

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

By Peter Hirshberg
Chairman, City Innovate Foundation

Dear Citizens:

The City Innovate Summit and the conversation we are having together here and now is a recognition that we have built a movement, that in the merest moment of time we have begun to change the way innovation comes to cities, how they can become more participatory and open.

This movement is about 5 years old and started when the mayors of many cities decided to open up their data to citizens, journalists, public-sector companies, non-profits, city and government agencies. The availability of open data has sparked a wave of innovation to improve how our cities operate and – dare I say it – the user experience of our cities in ways we never anticipated. As a direct result of open data, cities are investing in innovation by creating City Innovation Officers – and at the Summit we will be learning from Boston, Tel Aviv, and Copenhagen on the impact a Chief Innovation Officer can have on your city. Likewise, at the summit we'll discuss the impact of how engaged citizens are involved in co-creating the services and public spaces that define our cities.

The City Innovate Summit is an extraordinary two-day event happening June 17-18, 2015 in San Francisco where over 600 people are expected to come together and engage in a deep discourse about the role of our cities can and will play in global change.

To guide you in your thinking, I want to introduce you to the four (4) key themes of the city innovation movement.

First open data is an invitation both to innovate and to be more transparent about what works and what doesn't. Technology enables governments and its citizens to collaborate and co create the features of the city in ways never before possible. Open data has enabled cities like San Francisco, Rio, and Los Angeles to drive new policies. From these and other cities, we are learning the benefits of open innovation – so each city can build on the learning and results achieved by other cities. The availability of this learning has sparked cities to open up multiple data sets to their constituencies which can lead to startling results. For example, here in San Francisco we are finding that data about traffic and building health can usher in new policies that can reduce fatalities from childhood asthma¹ and drive traffic fatalities down to zero². Likewise, we can learn from the NY example – which requires building operators to make performance data available to the

¹ <http://innovatesf.com/tag/open-data-2/>

² <http://visionzerosf.org/>

public, recognizing that crowd sourcing this data is critical if NY is to be able to reduce its carbon footprint³. At the heart of this movement is Code for America that recently concluded a series of Hackathons, where citizen coders came together to hack together solutions to some of our toughest problems.

Open Innovation is also an invitation to participation and engagement. Open Street Maps - whether it was disaster response in Haiti⁴, New York (Superstorm Sandy), or Nepal (2015 Earthquake)⁵. New York leveraged open data to first responders to respond to Superstorm Sandy in a way that simply wasn't possible in New Orleans. Essentially what happened is that Waze - now a Google company - was able to crowdsource its request to understand which gas stations remained open and had the shortest lines, so that teams in NYC could direct first responders coming from out of state to those gas stations in real time⁶. This is a fabulous example of private/public sector partnership and open innovation.

Second, planning is changing. It has been said many times: cities are defined by their public spaces. This hasn't changed. What has is that urban planning is now borrowing a page from the lean start up movement - becoming more participatory, more agile, and embracing the notion of rapid prototyping as a fast and cheap way to figure out what could work. In other words, traditional urban planning is all of a sudden gaining the powerful, inclusive and iterative tools that we've seen take hold on the Internet, in the media, in commerce. And in something that can be as contentious as planning public space something magical happens when you create a prototype... you can enable planners to see how citizens will react in real time.

One such experiment came together in San Francisco recently with Market Street Prototyping Festival. This was an effort that brought together 50 artists to place functional prototypes on Market Street for 3 days. This temporary installation of artwork became a focal point for citizen engagement with artists, tech workers, homeless people, and families all coalescing to discuss what is art. Part of the challenge here is making sure that each installation of art found a permanent home within San Francisco and I'm proud to say that the artists are doing just that here in San Francisco.

Third, we are recognizing that an inclusive city benefits everyone.

Cities that are more inclusive are more livable, attract a more diverse talent base, and are capable of attracting and retaining both corporations and the arts - institutions that together drive tax revenues and tourism.

³ <http://cissf.org/1FVhu32>

⁴ <http://hotosm.org/projects/haiti-2>

⁵ <http://cissf.org/1MVA6JF>

⁶ <http://cissf.org/1FVhzDZ>

An inclusive city requires a vibrant ecosystem for job creation in our cities, one that relies not on one single industry. Of course, here in San Francisco we are well known for our innovation in the technology sector. The products, innovative technologies, and major companies created by the tech sector here in San Francisco are really unprecedented. At the same time, we are incredibly cognizant of the example of Detroit, especially as the cost of housing here in San Francisco skyrockets to some of the highest in the nation. So we have to learn how to be an entrepreneurial city that is also inclusive. No city can afford to tie its future to a single industry. So even in San Francisco we are making a conscious effort to build our city upon a network of loosely coupled industries that together make for a diverse, inclusive city.

I personally am most excited about what the Maker Movement brings to our cities, which is why I'm on the White House Counsel for Maker Cities. A Maker City is just what it sounds - a city that has made it easy for citizens to build products and services using a set of low-cost tools. In San Francisco, we have TechShop – headed up by Mark Hatch. Here anyone can go hands on with a 3D printer, pick up a soldering iron, or experiment with Raspberry Pi, an incredibly tiny computer.

At the City Innovate Summit we will hear from Detroit, San Leandro, and Pittsburg, how they are nurturing new businesses based on the Maker Movement and small-batch manufacturing. The economic benefits of bringing "making" into our cities is this ... hand-in-hand with making comes the development of companies dedicated to small-batch manufacturing. In SF, there is SFMade⁷ – a program that has encouraged all kinds of small batch manufacturing – from artisanal whiskeys to jeweler to bags – to thrive here in San Francisco. Likewise, we see New York making a conscious decision to bring back fashion incubation⁸ and fashion jobs.

There are hundreds of such experiments happening right now, one example of which is the Digital Harbor Project⁹, which turns under utilized community centers into Maker Centers. I am enormously optimistic about the ability of the Maker City movement to re-energize our cities, change how we educate our young people, and introduce middler schoolers like Victoria Walker – who recently beat out adults to win the AT&T Hackathon at age 11¹⁰ – to the wonders of making. We need more discussion around how making can lead to a meaningful career, beyond the tech sector. After all this is America – the birthplace of ingenuity.

⁷ <http://sfmade.org>

⁸ <http://www.nycedc.com/program/cfda-fashion-incubator>

⁹ <http://www.digitalharbor.org/>

¹⁰ <http://cissf.org/1Bgh5eT>

Fourth, this movement is a global - we are building nothing less than open innovation ecosystem. One thing we have to realize is that the city is not just the biggest story on earth - on some level they are our last great hope. Cities are the unit of innovation, they can move faster than any centralized government, and they are the nodes of sharing our best and more innovative ideas to solve the very real problems we face in sustainability, housing, and mobility. The mayors of our cities in the US are looking to innovation to help them avoid the unavoidable. No mayor wants to be the guy/gal who was on watch when levees break and was unprepared, experienced Snowmagedden and couldn't get the snow ploughs out to the right places, or had to ration water or electricity. Thankfully there are cities around the globe that have already dealt with challenges of this scope and they are more than willing to share what they have learned as well as the technology and data that made the difference when crafting a solution to cataclysmic events. The US has an enormous amount it can learn—for example—in how to build more walkable cities. London famously charges an entrance fee for anyone who wants to bring a car into the central business district. This type of thing is called “demand-based pricing” and has been proposed many times here in the US and is always shot down by business interests. Cities overseas that are brave enough to experiment with ways to reduce our dependence on private automobiles are experiencing significant reductions in obesity, childhood asthma, and carbon emissions.

In short, when in the late 1960s and 1970s our citizens were up in arms about the disaster that was our cities, today everywhere we look cities are innovating their way out of some of the biggest issues facing the planet. Sustainability. Inclusiveness. Resilience.

So what should you expect from the City Innovate Summit? Expect to be amazed by the pace of innovation coming from our cities. Expect to share ideas openly and honestly. Expect to build upon the ideas presented by others - back in your cities. After all, as I am fond of saying - “cities are an open platform. No one owns it, everyone can improve upon it.”