Making urban places that are attractive to women: differences that design can make

One of the measures of a good place, according to Project for Public Spaces, is seeing women and kids using it.
Who is it we’re designing for?
What are they looking for?
Gender-based differences

Many women’s preferences for and uses of urban spaces are different than men’s.

- Biological factors—neurological structure
- Cultural factors—roles, education, values, past experiences
What makes an urban place more appealing to women?

Practical concerns: differences in physical characteristics and culture

Psychological factors: differences in values, preferences and sensitivities
Physical Characteristics and Cultural Factors
Women tend to be smaller, with shorter reach and less upper body strength.
• Relatively small metabolic differences between men and women
• On average, women's total energy expenditure around 5 to 10 percent lower than men's
Apparel and women’s fashions

- Functional limitations: paving, seating
- Comfort issues: wind protection, sunlight

Physical characteristics
Accessories: bags and wheels

Physical characteristics
Differences in Values, Preferences and Sensitivities
Sense of security

Values and preferences
Sense of security
Sensitivity to negative conditions

Values and preferences
Information-rich settings

Values and preferences
Ambience

Values and preferences
Different social patterns

Values and preferences
Density Values and preferences
Territorial control

Values and preferences
Inside-outside
Furnishings
Choices
Active spaces
Attention to detail
Design Implications

Friendly and welcoming place
Softer boundary between inside and outside
Outside space that is furnished

Design Implications
Smaller scale spaces

Design Implications
Vitality: color and texture

Design Implications
Vitality: mix of uses

Design Implications
Places for healthy, active fun
Beautiful and well-crafted places

Design Implications
To design places to be more attractive to women:

- Size
- Protection from wind—sheltered space
- Good paving
- Safe and comfortable access: walkable streets
- Welcoming ambience
- Good social settings
- Beautiful surroundings