City of Philadelphia

**Emily Craven:** [00:00:00] This is Vibrant Spaces. A show about placemaking, activating and connecting city spaces for the communities you serve.

Hello. Hello. Hello, everyone. Welcome to the vibrant spaces podcast. I'm here, Emily Craven with my co host Timothy Sousa.

**Tim Souza:** Hello.

**Emily Craven:** Thank you so much for joining us for this fabulous episode with the wonderful Raheem Manning out of the city of Philadelphia, the nighttime manager, the nighttime mayor, the nighttime Batman.

I hope he has a cape somewhere in a closet that he pulls out for special occasions. but I think that the theme of this particular podcast is definitely a vibrancy for all. It made me think very deeply about how [00:01:00] accessible things were in the night in the city.

**Tim Souza:** Okay, so that's a great question, Em. Would you feel safe going out in the city where you live at night time?

**Emily Craven:** I feel, I mean, maybe I shouldn't, but I feel safe going out at night time. I've never had any issues. I've never felt unsafe, but nothing's opened him. Nothing. If I needed to go Christmas shopping, if I needed to do, like, particularly in the downtowns when I first moved to Edmonton, nothing was even open on a weekend during the day, let alone

late into the

evening.

**Tim Souza:** What if you were working at a coffee shop and had some tips? What would you do with your tips? Would you walk home with those tips? Would you feel less safe then on the streets? If you had a bag full of cash, let's say it's a little brown paper. No, no, I

**Emily Craven:** feel again, I feel very safe. That might be white.

Maybe that's white girl privilege. I don't know, potentially. Um, but a [00:02:00] lot of the cities that I've lived in, like Canada and Australia, finding a convenience store that's open past nine, finding a Pharmacy that's open late at night when you fall ill it's really

**Tim Souza:** difficult. I go to the gym, because if I go after the gym, most places start closing, because I get off work, I, do my chores, I go to the gym.

And then by nine, restaurants are closed these days. COVID really changed a lot.

**Emily Craven:** Oh, it feels like it was like that before COVID, Tim, though. Like,

**Tim Souza:** maybe I was just a baby. Maybe I didn't know.

**Emily Craven:** Well, Raheem was talking about, and we'll get to it in this podcast, where you have a lot of interesting things to think about so that you too can have these existential crises about how we all need Raheem in our city because our cities are failing at the night time related, whether it's safety, whether it's feeling connected, whether it's feeling like, you can get shit done at night as well.

I feel like our cities are definitely failing [00:03:00] spectacularly. I know Raheem said that there are a lot of nighttime managers in Europe? I don't know, maybe it's because they have a siesta and so like things are open later because people work later or they have a lot of, like even Asia, like the night markets in Asia are America are bonkers, right?

I don't know whether maybe that's a poor work life balance because, or whether that's, a great work life balance, right? Or it could

**Tim Souza:** just be the day thing. A lot of those places that have siestas and night markets Also, our very hot climates. And so it's just when it's more palpable to go out is when the sun is not attacking you, you know?

**Emily Craven:** Yeah,

that's very true.

**Tim Souza:** That might be part

**Emily Craven:** of it. What made our colonial asses? So, I don't know. Boring at night time. It feels like. Unhelpful at night time. The

**Tim Souza:** love of Puritan God. That, is who. I'm pretty sure. Probably.

**Emily Craven:** Here's [00:04:00]

**Tim Souza:** some good pieces. Those night markets are coming back to North America. We've seen them pop up in little spaces. We heard even our own Tanya Miller talk about what she was able to do in having like a nighttime barbecue. So those activities are slowly making their way back. That's true.

**Emily Craven:** So where I used to live in Australia, Brisbane had this great night market called Eat Street, which is essentially like a container market in like a port dock area.

So like you couldn't walk there from the city, like you had to drive there, but it was this container market that all of the food vendors were within these containers, but then there were also some. where you could buy presents and you could go shopping and it was, you opened at five, but it went until like almost midnight.

There was bands and entertainment and beautiful fairy lights strung up. And it was always, always, packed and the food is great. I think it only ran though, like Friday through Sunday. But it [00:05:00] saved my butt a couple of times when I needed to buy like presents for people. And I've worked remotely for much longer than I haven't.

And so I never really worked in the city pre COVID back in my Australian days. So it, it did save my butt a couple of times.

**Tim Souza:** That really pulls us into the things that Raheem is doing. So do you want to tell us a little bit about who Raheem Manning is other than Batman and the Night Mayor of, Philadelphia?

**Emily Craven:** Philadelphia. Raheem, he's so eloquent, so concise, bringing all of the questions back into the center. This man is just Amazing. He is an advocate for arts and culture and economy as a Philadelphia city's first nighttime economy director.

**Tim Souza:** Which is his official title, not nightmare.

It's actually, yeah, the city's first night time economy director, just to clarify for everybody listening.

**Emily Craven:** Correct. Yeah. And that nighttime economy director position is part of Philadelphia's department of commerce. So office of business development and workforce [00:06:00] solutions. So I, it feels like out of a lot of cities that we've spoken to whenever something's like in the economic development department, it gets shit done, man.

It gets shit done. And so in this newly created role Manning leads public engagement efforts to develop a strategic governance plan and advocate. For policies that support the city's attraction and retention of companies within its nighttime economy. So previously Manning served as the co chair of the city's arch and culture task force, where his work has collaboratively resulted in almost 3 million indirect grant funding for over 1500 individual artists and 60 small to medium sized arts and culture organizations.

Raheem earned his Bachelor of Arts from Clark Atlanta University, Master's in Business Administration from Thomas Jefferson University and holds a Certificate in International Business from East China Normal. University. Raheem is the first in his family to graduate high school and obtain a [00:07:00] master's.

Raheem spearheads hope for the next generations and has volunteered thousands of hours to support youth based community initiatives in Philadelphia, including coordinating the raising of over a hundred thousand dollars in donations to help hundreds of students attend historically black colleges. So I.

love Raheem to death. He is one of the most eloquent humans I've ever met, making such an impact in Philadelphia.

**Tim Souza:** Yeah. And I think that my, the coolest thing about him for me was that he's just this genuine concern. For like nighttime folk, right? People who are out and existing in the at nighttime when all the rest of us are sleeping but it goes beyond the arts.

You know, you can hear him get super excited about arts and activation, but he's really kind of focused on this forgotten people of Philadelphia and I put that in air quotes because not really forgotten. If you're a nighttime worker in Philadelphia, yeah. Batman has your back. So it's [00:08:00]

**Emily Craven:** very true. So enjoy this conversation

**Emily Craven:** Raheem, thank you so much for joining us.

**Raheem Manning:** No worries. Thank you for having me. It's really,

**Emily Craven:** really excited to have you. We know that you came and spoke at South by Southwest on all of the wonderful work that you were doing in Philly. And so we're just really excited to dive into it. In this podcast, um, I always like to start off with a little bit of Laying of what we love of our city at the start of every podcast.

So I wanted to ask you, what place is most special to you in Philadelphia and why?

**Raheem Manning:** Yeah, I think that's a good question. Listen, I love my city, so I have a lot of. special places and I get around a lot, right? Like I'm not somebody that stays in its own little section of the city. One professionally for the role I have, but also just as a person.

But I would have to say is the Schuylkill River [00:09:00] Trail. And again, most people can't pronounce Schuylkill, it's a Lenape Indian word, but it's the name of a river that runs through our city. And along the river, we have a running biking trail and I bike, I'm a cyclist. So each morning I get up and I usually do maybe between 10 and 15 miles to start my day.

And it's along the Schuylkill River Trail. It's so serene, it's peaceful beautiful, beautiful greenery and great views of the city. So you get a nice juxtaposition of nature and then that concrete jungle. And it's always a place I go to if I'm stressed and I need to walk, if I need to clear my mind.

I'll go there, I'll run, I'll bike. And so I'll go with Schuylkill River Trail. And if you haven't been, next time you come to Philly, make sure you check out the SRT.

**Tim Souza:** Gotta check it out. I think I'm now going to put that on the top of my list. I'm an avid traveler. So next time I'm in Philly, I'll hit you up.

We'll bike together. I'll be hopping behind you. I'll be hopping behind you. Probably about a good mile, but I'll be there with you.

**Raheem Manning:** Listen, I have a couple of bike rides coming up this month. One is a 65 mile charity bike ride. And then another is a hundred mile bike ride. So you should join me on those.

Yeah.

**Tim Souza:** [00:10:00] I'll be joining you two miles behind, but I'll be there

**Emily Craven:** two miles. I would be like 80 miles.

**Tim Souza:** Uh, I'll meet you at the end. We can have some coffee. How's that?

**Raheem Manning:** Well, it's beer at the end of these bike rides. Even better.

**Tim Souza:** Even better. Um, so let's talk a little bit about like your. Your role within the city of Philadelphia Philly is a really interesting place has a ton of history.

And you're doing something really fascinating there. So, can you give our listeners a quick rundown on what even a nighttime economy director is and where the idea comes from? And then how you are leveraging it. to drive that impact in the city of Philadelphia. I think from my understanding, it's a more unique model of how to activate nighttime.

And it's almost like a Batman mayor of the night, kind of thing. That's my understanding. Can you help us clarify that? And for me and our listeners?

**Raheem Manning:** Yeah, absolutely. Tim. So, you know, that's one of the number one questions I get, right. People will see my title. I'm often referred to as the nighttime mayor.

And I'll [00:11:00] tell you why, in the second, but people are always like, oh my God, that's so great. What do you do? And so I think you had to ask that question. So my title is the director of nighttime economy and business development for the city of Philadelphia. I'm based in the commerce department, which is our business development wing.

In the office of attraction and retention I'm tasked with Basically turning Philly into a true 24 hour city. Now, what is a 24 hour city? It's not a city that parties all night. You don't want to be Vegas or anything like that, but a true 24 hour city is a city that has a plan for what it looks and feels and operates like at 2 PM and at 2 AM.

And that has access to services for residents and those who are out who will work at 2 AM. And at 2 p. m. Right? And so bridging that gap in how cities governed. This is a relatively new concept when it comes to governing cities. Most cities are set up to govern from 9 to 5, and they hope those policies work from 5 to 9.

And that is not the case as we, continue to be a post [00:12:00] pandemic world, as we continue to be a more social world. And have more non traditional jobs. We need to make sure that we're intentional in activating our nighttime economy here in the city of Philadelphia, our nighttime economy includes your traditional things when you think about, which is nightlight, your bars, your clubs, your restaurants, your lounges, but it also encompasses.

Our third shift workers, our hospital workers, our emergency services workers infrastructure, construction, all the things that make a city move during the day. Those things that happen at night and thinking about how we actively plan for that. It also includes lighting and design, right? We talk a lot about safety in cities, right?

But safety is more than just dealing with. Crime, but it's also about how people feel and how you light a corridor and how people feel when they're walking in between streets or from a garage to a theater. How do we light up that corridor? And so in my city, I'm at the table for all of those conversations and steering policy changes as well, right?

We update the definition of how we regulate entertainment and other things such [00:13:00] as nightclub definitions or lounges and alcoholic service hours that we advocate for changes to make sure that our city continues to be competitive. Now the origin of the nightmare and why it's called the nightmares, because this municipal role, this role in government first was created in Amsterdam.

And so, the first nightmare ever is credited to Merrick Milan. Now Berlin was very close and right around doing some nighttime stuff. So you'll hear a little bit argument between Berlin and Amsterdam, but globally we credit Merrick Milan as being the first nightmare and his title was nightmare.

And he did a lot of transformative stuff in Amsterdam to make it one of the nightlife capitals of the world. When you think about nightlife globally, Amsterdam always comes up and he did a lot of transformative stuff for Rembrandt square, which is a red light district, which is also a public square.

Which is also a big tourism destination in this role spread throughout Europe. A lot of European cities have a nightmare, a night czar, or someone within their city government [00:14:00] dedicated to ensuring that the nightlife in the nighttime economy is being cared after and thought about intentionally. And then.

It begins to catch on in the U. S. So there's about 80 or so of us in the U in Europe. And then in the U S we're about 14 cities have nighttime economy managers, directors, or nightmares.

**Tim Souza:** I think that's so fascinating because so I know background on me. I had the opportunity to be an exchange student in Spain for a while.

And so I just assumed that's just how European cities operated. I never thought about the functionality of putting someone in a role to make sure that people can both sleep and be out at the same time. It seems like such a fascinating, what drew Philly to this conclusion? When did You know, what made Philadelphia say we need, a Raheem.

So,

**Raheem Manning:** Raheem made Philadelphia say we need a Raheem. Okay. Uniquely enough. So before I took on this role, I served as the co chair of the art and culture task [00:15:00] force. And the art and culture task force was a city council initiative by one of the council member Isaiah Thomas with the support of council member captain Gilmer Richardson that put together this task force during the pandemic.

When art and culture entertainment was gutted for many municipal budgets as we were sheltering in place and they put together this task force and, we looked at how the landscape of art and culture was treated here in the city of Philadelphia, specifically from a government support point of view.

You know, just to be honest, in Philly and in many other cities, people look at the arts and culture and entertainment as a, a secondary fact, as a nice to have and not a need to have. But if the pandemic didn't show us anything, is that we need social interaction, that the arts and culture and entertainment is what really makes life worth living.

It's not the jobs and the businesses. As we looked at the Philadelphia cultural landscape, we realized that there was no one to champion these causes internally in government. And we looked at some of the other cities, what were other cities doing? We had a member on our task force, Michael Fitchman, [00:16:00] who was very steeped into the research of nighttime economy and nighttime governance.

And so he connected us with the nightmares around the country and around the world. And so we met with them and said, Hey, what is it that you do for us? For your city, how do you, improve your city? What are you advocating for? And how do you be a shepherd of, growing the arts and culture and entertainment and represent artists in your city, and they share those with us.

So, we wrote a proposal myself and a couple other people on the task was wrote a proposal and submitted it to city council and we advocated for the passage and creating of this role in city council member, Isaiah Thomas, he championed the cause he got his colleagues on board and they voted and My position and then I was fortunate enough to get the position after that process and became the first nightmare or nighttime economy director in the city.

**Emily Craven:** I don't know whether this was intentional or not, but I think that as you say the arts is historically and entertainment is historically underfunded. And so I think it is a very. Interesting thing that this is under the department of commerce and it's under economic development. And [00:17:00] you're looking at, no, this is a necessity to economic development, to driving economic development.

Therefore it needs economic development dollars behind it, not arts grants that are continually cut.

**Raheem Manning:** Emily, you are spot on, right? One thing we had the opportunity to do in Philadelphia because, we weren't a trendsetter in this, we weren't first. We were able to look at how other American cities and where they place this role.

Some people, some cities like Pittsburgh, the role is in public safety. And we talked to Alison Harden, who's an amazing nightmare in Pittsburgh. And she talked about some of the challenges of being in public safety and what that makes the role look like when you're approaching businesses. And then other cities like DC.

Or New York, the role is in the mayor's office and we talked to the nightmares there about what comes with being in the mayor's office. It's a little bit more politicizing of the role is a little bit more of the politics that goes to it. And, you know, there's a lot of pros and cons there. What we realize is that this role is about shaping a city's future.

A view of its nighttime economy, specifically that creative [00:18:00] economy, the arts, the culture, the entertainment as a driver of economic development as a sector to be invested in, not as a thing that you give grants to. And here's a one off there, but something you put together a strategic plan and how to grow because here in Philadelphia, we had a study done by the greater Philadelphia cultural Alliance.

This was pre pandemic and they surmised that. For every 1 that the city invested into art, culture and entertainment, they received 300 percent return on that. And, that is something that is a powerful driver. And you may look at like, well, how does this 1 come back 300 fold? Well, when someone comes into the town for a show, they're coming for.

Maybe the show at the theater, which is spending money too, but they're parking, they are, buying dinner, they're buying drinks, they're also doing ice cream after, again, they paid the parking garage or the parking meter. And so that 1 that you invested gets turned over and [00:19:00] taxed and brought back into sitting coffers via revenue, because of all of these other things that people who are enjoying the arts.

Do right. We just don't go for the show. We make a, a plan of it, man, that includes if people are coming in for a concert, you know, hotels and all these other stuff. So again, looking at this sector and the nighttime economy as a economic driver, so therefore it made sense to put this in commerce and in business development, and so I do a lot of attraction and retention work more so in the retention, because the role is new.

So going to businesses, seeing how we can be a partner. And their success and in their growth, helping restaurants grow and find new places to expand. That's a part of the role. Right. But it's also about attraction. Right. I had an attraction when there's a restaurant, Dominican restaurant chain called Mama Juana, which is very popular in like New York and Northern Jersey.

And they were looking to expand into the Philly region and they want to decide between whether being in Philly or in, maybe South Jersey, and I met with that corporate officer that was looking to do the franchise and I took him around the city and said, Hey, Here's some great locations for a new [00:20:00] restaurant and entertainment hub, like Mama Wanna, and they just opened a couple months ago.

So, that's about the role, looking at it as a way to bring people to the city and grow you know, city and the other part, I'll say that as this, the more you grow your entertainment and you take care of your art, your culture, your entertainment sector. The more you attract people to your city people are not just coming to cities for jobs anymore.

People are visiting and falling in love. And with the ability to remote work and, all of our creative entrepreneurs that can live anywhere, that is the reason they're deciding to stay. And I'll participate in the city. And so, that's why this role was really important and that's why we decided to put it in commerce in economic development.

**Emily Craven:** Yeah that's incredibly smart. That's actually something that I know that one of your colleagues who was on the South by panel in the city of Austin, you know, the city of Austin puts it UNESCO media arts office under economics and commerce, and so you can very clearly see the way that then helps that culture and that scene thrive as a result of that.

[00:21:00] And so when you think about this nighttime economy, so you talked a little bit about that retention and that attraction, but you're also you talk very eloquently about the challenges. For the operations and needs of nighttime workers, right? Those nighttime workers I'm not awake at the regular times that the rest of us are but they also deserve a vibrant day.

And so how is, what is your approach to this kind of post pandemic vibrancy for those nighttime workers? What are the challenges they face? What are you trying to build for them?

**Raheem Manning:** Yeah I'll start with this story. And kind of an example as I tried to put. People's perspective from a nighttime worker, you and I work in nine to five.

Let's say, we can decide to go to lunch and we can walk outside of our office buildings or our homes if we're working remotely and find a myriad of, food options. It'll fit our budget. It'll fit our dietary restrictions. If we're eating clean and healthy, we can find a spot. If we want to go junk food, we can find a spot or [00:22:00] fast food.

Just have, balance options. However, if I worked overnight and I'm, third shift at the hospital, most of the time, if I don't pack my lunch, I don't eat. I don't have an option of what say and what I want to eat. Five dietary restrictions is even worse. Or if I'm eating healthy, it's even worse because there's very limited options open.

And so when we're talking about that, I think another thing, if you wanted to go to the bank and handle some financial transactions, deposit some cash, you can do that pretty safely, pretty easily during the day, but our nighttime workers, which are heavily hospitality or heavily tipped services have to transit home.

late at night without an option of stopping by the bank to put their money in, so they don't feel like someone can take advantage of them. If we wanted to engage with the city during the day, you can go and find out about your tax bill, find out about your light bill, or your water bill or any other city services that you need, but if you're asleep during the day and you work at night, You have to sacrifice sleep on a day off to go handle city business, to go down and [00:23:00] engage with the city.

And so becoming a true 24 hour city is realizing that those who work at night don't deserve less. They deserve the same access to city services as those who work during the day. They pay the same taxes as we do. And it's not fair that we have to inconvenience them so that they can handle normal businesses.

Even something as simple as grocery shopping. They have to sacrifice sleep. To do that because they work non traditional hours. And so I think what the role is to start shaping governmental policies to meet the needs of our nighttime economy. Now, we granted our nighttime workforce is not as large as the daytime workforce is.

So it's not about opening the city 24 hours, if that doesn't make sense, but it's about convincing a bank To have a 24 hour branch and our entertainment districts or entertainment sectors. It's about convincing city offices to meet our businesses where they are. We have, licensing inspections and other businesses like go out at night.

It's about providing services at night. And that doesn't mean we have to do it at the same scale that we do it on the day, but giving our [00:24:00] nighttime workers options so that they can live a life that is normal to them. It may not be normal to you, but relatively normal and regulated and that they can have quality of life.

I think that,

**Tim Souza:** Following our last couple of topics of nighttime management is in economic development, right? There's the top of that sandwich, the bottom of that sandwich, making the workers who are out, providing and needing those services.

How do you work and convince those businesses, those private entities to stay open what do you what are you doing? You mentioned there's some policy changes here. There's some other things there. But what is that tangibly look like for? That restaurant to stay open to feed those nighttime workers.

And I think in part, I think the second part of that question is, What about the demographics of Philadelphia makes, this need higher or bigger than what we see in some other cities who have the ability to turn off at night because they don't have a 24 seven workforce.

**Raheem Manning:** Right. So I think you bring up a couple of valid things.

One first is advocating you know, private sector is going to do what makes sense to [00:25:00] them. But we can advocate and incentivize as city government. And that's what we do, right? That's how we attract businesses. That's how we retain businesses. It's how we get new things in our city. That's how we intentionally grow certain markets, right?

We, we incentivize and we advocate, right? Like, Hey, come to Philadelphia and this is what we can do. So when we talk about private sectors and private entities and convincing them to stay open later or provide additional services, one, it's a conversation. And then two, sometimes you have to do incentivizing others.

And as a city and especially being in business development, we have quite a few tools that we use to incentivize businesses to sustain Philadelphia, to come to Philadelphia, to grow in Philadelphia. And so I utilize some of those tools and those conversations. I think the other part is making sure the environment.

Is beneficial, right? So if people are eating late, businesses will still be late. But the thing about, being open late, there's other environmental things that businesses will have to deal with. And that could be lighting, that could be safety issues, that could be [00:26:00] parking, that could be a whole bunch of other things.

So mitigating those things, so that businesses are open. Have a, an environment that is welcoming to them, staying open later to meet the needs of people who are out. And I think that's a lot of what we work on here. When we're looking at reform from regulatory reforms, that, a lot of our laws are antiquated in a city as old as Philadelphia.

And at one point people thought being out at night was a bad thing, right. You know, no one should be out at night. And so updating those laws to encourage. more late night participation in economy and economic development, more late night service offerings. But also making sure that when we talk to our private sector, we hear what the concerns are when staying late and that we offer solutions based on what we can do within the city.

**Emily Craven:** So I really love that. Component of it, right? That, that almost a perception management, I suppose, in, in a way there and you do some really interesting things around perception management for both businesses [00:27:00] and for citizens as well. Can you talk a little bit about the Liberty Bell safe certificate program that you've implemented but then also the bus stops that you have designed for women at night I would love to, to focus a little bit on those beautiful initiatives.

**Raheem Manning:** Yeah, yeah. So, a couple of things, right? When you are a business at night, there's a lot of unfair burden put on you because you're operating in the cover of darkness. And an example I use is that if you go to a shoe store during the day and the shoe store is open nine to five, maybe even nine to six, you go in and the moment that bell rings, or, the ding dong, when you walk into the business it's like, You know, people are attentive to, and they make sure that you have everything you need.

They actually do you need any help? They go get the size you need and all these great things. And how you feel about that, you buy and you leave. And once you walk out that door, as long as they took care of you in that business, your review started and ended once you got in and out of that business.

Right. And you go on Yelp or you go somewhere and you say, Hey, listen, that sneaker store, that shoe store was great. I felt, well taken care of and attentive. [00:28:00] What will your business that operates on the cover of darkness, whether it's a restaurant, a club, a bar, a lounge. Your experience starts when you park your car.

So you park your car and you get up and you begin walking through the garage or you walk through the parking lot or the dark alley and you feel unsafe because it's not well lit or it's not, a clear path or it's trash or other, myriad of things that could, Take your perception.

You're tying that to that business. And then you walk into that business. They may take great care of you. And then when you go back out, if you fill in that same sense of unsafeness, perceived unsafety, as you walk back to your car, your home, your Uber, you'll tie that to that business. You may feel like, I didn't feel safe going to, to Raheem's pub.

Raheem's pub may have taken great care of you. And so those are things that we have to realize when it comes to Nighttime business perception is very, very violent more than sometimes the realism of it. You may have never been in danger, not once at that night, but if you felt it, if you [00:29:00] perceived it, then it is real.

And so that's a big task that You know, the city in my role, we're looking to help alleviate from businesses. So one program is the Liberty Bell safe certification program, which we're in the process of launching. We haven't launched yet, but we're in the process of launching our first cohort. And what that program is one providing practical technical assistance to businesses to deal with things that are unique to businesses to operate at night and serve alcohol.

So we have six trainings. Those trainings are sexual harassment prevention and awareness, human trafficking prevention and awareness. Diversity, equity and inclusion harm reduction. So looking at how drug and alcohol is used in these venues and the best way to deal with intoxicated or under the influence patrons also conflict resolution how you deescalate situations they may happen, especially when people, you know, may be intoxicated when these things happen.

And so. Providing businesses with these trainings, one, make them more equipped to deal with situations that come up. But the other part is that we promote the, that these businesses are [00:30:00] certified and with an extra step to ensure you as a patron are taken care of. And so when you're thinking about where to go at night, okay, you look and you look in a decal of a window or on their website and you see that this business is Liberty Bell safe, certified, meaning they took extra steps to make sure that you feel safe.

And then they answer the question of, is it safe to go? To Tim's pub or Emily's, Tavern or Raheem's bar, because you look, you're like, okay, they took exercise and actually already start feeling better because they have this certification. And so that's the perception issue. And that's how we're dealing with that.

Then the other thing was about the bus stops. And when we spoke about that, that is things that some research that came out, we haven't implemented anything specific in Philly, but it was a part of the research that we did. We're looking at some of the things that other cities that we're doing where.

You have a bus stop this out at night and sometimes we put these big advertisement signs on the bus stop that covers it from one way or whatever. But what some research was saying is that sometimes that adds to the perception on safetiness, because if you can't see a three [00:31:00] 60 awareness, then you feel like, okay, someone could be lurking around the other side of the bus stop.

So being intentional about that, when we design, especially when we're designing for, women and those who identify as women, they often Want to be more around those surroundings because they often feel vulnerable in environments like that. So how do we make sure that when we're designing, we're not only designing for practicality, we're not only designing for general purposes, but we're designing for those gender specific, unique characteristics of those who are using these things.

**Emily Craven:** Yeah and I think that really highlights to me why The nighttime economy director position is so important. I think is that those design considerations not only different from a gender perspective, a diversity inclusion perspective, but also like just time of the day perspective, right?

And so if you don't have anyone specifically thinking about that exact thing it can get. Miss, right? And I think that the other [00:32:00] project that I really wanted to highlight that you had spoken to us previously about was just assessing that basic need of, as you said, that access to services at night that people don't normally get you are in the process of starting an overnight plan.

Food truck.

**Raheem Manning:** Yes. So one of the things that many cities are dealing with as a, we can call it a hangover effect from COVID-19, is that, cities closed down in a large way, especially our hospitality scene especially our restaurant scene, and they started reshaping. How they were providing services and what, what hours they're working with.

And so getting back open late, specifically when it comes to food options has been a little stagnant especially here in Philly. But I know I talked to some of my counterparts and other cities. There's a, there's quite a few reasons on that that, that are, that's affecting businesses ability to stay open late again.

But in the meantime, while we work those things out, we need to provide quality eats for our people who are moving at night. And one way we're [00:33:00] going to do that here in Philadelphia is by launching our overnight food truck market program, which we'll be launching later this month. And we're going to activate public spaces and, public city owned land.

Where we bring together a multitude of food trucks and a multitude of options, we lighten the space, we design it, we put permanent infrastructure there and we invite people to come and they operate from 9 a. m. And so giving late night eats an option. Be if you're a club dweller and you're coming from the 2 a.

m. let out and you need something to eat before you go back home or you're the overnight shift worker, or you're the emergency services worker or the police officer or the hospital worker, in your area of the city, a designated place to go that will have late night eats. This program is also.

There to spur economic development in neighborhoods. And that awesome, but give also business opportunities to buy pock and women owned food trucks, as we're going to prioritize, giving them opportunity to make money.

**Tim Souza:** That's awesome. And I think that you're tangibly [00:34:00] achieving these goals that you've been talking to us about, and I think that's such an amazing, like capstone to that part of the conversation around like what this could look like to build these intermittent solutions.

Because you

**Emily Craven:** can stagger that rollout, you can stagger the infrastructure, you can test different sites with a food truck, right?

**Tim Souza:** Very scientific method. And I think that the, first off, that's brilliant. And I think the second piece of that trigger is especially in maybe people who've now begun to shift and think about, okay, but you're activating and you're getting people out on the streets.

People live in downtown Philadelphia. Can you talk about what is your role and responsibility to those who are trying to sleep, who do work during the daytime, who are using that same time that you're doing these food trucks and creating safe transportation and lighting opportunities, what are you doing for residents who want to sleep?

**Raheem Manning:** Yeah, Tim. So listen, I let it be known that my job is just as much about supporting clubs, bars, restaurants, getting people out, activating, making noise as it is, as ensuring that those who sleep at night can sleep. [00:35:00] And that is a mandate of mine as well. And so what we do to ensure that we can have our cake and eat it too, is that we make sure we mitigate the effect of nighttime activity on those who want to sleep, but we also make sure that we put realistic expectations on people who are also sleeping at night.

We have the ability to choose where we want to live in a city and whether we want to live in a city or in the suburbs or whatever. And where we choose to live comes with different expectations, right? So take Philadelphia as downtown, for example, it's the second largest downtown by population in the country, besides New York's Midtown.

So we have a heavy, Dance residential population downtown. And that's what makes our downtown unique. That's what makes our downtown have more restaurants per capita than anywhere else in New York, and so we, that's some of the great facts that we have, but also that makes it, where people are living downtown.

I have to understand that there's an expectation of noise that you won't get if you live in the edge of West Philly. Like some of them like myself. And the other part of it is making sure that there's some responsible [00:36:00] use. Of sound. And so I mitigate between neighbors and businesses all the time, where it's like, Hey, are you as a business being responsible in how you do sound and not just the music you play inside your venue, but management of your people when they leave, right?

And the noise that they carry as you open and close your door and things of that sort. And they're also making sure that residents are aware. And so that's a really big part. One of the things that a lot of my counterparts in Europe and some of them here in the U S are looking into as agent of change loss.

And an agent of change law is basically a like a zoning and planning law. And what it says is who's ever last to the block needs to mitigate the nuisance or the sound. So for example, you have a live music venue that's been around 20 years. At one point they were the only tenant on the block, but the neighborhood started getting better and gentrification has happened.

And now people are moving in by the droves and big apartment complexes being built. Right across the street or next door to live music venue. Well, [00:37:00] what an agent of change law and saying, we welcome that, that residential development to this block, but you need to make and take extra steps to ensure that your development will not become a problem for the live music venue.

Meaning you build this development. You need to make sure you're soundproofing your windows or, maybe using thicker pain or something so that when your development is there, you're Your residents can sleep and enjoy peace and won't be bothered by the music venue that was there first. And then you can flip it, residential development, a music venue or a club or bar comes that the responsibility is on them to mitigate the sound so that them coming to this block does not affect.

What the residents expectations have been in was. And so looking at implementing things like that, but until we get to something like that, mitigating and also offering forum, right. A lot of times I'll get a noise complaint. And it's as simple as bringing both parties together, the business operator with the residents and saying, how can we both coexist?

And what is it [00:38:00] that we need to make sure that one resident can sleep. Business can operate and both those things can happen in the same space.

**Emily Craven:** I love how your role is a combination of policy activation and problem solving, right? I think that really shows that kind of the breadth of what goes into that. And what is helpful to have that as the same person, right? That drives those changes and those components as well.

And I even think that even like just looking at the night markets, I'm sure you're strategically selecting different sites for where those go. And I can even imagine that branching out and two, cause I'm sure that if you're looking for food at night, that's There may be a birthday present that you have to buy for grandma, that like this is so I can see like that kind of expanding and moving out, but then using those kinds of policies then helps make that a conversation that people feel they're involved in.

And I think that that was something that I wanted to move on to in this final section of our conversation which was around [00:39:00] that, um, Yes, a lot of this is happening in downtown and within that downtown area. But Philly is a vast metropolis with some amazing different enclaves and neighborhoods.

And so you're not just the nighttime manager for downtown, you are the nighttime manager for. the city. And part of that comes with celebrating the diversity and getting people out into those different parts of Philadelphia and really experiencing these wonderful, mom and pop restaurants that you talk about.

And so I wanted you to dive a little bit into, you know, The activation of those neighborhoods. Cause I know that you mentioned that traditionally Philly isn't necessarily particularly connected between downtown and those neighborhoods. And I know that you guys have FIFA coming up in 26. And I would love to hear you talk more about the interconnectivity that you're building with the rest of the city, particularly in light of FIFA coming.

Can you speak to how you're supporting these diverse Neighborhood demographics. Not just [00:40:00] downtown.

**Raheem Manning:** Absolutely. Emily. So, again, Philly is a city of neighborhoods and not only we are a city of neighborhoods, man our neighborhoods have amazing, amazing, unique culture. So much so that you can go to 1 neighborhood 1 day and go to another neighborhood another day, and it feels like a total different city because they have their own identities and their own.

Restaurants and flavors and sounds and they have their own entertainment. So our entertainment isn't centralized, right? We have downtown, which of course is a hub, but every part of the city has a hub. We're a city of avenues. So every neighborhood has an app, as we say in Philly is to have and all that avenue, there's going to be clubs, bars, restaurants daycares, churches, you name it.

You know, mom and pop restaurants, mom and pop do it yourself shops, art galleries. And our neighborhoods are built around these avenues that are the cult, like the economic center of each neighborhood. And so even for the overnight food truck market, our first selection was Fishtown. Fishtown is a very hip [00:41:00] livable, walkable live, work, play neighborhood that is just really boomed in our city for the last decade or so.

And they have some of the most amazing restaurants. They have some of the most amazing nightlife concert venues. And like you said, where we place our markets is very strategic and fish town as one of those strategic places, because it has so much stuff. And you can go, it's been. It's been a week in Fishtown and maybe not even see all the greatness that is there.

And that goes for every other neighborhood in our city, whether it's Manningham or East Pass or West Philly or Germantown. And so, as a city of neighborhoods, it's important in my role that I make sure that every neighborhood gets that attention and gets that attraction and economic development and opportunities, right?

And so when we look at FIFA, And let me break down 2026. Yes. Philly is hosting the world cup and we're super excited to bring FIFA to the city of brotherly love and sisterly affection. But however, 2026, we have FIFA. We have America's semi quincentennial, which is the [00:42:00] 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, which of course, We boldly and proudly say happened here.

Democracy was born in Philadelphia. We also have the MLB all star game all happening at the same time. Let me break this down. So in FIFA, we've been granted six games up into the, uh, the quarterfinals or the round of 16, for those who know, and we will be having a round of 16 match here in Philadelphia.

On July 4th, 2026 at our stadium in South Philly, while the city is celebrating the semi Quincentennial at the same time, we're expecting over 500, 000 visitors per week from FIFA alone. And then when you add in the semi Quincentennial, you add MLB all star game happening all at the same times and a myriad of other little mid sized things that are happening there in 2026, it is literally the world will be here in our city.

And it is my job to make sure. To ensure that when the world comes, they're not just downtown. They're not just in South Philly at the [00:43:00] stadium, but they go out into our neighborhoods and see the uniqueness that it is. And the great thing about our neighborhoods have so many ethnic identities as well, that wherever you are in the world, you'll be able to find your neighborhood, your space here in Philly.

And my job is to make sure that when we market our city for 2026, that economic development, that economic driver, A search for entertainment, a search for space and exploring and tourism goes into every nook and cranny of our city and to our neighbors and that they benefit from all the visitors that we have.

And so we're doing that now. We're putting our 2026 plan together now. But I don't go on, I'm at the point now, I don't leave a meeting or a conversation without mentioning 2026. I don't, I talked to neighborhood associations to make sure that they have a 2026 plan and Philly. 15 business improvement districts, which are pseudo government agencies that we give some authority to that help activate and bring economic development to their neighborhoods.

And they're all around. And I talked to all the bids to make sure they have a 2026 plan for [00:44:00] FIFA and the semi continued and the all star game. So, Emily, you're really, really right. It's big, it's bigger than downtown. It's bigger than our central business district. And in Philly, the way we shaped up, we will ensure.

And with this role that. Every section of the city that has nightlife as entertainment after five gets that same dedication from city government to help them thrive and grow.

**Emily Craven:** And I think that the wonderful thing that I really love about what you're saying there is that Yes, there are going to be a bunch of tourists here for that, and we want to bring that economic impact to the neighborhoods, but I think that the other thing that really rings through in what you're saying there is that you're not just planning to cater to tourists, you have a whole city that wants to celebrate.

**Tim Souza:** Absolutely. And all those neighborhoods have I think if I remember properly, you said that they all run their own events, that it ranged between 16 and 40, 000 people that are also be happening. In 2026. And these [00:45:00] events are typically just, we would call them local. They're Philly hosted Philly events, but people moving from one neighborhood to the next to go celebrate each other.

That's also a part of your dynamic that you're working with,

**Raheem Manning:** right? Yes, we are a city of festivals and I love it. And every neighborhood in the city has a festival that they do yearly, whether it's main street fest to second street festival to the South street market fest, the Italian market fest.

Chinatown festival. The night markets that we do like our city really activates. And again, our festivals draw up to 40, 000 people to come from one part of the city to another part. Right. And these are very hyper local. So, you know, these aren't festivals where people are flying in and driving around, it's not like Coachella.

These are markets, right. And so people are coming from West Philly to North Philly, Berkeley to Germantown, Germantown, to South Philly for these festivals. And what we don't want to happen is that during 2026 when we're having this influx of tourism, we don't allow the city to cater to our residents, right?

We [00:46:00] want them to celebrate and continue to celebrate. Like they normally do. A lot of the purposes for these festivals are economic development. People want to bring outsiders to their neighborhood so that they can spend money and experience, their mom and pop shops and their makers and their galleries.

And so I think there's an opportunity to 2026 to make sure that we bring tourism to our local neighborhoods so that they can all mix and mingle and both celebrate together. I think the other part of it is that I'm ensuring that we don't have a drain on resources. When a city has a big event like this, a lot of our resources go to ensuring that these events go off without a hitch.

That tourists who are less familiar are able to get around and that they feel safe, right? We don't want to make, we don't want to, in 2026, drain all the resources for these big events so that Midtown Fest, which we support, can't happen. Or Northern Liberty's Second Street Festival can't happen. Or, Main Street Fest can't happen because As the city, we provide services, right?

We provide [00:47:00] policing, we provide emergency management, we provide sometimes staging and sound that these festivals can get from the city, and my job is to make sure that those things are still readily available. How do we do that? Partnering with our regional agencies and authorities maybe where there's a thing where we go to the state and allow state police to come and provide some of those services.

We allow our County partners like Montgomery or Delaware, Bucks County or Chester County to come into Philly and have some operational authority. So again, that our cities, local festivals and our neighborhoods and our blocks are not feeling a drain on resources. Or a surcharge than the cost of those resources during 2026, any other large events as we, we move forward.

**Emily Craven:** And I think that the final thing that I would like to delve into, particularly around that big year that you have is that, one of the day, the dangers of relying heavily on events is that they're very.

**Raheem Manning:** [00:48:00] Yes,

**Emily Craven:** cool. And up and down and and you do have, that the kind of push or pull around resources and those sorts of things.

And so, we always like to put a lens or a focus on to, like, how do you. Cities plan to fill in those gaps between events so that. It helps make that consistency, whether it's for the businesses, whether it's for the residents, whether it's for the tourists who maybe do not come directly for fee for the come outside fee for whatever that might be.

And so, whether it's making something Instagram friendly, whatever that is. And so you mentioned that one of the things that you're looking to do is a kind of an evergreen activation to celebrate neighborhoods, but also to feel in that kind of. Fibrancy gap. I'll call it between events. Is that you were planning to, that, that you're looking at building a monument around FIFA and representing nations in neighborhoods providing almost like an Instagram friendly evergreen installation that celebrates not only The city and the event that you're hosting and the tourists, but it allows [00:49:00] locals to enjoy their city as well.

Can you tell us a little bit about this place?

**Raheem Manning:** Yeah. When you have big events like this the footprint of these events stay for decades. I mean, I went to school in Atlanta and I couldn't walk through that city and not see the impact of the 96 Olympics in Atlanta from the torch at Centennial Olympic park to the dorm that I stayed in on my university campus was built to house Olympians.

Um, and then later donated to our university. And so these events have lasting footprints, right? So my goal is to make sure that that lasting footprint can be felt in neighborhoods and continue to have, like you said, that evergreen effect of driving tourism and visitation to these neighborhoods. So one of the programs I'm looking to possibly fund is an attraction program.

And that's an attraction to me in an Instagrammable moment where. You walk into your neighborhood or you go to your neighborhood has a monument, and you know, that speaks to the moment, and one of the examples I use [00:50:00] is Mayfair in the Northeast is a very diverse neighborhood.

It's one of our most diverse neighborhoods, and we have representation from almost every country and culture around the world in Mayfair, and it blends so beautifully, and they're a very sports crazy town. Like a little part of our city. And as you know, Philly fans are crazy throughout the city, but we have this square Mayfair at Frankfort where whenever we win and whenever we celebrate, it just pours out into this thing.

And so an idea could be a Mayfair where they have this big soccer ball. that, celebrates 2026 and FIFA, but each patch on it can represent the diversity of the neighborhood, a flag from one of the cultures that represented our neighborhood and that stays. And so during FIFA, we're going to see all the Instagram stuff, all the celebrities and all the big people, all the influencers promoting this thing.

But wouldn't FIFA leaves that secondary tourism that tertiary tourism that's going to come because Philly did such a great job. And everybody was like, wow, Philly looks amazing. I'm going to go visit it in September instead of in, [00:51:00] July, they want to go find that page, that post that, that, that Instagramable moment that each neighborhood we're looking, hopefully would have, and that will spur the tourism for years to come.

Maybe I didn't make it in 2026. But now until my travel bucket list for 27 and I go and I'm like, wait, I seen this picture. Where's this thing at? Where's the soccer ball at? Where's there something at? And that will drive residual tourism and foot traffic into our neighborhood. So that's what I was talking about.

The other goal is to make sure that it lights up at night again, so that it again makes the vibrancy of a corridor continuously there, but also in a way that's memorabilia of a time where Philly was on the world stage.

**Tim Souza:** You know, I think. Raheem, you have sold Philadelphia to me. I want to come hang out with you at night, go out on the bike road.

I think what gets me excited is looking into that future lens of, I, you know, I'll try to show up for, for FIFA, but if I'm looking to put Philadelphia on my bucket list, what is , the things that you are hoping that we will see in the city in five years? So like the next five years after [00:52:00] you put in the work and you've got this community effort to build this interconnected city. What will we hope to see? What is your hope for the city in the next five years?

**Raheem Manning:** Yeah. My hope is that Philadelphia will be a 24 hour globally competitive hub for art, culture, nightlife, community.

And the creative economy that it is a driver for tourism that, you know, you can't go anywhere and not think about visiting Philadelphia. More tangibly, I would love to see that we extend our nightlife into a little bit later to be more competitive with our neighbors to be more competitive regionally and globally.

Right. So, in a couple of years, maybe you can go get meal at three in the morning, you can go party and go to the club until four or two later. You can go and see our the vibrant exhibits that we have that light up in our neighborhoods. I would absolutely love to see that.

Additionally, I think I would love to see where our city workers and our city employees that are working overnight and our third shift workers feel that they have options, feel that [00:53:00] they can go to the bank, that they can go get a quality meal that they are thought about and planned for. And I think, in five years we can make such a great movement, especially with the world coming here in just two.

So. I think as our city gears up and prepares to welcome the world, we are thinking innovative, our administration, the mayor Parker and her administration, she's a competitive mayor, which I love. She goes to a place, she sees something she likes and she comes back and says, how do we beat it?

How do we make our city better than that? And I think as we prepare to welcome the world, the post 2026, Philadelphia is going to be one that no one can leave off a list to see and travel to that. No one can say, Hey, I don't, I haven't had an amazing time there that , they have everything that I've ever wanted to do, whether I wanted to stay up late at night, or if I wanted to work late at night, if I wanted The neighborhoods, the downtown, the waterfront, Philadelphia has it [00:54:00] all.

**Emily Craven:** I love that. And that's a beautiful way to, to end off this podcast. I think I had one final personal question for you, Raheem, to like speak that like last drop of wisdom. So what would you be most likely to give us a gift

**Raheem Manning:** and why? That is a great question. Um, one of my favorite reads ever, and I think it's just, it's brilliantly written, is The Alchemist by Polo Coelho.

And The Alchemist is a book about a protagonist trying to find his way. And a lot of times in that book he thinks he knows where he's going and he's thrown off his path. And he started off his path so much in that book that you could be three quarters of the way through it and be like, where is this guy ever gonna get where he thought he was going?

And at the end of the book, you realize it never was he thrown off his path. He was where he needed to be at all times. [00:55:00] And I think as I've been in this role and my journey to this role many times, I'm like, okay. Where am I going? Like I know where I want to get this city. I know what I want to do.

How am I in a meeting right now talking about community issues and how am I here doing this? And as I realized, as this role goes and we get enrolled our programs and where I need to be, our city is where it needs to be. And it's where it's going to, take us post 2026 into the future.

Philadelphia is going to be the place to continue to be. And I think just like in Polo Coelho and the protagonist there, I think the city of Philadelphia is always where it needs to be in history. And we'll continue to be what it needs to be to get where it needs to go in the future.

**Tim Souza:** Beautiful. That is. I don't think we can wrap that up any better. And I think that was perfect. Raheem, you're hired. No, thank you. Make

**Emily Craven:** it philadelphia. Yes,

**Tim Souza:** thank you so much for joining us today. And we look forward to launching this and chatting with you more.

**Raheem Manning:** Listen, [00:56:00] Emily, Tim, thanks for having us.

Thanks for continuing pushing the envelope in the conversations we have, looking at new ways to highlight You know, how cities are being unique and differentiate themselves and I'm glad to be a part of it. I appreciate it.

**Tim Souza:** You know, I think that is genuine concern for the folk of nighttime.

**Emily Craven:** So genuine.

**Tim Souza:** So genuine. Like he does, again, love, you can see him light up a little bit about arts and culture, but he talks about making the city safe and making it accessible and providing opportunities for people to do what they need to get done while they are having time off without having to interrupt sleep.

Like that's a care for the people. And I'm, again, huge fan, big fan of this man.

**Emily Craven:** And I think that a lot of the time that care for people gets shuffled into like, it's a human services kind of a deal that isn't funded. It's underfunded. Right. Whereas like this genuine care for people is in the [00:57:00] economic department because they understand that looking after people, if

**Tim Souza:** you look after the people, right, they'll keep that money going.

The economy doesn't shut down. And I think it's important to go back to the conversation we were having in our last episode, that it's important to design solutions around. Your demographics and your populace, right? The same way that you're seeing that in Baltimore, you're seeing it here in Philadelphia, where they have a decent chunk of nighttime workers.

Like it's to the point where Raheem is able to be campaign for change for this, like, what did he say? A third of the city works at night, something like that. Like that's insane.

**Emily Craven:** And. I think that I love Raheem's honesty in that you don't have to be the first.

You don't have to be the first to implement an initiative. Like you do the research, you learn, you listen to podcasts like this. You go to South by Southwest talks [00:58:00] with very smart people like Raheem and. You implement it

**Tim Souza:** well, and that's the one of our whole goals of this podcast is that we're talking to these cool people But we want to drive change in cities.

We want people to pick it up Look at this great idea. I'll figure out how to do that I know I now know of someone cool whether that's in Philadelphia or Kansas City or Tampa that is doing this In a

**Emily Craven:** population that has demographics like mine, in a city that is the size of mine.

**Tim Souza:** I want people to do shit, Em.

I want people to go out and actually create change in their communities and know that takes driven individuals, like the ones we've been talking to, like Raheem created his role. He did.

**Emily Craven:** He and Sierra, he and Sierra created that role. They, but I also, they were very, they're also very competitive about it as well, right?

They were good. They were like, Seattle has a nighttime mayor, Blank Blank has a nighttime mayor, Philadelphia is competitive. We need a night, like, we can do this. Like, we need a [00:59:00] nighttime director. We can, you know, whether it's in his fight for the arts or, whether it's, the value that nighttime workers offer, , and it's very clear that the Philadelphia mayor wants the city to be the best.

Like, I think that Philadelphia and just in general, they're very competitive.

**Tim Souza:** Competitive plans. I mean, that is. Yeah. They are the birthplace of our amazing country and they're going to be celebrating this in a couple years here 250 birthday for the cradle lands of our democracy of the Declaration of Independence and everything that flowed out.

After

**Emily Craven:** that.

**Tim Souza:** Yeah. I promise.

**Emily Craven:** So they've had plenty of firsts themselves. Yeah. That's what he's saying. But they don't all have to be first. Do your research, learn, pick and pick up an initiative, drop it down, pick up an initiative, drop it down. It, you know. Yeah. Use that expertise and that you don't have to reinvent the wheel, take proven things, use it in your city.

And he has such a holistic [01:00:00] perspective, as you said, on what nightlife looks like. And it's honestly, he would do well in tech. He would do well in taking his very UX focus. Who are the users of the night? What do they need to do? How is this city building safe space for those users at night?

What is the user journey from their front door to their activities, when they get out of the car, when they park, when they get back to their front door, like the whole UX journey. Not just in a restaurant UX journey, you're like, no, no, no, all of it.

**Tim Souza:** Right. Well, and he sees that, UX journey for that restaurant or for that bar in the evening.

**Emily Craven:** And how can city policy change to accommodate all

**Tim Souza:** Right. The people, rather than forcing the people to accommodate to the city policy. And I think that that, again, is UX. Right. leadership as well.

**Emily Craven:** Yeah. And what needs to happen for a positive activity at night, right? What needs to happen to make an activity positive in [01:01:00] the nighttime, as opposed to positive in the daytime.

And I mean, like at Story City, we say to a lot of our creators who make experiences, like don't put things in alleys, et cetera, because you don't know when someone will do blank, blank activation. And Raheem is doing something about. The athletes, he is doing something about , the bus stops because public space is not just the day.

**Tim Souza:** Exactly. He really went into that hard and soft safety aspect, right? If you're going to go address this public space. at night time. People need to trust that, people have training to do with the scenarios that happen at night. Like the Liberty Safe Belt Program, yeah, that, that

**Emily Craven:** perception management that has both a hard component and a soft component. It's a PR campaign, but it has to be coupled. It has to be coupled with actual.

**Tim Souza:** , And, and physical infrastructure change, like for, you know, the, the study he mentioned about women being, feeling safer, With having a 360 view, that's an easy [01:02:00] change.

Get rid of the posters on the bus stop. Leave them be clear in class, simple hard safety change that is benefiting that whole UX journey of what it means to live at nighttime.

**Emily Craven:** 100%. I would hope that with his background in arts and culture, I would hope this, that this expands to cultural offerings for the nighttime shift as well, right?

Like,

**Tim Souza:** like, what would you imagine? Like

**Emily Craven:** the night, not just like the nightclub or whatever, but like things that allow people to unwind, to exercise along the river. To maybe connect with family. Works are like very high stress. Like they're very high stress. So how do they unwind where it's not just them sitting in front of a TV watching a Netflix thing.

They deserve to be, doing that exercise and unwinding in public as well. And so the lighting that he's doing that will help accommodate as [01:03:00] well as like design changes. around, everything for those who identify as women to those who want to use spaces at night. I think that a lot of what I thought nighttime manager was about helping out bars and parties

**Tim Souza:** and clubbing.

**Emily Craven:** And yeah, exactly. Right. Especially when you put

**Tim Souza:** it underneath economy, right. You're just thinking nighttime economy. And I think it's important that he also talks about those people who were out of it as part of his responsibility, but the people who are sleeping as well. Are also a part of his responsibility

**Emily Craven:** and I think you're seeing that cultural change just in general with the Bloomberg lighting grant that Tonya got right, where it's an acknowledgement of yes, lighting makes things safer, but lighting is also art and culture and people have that.

Right. To access that.

**Tim Souza:** Yeah. I think that what is really impressive that, that [01:04:00] Raheem is doing is he's really augmenting the city, taking, like you said earlier, taking those life and ideas, not being afraid to bring them into the city and intertwine them

to address these challenges that are faced at nighttime, whether it's via lighting or structural changes so that women feel people identify as women feel safe. But it's the challenge of this backs influx of people moving and that economic activity in the disparate neighborhoods. Because it's not like we're just going to be downtown.

**Emily Craven:** Yeah, but particularly with the whole kind of world pointed at them in 2026, that's definitely going to be their biggest challenge because they want that economic activity, not only in downtown, but in those neighborhoods, in those mom and pop shops.

But how do you drive that? Because yes, installations are one part of that. People will do a lot of things for a selfie on Instagram, surprisingly. But A lot of the programs that he does is going to be a lot of corridor building, transport corridor building, safety and lighting corridor building [01:05:00] between downtown and those neighborhoods to really build for local as well, right?

So yes, the visitors are important, but how do you use that opportunity to storytell? So that people come back year round. How do you use that opportunity to storytell, to show off the festivals to come back for, the mom and pop shops to come back for it's great that they've come for Instagram, but how to then take them to that food scene, you know,

**Tim Souza:** and both at nighttime and during the day, right?

Like, so he's doing all of this work to make nighttime feel safe. And that needs in for self for locals and so that'll make it feel safe for tourists to explore as well. And so it's going to be that exposure of FIFA of 250th anniversary of the United States when people out and about. They're going to need to move around, need to feel safe, need to feel like I want to come back and explore this city.

I want to explore more in

**Emily Craven:** Philadelphia. I'd like to speak and maybe little Easter egg for [01:06:00] next season. I would like to speak to more people in Philadelphia. And I would like to make that happen because I think that FIFA and the 250th anniversary of the signing of the declaration, it's not like.

Like the Eclipse that happened this year, right? Where it's one day and it's done. This is something that's going to happen across multiple weeks, across multiple like months. So how do you sustain the stories and activities? I'm sure the bulk of the 250 celebrations are going to be around one day, but People are going to be traveling

**Tim Souza:** to see Philadelphia

**Emily Craven:** to see Philadelphia in that year because of that celebration, not just on that one day.

And so how do you sustain those activities, those stories in a way that smooths the roller coaster for all of those economies of those mom and pop shops and in downtown in the neighborhoods? And how do [01:07:00] you do it without draining a bunch of resources? Yeah,

**Tim Souza:** I think that learning more from Philadelphia about how they're going to handle that next season will be awesome.

But also coming into our conversation next week is going to be super key because I think we'll have more time to really discuss that.

**Emily Craven:** That's right. This is our wrap up episode next week for the season. Where we're pulling together all of these threads, you're going into 2025 planning mode right now.

I know I see you, I see the panic and the plans and the endless meetings that you're a part of. So let's distill this season's learnings into a snack sized episode. That you can bring in to your vibrancy meeting, sound all educated and intelligent as though you've listened to a bunch of TED talks with some very smart innovators from different cities.

We'll be comparing and contrasting the learnings. And, what are the different ways that we can combine these initiatives and we can [01:08:00] all combine these initiatives to make 2025 the most vibrant year yet for our cities. What do people have to look forward to, Tim?

**Tim Souza:** Well, I guess people have to look forward to a deeper dive into the pros and cons of cultural plans.

Technology and vibrancy. Debates.

**Emily Craven:** Many debates. We're going to have lots of debates in this final wrap up season.

**Tim Souza:** I'm so excited for these debates. It's just the year of debates, really. So we're just joining into that conversation. And then the effectiveness. Of granting programs and where these people get these money and the effectiveness of,

**Emily Craven:** funding structures and we're going to look at all of them together

**Tim Souza:** and all of it.

**Emily Craven:** Yep. So that's what you have to look forward to next week. Thank you Raheem for being our nighttime representative in this season of the pod. We greatly appreciate you and the rest of you until next week. Hope you have a fabulous adventure.

**Tim Souza:** Cheers everyone. Stay positive.

**Emily Craven:** The Vibrant Spaces Podcast is produced by Story City. [01:09:00] You can find our entire archive on any podcasting app and on about. storycity. app where we publish transcripts and show notes. This episode was produced by Tim Sousa and our staff includes Justin Kahn, Brett Ludwig, and Victoria Lominska. Our theme song is Happy Indie by Alex Guz.

Our co hosts are Tim Sousa and me, Emily Craven. As always, thank you for listening. We hope you have a great day. A glorious adventure this week.