



SEPT  
25

PIZZA LUNCH

**JANET LOEBACH**

NOON | CENTRE SPACE | JOHN A. RUSSELL BUILDING

### CAN CHILDREN AND YOUTH HELP US TO DESIGN MORE INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACES?



Janet Loebach, PhD, PEng, M.EnvDesign

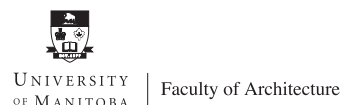
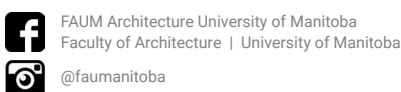
**SYNOPSIS** | The ability of children youth to freely enjoy public spaces, and to develop a sense of belonging and attachment to these environments, is critical for their physical, social, cognitive, and emotional development. Young people represent a vital citizen group with legitimate rights to occupy and shape their public environments, yet they are often driven out of public places by adult users, restrictive bylaws, lack of access, or hostile designs. Children, in fact, are disappearing from public spaces.

Some subgroups of youth may be especially marginalized in public spaces, prevented from freely using these environments due to their social or cultural identity, their familial or housing conditions, or their economic status or resources. Youth can also be deliberately designed out of public environments, or thwarted by designs which unintentionally make it difficult for youth to freely and safely utilize public spaces. Children and adolescents are also often excluded from genuinely participating in the planning of public, outdoor environments.

All youth have the right to use and inhabit public outdoor environments without prejudice or consequence, and their ideas, opinions, and needs should be considered essential to the decision-making processes utilized when creating public spaces. This talk will highlight the need for creating inclusive, youth-friendly public environments, as well as share strategies and best practices for authentically engaging youth in the assessment and design of public spaces.

**BIO** | Janet Loebach is an environmental design researcher and consultant based in Ontario, Canada, and the Principal Consultant for Thrive Design Consulting. Her research and practice focuses on children's perception and use of their everyday environments, and the socio-environmental factors which influence children's behaviour and well-being. She currently holds a Community-Based Research Fellowship at the CAMH Institute for Mental Health Policy research, where she is investigating the impacts of neighbourhood type on children's community play and mobility. Her areas of expertise include assessment and design of natural and built play and learning environments for children. She also has extensive experience with participatory, child-led and community-based planning processes. Dr. Loebach currently serves as Vice President of the International Play Association (Canada) and as co-chair of the Children & Youth Environments Network of the Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA). She is also a member of both Outdoor Play Canada and the CSA Task Force preparing guidelines for the development of Naturalized Playspaces. See [www.thrivedesignconsulting.ca](http://www.thrivedesignconsulting.ca) for additional information on Dr. Loebach's research and practice.

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