:53: But in terms of your really specific question around schematic
00:13:53 --> 00:13:53: design,
00:13:53 --> 00:13:56: I think that doing the kind of engagement that we
00:13:56 --> 00:13:58: are quite often now able to do.
00:13:58 --> 00:14:01: You know, having the social impact researchers on our team
00:14:01 --> 00:14:03: to be able to sit with us and talk a
00:14:03 --> 00:14:06: little bit about the impact of putting something here or
00:14:06 --> 00:14:08: there or creating social moments in spaces.
00:14:08 --> 00:14:11: I think one of the big things for us would

00:14:11 --> 00:14:12: be.
00:14:12 --> 00:14:14: Really working with our clients to convince them that some
00:14:14 --> 00:14:16: of the program spaces that make up a place,
00:14:16 --> 00:14:18: whether it's like the gymnasium,
00:14:18 --> 00:14:19: the fitness center, the pool,
00:14:19 --> 00:14:20: those are huge and important,
00:14:20 --> 00:14:23: but actually almost equally or maybe more important is what
00:14:23 --> 00:14:25: we call the in between spaces like kind of the
00:14:25 --> 00:14:28: glue spaces where people actually they might come to engage
00:14:28 --> 00:14:30: in a sport or to get a library book,
00:14:30 --> 00:14:32: but I think if you put a cafe there and
00:14:32 --> 00:14:35: you provide seating and Wi-Fi and you know a great
00:14:35 --> 00:14:38: view of people will stay longer and they're much more
00:14:38 --> 00:14:40: likely to kind of bump into someone they know or
00:14:40 --> 00:14:42: make a new connection.
00:14:42 --> 00:14:44: And so it wasn't really seeing the needle shift quite
00:14:44 --> 00:14:47: a bit in terms of people understanding that the kind
00:14:47 --> 00:14:47: of really,
00:14:47 --> 00:14:49: truly public spaces, interior and exterior,
00:14:49 --> 00:14:51: are really the fabric of the community and rentals.
00:14:51 --> 00:14:53: Really important connections happen, so that's kind of shaping our
00:14:53 --> 00:14:54: thinking.
00:14:54 --> 00:14:56: But I think the other piece of it is how
00:14:56 --> 00:14:58: do we know we're making progress?
00:14:58 --> 00:15:00: And that the how do you measure the intangible?
00:15:00 --> 00:15:03: So we really as a firm trying to get out
00:15:03 --> 00:15:04: and get onto that.
00:15:04 --> 00:15:05: I
00:15:05 --> 00:15:08: love how you touched on the spaces in between because
00:15:08 --> 00:15:10: it's it's sort of that leftover space where you know
00:15:10 --> 00:15:12: we're focusing on private.
00:15:12 --> 00:15:15: It's it's almost like we're focusing on the private and
00:15:15 --> 00:15:16: focusing on the public,
00:15:16 --> 00:15:18: but there's that semi private semi public.
00:15:18 --> 00:15:20: That sort of falls through the cracks,
00:15:20 --> 00:15:22: something that I think definitely works in.
00:15:22 --> 00:15:24: Your benefit is that HDMI works with a lot of
00:15:25 --> 00:15:25: public entities.
00:15:25 --> 00:15:27: You mentioned, you know, park boards,
00:15:27 --> 00:15:30: community centers, how do you see that?

00:15:30 --> 00:15:33: Approach in the non public sector you know.
00:15:33 --> 00:15:36: So if I I'm where I'm HDMI working with a
00:15:36 --> 00:15:40: private developer who just wants to build,
00:15:40 --> 00:15:42: you know, a spec house.
00:15:42 --> 00:15:45: Four to six story wood frame as little amenities as
00:15:45 --> 00:15:46: possible,
00:15:46 --> 00:15:48: you know maximize floor plate efficiency.
00:15:48 --> 00:15:52: How do you? How do you see that your learnings
00:15:52 --> 00:15:56: and your your results inform and and maybe alter that
00:15:56 --> 00:15:58: that very traditional approach?
00:15:58 --> 00:15:59: Yeah, that's
00:15:59 --> 00:16:02: also really interesting question and I will.
00:16:02 --> 00:16:03: Touch a little bit on,
00:16:03 --> 00:16:05: we are we are I am right now working with
00:16:05 --> 00:16:08: a private developer on a planned Community facility in Coquitlam
00:16:08 --> 00:16:11: that is quite they're really trying to achieve incredible and
00:16:11 --> 00:16:14: high social social outcomes. The work and maybe I'll talk
00:16:14 --> 00:16:15: a little bit about that,
00:16:15 --> 00:16:18: but I guess to your question it's really,
00:16:18 --> 00:16:20: I think about values and when we think about if
00:16:20 --> 00:16:23: I look back on the idea of branding and and
00:16:23 --> 00:16:26: having the the kind of interdisciplinary team that we have,
00:16:26 --> 00:16:28: I think a lot of the time it is.
00:16:28 --> 00:16:31: It is trying to understand what is valuable to people
00:16:31 --> 00:16:32: and I think.
00:16:32 --> 00:16:34: You know, for a lot of our,
00:16:34 --> 00:16:36: for a lot of private developers,
00:16:36 --> 00:16:37: the value is in, you know,
00:16:37 --> 00:16:40: the reality is they they wanted to have a competitive
00:16:40 --> 00:16:40: edge.
00:16:40 --> 00:16:43: You know what makes their four or six story walk
00:16:43 --> 00:16:46: up more desirable and perhaps cell versus the one down
00:16:46 --> 00:16:46: the street.
00:16:46 --> 00:16:49: And I think we are increasingly understanding that people people
00:16:49 --> 00:16:50: are looking for more.
00:16:50 --> 00:16:53: People want to be able to connect so that there
00:16:53 --> 00:16:54: is actually value.
00:16:54 --> 00:16:56: And that's you know, I think I think our our
00:16:56 --> 00:16:59: community clients see that and they get and they understand
00:16:59 --> 00:17:01: that that's the business that they're in.
00:17:01 --> 00:17:04: But I think our role in terms of branding communication.

00:17:04 --> 00:17:05: And in visual visual languages,
00:17:05 --> 00:17:08: is trying to explain what the differences explain what the
00:17:08 --> 00:17:10: benefit is and try to make it visible to people.
00:17:10 --> 00:17:13: And I think in terms of branding people are so
00:17:13 --> 00:17:14: much more savvy now.
00:17:14 --> 00:17:16: I think there's we have so much more access to
00:17:16 --> 00:17:17: information.
00:17:17 --> 00:17:20: Social media is everywhere, so I think people can start
00:17:20 --> 00:17:22: to see and I think we're getting more engaged,
00:17:22 --> 00:17:25: especially in the built environment and spaces that people want
00:17:25 --> 00:17:27: to live in terms of demanding what it is that
00:17:27 --> 00:17:27: they want.
00:17:27 --> 00:17:32: And I think the industry will shift a little bit.
00:17:32 --> 00:17:35: You know to try to provide those social more social
00:17:35 --> 00:17:35: amenities.
00:17:35 --> 00:17:36: No,
00:17:36 --> 00:17:38: you're right, especially when it comes to branding.
00:17:38 --> 00:17:41: I mean, marketing is faster than than construction.
00:17:41 --> 00:17:43: To take on innovation and redefine the story.
00:17:43 --> 00:17:46: And we're certainly seeing a lot of branding.
00:17:46 --> 00:17:49: Now, take the approach of community building and you know
00:17:49 --> 00:17:50: new tech,
00:17:50 --> 00:17:54: new condominiums and apartment projects come out with branding that's
00:17:54 --> 00:17:56: very different than what we would have seen.
00:17:56 --> 00:17:59: You know 510 years from now.
00:17:59 --> 00:18:03: What I love about your process with the rebranding is
00:18:03 --> 00:18:06: is is you have your branding team in house.
00:18:06 --> 00:18:09: So you've fully managed that process from A-Z.
00:18:09 --> 00:18:12: That's first of all very different than you know,
00:18:12 --> 00:18:14: a lot of other businesses,
00:18:14 --> 00:18:18: particularly architecture, that's also very different than how the development
00:18:18 --> 00:18:20: industry markets its projects.
00:18:20 --> 00:18:23: So you know, you want to imagine that you've nailed
00:18:24 --> 00:18:26: down your branding as a company,
00:18:26 --> 00:18:30: and then, let's say a private developer comes in.
00:18:30 --> 00:18:32: Works with you guys to build a building.
00:18:32 --> 00:18:36: They then outsource their marketing to a third party that
00:18:36 --> 00:18:39: may or may not capture the right message that may
00:18:39 --> 00:18:41: or may not highlight the right spaces.

00:18:41 --> 00:18:43: How does that you know?
00:18:43 --> 00:18:47: First of all, how has why take your branding in-house
00:18:47 --> 00:18:50: has how what has been the successes and results behind
00:18:50 --> 00:18:51: that?
00:18:51 --> 00:18:54: And how do you see that evolving when it comes
00:18:54 --> 00:18:55: to the developer side?
00:18:56 --> 00:18:58: Yeah, I I think for us,
00:18:58 --> 00:19:00: if I'm honest, we've been on a journey at least
00:19:00 --> 00:19:01: for five years.
00:19:01 --> 00:19:05: Maybe a little bit longer than that where we really.
00:19:05 --> 00:19:08: At the leadership level sat down and decided you know
00:19:08 --> 00:19:09: what to do.
00:19:09 --> 00:19:12: Maybe silly to understand our vision and to really lead
00:19:13 --> 00:19:15: with our vision and our values.
00:19:15 --> 00:19:18: And. I think that as I said it,
00:19:18 --> 00:19:20: like that idea to have more impact.
00:19:20 --> 00:19:23: I think our first thinking was that you know we
00:19:23 --> 00:19:26: can bring in our visual and communication team when we
00:19:26 --> 00:19:29: brought them in at a very small scale and I
00:19:29 --> 00:19:31: think our first thinking, if I'm really honest,
00:19:31 --> 00:19:33: Judy was like these, you know this these this team
00:19:33 --> 00:19:36: will help us better communicator architectural ideas and they will
00:19:36 --> 00:19:40: amplify our architecture and we were very architectural centered about
00:19:40 --> 00:19:41: it. And then, you know,
00:19:41 --> 00:19:43: in really quickly, really early on,
00:19:43 --> 00:19:46: we just saw the impact was so much greater than
00:19:46 --> 00:19:47: that that.
00:19:47 --> 00:19:49: You know the way that they were able to help
00:19:50 --> 00:19:53: us communicate ideas to our end customers like the Community
00:19:53 --> 00:19:56: and our clients was quite transformative and they helped us
00:19:56 --> 00:19:59: with that. So I think we immediately saw the impact
00:19:59 --> 00:20:00: there.
00:20:00 --> 00:20:03: But we also. They were helping us communicate ideas more
00:20:03 --> 00:20:06: effectively through branded campaigns with our existing clients.
00:20:06 --> 00:20:09: So if we had a new community building and we
00:20:09 --> 00:20:10: would have,
00:20:10 --> 00:20:12: like I said, we have engagement in House and we
00:20:12 --> 00:20:15: wanted to connect with the Community in a real in
00:20:15 --> 00:20:17: a really meaningful way.

00:20:17 --> 00:20:19: We had them. We brought them in to help us
00:20:19 --> 00:20:22: kind of create a wordmark and a branded campaign for
00:20:22 --> 00:20:25: those initiatives and we just saw the impact in terms
00:20:25 --> 00:20:27: of the uptake in in participation rates.
00:20:27 --> 00:20:30: Even just the idea of getting people kind of excited
00:20:30 --> 00:20:31: and again telling a story.
00:20:31 --> 00:20:33: But what this building could be like?
00:20:33 --> 00:20:37: We're just amazed by their approach and their perspective and
00:20:37 --> 00:20:38: where and where it took us.
00:20:38 --> 00:20:41: So you know what? What happened from Watford.
00:20:41 --> 00:20:44: Something quite small. We had all these engage engagement campaigns
00:20:44 --> 00:20:47: that really kind of grab peoples attention and got a
00:20:47 --> 00:20:49: little bit of of notice.
00:20:49 --> 00:20:51: I would say and then pretty quickly we had external
00:20:52 --> 00:20:55: clients asking us if our team could could do rebranding
00:20:55 --> 00:20:58: for them and a classic like really great significant values
00:20:58 --> 00:21:00: align client for us was was pacifist Canada.
00:21:00 --> 00:21:04: It's now possible Canada it was at the time.
00:21:04 --> 00:21:06: Canadian Passivhaus Institute and I hope A lot of your
00:21:06 --> 00:21:07: listeners dealing in the built environment.
00:21:07 --> 00:21:09: I've heard of passive house,
00:21:09 --> 00:21:11: but just in case, it's a really kind of ultra
00:21:11 --> 00:21:13: low energy certification program that I think is one of
00:21:13 --> 00:21:15: our really key tools and India dressing.
00:21:15 --> 00:21:17: Reduction of climate emissions. So when we had came and
00:21:17 --> 00:21:18: passed,
00:21:18 --> 00:21:19: both institute come to us and say,
00:21:19 --> 00:21:21: could we do a re rent?
00:21:21 --> 00:21:23: Could be worth one rear and we were just absolutely
00:21:23 --> 00:21:23: thrilled.
00:21:23 --> 00:21:25: And I think if you want to kind of Google
00:21:25 --> 00:21:28: that as a case study the the difference from can
00:21:28 --> 00:21:30: fee which I think most people didn't know to pass
00:21:30 --> 00:21:32: those Canada which I feel like is is the rear
00:21:32 --> 00:21:34: ending was incredible and amazing.
00:21:34 --> 00:21:36: And right now we're doing.
00:21:36 --> 00:21:39: Work with Squamish Nation, which is again so so impactful
00:21:39 --> 00:21:42: and kind of the work that we want to be
00:21:42 --> 00:21:42: doing.
00:21:42 --> 00:21:44: So that work is just incredible,

00:21:44 --> 00:21:46: so I guess I'm losing track of what your original
00:21:46 --> 00:21:47: question was.
00:21:47 --> 00:21:49: Maybe around the power, the power of branding.
00:21:49 --> 00:21:51: I think it evolved overtime for us,
00:21:51 --> 00:21:54: where we saw really how much more reach we could
00:21:54 --> 00:21:55: have to have more impact.
00:21:55 --> 00:21:58: I think it's that that's the real motivator for us,
00:21:58 --> 00:22:00: and I mean our team has grown.
00:22:00 --> 00:22:02: Since, you know, from one one creative joining us just
00:22:02 --> 00:22:05: specifically in terms of communication and visual branding.
00:22:05 --> 00:22:06: We have three creatives now.
00:22:06 --> 00:22:08: We have a client lead and the services lead and
00:22:09 --> 00:22:12: we are just really seeing the incredible potential they have
00:22:12 --> 00:22:13: to tell stories too too.
00:22:13 --> 00:22:16: Help us advocate on issues that we want to advocate
00:22:16 --> 00:22:17: on by kind of translating.
00:22:17 --> 00:22:20: Sometimes you know written or verbal thoughts into something that's
00:22:20 --> 00:22:22: really engageable and digestible for people.
00:22:22 --> 00:22:24: So I think in terms of I think your original
00:22:24 --> 00:22:27: question was what did it look like to do it
00:22:27 --> 00:22:27: internally?
00:22:27 --> 00:22:30: I think we had this incredible advantage of feeling really
00:22:30 --> 00:22:30: known,
00:22:30 --> 00:22:33: like we had people on the inside who kind of
00:22:33 --> 00:22:36: knew what our vision and values were and saw how
00:22:36 --> 00:22:37: we how we actually operated.
00:22:37 --> 00:22:40: In some ways, I think they reflected us back to
00:22:40 --> 00:22:43: ourselves as leaders of the firm in a way that.
00:22:43 --> 00:22:46: That we couldn't have expected it to be honest.
00:22:46 --> 00:22:48: Maybe if we'd gone with an external.
00:22:48 --> 00:22:51: Branding UM company, but I think that's the that's the
00:22:51 --> 00:22:52: trick is to is.
00:22:52 --> 00:22:55: They're great listeners, and so if it was in terms
00:22:55 --> 00:22:56: of our external clients,
00:22:56 --> 00:22:59: I think they're listening really deeply and trying to understand
00:22:59 --> 00:23:02: authentically what an organization or or client is and then
00:23:02 --> 00:23:03: trying to reflect that visually.
00:23:05 --> 00:23:07: It really touches on the importance of bringing in people
00:23:07 --> 00:23:10: with different skill sets and different experiences.
00:23:10 --> 00:23:13: Because you know me and you could be sitting on
00:23:13 --> 00:23:16: the table and we could listen to the same.

00:23:16 --> 00:23:19: We could hear the same thing but not interpret it
00:23:19 --> 00:23:19: or or,
00:23:19 --> 00:23:22: you know, brand it. The right way to actually reflect
00:23:22 --> 00:23:26: the message that's been said and it's really important to.
00:23:26 --> 00:23:30: Lupin, those players as part of our team who have
00:23:30 --> 00:23:33: that expertise and know how have their ears on the
00:23:33 --> 00:23:34: ground.
00:23:34 --> 00:23:38: And no, you know, whenever we actually captured the diversity
00:23:38 --> 00:23:41: of the community or one have we fall into the
00:23:41 --> 00:23:45: gap of a very niched survey that actually in fact
00:23:45 --> 00:23:47: captures only a specific part.
00:23:47 --> 00:23:52: Little did we know there's so much of those.
00:23:52 --> 00:23:55: So much of the community that's seen that survey,
00:23:55 --> 00:23:57: for example, but not actually responded,
00:23:57 --> 00:23:59: so I commend you guys for bringing in your your
00:23:59 --> 00:24:03: team in house and and starting to invite people that
00:24:03 --> 00:24:05: challenge your skill set and add to that.
00:24:05 --> 00:24:08: And having a very open approach to com pounding your
00:24:08 --> 00:24:10: skills rather than than soloing them.
00:24:10 --> 00:24:14: How do you? How do you see that?
00:24:14 --> 00:24:16: In the future, how do you you know?
00:24:16 --> 00:24:18: It seems like you guys started off by,
00:24:18 --> 00:24:21: you know, let's let's do a test run and and
00:24:21 --> 00:24:23: bring in someone to to brand it and it somehow
00:24:23 --> 00:24:27: exploded into a burst of opportunities that you didn't expect.
00:24:27 --> 00:24:30: How do you see that unfolding in parallel or or
00:24:30 --> 00:24:30: you know,
00:24:30 --> 00:24:32: with the practice of
00:24:32 --> 00:24:34: HDMI? Yeah, I think it's just going to keep growing.
00:24:34 --> 00:24:36: We're a little bit we're loving.
00:24:36 --> 00:24:39: I think you kind of touched on the idea of
00:24:39 --> 00:24:42: challenge like I think the other disciplines coming in are
00:24:42 --> 00:24:44: kind of challenging us and pushing.
00:24:44 --> 00:24:45: It's in a really good way,
00:24:45 --> 00:24:47: which is kind of humbling,
00:24:47 --> 00:24:49: but also it gets us somewhere so much better like
00:24:49 --> 00:24:50: we're kind of.
00:24:50 --> 00:24:52: I'm loving that part of like we're working with an
00:24:52 --> 00:24:55: environmental psychologist right now on that social impact framework that
00:24:56 --> 00:24:56: I touched on,

00:24:56 --> 00:24:59: and it's been really great to have her perspective and
00:24:59 --> 00:24:59: say,
00:24:59 --> 00:25:00: yeah, you're saying this book?
00:25:00 --> 00:25:02: Is that really happening? And how do we?
00:25:02 --> 00:25:04: How do we capture it?
00:25:04 --> 00:25:05: How do we document it?
00:25:05 --> 00:25:07: And you know, I think the the idea of bringing
00:25:07 --> 00:25:10: more people in just makes the ability to sort of
00:25:10 --> 00:25:13: solve those bigger problems and to hold us accountable for
00:25:13 --> 00:25:14: the things that we do.
00:25:14 --> 00:25:17: And I'm really in a more robust way,
00:25:17 --> 00:25:19: so I think for us it's just.
00:25:19 --> 00:25:21: It's just the beginning and we see whether it's through
00:25:21 --> 00:25:24: collaborations on project specific things with people outside,
00:25:24 --> 00:25:26: or bring it into our own team.
00:25:26 --> 00:25:29: I think I think the I think we they can
00:25:29 --> 00:25:29: summary.
00:25:29 --> 00:25:32: I think the problems we face are getting more complex
00:25:32 --> 00:25:35: and we just need more voices at the table and
00:25:35 --> 00:25:37: it especially at the city scale,
00:25:37 --> 00:25:39: right? I think for a lot of people who are
00:25:39 --> 00:25:43: in the development industry or see this incredible impact we
00:25:43 --> 00:25:45: have on people's behavior and.
00:25:45 --> 00:25:47: Their sense of safety and happiness in cities.
00:25:47 --> 00:25:50: I think working the built environment it's so critical to
00:25:50 --> 00:25:52: always be questioning how we're doing things.
00:25:52 --> 00:25:56: And are we doing things in the right way?
00:25:56 --> 00:25:56: I
00:25:56 --> 00:25:59: think the key word of this podcast really is what
00:25:59 --> 00:26:03: you just mentioned is that projects are becoming more and
00:26:03 --> 00:26:04: more complex,
00:26:04 --> 00:26:06: and this idea of of wanting to grab it and
00:26:06 --> 00:26:09: run with it by yourself is just not going to
00:26:09 --> 00:26:13: work anymore and we need to start really incorporating more
00:26:13 --> 00:26:17: and more of that. Those diverse speakers and those diverse
00:26:17 --> 00:26:20: voices that can speak to the potential problems and solve
00:26:20 --> 00:26:23: the existing problems so that we can future proof our
00:26:23 --> 00:26:26: our cities and communities for the future.
00:26:26 --> 00:26:29: Thank you so much. This was very informative.
00:26:29 --> 00:26:32: I'm really excited about the evolution of HCMS practice for
00:26:32 --> 00:26:34: all of our speakers.
00:26:34 --> 00:26:36: HDMI has a ton of books that they publish terms

00:26:36 --> 00:26:39: of community building pools and public spaces,
00:26:39 --> 00:26:43: and I really invite anyone who's at the other end
00:26:43 --> 00:26:45: of this podcast to check them out,
00:26:45 --> 00:26:48: check out their work and their recent rebranding,
00:26:48 --> 00:26:51: Melissa. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak
00:26:51 --> 00:26:54: with you and learn a little bit more about HTML
00:26:54 --> 00:26:55: practice.
00:26:55 --> 00:26:57: Thanks Judy was a pleasure.
00:26:57 --> 00:26:58: I love the conversation so thanks for having me.

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