SAFETY IN PUBLIC SPACE

WOMEN, GIRLS AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE

GOOD GROWTH BY DESIGN

DESIGNING
A CITY

FOR ALL
LONDONERS

CONTENTS

'AN INTERSECTIONAL LENS IS CRITICAL TO … RECOGNISING THAT SAFETY IS DIFFERENT FOR DIFFERENT PEOPLE'

Dr Mimi Sheller (2018)

FOREWORD

For women, girls and gender diverse people, the city is a space that was not designed for us. We need to adapt to it, rather than have it reflect our needs. As we move through it, we are often filled with fear rather than confidence. We are forced to take the long way around rather than the straight route through. We walk quickly while thinking about how to weaponise our possessions rather than moving leisurely through spaces that are supposed to be designed for everyone. We carry this fear in our bodies every day whether we are aware of it or not.

Perhaps the problem is also that public space is an afterthought in the design of our cities. It is the leftover space and a place to mitigate the issues that weren't reflected in the design of the nearby buildings. It is too often a catch-all solution that is overly sanitised, restricted and unwelcoming space. The recent Covid-19 global pandemic highlighted the importance of public space, when it became the only place where we could 'safely' meet one another. But here, safety was defined just in terms of contracting the virus, and not by how long we would feel comfortable in a space with

fewer people around, with a limited provision of public toilets and civic infrastructure, and nowhere else to go.

Gender-based violence intensified during the pandemic both at home and in public spaces. The deadliest year globally for gender diverse people was 2021 with 375 transgender murders recorded. In London, there were the murders of Sabina Nessa, Sarah Everard, Bibaa Henry and far too many others. This cemented the fact that safety for women in public space had reached a breaking point. However, women, girls and gender diverse people are not victims of the city. Instead, the city is missing out on our knowledge and expertise. In her book *Invisible Women*, Caroline Criado Perez writes, 'When we exclude half of humanity from the production of knowledge we lose out on potentially transformative insights' (Criado Perez, 2019). We need to be active participants in making cities in order that key decisions reflect all of our needs.

For London to be a city for everyone, it needs its public realm to be designed as an important piece of infrastructure in its own right. This document doesn't just focus on better lighting and sight lines, however. Instead, it enshrines participatory and co-design processes at the heart of public space projects. That way they can each be shaped by the different people who use or want to use them. The guidance and series of questions found here will help us as designers to become more active listeners. It will allow us to engage the female and non-binary voices that too often aren't heard and involve them in the making of their public spaces. Ultimately, in the creation of cities, expertise – based on both professional and lived experience – must be valued. As the urbanist and activist Jane Jacobs said 'Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody' (Jacobs, 1961).

Manijeh Verghese
Mayor's Design Advocate

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Care work
Work that includes both direct care activities such as feeding a baby or nursing a family member as well as indirect care such as cooking and cleaning. This work is often an unpaid but essential dimension of the world of work (Addati et al., 2018).

Cisgender
People whose gender identity is in alignment with the gender assigned to them at birth.

Co-design
A design methodology that uses creative and participatory approaches with the aim of sharing knowledge and power in the design process (Beyond Sticky Notes, 2022).

Endangered
Being at risk or in danger.

Gender Diverse/Transgender
Interchangeable umbrella terms for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression exists on a spectrum outside of their sex assigned at birth.

Gender equality
A human rights issue that refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of all genders.

Gender equity
Refers to equal outcomes across genders, which may require specific interventions (such as benefits, opportunities and resources) for those who have historically been excluded.

Gender inclusivity
Ensuring that a particular action (project, policy, behaviour etc.) proactively involves, listens to, and gives power to people on an equal basis, and avoids bias towards or against a particular gender.

Gender-informed
An approach to decision making that includes an explicit understanding of how gender dynamics shape both the problem and appropriate responses.

Gender mainstreaming
The process of integrating a gender perspective across all policies, plans and programmes in a given institution.

Gender norms
The generally held social beliefs about how different genders should and/or do behave.

Intersectionality
A concept that describes how systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class and other forms of discrimination 'intersect' to create unique dynamics and effects (Center for Intersectional Justice, 2022; Crenshaw, 1989).

Inconvenienced
The experience of an added layer of trouble or difficulty.

Ill-at-ease
The feeling of not feeling unsafe, yet being wary and not relaxed.

LGBTQIA+
An abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual. The plus at the end refers to the many other communities and gender/sexual identities that exist.

Marginalise
The act of treating a group as unimportant, insignificant or peripheral.

Microaggressions
A subtle or indirect type of discrimination towards a marginalised group that are often experienced on an everyday basis. When experienced multiple times over the course of a lifetime, they have significant impacts on the lives and opportunities of marginalised people.

Misogyny
The hatred or dislike of, and prejudice against women. This results in structural, institutionalised discrimination against women, as well as physical intimidation, abuse, and sexual violence.

Patriarchy
A social system that promotes binary notions of gender and privileges masculinity by giving men (and concepts, behaviours, world views associated with masculinity) the greatest power, leadership roles, moral authority and access to resources.

Public space
The space between and within buildings that is publicly accessible. Some internal or elevated spaces can also be considered as part of the public realm, such as markets, shopping malls, sky gardens, viewing platforms, museums or station concourses.

Racialised
Those groups and individuals who have been defined by their 'race'. 'Processes of racialization begin by attributing racial meaning to people's identity. In societies in which "white" people have economic, political, and social power, processes of racialization have emerged from the creation of a hierarchy in social structures and systems based on "race"... The effects of racialization are the racial inequalities embedded within social structures and systems.' (University of Winnipeg, 2022).

Rape Culture
A society where sexual violence and abuse is normalised, played down and laughed off (Rape Crisis, 2021).

VAWG
Violence Against Women and Girls, which is defined by the United Nations as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life' (United Nations, 1993).

Woman
An adult female. This includes both cisgender and transgender women.

'NO AMOUNT OF LIGHTING IS GOING TO ABOLISH THE PATRIARCHY'

Leslie Kern (2021)

INTRODUCTION

The experiences, needs and realities of women, girls and gender diverse people have long been excluded from urban development processes. This has resulted in an under-provision of basic facilities that make public spaces truly accessible (for example adequate lighting, play spaces, sheltered rest spots, accessible, clear sight lines etc.) as well as an erasure of their experiences and needs in infrastructure investment decisions. As a result, many women, girls and gender diverse people feel inconvenienced, ill-at-ease and endangered in the urban environment (World Bank, 2020).

Despite sustained action towards gender inclusion by some cities over the past decades, gender informed urban planning and public spaces are still far from the norm. There is a great opportunity and necessity for all those involved in the design and delivery of public space to develop new knowledge, trial new methods of engagement, observe the impact these have, and create a new paradigm for inclusive public spaces. It also requires action towards a more inclusive and diverse urban development sector.

Cities across the world have already been experimenting with a variety of policy, research, and design tools across all phases of design, delivery and management of public space. These range from the adoption of established methodologies (such as public space audits, gender disaggregated data collections and co-design) to more experimental participatory approaches. These experimental approaches attempt to challenge existing norms about who has power in design decisions and whose needs and voices are seen as valuable enough to be included.

In London, we are inspired by this action and want to continue to be part of the change. We have our own challenges in relation to gender-based violence, which have been highlighted by the murders of women in London's public spaces such as Bibaa Henry, Nicole Smallman, Maria Rawlings, Sabina Nessa, Sarah Everard, Naomi Hersi, and Zara Aleena (amongst many others). But beyond the most extreme cases, we know that concerns around personal safety are a pervasive everyday experience of women, girls and gender diverse people in our city.

'WOMEN ARE NOT MERELY OBJECTS IN SPACE WHERE THEY EXPERIENCE RESTRICTIONS AND OBLIGATIONS; THEY ALSO ACTIVELY PRODUCE, DEFINE AND RECLAIM SPACE.'

Hille Koskela (1997)

We believe that the essential core action needed to advance safer cities is actively including women, girls and gender diverse people's experiences, needs and realities in all stages of the design process. This means gathering data and educating design professionals about gender differences in the uses of space. It means listening to women, girls and gender diverse people about their experiences and taking them seriously, co-designing spaces, and ensuring the management,

maintenance and programming of public space has their needs (and hopes and dreams) in mind. Whilst gender inclusion is an important goal in and of itself, it is widely acknowledged that including women, girls and gender diverse people in the design process has multiple co-benefits. This includes (but is not limited to) climate resilience through the provision of green spaces and increased access to low carbon transport modes such as walking and cycling (C40, 2019).

Throughout this document we refer to women, girls, and gender diverse people. We do this because their experiences, needs and realities are often distinct from one another whilst overlapping. Our understanding of womanhood is trans-inclusive, and we acknowledge that many gender identities fall outside binary categories. We need to continue to have direct, open and fluid dialogue on how safety issues affect all three communities as well as how these issues interrelate.

Academic research and feminist movement have given us strong theoretical foundations for gender inclusive cities, and it is now the time to put these into practice. This will require high ambitions, creativity, rigorous documentation and determination. Most of all, achieving the aspirations of a gender inclusive city is an 'ongoing experiment' (Kern, 2021) in challenging exclusionary approaches to city making, and this is an experiment we can all participate in.

'THE FEMINIST CITY IS AN ONGOING EXPERIMENT IN LIVING DIFFERENTLY, LIVING BETTER AND LIVING MORE JUSTLY IN AN URBAN WORLD'

Leslie Kern (2021)

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report underscores London's commitment to advancing gender equity and presents tangible actions public space projects can take towards this aim.

This document is phase 1 of a larger programme of work which will support and guide the design sector, test and trial design and engagement approaches and evaluate and collect data across London.

Phase 1
Principles primer and toolkit of questions for Mayor's Design Advocates
This report:
1. presents a framework for thinking about women, girls and gender diverse people's safety in public space,
2. draws on key literature to describe the principles of gender inclusive urban development, and
3. provides a set of questions to help guide urban public projects through key project stages: project set-up, understanding, making and using.

Phase 2
Testing phase 1 questions with live projects across London
These guiding questions will be applied to ongoing live public realm projects as part of design reviews by Mayor's Design Advocates. Through feedback and reflections on how well these questions work to guide the projects, we will refine and adapt the questions and produce a revised set of questions that can be adopted more widely by the sector.

Phase 3
Wider design guidance for the design sector
Learning from earlier phases, we will draw together best practice examples from London to support planners, architects, engineers, designers, developers and commissioners of public realm.

'MALE DESIGNERS OFTEN SUGGEST THAT THEY SHOULDN'T BE THE ONES WORKING ON WOMEN'S SAFETY. I'D ARGUE THE OPPOSITE, THAT THIS IS A BROAD RESPONSIBILITY AND IS ABOUT BASIC PROFESSIONALISM. THE QUEST? A GENDER-EDUCATED PRACTICE WITH THE CAPABILITY OF LISTENING.'

Rebecca Rubin (2022)

UNDERSTANDING SAFETY

Inconvenienced	Ill-at-Ease	Endangered

Exclusion as the common foundation

A spectrum of experiences
Safety is experienced on a spectrum from mild inconvenience to extreme danger. The daily inconvenience of having to consistently take a longer route home to avoid certain areas, having to carry a buggy up steps, or being underserved by public transport systems are microaggressions that create daily low-level exposure to physical and psychological harm. This sends the message that public space is not 'for' you. These everyday experiences of inconvenience are safety issues that must be taken as seriously as more overt gender based violence (World Bank, 2020).

When a group is prevented from using a public space easily, it is in part because their experiences, needs and realities were not included in design considerations in a meaningful way, and that safety issues for these groups were not prioritised. As such, exclusion is the common foundation of unequal public space provision.

1 Freedom from violence, harrassment and intimidation

2 Usability

3 Sense of belonging and levels of participation

'THE RIGHT TO THE CITY MEANS NOT ONLY THE ABSENCE OF VIOLENCE AND FEAR; IT IS ALSO ABOUT THE POSITIVE RIGHT TO EFFECT CHANGE IN THE ELEMENTS THAT ENGENDER WELL-BEING AND GENDER EQUALITY. THESE INCLUDE A PLACE TO LIVE, ACCESS TO LIVELIHOODS AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN ALL ASPECTS OF PUBLIC LIFE, FROM "LOITERING" IN PUBLIC SPACE TO DECISION-MAKING ABOUT PUBLIC RESOURCES.'

Dr Carolyn Whitzman et al. (2014)

Three lenses of safety

A sense of safety is much more complex than avoidance of crime. Safety can be understood through three lenses: freedom from violence, harassment and intimidation; usability; and sense of belonging. Each has a distinct impact on women, girls and gender diverse people's experiences and behaviours in public space and different implications for public space production. They can also be understood through 'implicit safety questions' that anyone using public space asks themselves, but that gender plays a central role in one's ability to answer positively. This is described in more detail in the following section.

**1
Freedom from violence, harassment and intimidation**

Implicit safety question: *Do I feel free from the threat of violence?*

Inconvenienced
In response to the fear of violence, women, girls and gender diverse people routinely make strategic decisions about where, when, and how they travel through public space. This includes (but is not limited to) changing routes home to avoid areas of the city they perceive to be more dangerous, being vigilant when choosing seats on public transport, using headphones and sunglasses as a way of feeling invisible and placing keys in between their knuckles as a way of feeling less vulnerable, or simply avoiding hanging out in public space altogether (Vera-Gray and Kelly, 2020). This work has been dubbed 'safety work' (Kelly, 2012), where women may not feel ill-at-ease, but perform these behaviours as part of their everyday routines.

Ill-at-ease
Girls are socialised from a young age to be fearful in public spaces. As such, they don't have to have been directly affected by gender-based violence to understand that by presenting as female in public space, they are vulnerable to male aggression. A survey of 8,000 Londoners found that 74 per cent of female respondents feel worried about their safety some, or even all of the time, and 68 per cent worry about harassment on public transport (GLA, 2018). In London, feelings of safety have recently declined, and impact how Londoners live their lives. The 2021–22 MOPAC Public Attitudes survey found that 69 per cent of women are less likely to go out after dark (MOPAC London Surveys, 2022).

Endangered
Gender based violence and harassment is common in public spaces and varies from daily microaggressions such as staring and catcalling, to groping, flashing, stalking and more extreme forms of violence such as rape and abduction. Some 71 per cent of women in the UK have experienced some form of sexual harassment in a public spaces, with this number rising sharply to 86 per cent among women aged 18–24. (Greater London Authority, 2018).

Women of colour, disabled women and LGBTQIA+ people are often exposed to greater threat of violence and harassment due to racial, ableist and homophobic discrimination. For these groups, experiences of sexism intersects with and is compounded by other forms of structural discrimination. For example, transgender people are subjected to different types of harassment than cisgender people. This includes transphobic hate crimes and invasive questions about their gender identity (Lubitow et al., 2020). At the same time, there are few specialised support services for gender diverse people (Hubbard, 2021).

**2
Usability**

Implicit safety question: *Does this space meet my needs?*

A usability lens pulls into focus core assumptions around who spaces are designed for and whose needs are being accounted for in the production of public space. This includes the basic gender inclusive accessibility principles at any given site (eg dropped kerbs, step free access, adequate lighting, long sight lines, clear exit routes, rest spaces etc.) but also more fundamental priorities around what type of infrastructure is being commissioned in the first place (eg high speed commuter trains vs. local bus upgrades, public toilet provision etc.).

Inconvenienced
For example, public transport networks in cities across the world have been set up around optimising peak-hour commutes into the centre of cities and privilege radial, long distance journeys. The implicit assumption has been that public transport should serve the needs of the default male breadwinner (Law, 1999). Because of gender norms, women tend to make more local, multi-stop, varied and encumbered journeys than men, usually including multiple trips a day using different modes of transport in order to combine work with domestic and caregiving responsibilities (Blomstrom et al., 2018). This is true in London where women make more weekday trips than men (TfL, 2019). The result is a transit system which is more difficult for women to access, despite them being the majority of public transport users. On top of this, neighbourhood level infrastructure, which is disproportionately used by women and girls is generally underinvested in.

Ill-at-ease
Women are more likely to commute sustainably (ie walking or taking public transport), in part because it is cheaper and in part because where a household has one car this is often used by the main household earner for work-related commuting. This means that women may end up spending more time walking through or waiting in isolated places to access public transport, where they are exposed to gender-based insecurity. This underscores the need for safer public transport and public spaces that cater to journey types that are far more likely to be done by women.

The under-provisioning of specific well designed public and social spaces for teenage girls can also push them into unnecessarily precarious settings where they may feel vigilant.

Endangered
Ultimately, inaccessible spaces can result in direct physical and psychological harm. This includes increased likelihood of trips and falls and physical strain from lifting buggies upstairs, as well as not being able to easily access urban resources such as healthcare appointments, exercise, and social and cultural activities that promote overall wellbeing. This is illustrated, for example by a lack of toilets that are accessible to gender diverse people and where these groups are often made to feel unwelcome, are harassed or attacked for using these spaces.

**3
Sense of belonging and levels of participation**

Implicit safety question: *Do I feel welcome, empowered and a sense of ownership of this space?*

A sense of belonging is a core diversity and inclusion principle and is different from the idea of fitting in. Instead, it is the idea that one's identity is welcomed and celebrated and need not be hidden away or muted in order to be acceptable and accepted.

Inconvenienced
Marginalised identities are underserved by urban infrastructure. From a gender perspective this can be seen through the under provision of access to affordable food, care facilities, accessible toilets, transport and other infrastructure that explicitly addresses the practical and social needs of women, girls and gender diverse people. This under provision both sends the consistent message that this space is not 'for' you, as well as blocking access to public space in practical terms.

Ill-at-ease
This sense of exclusion is compounded by a lack of visibility of communities that have historically been marginalised in the public realm. This is both in who is present in the streets and who is celebrated and supported through urban realm features (such as places to stop and rest, to play, with step free access and cycling facilities etc.) that meet a diversity of needs. Action towards spaces that foster a sense of empowerment and belonging can be achieved by celebrating

marginalised identities through public art installations, place names, advertising campaigns and community events.

A sense of belonging fosters a sense of ease, joy and a right to be in public space. It also increases the likelihood of community members being active participants in shaping and reshaping public space. Building on ideas behind 'the right to the city', a sense of belonging fosters the collective sense that communities have the right to reshape themselves by reshaping their neighbourhood (Harvey, 2008).

Taking action towards a sense of belonging includes opening up the processes of urban development to make them more participative and representative. A key barrier to addressing this problem is the underrepresentation of women, girls and gender diverse people in the professions that produce public space. In addition, there are limited budgets available for co-design work and to maintain and manage spaces once they are built.

Endangered
In the most extreme cases, narratives about who does and does not belong in public space can foster existential threat and violence towards marginalised people. In these instances, public space also becomes the site of resistance and collective power, where people gather on the streets for protests, for vigil and to organise collective action. This was seen in the 2021 vigil for Sarah Everard on Clapham Common, where people gathered to express their grief and call for change.

THE MAYOR OF LONDON AND THE GLA

'WE NEED TO MOVE AWAY FROM NOTIONS OF CREATING SAFETY. NOT BECAUSE IT'S NO LONGER IMPORTANT, BUT BECAUSE IT'S NOT IN OUR GIFT TO ENGINEER OUR COMMUNITIES IN THIS WAY. RATHER THAN HELPING PEOPLE "FEEL" SAFE, WE NEED TO HELP PEOPLE "BE" SAFE BY FOCUSING ON THE CAUSES OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE.'

Dr Nina Burrowes (2022)

'RATHER THAN REMOVING PARK BENCHES, AUTHORITIES SHOULD FOCUS ON MEANINGFUL SOCIAL INVESTMENT THAT CAN ALLEVIATE INEQUALITY AND SOCIAL MARGINALISATION.'

Phineas Harper (2022)

'THERE IS NO NEAT MATCH BETWEEN WHAT CRIME STATISTICS MIGHT SAY ABOUT THE SAFETY OF AN AREA AND HOW PEOPLE ACTUALLY FEEL FEAR AND SAFETY IN THAT AREA.'

Dr Claire Edwards (2020)

'WE ARE WHAT GETS REMOVED WHEN SPACES GET SAFER FOR YOU. WE'RE EITHER PRICED OUT OR POLICED OUT'

Dr Adonia Lugo (2018)

UNDERPINNING CONCEPTS FOR GENDER INCLUSIVE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Action towards gender inclusive development requires an understanding of the fundamental concepts that form the building blocks of progressive movement. This section draws on decades of feminist research and action to distil and describe these concepts. They are intended to outline the challenges we are currently facing and guide new work and thinking towards gender inclusion. These concepts will evolve over the coming decades as the field progresses.

GENDER IS A SPECTRUM

Historically in the west, gender has been conceived of as a binary (either male or female) and fixed characteristic related to biological sex. This notion has been contested by scholars and activists who have brought to light the multiple and varied forms of gender identity and gender expression that exist and are the lived reality of many people across the world (Erickson-Schroth, 2017; McNabb, 2018).

As such when addressing issues of gender inequality, rather than seeking a catch all definition of gender, we should focus on understanding the impacts of socially constructed gender norms. Gender norms are the generally held beliefs about what men and women are like and what they do (Vera-Gray, 2018). These norms have shaped both individuals and societal structures, serving to constrain the freedoms and behaviours of all genders.

Most gender systems are deeply hierarchical, where the traits and behaviours associated with masculinity (such as being a man, economic productivity, aggression etc.) are privileged over traits and behaviours that are considered feminine (such as being a woman, care work, gentleness etc.) (Cislaghi and Heise, 2020), and where diverse genders are unacknowledged or minimised. On top of this, hostility and violence directed at women, girls and transgender people increases their vulnerability in urban life, which is rarely accounted for in design processes.

Adopting a gender lens in urban development processes actively challenges gender norms, the gender binary, and hierarchical approaches to gender. It does this by acknowledging and addressing the fact that women, girls and gender diverse people have been systemically excluded from urban decision making around urban infrastructure and that their experiences and needs have therefore been ignored.

WOMEN, GIRLS AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE NEED POWER TO RESHAPE THE CITY

Many approaches to women's safety focus solely on minimising the perceived dangers of the city. This builds on the patriarchal notion that women are helpless victims who must be protected. We can see this in the creation of women only train carriages that implicitly assume females must be separated from males for their safety and which exclude diverse genders. It is also seen in approaches that rely on over-policing and surveillance, reinforcing the idea that women are only safe if they are protected by patriarchal police forces.

As a result, solutions developed for women's safety often reinforce their position as powerless, rather than seeking to dismantle social and physical structures that block them from full and equal participation on urban life (for example by creating accessible transport, valuing care work, challenging rape culture etc.) On top of this, black women, women of colour and transgender women are often perceived of as threats to white cisgender women due to structural racism and patriarchy. As a result, not only are racialised and transgender people underserved by notions of the 'helpless woman', they are also often actively victimised by it.

A sole focus on urban insecurity also fails to acknowledge the liberating potential of cities for women, girls and gender diverse people. Many people flock to cities for employment opportunities, to build community with people who sit outside family or traditional social networks, or to simply access diverse cultural experiences.

As such, when addressing safety in cities, we should be looking at opportunities to create access to free and full participation in urban life. This idea is central to the Right to The City, which is 'the right to change ourselves by changing the city' (Harvey, 2008). It calls for projects and programmes that enable urban residents to be active participants in the processes of urban development (Whitzman et al., 2012).

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A 'SAFE' CITY

Safety is a subjective experience that relates to individuals' personal histories, experiences and identities. It means different things to different people and is experienced in different ways. For example, whilst one person may find security in a crowded high street, another person may experience such proximity to strangers as a threat. In this way, not only are safety needs of individuals different, they are also often in conflict with one another. A recent example of these competing safety needs has been in the roll out of colourful crossings that celebrate and make visible LGBTQIA+ communities. However, these also create safety and accessibility issues for people living with sight loss, dementia, and some people with young children.

One method for delivering safer places is Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). This is whereby design solutions are used to minimise the possibility for criminal activity. CPTED solutions include interventions such as CCTV or the removal of benches where young or otherwise marginalised people might gather. Whilst this is an important perspective, in practice it is often applied bluntly with limited understanding of the spatial, temporal and social dynamics of the local area (Cozens, 2011). Criticism of these approaches are that they tend to be focused on simply removing the most marginalised (eg racialised, homeless, young etc.) from public spaces to make them feel safer for other people (Untokening Collective, 2018).

On top of this, CPTED tends to reduce the usability and quality of spaces for all, leading to under-use and in turn, higher likelihood of crime. When we create visions for 'safe' places there will always be underlying value systems at play about for whom and from whom the city should be made safe. These need to be made explicit and critically challenged. It is not in the gift of the public space professional to declare a city 'safe' or 'unsafe'. Instead, designers need to work with communities to co-create and develop new processes that disrupt exclusionary practices in public space design.

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL – INTERSECTIONALITY

The lived experiences, needs and realities of women, girls and gender diverse people are incredibly wide ranging. This diversity (or intersectionality) stems from the ways in which categories of identity (such as sex, race, class, disability, sexuality etc.) are layered and intersect to form distinct types of vulnerabilities and lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1989).

The intersection of marginalised identities often increases risk of exposure to and alters the nature of harassment or abuse experienced. For example, we know that black women and women of colour are often more at risk of victimisation and exclusion than white women, and that the nature of sexism and harassment they experience is more likely to be racialised. The London Sexual Violence Needs Assessment found that a criminal case is more likely to be 'nocrimed' – meaning no further action will be taken – if the accuser is BAME, has mental health problems or has learning disabilities (MOPAC and NHS England, 2016).

When an intersectional lens is not applied to the production of public space, the lived experiences, needs and realities of some groups are excluded, resulting in further marginalisation.

Therefore, built environment professionals must identify and addressing intersectional experiences, needs and realities at the beginning of the design process, and prioritise those who have been most marginalised. This includes explicitly seeking out these communities by working with organisations that represent them, being adaptive to times of day, engagement style and platforms that meet their needs and interests.

Designers should also acknowledge that marginalised groups can and do create their own actions for safer spaces outside of formal design processes (eg Strut Safe). These actions should be included in more formalised urban processes and be recognised and compensated.

POLICE AND CRIME LED APPROACHES ARE NOT APPROPRIATE

Much violence against women and girls (VAWG) in public space is not illegal. It is not always illegal to shout at someone in the street or follow them home, and there is no specific law that protects people from street harassment in and of itself.

Where VAWG is a crime, it often goes unreported in part due to the normalisation of these behaviours, as well as levels of embarrassment or shame that often accompanies them. This is compounded by the widespread distrust of policing organisations who are perceived to be characterised by cultures of misogyny. Some 76 per cent of girls who have experienced harassment in their lifetime have never reported it to the police and 42 per cent have never told anyone about it at all (Plan International and Our Streets Now, 2020). Four in five transgender people who experience hate crime don't report it to the police (Lee, 2018). Even if reporting rates improve over the coming years, most street harassment will still not enter the criminal justice system.

When VAWG is reported, policing services are often ineffective. Only 1.6 per cent of reported rapes end in prosecution and rape convictions have declined by 64 per cent since 2016–17 (Barr and Topping, 2021).

We know that it is often the fear of violence, not the crime statistics themselves that block free participation in public space. This fear is rooted in personal histories and experiences of violence, how VAWG is fetishised in mainstream media, and how women, girls and transgender people are socialised from a young age to keep quiet in the face of violence against them. London's Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) recognises these limitations and as such the London VAWG Strategy 2022–2025 lays out plans beyond traditional policing approaches (for example though the Women's Night Safety Charter).

WE NEED A MORE DIVERSE SECTOR

Women and gender diverse people are underrepresented in the majority of built environment professions that produce public space, particularly in decision making roles. This underrepresentation contributes to the continued exclusion of women, girls and gender diverse people's needs in public realm design as they are underrepresented in project teams that make key decisions (Siemiatycki et al., 2019). The lack of diversity affects not only the way we design, but also who we design for (Bicquelet-Lock and Taylor, 2020). There is also research that shows we are more likely to hear and respond to issues we are affected by.

The gendered idea that planning is predominantly an objective and technical pursuit rather than one that contends with social and political systems, limits action around gender, race, and other critical social factors affecting urban development (Kern, 2021; Smith Hams and Lam, 2021).

As such, concerted action towards a more inclusive sector is needed, which has been highlighted and examined in Good Growth by Design's existing Supporting Diversity Handbook (Good Growth by Design, 2021).

A significant current barrier to entry to the built environment sector is the length, level and cost of professional qualifications and training required. One key way to open up the sector is by challenging notions of the sector itself and who gets to be on project teams. This requires taking bold steps in challenging beliefs around what counts as expertise and knowledge by engaging in true co-design with communities. This includes properly resourcing and respecting community experts as co-producers within commissioning, design, delivery and management of public space.

FROM THEORY

TO PRACTICE

This is a call to action. We have laid out some of the key principles of a gender-informed approach to public space provision. Now, it's time for us all to experiment with what that means in practice. This will involve taking bold and concerted action on our projects. This includes a willingness to try out approaches we haven't used before and to have the difficult conversations required to centre women, girls and gender diverse people in the design and delivery of public realm. The best way to move forwards with this is to develop participative practices that really engage women, girls and gender diverse people in the making of the public realm.

To support you in this, we have developed a set of questions to help you think holistically about these issues. The questions are set up around four phases of the project lifecycle: **project set up**, **understanding**, **making**, and **using**, and can be referred to throughout project development. We hope this will help you challenge your approach, and experiment with new structures and processes to create public space.

In many cases, this might involve taking a few small steps towards gender inclusion in the first instance, rather than implementing transformation across all aspects of the project. In this sense a willingness not to let 'perfect' be the enemy of the 'good' is an important mentality.

Importantly, this is a series of questions – not answers. This is because there is no one correct solution for working towards women's safety that will be relevant for every project. We also know that you, and the communities you work with already have much of the knowledge, skills and tools to make transformative change.

We hope that you use these questions creatively and that they enable you to become more active listeners, rather than making assumptions about how people use public space. You do not need to systematically 'answer' each of the questions, although you may choose to. Rather, you should use them to support you in including a holistic gender perspective your projects. We also know that you will have your own questions, and so we have left space for your own notes and reflections in this document.

10 QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU

EXPERIMENT IN YOUR PROJECTS

PROJECT SET-UP

1. Is project leadership addressing exclusion?
2. Is the project team gender informed and diverse?
3. Is the project budget appropriate?

UNDERSTANDING

4. Are you practising inclusive engagement?
5. Is your data collection process adopting inclusivity principles?

MAKING

6. Are you adopting genuine co-design with women, girls and gender diverse people?
7. Are your design features gender-informed?
8. Are you considering diversity and inclusion issues beyond the site boundary?

USING

9. Are appropriate policies and strategies in place to support women's safety in the longer term?
10. Is there an agreed approach to continuing community programming in the space?

'I WANT TO TELL MY FELLOW ARCHITECTS: IF YOU CONTINUE TO PERFORM THE ROLE OF "THE MAN OF TASTE", YOU CONTINUE TO BE COMPLICIT. FOR ME, THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE: TO CONSIDER TASTE AS A COLLECTIVE AND OPEN PRACTICE.'
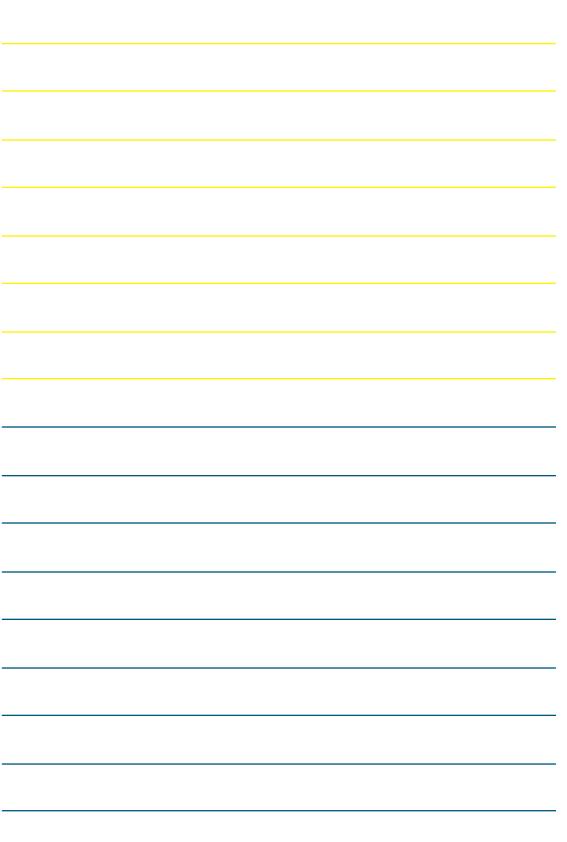
Adriana Cobo Corey (2022)

PROJECT SET-UP

1. Is project leadership addressing exclusion?

- Is intersectional gender inclusion a named priority from the project leadership, with a written vision, strategy and a set of project principles for gender inclusion in this project? Does the person writing this have gender expertise?
- Does the project brief have a clear articulation of the gender needs of the project?
- Is there agreement amongst project leaders that women, girls and gender diverse people's knowledge is key to the success of the entire project? Have you identified who these individuals, groups and organisations are for this project?
- Has the project team read and understood the key principles of gender inclusive public space development as described by this document?
- How are you making space for experimentation and learning from failure in this project? For example a fund for gender experimentation or agreeing to use untested experimental methods of engagement etc.
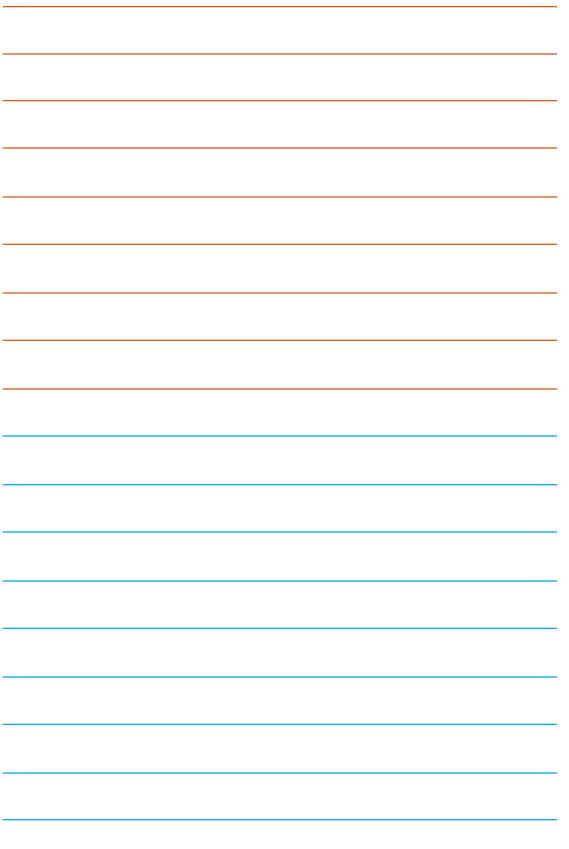
PROJECT SET-UP

2. Is the project team gender informed and diverse?

- Have you set up a gender inclusion board comprising diverse community experts to agree project aims and success criteria as well as supporting regular project evaluation?
- Is there a dedicated person in the design team responsible for ensuring a gender lens is adopted by all team members? This should be someone in a senior leadership position that is who can positively challenge others on the team. Do they have gender expertise? If not, can you partner with someone who does?
- Does the project team achieve good gender diversity at all levels?
- Are you seeking training and actively keeping up to date guidance on in gender inclusion expertise, the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty?

3. Is the project budget appropriate?

- Are you allowing enough time and resource for meaningful participation and community engagement expertise? Where you believe it is under-resourced, how are you advocating for more investment?
- Is there budget to maintain the space after build?
- Where there are concerns around limited budget, how are you demonstrating cost-benefit (including cost savings later in the project)? Are you highlighting how a gender lens often means doing things differently rather than being more expensive?
- Are you using gender budgeting to ensure resources are equitably distributed?

UNDERSTANDING

4. Are you ensuring that multiple diverse voices shape project decisions?

- Are you actively seeking out an understanding of a diversity of experiences? For example including racialised women, disabled women, LGBTQIA+ women, older women, girls, gender diverse people etc. Are you paying people for their participation and expertise?
- Are you using your engagement to challenge power dynamics? For example, are community capacity and community needs being described by the community themselves, rather than being assumed by the project team?
- Are you taking women's testimonies seriously and positioning them as the experts? Are you believing them rather than attempting to 'explain away' their perspectives, experiences and feelings?
- Is it clearly communicated when and how community stakeholders can get involved with respect to safety from a gender perspective?Are you feeding back to those you are engaging with?

- Are you enabling access to participation by using accessible spaces as well as providing childcare, and going to spaces where people already gather rather than expecting them to come to you?
- Are you using plain English and accessible information and communication formats? Are you experimenting with more informal approaches to engagement so that people do not feel like 'outsiders' in the process?

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UNDERSTANDING

5. Is your data collection process adopting inclusivity principles?

- Are you collecting gender disaggregated data? Does this data represent a 24-hour period and all days of the week, rather than just what is considered to be 'peak' hour use?
- Are you collecting equality monitoring data? Can you breakdown the data by gender? Are you collecting this data as part of engagement activities (eg events/questionnaires)? Do you have a template to collect equality monitoring data?
- Is existing ownership and use being understood and respected? Are you exploring where and how women, girls and gender diverse people currently use the space and where there are gaps in this data? That is asking 'where are the girls?'
- Are communities involved in deciding what data should be collected?

- Are you conducting women's safety audits?
- Do you know who is passing the site, how they are feeling, what is relevant to them, and what their dreams are?
- How are you capturing the impact of this project in relation to gender inclusion and communicating it?

MAKING

6. Are you adopting genuine co-design with women, girls and gender diverse people?

- Are you believing women, girls and gender diverse people's concerns and working with them to address these concerns in the design? Are there clear routes of influence that can be evidenced? Are you using tools and techniques that actively involve women, girls and gender diverse people?

- How are you recognising and supporting women, girls and gender diverse people's power and agency in this space? (For example by creating spaces where they can be active participants in the city rather than simply 'protecting them' from male aggression.)

- Are you explicitly identifying where there are tensions in the needs of different groups and the safety trade-offs that exist?

- How are you ensuring you do not displace marginalised groups in order to make the space appear safer for other people?

- How are ideas being tested with local women, girls and gender diverse people to check they work for them and their safety concerns?
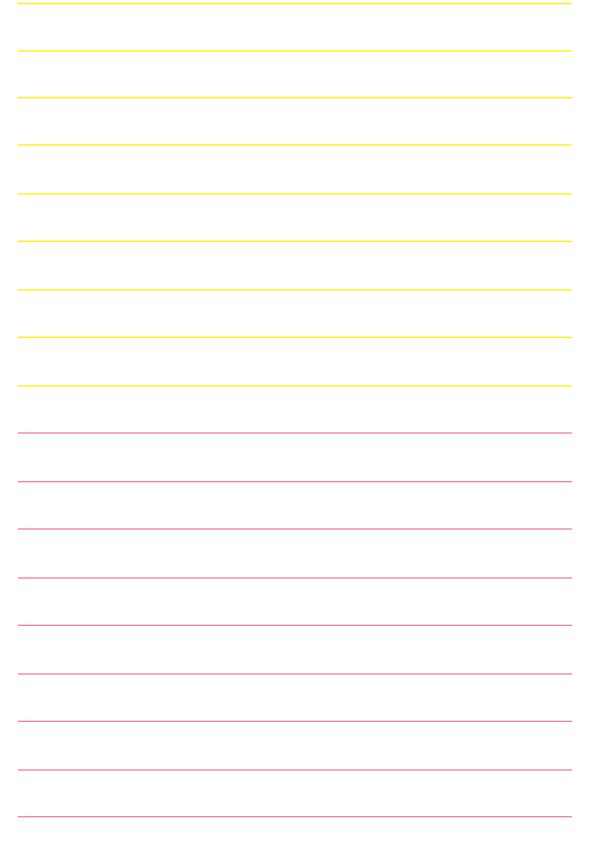
7. Are your design features gender-informed?

- Have relevant inclusive design legislation and policies been included at all stages of the project? (For example section 17 Crime and Disorder Act, Equalities Act 2010, Equality Impact Assessment, section 106, London Plan, Local Supplementary Planning Documents etc.)
- Are you seeking opportunities to activate in-between spaces especially those on walking and cycling routes?
- Are you co-locating community facilities, shops, workspaces, playspaces etc?
- Does public art and advertising provide positive imagery of women, or celebrate women and/or care work? (eg blue plaques, street art by women, about women, advertisements etc.)
- Is the design flexible and adaptable so that it may be used for a variety of activities and purposes?
- Are there clear sight lines? (eg long views)
- Is there a sensitive lighting scheme that avoids glare and over-lighting?

- Is there clear signage about who to contact/where to go if support is needed while in this space?
- Is there step free access across the site? Do users have to take significantly longer journeys to reach the step free access?
- Are you ensuring windows of residential and commercial buildings overlook pedestrian areas?
- Are there sufficient and appropriate rest spaces? (eg sheltered, near play spaces, clear sight lines, communal etc.)
- Are there inter-generational green spaces and play spaces with a variety of features, including hang out spaces for less active teenagers?
- Are you avoiding overuse of CCTV, high opaque fences/walls, long corridors, isolated spaces, and blind corners?

8. Are you considering diversity and inclusion issues beyond the site boundary?

- Are active travel modes to and through the site accessible and clearly signposted? (For example segregated cycle lanes etc.)
- Are there accessible toilets and other facilities on site or nearby? (For example affordable food, water, shade/cover, safe cycle parking etc.)
- Are nearby public transport stops accessible? (For example adequate seating, shelter, lighting, signposting, live information etc.)
- If there are not appropriate facilities available nearby, how are you using this project to highlight and secure, where possible, the need for accessible infrastructure? (For example collecting data about site use, advocating to the client/ local authority/transport authority etc.)
- Does the surrounding area meet gender inclusion standards so that the site doesn't become an 'island of safety' in the area?

9. Are appropriate policies and strategies in place to support women's safety in the longer term?

- Is there a joined up 24-hour strategy and local action plan for women's safety that is devised and held by key local stakeholders? This might take the form of a local tackling violence against women and girls strategy, for example.
- Is there a long term measuring and management process that will collect gender disaggregated data around the use of space, with processes for resourcing interventions accordingly?
- Is there a strategy regarding community facilities provision and protection, as well as tenant choices that promote active public spaces over a 24-hour period (eg inclusive mix of leisure facilities that activate streets)?
- Does this project comply with the principles of the Public London Charter, night time guidance and TfL's Healthy Streets?

- Are you feeding back project learning to the relevant policy holders who can update policies and strategies in line with on the ground experience?

10. **Is there an agreed approach to ongoing community programming, stewardship and management in the space?**

- Are you using all tools and legal mechanisms available to secure these, such as S106 and CIL funding?
- Is there a local organisation (formal or informal) in place that has power to do inclusive programming in the space? Do they have priorities around enabling women, girls and gender diverse people to actively use the space? (For example bookable spaces for community activities, clubs for girls to access traditionally male dominated street sports.)
- Is there transparent communication about how the community can be involved in terms of upkeep and continual engagement with the site? Is this resourced and secured?
- How are you promoting diverse and active 24-hour use of the space?

- Does this space provide opportunities for ongoing experimentation around gender inclusion in public space? (For example space for events, adaptable/flexible spaces that make it possible for re-appropriation, programmable spaces etc.)

RESOURCES AND NEXT STEPS

The Good Growth by Design team, in partnership with Mayor's Design Advocates will be applying these questions to a series of public realm projects in 2022–23. Our aim is to sense check the questions and understand the ways they can influence public space projects. Above all, what impact will they have on providing public realm that meets the needs and realities of women, girls, and gender diverse people.

Once this data has been collected and feedback received, we will revise and refine and update these questions as an evolving resource.

We also hope that public space professionals across London are inspired by this report and its questions. We also hope that they might be adopted and experimented with in design team meetings, design reviews and when writing briefs.
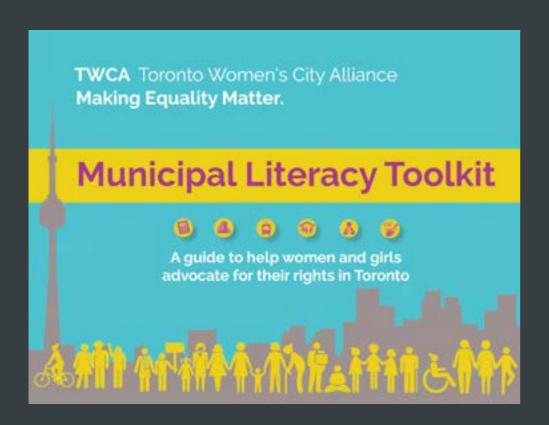
CASE STUDIES

WOMEN'S NIGHT SAFETY CHARTER

The Mayor of London's Women's Night Safety Charter is a series of pledges that organisations which operate at night sign up to. These pledges include (but are not limited to) nominating a women's night safety champion who can push the agenda within the organisation; informing customers as to what they can do if they are concerned about their safety; staff training around women's safety; gender informed design principles for public spaces.

MARSHA P. JOHNSON STATUE

A group of local trans people collectively organised to put up a statue of Marsha P. Johnson, a LGBTQIA+ civil rights activist in a New York City park. It is the first statue of a transgender person to be installed in a NYC park, and only the 8th of a woman (out of approximately 800 in total). The sculpture coordinator, Eli Erlick said, 'we cannot stay idle and wait for the city to build statues for us … we must create representation by and for our own communities'. (Weaver, 2021)

TORONTO WOMEN'S CITY ALLIANCE

Toronto Women's City Alliance are an advocacy group who have been organising to end the growing silence and invisibility of girls' and women's voices and issues from the political agenda in the City of Toronto. Much of their work is focused on upskilling Toronto residents in the processes of urban development. For example, their 'Municipal Literacy Toolkit' to help politicians, residents and city staff to understand the impact of city services on women's lives.

BODY MAPPING

One observation about women's safety audits is that they are not focused enough on how women feel fear of violence in their bodies. Body mapping is intended to fill this gap and be a complementary process. A set of exploratory body map storytelling workshops were held in New York City, Mexico City and Barcelona and Medellin (Sweet and Ortiz Escalante, 2015). They found that body mapping can help planners better understand, document and connect to the realities of women facing multiple types of violence, as well as grasp – through bodies – how space is felt and used.

GIRLS OF THE LIGHT, LONDON

In this interactive art project, artist Hanna Benihoud projected animated women in dark spaces in Tottenham. Illuminating these intimidating spaces temporarily changes the experience from scary to celebratory. The project highlighted the difference in how women use the city after dark.

THE GIRL STAIRS

This installation was co-designed through a collaborative process with teenage girls in Sweden. It has been described as 'a pink staircase to scare away the tough guys' and placed in a part of the city the girls had identified as somewhere they typically avoid on safety grounds. It shares critical reflections on the city and asks questions about justice, inclusion and equality. It also has a 'screaming hole' where you can shout out your aggression.

PHOTOVOICE

Photovoice allows participants to express their frustrations, stories and reflections from their own perspective and on their own terms. An action research initiative of 26 African American women co-researchers photographed their neighbourhoods to understand and expose unmet safety needs in their community. It involved three steps:
1. recording personal reflections about the strengths and concerns about one's community through individual photography;
2. promoting knowledge and critical dialog through group discussion of the photos; and
3. telling truth to power through presentation and discussion of the images and the stories associated with them.

Photovoice allows the co-researcher herself to make the most important decisions about data relevancy and interpretation in a collaborative setting.

PARTICIPATORY PLANNING BOARD GAMES

Urbana designs and organises participatory planning board games that aim to record the everyday needs of residents as well as highlighting the voices of the people who want to use their neighbourhoods creatively. Using play to engage key stakeholders has been shown to help bring people and acknowledge the diverse needs and desires in urban space.

HER BARKING

This experimental programme – devised and led by Street Space – focused on women-led co-design around themes of women's safety. In Barking, 51 per cent of residents do not feel safe after dark, compared to a national average of 21 per cent. The majority of these residents are women, older people and disabled people. Together, they co-designed and tested low-cost interventions to make streets and spaces feel safe.

GENDERED LANDSCAPES BUS TOUR

This bus tour of the city Umeå is a way of making statistics come alive and to demonstrate concrete effects of striving for gender equality. It promotes discussion, awareness and normalisation of gender inclusive action. One of the stops on the tour is the statue 'Listen' by Camilla Akraka, which is the world's first #metoo monument, dedicated to those who broke the silence.

THE TUCKSHOP TANNER STATUE

Artist Jessica Wetherly was commissioned to create a life-size bronze sculpture of a woman. This sculpture represents and celebrates the women who were said to give children a sixpence on their birthdays in a former tuckshop which previously stood on the site. It is one of the few public sculptures in London that celebrate care work in the city, and that tells the stories and histories of women's contributions to urban life.

BREDÄNG PARK

In collaboration with a focus group of girls living in the suburb Bredäng, in Sweden, Nivå developed a park for spontaneous dance, play and free sports. The community wanted an inclusive space that was safe and vibrant for everyone, where friends, siblings and parents could spend time together. Through a series of workshops, the project developed a design for a park that would allow spontaneous physical activity. Key design features were a pergola and stage with stepped seating to ensure the park can be used throughout the day and in all seasons.

Welcome to Coram's Fields

We are a children only park, so adults without a child should not enter

coram's fields

CORAM'S FIELDS

Coram's fields (located nearby Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital) requires all park users to be accompanied by a child. Similar policies can be adopted for public facilities that are typically male dominated (eg having women-only times in skate parks etc). Studies have found that creating times of day for women and girls to use spaces that are traditionally male dominated increases their use of the facilities outside of those times as it signals that women are welcome in this space. It can also allow women to gain confidence and skills in using it outside the pressures that come with the male gaze.

The image labels read: CHARACTER - RICH DESIGN, LIGHTING, INTIMATE SCALE, SCREEN, PLACE TO CO-CREATE, SEE BUT NOT BE SEEN, SIT UNDER A ROOF'S COVER, SIT ON YOUR OWN OR WITH SOMEONE

FLICKRUM – PLACES FOR GIRLS

This research project included interactive street performances and design workshops to address issues around mobility for teenage girls. The research asked the question 'where are the girls?' and allowed the girls to tell their own stories through theatre.

'I NEED TO LIVE WHERE I CAN WALK. I NEED TO BE ABLE TO WALK TO WORK, TO THE STORE, TO A PLACE WHERE I CAN SIT AND DRINK TEA IN FELLOWSHIP. WALKING, I WILL ESTABLISH MY PRESENCE, AS ONE WHO IS CLAIMING THE EARTH, CREATING A SENSE OF BELONGING, A CULTURE OF PLACE.'

bell hooks (2009)

BOOKS TO READ NEXT

- *The Feminist City*, Leslie Kern (2021)
- *Design Justice: Community-led practices to build the worlds we need*, Sasha Costanza-Chock (2020)
- *The Right Amount of Panic: How women trade freedom for safety*, Fiona Vera Gray (2018)
- *Invisible Women* by Caroline Criado Perez (2019)

REPORTS TO READ NEXT

- Untokening Mobility: Beyond Pavement, Paint and Place
- Making London Child-Friendly
- Towards Safe(ER) Space: Disability and everyday spaces of un/safety and hostility in Ireland
- Women's Safety Audits: What Works and Where?
- Transmobilities: mobility, harassment, and violence experienced
- by transgender and gender nonconforming public transit riders in Portland, Oregon

TOOLKITS TO USE NEXT

- URBACT Knowledge hub presents: gender equal cities
- Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Planning and Design

'EQUAL REPRESENTATION IN PLANNING DECISIONS WAS ONE OF THE FIRST DEMANDS OF THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT, BUT THERE WAS ALSO THE AWARENESS THAT POWER EXERCISED BY FEMALE BODIES AND BRAINS IS NOT NECESSARILY FEMINIST OR EMANCIPATORY. RATHER, THERE IS THE NEED FOR A "NON-SEXIST COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE"'

Lidewij Tummers and Heidrun Wankiewicz (2020)

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'THOUGH ALL HUMANS DESIGN, NOT EVERYONE GETS PAID TO DO SO. INTERSECTIONAL INEQUALITY SYSTEMATICALLY STRUCTURES PAID PROFESSIONAL DESIGN WORK. PROFESSIONAL DESIGN JOBS IN NEARLY ALL FIELDS ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY ALLOCATED TO PEOPLE WHO OCCUPY HIGHLY PRIVILEGED LOCATIONS WITHIN THE MATRIX OF DOMINATION.'

Sasha Costanza-Chock (2020)

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Contact

goodgrowthbydesign@london.gov.uk

www.london.gov.uk

Author

Dr Ellie Cosgrave, Publica

GLA client team

Kathryn Timmins, GLA Regeneration

Sarah Considine, GLA Regeneration

Paul Harper, GLA Regeneration

Aishni Rao, GLA Regeneration

Mayors Design Advocates sounding board

Jayden Ali

Daisy Froud

Julian Lewis

Teri Okoro

Rebecca Rubin

Manijeh Verghese

GLA family steering group

Tim Spires, GLA 24-hour team

Amy Lamé, GLA Night Czar

Khadacia Smith, GLA Children and Young Londoners

Sian Evans, GLA Culture

Amma Coleman-Green, GLA Transport

Vanessa Harrison, GLA Transport

Fi Ali, MOPAC

Jain Lemom, MOPAC

Grace Loseby-Morris, MOPAC

Susan Price, MOPAC

Mandy McGregor, TfL

Special Thanks

Megan Key, All About Trans

Kamari Romeo, All About Trans

Lucy Atlee, TfL

Georgina Carey, TfL

Sam Monck, TfL

Nicole Collomb, GLA

John Diver, GLA

Evangelia Georgali, GLA

Natalie Gordon, GLA

Juliette Young, GLA

The GLA Peer Outreach Workers

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Public Liaison Unit, GLA
City Hall, Kamal Chunchie Way
London, E16 1ZE

Telephone   020 7983 4000
Minicom   020 7983 4458
www.london.gov.uk

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