

## Community, Connection, and COVID



Livonia Chamber of Commerce President Dan West revels in the intricate nature of his job.

“I take my work home with me every day.”

Dan West tells PurposeCity host Ken McMullen he adamantly opposes the notion that business is not personal. In fact, he would say just the opposite: a personal relationship – a trusted understanding of an individual, a family or a neighborhood – goes to the heart of the ultimate success and satisfaction of a business. In his 15-years as the head of one of Michigan’s largest business communities and a life-long resident, the relationship factor is foundational.

“Livonia based its entire success on the notion that community matters. Early on – in every neighborhood – the city planning department strategically built a park, a church and a school. It just fosters and strengthens that sense of community.”

**Ken McMullen:** “There’s more to community than just living near people. Sometimes we don’t even know our neighbors. So, community isn’t just an approximate location – it’s a connection with people, a shared identity... it’s a social unit with commonalities, right?”

**Dan West:** “Human contact is critical to a community – even scientific studies have shown it’s critical to our survival and our mental health. Human contact – a shared commonality – goes to the heart of what a person desires.”

**Ken McMullen:** “Connecting with people means you have to be involved with people.”

**Dan West:** “For 18 months we followed orders, stuck with family, we learned we are interdependent. We need people. Thinking and acting outside of just ourselves brings happiness and fulfillment, connecting with people is crucial. My kid’s softball team – they share something in common, which then leads to offering and sharing something to the conversation and overall goal. We’ve been forced into a situation where we’ve lost a lot of that. The struggle going forward is reengaging in a healthy way with our community – we’re somewhat out-of-practice because of COVID and the resulting shutdowns. Isolation takes a toll on mental health – and certainly we’ve seen what isolation does to business. It’s all intertwined. Humans need humans – that applies to both our personal and professional lives.”

Dan West says, for Livonia, the return on investment has reaped generational outcomes. “70% of people now building homes either currently live in Livonia or are from Livonia.”



**Dan West**

*President, Livonia Chamber of  
Commerce*



Listen to the full conversation at  
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