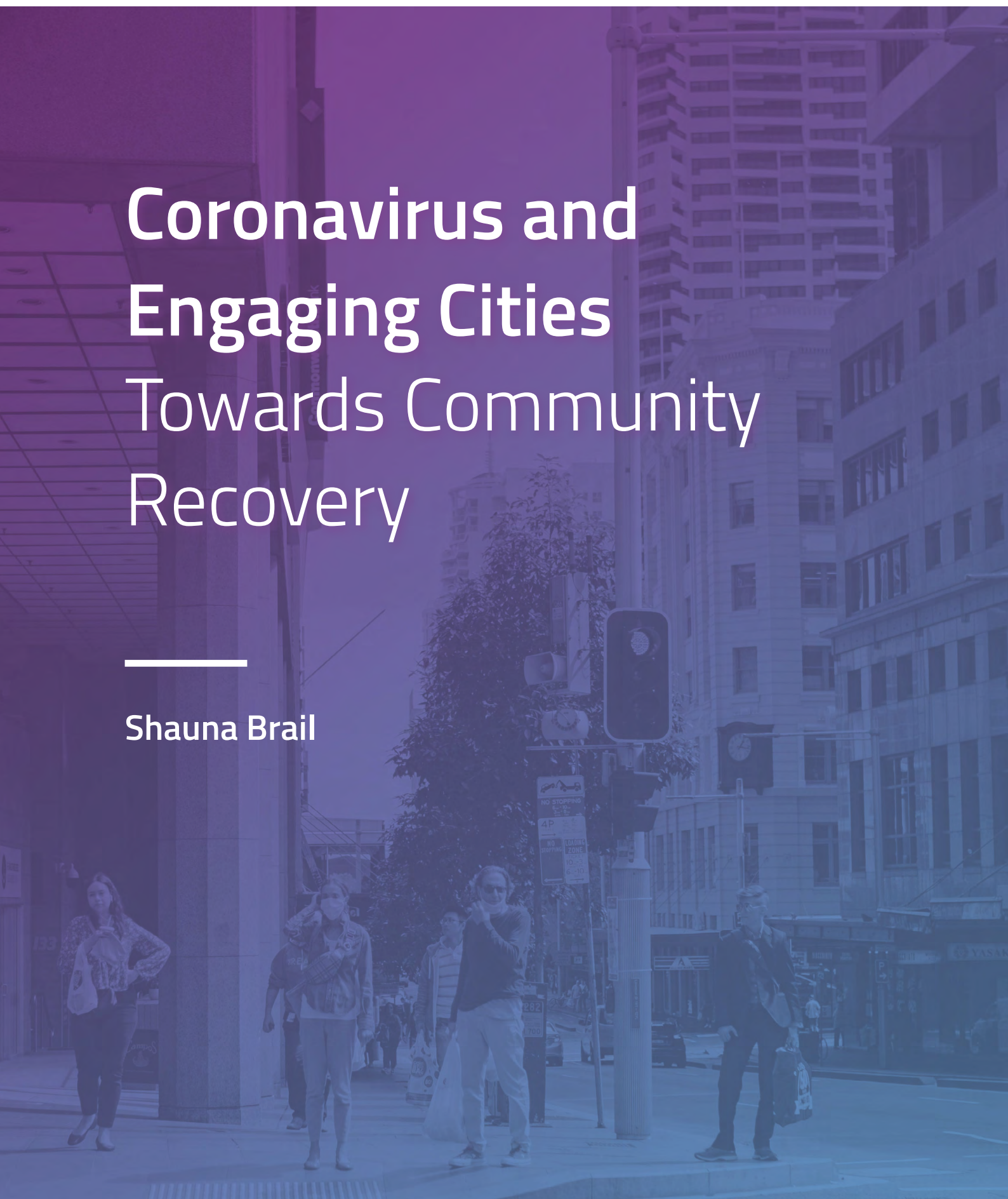


Coronavirus and Engaging Cities Towards Community Recovery

Shauna Brail



Coronavirus and Engaging Cities: Towards Community Recovery
Edited by Sally Hussey

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Foreword

Cities are at the epicentre of the coronavirus pandemic. Put differently, with COVID-19's impact on cities and densely populated urban centres, it has become, predominantly, an urban-focussed pandemic. It has also redoubled the inequalities of urban cities as [groups are affected unequally](#), particularly vulnerable and marginalized communities. (Across the US alone, Black Americans are dying at [three times the rate](#) of White Americans.) And while global lockdown has forced many changes - social distancing, quarantining and self-isolation measures to curtail person-to-person transmission - the shift to cities reopening is overwhelmed by uncertainty. The pandemic, it seems, upends the very notion of an urban future.

Coronavirus and Engaging Cities: Towards Community Recovery sees Canadian-based urban scholar, Shauna Brail, confront this current global picture as she looks toward our collective urban future. She examines not only how COVID-19 might shape our cities and urban life, but, in offering a focal point for local governments, provides strategic responses to the challenges that face municipalities and cities in rebuilding communities.

It is undoubtable that [unsettling historical parallels](#) can be drawn to previous epidemics. Cities and disease, too, seem "[conjoined in their creation](#)" as early urban planning laws sought to minimise exposure to infectious diseases, tackling overcrowding and poor sanitation through the regulation of street layout, building codes and public space standards. Here, however, Brail is careful to point out that the spread of infectious disease is not new. She mines the past to contextualise lessons learned. She surfaces links between poor working and living conditions and the spread of disease in the early stages of industrialization, the introduction of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) during the Spanish flu, which infected two thirds of the world's population, socio-spatial inequality in cities, and, with the emergence of SARS in the early twenty-first century, connections *between* cities, which, she writes, "act as vectors of disease spread." (Unlike Coronavirus, with the ability to contain its lethal contagion, as David Quammen [writes](#), SARS was "the bullet that went whistling past humanity's ears.")

In this e-book, however, Brail is not simply asking the question, how will COVID-19 shape future planning and city-building? In providing a lens on four strategic pathways to local recovery and reopening – mobility, housing and food security, local business and public realm – Brail pulls the focus out as wide as possible. Here the view changes. To be sure, we gain insight into the collective challenges, particularly where COVID-19 has amplified



homelessness, overcrowded living arrangements, underemployment and food insecurity, for instance. Yet, we don't lose sight of the opportunity to address key aspects of urban and community life going forward. The role that public transit plays in serving racialized, marginalized and low-income individuals, for instance. Unpacking these four themes as a strategy for a larger community recovery, these local responses also magnify areas for ongoing public and community engagement. Brail writes, "the overarching prioritization of people emerges throughout each of the four key areas and is fundamental to all city building."

Critical is Brail's attention to the pivotal role of municipal governments. To be sure, in the context of the pandemic, local governments can seem less powerful in decision-making, positioned in the penumbra of federal government policy. But, while Brail acknowledges such limitations, she appraises the rapid municipal-led responses that "demonstrate the role that city governments can play as catalysts in supporting residents' basic humanitarian needs." From the early recognition of housing insecurity, to supporting homeless individuals, to pausing evictions for local businesses and placing a cap on food delivery commissions to safeguard local business revenues. But, she reveals, it is in rethinking the prioritization of the public realm that defines municipal responses to coronavirus at a global scale.

While Brail herself argues it is too soon to understand the full impact of the pandemic, she draws together the common challenges faced by cities and urban-level approaches that characterize municipal responses to rebuilding community beyond the pandemic. Highlighting the potential of positive change and generational opportunity to reimagine a collective future, she adds, "municipalities need to consider how to privilege equity considerations for marginalized and other equity-seeking groups." While change and uncertainty might define, indeed overwhelm reopening, as Brail writes, "it is a time for experimentation."

Sally Hussey



Introduction

Devastation caused by the global spread of COVID-19 is tragic. Beloved cities around the world – from Wuhan, to Milan to New York – have been at the epicentre of outbreaks. As such, the pandemic places public health concerns front and centre for the foreseeable future. At the same time, coronavirus threatens to derail economic activity as a result of the need to enact physical distancing measures, quarantines and lockdowns. These measures form a key and notably low-tech component of the public health professional’s toolbox and are an effective way to slow the spread of disease. In turn, slowing down disease transmission helps to ensure that our healthcare systems have sufficient capacity to protect and save as many lives as possible.

We now, for better or for worse, can visualize what many cities look like on lockdown:

- Streets and public spaces are empty;
- Public transit ridership is down 80-90 percent;
- Stores and restaurants are boarded up;
- Offices and schools are closed;
- Frontline workers in healthcare, food services, and transportation are some of the most vulnerable during the pandemic, and
- Debt is building to unsustainable levels for local governments, businesses, organizations and individuals.

Moving from lockdown to reopening is filled with uncertainty and complexity. Closing was, in retrospect, much simpler than reopening. As cities around the world learn what it means to live with the coronavirus pandemic until a vaccine or other solution is found, the only constant is change. And undoubtedly, cities will change. The question is: how will they change? What future lies ahead for density, for streets and public spaces, for institutions, for thriving businesses and robust communities? What steps can we take to protect our cities moving forward? What actions, taken now, will lead to the cities we want?



Looking Back to Move Forward

Before we can look to the future, we must look to the past. How have previous public health crises shaped cities and urban life?

At the dawn of industrialization in the UK, Friedrich Engels wrote *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, published in 1845. Engels is credited with establishing a connection between poor working and living conditions for factory workers and the spread of disease such as smallpox and scarlet fever. His work and observations pre-date the emergence of the field of public health.

While the coronavirus pandemic is being described as a once in a generation challenge, the spread of infectious disease is not a new phenomenon, not even on a global scale.

The 1918 Spanish flu is [cited](#) as the most devastating epidemic in recorded history, where it infected an estimated two-thirds of the world. Global efforts to control the flu primarily consisted of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) such as restrictions on public gatherings and quarantines. However, the success of these efforts varied across cities. A [study](#) of NPIs implemented during the flu across different US cities found that cities which implemented an early, sustained, layered strategy best mitigated total deaths. The severity of influenza in cities has also been [linked](#) to socio-spatial inequality, where concentrations of low socioeconomic status populations correlated with greater numbers of flu deaths. Lastly, [studies](#) conclude that population size, as a barometer of density, did not act as a factor in increased deaths.

[Analysis](#) of the global outbreak of SARS in 2003 demonstrates the ways in which connections between cities act as vectors of disease spread. SARS was effectively stopped by traditional public health measures, including contact tracing and quarantines. The aftermath of SARS not only prompted changes in public health-preparedness, but the development of significant economic revitalization efforts. In Toronto, for instance, revenue from tourism fell dramatically. However, out of the shadows of SARS, [SARStock](#) and [Luminato](#) were developed as civic efforts to rejuvenate Toronto's tourism sector.



Coronavirus: Urban Impact

Coronavirus has distressing impacts on cities and urban activities that thrive on density. Research finds that [coronavirus spreads](#) easily as a result of contact with infected people, including through droplets that are released upon sneezing, coughing or even talking. The recommendation to physically distance by keeping six feet apart from others is based on the virus' ability to be transmitted. As a result, the virus is especially of concern in larger, urban centres that are by their very nature, designed to bring large numbers of people in close proximity to one another. A [study](#) by scholars at the University of Chicago, based on data examining over 200 US metropolitan areas in mid-March, 2020, found that denser cities experienced disproportionately larger outbreaks. Conversely, evidence from Chinese cities suggests that population density is [not](#) a precursor to relatively larger coronavirus outbreaks. The authors of both studies rightly [point out](#), however, that big cities are also more likely to have strong social and physical infrastructure capacity which enables scaling up effective responses to limiting the spread of coronavirus.

Anecdotal evidence seems to support the notion that cities and civil society have demonstrated remarkable capacity to respond to the pandemic, even under the most dire of circumstances. Organizing to provide support for the elderly and vulnerable, tax relief for small businesses, advocacy for pedestrians and cyclists, and data sharing amongst municipalities, are just some of the types of responses that emerged over the course of a few weeks.

All this points to another important lesson: in times of great distress and uncertainty, people and organizations more often [come together](#) to provide support to one another, rather than responding selfishly. As such, while coronavirus continues on a path of death and destruction, it has simultaneously and somewhat ironically opened up an unexpected opportunity for positive change.

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Cities, Coronavirus, and a Path Forward

The remainder of this e-book focuses on drawing out opportunities for urban reopening and recovery in four key areas: mobility, housing and food security, local business and public realm. Each section addresses what we learned during lockdown, creative approaches to reopening and recovery, and ways in which cities can move towards reimagining our collective urban future.

In most places it is abundantly clear that financial support from more senior levels of government is needed in order to revive urban economies. Furthermore, around the world, municipal governments have different powers to regulate, spend, tax and plan. Nevertheless, there are common challenges faced by cities alongside a range of approaches that characterize urban-level responses to rebuilding urban life. Underlying each of these four key areas of attention is the knowledge that cities cannot thrive without strong local economic conditions. Indeed, each theme connects to and builds upon local urban economic opportunity and prosperity. Finally, cities are comprised of people from socioeconomically and demographically diverse backgrounds. Any plans must include a range of perspectives and needs sought out through ongoing discussion, consultation and engagement. The overarching prioritization of people emerges throughout each of the four key areas and is fundamental to all city building.

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Mobility

Mobility, or the movement of people from one place to another, truly touches all aspects of urban life. It contributes to people's ability to access work, food, education, leisure and more. It turns out that changes in mobility are amongst the most stark indicators of a city in lockdown. Public transit agencies report ridership declines in the range of 80-90 percent. Vehicular traffic on streets is noticeably sparse – no traffic jams, fewer car accidents, streetside parking in commercial areas sits empty. At the same time, the number of cyclists is demonstrably higher as commuters shift to cycling in an effort to avoid the challenges of physical distancing on public transit.

A rapid response [survey](#) conducted at the University of Toronto in early May 2020, found that, among frequent transit users during lockdown, nearly 70 percent stopped using transit upon the closure of almost all workplaces on March 15, 2020. According to the results, "survey respondents who continued to ride transit after March 15 were more likely to be male, have a disability, have incomes under \$80,000, be over the age of 50 and identify as Filipino, Latin American, South Asian, Middle Eastern, Southeast Asian, West Asian or Black." This research provides evidence of the role that public transit plays in serving racialized, marginalized and low-income individuals. While the cost of operating public transit services for a fraction of riders is indeed high, shutting down services would undoubtedly exacerbate existing inequalities.

Identifying mechanisms for continuing to serve public transit users, especially upon the interim stages of reopening when physical distancing measures are in place, means that transit agencies may need to prioritize service areas based on ridership needs. In San Francisco, bus routes were reduced during lockdown from 68 to 17 bus lines, predominantly to continue services for essential workers with no other means of transport to and from work. Managing appropriate service levels to attract riders, while utilizing only a portion of the capacity of each vehicle (estimated in some places to be about 30 percent), is a short-term solution and a long-term catastrophe for transit. During the lockdown phase for instance, New York's transit system [lost \\$125 million](#) weekly while Transport for London experienced a loss of about [90 percent](#) of their usual income. In some cities, including Tokyo, Taiwan and Seoul, new intensive cleaning protocols, temperature taking upon entry to stations, and requiring all passengers to wear masks, has made it possible for these transit systems to operate in a new normal.

As cities begin to reopen, the way in which they approach mobility will play a crucial role.



As cities begin to reopen, the way in which they approach mobility will play a crucial role. In terms of mode share, the reopening of cities in China shows the dangers of the 'new normal' for transportation mode share. Absent interventions, evidence appears to point towards increases in private automobile use and declines in public transit use. In the three weeks between February 21 and March 16, 2020 – as lockdown measures were lifted, automobile trips rose about two times as fast as bus trips. A survey by [Ipsos research](#) indicated that, post-lockdown, car use doubled while public transit use was less than 50 percent of its pre-lockdown state. The same study suggests that 2/3^{rds} of those surveyed who reside in "severe outbreak and tier 1 cities" and do not own cars, indicate interest in purchasing a car in the next six months. Nearly 80 percent of those who would like to purchase a car are motivated by the fact that driving reduces the chance of infection, with half suggesting that "public transit is not safe."

If returning public transit ridership to pre-coronavirus levels is not viable for public health reasons, and if at the same time cities want to prevent a shift from public to private means of transportation, what can be done? One solution being proposed and tested from Melbourne to Milan is the opening up of streets to cyclists and pedestrians. This will be discussed further under 'Public Realm.'




Housing and Food Security

It is widely acknowledged that COVID-19 amplifies existing inequalities in cities, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized populations. Conditions associated with homelessness and sleeping rough, as well as overcrowded living arrangements in homes and shelters, facilitate the spread of the disease through the absence of physical distancing, adequate hygiene, and an inability to observe 'stay home' orders. In addition, the economic repercussions of business closures, employee furloughs and reduced consumer activity, also translates into increases in the number of unemployed and underemployed people and exacerbates housing and food security.

Some municipal governments recognized relatively early on that housing security would become challenging during a pandemic and were amongst the first to act on a humanitarian basis in response to COVID-19. For instance, San Jose was the first city in California to propose a measure that temporarily prevented evictions for renters whose incomes declined as a result of coronavirus shutdowns. A moratorium went into effect on March 11, 2020, and was followed by similar measures in other Californian cities, eventually leading up to a statewide ban.

Municipalities have also been working on rapid response mechanisms to supporting homeless individuals during the pandemic. Responses have included retrofitting shelters to enable physical distancing and providing hotel rooms as recovery spaces for people experiencing homelessness who also are diagnosed with coronavirus. In [Athens, Greece](#) a 400-bed dormitory-style group of buildings are being used to provide short and longer-term housing to homeless people. Advocates have [pointed out](#) that the speed of implementation that characterizes these responses indicates that cities are able to provide stronger, more socially just supports to homeless people. In some cases, coronavirus has accelerated improvements in housing the homeless.

Alongside housing insecurity, food insecurity has also been aggravated by the pandemic. With employment and income loss, combined with increases in food costs in part as a result of supply chain limitations, there are estimates that the number of people globally experiencing food insecurity may [double](#). The closure of schools also means that children and families that rely on school lunch programs to help alleviate hunger, are not in operation. Cities like [Espoo, Finland](#) organized together with non-profits and faith-based groups to distribute food to those whose circumstances were negatively affected by coronavirus. In [Toronto](#), the city's public libraries were temporarily repurposed to serve as food bank distribution centres. While food banks and school lunch programs are essentially band-aid approaches to larger systemic issues around inequity, these rapid municipal-led responses demonstrate the role that city governments can play as catalysts in supporting residents' basic humanitarian needs.



SORRY
WE ARE
CLOSED

Local Business

Coronavirus mitigation efforts have resulted in a range of what were intended to be short-term business closures. While grocery stores and food manufacturing facilities remained open as a result of being deemed an essential service, clothing stores, restaurants, movie theatres, offices, and in some cases manufacturing facilities, shut down temporarily or altered work arrangements significantly. Even for those businesses that stayed open, physical distancing policies led to dramatic reductions in economic activity. In the UK, March 2020 [clothing sales declined](#) by over 34 percent relative to the year prior.

Small businesses are responsible for a significant proportion of employment. For example, in the US, small businesses account for approximately [50 percent of all employment](#). A [May 2020 survey](#) of independently owned businesses in Canada, taken at a time when many provinces had begun to introduce reopening plans and some optimism was returning, nevertheless found that 15 percent of businesses were not confident that they would survive COVID-19. Despite the prominence of small business, it is big businesses that are [expected to excel](#) in a post-pandemic economy. In part, bigger businesses have larger financial reserves to weather a downturn, they are more likely to have a significant digital presence, and they have more sophisticated leadership structures which enable easier access to senior levels of government.

Main streets are the retail arteries that connect and serve neighbourhoods. Storefronts typically face onto the sidewalk and the types of goods and services sold can include things like book and clothing stores, coffee shops, realtors, restaurants, and hair salons. As the frequent location of small businesses, main streets have suffered disproportionately with the closures precipitated by COVID-19 and have garnered significant attention as a result. Community and business associations that support main streets are [playing a crucial role](#) in advocating for the needs of these small businesses.

Restaurants and food services continue to be amongst the hardest hit businesses. An April 2020 survey of independent restaurants in [Canada](#) found that up to 50 percent might not survive the pandemic if closures endure. Similar scenarios are playing out elsewhere too – for instance, in [Italy](#), [Singapore](#) and [Australia](#). Restaurants and cafes are important to main streets, in part because they help to animate and energize neighbourhoods and storefronts.

It is abundantly clear that local businesses are at high risk as a result of the pandemic.



As neighbourhood centres and gathering places, main streets also support local arts and cultural activities. With the cancellation of music festivals, theatre, and art and music lessons, amongst other things, arts and culture is suffering. Main streets and local businesses in some cities have created new opportunities for artists through the [painting of streetside murals](#) – which speak to the tragedy and hope of coronavirus and also draw people to these places.

It is abundantly clear that local businesses are at high risk as a result of the pandemic. Financial support from national governments can provide assistance with wage subsidies and rent relief in the short term. Cities can contribute too.

Municipal governments are typically limited in the types of direct financial support that they can provide, unlike higher levels of government that can provide wage and rent subsidies for small businesses. However, it is often within a municipality's power to pause evictions of tenants, and this is a strategy that local governments including San Jose and Toronto have undertaken in an effort to stem small business closures.

Another strategy used to ensure that revenues stay in the hands of small businesses is a cap on food delivery commissions. [San Francisco](#) enacted a limit on the commissions charged by food service delivery firms to a maximum of 15 percent per order.

In moving to reopening, small businesses are faced with reduced capacity due to the need to maintain physical distancing. Indoor restaurant seating capacity may be reduced by 50 percent or more. Reduced capacity extends beyond restaurants – to reopen, most shops and services must develop new protocols that limit physical interactions in order to reopen safely. Renewed interest in how a city's publicly-owned spaces are used is a direct result of responses to coronavirus. The next section details some of the ways in which public spaces are being repurposed and reoriented in response to COVID-19.



Public Realm

Public space has become a critical asset in all stages of the pandemic. In city after city, as public health experts called on citizens to isolate and stay at home, images depicted the shutdown of urban life. Photographs of empty streets and sidewalks in Chinese cities were amongst the first to depict the stark reality of lockdowns, followed by similar images from cities across Europe, North America and Australia, Latin America and elsewhere. Almost as soon as streets and public spaces became devoid of public life (and vehicles) however, they became the point around which returning to some semblance of normal concentrated.

It is now evident that public space is an absolutely crucial piece of reopening and recovery strategies. In part, this is connected to the epidemiology of the virus. Because of the way coronavirus spreads, there is a reduced risk of transmission in open air, outdoor spaces. In most cities, streets comprise, on average, about 30 percent of the land area and represent about 80 percent of a city's total public space. Rethinking the prioritization of public realm has become one of the most essential elements of municipal responses to coronavirus at a global scale.

Before coronavirus, city governments were already under pressure to reduce the proportion of street space devoted to private vehicles. This was in part due to efforts to [reduce greenhouse gas emissions](#) and also as a result of successful efforts to promote streets as public resources to be shared more equitably with transit users, cyclists and pedestrians. Upon lockdown, especially where schools and most workplaces were closed, private automobile use declined considerably, providing an opportunity for rethinking the allocation of street space as a form of public space.

As efforts to physically distance unfolded, residents in cities like New York took to cycling instead of risking infection on crowded public transit vehicles. With an increase in cyclists and a reduction in private vehicles, New York added temporary bike lanes to safely accommodate increased cycling traffic. Pedestrians also began to demand access to street spaces during lockdowns. Being cooped up indoors, especially for those living in homes without backyards, streets provide a place to get fresh air and exercise while maintaining physical distancing.

Furthermore, other public outdoor spaces, including sidewalks, parks and squares are also at a premium. Given distancing requirements, shops and restaurants are looking for ways to utilize sidewalks, streets and public squares as part of their reopening strategies. In [Vilnius, Lithuania](#) cafes and restaurants are permitted to use the municipality's public spaces free of charge. Previously, the distancing requirements in place, in

Public space is an absolutely crucial piece of reopening and recovery strategies.



combination with the narrow old town streets, made it difficult for cafes to comply and continue to serve a sufficient number of customers. The opening up of public spaces beyond the use of sidewalks is intended to ensure that the city's café culture can survive post-pandemic. Similarly, photos taken in [Kalaw, Myanmar](#) demonstrate physically distanced produce stalls and merchants using spaces marked along the centre of a street.

Taken together, there is significant pressure to repurpose, either temporarily or permanently, public outdoor spaces. We are now experiencing what some are referring to as a generational opportunity to make some of these changes permanent, and reverse decades of decision-making and infrastructure planning that privileged private automobiles over all else. Milan announced the transformation of 22 kilometres of streets, repurposing them for cyclists and pedestrians. In Montreal, [327 kilometres](#) of bike and pedestrian paths will temporarily be added in summer 2020 to support the city's reopening plans. Indeed, the National Association of City Transportation Officials released a report called [Streets for Pandemic Response and Recovery](#) that details strategies and responses for adapting streets to a range of activities, including transit, cyclists, pedestrians, transit, dining and delivery. As public spaces are used for new types of private sector activities such as markets, restaurants and shops – new opportunities for public-private collaboration ensue.

COVID-19 is the cause of devastating tragedy worldwide. That there may be an opportunity to build a stronger sense of place and create vibrant outdoor spaces that celebrate urban public life as a result of recovery plans, is a small but significant silver lining.



Strategies for Rebuilding

Coronavirus demands rapid responses to all of the challenges raised in the preceding sections. It is a time for experimentation. Below is a brief synopsis of strategic responses that municipalities can undertake, both on their own, and with a range of private, public, non-profit and philanthropic partners across the city:

MOBILITY

- Ensure public transit is safe and attractive
- Avoid strategies that result in increased vehicular congestion
- Open up streets to cyclists and pedestrians

HOUSING AND FOOD SECURITY

- Identify place-based approaches to provide permanent housing for homeless populations
- Leverage municipal resources and build partnerships to support food insecurity
- Support basic humanitarian needs and privilege equity considerations in decision-making

LOCAL BUSINESS

- Work with local business associations and advocacy organizations
- Identify adaptations that prevent near-term evictions, create employment and entrepreneurship opportunities
- Consider new approaches to using sidewalks, curbs and streets for commercial and cultural uses

PUBLIC REALM

- Acknowledge that public space is crucial to reopening and recovery
- Promote active transportation, open streets and park spaces for safe physical distancing
- Repurpose public outdoor spaces, privileging equity, climate and non-vehicular uses



Conclusion and Next Steps

It is too soon to understand the full impact of coronavirus on cities, yet it is clear that impacts will be both far-reaching and long-lasting. Coronavirus, and societal responses, will undoubtedly result in change across many layers of society, including government, institutions, industry, civic actors and more.

Attention is turning to the unequal impacts of coronavirus. Where race-based data is collected, it is acknowledged that people of colour are more likely to be diagnosed with coronavirus, and that fatalities concentrate in marginalized populations. Those experiencing poverty and living in crowded conditions are at higher risk of infection. Coronavirus highlights features of cities that have been associated with inequality and racial discrimination and amplifies them. In responding through reopening and recovery plans, municipalities need to consider how to privilege equity considerations for marginalized and other equity-seeking groups.

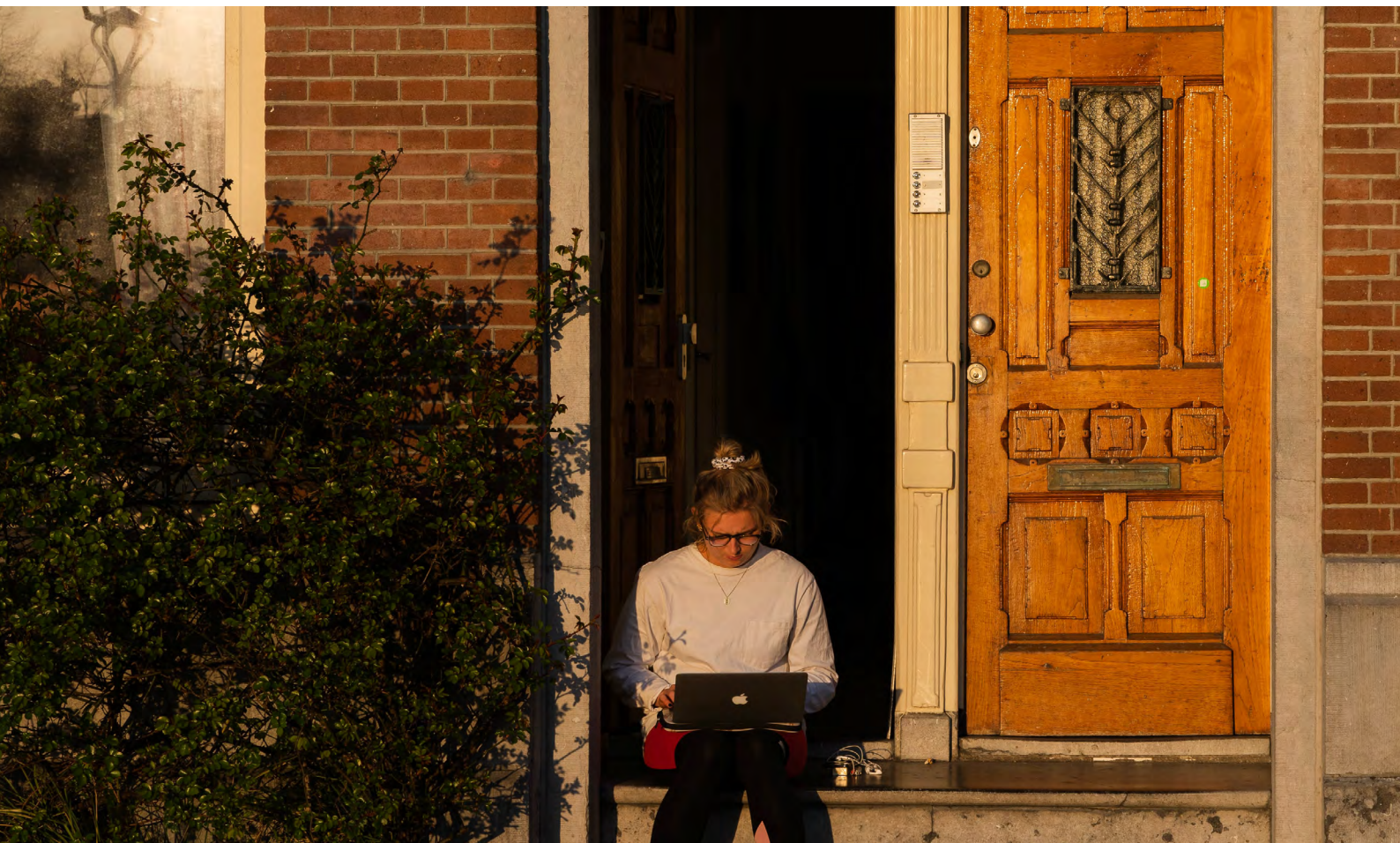
Furthermore, as Black Lives Matter rallies across the world have persuasively demonstrated, it is a time for listening and engaging. Many governments, institutions and organizations appear to be collectively at a moment of introspection and openness. The coronavirus pandemic is a tragedy that has somewhat puzzlingly expedited the potential for positive change across a range of systemic inequities and injustices.

The timing and urgency of the pandemic, during a period of heightened responsiveness to the ongoing climate crisis, should not detract from approaches that consider the challenges of climate change. During lockdown, there is global evidence that air pollution declined and water quality improved. In redesigning processes and places, consideration of initiatives that promote climate neutral or climate positive outcomes are highly desirable and can help prevention of impending climate-related tragedy.

Consultation and engagement is essential in facilitating rebuilding. Engagement mechanisms that enable the sharing of knowledge, insight and needs are crucial to developing responsive and flexible recovery and rebuilding strategies. Whether by means of virtual town halls, citizen reference groups, neighbourhood and community-based initiatives or other forms of public engagement, experimentation and collaboration go hand in hand.

Coronavirus reveals weaknesses in cities. Yet at the same time, this is a generational opportunity to reimagine cities and urban spaces. Given that the pandemic gives pause to force a collective rethinking of priorities, recovery, reopening and reimagining can and should include a comprehensive approach to resilience by protecting public health while also increasing equity and addressing climate change.

Engagement mechanisms that enable the sharing of knowledge, insight and needs are crucial to developing responsive and flexible recovery and rebuilding strategies.



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Shauna Brail is an Associate Professor at the Institute for Management & Innovation, University of Toronto Mississauga. As an economic geographer and urban planner, her research focuses on the transformation of cities as a result of economic, social, and cultural change.

Her current research examines the disruptions taking place in urban mobility, particularly focused on the emergence and shifting strategies of ride-hailing firms and associated impacts on cities. She is the co-Principal Investigator of a five-year Insight Grant funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada called '[Taking Canada for a Ride: Digital Ride-Hailing and Its Impact on Canadian Cities](#)'.

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About the Editor

As Principal Writer and Editorial Director at Bang the Table, Sally Hussey interrogates [global challenges in public engagement](#) and commissions original, evidence-based research by global experts to inform the wider community, on-the-ground practitioners and engagement professionals on cutting-edge insights and issues in public engagement.

Coronavirus and Engaging Cities: Towards Community Recovery is her second collaboration with Dr Shauna Brail, following on from the 2018 publication, [Citizen Engagement and the Changing City](#).

Hussey has an extensive background in the publishing, academic and cultural sectors and is recognised by the *Who's Who of Australian Women*.

