

BUILT BY WOMEN

HOW WOULD WOMEN DESIGN CITIES DIFFERENTLY?

SEPTEMBER 29, 2022

HOSTED BY:

**URBAN LAND INSTITUTE (ULI), AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS (AIA),
AND UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH**

WITH THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF:

ELSIE H. HILLMAN FOUNDATION AND HEINZ FOUNDATION

BUILT BY WOMEN COMMITTEE

Kirsten Compitello, Michael Baker

Michelle Fanzo, AIA Pittsburgh

Lisa Kelly, First National Bank

Dusty Kirk, Reed Smith

Thomas Morton, University of Pittsburgh

Melissa Simonetti, Carnegie Museums

Katie Walsh, SmithGroup

FOUNDATION SUPPORT

Heinz Foundation

Elsie H. Hillman Foundation

BUILT BY WOMEN

The Urban Land Institute Pittsburgh Chapter (ULI) Women's Leadership Initiative (WLI) working in collaboration with the American Institute of Architects Pittsburgh Chapter (AIA) Diversity and Inclusion Committee were proud to host a summit titled "Built by Women: How would women design cities differently?" This event, held in the Rivers Club in Pittsburgh on September 22, 2022, gathered over 90 attendees to rethink the design and planning of our city and our manmade environments that support equity, inclusion and that support women.

ULI and AIA thank our excellent table leads: Caren Glotfelty, Executive Director, Allegheny County Parks Foundation ; Ling Hong Almoubayyed, Smith Group; Ose Akinlotan, Planning Manager, City of Pittsburgh; Rebecca Kiernan, Principal Resilience Planner Sustainability + Resilience Division, City of Pittsburgh ; Kathryn Schlesinger, MPM, Senior Mobility Project Manager, Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership; Darcy Cleaver, Section Manager of Transit Amenities, Pittsburgh Regional Transit; Georgia Petropolous, Chief Executive Officer, Oakland Business Improvement District; Carissa Schively Slotterback, PhD, FAICP, Dean and Professor, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs ; and Dusty Elias Kirk , Partner, ReedSmith LLP. An hour of coffee and networking preceded the keynote, and was a highly enjoyed opportunity for attendees to connect and socialize.

This event received support from The Heinz Foundation and The Elsie H. Hillman Foundation, which made this event possible and ensured a successful and well-attended program. The University of Pittsburgh was also a valued partner. University students attended and acted as note-takers at the tables. This program was designed in collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh to support their Women in Design seminar series planned for spring 2023. The program was built upon a panel discussion conducted virtually in 2021. Our goal is to ensure that women's voices are heard, their contributions acknowledged, and their issues and challenges are addressed as we consider how cities should adapt in the future.

KEYNOTE:

DESIGNING INCLUSIVE CITIES

Mary Anne Ocampo, Principal at Sasaki, Associate Professor at MIT

[Designing Inclusive Cities - Video Recording](#)



Keynote speaker Mary Anne Ocampo is a Principal at Sasaki, a multidisciplinary firm with an integrated planning and design philosophy, and an Associate Professor of the Practice of Urban Design and Planning in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She practices as an urban designer, working on international and domestic institutional and urban projects, leading teams with strategic planning and a commitment to design excellence. She serves as the Chair of the board for the Hideo Sasaki Foundation (with a mission focused on design and equity) and is affiliated faculty at MIT's Leventhal Center for Urbanism. Her keynote speech shared examples from around the world of how women are included or excluded from cities, and the resulting impacts on their social and economic status. She described the various ways that Sasaki's work in places like Afghanistan and the Philippines is measuring gender inclusivity and promoting concepts for city design that better address the invisible needs of women. For example, her work in the Philippines explored how women's work in the fishing industry, from cleaning to sales, provides the majority of the labor needed to get fish to market, but is valued less than the traditionally men's work performed up front. Mary Anne talked about how typhoon weather disproportionately impacts women,

Measuring Progress



an interesting conversation to explore as this event occurred the same week that Hurricane Ian hit Florida. Her keynote, while international in focus, brought to light many issues and imbalances that we continue to see play out in the United States as well.

Following her presentation, the summit transitioned into small group discussions focused on discussing these issues and possible solutions within a local Pittsburgh and regional context. The in-person round table discussions assembled women leaders and innovators together to examine how our city can evolve to be more equitable, diverse and inclusionary from a viewpoint of women in our community. Each table was moderated by a local female leader from across various interrelated fields within real estate and design. These discussions gathered ideas and experiences that women bring to the field, and explored ways in which we can continue to transform our lived environment to be more inclusive for all. The table discussions considered three primary questions:

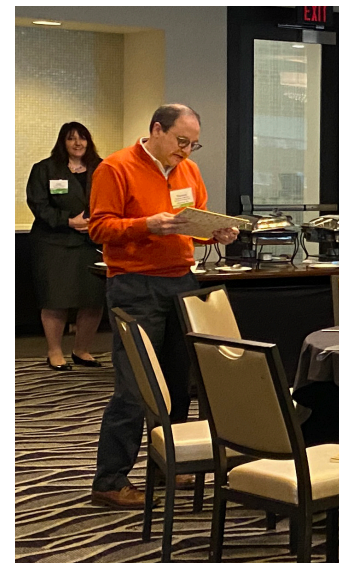
- How can city design better reflect the daily needs, safety, and activities of women?
- How can city design better reflect the invisible work of women?
- How might a focus on social equity, diversity, and inclusivity positively influence post-Covid economic recovery?

TABLE DISCUSSION:

PARKS & OPEN SPACE

Moderated by:

Caren Glotfelty, Allegheny County Parks Foundation



What makes a park welcoming or unwelcoming? This group discussed accessibility and safety needs in our public spaces and parks. Internet access was also included as a valuable resource, as more people can be drawn to parks if they can conduct work or personal activities while enjoying the fresh air or even watching children. Parks are ideal multigenerational and multi-use public spaces, and better design and resources can ensure they function for everyone. Further, community engagement was a common thread in this discussion: park design and decision making should reflect a respect for all people and respect for a wide range of needs or activities. From passive to active recreation, people use parks in many different ways and the space should be welcoming and accommodating in order to truly serve the community and be an asset that brings community together. The Rainbow Park in Vancouver was listed as a great example to emulate. Greater park activation is desired: pickleball courts were an example. Local government should be continuously open to exploring and trying new ideas for park activation, policies, and public engagement.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Lighting at night needs to be regularly provided, with appropriate lighting levels and timing of use to ensure safe visibility along paths and frequently used spaces during all low-light times.
- Proper paving is needed to allow safe use, even for those with mobility aids, strollers, high heels, or balancing multiple loads such as bags, purses, or even a child.
- Safety needs to be a design consideration for all users and ages: parks are used by people of all ages and for many activities, not only single adults prepared for recreation.
- Include public restrooms as a default, including locating them in safe and well-lit areas.
- Programming for parks should include spaces and programs for many ages and needs.
- Prioritize reliable and regular public transportation with service to parks.
- Include internet connectivity in public spaces, which not only makes them more usable for activities involving online access, but also increases safety by avoiding loss of cell phone signal or “dead zones” that leave visitors vulnerable in an emergency.
- Playground equipment should be kid, adult, and ADA friendly. Age-integrated designs and active settings allow users of all ages and abilities to feel comfortable, safe, and welcome: trampolines in the ground were a particular suggestion.
- Provide seating!
- Include supporting uses such as a cafe and dog park that allow multifunctional park visits.
- Require that developers include publicly accessible parks with large developments to clearly contribute to building a strong sense of community.

TABLE DISCUSSION:

PLANNING & INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderated by:

Ose Akinlotan, City of Pittsburgh

Rebecca Kiernan, City of Pittsburgh



How can city design better reflect women's invisible work and address their safety needs? This table focused on the downtown Pittsburgh core and how single women and mothers with children interact with the city. The addition of Target to downtown Pittsburgh has provided support for errands and groceries, however, people expressed safety concerns with the lack of cleanliness, police support, and lights to get there. In addition, the table discussed how the urban core is unsafe for children with no public playgrounds, and this public amenity would support families in the city. Safety concerns are increased in the evening, with many dark streets and scary walks to public garages. Lastly, the table discussed the community engagement process and the need for more inclusive, diverse engagement that addresses the affective populations' neighborhoods as we work through Post-Pandemic life. The city is looking into data gaps for street lights, but who needs this project and what benefits? How do we structure engagement? We tend to see work women focus on in the non-profit and volunteer sector, and greater support for salaries is needed. Women think and design differently based on needs, and their voices can support greater inclusivity in the city.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Create more open spaces for outdoor activities and restaurants.
- Activate community engagement post-pandemic with technological, transportation, and childcare resources to create the space for diverse voices who may not have access to community meetings. Also be aware of times for working individuals.
- Create a better downtown safety core, especially after sunset, and for children with better sidewalks and playgrounds access.
- Create lighting incentives for property owners to create safer streets in the evening.
- Create better responsibility for lighting in the public sector.
- Recognize and support invisible women work.
- More affordable downtown with better schools, transportation, and safety.

TABLE DISCUSSION:

POLICY & IMPLEMENTATION

Moderated by:

Carissa Slotterback, GSPIA, University of Pittsburgh



Communication approaches need to change to better accommodate more diverse participation. It's difficult to reach a wide audience, and often the most marginalized residents are those who are left out. This impacts more than women, but certainly impacts women too. Creating and setting policy requires an understanding of the people impacted, but people are racing to complete workdays, pick up kids, get home, fulfill extracurricular engagements, make dinner, commute, and more - we are often competing for time, and need to find ways to allow more unconventional engagement and reward people for the time they offer. Methods of outreach are also important: build off of and connect with trusted, word of mouth networks that tap into networks where women already gather or share news. Safety is also crucial: policy changes need to understand how users experience the city or the spaces impacted by any given policy and ensure it's geared towards creating a safe experience. Inclusive planning and design that includes women not only as stakeholders but in the planning team can help move us towards more inclusive design considerations across the board. When cities don't feel welcoming to families and younger visitors, they limit their audience and thus limit their activities and economic potential as well.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Change meeting hours to offer after hours events so residents can attend outside of work hours.
 - Include childcare or design meetings with family-friendly settings that allow parents to attend with children and be able to meaningfully participate.
 - Value people's time by directly rewarding those who participate. This may include offering food, transit passes, or other compensation.
 - Update building codes and design standards to include "personal" rooms that can be used for breastfeeding or other purposes. Do not call it a "mothers' room" but use more inclusive naming.
 - Mandate wider sidewalks that accommodate strollers, as well as many other mobility needs.
 - Design cities for children - a more inclusive design will then accommodate many diverse users.
- Child-centric cities are safe, easily navigable, and inviting to users of all ages.
- Prioritize pedestrian safety over cars in order to promote safety for all and raise new generations that value our cities.
 - Enforce safe and shared uses of space, starting by ticketing those who use space inappropriately. Cars parked in pedestrian spaces is a common example.
 - Update zoning codes to allow and promote multigenerational living, which is growing in popularity and allows more shared resources, support for mothers, and living-in-place for elders.
 - Educate elected officials and bring topical expertise to them. Elected officials, especially at local levels, don't have ample resources or staff to bring them in-depth understanding of complex issues so shared expertise is important.

TABLE DISCUSSION:

PUBLIC REALM

Moderated by:

Georgia Petropoulos, Oakland Business Improvement District



Women are often not at the table, and when they are, their insights are frequently taken out of context or do not filter through to final outcomes. This discussion talked about how womens’ conversations are framed as “other” instead of essential to our shared communities. Streets, public space, outdoor uses, sidewalks, stadiums and more are for all to use, yet without including womens’ needs they ignore half the population. Clubs for example are a common shared community setting that continue to be oriented towards traditional patriarchal settings, geared towards men’s comfort and sometimes still excluding women entirely. Historically, men prefer to do business with men: our shared spaces and public realm designs must radically shift to promote more inclusive work and social patterns and not reflect patriarchal patterns and status quo. Sequencing and flow of spaces and connections are crucial, because every point of delay or point of darkness creates opportunities for women to feel unsafe and introduces potential for harm that ultimately discourages women from entering the area at all. Planning and policy can be used to codify safe standards for lighting, access, maintenance, and more. Women often take many paths throughout the day beyond simply work to home (such as grocery stores, childcare, and other errands or extracurriculars), and each path needs to be designed to feel equally inclusive and safe.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Reexamine “mens” spaces to ensure there is a women’s corollary if this has a clear need, otherwise abolish the separation and make it inclusive.
- Create a transportation system that supports women’s needs of traveling to and from the home, work and childcare.
- Provide spaces for nursing in offices and community buildings.
- Provide diaper changing facilities in all restrooms, regardless of gender.
- Evaluate parking structures to ensure all safety measures are being implemented. An example includes promoting the installation of panic buttons in parking lots.
- Evaluate public pedestrian paths connecting neighborhoods and ensure they are complete, safe and in good condition
- Provide proper lighting in public realm areas, with motion sensors in less-used areas to support widespread lighting while protecting resources and limiting light pollution.
- Ensure interior shared spaces such as common corridors, entry areas, parking pay stations, and the like have reliable lighting, cameras that work, and no delays for button-enabled access. Systems must be maintained and functional or they create vulnerabilities.
- Include women in positions of leadership, to truly ensure equitable outcomes and show that cities are inclusive for women from decision making to resulting user experience.
- Parking Authority and other Pittsburgh institutions can be contacted to ensure spaces are safer and meet priorities listed here.

TABLE DISCUSSION:

REAL ESTATE

Moderated by:

Dusty Kirk, Reed Smith



In the times of COVID, access to outdoor and public spaces has become an urgent matter of public health - yet many in urban cores do not have access to private outdoor spaces and have limited access to safe community spaces. The group discussed that since returning to the office, there has been increased safety and sanitary issues including; public urination and smells at an all-time high, lack of street front businesses that provide eyes on the street, and increased gun violence throughout downtown and neighborhoods. In addition, the group talked at length about the immediate need for basic amenities that support working families in the downtown core. Amenities such as child care are unreliable and expensive and do not support working parents who can work late shifts. In addition, with the invisible work of women, we have seen a trend of seasoned women leaving the profession due to a lack of wages and childcare, which has impacted the urban cores.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Create more reliable and affordable childcare in the Urban Core of Downtown Pittsburgh to better support working families and the post-pandemic city.
- Create better safety and sanitary system with emergency lights, lighting, security cameras, public restrooms, and better police presence
- Expand middle-income workforce housing and amenities that support working families (ie. playground, childcare)
- Create safer parking garages.
- Better reliable public transportation that also can support moving children through the city.
- Create opportunities and incentives to empower women with children working towards post-education.
- Provide playgrounds for children in the downtown Pittsburgh Core.

TABLE DISCUSSION:

TRANSPORTATION

Moderated by:

Kathryn Schlesinger, Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership

Darcy Cleaver, Pittsburgh Regional Transit



Transportation and the experience of moving around Downtown Pittsburgh has significantly changed compared to the pre-pandemic city. This table discussed new modes of transportation, with the addition of scooter and bike systems that have reinvigorated people’s connection to the urban fabric and outdoor connections. On the flip side, rail and bus ridership is improving slowly but still not at pre-pandemic ridership due to hybrid work-from-home lifestyles. In addition, this table discussed the importance of creating welcoming and safe transit stops for women by focusing less on vehicular lighting and more on pedestrians. Developers need to think about pedestrian and transit users, creating safe and accessible paths to the destination, including sidewalk conditions and maintenance plans for longevity. Lastly, women have more “stuff” to carry with strollers, groceries, children, shopping, etc, and creating better accessibility features to transit will help support their needs.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Create an information campaign so people know that bus drivers can lower and kneel the bus to bring strollers, grocery carts, children, etc, onto the bus.
- Keep amenities and stores in clusters to make it easier for people to take one trip.
- Create sidewalk maintenance plans.
- Create better infrastructure and amenities to connect Pittsburgh's different townships and boroughs.
- Create lighting solutions for pedestrians, not just vehicular lights.

TABLE DISCUSSION:

URBAN DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE

Moderated by:

Ling Almoubayyed, SmithGroup



This table discussed design approaches and ideals that can make cities and urban environments more inclusive and welcoming to all. Accessible design for parents was a common theme: by designing for mothers, cities become similarly inclusive for fathers, grandparents, and any other caretaker as well as safe and welcoming to children themselves. This was discussed as co-locating amenities and allowing more mixed uses to support the many activities, chores, and daily needs of women and of all residents. Varied family sizes and parenting approaches led to discussions of encouraging diversity in housing types and locations, as well as promoting more mixed use. Accessibility impacts families in many ways, including transportation patterns and spatial requirements: while other tables discussed pedestrian access, this table also discussed how our current development patterns can make it difficult for parents to navigate without a vehicle, and accessible parking spaces are needed more regularly.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Provide more range in housing sizes and types, to respond to varying family sizes and types.
- Build more child-friendly open spaces that allow kids to play away from the street while remaining visible to parents.
- Provide lighting at night.
- Provide parks and parking nearby for safe use and access, including provisions for larger parking spaces to accommodate larger family vehicles, gear, or other needs.
- Promote daycare locations near other daily activities, acknowledging that many parents and caretakers have commutes with multiple stops to accommodate childcare and child extracurriculars.
- Disperse grocery stores across neighborhoods.
- Convert underutilized office buildings to enable more housing in urban areas.