Open City Three-Year Plan

2019 - 2022
About Open City

Open City is a charity promoting people-centred cities with a year-round programme of events and initiatives serving the public, the education sector and the construction industry.

What we do
Our core team works with the Open City network - built environment professionals, educators, clients and politicians - to produce Open House for the public; programmes for professionals; and learning programmes for schools and communities.

How we do it
Our events programme uses the city itself - buildings, infrastructure and the public realm - to learn and improve our knowledge of how the built environment works.

Why we do it
We believe that the future of city-making is equitable urban design and planning where everyone has a role in shaping their city. Open City’s diverse programme of events – which place learning through architecture at their core - is working towards that goal.
Our mission statement:

“Making cities better for everyone through experiencing and learning from great buildings and places”

Architecture, planning and urban design can seem like daunting, some might say inaccessible, subjects that can be challenging to ‘explain’ to the general public. Our mission is to show the exact opposite is true.

Indeed from an early age each of us learns these subjects ‘on site’, whether rearranging our childhood bedrooms, wandering – perhaps warily - through new parts of town, or carving out some space on our desk at work that says ‘me’.

Open City’s programmes – our tours, our family events, our learning workshops for schools, our professional forum and of course Open House – build on this innate knowledge and passion for design and show how rewarding learning from the built environment can be.

By celebrating the diversity of the human experience of architecture and planning we can better understand how we can shape our cities in the future to meet and reflect the needs of everyone.
To achieve our mission we will:

- **Lead** more architecture-inspired design workshops for more children and young people in more schools across London to engage with a wider audience.

- **Mentor** more teenagers from diverse backgrounds to prepare them for university studying architecture and engineering.

- **Build** on our design guidance training for communities during regeneration projects.

- **Nurture** and grow our 1800-strong volunteer network.

- **Foster** a public-friendly design culture among our professional network.

- **Forge** stronger links with London schools, teachers and educationalists to keep our city-making learning programmes vital and relevant to the national curriculum.

- **Launch** a public conference on city-making promoting people-centred architecture and design.

- **Develop** Open House London, shaping forthcoming programmes based on detailed audience feedback.

- **Build** long-term partnerships with the GLA, London’s boroughs and other representative organisations in our mission to promote the benefits of great city-making - architecture, planning and infrastructure design - to all citizens.

- **Provide** a free public talk – the Thornton Lecture – by a leading figure from the cultural sector.

- **Deliver** public boat tours, cycle tours and walking tours of London’s best buildings throughout the year.

- **Diversify** our board of trustees so it includes more women and young people from a range of ethnicities and backgrounds.
1
We will put people – and our audiences - first in all we do

Why?
By celebrating the diversity of the human experience of architecture and planning we can better understand how we can shape our cities in the future to meet and reflect the needs of everyone.

How will we do this?
We want to reach as many people as we can to show how we can all have a stake in shaping the cities we live in. We will therefore develop and maintain a programme - of tours, family events, learning workshops for schools, a professional forum and of course Open House – that engages people of all ages regardless of status, ability or background.

2
We will provide thought leadership

Why?
Open City has been at the forefront of ethical city-making ideas since it was founded in 1992 when Open House gave free public entry to private buildings in London for the first time. As new factors - from globalisation to digital technologies – begin to shape our lives, it is crucial we continue to promote new city-making ideas.

How will we do this?
We will launch a public conference on city-making promoting people-centred architecture and design in 2019. The conference will host design workshops bringing public and professional audiences together alongside expert speakers on contemporary city-making ideas from across the world.
Our top objectives in achieving our mission statement:

3. We will geographically broaden our remit

Why?
Open House has long extended its reach beyond London. Indeed the Open House worldwide network spans more than 40 cities across five continents. Spotlighting great architecture wherever it is located - and making it accessible to the public – is crucial to the development of a culture of understanding around architecture, planning and urban design.

How will we do this?
We will continue to engage every London borough in our Open House festival, extend our tours programme to include great architecture in counties neighbouring London and ensure that our learning programmes engage children and families from London boroughs. We will also use our social media platforms to increase our reach.

4. We will take an approach that always considers the sustainability and integrity of the organisation

Why?
As the political and financial landscape continues to remain uncertain it is vital Open City retains a pragmatic approach to aims and ambitions. By ensuring we maintain a presence within London's vibrant built environment sector and continue to connect it effectively with the public, we can continue in our mission to make cities better for everyone.

How will we do this?
We will ensure that the objectives and aims outlined in this three-year plan are embedded into all areas of our programming and we will regularly review, evaluate and publicise our progress.
Action plan for programme areas

Organisation and staff

- We will evaluate all current programmes to ensure they are being delivered to their full potential, identify areas of improvement and create action plans to ensure we are achieving our objectives.
- We will develop sustainable income through reviewing and refreshing our corporate sponsorship programmes, establishing new and long-term sponsorships opportunities and establishing membership programmes for the public and professionals.
- We will increase number of benefactors by 25%.
- We will create a Junior Board of diverse, young professionals to work with our Board of Trustees to ensure we remain relevant to and reflective of London’s diverse communities.
- We will invest in our staff by offering more training opportunities and reviewing our performance review systems to build capacity in delivering our aims, and to ensure they are and feel valued.
Action plan for programme areas

Public programmes

- We will expand Open City’s ‘Evening With’ tours programme outside of London and develop new boat tours to engage with a larger and more diverse audience.
- We will digitise our data asset into a year-round app and website to engage with more people whilst increasing our social media following through offering more ‘takeover’ projects with our stakeholders, strategic posting, competitions, public debates and online opinion polls.
- We will increase visits from locals within their own boroughs to build local pride within the community. We will do this by working with boroughs to engage with local target groups and use social media marketing to target groups online.
- We will ensure that all Londoners of all abilities and from all backgrounds can engage with our programmes through offering accessible and specialist activities for a diversity of audiences with a range of needs.
- We will develop our volunteer programme to engage with a younger audience and encourage repeat volunteering across all Open City platforms. We will achieve this through ensuring that programmes enable volunteers to learn a range of transferable skills for personal CV development. We will also work in partnership with universities and colleges to attract students with an interest in architecture, the built environment, heritage and education.
- We will continue to develop and build on the existing Open House London database and app to complete all major developments so that it is easy and ready to use each year with no errors. Not only will this make the submission process for the programme simpler and easier for guide production but it will also allow us to market the app as a tool for the public to use all year round. This will enable us to focus on engaging with our audience in the months outside of the Open House London programme and build the brand.
Action plan for programme areas

Professional programmes

- Our professional programme will pursue new advocacy and enabling lines of work such as the recent success carried out for Argent BXS.

- We will develop a new professional corporate membership programme that will provide a range of benefits and would aim to at least double our current corporate membership. The most significant feature of the new professional membership programme will be the annual Open City conference. This will bring together all of Open City’s stakeholders, from the professions, to volunteers and young people. The conference will be a two-day event, taking place in the spring. It will feature an initial evening networking event, followed by a day of lectures focused on a contemporary and pertinent theme given by guest speakers and those from our stakeholder networks. The conference will close with a day of site visits.
• We will develop our Open House Families programme by increasing participation by 1000 families per year, increasing participants from BAME audiences by 2% each year and delivering specialist activities for SEND audiences. We aim to develop the festival in this way to enable everyone from all backgrounds to be able to learn about London’s incredible architecture through direct experience. We will also develop a family tours programme to enable families to pass on their knowledge of London’s best buildings to other families in an informal and fun setting with the aim of enthusing more families from across London to explore all parts of their city. We will aim to increase press and social media coverage with the aim of making Open House Families as famous and successful as Open House.

• We will develop our Architecture in Schools programme by increasing participation by three schools, one London borough and three architectural practices each year. We will continue to target schools with a high proportion of pupils receiving free school meals and we will deliver specialist activities for SEND audiences to enable all children from all backgrounds to benefit from participating in the programme. The programme will have the ultimate aim of enabling pupils from all of London’s boroughs to learn about how they can contribute to the improvement of the places where they live, learn and play. We will also increase publicity around the programme through continuing to exhibit winning designs in central London locations and achieving more press and social media coverage to highlight the importance and benefits of young people learning about the built environment.

• We will aim to develop the Accelerate into University programme by expanding the course to run from September to August each year to enable us to increase the number of skill development workshops, mentoring sessions and work experience opportunities. We will increase the number of skill development workshops by 25% to enable a wider variety of experts from different disciplines within the built environment and academic staff from a range of London university architecture courses to share their experience, skills and knowledge with students. We will also increase the number of mentoring sessions by 25% to enable students to gain a better understanding of how architects design, work and contribute to the development of cities and to create high-quality projects that will help them with their university courses. We will run the course through to August to deliver a work experience programme that enables students to apply the skills and knowledge they have developed from taking part in the programme to real life situations and to gain meaningful experience that will help them to develop their careers.
The coming years will be an exciting time of development for Open City. Our growth will only be made possible through the support of our valued partners and supporters.

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