



steps

Shaping Space

What We've Heard So Far
DesignTO - January 25th, 2023

Presented By: Bridget MacIntosh (she/her)

STEPS

Inspiring Welcoming Spaces



Land Acknowledgement

Our office is based in the Ancestral Wendat territory and the shared territory of the Anishinaabeg and the Haudenosaunee, covered by The Dish With One Spoon treaty, and later, Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

As a national organization, we acknowledge and are grateful for this land on which we work, play and create, that is still home to Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island. STEPS is committed to cultivating safe spaces for Indigenous voices to be heard. We encourage you to learn more about the land where you reside at native-land.ca.

Our Approach

STEPS has been recognized through numerous awards for our community-engaged approach in fostering vibrant communities. Each project is tailored to meet the unique needs of the diverse sites and communities in which we work.

We are accredited by Buy Social Canada and as a City of Toronto Diverse Supplier for our work employing individuals who face barriers in the traditional labour market.





Shaping Space

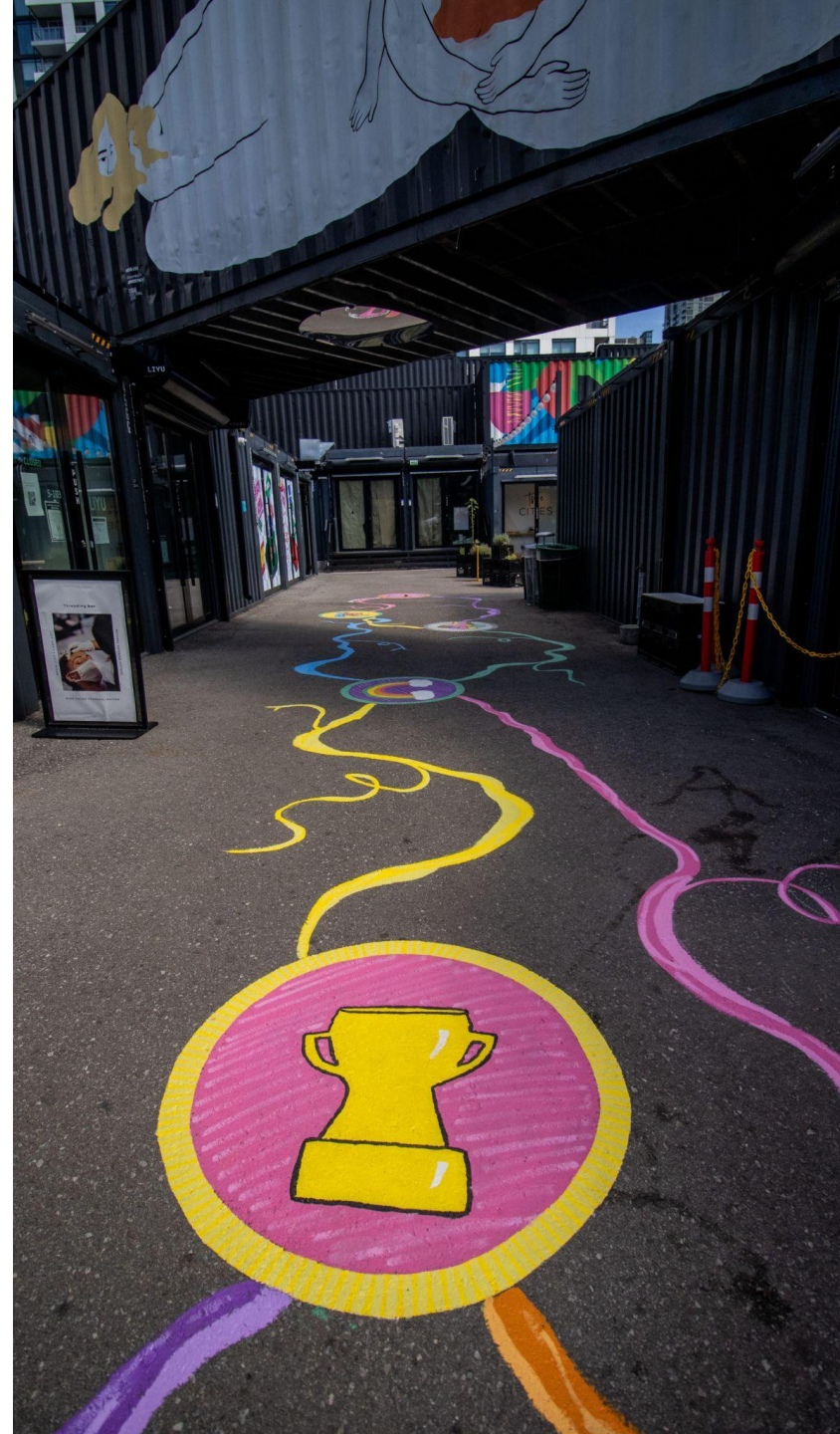
Culturally Responsive Public Spaces

Supported by the Public Health Agency of Canada's Intersectoral Action Fund

Setting the Context

In spring of 2022 STEPS was a funding recipient of the Public Health Agency of Canada's Intersectoral Action Fund (ISAF). The objective of the ISAF is to support action on social determinants of health by building capacity in communities to advance intersectoral action, in ways that improve population health and reduce health inequities.

To support this objective, STEPS launched the Shaping Space: Culturally Responsive Public Spaces project. Working, together with its partners and collaborators, Shaping Space will identify priority areas for collective action to cultivate culturally responsive public spaces for more equitable access for all Canadians, with a special focus on equity-deserving communities.





What is Culturally Responsive?

In the context of the Shaping Space project “culturally responsive” is defined as:

- Taking into account what the community needs to feel welcomed and safe in public spaces and to reap the physical, mental and social benefits afforded with access to such public spaces. Specifically looking at the needs of diverse individuals from a variety of equity-deserving groups within those communities.
- Ensuring that these needs are realized in public spaces to contribute to health equity and well-being.

Shaping Spaces' Goals

- Support STEPS' mandate to engage communities to transform public spaces into vibrant places to live, work, and play.
- Support the development of safe and inclusive public spaces.



To date, this work has been facilitated through a combination of stakeholder roundtables, public conversations, and knowledge exchange strategies to both collect and share learnings around health equity related to public space access.



A hand holding a paintbrush with blue paint on the tip, set against a background of various colored paint tubes and brushes. The scene is brightly lit, with a focus on the brush and the paint it carries. The background is slightly blurred, showing a variety of colors including blue, yellow, orange, and purple.

What We've Heard So Far

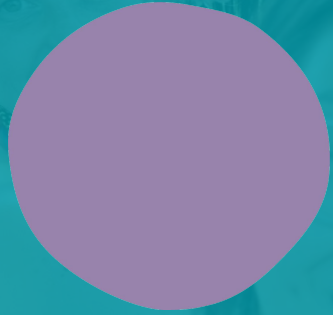


What We Heard So Far

FUNDING

- Long-term and increased investments
- Removing restrictions on funding
- Compensating community stakeholders and rightsholders for their time consulting on public space initiatives
- Reducing barriers in applying for funding
- Investments in training

What We Heard So Far



COLLABORATION

- Build trust by investing in ongoing relationships
- Mentorships and knowledge sharing
- Citizen and community led initiatives
- Our relationship to time

What We Heard So Far



DESIGN PHYSICAL ELEMENTS



- More places to rest in comfort
- Greenery and vegetation
- Accessible by multimodal transportation
- Access Guides / Visual Guides
- Signage
- Structured and unstructured play areas
- Well resourced and actively maintained

What We Heard So Far



DESIGN ACTIVATIONS

BOB CHAPMAN

TRANSIT

Transit is a complex system, and it's one that we often take for granted. But it's also a system that's constantly evolving, and it's one that we can all have a say in. In this article, we'll explore the challenges of transit design and how we can work together to create a better system for everyone.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Bob Chapman is a transit design expert with over 10 years of experience. He's worked on projects ranging from bus rapid transit to light rail, and he's passionate about creating transit systems that are efficient, accessible, and enjoyable to use. He's also a frequent speaker at transit industry conferences and has written several articles on transit design.

PATCH

Transit is a complex system, and it's one that we often take for granted. But it's also a system that's constantly evolving, and it's one that we can all have a say in. In this article, we'll explore the challenges of transit design and how we can work together to create a better system for everyone.



- Free amenities
- Placekeeping rather than Placemaking
- Spaces that allow cultural expression and connection to flourish
- Navigating bureaucracies and building capacity

Shaping Space

Culturally Responsive Public Spaces

This project is made possible through the generous support of the Public Health Agency of Canada's Intersectoral Action Fund.

<https://stepspublicart.org/shaping-space-culturally-responsive-public-spaces/>

Canada 

steps



www.stepspublicart.org



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Deliverables: Research Output

- Review data collected to date by the Shaping Space project via roundtables, online panels and desk research as well as participate in a follow-up discussion with facilitators.
- Seek out recent Canadian-based papers, reports, cultural plan consultations/summaries and other published community consultations summaries that speak to what equity-deserving groups would like to see in public spaces.
- Identify any Canadian-based organizations that are doing work to address such needs via collaboration to develop equitable, accessible and culturally responsive public spaces.
- Research how Canadian municipalities are programming urban public spaces related to the social determinants of health, and identify the barriers that may exist for equity-deserving communities in accessing them.
- Students will provide an action plan that contextualizes the needs of equity-deserving groups with respect to accessing public space to experience positive physical and mental health outcomes along with potential alignment to work being done by other groups/organizations to meet these needs.
- Creativity in the design of the action plan is strongly encouraged. Students will present these insights through a creative format of their choice (ex. video, photo essay, podcast, infographic, website, or written report)



Background

The World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. Research has shown that the safety, quality, and accessibility of the physical environment are all important determinants of health. Environmental resources, like public space, impact health through a variety of physical, mental and social variables which manifest in a variety of outcomes.

Every public space has distinct functions, management approaches, funding structures and user groups, as well as requires its own strategy for promoting equity and inclusion in fostering a sense of safety and belonging. Without considering public space design and programming in the context of wider systemic inequities and public policies all Canadians will not be able to access the health benefits afforded by parks and green spaces

During the COVID-19 pandemic, public spaces offered one of the few venues where Canadians could exercise, connect with neighbours and experience local culture. People are paying attention to these spaces and their potential benefits for communities like never before. They are seeing how their communities, their industries and their families are using (or are not able to use) these spaces. Like never before, the general public and city officials are paying attention to the variation of access to public space, the red tape in its use, and the safety of our Black, Indigenous and racialized communities in these spaces.



Research Questions

1. What are the recurring themes and/or needs from equity-deserving communities that emerge from various studies exploring the link between public space access and good physical and mental health?
2. What have municipalities (via planning and/or other departments) implemented to help create equitable access to public spaces?
3. What Canadian-based organizations groups or individuals are doing work to improve public space access to achieve positive health outcomes. How can STEPS align with this work?
4. What global examples exist that align with creating equitable and accessible public spaces?

Shaping Space - Culturally Responsive Public Spaces



SURP Graduate Studio Collaboration

Background / Project Scope / Research Questions / Deliverables

Project Scope

STEPS proposes that through collaboration with SURP's Graduate Studio we begin to formalize strategic, intersectoral partnerships that enable collective action to cultivate safe and culturally responsive public spaces across Canada, particularly for equity-deserving communities.

This will be achieved through the co-creation of the action plan for what the next phase of collaborative capacity building could look like inspired by a shared vision between culturally relevant public spaces and health outcomes.

The action plan would be informed by the data gathered to date through the Shaping Space projects as well as other sector-based research exploring the connection between public space and health wellness.

The action plan will help Shaping Space:

- foster a community of practice to increase the representation of experiences in public space design and activation.
- Forming a supportive network with which we can develop nuanced strategies to overcome the complexities of public space access for equity-deserving Canadians
- Serving as a project legacy piece that can be used by STEPS to guide future cultural planning and placemaking work as well as used by other intersectoral partners to strategically plan for building more inclusive and equitable public spaces.

