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THE AGENDA

UPCOMING
EVENTS



"The real heroes of *Happy City* are regular citizens who got sick of waiting for other people to fix their cities," says Charles Montgomery. Photograph courtesy Charles Montgomery

Happy City heroes

Charles Montgomery is an urbanist. He's championing livable cities and calling on planners, city builders—all everyday Canadians, really—to become design activists fixing broken cities and improving lives.

"The way we choose to plan and invest in our cities has a direct impact on every aspect of Canadians' lives," he tells *P&I*. "Any policymaker serious about public health and economic resilience should be embracing the cause of cities."

Mr. Montgomery, award-winning journalist and author of *Happy City*, will be at the Museum of Vancouver on July 9 with Mark Shieh to discuss these exact issues. Paired with the museum's exhibit *Stefan Sagmeister: The Happy Show*, the talk is part of a series of "fun and brainy talks" exploring happiness.

Mr. Montgomery says that federal politicians should take note of the urban agenda. "When senior levels of government subsidize urban highways instead of transit, for example, it pushes

families into neighbourhoods where they spend twice as much on transportation. When they support rapid transit projects, they enable more compact development that gives Canadians more choice about where to live and how to move every day. This is not just good for family budgets. It keeps people healthier by encouraging walking. And that means huge savings in healthcare spending."

He tells *P&I* that anyone can become a "design activist"—it doesn't need to be lead from top political players. "The real heroes of *Happy City* are regular citizens who got sick of waiting for other people to fix their cities," he says. "Consider New York City. Many people credit former mayor Michael Bloomberg with the massive renaissance in public space in that city: the pedestrianization of Times Square, the bike lanes, the wonderful plazas and fast busses that sprung up during his term. The truth is, those changes happened because a coalition of livable streets activists and neighbourhood groups carried out a successful city-wide campaign demanding safer, more social streets. The activists put the issue on the agenda."