Developing an Inclusive-Design Landscape Audit Tool:
Low-Income Single Mothers in Hamilton ON

by
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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE-DESIGN LANDSCAPE AUDIT TOOL: LOW INCOME SINGLE MOTHERS IN HAMILTON ONTARIO

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In Canada today, women make up 50.4% of the population. Yet, the built environment is still not designed for women. Women make up 40% of the working world and according to the World Bank, women spend between 2 to 10 more hours a day than men caring for children, the elderly or the sick. The purpose of this research is to identify problematic conditions faced by women in the urban landscape. Using a neighbourhood landscape audit tool to collect user data during three neighbourhood walks, the tool combines a data collection sheet, photography, a character development reference sheet, specific every day carry items and a series of maps. This research provides urban design recommendations when designing for single mothers, women and a wider inclusion for all participants of the urban environment. Using the right methods which engage a women’s daily use of space and perspective, a more inclusive design can be implemented by landscape architects.

Key words: women, single mothers, urban environment, landscape architecture, inclusive design, qualitative research
DEDICATION

For women,

For those who have ever felt like the built

Environment wasn’t made for them

&

For the future of our children.

May you know a more inclusive life and

may you lead in example.

“i stand
on the sacrifices
of a million women before me
thinking
what can i do
to make this mountain taller
so the women after me
can see farther”

— Legacy, by Canadian poet Rupi Kaur
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1 Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Personal Reflection

As a child, I understood many things that existed inside my young but curious world. I knew that if I waited patiently for Mom to wake up on her off-work day’s she might take me to the park or we might play a game together. I also knew that going to classes with my Mom meant I got to have a pack of Smarties to create fun pictures with. I knew that the majority of my time was spent between going to work with my Papa, helping my Grand Colette on the farm or around the house and making crafts at my Nan and Opa’s house. What I understood was that grandparents make great friends and that they can teach you a lot about what I now know as empathy for others, even when you don’t always understand the full picture. What I didn’t entirely understand as a child was that my Mom’s absence from home was a result of her long hours spent at work and school. Or that she struggled to go absolutely anywhere with a stroller, let alone trying to go into a store for groceries with a stroller after she had finally gotten me to sleep in the car. I didn’t fully understand her tiredness or the sacrifices that she made socially, financially and emotionally to make sure we were cared for. As I got older, I realized so much more about Mom’s position of being a single mother and, although I can never fully understand what she went through, I remain curious in wanting to understand her experience. It is from these moments as a child, experiencing life with my single mom and learning empathy from my grandparents, paired with learning about design and landscape architecture as an MLA student that has led me to this point in exploring women and single mothers in the landscape.
1.2 Research Context

More than half of the world’s population live in urban areas today and it is estimated that by 2050 approximately two thirds of the world’s population will be living in urban areas (United Nations, 2020). These are areas that are meant to provide community, connections, experiences, celebrations, liberties and a quality of life. Though these qualities make a city livable for citizens, many are limited because of their status, gender, ethnicity, age and physical abledness. The right to the city, as defined by Henry Lefebvre, is the right to access and use the city and the right to participate in creating the city (Lefebvre, 1967). For many minorities, this has not become fully
achievable and, as a result, urban environments, intentional or not, have become both oppressive and discriminatory in design for a large majority of citizens who inhabit urban areas.

This is a problem for women. Women make up 50.43% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada) and close to 50% of the overall world population (Our World in Data), while the consideration for women in the design process and application of design in urban spaces still treats women as a minority. Cities have been planned and designed for centuries by men, for men and for their routine in the urban environment (Weisman 1992). From the roads that transported men to their industrial jobs in the early 20th century, to the skyscrapers that represent their ideal work environments, or the need to participate in leisurely activities in public urban spaces away from the home, the city has been forged in the ideal of man (Criado-Perez, 2019). Meanwhile, women have been considered the ‘other’ (Simone De Beauvoir, 1949) with the designated role to maintain domestic and care-giving responsibly that, for so long, belonged within the physical and social boundaries of the home (Weisman, 1992). While the lives of women have changed over time, the urban environment in which they live has changed little (Wekerle, 2006).

Although women represent a larger proportion of the working world today - 40%, more than they ever have in Canada - they are still less likely to be promoted into positions of power and on average earn 75 cents for every dollar that men earn (Statistics Canada, 2016). Women are working outside of the home but they are also maintaining domestic and caregiving roles more than their male counterparts; and these dual roles have not been accommodated by urban designers (Kern, 2019).

More than 2.4 million women and girls in Canada are living on a low income. Single mothers and their children, First Nations women and girls, visible minorities, women with disabilities and
senior women are the highest represented women in poverty (Statistics Canada, 2016). When these factors are combined, and these are just some of the many limitations women experience, it means that they are already at a disadvantage that greatly affects how a woman can use the city and how a woman partakes in the decisions of how a city is shaped. This means that Lefebvre’s requirements for a right to the city are still not met because women cannot access the city in the ways that they need to in order to ensure a quality of everyday life; nor do they have an equal and sufficient say in how it is created. To achieve inclusive cities means to change the methods and processes of how urban environments are designed by whom and for whom. If this responsibility is not taken on by landscape architects and other city builders, then we fail more than half of the Canadian population in their access and right to everyday life.

1.3 Research Aim

The aim of this research is to identify the gaps that exist in the understanding of urban environments as it pertains to women’s experiences and well-being, and to contribute to inclusive design strategies that can be used by landscape architects, designers and planners as a way to create better urban environments for women and other under-represented minorities.

1.4 Research Goal

To create a methodology for auditing the neighbourhood landscape from the perspective of low-income single mothers, and test it in the McQueston neighbourhood in Hamilton, Ontario.
Objectives

The objectives used to achieve this goal are:

1. Identify a case-study neighborhood in the City of Hamilton

2. Design and conduct a focus group

3. Design a landscape assessment tool and test it through neighbourhood walks

4. Illustrate results via findings maps

5. Discuss the application of the audit tool

1.5 Thesis Organization

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter Two outlines the existing literature and theories that challenge who has the right to the city, what the right to the city means, the way cities are built historically for the male ideal, how women are considered as the ‘other’ and the gender data gap as it discriminates against women. Chapter Three describes the methods used to conduct this research. Chapter Four presents the results and analysis. Chapter Five discusses how the research findings can contribute to landscape architecture processes of ensuring more inclusive urban environments through combined participatory design approaches that include collaboration, empathy and advocacy. Chapter Five presents the limitations of this research and suggests how designers can ensure more inclusive cities.
2 Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter reviews feminist critiques of the urban environment starting with a definition of the right to the city and a summary of the traditional, able-bodied white male’s ideal and needs that have largely shaped the design of the urban environment today. This chapter provides a discussion of the physical and psychological obstacles women encounter daily in the city and the importance of a participatory design approach that aims to achieve inclusive urban landscapes when re-visioning an urban design agenda.

“This is a man’s world. This is a man’s world.
- Betty Jean Newsome & James Brown (1966)

2.1 Defining the Right to the City

The ‘right to the city’ is a concept, proposed by French philosopher Henri Lefebvre in 1968, as a response to the city that had become more about capitalism and commodity than about citizens or their ability to use and access the city. Lefebvre believed that in order to fully achieve the right to the city, inhabitants should have the right to use urban space and the right to participate in creating urban space. He believed this would be most effective by and through social practice (Lefebvre, 1968). Lefebvre envisioned the production of space as an inclusive planning and
design process and argued that the city is more than just functional forms, it is designed to serve the social routines of those who use it; he believed that understanding the social production of spaces can contribute to more humane, accessible and livable spaces (Zieleniec, 2018). Lefebvre imagined that the production of urban spaces would be a result of power relations shifting towards urban inhabitants and away from the control of capital and the state (Mark Purcell, 2002).

David Harvey (1996) is a Marxist economic geographer who is greatly influenced by Lefebvre and believes that our society is dominated by the growth of capital through market exchange. By accepting and living under capitalism, we submit to giving up our rights to a ruling class. Harvey believes the right to the city is the right to also re-define the social power that currently exists over citizens in the capitalist city; it is more than simply the right to physically accessing space. For Harvey, it is about defining place and re-making the city in unity with the “heart’s desire” (2003, pg.3). He defines place as a relationship that is a socio-spatial (the relationship between the built environment and society) structure that designates distinctive roles and can define who has access to power. Therefore, place making is fundamental to social development, social control and social order. This is why it is important, when considering the process of creating places, to understand how it interrelates with the social creation of space and time. Harvey (1996) believes that the most precious of all human rights is to remake ourselves and our city by creating a qualitatively different kind of urban sociality.

The right to the city has also become about responsibility efforts and initiatives to create more inclusive cities globally. In 2011, the right to the city was defined by Un-Habitat, an organization
based in over 90 countries to promote the development of socially sustainable cities. They insist
that the right to the city is achieved by making cities inclusive and rights based. They believe that
the inclusive city incorporates four dimensions of equality: economic, social, political and
cultural. Only when these are combined will inclusiveness be guaranteed. They believe that the
fundamental principle to the right to the city is when human rights are interdependent and
indivisible (Un-Habitat, 2020).

2.2 Gender Roles in The Man-Made Environment

The literature reveals a common theme of how gender has determined the position of men and
women in society; gender roles can determine a form of spatial and social separation and as a
result have shaped the structural forms, spatial layouts and total functionality of the urban
environment. Men are often associated with “meaningful” work and the public world of events,
while women have been identified with the home exclusively (Weisman, 1992). The city is
conceived largely as a place for men’s opportunities, mobility and economic exploration (Pitter,
2019) while the home is identified as “women’s space” (Wekerle, 1984; cited in Michelson,
1994; pg.26) where maintaining the domestic space and children is a woman’s primary
responsibility and purpose.

Weisman (1992) explains that the built environment is a cultural artifact that is shaped by human
intention and intervention, and how cultural values and implied standards of behaviour reflect the
process and shape that built forms take. This is not a new phenomenon; it is how the city has
been written and shaped historically. Landscape historian David Streatfield points to Norman
Newton’s 1971 seminal work ‘Design on the Land”, to argue that “the history of landscape
architecture, from the earliest societies in Mesopotamia and Egypt to the present, has been presented as a narrative of landscape designs created by a pantheon of heroic male figures” (2012, pg.5). Weisman illustrates how the built environment reflects the men who have created it, through the twentieth-century skyscraper, which she describes as a "pinnacle of patriarchal symbology" (1992, pg.16) that represents the masculine ego "rooted in the masculine mystique of the big, the erect, the forceful". In the same regard, the traditional association of the home as woman’s space reflects the cultural values and implied standards that are assigned to her, defining her social and physical relationship to the built environment and her access to the city. Modern industrial cities are segregated into men’s and women’s spaces; this public-private separation is a foundation for the modern capitalist society and this model is reinforced by urban planning and design decisions (Wekerle, Peterson and Morley, 1980). The home, then, is an element of interest because it creates a barrier that limits a woman’s ability to expand beyond her roles and overcome social discrimination (Wekerle, Peterson, Morley, 1980). It was industrialization that fundamentally transformed women’s relationship to work and to the home. In the eighteenth century, men’s work moved from the home to the factory (Bernard, 1975) and women gradually lost positions in those industries in which they had been accepted earlier (Oakley, 1974). This gradual restriction, of women’s place being the home, became justified by the growing ideology that the home and family responsibilities were a safe refuge that provided protection away from industrial society (Werkle, Peterson, Morley, 1980). Women became a class of housewives and mothers with the sole responsibility of the care and maintenance of the domestic sphere (Zaretsky, 1976). Women became separated from the public sphere, where their presence was viewed as unnatural and destructive of the social order (Bernard, 1975). As a
result, women’s domestic responsibilities and home environment were considered a private family affair and not part of the public interest (Wekerle, Peterson, Morley, 1980). Another important societal factor, defining the relationship of women to the home environment, is the denial of the economic contribution made by women through domestic work. Women’s domestic work provides the male worker with emotional, personal, culinary and safe refuge needs, while also providing more opportunity to engage in the male’s job demands outside of the home, leisure activities and participation in public life (Wekerle, Peterson, Morley, 1980). Different meanings of men and women’s spheres, through perception and imagination, lead to different attachments to the home; while man’s deep involvement was in his other “world”, women’s identity reflected her emotional attachment to her roles as a mother and wife in the domestic sphere (Wekerle, Peterson, Morley, 1980). However, for many women, confinement to the domestic environment was and is viewed as oppressive. Women still seek to access alternative environments and to gain the same rewards men receive in work and public recreational settings. When women participate in the public workforce, this limits their ability to socially engage in activities because of the time and energy put into maintaining their role and duties inside the home (Wekerle, Peterson, Morley, 1980).

Women’s access to resources and their participation in the public sphere is affected by the spatial structure of the city, which has been historically designed by and for men. Nearly all human environments are designed, built and managed by male-dominated professions, where existing female stereotypes are reinforced. As a result, both the design process and design implementation of numerous environments discriminate against women and give minimal recognition to their changing needs. Wekerle, Peterson and Morley (1980) provide three basic
distinctions that they believe identify the characteristics of women’s environments: 1. the degree of segregation between the sexes in the activities carried out in a given environment; 2. the intensity and nature of occupancy of a space by women users and 3. the extent of control over environments by women users (pg.6). These three distinctions outline the primary limitations placed on women in the environmental context, which include their limitations to access, the range of activities they can partake in, and on the degree of independence they have in different settings (Wekerle, Peterson, Morley, 1980).

Hayden (1980) argues that women are not considered equal participants in society, and that they need to push for less domestic division based on sex, the privatized financial basis of domestic work, and the elimination of spatial separation of homes and workplaces in the built environment. The problem, she states, is paradoxical: “women cannot improve their status in the home unless their overall economic position in society is altered and women cannot improve their status in the paid labour force unless their domestic responsibilities are altered” (1980, pg.176). When women - the homemaker, the caregiver, the “other” - recognize that they are struggling against both gender stereotypes and wage discrimination, when they realize that changes in social, economic and environments are necessary to overcome these conditions, they will no longer accept cities that have been repetitively designed based on the principles of another era that declared that a woman’s place is in the home (Hayden, 1980).

### 2.3 Gender Data Gap

In 1949, philosopher and social theorist Simone de Beauvoir argued that a man considers his body as a direct and standard connection to the world, regarding the body of women as abnormal
and obstructive. Today, Criado-Perez (2019) argues that the reinforcement of the male experience as the universal experience is because of the gender data gap. She states that “whiteness and maleness can only go without saying because most other identities never get said at all” (2019, pg.33). What is male comes to be seen as universal, firstly, because women are not seen and are not remembered due to their secondary status and, secondly, because male data makes up the majority of what we know. Because of this, women - half the global population - are positioned as a minority with a marginalized identity and a subjective point of view. This sets up women to be even more forgettable, ignored and dispensable in culture, history and data, making women invisible. We live and build as if the male body and its association to life experience are gender neutral. This is, Criado-Perez (2019) argues, a form of discrimination against women.

Weisman’s (1992) book titled *Discrimination by Design* outlines the conditions that reflect and reinforce women’s second-class status, listing discriminatory laws, governmental regulations, cultural attitudes, informal practices, and lack of awareness by professionals as prime examples. This approach to design and use of public spaces, buildings, transportation systems and housing greatly hinders women’s lives. Weisen (1992, pg.9) states how this is a result of “patriarchal societies where men are by definition the dominant group, social, physical, and metaphysical space are the products of male experience, male consciousness, and male control.” Additionally, Weismen (1992, pg.10) claims that space designed and made by man “encodes and disseminates white male power and superiority,” which reinforces both women and minorities as secondary to the design of urban environments.
Criado-Perez (2019) elaborates how bias in data collection comes up more often than not, and how this misrepresents the supposedly-unbiased data that increasingly structures our lives. She argues that, even in a world increasingly run by ‘unbiased’ supercomputers, women are still very much de Beauvoir’s Second Sex because of what is in fact being collected and analyzed. The dangers of being relegated to, at best, a sub-type of men is as real as it has ever been. Criado-Perez (2019) believes that when we are designing a world that is meant to work for everyone, we need women in the room in order for this gap to be bridged. As she shows through her examples, failing to include the perspective of women is a significant contributor to the unintended male bias that attempts (often in good faith) to pass itself off as ‘gender neutral’. If the people who make decisions for us all are white, able-bodied men, that too constitutes a data gap. Criado-Perez states: “This is what de Beauvoir meant when she said that men confuse their own point of view with the absolute truth” (2019, pg.9).

2.4 The Gap Specific to Landscape Architecture

Wekerle (1980) agrees that there is a knowledge and design gap in the focus on women and their relationship to the urban environment. Furthermore, she indicates that there are substantial gaps in the kinds of environments and the different types of women that have been studied. She recognizes that there is research being conducted; however, it is often limited in relation to landscape architecture, inaccessible and not directly related to women's use of the urban environment (Wekerle, 1980). She speaks about how environmental and behaviour studies focus more on the private world of women, their housing and close surrounding neighbourhood, rather than how women use the public environment. The exception she says, is related to studies of
women and environmental hazards but there is a shortage of studies related to the environmental factors of the workplace. Furthermore, there is minimal research on how women use public environments such as airports, civic buildings, public malls and shopping centers, even though their floor layouts and overall design make it difficult for women to use, especially for women with small children (Wekerle, 1980). She also specifies that there is a lack of detailed case studies on women living in urban settings and says that this kind of research has the potential to provide planners and designers with information for creating more responsive environments for women. Additionally, Wekerle indicates how we know very little about the single parents who live in suburbs after a divorce and how they cope with an environment organized around the two-parent nuclear family, or women in ethnic neighborhoods and their more segregated urban worlds. Wekerle refers to Hapgood and Getzels (1974), who believe that zoning is the most influential tool that planners have to control the use of land. However, there is little data on the effects of zoning on women's day-to-day lives. Zoning makes it harder to combine work and family roles since zoning requires the segregation of home and work, directly affecting women who perform both domestic and work duties. For example, zoning limits the location of child-care facilities and often forces families to travel lengthy distances outside their neighborhood (Wekerle, 1980). The journey for women workers is more complicated than men’s because women’s journeys are more time consuming, costly and complicated, which Wekerle says is not accounted for by planners. Fare structures and location of transit lines do not accommodate a woman’s trip pattern while she often tries to save time by combining her shopping trips for household errands with her journey to work. Similarly, a mother responsible for taking her children to child-care facilities, often at a distance, is not reflected in transportation models since
she spends extra time and money. What has been discovered in one of the first studies conducted on women and travel patterns is how women are subjected to daily harassment in trying to coordinate work hours and commuting schedules with the hours of these facilities (Wekerle, 1980, pg. 206). Moreover, both women’s spatial movements and patterns continue to be determined and shaped by their fears.

Furthermore, research on women's travel patterns makes an important contribution not only to the transportation field, but also to theories of spatial inequality and resource allocation within the city. Women's groups should push for improvements in transportation, zoning and environmental issues, Wekerle says, and unless they do, the problems that they experience will not become a priority to planners and designers.

Carolyn Whitzman (2013) defines what a safe and inclusive city would entail. People would have basic access to housing and education, to leisure activities, to livelihoods, more equality between genders, less discrimination against differences, and an overall chance of happiness. Encounters with strangers would not be feared. The shape and inhabitation of public space would provide a sense of empowerment while providing privacy to all when needed. Mainstream debates and policies would fully integrate the voice and rights of all citizens regardless of status or power. The enjoyment of the city would outweigh the dangers, and no one would feel alone in their efforts. Combating unsafe cities and creating more opportunities for community would require a wider understanding of the needs of all residents, their visions and what they define as the necessary conditions for productive and dignified lives. To achieve this would take an equalized partnership between diverse agents of civil society that include different levels of government and women’s, and other, organizations. An inclusive city requires a constant effort
to be made that involves different voices, across gender, income, age, ethnicity, sexuality and abilities (Whitzman, 2013).

Today, women are facing barriers when it comes to both accessing and creating the cities they live in, and therefore the right to the city it not available to them. Leslie Kern, a professor and director of women's studies states: “Throughout history, women have used the city as both the site and the stake of struggle, as Lefebvre put it. In other words, the city is the place to be heard; it's also the place we're fighting for. Fighting to belong, to be safe, to earn a living, to represent our communities, and so much more” (2020, pg.4).

We must re-invent the physical and social structure of the built environment to reveal the full importance of women’s lived experiences, it’s one of the most important changes we can make. Fully empathetic and life-enhancing environments will not be achieved or created until society and decision makers value the aspects of human experience that have been undervalued through the oppression of women. Working together can be our collective responsibility to change and achieve this (Weismen, 1992).
3 Chapter Three: Methods

The research methods were developed to create a replicable audit tool that can be used by landscape architects, community activists and policy makers in order to identify challenges and opportunities faced by women in the daily experience of the urban landscape. The objectives are as follows: 1. identify an appropriate case-study neighbourhood, 2. design and conduct a focus group, 3. design a landscape assessment method and test it through three neighbourhood walks, 4. illustrate results via findings maps, and 5. conclude with a discussion on the potential for broader use of the audit tool for those who are not adequately accommodated by the current urban landscape. For this research, low-income single mothers living in the McQuesten neighbourhood of the City of Hamilton constitute the user group that is the focus of this research.

Research Goal

To create a methodology for auditing a neighbourhood landscape from the perspective of low-income single mothers in the City of Hamilton.

Objective 1: Identify a case-study neighborhood in the City of Hamilton

M 1: Review Action Plans for the City of Hamilton’s 11 ‘Neighbourhood Action Strategy’ (NAS) neighbourhoods

M 2: Review demographic data of the selected neighbourhood to identify a female sub-user group

Objective 2: Design and conduct a focus group

M 3: Working with City staff, identify and recruit focus group participants
M 4: Develop a focus group protocol

M 5: Run focus group to generate ‘persona’s’ and ‘daily routines’ for a plausible low-income single mother residing in case study neighbourhood

**Objective 3: Design a landscape assessment method and test it through neighbourhood walks**

M 6: Develop field data collection tools

M 7: Audit the neighbourhood/city experience from the perspective of each persona

**Objective 4: Illustrate results via findings maps**

M 8: Analyze / synthesize field work findings

M 9: Collage results into a findings map

**Objective 5: Discuss the application of the audit tool**

M 10: Evaluate findings and reflect on potential improvements, changes or broader uses

The research design is demonstrated as a methods flow chart in Figure 1.1 below. Following Figure 1.1, the methods are explained in more detail.
Figure 2: Methods Flow Chart, Source: Author, 202
3.1 Neighbourhood Identification

Both the neighbourhood scale and human scale are important aspects that have fundamentally guided this research. Urban studies theorist, Jane Jacobs (1961) suggests that,

> the real value of cities lies in their diversity, architectural variety, teeming street life and human scale. It is only when we appreciate such fundamental realities that we can hope to create cities that are safe, interesting and economically viable, as well as places that people want to live in (as quoted in Neal, 2003, pg.4).

The neighbourhood scale is also essential due to the deep-rooted relationship it provides between residents and their experience. Building on the work of Jacobs, Taylor describes the neighbourhood as “the familiar places of home, work and play, experienced with feet on the pavement, hand on a tree, eye on a sunrise, ear to the street, nose in the bakery” (2010, pg.5). People’s daily lives and day-to-day routine at the neighbourhood level is the scale at which this research takes place.

3.2 Focus Group

A focus group was used as a way to gain perspectives from a sub-group through the participation of community members from the identified neighbourhood. Deming and Swaffield (2011) have outlined essential requirements for a focus group. The first is to select a specific topic that the group focuses on and the second is to provide a group setting that has agreed-upon protocols for interaction. This helps to ensure that all participants can feel comfortable and are willing to
express their views in the presence of other members of the community (Deming and Swaffield, 2011). A focus group is typically made up of eight to twelve people with similar backgrounds, interests, and values. It is also an efficient way to draw upon the views and knowledge of a range of people and may be used early in a research design to scope an issue, identifying themes that will be used in developing the detailed techniques. Deming and Swaffield (2011) further explain how focus groups are useful parts of an interpretive strategy that give insight into a shared or common experience and can generate ideas or strategies to resolve a problem. Interpretive research strategies, such as a focus group, require the investigator to both become a social actor within the research and to actively engage in making sense of the experiences they encounter. Therefore, interpretive strategies hold both objective and subjectivist positions (Deming and Swaffield, 2011).

In the case of this focus group, participants were asked to participate in the development of a “persona”. This method is derived from social science research and focuses on user-centered design approaches. Personas are "fictional characters, based on actual data, that depict [a] target user population" (Pruitt and Grudin, 2003, pg.12). Cooper et al. (2007) note that designers often neglect the actual user and choose scenarios based upon people similar to themselves.

The persona method builds a narrative description of a real-world user based on valid observations and interviews creating a user-model of a characteristic persona with a fictional name and background. In this way, a higher degree of empathy with the user can be reached to help designers relate more to that user (Schafer et al., 2014). In this case, the persona method is used to analyze and understand the day in the life of low-income single mothers.
3.3 Design and Testing of Landscape Assessment

I designed a landscape assessment method, and then audited the case study neighbourhood’s landscape from the perspective of the personas created in the focus group, as a way to further engage, understand and map the environmental experience encountered on a daily basis by a low-income single mother. From the information collected in the focus group, I developed a series of routes that guided me while walking through three neighbourhoods where I would be both the developed persona - seeing through the lens of a low-income single mother - and the researcher intent on observing spatial patterns. I collected information through voice recordings, photography and written notes on the field maps. I also had a female field-partner walking with me to both assist and act as the single mother persona in situations where I needed to record and observe the physical conditions of the situation, and to help gather additional observations. Aside from personal recording materials, I was able to determine what items I needed to wear and carry with me based on the focus-group persona development exercise. I then collected and recorded information as it related to the single mother’s experience in the urban landscape. I also made notes of how I, as a female researcher, was experiencing this exercise.

3.4 Findings Maps

Once all three walks were completed, I analyzed my findings through a collaging process by writing notes and overlaying sketches on printed pictures, and through an analysis of my transcribed recordings that I previously summarized. I then synthesized the information into a graphically represented and organized set of findings maps. The role of the findings maps is to synthesize the information collected from the persona landscape assessment. This would be useful in other instances, to synthesize and highlight the most important attributes from the walks
as they relate to the sub-group in the landscape. This could also provide a quick and efficient source of information for landscape architects or policymakers who need to access important information for the people they are designing for.

### 3.5 Refinement of the Audit Tool

I evaluated all of the steps that comprise the audit tool and have suggested some refinements. My hope is that others might use it to repeat this research and apply these methods to understand the urban landscape experience of other community sub-groups, such as people living with disabilities, seniors, teenagers or 2SLGBTQI+ communities. From running this test, I have noticed things that worked well, and also thought about alternative ways to approach each step that would make them more effective.
4 Chapter Four: Results & Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to communicate the results and analysis of selecting the neighbourhood, the focus group and the design and testing of the landscape assessment. The findings maps are a result of both the landscape assessment walks and the information collected during the focus group.

4.1 Selecting the Neighbourhood

From the beginning of my neighbourhood selection process I developed criteria that would help me select a neighbourhood. First and most importantly, I had a goal, for the purpose of this research, to focus on women and their lived experience of their neighbourhood which I will further explain below. Secondly, I knew studying a neighbourhood in the city I lived in would allow for more engagement between myself and community members. That meant that it was important to search for information that would help me select a neighbourhood in the city that I currently live in, Hamilton, Ontario.

The City of Hamilton website was a useful resource for providing information on neighbourhood development initiatives. One of these initiatives included the Neighbourhood Action Strategies (NAS) that were established in 2010. In 2017, the Social Planning & Research Council of Hamilton produced an online document titled History of the Neighbourhood Action Strategy; developed by The Neighbourhood Action Evaluation Team. It states:
Hamilton’s Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS) was incubated in 2010 and began working in 11 neighbourhoods in order to address social, economic, and health concerns on a neighbourhood level in the City of Hamilton. As a resident-led, city-wide initiative, the strategy has evolved over the past five years to try to respond to the varying needs of these communities (2017 pg.3).

The document also outlines the history and events that led up to the development of the Neighbourhood Action Strategies. The document explains that in 2002 ‘neighbourhood hubs’ emerged as a result of previous anti-poverty programs run by the Hamilton Community Foundation (HFC). They were defined as a “local collaborative with a strong resident voice... an existing structure focused on centralized community work to reduce and prevent poverty” (Hamilton Community Foundation [HCF] 2009, pg.3). Based on the HFC initiatives, the City then developed criteria which were applied to nearly 50 Hamilton neighbourhoods in order to select additional hubs. The criteria were determined as stated:

The criteria sought not to create a ranked list of neighbourhoods in need in support, but weighed the following factors to select the final neighbourhoods: “desire by residents in the neighbourhood to work in partnership with the City on neighbourhood development; presence of existing networks or planning bodies within neighbourhood; planned investment that could be leveraged for additional development; current planning already scheduled and could therefore be expanded/augmented; and existing assets [of] people, associations, organizations” (City Memo CM 11007).

From the City-elected neighbourhoods and the existing HCF Hubs, a final list of neighbourhoods were determined that would make up the Neighbourhood Action Strategies: Jamesville, Beasley, Keith, McQuesten, Stinson, South Sherman, Gibson and Lansdale Area (GALA), Crown Point, Riverdale, Davis Creek, and Rolston (see Figure #2 below).
I reviewed all 11 Hamilton Neighbourhood Action Strategies assessing each community’s goals, concerns and demographics (see Appendix #1 for notebook neighbourhood assessment). Since the NAPs stemmed from anti-poverty initiatives, this is a component that no doubt would be incorporated into my selected criteria as well. In Hamilton, single women have the highest poverty rates among Ontario’s cities, including Toronto, and more than 7 in 10 female lone parents with children under 6 in the Hamilton census metropolitan area are living in poverty (Mayo, 2010). In the McQuesten neighbourhood, the total population poverty rate is 44% and the child poverty rate is 75%, which is triple the City’s child poverty rate (McQuesten Neighbourhood Action Plan, 2012).
I used the demographics and community initiative details from the NAS to also narrow my search in focusing on the neighbourhoods that had a strong female representation.

Additionally, I was searching specifically for aspects that were focused on or related to women and their experience in the communities in which they live. For example, elementary schools with young children would be connected to mothers who would take their children to and from school. Parks, churches or community centers could indicate activities and social routines in which women in these communities participate. Crown Point, McQuesten and South Sherman were the three neighbourhoods from the NAS that best met these selection criteria.
The availability and willingness of City staff to assist my research was also a contributing factor towards my neighbourhood selection criteria. Having the support from key municipal staff indicated two things: One, that the need and importance for research on women in Hamilton communities was valid, and two, that the willingness to support this research could help lead to my ability to make connections in the NAS communities.

My selection of a neighbourhood was then narrowed to the McQuesten as it met my neighbourhood-selection criteria most closely. The following indicates how these criteria were met by selecting McQuesten:

1. There is a high percentage of low-income single mothers. This group of women has a particular lived experience.

![Figure 5 - McQuesten Hamilton Family Structure Statistics, Source: McQuesten Neighbourhood Profile Document, SPRC Hamilton Website, 2012)
The profile of families with children in McQuesten is nearly opposite to the profile for the City of Hamilton as a whole. While two thirds of families with children in the City are married and almost one quarter are led by female lone parents, in McQuesten these categories are almost equal (43% are married, 40% are led by female lone parents). The proportion of single dads is almost double in McQuesten as compared to the City: 9% vs. 5% (McQuesten Neighbourhood Profile Document, 2012).

2. This is a neighbourhood from the 11 Neighbourhood Action Strategies for the City of Hamilton.

3. City of Hamilton Community Development Staff willingly assisted me in making connections with community leaders in McQuesten.

### 4.2 Focus Group

The goal of the focus group was to help me determine a plausible every-day persona of low-income single mothers in McQuesten, and the routes they take navigating their days. The results helped me to conduct and design a landscape assessment for my third method, the neighbourhood landscape assessment.

#### 4.2.1 Design of the focus group

Several considerations went into the design and development of the focus group and are detailed below.

##### 4.2.1.1 Participants

I met with City of Hamilton Community Development staff to identify and make connections with potential focus group participants from the McQuesten neighbourhood. During this meeting
I indicated the criteria that I had developed for selecting the participants. Participants should be professional staff or leaders in McQuesten who could speak on behalf of the single mother experience. Preferably the participants would be women who represent different roles in the community so as to reach a more inclusive voice where possible. The City of Hamilton staff then helped me identify community members who best fit this criteria. I then developed a recruitment letter (see Appendix #2) that was sent to the selected participants via email. A total of five female participants responded and agreed to participate in the focus group. The participants included a McQuesten Urban Farm manager; an educator, an engagement leader and farmer at the McQuesten Urban Farm; a McQuesten Community Planning Team representative; an early-years program manager from Niwasa Kendaaswin Teg (a non-profit charitable Indigenous organization); and a registered Early Childhood Educator at St. Helens Community Center. I also had two female research assistants who were trained by me on the focus group process and who participated by serving as focus group discussion leaders.

### 4.2.1.2 Location, Date and Time

Once participants were selected, I determined the location and time that the focus group would take place. I knew that it was important to hold the focus group meeting somewhere that was familiar and connected to the community so that participants could feel comfortable and safe, preferably an existing community center or hub in the McQuesten neighbourhood. When I met with City of Hamilton staff, I made this location preference known to them. Thankfully, City staff knew that the St. Helen’s Community Center in McQuesten would be the ideal location. They then assisted me in contacting the St. Helen’s coordinators to make arrangements for a suitable date and time. I then developed and emailed a scheduling poll, sent through email, that
had optional dates and times from which participants could choose. February 3rd, 2020, at 9:00 am at the St. Helen’s Community Center was the most suitable date, time and location for all participants. Additionally, I brought coffee, drinks and snacks for participants since I knew that the exercises would take a few hours to complete.

4.2.1.3 Focus group exercises

I developed three exercises for the focus group. Each was intended to generate and build details of the low-income McQuesten single-mother persona. I also determined that the nature of these exercises would need to be specific to the winter conditions in Hamilton since I, the researcher, needed to conduct the landscape assessment during the winter months. Winter weather conditions in Ontario greatly differ to those in spring, fall or summer months. Therefore, these conditions could greatly alter results that would be produced in comparison to if the landscape assessment were being conducted during other seasons. Each exercise was accompanied with instructions and compiled into a booklet for participants and group leaders to record information and guide them through each of the exercises in an organized process. Prior to running the focus group, group leaders, who were also Master of Landscape Architecture students were brought through these exercises so that they could assist the focus group participants. I felt it was important to develop an ice-breaker exercise before we started the exercises so that we could get to know each other and feel more comfortable with sharing information with one another. For the first two exercises, the focus group was divided equally into two groups, each with a leader, so that the information collected could be developed in detail and so that participants would feel comfortable in sharing information in a smaller group setting. If these exercises only consisted of one large group instead of two smaller groups there may not have been enough time to share
details from every member and developing two personas may not have been as achievable. The purpose for designing the focus group like this was to generate multiple low-income single-mother personas, helping to ensure that a variety of perspectives could be explored. The third exercise was designed to bring all of the focus group participants together as a collaborative voice and reveal any major, reoccurring concerns or opportunities in the neighbourhood.

For the ice-breaker exercise, I asked participants to list the most important items that they carry with them daily. I was hopeful that this would help generate conversation about their own daily routines and needs, as these items could also tell a story about the personas. This also set up a pre-understanding for what I would be asking them to do in the focus group. This exercise was intended to run for 15 minutes.

The first exercise focused on developing a detailed persona profile. On a sheet of paper I developed a set of graphic boxes where focus group participants and group leaders would be prompted to list an appropriate age, name, place of residence (or closest intersection), number of children on average and the children’s ages. On an additional sheet of paper I developed a set of writing boxes where participants could record the everyday items that a low-income single mother in McQuesten might carry and bring with her (her ‘every day carry’) during the winter months. This exercise replicated the ice-breaker exercise that participants were asked to do at the beginning of the meeting. I felt that 20 minutes for this exercise was appropriate to collect a sufficient amount of information.

The second exercise was designed to focus on the routine and day-in-the-life of a low-income single mother in the McQuesten neighbourhood during the winter months. I developed a series of
data-sheets that participants and group leaders could use to detail the single mother’s routine by listing daily stops and locations. I also left a place for participants to indicate who, if anyone, would be accompanying her at these times and places. I felt this would generate a realistic picture of the travel conditions a McQuesten low-income single mother experiences. I then provided 24”x 36” printed maps of the McQuesten neighbourhood which included surrounding areas and neighbourhoods for participants to indicate some of the locations that low-income single mothers travel to that are outside of the McQuesten neighbourhood. I provided coloured markers and coloured sticky dots that participants could use to plot the stops and locations on the map that they had listed in the booklet. The goal of these maps was to develop detailed routes of the streets, transit lines and paths that were most likely to be used between stops and locations. I allotted 40 minutes for the exercise with a 15-minute intermission for those who needed a break between this exercise and the next.

The third and final exercise was focused on participant collaboration to engage in a communal conversation that would reveal any major points of stress for low-income single mothers in the McQuesten neighbourhood. This was also an open opportunity for participants to express any opportunities and constraints from their own perspectives and experiences as women in the community who experience the McQuesten landscape daily as well. This would later help me in bringing awareness to the experiences of women in this community that additionally contribute to some of the experiences the low-income single mother might have concerns with as well. These details would be written down on sticky notes as the conversation occurred and added on top of the completed 24”x 36” maps, according to spatial location, if applicable. I determined that 15 minutes for this exercise would be sufficient for collecting the information needed.
4.2.1.4 Focus Group Agenda

Once I developed the exercises, I was then able to determine an agenda that would help inform participants, keep the focus group organized in a timely manner and determine the full duration for the focus group, running for 2 hours and 15 minutes from 9:00 am to 11:15 am. The resulting agenda stated:

9:00am - Everyone arrives  
*Light refreshments available

9:15am – Ice-breaker Exercise

9:30am – Character Development Exercise

9:50am – Daily Agenda & Map Exercise

10:30 am – Break if needed

10:45 am – Moments of Stress Sticky Note Exercise

11:15 am – End of Meeting

4.2.1.5 Contingency plan

Additionally, I planned for alternative outcomes that might occur during the focus group. For example, I considered that if a participant could not make it at the last minute I might break the focus group into three smaller groups instead of two larger equally-divided groups. I also
planned each exercise in order of importance in case we ran longer with the first exercise than the time I had originally allotted.

4.2.2 Exercise findings

I will describe how the participants responded to each of the three exercises and highlight some of the conclusions and materials that were generated during the focus group. A detailed transcript from the three exercises can be found in the Appendix.

4.2.2.1 Exercise One - findings

Once the two groups were assigned, participants continued their conversation from the ice-breaker exercise as a way to get to know their group members further. Thankfully, I, along with the group leaders, was able to bring the focus back to the first exercise after the 15-minute ice-breaker.

Both groups successfully developed the persona profiles as indicated on the sheets and expressed that the exercise was fun to do. The every-day-carry items indicated by participants resulted in many similarities between the two groups and also helped to establish some of the individual qualities that were more specific to the single mother in McQuesten. The persona profile that was developed would later help me become more aware of some of the details I needed to consider as I was designing and performing the landscape assessment. For example, knowing that three children was considered the average of a 29-year-old low-income single mother in McQuesten by the participants, I then needed to consider some of the constraints or difficulties that come with trying to travel with three children, and what that might mean for these women, both socially and financially, as they navigate the landscape on a daily basis. The every-day-carry
items listed by participants helped me to make a list of the things I needed to bring with me during the landscape assessment. Knowing when and why to carry these items would later help bring awareness to the experience and difficulties that low-income single mothers in McQuesten face and how it then relates to their routine. For example, knowing that I needed to bring an empty stroller with me to get groceries not only brought awareness to the fact that this made it easier for low-income single mother to transport these sometimes heavier items home more easily but it would allow me to understand some of the difficulties that ensue when navigating the landscape with a stroller.

4.2.2.2 Exercise Two - findings

By the time we reached exercise two, the participants were engaging fully with one another. Building on exercise one, there was a lot of conversation about the neighbourhood concerns, so I indicated that we would be addressing this in exercise three although I found that these conversations also helped to develop the day-in-the-life routine of a low-income single mother in the McQuesten neighbourhood. I was switching back and forth between the two groups at this point as well, which helped speed up the process as I was keeping track of time. The development of these routines was completed successfully and both groups gave themes to their personas daily routine. One group told the story of the stay-at home low-income single mother in McQuesten, giving specific locations as they best suited their persona’s lifestyle. For example, this group indicated that their persona would travel on the Hamilton bus with a subsidized bus pass and spend only two hours shopping for groceries and everyday necessities because otherwise they would pay an additional bus fee if they did not stay within the two-hour time frame. They also indicated that the financial situation of the low-income single mother would
determine some of the considerations that influence her travel and location choices. For example, the group indicated that the routine they developed would happen on a Thursday because the 20th of every month, the day after they received ‘baby-bonus’ subsidies from the government, would be the best day for making the essential purchases needed for the month (ex. groceries, toiletries, clothing etc.). The other group had similar themes for their McQuesten low-income single mother persona. However, they developed two routines that they felt were important to share for their persona: One was a weekday routine and the other was a weekend routine, both representing different daily routines through the week.

4.2.2.3 Exercise Three - findings

Although exercise three was the lowest in priority to complete, it proved to be just as insightful. The conversation that emerged from the participants as a joint group was not only useful but it was important. This became an opportunity for the focus group participants to really be heard. I asked participants:

“Using sticky notes, brainstorm moments of stress that a single mother might experience as she travels the urban environment.”

This sparked conversation about the concerns and opportunities to improve the McQuesten neighbourhood for both themselves as women and for the low-income single mothers living in the neighbourhood. At one point there was a very reflective moment when one of the participants expressed their concerns about walking alone with her children in some areas of the McQuesten neighbourhood. Another participant spoke up and offered to become her walking buddy to provide support and security. Some of the participants, knowing that I would be performing a
landscape audit, advised me to have a buddy for safety while I performed the walks as well. This recommendation would influence the choice of an assistant to accompany me during the walks. This exercise provided more details that I reflected on as I performed my landscape assessment, resulting in more in-depth and insightful results. Below, is a synthesized diagram of the sticky-note brainstorming exercise that was completed by focus group participants to highlight both the existing McQuesten neighbourhood conditions and some of their proposed solutions (Figure #5).
Figure 6: Focus Group Points of Stress Exercise, Source: Author, 2020
4.2.2.4 Focus Group Summary

Participants successfully completed all of the exercises, although we did run over time by about 45 minutes because focus group participants and group leaders requested that we continue our conversation. I was notified by the St.Helen’s Community Center coordinator that this would be perfectly fine since they did not have anyone using the space during that time.

The results from the three focus group exercises were successful in helping me determine a plausible every-day persona of low-income single mothers in McQuesten, the routes they take navigating their days, and the concerns that occur as they relate to the McQuesten neighbourhood and neighbourhood landscape. More specifically, the results helped me in the development of a landscape assessment, directly informing the scheduling that guided the walks (time and place), the items to bring on each walk, and some of the existing opportunities and constraints that would help bring further insight and awareness during the walks. This information was then compiled into three different field-map sheets that replicated the three routines and two personas developed from the focus group. Further explanation of these field-map sheets and the landscape assessment will be explained in the next section of this chapter.

Figures #6-#10 below are photographs taken during the focus group of the participants and research assistants. The participants and assistants signed a photo waiver, agreeing to let me use these images.
Figure 7: Focus Group Photo #1, Source: Author, 2020

Figure 8: Focus Group Photo #2, Source: Author, 2020
Figure 9: Focus Group Photo #3, Source: Author, 2020

Figure 10: Focus Group Photo # 4, Source: Author, 2020
4.3 Landscape Assessment

The purpose of this landscape assessment was to develop field data collection tools that were based primarily on the information collected during the focus group meeting. The goals in developing these tools were 1) to audit the neighbourhood experience from the perspective of each persona that was created of the low-income single mother in McQuesten and 2) to apply a critical lens from a landscape architect’s perspective.
4.3.1 The design of the Landscape Assessment

The design of the landscape assessment was based on the focus group information that was collected in developing a persona of a single mother in the McQuesten neighbourhood, and her typical daily routine during the winter months in Hamilton, Ontario. I analyzed the data from the daily routines and associated maps and then combined them into three separate field-map sheets (see Figure #11 below). Along the left side of Figure #11 is the numbered schedule that I followed for each walk, with the map I used shown on the right side of Figure #11 and corresponding with each numbered location on the schedule. In the bottom middle of Figure #11 is the character profile, used as a reminder in the field, to refer back to the two different personas developed from the focus group. One persona represented a low-income single mother in her daily routine on the weekend. The second one was developed to represent the same persona but to demonstrate her position as a working low-income single mother on a weekday, more specifically on a Monday. The third was the second persona who demonstrated the routine of a stay-at-home, low-income single mother on a Thursday near the end of the month, determined to be the day she receives the baby-bonus government subsidy. These three routines led to three separate neighbourhood audit walks: Walk 1 on a Saturday, Walk 2 on a Monday and Walk 3 on a Thursday.
The Daily Agenda: Week day Routine:
Thursday Activity
1. 7:15 - 8:00 am Walking
   Place: Highland Rd. City Housing (9
   Unit building)
   With 3 children (3- year old in stroller)
   Drop off: 3-year old (keeping 7-year old
   15 minutes herself) Boys as day care, drop-
   ping them off in school. Sometimes there
   is a bus trip to school, 7 year old is
   with her too.
2. 8:00 - 8:30 am Walking
   Place: McQueen St. (Eastwood St near
   Melvin Ave)
   With 19 year old only.
3. 8:10 am - 8:30 am Walking
   Place: Ag & Catto Place (Bus Stop)
   With 19 year old.
4. 8:30 - 8:35 am Walking
   Place: City & Queen St - Bus stop (Hamil-
   ton Tran.)
   With Arie with an empty stroller (2 wheel-
   ed stroller)
   - Friend’ house.
5. 8:50 - 9:25 Walking
   Place: McQueen St. N. from (Bus
   Stop)
   With friend & empty stroller (spend 30 min.
   here) &
6. 9:30 - 9:55 Walking
   Place: Dilbert St. - N. St. (Bus stop)
   With friend & stroller
   List: School project stuff, crafts, body
   products, hair stuff.
7. 10:00 - 10:30 Walking
   Place: N. Kirk – N. & Queen St (gru-
   ced)
   With friend & empty stroller (spend 30 min.
   here)

Note: Money saving tip: keep trip under 2
hour for boys, today day trip has two bus trips
(they have been sick last year?) List: water, food, new books, these

Figure 12: Designed Field Map Example, Source: Author, 2020
The everyday carry items identified during the focus group helped me to determine what I needed to carry on each walk. These items would resemble the persona’s that were developed of the McQuesten single mom’s see Figure #13, below.
Figure 14: Single Mother's Every-Day-Carry, Source: Author, 2020
Additionally, I also had my own set of every-day-carry items for the walks that I needed to bring with me as the researcher (see Figure #14, below). I used a voice app on my smartphone to record my observations as I traveled to each location, following the routes indicated on each field map. I also used my phone’s camera app to photo-document my findings, which supported my voice recordings. I brought an external charger and charging cord to keep my phone charged because my battery would get low quickly from the cold temperatures and constant app use.

Wireless earbuds connected to my smartphone recording app by Bluetooth helped me to document findings easily and efficiently. I wore touch-screen gloves so that my hands could stay warm while I was recording information. I brought a clipboard folder that was waterproof to store my field map sheets, and a notebook to manually record my findings in case my smartphone battery died. A changeable multi-colour pen helped to keep information organized by colour and to reduce the number of items to carry. My Presto card was used for the times when I took the Hamilton Street Railway and I brought my wallet with change in case my card did not work. I also brought sunglasses, as the weather changed hourly, and had snacks and water with me because for the majority of the time I did not have time to stop and eat. I wore waterproof boots with good tread on them for the changeable winter-weather conditions and a pair of warm socks (not pictured). Additional items not pictured are a winter jacket, hat and fleece leggings/snow pants, also to keep me warm during the cold and wet winter weather conditions. Lastly, I brought an assistant along on two of the walks to assist me with documenting my research. There were times when documenting the experience of the persona of the McQuesten low-income single mother required me to step back and observe while my
assistant portrayed the character experience. This also provided an opportunity to discuss and collaborate on the information from the walks.

Figure 15: Researcher Ever-Day-Carry Items, Source: Author, 2020
4.3.2 Testing the landscape Assessment through three walks

This section provides the summarized recordings from the three audit walks. As a reminder, the scheduled times and events of these walks were determined by focus group participants as a guide for me to follow. The results of the recordings are what I experienced, observed, and documented as I followed and conducted each of the three audit walks. Each walk differed in temperature, weather conditions, total length, start-end times, mode of transportation (walking, transit, cab), and every-day-carry items. There were times during my walks when I documented how I was feeling and some of the difficulties I experienced as the researcher when I conducted the walks. These details are meant to indicate the difficulties I faced as a female researcher and to reveal where this method should be improved if replicated. In order to follow the results of the walks, I have prepared the following system:

Normal text – a transcription of my recorded observations from the landscape assessment

**Bold text** – An analysis or call out areas where the audits are being altered from the planned walks.

*Note* - These are personal notes from my experience as the researcher

R # - These are the recording numbers in order

**Walk 1 Conditions:**

**Date:** Saturday February 29, 2020
**Character profile:** Crystal

**Start temperature:** -12C (Windchill -17C)

**Weather condition:** sunny and very cold

**Total length:** 10 hours

**Start time:** 9:20 am

**End time:** 6:37 pm

**Modes of transportation included:** walking and cab

**Who was with me:** assistant

**Walk #1 Overview**

This walk takes place on a Saturday and resembles the weekend routine of a low-income single mother in McQuesten. Saturday was chosen as the best day to show a weekend routine because of tasks that would be performed on a Saturday vs. on a Sunday that has different tasks. For this walk I was auditing the McQuesten neighbourhood from “Crystal’s” persona. She is 29, has three children who are 6 months old, 2 years old and 7 years old. She lives on Oriole Crescent in McQuesten. Her key tasks include: 1. Taking the children to the St. Helens Community Center for activities 2. Going to the Lux Laundry to do weekly laundry for herself and the children 3. Going for groceries at the Wal-Mart in Stoney Creek and to feed the children dinner at the McDonalds (also in the Wal-Mart).
**Walk #1 Experience:**

**R1 (9:20 am):** “We are starting at Oriel Crescent and we are about to walk over to the McQuesten Urban Farm. Conditions right now are sunny but there is still snow from the snowfall last night, unplowed sidewalks along the route and we’re about to start. My assistant will enact Crystals character as I narrate her experience while we go along our walk today.”

**R2 (9:24):** “We are just walking along the pathway here and it’s icy and slippery from the snow. There’s ice underneath the snow and so far there’s been no plowed or shoveled sidewalks, making it a little bit difficult to walk. At the moment there’s not a lot of pedestrian traffic right now, so if I was thinking if I was Crystal and had two kids with me there wouldn’t be enough space on the sidewalk.”

**R3 (9:26):** “We have arrived at the McQuesten Urban Farm outside of the St. Helen’s Center and we’ve hit a point in the sidewalk where it has been salted and shoveled and it’s making for less slippery conditions.”

**R4 (9:30):** We are standing at the park outside of the St. Helen’s Center. Crystal would have just dropped off the kids for their weekend activities. If we had the stroller and the kids with us, they might want to play on the playground. There is no actual way of getting a stroller over to the playground because the paths are not shoveled and a lot of the equipment is covered in snow, including the benches. There is no actual way of accessing the playground safely without going through deeper snow. We would have to leave the stroller to the side and take the kids through the snow.”
**R5 (9:38):** “I had my friend bring the stroller over to us so that we could explore and test some of the McQuesten outdoor areas. This is outside of the routine research outline that was indicated in the focus group but this was noted at another point in the focus group that the path conditions sometimes aren’t the best. So we are walking down the McQuesten Urban Farm path and we are noticing the path is not cleared of snow. The stroller has snow build up on the wheels making it noticeably harder to push the stroller. We have caught some ice along the way as we travel along the path and right now I can say with gloves on my hands are cold from pushing the stroller and having my hands on the top of the handle.”

**R6 (9:41):** “We are at the Urban Farm now; down the path, there are light posts down the pathway, so far there have been four light posts. We don’t know if they truly work or how bright they are since it isn’t dark outside right now but it could be something we observe tonight when it is dark. Along the path the snow is melting from the sun exposure. I’m noticing there are some playful little decals on the ground in the shape of vegetables and fruit. There is a good line of sight to the end of the road and the 7/11 from here. The stroller is still collecting snow on the wheels and there is no sign of salt.”

**R7 (9:48):** “We are about to walk down the other side of the Urban Farm path, the pathway is asphalt and for the first little bit of the path we can see a lot of the snow is cleared off by the sun exposure. We notice that the water is pooling in some areas along the path as well. We are going to see how pushing the stroller is in comparison to the other side of the path. *Note* We had to stop and take a break because our hands are cold. I’m trying to record everything using a phone recorder, phone camera and maps on clipboard and I need to keep taking my gloves off to write or tap my screen on my smartphone. My assistant’s hands are cold from pushing the stroller.”
Something else to make note of, there was a man walking up the pathway with an unleashed dog, this was something that was brought up in the focus group that often times there are unleashed dogs along the paths and the parks. Although the dog owners are often near by, focus group participants expressed how this makes them feel un-safe or nervous because of the unpredictability of the dogs actions, especially when they walk their own dogs along the paths or park.”

**R8 (10:02):** *Note* my battery is under 50% right now. “We have ended up on the farther part of the McQuesten Urban Farm path, at Beba playground. The playground is broken into two small parks by the pathway that runs through the middle. This is really functional to access the park without having to leave the stroller somewhere else. Crystal might put the two-year-old and six-month-old together in the stroller to make it easier to travel with the kids through the snow. The sun is out so it’s quite warm on this pathway, which is really nice. We are now going more into the housing area at Oriel Crescent where we started. Along the same pathway there is more shade from the canopies of the trees. We are pushing up hill with a lot of snow and ice on the path.”

**R9 (10:10):** “We made our way from Beba Park and are approaching another park that is smaller located behind the Oriel Crescent housing units. There is no sidewalk or if there is then it hasn’t been cleared enough to see so we are walking though the parking lot as an alternative. There are light posts and finally a sidewalk as we approach the park entrance. Crystal has to get the stroller onto the sidewalk but is having a hard time getting the wheels up onto the sidewalk because there is no curb cut. Crystal is pulling back on the stroller, front wheels up and pushing really, really hard to get the stroller up onto the sidewalk. She is finally able to get the stroller onto the
sidewalk. The park is not cleared of snow or ice, and as a result there is a lot of snow build up on the tires of the stroller. The park is not overly accessible, kids couldn’t use this park safety at the moment.

**R10 (11:07):** “It’s approximately 11:10 and we are standing waiting outside of Crystals house on Oriel Crescent for Hamilton Cab. It’s warm where we are standing from the sun coming down. Waiting with two laundry bags, the diaper bag on her back, two kids and the baby strapped to the front of Crystal with baby wrap carrier.

**R11 (11:15):** No voice just static/wind

**R12 (11:44):** “We just arrived at Lux Laundromat. We ended up having to call Hamilton Cab a second time after waiting 30 minutes and no one showed up. We called again and it took about seven minutes for the cab to come. We started the cab ride at 11:39 am and got here at 11:44 am. The cab pulled in front of the laundromat off of Parkdale Ave, a very busy street at this time. I could imagine Crystal would be concerned about her kids running out onto the road while she is trying to get the laundry out of the trunk of the cab. We are in a tight parking lot as well, so making sure vehicles don’t back into the kids or the cab dropping us off is also a concern. The cab ride was $8.40 with a tip included. We are now going into Lux Laundry, I wonder how much the cost of washers and dryers are.”

**R13 (12:44):** “We have arrived home from Lux Laundromat. We used Hamilton Cab again but this time when we got dropped off, the cab driver stopped in the middle of the road with oncoming traffic coming from both ways. Crystal would be trying to pay the driver, collect her belongings and get the kids out of the cab while people flash their lights. At the laundromat there
was no change table in the washroom and nowhere else to change the baby. Washrooms were for customers only. The total cost of the cab ride coming home was $8.00 and the total cost to wash and dry both bags of laundry was $21.75. It’s lunch time now, the kids had a snack at the Laundromat that was packed in the diaper bag. They will nap while Crystal puts away laundry and then go back out at 4:30 for groceries. *Note, I’m really tired and could also use a nap
*laughs* it’s really hard to capture everything on paper and try to record while also thinking about the character at the same time. It might be the best option to just take the map with me but use my phone recording and camera to document the journey without the paper recording.

**R14 (5:00 pm):** “It is now 5:00, Crystals kids slept a little longer from their nap, which is a good sign that they might be a little more rested for the grocery store journey. We are outside waiting for Hamilton Cab to go to Wal Mart to grocery shop. The kids will be having dinner at McDonalds while we are there. Currently it is -3 degrees, the sunshine isn’t out resulting in colder conditions at the moment. We have the diaper bag and the three kids, no car seat for the cab, no stroller.

**R15 (5:09 pm):** “Okay we are here at the Wal mart now in Stoney Creek, it’s 5:09 pm and the total fare for the Cab was $12.00 with tip. The sun is starting to set and the cab driver dropped us off right in front of the “Food and Fashion” entrance as requested to let us out at the entrance area.”

**R16 (6:21 pm):** “We are done our shopping trip at Wal Mart now. It is not fully dark yet but the lights are on in the parking lot, as we come out of the Wal mart after dinner at McDonalds. We are waiting to be picked up by Hamilton Cab. The cab has arrived and we are unloading the bags
from the cart into the cab with the two kids, the six month old strapped to Crystal. She’s trying to figure out, does she leave the kids in the cab to put the cart away or does she just leave the cart there and get in the cab and go? She leaves the cart because the kids are being rambunctious. The front entrance is clear of snow, and the accessibility using the cart is no problem.

**R17 (6:37 pm):** “We are home now, it is -4 degrees. Crystal takes the kids inside, then comes back out and gets the groceries from the trunk of the cab making multiple trips. There is a bit of street lighting but not enough for full visibility. The snow is not cleared making for slippery conditions going up the steps and walkway. This concludes Crystals trip for today”.

**Walk #2 Conditions:**

**Date:** Monday, March 2, 2020

**Character profile:** Crystal

**Start temperature:** 5C (feels like 1C)

**Weather condition:** overcast, damp air, mild-cold

**Total length:** 10 hrs and 45 min

**Start time:** 7:15 am

**End time:** 5:30 pm

**Modes of transportation included:** walking and transit

**Who was with me:** No one
Walk #2 Overview

This walk takes place on a Monday and resembles the workday routine of a low-income single mother in McQuesten who travels outside of the neighbourhood to attend work. For this walk I was auditing the McQuesten neighbourhood from “Crystal’s” persona again. Her key tasks include: 1. Dropping the children off at school and daycare 2. Traveling to work on the bus 3. Going to work near James St. & Colbourne St. in downtown Hamilton 4. Traveling home after work 5. Picking the children up from school. Today she has made the deliberate choice to not bring a stroller with her because she has no place to put it once she drops the kids off at school/daycare.

Walk #2 Experience:

R1 (7:15): “Starting from home on Oriel Crescent and walking along the side walk, it’s currently 5 degrees but feels like 1 degree. The snow has mostly melted, there is a lot of salt and some water runoff on both the sidewalks and streets. It’s pretty bright out at 7:15 am and I am walking over to the Hillcrest Elementary school to drop off the kids. Today I am alone so I will try to position myself as Crystal along the walk. There aren’t a lot of kids walking with parents to school yet maybe it’s just timing. I am going towards the St. Helens Center and I will be on the Urban Farm path momentarily”.

R2 (7:20): “I’m now making my way through the Urban Farm path onto this back walkway that branches off from the Urban Farm path but this side path is muddy, there are parts that aren’t paved and some snow build up. I’m on a sidewalk that the side path connected to in a
subdivision near the Hillcrest school and there is no sign of kids or people pushing strollers maybe I’m still a bit early here but it’s a deserted area right now”.

**R3 (7:24):** “I have arrived at the Hillcrest Elementary school. It’s clearly not school time yet, that’s a complete side note but it’s 7:25 am and the parking lot is pretty bare. Something I noticed walking up to the school was that there were no crosswalks, there might be a crossing guard at the end of the street when it gets a little busier. So far the pathways are paved, no ice or snow. Something I did notice, the path to go up to the daycare area was covered by ice and snow and mud! Pushing a stroller along that walkway wouldn’t be ideal, I would chose the parking lot because it is cleared better. I have hypothetically dropped the kids off now, I’m assuming there would be a before school program [as this wasn’t clarified in the focus group]. Walking down the sidewalk here now heading over to the bus stop to go to work”. I am fairly close to the bus stop located on Woodward Ave and Melvin Ave, located across from the 7/11 and I’m noticing that there is no bus shelter to stand under and it’s starting to rain.

**R4: (8:13 am):** The Bus Experience - “Okay, I’m off the bus now and I made a lot of phone notes of my bus trip experience. It was hard to do recordings and navigate in the bus since I was doing a lot of seat changing. There was a lady who came onto the bus with a stroller and her kids so I was trying to move for them to sit but the bus was packed and there was nowhere for me to really go. Another lady with a Moped came on as well and then a lady with a walker. So I kept changing seats a lot to allow for people to sit and be accommodated properly. The lady with the Moped had to enter the bus backwards and she struggled on the ramp because it didn’t completely meet the sidewalk. There was a hand post in her way as she [tried] to back in, she had to keep angling her Moped because it was a tight space. The woman who came on with her two
kids and partner, had a little boy in the stroller and a little girl that was just a bit older. The little
girl did not want to sit on the seats even though the dad was trying to get her to sit. The stroller
took up about two seats and the whole width of the isle. No one could get past but she really
didn’t have much of a place to go, the bus was really packed and there was really nowhere else
she could put the stroller. People around her were getting upset and trying to get past her, some
even stepped over her just to get onto the bus. The lady who was on the Moped was already in
the reserved accessibility seating area where the mother might have [gone] alternatively. The
mom and her family were on the bus for about 10-15 minutes and the dad actually had to go to
the back of the bus because there was no space to stand with them. It was *big sigh* exhausting
to even watch. This is a probably a realistic day in the life of Crystal if she was that mom with
the stroller. The amount of scents such as cigarette smoke, perfumes, really, really sweet scents
that kept coming on and off the bus was overwhelming and I actually have a headache right now.
I’m also someone who gets migraines or headaches so I think this might have triggered it.

When you go to sit down in the bus seats there really isn’t a lot of room for anything other than a
small bag you are carrying. People were getting upset with one another. You also have to be
really quick to get off the bus because the bus drivers close the doors quickly. I’m off the bus
now at Colbourne Street, I was getting really overheated on the bus with my jacket on after a 30-
minute bus ride and now that I’m off I’m a bit cold even though it’s still 1 degree. It’s extremely
windy right now as well. I should note that this is an area outside of the McQuesten
neighbourhood. It’s 8:20 am and Crystal would be starting work.

R5: (5:01 pm): “It’s 5:01 pm and Crystal would be done work. I just got off the bus traveling
from the John Street and Barton Street bus stop near Crystal’s work. It wasn’t as busy as the
morning trip. I noticed a larger majority of men on the bus than women right now and no kids. I also noticed that there was no one with a mobility device and priority seating was being used by everyone. There was a lot more seating. I would say at this point Crystal would be pretty tired.

*Note* I’m feeling extremely exhausted, carrying bags with me from the day, trying to stay alert on the bus. Crystal would be going to pick up the kids at this point so I am walking over to Hillcrest Elementary School. **As I’m walking from the bus stop I’m noticing that there are not a lot of kids around. It’s warmer than it was this morning and there is no snow on any of the sidewalks or pathways.**

R6 (5:04 pm): *Note* “I’m about half way to Hillcrest school and I just wanted to make a personal note here, I need to use the washroom and there are no washrooms around. This would be something to consider for Crystal as well after a 40 minute bus ride. She may be able to use the school washrooms but for me there really is nowhere to go at this point and I still need to finish the walk, get to my vehicle and drive home to use a washroom. It’s still pretty bright outside at 5:05 now. I notice a lot of garbage along the way as well. Again, no kids or parents around yet but I think at this time the kids would be in an after school care program as well until Crystal could pick them up.

R7 (5:08pm): “Crystal would have picked up the kids and be walking back to the 7/11 as indicated from the character development sheet because she has hypothetically forgotten an ingredient for dinner. Also, just observing there is a man going into the school to pick up his kids, but it looks like he is waiting at the door for someone to let him in. So, that’s a good idea. I did notice the path to the daycare which I mentioned earlier in the morning recording is now cleared. Obviously, if I was truly getting the kids it would have taken me a little bit longer so I’m
just going to walk slowly to the 7/11 because I think it would take at least 15-20 more minutes from now to get them dressed and going. I do notice parking lot lighting at the school, also noticing street lighting on only one side of the street. There isn’t a lot of activity and it’s pretty vacant around the school area at this point in the day. It’s cold and windy as well.”

R8 (5:22 pm): “Approaching the 7/11 now, the kids would be with Crystal as well, it’s pretty busy at the moment in the parking lot and a lot of people are pumping gas. People have to cross the parking lot to get to the front doors of the 7/11. But I’m going to continue on and make my way down the Urban Farm path. The path is getting darker but there is still moderate visibility. The map from the focus group is hard to understand what route she takes home so I will be making a few assumptions here. The quickest option for Crystal to reach home would be the Urban Farm path that runs behind the St.Helen’s Center but the path has no lighting. The other option is the path that runs on the opposite side, still behind the St.Helens Center and is lit but it would be longer. I’m not sure which path she would choose in this case.”

R9 (5:30 pm): “Coming up Oriole right now I chose the non-lit path because I felt that Crystal might choose this way if she was tired and had the kids with her who would likely be tired as well. The path was pretty vacant, one lady was walking about six dogs, she was the only person I encountered walking down the shorter path. I’m moving a lot quicker than Crystal probably would with two kids. I’d imagine with all of [the] puddles that the kids might want to jump in them. So now I’m thinking if I was Crystal, I would have two puddle drenched kids that are cold. Crystal might have the kids bags after they play in the puddles and all of her own bags. As well as the stuff for dinner. She would need to make dinner, feed the baby and now bath and get the
kids in Pj’s after puddle jumping. I can just imagine how tiring this would be for the mom in the position.*Side note: I still really need to use a washroom!”

**Walk 3 Conditions:**

**Date:** Thursday, March 5, 2020

**Character profile:** Karen

**Start temperature:** -1C

**Weather condition:** sunny, bright, cold, dry

**Total length:** 12.5 hours

**Start time:** 7:15 am

**End time:** 7:10 pm

**Modes of transportation included:** walking with stroller and using transit

**Who was with me:** assistant

**Walk #3 Overview**

This walk takes place on a Thursday and resembles the stay-at-home routine of a low-income single mother in McQuesten who is pregnant. Thursday is significant to this stay-at-home, low-income single mother because this would be the day after she receives her monthly government subsidy, allowing her to pick up essentials for the month. For this walk I was auditing the
McQuesten neighbourhood from “Karen’s” persona. She is in her in her late twenties/early thirties, has three children who are 6 months old, 3 years old and 7 years old. She lives in social housing near the intersection of Dunsmire St. and Reid St. in McQuesten. Her key tasks for the day include: 1. Dropping the children off at school and daycare 2. Traveling on the bus to get to the Nash Plaza 3. Meeting a friend for coffee in the Nash Plaza McDonalds 4. Picking up needed items from the Dollar store in the Nash Plaza. 5. Picking up groceries for the week from No Frills across from the Nash Plaza. 6. Picking up items from Bed & Bath. Today she is bringing the stroller with her to help transport items she will purchase along this trip.

**Walk #3 Experience:**

**R1 (7:36 am):** “My assistant is with me again today to enact Karen’s character as I narrate her experience while we go along our walk. We are starting at Karen’s house on Bingham Rd. and going to drop the kids off at school, we have walked from to Ayre Street and down Bingham Street to drop the youngest kid off at daycare. Now we are walking to Hillcrest, the width of sidewalks are sometimes not wide enough for stroller, kids and oncoming pedestrian traffic, although at the moment there isn’t a lot of people. It’s the morning, it’s quite bright out and we are walking east, so towards the sun right now. **Note*** Sometimes to look straight forward at where I am going is blinding, definitely bring sunglasses. Currently its -1 degree, my hands are cold pushing the stroller but the sun helps”.

**R2 (8:31 am):** “We dropped the middle kid at Hillcrest Elementary School, now we are walking with the 10 year old back to get the bus to Viscount Elementary School. When we dropped the kids off at the Hillcrest Elementary school [we were assuming] there is a before school program
because there were no signs of kids coming to school yet. Just as we were leaving some kids started to walk along the sidewalk towards the school. We are assuming that Karen dropped the two middle kids off first in order to get the 10 year old to the bus to go to Viscount Elementary School. We are now heading towards the bus on Reid Rd and Queenston Rd. **Currently we are walking down Grimsby Ave and a pattern that we are noticing is that we keep choosing the sidewalks that are more exposed to the sun to keep us warmer as we walk. We have also noticed especially with the stroller that there are shrubs that impede the walkway creating a narrower path to walk along. The walk has been pretty minimal for encountering other people.**

**R3 (11:10 am):** “I’m going to back track a bit here because it was hard to record while taking transit. The bus cost was $3.25 and will likely cost the same on the way back but if Karen was taking the bus she would have a 2-hour bus pass at a reduced cost. We entered the bus from the front and had to lift the stroller up onto the bus. The parked stroller sat across 3 seats but it was the only way to not block the aisle way. Once we got to our stop we exited the bus at the back and the bus was higher than the curb which created a rough exit. We ended up tilting the stroller forward and if there was a child in the stroller it would have been dangerous for the child. We made our way to the McDonalds and once we arrived we noticed the one door didn’t have an automatic open door button. Without Karen’s friend to hold the door for her she would have been struggling to get the door open with the stroller. To get to the McDonalds entrance we had to cross the drive-through exit lane”.

**R4 (11:13 am):** “We are in the McDonalds now and it is very busy, we are limited to where we can sit because of the limited stroller access. It would have been easier to doc the stroller
somewhere and find a seat. The same could be said for the multiple people who have accessibility devices sitting in the aisle ways, making it hard for us to get through with the stroller. The washrooms are not equipped for a stroller or a mother with multiple kids. Leaving the McDonalds to walk to the Dollar Store. It is a bit of challenge to navigate walkways. Most of the safer options take A LOT longer in order to get to places located right beside each other. So instead we are going through the parking lot. I can see why Karen would choose this timing because it would be ten times busier on a weekend or evening, especially in the parking lots that are already a bit busier right now. We are now leaving Dollarama to go to the No Frills across the road and are going through the parking lot again because there are no connecting walkways to get over to the other side of the complex to cross the road. We have found a walkway in the center of the parking lot but there is a large pile of snow that has been pushed onto the walkway, likely from a plow. It is making it hard to push the stroller through. We have reached the road now and are trying to cross to get to the No Frills but we have to walk up to the stoplights to the crosswalk and then all the way back down, about a ten minute trip even though the No Frills is right across the road. We didn’t want to risk crossing a super busy street with a stroller. So now we are in the No Frills parking lot, again another parking lot stroller walk because there are no walkways leading to the storefront. It feels like it has warmed up a bit now. We have items from the Dollar store strapped into the stroller making the stroller more weighted”.

R5 (12:29 pm): “Back tracking with our trip again because I got preoccupied trying to navigate our trip from No frills to the Bed and Bath store which we just left. The trip over from No Frills took us across the parking lot again because the only walkways provided would take double the time to get to the Bed and Bath store across the road. We are trying to keep in mind that Karen
would be on a two-hour time limit with her bus pass. We had to [lift the stroller] onto the walkway that connects to the cross walk with the stroller because there was no [curb cut] that we could access. We made our way to the Bed & Bath store and as we approached the entrance we noticed there was no designated walkway up the door so we had to walk through the parking lot again. There was no automatic open door button and there was a sign asking that people don’t come through with a stroller so we parked the stroller at the front of the store. We also noticed A LOT of salt on the walkway when we approached the Bed & Bath store. It was likely left over from all the snow we recently had. The salt kept getting caught in the stroller wheels. Now we are making our journey back towards home and stopping at Pete’s Variety on the way. We have chosen to walk with the stroller full of groceries and supplies. Note* We are deciding to walk instead of take the bus because we want to consider the worst case scenario in this situation. So we are going to say that Karen misses her 2 hr window and decides to make the choice not to spend additional money on a bus ticket. Right now the sidewalk route is warm from the sun so that’s enjoyable although there is a lot of wind. We did spend about 30-45 minutes in each store: Dollarama, No Frills and Bed & Bath. So if this were Karen she would be running behind schedule”.

**R6 (12:54 pm):** “We are walking up to Pete’s variety now on Queenston Rd and a few things we have noticed so far is a really high noise level caused by the traffic on Queenston Rd. I can imagine a child in the stroller we are pushing would not enjoy the trip. Also, if you are someone who gets migraines from sound easily this would not be a good option. I was thinking if this was Karen’s situation it wouldn’t be the easiest. As we are coming up to Pete’s Variety there is no ramp, in fact I don’t even think the step up to the store is to code. Definitely not accessible at all.
Documenting my assistant with the stroller and she is explaining how frustrating and difficult it is to pull the stroller backwards and then try to turn around to get in the door. There is no accessible button for the door to open automatically and swings outward. In the store now and there is no accessible washroom, you have to go down a set of stairs in which case Karen would have to leave the stroller at the top of the steps but I will say this much, the store was not inviting for washroom use. Backtracking in our trip again, the walkways we were on were narrow in some places and, shrubs were impeding on the walkways making for a super narrow path on a really, really busy road. We had to stop and let people by for safe passing. Walking back to Karen’s home now and the side streets are a lot quieter than Queenston Rd. The sun is high now, it is 8 degrees and approximately 1:00 pm so most walkways have warmth from the sun.

Notes*: I want to make note from today’s trip that there weren’t a lot of great places that I could see a mom feeling comfortable with breast feeding her child. I wonder how designers might approach this problem.

*Pushing a stroller for the day is tiring!* I can only imagine what it would be like to be pregnant like Karen’s character with kids in the stroller and groceries after a long trip. Access to washrooms with stroller accessibility were minimal. Also I can imagine using a washroom would be more frequent at times.

**R7 (1:08pm):** “We have arrived at Karen’s home on Bingham Rd. Karen would now drop off the groceries at home and head to pick up the kids from school. Along our travels we noticed a park on route. I was considering if Karen came to this park there would be no accessibility to access the benches with the stroller. Karen would have to leave the stroller and carry the child to
the playground. It’s mucky out and pushing the stroller on the grass would have been problematic I could imagine. There were no washrooms available although her house isn’t far from the park.

We noticed a porta-potty near the bus stop outside near the park but you could only access it with a key because it was locked likely for bus drivers only. There was [a] sign that indicated “men only”. We considered how it might play out if we did use a porta-potty with a stroller and the kids, we would have to leave the stroller with anything in it and the kids outside because there would be no room for kids to come in with you. Karen does have a 10-year-old to supervise but I could imagine this would be difficult for a low-income single mother with younger children especially if they were at an event or park and porta-potty’s were the only option available.

**R8 (3:01pm):** “We were at Karen’s home about ten minutes ago and we are now arriving at Hillcrest Elementary School with the stroller. We kept choosing the warmer side of the sidewalks again however there were cold patches from the vegetation along the way. We went down the side path that branches off of the McQuesten Urban Farm path and it was extremely soft since it’s later in the day and things have warmed up a bit. We were dodging around the muddy area with the stroller. There were no street lights down this path either so we agreed, we wouldn’t use this route at night but would Karen? We noticed another family with kids using Beba playground and they had their stroller parked in the playground mulch to keep it close to them. We are walking back home now and there is nothing overly different from the walk to Hillcrest Elementary School other than the school being a lot more busy and seeing how the school operates during pick up hours. There was a lot of vehicle and pedestrian traffic, stroller use by parents and kids playing sports in the fields.
R9 (4:23 pm): “Karen would now be arriving home with all three kids. She would have picked up the ten year old from the bus stop. Karen would now get the kids ready for activities and dinner at the St. Helens Community Center.

Note*: It was a bit windy, I had sunglasses on and my eyes were watering from the sun and wind. There was a man with his two dogs across the road and both the dogs were off leash. There were kids playing in the same park. We also saw on the Urban Farm path as we were coming home that another man had his dog off leash. This would be the fourth encounter of a dog off leash.

R10 (6:49 pm): We are starting the last half of our walk for Karen’s character. Karen would gather the children and walk over to the St. Helen’s Community Center. We have walked from Karen’s house on Bingham Rd. to St. Helen’s Community Center. Karen would go inside with the kids to have dinner and the kids would join in the scheduled weekly activities. We decided to make a trip to Hillcrest Elementary School which was out of our character schedule but we wanted to see what the area was like at night. There is lighting only on one side of Eastwood Street, which is the street Hillcrest Elementary School is located on. At this point it’s pretty dark. Kids were playing basketball at the school but there is no lighting in that area so they were leaving. Located at the McQuesten Urban Farm path now and there are two paths that run down each side of the St. Helen’s Center. One path which is closer to the farm has no lighting and the other has lights that work well with moderate brightness. There was a woman walking very fast down the non-lit path, we don’t know why.
*Note: Taking pictures at night with my phone camera produces a lot more light than what we can actually visibly see here. So when looking at these pictures it’s something to be aware of. The true lighting is a lot darker.

Almost every woman that we have encountered (so far that is about 4), have had dogs on leash walking with them. Some women had children with them as well.

We are walking down the darker path and I would say if I wasn’t walking with someone else I would be more on edge, more on guard and alert. This is the shorter path to get places though, so the convenience is preferred.

R11 (7:08 pm): We are now back at Karen’s house and we are both cold. My feet are cold and I’m wearing warm socks and winter boots. It’s a three quarter moon out so the light is a little brighter than most nights. I’m going to back track again and talk about a few points from our walk home. We noticed two women walking on the path and realized that all the women we encountered, including ourselves were wearing black making for poor visibility between us and them. When we left the St. Helens Center it was busy with kids playing outside, kids on bikes and parents picking their kids up. Since it is winter the tree canopies are bare letting a lot of lighting shine through from the streetlights onto the sidewalk but if you consider when the canopy is full in the summertime there would be minimal light getting through. This concludes our Thursday walk.

*Note: As a woman walking at night I was making the choice as I always would walking alone at night, to walk a bit faster than I did during the day. I think if you are a mom walking home with
kids, you can’t really be walking any faster than them, especially with three kids. It’s just something I was thinking about on our way back.

As I end these walks I think another avenue I would like to explore if I had the chance would be understanding the routine of a mom with a vehicle. How does she get the kids and stroller in and out of the car? Is it easier? Harder? What about navigating a parking lot and parking spot?

4.3.3 Critique of and Recommendations for the Landscape Assessment method

While the experiences of the three walks were insightful and informative, some challenges did occur. The walks ended up being a lot more tiring and difficult than I predicted; I can imagine this would be true to the experience that a single mother would face. This was because of the long hours spent in the field; at times, the winter conditions could be harsh or unpredictable; there was minimal access to washrooms, and multi-tasking between the character and researcher.

I did not pay careful attention to my personal time management in drinking water or eating, which meant I ran out of energy quicker. Safety was also another important factor when conducting these walks because there were moments, as a female researcher, when I walked alone.

There were moments when I did not know how my character would respond to certain situations and had to make assumptions in the moment; I think this is a natural occurrence when improvising for any researcher. However, I would recommend documenting these assumptions and further investigating to be more thorough in the research, perhaps through a follow-up interview or questionnaire. I also took opportunities to explore the neighbourhood or slightly
alter the walk scenarios to gain more perspective. For example, there is a moment in the walks when Karen is supposed to get on the bus after shopping within the two hours of the time she first got on the bus. I wanted to explore what her journey would be like if she missed that two-hour window to gain the perspective of the worst-case scenario. The recordings became more refined as I completed the other two walks.

Practical Recommendations for the Landscape Assessment Walks:

• Identify where washrooms are in your neighbourhood so that you can access them along your routes. However, I would like to point out here that I believe there is a lack of available washrooms I was able to access on my walks.

• Always bring a field assistant with you to help manage the multi-tasking as you move between the researcher and persona. The field assistant can also provide a sense of security and safety.

• Check the weather before you leave and wear weather-appropriate clothing. For the first walk I did not have the texting gloves and had to keep taking my gloves off to touch my screen resulting in very cold hands and at times my phone would not recognize my touch.

• Make and revise your field list. Having a “runner” available to bring anything you may have forgotten is helpful. No matter how organized I was, I would still forget something for my walks.

• If conducting the walk during cold weather, always bring a backup charger with multiple charges available because you will run out of battery faster.
• Set reminders to drink and eat when you use your field map sheets. Carry easy-to-eat snacks with you for maintaining your energy.

• Explore when an opportunity is presented and be willing to improvise.

### 4.4 Findings Maps

The purpose of the findings maps is to communicate the discoveries that were generated by performing the landscape assessment. This is an example of the type of deliverable that a landscape architect might generate to explain the key findings and information gathered during the walks as it relates to low-income single mothers in the McQuesten neighbourhood. More broadly, these findings maps could be documents generated during the inventory and analysis phase of a community planning process, to inform the location and type of required design interventions. For this research, I will use these findings maps in a presentation to City of Hamilton municipal staff; I was asked by them at the beginning of this research to present my results upon completion.

#### 4.4.1 Creating the findings maps

Once all three walks were completed, I transcribed, analyzed and then summarized my recordings. I also printed all of my photographs. I then analyzed all the findings through a collaging process. This collaging process combined several techniques. First, I laid out the transcribed recordings and images in order of the walks, first with Saturday, then Monday and Thursday. I cut down and glued all of the recordings and images onto craft paper. I then pinned the panels up on the wall to start analyzing my findings (see Figure #15, below). I highlighted
text with different coloured markers or drew diagrams on top to highlight key findings that emphasized both spatial and social aspects that affected the represented personas. I then colour-coded these re-occurring elements with sticky notes so that I could visually connect and organize my findings (see the zoomed-in-image of the collaging process in Figures #16, below). I also doodled on top of printed pictures to re-create moments that I could not capture otherwise, such as, for example, since I did not have children along to partake in the walks, the situation would have been different if they were there. I also used this technique to visualize and brainstorm better solutions. I then developed a synthesized version of my collage where I graphically represented and organized everything into a findings map (see Figure #17 below).
Figure 16: Collaging Process, Source: Author, 2020
Figure 17: Zoomed in Collaging Process, Source: Author, 2020
### 4.4.2 What the findings map might look like

The map below (see figure #17) highlights the key findings from all three walks collectively. I was able to identify recurring patterns from all three walks that I organized into the following categories:

1. Sidewalk Conditions
2. urban Farm Path Conditions
3. Stroller inaccessibility
4. Transit Experience

I first created a map of McQuesten. Surrounding areas to the McQuesten neighbourhood were also included because some of the trips taken were outside of the McQuesten neighbourhood. The purpose of the map is to indicate place specific patterns as it related to the walks. For example, I illustrated the key locations (stores, schools, parks etc.) that were most relevant to the persona’s destinations. I then organized the categories around the map, each category was given a number. The numbers were then placed on the map to identify where the patterns occurred geographically in the McQuesten neighbourhood. Sketches were also included to detail the findings from the walks more specifically. I used the photographs taken from the walks as a reference to create these sketches.
Figure 18: Findings Maps, Source: Author, 2020
5 Chapter Five: Discussion & Conclusion

From the beginning of this research, the main goal was to identify and explore methods that landscape architects and designers could use to help understand and address the barriers that currently exist in the urban environment between women and their right to access the city. I felt that it was important for the process to be participatory, bridging the researcher’s knowledge and the user’s experience. Each method used in this research has proven to be insightful to my exploration in achieving this goal, which I will reflect on below. What has resulted from this research is a landscape audit tool that is replicable as a process for better understanding, and is recommended to those who aim to achieve more inclusive cities.

As described in Chapter 2, there are many instances where the design of urban environments have not accommodated women when they lack the safety, security or necessities that affect women’s everyday lives, where women have been considered the ‘other’ as a result of mainstream design using the male body as the prototype. What we also know from Chapter 2, is that the able-bodied cisgender white male has historically held primary positions as decision makers and designers of cities. The design of the public sphere primarily reflects the able-bodied, white male’s personal experience. But cities are the places where people are diverse in race, culture, age, gender and ability, and where they too experience public life. These are experiences that may be overlooked when the designer is one gender, one status, one ableness and relying on their personal experience. Women’s daily lives are different; their experiences of environments are physically, mentally and spatially different. What I will recommend below is an approach
that can be taken based on my experience in this research process. I will explain how collaboration, empathy and advocacy are key values in achieving more inclusive design processes.

*Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because and only when they are created by everybody.* -Jane Jacobs

### 5.1 Collaboration

Collaboration with others can build strength in design outcomes and improve neighbourhoods and urban environments. This can be collaboration with municipal staff, with NGOs and with individual citizens. Collaboration can support initiatives that are diverse and support the need for change.

During my research, I made connections with municipal community development staff in Hamilton. Taking the time to make these connections helped me to gain mutual trust and understanding; this also validated that there is a knowledge gap in how women use the urban environment. Municipal staff supported my efforts as a researcher and designer who wanted to help them and to offer potential solutions. My positive connection with municipal staff led to connections with community members who were invited to the focus group. Without this collaboration, my research may have lacked the support and connection with the City that I chose to study and with its users in the community.
To ensure my neighbourhood audit reflected the particular experience and perspective of low-income single mothers, I organized a focus group in order to collaborate with community members, who were invited by municipal staff who knew the best people to engage with. The focus group was an opportunity for me to listen, empathize and work with community members. Based on what I learned from the focus group participants, I created a landscape assessment protocol. I was fortunate to be joined by a field assistant who has personal lived experience in navigating the McQuesten landscape; they were able to help me see things that I might have otherwise overlooked.

5.2 Empathy

As landscape architects we can be aware that environments have not always been designed to be diverse. We can acknowledge that the urban environment can set up barriers to the freedom of movement and ability to access important facilities for many in our cities. We can make it our responsibility to contribute to changing this by building the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing within their frame of reference. We can place ourselves in the position of others and then use our understanding to make informative changes. Landscape architects can explore methods where more voices are heard and fewer experiences are overlooked. Knowing that each individual experiences the same situation differently can add awareness and value to the way information is gathered, research is conducted, and planning and design decisions are made. What I would like to recognize is that for some designers, empathy can also impose personal biases by the designer of how people think or feel, translating it into their own thoughts or feelings. This means that empathy is not a simple solution but rather one
we should recognize as a symbol of caring what others think, feel and need. Ultimately, I believe that the city building professions need to become much more reflective of society, in order that professionals can contribute to an understanding of the groups we design for and with. Supporting the need for more diversity at the practitioner level also means hiring those that represent these groups as a means to give voice and perspective to the profession of landscape architecture. While this is starting to happen in the landscape profession there is a long way to go, and projects like implementing better urban design for the low-income single mother, for example, need attention more immediately. In the short term we can’t hold back the process of working on these problems. We need solutions, tools and the practice of empathetic methods to work towards more welcoming, usable and diverse places. As landscape architects we can be genuinely curious about others and how they experience life.

It is important for the designer to incorporate a form of engagement with their users of urban environments and neighbourhoods. Finding methods to design with people rather than just for people, and to empathize with the user, listen to them, understand their needs and their emotional connections to place and community can result in more accessible design, and a better experience for the user. A landscape architect or researcher should aim to select the user first and then the neighbourhood or place because understanding the user first — the socio-behaviours and values of citizens who inhabit our cities — can better translate into a better understanding of the transformations needed to serve our society better.

I aimed to engage with women who could represent low-income single mothers living in the McQuesten neighbourhood, who could help me to develop scenarios that single mothers in that neighbourhood would experience. Developing a persona as part of the focus group activity
brought the focus to the lived experience. This method gave me the information and the tools to increase my understanding of the perspective of a low-income single mother in McQuesten. This helped me to a way of seeing that I may have missed otherwise when I took my neighbourhood walks. Experiencing the landscape from the persona’s perspective, experiencing obstacles that participants pointed out during the focus group, made me think further about situations or outcomes. Just like the single mother in McQuesten, other Hamilton neighbourhoods can be explored with the same empathetic approach.

5.3 Advocacy

While landscape architects can be empathetic in how we conduct our research, we also have to acknowledge that we cannot fully take the position of a person’s own lived experience, how they fully connect and feel welcomed and safe in the neighbourhood that they live in. But we can advocate for them. As landscape architects, it can be easy to make assumptions about another person’s lived experience; this can happen when we are not fully informed. It is one thing to recognize that we do this but we need to act to overcome our assumptions as well. Indeed, if I had had more time, it would have been helpful to have gone back to the focus group participants and discussed if my understanding was accurate or needed to be changed.

I produced a Findings Map that synthesized my results in order to record and communicate the experiences of low-income single mothers in McQuesten. The Findings Map can also help to validate the McQuesten persona’s voice and perspective. The research analysis provides the opportunity to bring community voices to municipal staff, who can then make informed decisions on landscape design based on the users’ needs.
5.4 Limitations

My landscape assessment experience was centered on experiences, activities and routines on particular days in the winter. This would have been different in July or August, when children are not in school and as a result the single mother might have a different routine. As a female researcher I also faced situations that limited my access to certain points in the route I was taking and also made it hard to fully record the experience of the walk. Environmental factors such as cold temperatures altered the way I was able to collect information. I would have liked to have spent more time with community members to improve my understanding when I had to make assumptions but was limited due to time constraints. Lastly, halfway through the final semester of this thesis project, the SARS-COV-2 pandemic closed all public gatherings, critically altering my ability to access expertise, or in-person resources.

5.5 Refinement of the Audit tool & Broader applicability

From my research it became clear that the development of the audit tool could be adapted and utilized to audit a neighbourhood from a different marginalized perspective. Some refinements were made to make this tool more broadly applicable. The diagram below “The Community Member Perspective Neighbourhood Audit Method” shows the modifications made. As you will see in the modifications the audit tool has indicators that are intended to communicate to the
potential users of the tool such as landscape architects, community activists and policy makers, starting at different points based on involvement.
Figure 19: “The Community Member Perspective Neighbourhood Audit Method”, Source: Author, 2020
5.6 Conclusion

Landscape architects and planners can achieve stronger, more diverse and inclusive urban environments by engaging with the users of the environments for whom they design. They can contribute to improved knowledge in collaboration with community participants, opening up their research to the user experience. Designers can work to advocate for users with decision makers. It should not just be a choice but a responsibility for the designer.

*Never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world. For indeed, that’s all who ever have.* - Margaret Mead


APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Neighbourhood Selection Process
Appendix 2: Focus Group Invitation Letter

January 3, 2020

Dear McQuesten Community Leaders:

Re: Focus Group on Urban Design Strategies for Single Mothers in McQuesten

My name is Skyllyssa Carville; I am a Masters student in Landscape Architecture at the University of Guelph. I am conducting a design-based research project on the experience of low-income single mothers in navigating the urban landscape. My research goal is to develop an audit tool that landscape architects, and others, can use to identify challenges and opportunities that low-income single mothers have in moving through the urban landscape.

You have been identified by Adam Watson and Al Fletcher as leaders in the McQuesten community. Therefore, I am reaching out to see if you would be willing to participate in a focus group in January 2020. The goal of the focus group is to develop a ‘persona’ (or personas) that would represent a plausible single mother living in McQuesten, and then to map out a ‘day in the life’ for each persona - generally, where does she go, why, when, how, with whom, and what is she bringing along?

During this focus group, participants will be provided with maps on which they can draw the routes within McQuesten and the greater city landscape. With the information gained from the focus group, I plan to follow these route(s) and conduct an audit of the urban landscape from the perspective of these single-mother personas, to identify challenges and obstacles that could be addressed through better urban design strategies.

I am hoping to convene 6-8 participants for 1.5 to 2 hours and hope that you might be available to participate. I am aiming to identify a specific date and time in January that would work well for participants. If you are interested in participating, please link to the doodle poll provided in the email and indicate your availability.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Best wishes,

Skyllyssa Carville
MLA Student
University of Guelph
647-232-1030
Appendix 3: Focus Group Exercise Booklet

McQuesten Community Focus Group

For the purpose of thesis research at the University of Guelph

Hi I’m Skg.

I will be leading the focus group with the intention of developing a character profile that best represents a hypothetical McQuesten Single mother. I will then be auditing the neighbourhood based on these findings. My ultimate goal is to develop an audit tool that landscape architects can use to audit neighbourhoods as part of the design process.

Group #: ________________________________

I would like to stay in contact as I continue my research. If you are interested in contributing and staying connected could you kindly provide the following:

Your Email or Phone number: ________________________________

Best times to contact: ________________________________

Today’s Agenda

9:00 am
Everyone arrives
*Light refreshments available

9:15 am
Ice breaker exercise

9:30 am
Character development sheet

9:50 am
Daily agenda & Map out route exercise

10:30 am
Break

10:45 am
*Moments of Stress*
Sticky Note Exercise

11:15 am
End of Meeting

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT: Low Income Single Mothers in McQuesten

HYPOTHETICAL CHARACTER PROFILE

Her name is: __________________________________________

Her age is: __________________________________________

She lives (nearest intersection): __________________________

Number of children & age: ______________________________

HER EVERYDAY CARRY IN WINTER

*Please list items that she would carry with her in her daily routine
*Please be brand specific if you can

TASK ATTIRE - FOR A TYPICAL WINTER WEEKDAY

*Please list any clothing items that she or her children might be wearing especially in regards to the winter climate.

OTHER IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS OR INFORMATION

*If her routine/diet/everyday carry differ on the weekend or during a different season provide details here
HER DAILY AGENDA CONTINUED

5. Travel from location (4) to location (5) by (circle one): Car  Bus  Bike  Walking  Other
   Location (5)
   Time of day ______ to _______
   Place (name, address, intersection): ________________________________
   With who: __________________

6. Travel from location (3) to location (6) by (circle one): Car  Bus  Bike  Walking  Other
   Location (6)
   Time of day ______ to _______
   Place (name, address, intersection): ________________________________
   With who: __________________

7. Travel from location (6) to location (7) by (circle one): Car  Bus  Bike  Walking  Other
   Location (7)
   Time of day ______ to _______
   Place (name, address, intersection): ________________________________
   With who: __________________

8. Travel from location (7) to location (8) by (circle one): Car  Bus  Bike  Walking  Other
   Location (8)
   Time of day ______ to _______
   Place (name, address, intersection): ________________________________
   With who: __________________

HER DAILY AGENDA

Below is an opportunity to illustrate what the weekday routine would look like for a MoQuesten single mother. Considering some of the worst case scenarios would be helpful as a way to reveal specific obstacles and limitations that occur in the landscape.

1. Travel to location (1) by (circle one): Car  Bus  Bike  Walking  Other
   Location (1)
   Time of day ______ to _______
   Place (name, address, intersection): ________________________________
   With who: __________________

2. Travel from location (1) to location (2) by (circle one): Car  Bus  Bike  Walking  Other
   Location (2)
   Time of day ______ to _______
   Place (name, address, intersection): ________________________________
   With who: __________________

3. Travel from location (2) to location (3) by (circle one): Car  Bus  Bike  Walking  Other
   Location (3)
   Time of day ______ to _______
   Place (name, address, intersection): ________________________________
   With who: __________________

4. Travel from location (3) to location (4) by (circle one): Car  Bus  Bike  Walking  Other
   Location (4)
   Time of day ______ to _______
   Place (name, address, intersection): ________________________________
   With who: __________________
“Moments of Stress”
Sticky Note Brainstorm
Exercise

Using sticky notes we will brainstorm “moments of stress” that a single mother might experience as she travels the urban environment.

Participant notes
Appendix 4: Focus Group Maps
Appendix 5: Landscape Assessment Field Sheet's

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Home Office</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Housework</td>
<td>Alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Caregiver</td>
<td>Caregiver</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Daily Activity Routine:
1. 6:00 am: Wake up
2. 6:30 am: Breakfast
3. 7:00 am: Drive to work
4. 4:00 pm: Meet with client
5. 5:30 pm: Pick up kids
6. 6:00 pm: Dinner
7. 7:00 pm: Family time

Audio Symbols:

Photography Symbols:

Expense along trip:
1. $50<br>2. $30<br>3. $20<br>4. $10<br>5. $5<br>6. $2

Map of McQuesten West:
- McQuesten Urban Farm
- Hillcrest Park
- McQuesten East
- Normanhurst

Legend:
- Green: McQuesten Urban Farm
- Blue: Hillcrest Park
- Red: McQuesten East
- Yellow: Normanhurst