



caringcities:

Putting People First
From Planning
To Policy

CAWI
IVTF **20**
years/années

of **women leading** | avec des **femmes qui ouvrent**
the way | la voie



caringcities

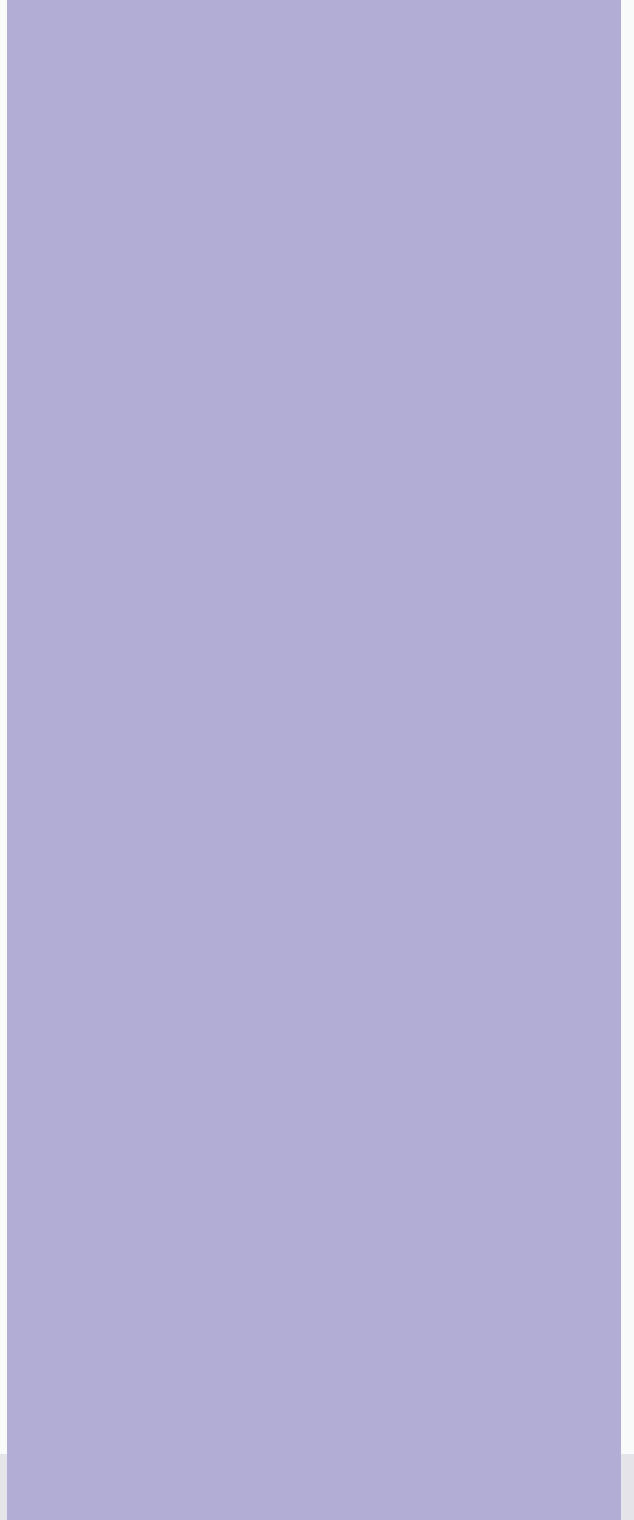


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City For All Women Initiative

Mission:

CAWI works alongside women of diverse lived experiences and community organizations to build their knowledge, skills and momentum so we can collectively advocate for economic, political and social justice.

CAWI works with decision-makers and partner organizations to advance public policies and practices that make Ottawa a more

inclusive and caring city.

In the spirit of reconciliation with the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island, we strive to work with an inclusive and equitable lens that aligns with our mission and values, we seek to decolonize structures and systems, and we work to support self-determination.

Vision:

A safe and equitable city where residents and communities are empowered, engaged, and thriving. idetermination.

Values:

- Grassroots
 - Collaborative
 - Equitable and inclusive
 - Compassionate
 - Transformative
-

Key Ideas

Care:

Care is a broad concept that includes feelings, actions, and wider practices¹. For example, care can mean being concerned for a sick child, nursing a sick child back to health, or ensuring that sick children have access to the right medication.

The following definition of care emerged in 1990 and remains relevant today:

[Care is] “everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment.”²

While care is often thought of as something limited to the home, the definition above recognizes care as an action that is essential to live well in the world³. Indeed, care is a process that can be implemented and institutionalized in various contexts, from schools to corporate boards.

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Care focuses on four principles:

1. Need: Bottom-up communication of need is essential to guide the act of care. Bottom-up communication refers to the public communicating their needs to those in power⁴.
2. Relationships: Everyone requires some kind of care to meet their needs, and we must all depend on each other for this care.
3. Continuity: Care should be ongoing, rather than one-off. For care to continue, it must be flexible to change.
4. Forward-facing: In order for care to efficiently adapt to change, it must look forward to predict how needs will evolve and how to meet them.

In caring cities, urban design is a caring process. Caring urban design seeks to understand the needs of residents, and plans how to best develop infrastructure to meet those needs now and in the future.

Care Economy

Care economy is a broad term that refers to all paid and unpaid labour related to care, and is often used to talk about care as a sector that needs development and funding.

A care economy includes those who need care and those who provide care⁵. It includes health and education services as well as social infrastructure such as sick leave, employment insurance and workplace regulations.

Care work refers to labour and processes carried out to meet the care needs of others. Caregiving is a type of care work which involves a person providing support to someone who is unable to support themselves⁶.

In 2022, half of Canadians aged 15 and older reported engaging in caregiving work within the previous year⁷. Need for care is expected to rise in coming years as the population ages, increasing pressure on caregivers and caregiving mechanisms. This increased demand for caregiving disproportionately impacts women, especially migrant and racialized women, who most frequently engage in caregiving work⁸.

Caregiving can be paid or unpaid. Unpaid caregiving usually involves someone looking after dependents like children, seniors, or adults with disabilities. Unpaid caregiving is correlated with poor mental health and time poverty for unpaid caregivers. In this context, time poverty refers to caregivers missing opportunities for pay and growth due to time spent giving unpaid care. This worsens their socioeconomic situation and reduces their access to services they need⁹. And yet unpaid work, including caregiving, was valued at \$516 billion to \$860 billion in Canada in 2019, showing the immense contribution of this work to the economy¹⁰.

A healthy care economy requires public investments to ensure equitable access to care, both in terms of social and physical infrastructure¹¹. When care economy design stems from a feminist, intersectional and decolonized approach, it acts as a driver for inclusion¹².

Urban Feminism

Feminist urbanism is an approach to urban planning and design systems which considers women's experiences and needs¹³. This is a transformational process which challenges beliefs about women's roles in society and in the home.

For example, transport design policies often favour male patterns of transit.

Men typically travel directly between home and the workplace while women often "trip-chain", stacking short trips to multiple destinations such as schools, grocery stores and the workplace. This is due to the expectation that women manage the household as well as their employment¹⁴.

Trip-chaining relies on public transport, para-transit, or active transportation, like walking¹⁵. A feminist urban design would consider women's mobility needs and expand the transportation framework to meet these. Feminist urban design also contributes to sustainable urban development, and fosters inclusivity¹⁶.

A feminist urban design approach is not meant to prioritize the needs of women over all, but aims to ensure that no group's needs are prioritized above others. This is done by using an intersectional lens to understand how different components of someone's

identity, such as race, gender and sexuality, interact to give them a unique experience.

Universal Design

Universal design refers to the intentional creation of environments, such as buildings and public transportation, that can be accessed and understood by everyone regardless of age, ability or status¹⁷.

Some examples of universal design include:

- Barrier-free access to buildings with ramps and elevators
- Clear signage to help navigation using features like high contrast colours, braille and audio signals
- Public transportation with accessibility features for those with mobility constraints or strollers

Inclusive and barrier-free spaces are important for those living with disabilities, and are increasingly useful for the aging population. Universal design can also greatly reduce the mental load for caregivers as well as recipients. Universal design is essential for meeting accessibility needs today, but also for preparing for future accessibility needs.

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Participatory Decision-Making

Participatory decision-making uses bottom-up communication to understand the public’s needs and enables people to have input and influence on decisions that affect them by actively including them in political and economic processes through mechanisms like public forums and surveys¹⁸. This is essential to centre those who are most vulnerable in our communities in decision-making.

The International Association for Public Participation mentions five steps toward public engagement¹⁹:

1. Inform: Provide the public with information to help them understand problems, opportunities and solutions.
2. Consult: Receive feedback from the public on analyses, decisions and options.
3. Involve: Work directly with the public to ensure that concerns and goals are understood and considered.
4. Collaborate: Partner with the public in every part of decision-making, from identifying options to choosing a preferred solution.
5. Empower: Allow the public to make the final decision.

Not only is participatory decision-making important to the process of care, it is also a pillar of a healthy democratic system.

The Caring City

A Caring City refers to an urban environment that prioritizes the well-being and quality of life of its residents by placing emphasis on creating spaces and systems that promote inclusivity, community engagement, and sustainability. The Caring City concept includes physical infrastructure as well as social, cultural and environmental aspects of urban life.

One way that caring cities place humans at the heart of their design is by shifting focus from standardized planning to diversified housing, neighbourhoods and services to meet residents' different needs²⁰. For example, care work can be spread out through an interdependent network, ensuring that the autonomy of dependent persons is respected and that caregivers feel supported in their work²¹.

To illustrate how this works in practice, let's look at two case studies of caring cities.

Case Study I: Barcelona

Between 2013 and 2018 the City of Barcelona developed its guiding urban design concept, 400m x 400m units called “Superblocks”²². Superblocks are designed so that they are separated by outer streets but each contain an inner area with no motorized traffic. These interiors include green spaces, areas for recreation, benches and other amenities.

In addition to the Superblock design, the City launched 68 initiatives to democratize care work. The goal was to ensure quality care for its residents, but also to distribute the burden of care among a larger number of stakeholders in order to decrease the isolation and stress experienced by caregivers and recipients.



PHOTO: LOGAN ARMSTRONG VIA UNSPLASH.

These initiatives have included:

- Supports for elders such as digital training and non-market seniors' housing
- The Carer Card, which provides access to personalized resources for carers
- “Barcelona Cuida”, a centre that provides resources, advice and networking for caregivers and recipients

The City of Barcelona is currently developing over 500 more Superblocks due to the success of their urban planning model²³. This case study demonstrates how urban planning can work with city policy and programming to achieve caring urban design.

Case Study II: Bogotá

The City Government of Bogotá has implemented a Care System called Care Blocks as part of its Caring City framework. This is a land-use planning model which concentrates infrastructure and services to give professional care to dependents while providing caregivers with access to educational, well-being, and income-generating services such as employment training, counselling services and free laundry services^{24,25}.

Care Blocks are located at the centre of existing city facilities, reachable within a 15-minute walk from any of the surrounding facilities.

This allows Care Blocks to act as anchor buildings in these areas. This is an example of urban design that centres care work.

Mobile Care Blocks called Care Buses have been launched for rural and urban areas that lack the appropriate infrastructure for static Care Blocks. There is also a 24/7 Home Assistance Program which reaches those who need care in their homes.

The Bogotá model demonstrates social and administrative innovation by replacing silos with tandem operations that prevent care overload by effectively creating a 15-minute neighbourhood for caregivers.



PHOTO: WWW.MANZANASDELUCIDADO.GOV.CO

Key Components of the Caring City

1. Social Inclusivity
2. Community Engagement
3. Sustainability
4. Health and Well-being
5. Cultural Diversity
6. Safety and Security
7. Affordable Housing
8. Education and Access to Information

Getting Started: Ottawa as a Caring City

Recommendations

- Prioritize the development of affordable housing in all sites identified by the Interdepartmental Task Force on Affordable Housing Near Transit Stations in 2019
- Develop Care Blocks and expand care services around transit hubs
- Include a Care lens in the implementation of 15-minute neighbourhoods

Context

Public transit is essential for livable cities²⁶. It reduces traffic, decreases time spent on commute, and is more environmentally-friendly than private vehicles.

An efficient public transit system is also a social equalizer. 20-40% of Canadians do not drive and rely on transit, and women and newcomers rely particularly heavily on public transit^{27,28}. In Canada, an efficient public transit system has been demonstrated to create savings of \$10,000 per household²⁹.

Low-income people rely more heavily on transit access, and lack of public transit prevents them from finding and holding on to jobs, negatively impacts their education, stops them

from accessing essential services, and prevents them from obtaining upward social mobility³⁰. This is known as transport poverty. Research has shown that increasing transit access to low-income neighbourhoods improves these outcomes for residents³¹.

Transport poverty is more prevalent among people with mobility limitations, people living further from transit, seniors who cannot safely get to a station due to lack of pedestrian infrastructure, and other vulnerable groups. This can worsen social exclusion and further marginalize vulnerable groups³².

It is clear that at the heart of a Caring City is transit-oriented development that makes services accessible for those who need them most. To achieve this, urban planning must put emphasis on high-density mixed-use land planning around transit hubs.

The City of Ottawa has repeatedly recognized the importance of transit-oriented development in its plans. In 2014 it released its Transit-Oriented Development plans, which established a strategy for transit-supportive communities with the design of the light-rail train³³.

Additionally, the 2019 report to the Finance and Economic Development Committee by the City's Interdepartmental Task Force on Affordable Housing Near Transit Stations identified 20 sites in proximity to light-rail transit stations that would be good candidates for affordable housing development in the short-, medium- and long-term^{34,35}.

Most recently, the City's 2021 Official Plan has placed a focus on 15-minute neighbourhoods, which aim to ensure residents can meet their needs within walking distance of their homes³⁶. The plan also examines how 15-minute neighbourhoods look different in urban, suburban and rural areas.

These are key areas for urban design to consider a care lens. A feminist urban lens is also important to emphasize here as women, especially racialized and migrant women, tend to live below the poverty line and rely on transit more than any other demographic in Ottawa³⁷. The 15-minute neighbourhood framework is particularly compatible with the principles of Caring Cities. For example, Bogotá's Care Block model has adapted 15-minute neighbourhoods for both urban and rural areas through Care Hubs as anchoring buildings, and Care Buses as alternative options for less dense areas.

With the light-rail train routes

expanding, and the City of Ottawa's Official Plan in its early stages of implementation, this is the right time to incorporate a care lens into Ottawa's growth. Centring care in its urban planning will prioritize its people and provide a path to sustainable development for Ottawa.

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