

caringcities:

Putting People First
From Planning
To Policy

Care

Care includes feelings, actions, and wider practices.

Care focuses on four principles:

- **Need:** Bottom-up communication of need is essential to guide the act of care.
- **Relationships:** Everyone requires some kind of care to meet their needs, and we must all depend on each other for this care.
- **Continuity:** Care should be ongoing and flexible to change.
- **Forward-facing:** Care must look to predict how needs will evolve and how to meet them

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

Feminist Urbanism

Feminist urbanism is an approach to urban planning and design systems which considers women's experiences and needs.

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 needs. 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 work.

Key Components of the Caring City

- Social Inclusivity
- Community Engagement
- Sustainability
- Health and Well-being
- Cultural Diversity
- Safety and Security
- Affordable Housing
- 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

Public transit is essential for livable cities. 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. 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 mobility. This is known as transport poverty. Increasing transit access to low-income neighbourhoods improves these outcomes for residents.

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 groups.

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 train.

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.

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 Ottawa.

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 homes.

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.