

Cities are designed around men. It's time for equality in urban planning.

Despite representing half of the population, women have never been at the heart of planning thought or practice.

Only a few women have been influential or writing on planning and city design, with the author and activist Jane Jacobs being the single biggest exception, while most cities are [designed around men's](#) needs and their work. In fact, an influential 1980s essay, [What would a non-sexist city be like](#), Yale professor Dolores Hayden argued women's place had been in the home and that had shaped architectural design and urban planning in the last century.

Women use cities differently to men in three ways. First, they tend to spend more time in their homes because they are more likely to work part-time and take responsibility for child caring. However, this is changing rapidly. More women than ever before are in full-time employment due to wider societal changes such as the rise of dual-earner families and shifts in parental leave. Second, women have different [transportation habits](#). They drive less, use more public transportation and are more multi-tasking between home and work; that is to say, they take more short trips and [daily errands](#) than men. Third women say some [public spaces](#) do not belong to them either because they feel designed for men or are poorly lit and so they feel unsafe. On average, [women walk less](#) in the city and one recurring explanation for that is personal safety. Women prefer to take a taxi after dark, preferring '[to pay to stay safe](#).'

How can [urban planning](#) deliver a more [inclusive city for women](#)? Urban plans should be made with women's safety, comfort and economic welfare in mind. Planning for [women's safety](#) means well-designed, well-lit and active public space at all hours; and more seamless transportation, where women do not have to walk between isolated locations. Planning for [women's comfort](#) means a built environment which accounts for women's physical and biological characteristics. Women are shorter than men; they carry and care for children, and use buggies in the city. They also prefer to use more sheltered and warmer environments due to differences in their [body metabolism](#). Planning for [women's economic welfare](#) means planning for safe walking and – why not? – making it cheaper for women to use public transportation as they use it more and so end up paying more than men, while earning less.

While urban planning cannot completely change some core issues with being a woman in the city like [street harassment](#), planning for a better environment with the other half of the population in mind can only help us progress toward equality.

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