

Placemaking

[00:15] - Frith Walker

Panuku is Auckland Council's property and regeneration agency, and we exist to make sure that parts of Auckland are looked after and also brought into new ways of being that are good for everyone.

Panuku takes a place-led approach because we know the importance of considering what is there before we start work.

So we think about the geology of a place, we get to know the communities of a place, we think about what the right future could be for that place, and then we bring our technical expertise, then we bring our subject matter expert skills and listen to those answers and then think about what is right.

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At Panuku, we use a do-learn-do approach, which means we try and go out and do something, do something little, try by doing, and then we learn from that action and then we go out and we try again.

The idea is that we're going out and showing action, learning from it, and then iterating each time.

One of our key learnings from the do-learn-do approach is the opportunity that it gives us to work with people in place, the people of the place, actually on the site we're talking about, where you learn things and get to meet people in ways that you simply don't get to do when maybe you're working with bits of paper.

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Panuku works in a diverse range of neighbourhoods across Auckland from places that may be undergoing a huge amount of change over 20 years, sites that are really changing their personality, and other neighbourhoods where we're working in communities that have been in place for decades, and maybe that change is slightly smaller, but trying to be a bit catalytic.

So a huge range of timescales, a huge range of kinds of people we're working with all the while trying to keep that place-led approach in mind.

The do-learn-do approach works across all stages of regeneration because it's constantly giving you an opportunity to test, to trial, to meet new people.

So at every stage we're checking that what we're doing is right for the place and right for that future of those people of that place.

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Connecting people to their place is important because it creates the opportunity to build relationship not only between people and people, but also people to their places, which means that they care more about those places. They will take care. They care about the other people in those places and will take care of them. And that creates resilience and connectedness in communities that will last far into the future.

A great example of where do-learn-do has worked well is a site known as 38 Hurstmere Road in Takapuna. And this is a place where we've been able to make a temporary public space, where in the future we'll be making a permanent town square for that community.

And this site, 38 Hurstmere, has enabled us to build trust with the community, help the community get to know us and what we're doing, and then start to work on that future town square development together.

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Placemaking in waterfront cities is interesting because it lets us explore the importance of the connections between human beings and water.

We know that when a human being stands next to a water body, they feel really good. There's something that happens in our minds.

And so this worldwide effort to reconnect communities to their waterfronts has been really exciting and watching people develop relationships with place and that really important substance that we all care about deeply in a really meaningful way, that's been the job of a lifetime.

[03:28]

One thing I was really keen to share with you is the potential that lies in this conversation around placemaking, around place, and that led me to remember the importance of indigenous people in this conversation and their connection to place.

And we here in Aotearoa are very lucky to have a Treaty and to have a relationship with Mana Whenua.

But when you are from a place at an indigenous level and you know you are related to that place, that changes your conversation. And so how we can reach into that deep knowledge of place and let that impact our work for the good of the generations yet to come, that is the thing that I really, really feel incredibly personally excited by, and I know lies at the heart of what we need to be achieving here for ourselves on this planet at this time.