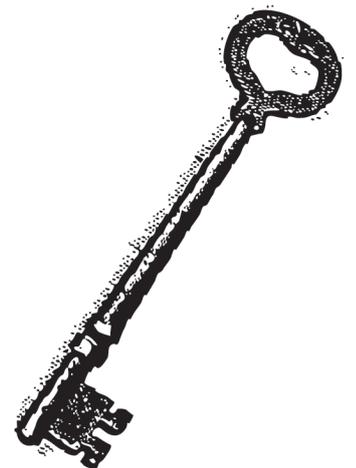
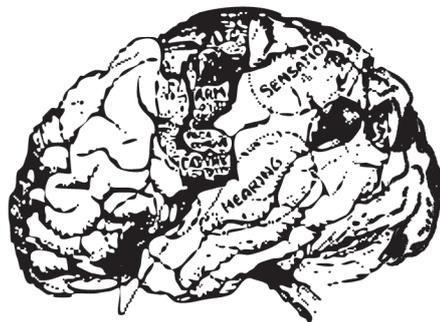


# Open House Impact Study:

25 years of opening eyes, minds, and doors



# Contents

	<b>Executive summary</b>	3
<b>1.</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	6
1.1	Background	7
1.2	Impact Study Approach	9
<b>2</b>	<b>What is the Open House experience?</b>	11
2.1	Physical Experience	11
2.2	Shared Experience	13
<b>3</b>	<b>How is dialogue encouraged?</b>	16
3.1	Learning	16
3.2	Language	18
3.3	Current Issues	19
	Topical Issues	20
	Sustainability	21
	Accessibility	22
	Health and Welbeing	22
3.4	Shared Dialogue	24
3.5	Reflection	25
<b>4</b>	<b>Empower to advocate?</b>	26
4.1	Empowerment	26
	Local	26
	Changing people's perceptions	26
	Active Citizenship	27
4.2	Advocacy	27
	Citizens	27
	Building Owners	28
<b>5</b>	<b>How does Open House influence?</b>	29
5.1	Policy Impact	30
5.2	Sponsors and partnerships	31
<b>6</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	32
	<b>Contributors and Acknowledgements</b>	34
	<b>References</b>	35

# Executive Summary



## The 2017 Impact Study

The 2017 Open House Impact Study assesses how Open House contributes to the international shift toward greater public participation in city design. Open House is described by visitors and partners as a unique opportunity to engage with their city's architecture. It is a uniquely independent, apolitical, inclusive programme offering direct experience of well-designed places and spaces.

The aim of the impact study is to understand and demonstrate the value of Open House as a means of engaging the community and empowering them to advocate for a high-quality built environment. It has become imperative to ensure citizens have a stake in the development of their cities to enable them to advocate for measures that would improve their own wellbeing.

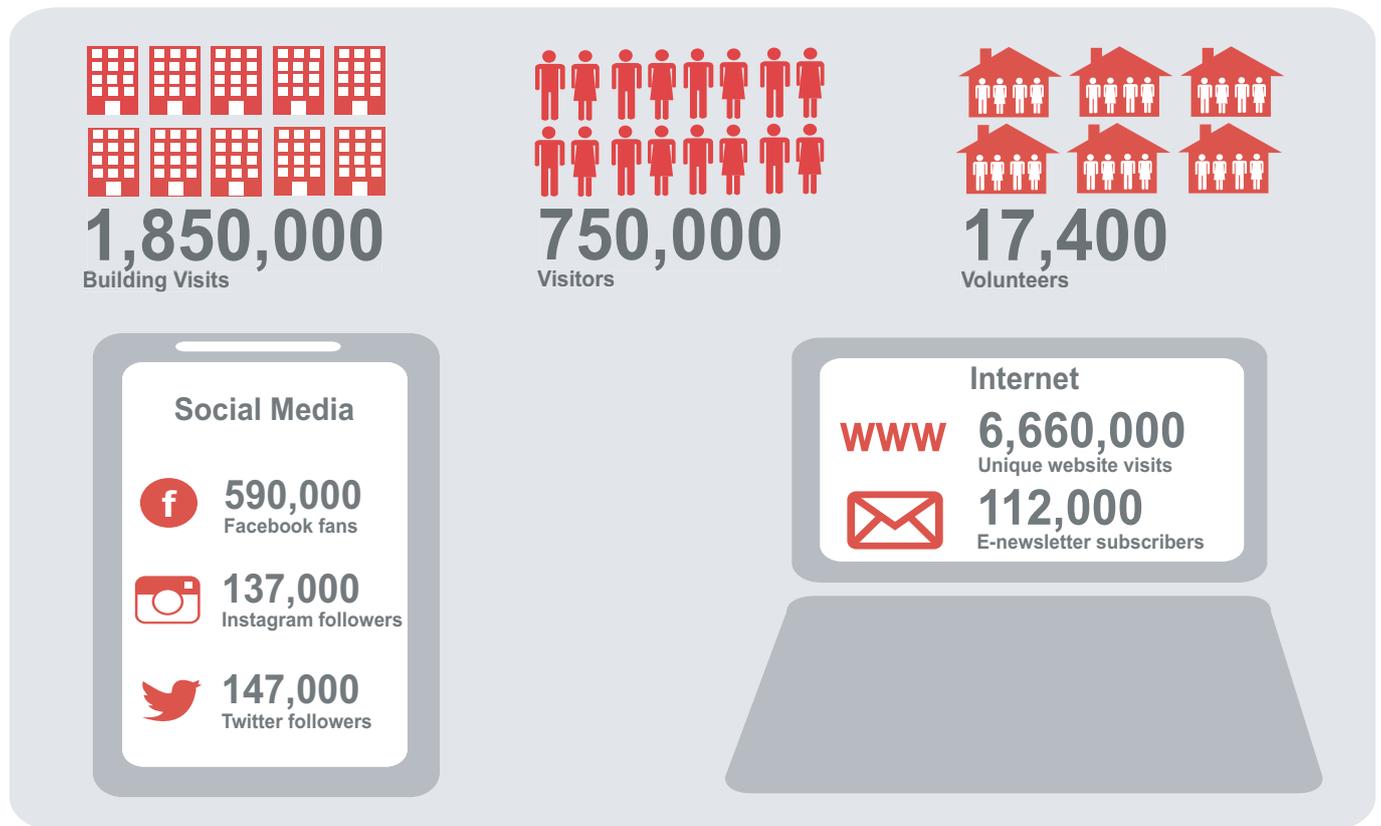
## What is Open House?

The Open House concept was founded in London in 1992, aiming to create a wider community able to engage with architecture on their own terms and argue for a better quality of built environment.

Open House facilitates opportunities for a city's inhabitants to directly experience how well-designed cities can improve their lives, by opening examples of architectural excellence to the public. These experiences stimulate dialogue about architecture and learning, which empowers people to advocate for a well-designed built environment.

The key aims of Open House are achieved through a free weekend programme showcasing places where we live, work and play.

## Key facts about Open House Worldwide ...



The concept resonated with cities internationally and the organic growth of independent Open House cities led to the creation of the Open House Worldwide Family of affiliated cities in 2010, which has grown to more than 30 cities across five continents (see map above). The exponential growth of the concept suggests it is an international zeitgeist, revealing a global need for the experiences that Open House curates. It also signifies that the Open House concept is readily translatable. Direct experience is a universal means of 'learning' – it requires no specific or specialist knowledge or language and can be applied in any city.

The core of the Open House concept is simple, but powerful; facilitating direct experience of architectural excellence, free-of-charge, in a non-elitist manner as part of a process of catalysing design advocacy. The Open House **Key findings from the study demonstrate:**

approach is independent, apolitical, inclusive, and accessible. Open House is a worldwide phenomenon with common values, but each city operates at a local level – a feature that is critical to its success in a particular city. Programmes respond to the particularities of the local environment.

The Impact Study incorporates data from thousands of visitors, volunteers, and programme organisers, to assess the impact of Open House programmes worldwide.

## Experience

- The success of Open House is attributable to its approach of offering **diverse, direct experiences, free-of-charge**, in a **non-elitist** manner. It reaches **¾ of a million people worldwide** - the largest audience of any international architecture programme.
- Open House is described by visitors and partners as a **unique** opportunity to directly engage with architecture in their city.

## Dialogue

- Open House provides an **alternative method of community engagement** because it is a uniquely **independent** and apolitical body that can bridge between government, the architectural profession, and the public in an open non-hierarchical dialogue.
- Open House encourages better exchange of knowledge and ideas through **accessible language**, offering informal **learning** opportunities, and encouraging people to **reflect** on what they have seen, heard and learned. **87%** of visitors surveyed worldwide have learnt something new about their city through Open House.
- Linking to **current issues** builds a groundswell of interest around critical issues for the city and feeds into policy thinking; Open House becomes an **agenda setter**.

## Empowerment and Advocacy

- Open House empowers people at the **local** city scale, creating a sense of **civic pride** and **active citizenship**. **28%** of visitors worldwide state they are more likely to become involved in local governance

decisions in relation to architecture and urban design as a result of Open House.

- Open House creates an **independent platform** that gathers citizen responses that can help inform policy and through which policymakers, architects, and industry professionals can engage directly with the public.
- Open House **changes perspectives** with **75%** of visitors surveyed worldwide believing Open House changed the way they see the city.

## Influence

- Open House cultivates **advocacy coalitions** and **strong relationships** with partners and policy makers to amplify their influence in championing well-designed cities.
- Open House has demonstrated its value in directly enabling architectural policy outreach and awareness objectives. External stakeholders have described Open House as being “**pivotal**” and a “**benchmark**” in **inclusive** architectural dialogue and **engagement**.
- Open House cities have enthusiastic media partners and gain considerable coverage. Open House programmes are covered in national and local press, social media, TV and radio.
- Open House creates a community of shared interest. Building owners and industry organisations value Open House because it provides an **independent channel to demonstrate corporate strategies** and values including corporate responsibility, sustainability, marketing and publicity, and staff development.

# 1 Introduction

*“Well-designed buildings and public spaces are vital in creating and sustaining a vibrant and equitable city and Open House London enables the wider community to become more knowledgeable, engage in dialogue and make informed judgements about architecture”*

Victoria Thornton, Open House Founder

The growing urbanisation of the world’s population puts cities at centre stage of problems such as sustainability, wellbeing and equity. In 2016, approximately 54.4% of the world’s population live in urban settlements, and by 2030 an estimated 60% of people worldwide will live in cities (United Nations, 2016). There has been a significant international shift toward greater **public participation** in the design of cities, to address these issues, increasingly referred to as **co-design, co-creation, or active citizenship**.

Co-design of cities has been seen as a way of enabling sustainable, equitable, intelligent cities (Deakin, Lombardi, & Cooper, 2014; Nevens, Frantzeskaki, Gorissen, & Loorback, 2013). Co-design in cities enables architects and planners to utilise community expertise and develop innovative solutions, and work directly with local communities in a collaborative way to create citizen-centred solutions that increase well-being, and results in a sense of collective ownership. It is a democratic process that involves citizen participation in the design of services, products, programmes or spaces. The objective of co-design is “not the mass customisation of the products, nor

personalisation of service provision, but collectivisation of the process. In particular, the collectivisation of the process in ways that allow citizens to collaborate with one another as a community of subjects who are sufficiently empowered to govern such developments” (Deakin et al., 2014, p. 56). This participation has been enabled by technology including social media, which facilitates the unmediated expression of opinion through independent platforms.

Open House contributes to this shift towards co-design by highlighting the role the community can play in the creation of their city and empowering people to advocate for well-designed cities. Victoria Thornton, the Open House founder explains that “well-designed buildings and public spaces are vital in creating and sustaining a vibrant and equitable city and Open House London enables the wider community to become more knowledgeable, engage in dialogue and make informed judgements about architecture”. Critically, a diverse range of buildings are opened to reflect the everyday environments where we work, live, and play, not just the iconic buildings that are the focus of the architectural press. These include schools, government buildings, houses, community centres, and offices, from all periods in the city’s history.

The core of the Open House concept is simple, but powerful. Open House provides opportunities for a city’s inhabitants to directly experience how well-designed cities can improve people’s lives as part of a process of catalysing design advocacy.



The cornerstone of Open House is direct experience. Curating **direct experiences** generates potential for people to engage in **dialogue** about architecture and share their knowledge. By offering direct, physical experiences, the aim is to encourage dialogue and **empower** a city's inhabitants to **advocate** for a well-designed built environment.

Anecdotally, it has been understood for some time that visitors, building owners, city officials, and volunteers see great value in Open House programmes, but there has been little substantive documentary evidence on the value and impact of Open House. The aim of the impact study is to understand and demonstrate the value of Open House as a means of engaging the community and empowering them to advocate for a high-quality built environment.

The Impact Study uses survey's, international research, and case studies to explore best practice approaches and Open House's impact. Section 1.1 explains the origin and development of Open House and Section 1.2 describes the approach to this impact study.

## 1.1 Background

The Open House concept was founded in 1992 by Victoria Thornton, aiming to bridge the gap between London's citizens and the architecture of the city itself. There are now a number of public engagement initiatives about architecture in the UK, but at that time Open House was a very early example of its kind addressing a clear deficiency. It is still the first of its kind in many of Open House cities internationally including Lagos, Gdynia, Buenos Aires, Monterrey, and Vilnius.

Open House seeks to engage the public by giving people the opportunity to understand and engage with architecture on their own terms. Open House aims to open eyes, minds, and doors. The core of the Open House concept lies in the direct experience of the buildings and

spaces, accessible and free to all, ensuring everyone's right to the city for one weekend a year.

The Open House London weekend programme gave Londoners the opportunity to explore a range of building types; places they live, work and play. Open House London has grown and developed to become a very successful annual programme that sits within the charity Open City. Open City was created as an organisation to further the objectives of design advocacy through diverse programmes during the course of the year. Alongside Open House London, these include Accelerate into University, Architecture in Schools, Archikids Festival, Green Sky Thinking, and My City Too!. Open House London now includes an extremely varied range of architecture and urban design including private homes, government buildings, schools, cultural buildings, infrastructure and transport projects, landscape and public realm, public art, and future development sites.

Open House London was extended beyond architecture to include future significant developments for London, including infrastructure projects, for a broader picture of city making. In parallel to building tours, Open House London organises debates, walks, children's programmes, surveys and polls, and partners with AJ Buildings Library to give Open House visitors access to extensive background information on projects. In 2016, over a 48 hour period, Open House London, saw 200 000 people of all ages and occupations visit 750 buildings of all types opened by their owners with the help of over 1000 volunteers. The Open House London programme presented:

- **London's changing shape** through contemporary architecture
- **Spaces to live in** through great design and innovation
- **How the city works** through infrastructure and engineering projects

- **A greener city** through the city's best sustainable buildings
- **Places and spaces of the city** through inspirational public space
- **Revitalising the city** through regeneration
- **Connecting communities** through public and community buildings

The concept of a different kind of public engagement with the building environment resonated with cities internationally. Ten additional cities internationally had established Open House programmes by 2010. The organic growth of Open House cities led to the creation of the Open House Worldwide Family in 2010. The Open House family has grown to more than 30 cities across five continents committed to the values of the original London concept. Three quarters of a million people worldwide participate annually in programmes that are accessible and free to all, aiming to uphold everyone's right to the city through direct

The Open House family grows every year, as does the scale of many of the Open House cities year on year. Vilnius showed a 200% increase in the number of buildings offered and volunteer participation, and 230% increase in the total number of visits from 2015 to 2016. The growth of the concept suggests it is a zeitgeist, which demonstrates there is a global need for the experiences that Open House cities curate. The worldwide adoption of the concept signifies the model is readily translatable and endorses Open House's uniquely independent, apolitical, inclusive approach that offers direct experience of well-designed places and spaces.

experience of the built environment. The exponential growth of the concept suggests it is a zeitgeist, revealing a global need for the experiences that Open House curates. It also signifies that the Open House concept is readily translatable. Direct experience is a universal means of 'learning' – it requires no specialist knowledge or language and can be applied in any city. The core of the Open House concept is simple, but powerful; facilitating direct experience of architectural excellence, free-of-charge, in a non-elitist manner as part of a process of catalysing design advocacy. The Open House approach is independent, apolitical, inclusive, and accessible. Open House is a worldwide phenomenon with common values, but each city operates at a local level – a feature that is critical to its success in a particular city. Programmes respond to the particularities of the local environment.

The current Open House Worldwide Family includes: Athens, Barcelona, Belfast, Brisbane, Buenos Aires, Chicago, Cork, Dublin, Gdynia, Gdansk, Helsinki, Jerusalem, Lagos, Limerick, Lisbon, London, Melbourne, Madrid, Monterrey, Milan, New York, Oslo, Perth, Porto, Prague, Rome, Slovenia, Stockholm, Tel Aviv, Thessaloniki, Vienna, Vilnius, and Zurich. Additional cities due to stage Open House programmes in 2017 include San Diego, Bilbao, Torino, and Santiago.



## 1.2 Impact Study Approach

This impact study explores the role of Open House as a means of engaging and empowering the public to advocate for well-designed cities. The study considers how Open House values and aims are being enabled across all of the Open House Worldwide cities in 2016. The aim is to understand the impact of Open House in 2016; it is not a longitudinal study that tracks the impact over time.

Although a number of the cities have demonstrated a positive and measurable economic impact of Open House, economic impact is not addressed by this study as it is an indirect outcome of the major aim of advocacy. There is evidence demonstrating improved health and wellbeing outcomes as a result of engaging in a cultural activity and volunteering. These are a positive impact of Open House, however, these impacts not considered in detail in this study. Direct environmental impact as a result of Open House programmes is also outside the scope of this study.

We adopted a qualitative research approach that allows detailed research questions and themes to emerge in parallel with data collection. Some of the detailed research questions that are addressed in the forthcoming sections included:

- Does Open House change stakeholder/participants attitudes to their cities?
- What are the barriers to Open House objectives and what is best practice?
- Does Open House encourage active citizenship/co-design?
- How does Open House compare with typical methods of community engagement relating to the city?
- How can Open House act as a platform to gather knowledge about citizens response to their built environment to support policy decisions?
- How can Open House influence built environment policy?
- What is the importance of free entry?

- What is the significance of physical versus mediated experience of architecture?

The research approach involved comparing Open House with similar organisations, identifying best practice examples from Open House cities across the world, reviewing visitor and volunteer feedback, and undertaking a literature review of relevant academic research. As well as architecture and design, research fields included psychology, social science, urbanism, sustainability, anthropology and governance. The research field was expanded to include these fields as the Open House concept extends from architecture into these overlapping fields. Data collection methods included document/media and literature dissemination (local media, letters/emails/reports/books and academic papers), online surveys, and conversations. The visitor surveys were tailored to understand the impact of Open House on visitor learning, empowerment and advocacy. Visitor surveys were either on-site assisted surveys completed during Open House programmes or online surveys completed afterwards. 1735 surveys were collected from visitors across the Open House Worldwide family.

Qualitative analysis was used to interpret data to identify key themes, and present findings and

recommendations. The researchers acknowledge the risk of survey result bias as some of the surveys were presented in English rather than the respondents' native language which would bias English speakers and introduce potential misunderstanding. Additionally social media surveys may be biased towards younger audiences.

This study explores the impact of Open House's approach; offering physical experiences and encouraging dialogue to empower a city's inhabitants to advocate for a well-designed built environment. Each stage in this process is examined in the following sections. Section 2 considers experience in relation to the impact of *physical experience* and *shared experience*. Section 3 reviews the significance of *learning, language, current issues, shared dialogue* and *reflection*. Section 4 explores *empowerment* and *advocacy*. Section 5 explores evidence of Open House's influence on policy and key stakeholders. Section 6 summarises and discusses the significance of the Impact Study findings and offers a number of recommendations to amplify Open House's influence.

# 2 What is the Open House experience?

*“Open House should be singled out as being pivotal in widening the discussion around architecture in Ireland. The fact that it focuses on public engagement, rather than just speaking to the design community, is a highly effective and admirable example of inclusivity”*

(Dr Linda King, Open House Dublin 2015)

Open House facilitates opportunities for a city’s inhabitants to experience a diversity of high quality design across ages, styles, and typology, that is to say in its broadest sense, in order to demonstrate that well-designed cities can improve people’s lives. Section 2.1 examines the importance of initiating direct **physical experience** of the city, rather than mediated experience. Section 2.2 considers how Open House achieves **inclusivity** and the significance of **free entry** to all programmes.

## 2.1 Physical Experience

Central to the Open House concept is offering direct physical experience of architecture. Direct physical experience is the optimal means of engendering understanding about architecture and design to enable informed dialogue. Steve Douglas, Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration, London Borough of Hackney, recognises the value of Open House lies in the direct physical experience. He argues “high quality design in our buildings helps to create successful neighbourhoods, and getting the

chance to see this architecture in the flesh is a great opportunity to find out more about the role design plays in our lives”.

Abstract images, such as photographs and illustrations are unable to convey the reality of the built environment; direct experience is key to engaging with one’s surroundings. Physical experience offers a multi-sensory impression of architecture that mediated experience through images, the internet, or television cannot.

Architectural photography particularly, tends to create an idealised substitute of the real architecture, typically portraying unoccupied, new, faultless buildings and spaces with the help of digital technology. The image is a curated representation of the building, which discourages critique.

Goldhagen (2011) argues that architecture is a three-dimensional and multi-sensory medium with acoustic, olfactory, and tactile qualities that photographs fail to convey. She argues photography can actively distort architecture in respect to other qualities. Photographs distort scale, flatten texture, misrepresent colour, and obscure construction details that are “critical to the user’s experience of them” (Goldhagen, 2011). Cameras “compress the middle register of the space behind the viewfinder to the point of near non-existence; as a result, deep space projects dramatically toward the front of the picture plane as it never would to a viewer standing on the ground” (Goldhagen, 2011).

Images represent one single instant in the life of the building so cannot convey how the building changes in the course of the day, through the seasons, over the years, how it is used in reality, or indeed a building’s failures.

Studies from the field of Biophilia have investigated the impact of direct physical experience versus mediated experience on wellbeing. Biophilia is the innate connection between humans and nature. Responding to this connection is one of the principles of design for health and wellbeing, and there is a substantial body of evidence to demonstrate the positive wellbeing benefits of design that incorporates natural elements or provides connection to nature.

Kahn et al., (2008) explain that direct physical interaction with the natural world has a significantly different psychological and physiological impact than interaction with technological nature. Physiological and psychological experience of nature “differ depending on the medium (transparent glass or digital display) through which one views nature” (Kahn et al., 2008, p. 198). They explain the difference is due to technical issues of parallax, pixilation, and 2-D as opposed to 3-D depth perception, but also how judgements by viewers about what it means for a view to be ‘real’ compared to a representation feed back into physiological and psychological system. The study found that digital displays of nature were not able to provide the same wellbeing benefits (measured, for example, by heart rate recovery) as interacting with ‘real’ nature.

Goldhagen’s analysis and Kahn’s study provide accounts of how physical experience stimulates a very different physiological response to mediated experiences, but there are also qualitative accounts of the significance of the physical experiences that Open House provide.

Stewart (2014) suggests Open House Buenos Aires is not just about the theoretical and stylistic aspects of architecture but how you absorb the “atmosphere of the place, the feel that the people in it leave behind” (Stewart, 2014). Residents of housing estates who take guided tours and tell visitors their stories are able to convey tenderness towards the built

environment. María Eugenia Cabezas, great granddaughter of the architect of the Bencich talks of the imperfections of the building and how the way the building changes over time demonstrates that the building is alive. The stories of the people of the city make “it a living organism, one that belongs to us just as much as we belong to it” (Stewart, 2014).

Open House demonstrates how the built environment can articulate cultural and historical themes through direct experience. This is revealed by one of the visitor comments to Open House Chicago who stated “it has allowed me to see each layer of the city's history and reconstruction. It also has given insight into where the city is headed both from an aesthetic and sociological standpoint” (Open House Chicago 2016).

Because Open House offers such a diversity of buildings in many different areas it helps build a broader picture of the city. Many of the respondents to the visitor surveys, including Chicago and Belfast, described the significance of being able to access buildings they couldn’t normally enter and being encouraged to venture into neighbourhoods they wouldn’t normally visit. One respondent described their shock at the “rampant segregation” and “total inequity of funding” that had been revealed to them through Open House (Open House Chicago 2016).

In 2016, Open House Chicago focussed on the Englewood neighbourhood, which is one of the most impoverished and dangerous parts of Chicago that many would be afraid to visit. The Yale Building in Englewood was one of the most popular sites in Open House Chicago 2016, attracting thousands of visitors who would not normally travel to this part of the city. One of the fundamental principles of Open House is free entry and that can be understood as both non-monetary admission and the opportunity for people to access buildings usually ‘off-limits’ on their own terms.

## 2.2 Shared experience

Reaching as broad an audience as possible is crucial to the aims of Open House cities around the world. Offering experiences free-of-charge is a straightforward means of encouraging a wide audience.

For example, Open House London actively engages with all sections of the community regardless of wealth or status. This is reflected in the visitor demographic; surveys show visitors are from a broad range of ages, occupations, and income. Occupations included solicitors, checkout assistants, teachers, professors, nurses, architects, paediatricians, drivers, art critics, traffic wardens, dancers, and cleaners (Open House London 2016). Many respondents included free or good/great value in their five words to describe the value of Open House to London.

Offering free-of-charge experiences recognises the importance of encouraging the participation of lower-income earners. A retiree stated that it is a “privilege and pleasure to get to see as much of our wonderful city, free of charge”; an administrator that Open House is a “unique opportunity to be able to see inside some fantastic buildings, and all for free!” and a receptionist gave these five words to describe the value of Open House to London “Fascinating, Fantastic, Informative, Joyous, Free” (Open House London 2016).

Anne Muriungi, a visitor to Open House Lagos describes Open House as a “game changer for Lagos if kept as it originally is – free of charge for guests” in this “socially and economically stratified city” (Muriungi, 2016). Open House was able to “shrink this village” to allow people to “venture into some of these buildings deemed the playgrounds of the rich or open to select few. Open House allowed for inclusivity in this way and tore down barriers that society has otherwise erected for us on ordinary days” (Muriungi, 2016).

These visitor comments reinforce the importance of free-entry to buildings as a cornerstone of Open House that makes it unique. It differentiates Open House from international architecture festivals showcasing buildings, such as The Venice Biennale, which is a ticketed event, is expensive to attend and attracts the architectural elite. The tradition of national pavilions, which designates younger developing countries less space, provokes questions of democracy and inclusivity.

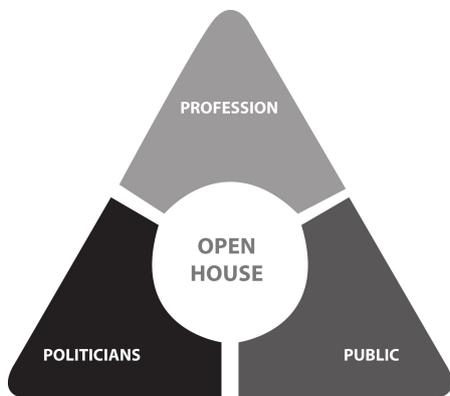
Dr Linda King, design writer, historian and educator believes “Open House should be singled out as being pivotal in widening the discussion around architecture in Ireland. The fact that it focuses on public engagement, rather than just speaking to the design community, is a highly effective and admirable example of inclusivity” (Open House Dublin 2015).

The power of free is a well-documented marketing device. Ariely (2008) argues the draw of free products or events is very powerful. It gives an emotional charge because we perceive that what is being offered is immensely more valuable than it really is because as a transaction it has no possibility of loss or risk of having made a poor decision (Ariely, 2008). Offering Open House programmes free of charge not only creates a democratic and equitable space, but according to Ariely actually motivates visitors based on the ‘power of free’.

Gdynia has gamified its Open House programme through *Everytap* App by placing transmitters at festival locations. Visitors gain a point through Bluetooth at each place visited and for every 7 points gained the visitor receives a festival gadget and the highest scorecard wins a special prize. The gamification is a successful and popular means of engaging visitors and promoting participation. Influence could be further enhanced by adopting a more critical approach and relating points to encouraging visitors to reflect on their experience, engage in dialogue or advocacy.

Open House endeavours to engage and bring together all points of the triangle; public, professional, and politicians. As an organisation, it belongs to all of these but none exclusively; it cannot be considered a top-down or a bottom-up movement but occupies its own independent platform between the two. There are a number of other architectural education/engagement organisations that operate in this space but Open House is often unique in its appeal to the general public, rather than design professionals or industry.

Focussing on design professionals limits the audience and therefore the impact any engagement can have. Data collected from Open House Dublin 2015 revealed that 85% of visitors to Open House came from backgrounds other than architecture, which demonstrates Open House appeals to a broad audience. In the next section, we explain how Open House attracts a wide audience by encouraging a dialogue with the public in a language they can understand.



*Bringing together points of the triangle*

Open House endeavours to be an inclusive programme in terms of gender, socio-economics, age and disability. A number of Open House cities have been trialling initiatives to engage the visually and hearing impaired. Open House London 2015 offered Vocal Eyes audio-described tours and British Sign Language tours. Open House Porto 2016 collaborated with the organisation Hands to Discover to offer guided tours to the hard of hearing to the Monastery of Serra Do Pilar.

Hands to Discover promotes accessible tourism for deaf people. They also partnered with ACAPO to organise visits for the sight impaired to the Bolhao Palace.



Open House weekends include specifically tailored programmes for children and youth. Open House Brisbane has its own printed Children’s Program with activities designed by Brisbane architects, landscape architects, designers and organisations. A range of activities are also offered at many of the venues across the weekend, such as model making, bridge design and making, colouring, art and craft, LEGO, storytime, role play, meeting firefighters and the cast of plays, and concerts.



Open House Lisbon’s Junior programme also has many interesting activities aimed at a younger audience, encouraging young people to think critically about the city. One programme focuses on city planning and asks young people to adopt the role of urban planner and think

critically about streets, open space, ecology, and pollution. Another workshop discusses concepts such as form, function, program, and scale. The participants are then encouraged to work in teams to develop methods of representation and construction in teams to design and build a prototype house.

Open House Athens and Open House Thessaloniki offer a special programme called Open School. It gives student groups the opportunity to visit buildings in the Open House programme as a scheduled visit on the Friday before the weekend programme starts.

# 3 How is dialogue encouraged?

*“Met friendly volunteers in orange shirts today...a great community atmosphere, everyone talking with each other. Looking forward to the next one!”*

(Linda Open House Brisbane 2016)

Open House offers direct experiences that generate potential for people to engage in dialogue about architecture and share their knowledge and ideas. The dialogue is either informal discussion during Open House or part of planned satellite events such as debates.

In order to create meaningful dialogue there must be information exchange, accessible language, and opportunities to deepen the dialogue. Weeks' (2015) definition of deliberation is relevant here. He argues that to deliberate is to act on information; deliberation is “an application of creative intelligence and normative evaluation that leads ultimately to the formation of personal judgement” (Weeks, 2015, p. 298).

Weeks cites Yankelovich (1991), who explains that deliberation can be accelerated by structured activities that present people with options, provide information about the options and their consequences, encourage reasoned discussion among peers and ultimately encourage reflection (Weeks, 2015).

This is precisely what Open House programmes aim to do and this section explores how Open House provides **learning** opportunities in a common **language**, then extends the discussion through **shared dialogue** of **current issues** and prompts **reflection**.

## 3.1 Learning

Learning is a key element in Open House's strategy for enabling dialogue. Surveys revealed that 87% of visitors worldwide have learnt something new about their city through Open House. Roberts (2015) explains that “public learning enables public dialogue” (p. 23). Public learning is collaborative learning and inquiry must take place in a “safe space which enables participants to challenge the status quo” (Escobar, 2011, p. 39). Open House can be described according to Oldenburg's definition of ‘third place’, which is a place that is a “leveller is, by its nature, an inclusive place. It is accessible to the general public and does not set formal criteria of membership and exclusion” (Oldenburg, 1999).

The learning process begins with the volunteers. Lay volunteers are able to gain an in-depth understanding of well-designed buildings. One of the volunteers from Vilnius commented that volunteering “involved me in discussions about architecture ... and changed my point of view about some places, buildings, constructions” (Open House Vilnius 2016). An Open House Brisbane visitor stated “feel I gain so much knowledge and understanding of the spaces around us after every event” (Open House Brisbane 2016).

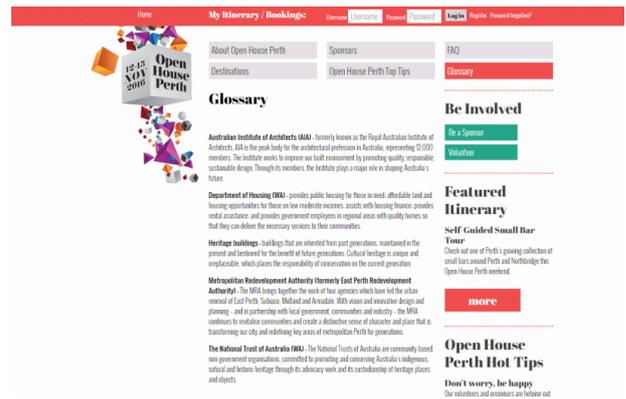
Open House also facilitates the learning of those already within the built-environment field, with a number of Open Cities developing partnerships with universities. Some Open House cities offer university accreditation to architectural students to enable them to achieve formal learning objectives including, Barcelona, Rome, Lisbon and Ljubljana. Open House Rome volunteers can obtain a CFU (university formative credit) if they prepare a detailed report on the building where they will volunteer. Robert Balder,

executive Director of Cornell University’s College of Architecture, Art and Planning, states Open House provides their students with “compelling and unique experiences that connect them to New York City in ways that classroom learning can’t. It stimulates their study of the city and inspires them to think deeply about our past, present, and future. I wish OHNY could be part of every course!” (Open House New York 2011).

Open House cities train volunteer guides to be able to talk to visitors about the architecture, function and history of Open House buildings. The volunteer learning process, in turn, enables them to engage in meaningful dialogue with visitors. Additionally, fact sheets are provided to visitors, building guides are available, and scheduled lectures are organised.

Building tours also often involve building owners and design professionals, as well as building users, who can explain their roles and how their projects work in detail. A visitor to Open House London stated “an excellent tour and great to have the professionals involved with the building on hand to give us a real insight into the development of the philosophy and vision for the centre” (Open House London 2016).

The aim is to increase architectural literacy. Open House Guides are produced to accompany the weekend programme, but many become a permanent resource showcasing the best architecture of the city. Some cities also offer additional resources online, for example Open House Perth has an architectural glossary to help citizens understand terms often used in relation to the built environment.



Open House cities follow a detailed selection process in order to showcase quality architecture. This is a process of continual research and often involves asking architectural historians and commentators and reviewing architecture awards.

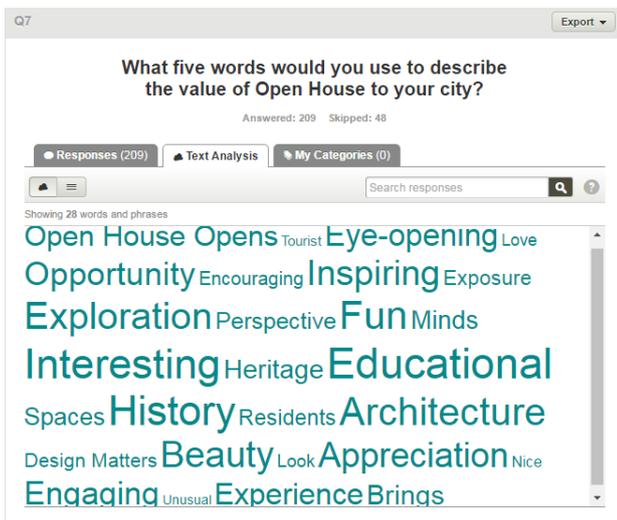
Open House Rome 2016 showcased The Auditorium Parco Della Musica by Renzo Piano who won the Pritzker Prize for demonstrating a combination of talent, vision, and commitment, and has produced consistent and significant contributions to humanity and the built environment through the art of architecture. Guided tours were organised for MAXXI, the National Museum of XXI Century Arts in Rome by Zaha Hadid Architects. MAXXI won the Stirling Prize (2010) and Zaha Hadid won the Royal Institute of British Architects’ Royal Gold Medal given in recognition of a lifetime’s work to a person who has had a significant influence on the advancement of architecture. But it is not only iconic contemporary projects that are showcased; in Rome, archaeological sites from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD (Auditoria Adriano) to installations by emerging architects (Ex Elettrofonica) are also open to the public.

Open House Limerick showcases the UL Medical School and Student Housing by Grafton Architects. The project was on the Stirling Prize shortlist in 2013 and the practice won the Silver Lion at the 2012 Venice Biennale presented in recognition of the most “promising practice”. These are just a few of the examples of

architecture and places judged outstanding by awards, prizes and other honours.

Visitor surveys clearly demonstrate the learning impact of Open House and how visitors may become advocates for high-quality design. Visitors to Open House Belfast stated that Open House “helped to encourage an appreciation of well designed buildings” giving an “insight into how certain buildings can play a role in the overall quality of the urban environment”, and how good design can “add value” to communities “without people realising it” (Open House Belfast 2016). One visitor stated that they had “actively engaged in some really interesting discussions over the weekend that have helped me articulate my views better” (Open House Belfast 2016).

A text analysis of the visitor surveys from Open House Worldwide revealed the word *educational* was one of the most popular words used to describe the value of Open House. Open House programmes for children are important for inclusivity but also for engaging future generations in the learning process.



100% of respondents to the visitor survey in Vilnius stated they had learned something new about their city’s architecture through Open House programmes. A number of respondents said they had enjoyed learning about the design process, the occupants response to the space

“emotions of employees”, and how the “building functions in reality” (Open House Vilnius 2016). Open House building open days therefore become informal Post Occupancy Evaluations.

Open House knowledge sharing can also be delivered in a more formal manner. *Learning by Design* was research project run in parallel with Open House London 2005-2007. An early evaluation established a need by the educational community for guidance on exemplary school architecture. An illustrated publication was produced in partnership with the Department for Education and Skills. It highlighted insights from the headteachers, students, and governors about how new and refurbished schools work for them. The publication was aimed at decision-makers at pre-briefing stage, providing a point of reference for the educational community.

### 3.2 Language

Open House performs an essential role in mediating between the three points of the triangle, and a key element of this is presenting issues in an accessible manner. Open House Worldwide requires that at least one member of the Open House board in each city is a non-architect and one member is from an architectural background. This encourages broad perspectives in the organising committee, which in turn enables Open House to be able to talk to a broad audience.

Critical to encouraging dialogue between people of the city, the built environment professions, and politicians is co-creating a common language. Both architecture and public policy fields have been criticised for using vocabulary that obscures and constrains dialogue with the public (Escobar, 2011; Ijeh, 2015; Jencks, 1977; Ventriss, 2015). Ijeh (2015) suggests there is a “hardcore coterie of celebrated architects who insist on propagating an esoteric style of language that is not only completely incomprehensible to laypeople but to scores

within their own profession” (p. 271). Ijeh argues that architects need to resist this ‘cryptically choreographed conceit’ and acknowledge that because architecture is the universal tool that shapes our built environment, the language architects use is critical. We are familiar with the terms medical or legal jargon, but it is only “architectural jargon that has the potential to impoverish and confuse an individual's relationship with their surrounding context” (p. 276).

Jargon can be used unwittingly or as an instrument of power to mark status, expertise, or authority, which establishes zones of exclusion and justifies pre-packaged messages and dominant voices (Escobar, 2011). Ijeh warns that hubristic language threatens the already alienated relationship between the architectural profession and the public because if the public cannot engage with its architects the conversation becomes one-sided and therefore futile. According to Ijeh, the privilege of being able to shape the built environment brings a responsibility to the general public that architectural invention must be benign. Therefore, it is “absolutely crucial that the relationship between the architect and the public is based on mutual trust and understanding” (Ijeh, 2015, p. 276).

Ventriss argues for a ‘public language’ that does not use jargon or mask its assumptions under the “thick fog of sophisticated methodologies” (Ventriss, 2015, p. 46). Crafting a shared language is a slow but critical process in which participants share the difficult task of finding a working vocabulary that makes everyone feel included (Escobar, 2011).

Open House Helsinki deliberately frame their messages in manner that avoids elitism, directed at an audience that isn't just architecture professionals. Descriptions of buildings in the Open House Helsinki programme used plain language, accessible metaphors to explain architectural concepts, and contextualise projects by giving international

examples or comparisons. They were the first group in Helsinki to use social media to communicate and encourage people to look at their surroundings and built environment in a new way. Instawalk was a guided walk and photography tour that encouraged participants to record their impressions on Instagram. The workshop explored the Hakaniemi area that is currently being regenerated and information on the zoning and city planning of the district and its shorelines was given during the tour. Such events encourage learning and knowledge share and using imagery to record and articulate visitors impression of the built environment.

In the 2016 Open House London Guide at the beginning of each section, the key characteristics of each borough are summarised. The summary includes a distillation of the development plans of each borough council in a succinct and accessible format. This not only acts as a means of translating the sometimes inaccessible nature of development plans, but amplifies their impact through Open House London's wide audience. Adopting a consciously unambiguous and non-elitist language is central to Open House's approach.

### **3.3 Current issues**

Open House links to current issues to build a groundswell around critical issues for the city, set the agenda, and feed into policy thinking. Open House's approach acknowledges that the idea that we “elect people who fix things and we go back to our daily lives is being eroded ... Urban decision-making is going to rest on a much more active citizenry expressing preferences in real time through handheld devices” (Maxwell Anderson cited in The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2016).

Focussing on current critical issues and engaging the public is more likely to catalyse action because it is addressing urgent issues. Weeks (2015) argues that “well-implemented community dialogue is a powerful instrument for

creating a public will to act” (Weeks, 2015, p. 311). Open House aims to create opportunities for the people of a city to experience best practice design that responds to prevailing issues such as Sustainability, Accessibility/Inclusivity and the emerging field of Health and Wellbeing.

### Topical debate

Many Open House cities focus dialogue through organised debates, themed curation, and lectures leading up to the Open House weekend. Typically the debates link to particular issues that are of current concern to each city, for example, Dublin’s 2015 ‘Big Housing Debate: the way we live now’ and London’s 2015 ‘London’s pollution is ruining our lives. Can we build a cleaner city?’. There is a large appetite for focussed dialogue on current critical issues. This is manifest in the ballot for the Open House London 2015 debate, 8000 people applied for 100 places.

Dublin’s ‘Big Housing Debate’, on the eve of Open House Dublin, brought together high-profile professionals from the built environment, developers, policy makers, and the public to discuss housing. These included ESRI Director Professor Frances Ruane who is a member of the Economic Advisory Group and European Statistical Advisory Committee and honorary professor at Trinity College, Keran Rose a Town Planner and author of the Dublin City Council standards for apartments, Geraldine Kennedy Director of Sheelin and Embassy Property Groups who develop, build and manage large scale developments in Dublin, and RIAI President Robin Mandal who unveiled their Housing Policy document. The programme was curated according to the theme ‘This place we call home’ focusing on domesticity and urban space.

London’s 2015 debate was facilitated by public opinion surveys. A poll was conducted prior to the debate to understand the public’s opinions on existing greening initiatives, physical

environments in need of improvement, their current involvement in planning and consultation of their neighbourhood, and the potential impact of well-designed spaces on their wellbeing.

Linking the live debate to opportunities for issue-based social networking can also extend its effectiveness. Issue-based social networking groups are becoming “power-brokers in influencing governmental policies” (United Nations, 2010, p. 84). Open House’s future aspirations include enhancing issue-based social networking. Open House London’s 2015 Open Debate: ‘London’s pollution is ruining our lives. Can we build a cleaner city’ included a Survey Monkey Poll (linked from the website) and twitter discussion as well as a live debate with a panel and audience of 160.

The annual Open Debate gives the public and professionals alike a unique platform for discussion and sharing of opinion about how the city is planned, designed, and built. Chaired by John Vidal, Environment Editor, *The Guardian*, the debate considered what London’s designers can do to help clean up our city for good. With the population of London reaching 8.5million in 2014, the debate was considered timely for setting an agenda for the coming decades. The public poll accompanying the debate revealed 54% of respondents think London is badly affected by air pollution, 43% think London is badly affected by light pollution, and 27% strongly believe that the built environment industries are not doing enough to help reduce pollution and make London a cleaner city.

The Open Debate 2015 begins to demonstrate how Open House acts as a platform to gather citizen’s responses to their built environment that could be used to support policy decisions. Open House has a considerable worldwide community of social media users including twitter, facebook, instagram, and email newsletters.

Open House New York endeavour to select sites that have been in the media recently or are

linked to big discussions in the city. They also curate events over the weekend programme that tie to current events and anniversaries.

Open House Milan 2016 opened a number of social housing developments to focus dialogue around this issue. Housing problems in Milan are considerable, and following the 2008 economic crisis there was a significant increase in the number of people unable to afford suitable accommodation. Innovative housing solutions have been developed in Milan to offer quality affordable housing and encourage socialisation and neighbourliness. A number of developments were showcased including early examples from the early 1900s (Solari 40) to the contemporary social housing on Via Cenni by Rossi Prodi Associati (2013).

Open House Oslo 2016 curated a programme to show the results of the regeneration of the Groruddalen area. It was a nine year project aiming to improve the environment and living conditions in the four districts of Groruddalen (Alna, Bjerke, Grorud, and Stovner) and included work to district parks, hiking and cycle paths, waterways, community spaces, and farms.



## Sustainability

Open House Zurich 2016 offered guided tours of Tamedia Media House by Shigeru Ban. This highly sustainable building incorporates a pre-fabricated timber structure, twin skin façade, natural ventilation, and groundwater heat pump, achieving carbon zero. Tamedia's key innovation is its timber structure achieved

without steel reinforcement. Timber is one of the only renewable, carbon neutral construction materials.



Open House Madrid 2016 offered tours of the Repsol Campus, which was the first large office building in Spain and one of the first in Europe of its size to achieve LEED Platinum certification. The building houses 4000 employees in four buildings arranged around a large open space. Natural light has been optimised, recycled materials utilised, alternative energy sources installed, high accessibility, Sustainable Urban Drainage principles (native plant species, rainwater harvesting), and smart climate monitors. The building also meets universal accessibility principles and in order to ensure this, Repsol employees helped to identify barriers to accessibility in the surrounding areas. These barriers were then remedied in a pioneering initiative, aided by Repsol's specialist consultants at the Spanish Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired.



Studies show that an estimated 70% of all homes that will exist in 2050 have already been built (Sustainable Development Commission, 2006). This demonstrates the importance of showcasing how existing housing can be refurbished to contribute to major gains in energy efficiency. Open House Cork showcased the Ard Bhaile Social Housing development. The houses were refurbished by Cork City Council and the department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government to increase their energy efficiency. Energy efficiency measures included attic insulation, cavity wall insulation, external wall insulation, double glazed windows, fuel stoves, central heating controls, insulated hot water tanks, and Air to Air heat exchange systems.

Enabling sustainability knowledge sharing is imperative to Open House. A survey by Open House London revealed 80% of respondents believed their Open House visits had improved their understanding of the impact their home has on climate change.

### **Accessibility**

Addressing the needs of a rapidly ageing population is also a key concern of Open House. Open House Barcelona 2015 and 2016 collaborated with the Municipal Housing Authority (PMHB) to address two key issues faced by an aging population; inadequate housing and social inclusion. Open Extra LARGE included tours and workshops aimed to highlight the needs of an aging population and promote inclusivity. The workshops encouraged dialogue between technical users and care and design professionals. Elderly occupants of four of PMHB's buildings showed visitors how the architecture responds to their particular requirements. The wider social purpose of the tours was to promote the participation, involvement and integration of the elderly in cultural activities at the city level, and highlight needs of the aging population.



The Repsol Campus (Open House Madrid) incorporates universal accessibility principles, which was facilitated by the participation of Repsol employees and their families. Repsol employees helped to identify barriers to accessibility in the surrounding areas. These barriers were then remedied in a pioneering initiative, aided by Repsol's specialist consultants at the Spanish Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

Open House cities also feel strongly about the need to promote design for Health and Wellbeing. In 2014 Open London became one of the first bodies to gather experts to discuss health and wellbeing in city design in London. The Green Debate 2014 'London: Designed for Healthy Living?' had an audience of over 200 public and professionals and panellists included Dr Yvonne Doyle (Regional Director, London, Public Health England), Paul Heather (Managing Director, Skanska), Dan Epstein (Director, Useful Simple Projects), Marie Murray (Manager, Dalston Eastern Curve Garden) and Ben Plowden (Director, Planning, Surface Transport, Transport for London). The panel was chaired by Dan Hill, Executive Director, Future Cities and focussed on the challenge of health in urban spaces.

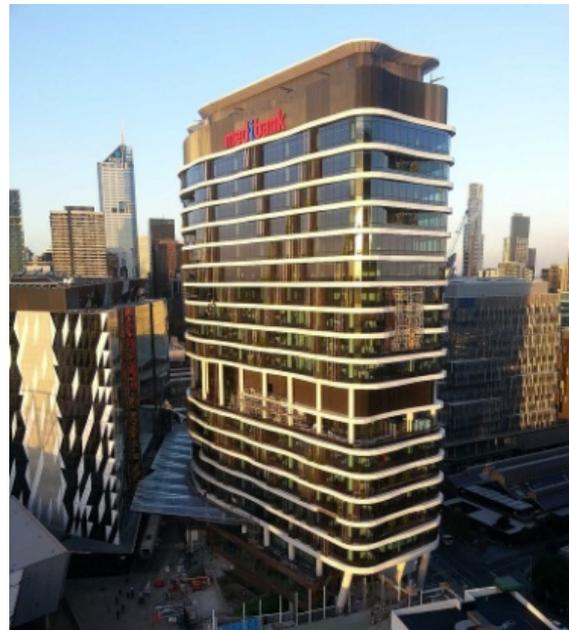
Open House Vienna received a research grant from the Vienna Housing Institute (part of the Vienna City Council) in 2015 to study different

types of housing and their impact on the wellbeing of individuals. They carried out interviews with architects and occupants, organised panel discussions, and surveyed Open House visitors on wellbeing in housing. They have received another grant for housing research in 2016. This work and the manner in which they have combined it with the Open House programme has caught the attention of the Minister for housing in Vienna, generating further support for Open House Vienna and the potential to directly influence policymaking. Health and Wellbeing was the theme of Open House Slovenia 2016.

The Slovenian newspaper Finance featured Open House numerous times and reflected critically on the importance of physically experiencing buildings in relation to Open House Slovenia's 2016 theme. The newspaper stated that the public is uninformed because they do not have the opportunity to experience good contemporary architecture, observe how the spaces make them feel, and subsequently discuss it through informed dialogue. The article argues that in order to improve living environments, people need to experience and be inspired by good architecture in order to advocate for better solutions ("Mid-April will be marked by the Festival of Open Houses Slovenia," 2016). The SI.MOBIL and KMAG premises were opened to the public showcasing health and wellbeing principles. Special programmes included talks focusing on health and wellbeing in timber construction.

Open House Melbourne 2016 offered guided tours of Medibank Place, one of the healthiest workplaces in the world. The new workplace was part of a cultural change for Medibank (Australia's largest health insurer) to live according to its core principles and create better health outcomes for its members, employees and the community. The building, by Hassell studio, was designed according to principles of Health Based Working (HBW) that puts the mental and physical health of people at its heart. Principles such as free address, quiet zones,

active workspaces, circadian lighting, exercise facilities, productive gardens, and biophilia were incorporated into the design.



Open House New York 2016 opened Google's New York Office which demonstrates how architecture can create spaces that power a work culture that fosters collaboration, innovation and opportunities for play. A variety of work environments are provided to provoke "casual collisions" that enhance wellbeing through sociability and enable innovation.

Open House Prague 2016 offered guided tours of Microsoft's headquarters 'The New World of Work'. Microsoft endeavoured to maximise employee satisfaction, creativity and productivity through innovative principles of design for health, wellbeing and productivity. The building is designed as an ecosystem of diverse working spaces, offering space for individual work, collaboration, concentration, and relaxation. The programme included guided tours of the workplace and demonstrations of the use of technology to improve working practices.

A visitor to the Chicago Open House commented that they believed Open House changed what they thought about the importance of well-designed buildings by

showing them “the effect that office design can have on overall happiness” (Open House Chicago 2016).

### 3.4 Shared Dialogue

Open House endeavours to enable democratic dialogue by creating an inclusive and independent platform to bridge the gap between experts and users. Democratic dialogue as a concept is characterised by shared objectives, optimism regarding the resolution of difficulties, pragmatic problem-solving without concern for status/hierarchy, shared responsibility, multiple-perspectives co-existing, and inclusivity (United Nations, 2001). Inclusive dialogue allows a range of forms of communication including storytelling and testimony and different styles of expression (Escobar, 2011).

Open House gives permission for everyone (including government, private organisations, professional institutions, and the public) to exchange views, and engage in the discussion using their own styles and forms, whilst recognising their shared responsibility for a well-designed built environment.

Open House’s approach differs from traditional public consultation/engagement techniques by putting all of the stakeholders on an equal footing. Public engagement often feels like something being done to the people. One of the respondents of the London Visitors Survey commented

*I was a public meeting held by the developers of Nine Elms in Battersea ... The audience of mainly local people were cowed and glum. Many voices were raised with serious concerns about the scheme, people were answered politely but it was patently obvious to everyone there that whatever anybody thought ... nothing whatever was going to change ... the decisions were made long before we hear about them, the implications aren't clear*

*[until] it's too late to do anything about them – and even if we'd tried at an earlier stage we wouldn't be successful* (Open House London 2016)

Another respondent explained that public planning consultations were “generally a depressing experience as the dice are loaded in favour of developers” (Open House London 2016). The comments from London reflect the use of the traditional top-down DAD model of decision making (Decide-Announce-Defend) (Escobar, 2011).

Escobar (2011) argues that the traditional methods of public participation in government decision making simply do not work. They don’t achieve genuine participation, provide meaningful information to public officials, satisfy the public that they are being heard, improve policy decisions, or represent a broad spectrum of the public. Escobar notes that instead they seem to antagonise members of the public who do try to participate and discourage them from wasting their time in rituals designed merely to satisfy legal requirements (an argument supported by the London Open House visitor quotes above).

Soliciting wide participation through traditional methods of public consultation such as public hearings is very difficult, but technology has the potential to significantly increase participation enabling elected officials to solicit greater feedback input on decisions (The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2016).

As an independent body, Open House is able to engage all of the stakeholders in a dialogue liberated from the entrenched hierarchies that undermine traditional forms of public engagement. Both local authorities and developers have become involved in Open House London to engage in dialogue with the public. Paul Nichols, the Divisional Director Regeneration and Planning, at the London Borough of Harrow said this of Open House London 2015 “with significant development

plans currently taking shape to build a better Harrow, this major event has provided us with a great opportunity to showcase regeneration sites as part of our commitment to open and honest conversation with the community". Ken Livingstone (former London Mayor) first unveiled elements of the Tall Building Policy at the beginning of Open House London 2000. Livingstone announced to a select group of building owners and architects that he wanted to see public areas at the top of new skyscrapers similar to that of the Greater London Authority's headquarters by Foster and Partners (Taylor, 2000).

Open House is also used as a means to promote intercultural dialogue around a shared history. Wainwright (2014) calls it a "politicised call to arms taken up by some of the more divided cities to stage the event, including Jerusalem". Programme organisers in Jerusalem see Open House as an opportunity to encourage debate about the city in a secular way, which is critical given the religious polarisation. Open House buildings in Jerusalem range from Moshe Safdie's housing in the Jewish quarter to Palestinian sites in the east.

### **3.5 Reflection**

Open House provides opportunity for reflection by requesting feedback from participants. Questions such as "Has Open House changed the way you see the city", "Are you more likely to engage in public consultations" prompt participants to reflect on whether they are beginning to think more critically about the city and whether they will take opportunities to speak out about aspirations for their city. The survey's

of visitors also provides an opportunity for Open House to reflect on the effectiveness of the programme and how visitors are responding. Open House Vilnius uses survey data to complete a SWAT analysis to understand the strength and weaknesses of the programme to improve for the following year.

An international conference to reflect on Open House and engage stakeholders in key urban issues is organised periodically. The Open House Worldwide Conference 2012 took place in London focusing on the theme Smarter Cities, Smarter Thinking. The first day was an opportunity for Open House cities to reflect on the politics and funding of Open House cities and Open House's development. The second day was hosted by CBRE and included a range of speakers from IBM, Telford Homes, Open City, Arup, CBRE exploring the wider implications of the conference theme.

Open House Monterrey undertook a web-based survey of their participants in 2016 to understand their response to Open House programmes and to encourage them to reflect on their experiences. A resounding majority (89%) believed Open House changed the way they saw the city. One respondent replied "Now I appreciate more the buildings, I do not see them as mere buildings but as something that is part of our society, of our history, and it is our duty to care" (Open House Monterrey 2016). Creating an opportunity to reflect resulted in a process of empowerment, an understanding that shaping the city is in the hands of its people.

# 4 Empower to advocate?

*“Our environment should not be [the] responsibility of third parties”*

(Open House Monterrey 2016)

Offering experiences and encouraging dialogue about architecture and urban design creates awareness that the public has a stake in the design, development and care of its city. Open House encourages people to understand the city as a ‘**shared**’ space that is **co-created** and the city’s inhabitants have the power to change the city, promoting **active citizenship**. The aim of Open House is to democratise the design of the city by **empowering** its citizens to **advocate** for good design. This section explores how Open House achieves those aims.

## 4.1 Empowerment

### Local

Open House operates at the city level. Democratic empowerment has been considered for many years to be most effectively enabled at a local level rather than nation-state (Bookchin & Evanoff, 1994; Odum, 1971; Schumacher, 1973). At the local level people “engage on a daily basis with the state, public services, markets and the political system ... empowerment requires participation and accountability in local governance and decision-making – effective and inclusive local citizenship” (Dom, 2012, p. 3).

Citizenship infers rights, aspirations and responsibilities on people of the city in relation to society, the economy and the state. Empowerment through local citizenship changes who has decision-making power and who has a voice at local level (Dom, 2012).

Open House is a worldwide phenomena with common values, but each city operates at a local level – a feature that is critical to its success in a particular city. Particular aims, objectives, and programmes are developed at the city level to respond to the needs and characteristics of the local population in order to empower them.

It is an Open House Worldwide requirement through the memorandum of understanding that each city signs that Open House operates at the city level not at a national level so it remains at a scale where it can enable active citizenship. Open House operates citywide, rather than at the individual neighbourhood scale to enable understanding of city-scale issues and it is at this scale that architecture policy is typically focussed.

### Changing people’s perceptions

Visitor feedback demonstrates that Open House has changed people’s perceptions of their city and their sense of ownership. Open House Vilnius’s visitor survey demonstrated that Open House empowers citizens. 92% of respondents stated that Open House helped them to see their city more clearly or in a different way. Respondents stated that “I felt more proud of my city”, “made me feel much closer to the city I live in” and “I see Vilnius now as a place where anything is possible” (Open House Vilnius 2016). They also commented that Open House had encouraged them “take more initiative to get people of my city involved, to speak about it more, to act more” and “to be more active in the urban life and all plans for it” and another that Open House reminded them that Vilnius is “a democratic city ... we have to say our opinion loud” (Open House Vilnius 2016).

One of Open House Slovenia's survey respondents revealed that they believe Open House Slovenia "shows that we can still change our city" (Open House Slovenia 2016).

### **Active Citizenship**

When people are informed and empowered they can participate in the decision making process and hold those who make the final decisions accountable. Lack of information can be an obstacle to empowerment (Dom, 2012), but Open House addresses this through information exchanges explained in the previous section (3.1). As citizens are empowered they create a "different relationship with their respective governments, characterized by enhanced effectiveness, as government are able to respond to the needs of citizens in a more direct manner" (United Nations, 2010, p. 84). Internet and social networking tools are being used increasingly to help empower citizens to become more active in expressing their views (United Nations, 2010).

28% of Open House survey respondents worldwide stated that Open House had encouraged them to become more involved in discussions about architecture and planning in their city.

The Open House Belfast visitor survey demonstrated Open House was a way of articulating and amplifying civic pride. One respondent stated Open House has "extended the feeling ... of civic pride in Belfast" and another that Open House "made me feel I should be more involved in making contributions to debate on these things" (Open House Belfast 2016). A visitor survey following Open House Chicago 2015 revealed 92% of locals were "proud to be a Chicagoan" because of Open House Chicago. The vast and enthusiastic volunteer participation is in itself evidence of how Open House enables active citizenship. In 2016, Open House cities collectively had 17,400 volunteers.

Open House Buenos Aires runs a programme called Open Wall that encourages people to look at urban spaces differently and participate in interventions. Open Wall 2015 involved the creation of urban art during the Open House programme. The intention was to encourage citizens to see the value in the city walls and encourage collaboration between the community and urban artists.



Open House also demonstrates that it encourages active citizenship through its volunteering programme. The participation of large numbers of volunteers is significant particularly in countries where volunteering is uncustomary. Open House Vienna has a large volunteering community despite, as the organisers explain, volunteering not being embedded in the Austrian culture.

## **4.2 Advocacy**

### **Citizens**

Fostering understanding about the value of a well-designed city and the role of the inhabitants in its creation encourages them to advocate for a well-designed built environment. This includes how architecture addresses environmental, social and economic sustainability, and how 'people-centred' design can optimise the health and wellbeing of building occupants. The ultimate aim of Open House is to catalyse citizens to advocate for good design by curating direct experiences that generate dialogue, and

encourage empowerment. 73% of respondents to the Open House Monterrey visitor survey stated that Open House made them more likely to get involved in debates about architecture and planning in their city. One respondent stated that before Open House “I didn’t know we have the chance to speak” and another that “city planning and actions based on that planning depends our life quality, our environment should not be responsibility of third parties” (Open House Monterrey 2016). Another respondent summarised the impact of Open House as an opportunity to “know the views of other people with whom we live day by day and thus find solutions to the problems we find in our neighbourhood to create a better environment” (Open House Monterrey 2016).

Respondents from London’s visitor survey who agreed that Open House encouraged them to get involved in discussion about architecture and planning in their city commented that “it’s made me more engaged with pushing for good design”, “I now try to keep informed about developments in my area and in central London and have commented on a few projects”, “attended local development plans meetings and related written comments afterwards”, “have been involved in commenting on planning proposals”, and “have joined in about the discussions about proposed cycle lanes in Enfield” (Open House London 2016).

### **Building Owners**

Advocacy can also be demonstrated by the involvement of the building owners. By opening-up their buildings to the public they recognise the value of their asset and become advocates for the positive qualities of good design. It enables them to see their building in a different light, and reflect on the impact of their environment on their own wellbeing. The same can be said of architects and other building environment professionals. It is also an opportunity to reinforce organisational values and identity in the built environment. This may also influence the future procurement and

design of any subsequent buildings. Swedbank’s new headquarters was opened to the public during Open House Stockholm 2016. The building reflects Swedbank’s corporate values: open, simple, and caring. Opening the building to the public enabled Swedbank to reinforce these values and understand how the public responded.



Understanding the architectural intent of the building has the ability to transform perceptions of that building. One of the buildings in Open House Vilnius’ programme, The Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, was strongly disliked by its occupants. Following the Open House weekend, during which volunteers explained the narrative of the design, the ministry asked the volunteers to run a special tour for its employees and they subsequently began to appreciate the post-modernist design. Such responses reinforce the importance of the physical experience and opportunity for dialogue that Open House offers. When asked whether Open House had changed what they thought about the importance of well-designed buildings in their city one Vilnius respondent stated that they knew it was important but “actually visiting the buildings gave me an even deeper understanding of it” (Open House Vilnius 2016).

This comment essentially closes the loop between advocacy and experience demonstrating the need for a joined-up approach to design advocacy that places physical experience of the buildings and spaces at its heart. In order to advocate for good design, people must first experience it.

# 5 How does Open House influence?

*“Open House Dublin ... has provided the most direct engagement of its kind between the public, our buildings and places. That is exactly the sort of outreach and awareness approach that supports the wider objectives set out in the Government Policy on Architecture”*

(Martin Colreavy, Principal Architectural Advisor to the Government)

The preceding sections explored Open House’s power to catalyse design advocacy. Feedback from visitors provides evidence of the direct impact Open House had on participation and advocacy. This power becomes amplified when those leading the development of the city respond. Engagement without recognition of power and politics will lead to “a voice without influence. The critical challenge is for citizens, particularly the excluded and marginalised, to be able to influence policies and institutions, and for these in turn to become more accountable to them, and act in their best interest” (Dom, 2012, p. 5). This section explores the influence Open House has on policy, sponsors, and other city stakeholders.

## 5.1 Policy Impact

The likelihood that advocacy bodies will be influential is dependent on their relationship with policymakers (Mitlin, Hickett, & Bebbington, 2007; Rich, 2004). Advocacy coalitions are becoming more common, where relationships

are built with other key actors (such as media, politicians, industry, activists) to coordinate a master frame to reinforce the collective message (Mitlin et al., 2007; Snow, 2004; Stone, 2004). Advocacy coalitions refer to coordination over time of people from diverse positions who share particular values (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993, cited in Lucarelli & Radaelli, 2004).

Open House London fosters very strong relationships with many stakeholders in the built environment. Jules Pipe, the deputy mayor opened Open House London 2016. He explained the Mayor’s new campaign is to convey that London is ‘open’ and the “ethos of the Open House Weekend aligns perfectly with this. By enabling everyday Londoners to access spaces they would otherwise not be able to will help to change perceptions, break down barriers and inspire people to demand high-quality places for current and future generations. I’m therefore delighted to open and to support Open House Weekend” (Pipe, 2016).

Open House Dublin is instrumental in delivering the Government’s architecture policy objectives. Open House Dublin 2016 was opened by Heather Humphreys, the Minister for Culture who is responsible for architecture policy. She stated that “from its outset, Open House has highlighted the role that architecture plays in our lives and urges us all to think twice about the buildings we pass by every day. I am very pleased that my Department is continuing to provide financial support for Open House Dublin in 2016” (Humphrey’s 2016). Open House Dublin was a key project that gained funding through Government Policy on Architecture (GPA) Department of Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) Direct Grant Aid Initiatives as

a priority public awareness action to implement the Government Policy on Architecture 2009-2015 ("GPA Annual Report 2011-2012," 2013). Martin Colreavy, Principal Architectural Advisor to the Government, stated "at the core of this engagement has been the IAF's successful delivery of Open House Dublin which has provided the most direct engagement of its kind between the public, our buildings and places. That is exactly the sort of outreach and awareness approach that supports the wider objectives set out in the Government Policy on Architecture".

Limerick City & County Council has been informed by data provided by Open House programmes. Visitor responses were used to understand public attitudes towards conservation of particular buildings, the use of the main streets and other related events.

With the exceptions of the notable examples above, it is often difficult to trace the direct influence of Open House in the policy sphere. There is rarely a one-to-one correspondence between a study produced or an advocacy event and subsequent policy change, because there are many intervening forces that obscure the cause and effect relationship (Stone, 2004). This is partly caused by the crowding of the policy-making community, which results in many voices with a similar message (Abelson, 2002; Tsz Ming Mong, 2008). Many have claimed that every successful policy idea "has a hundred mothers and fathers; every bad policy idea is always an orphan" (Abelson, 2002, p. 5).

Some argue that the value of advocacy bodies is not their direct impact on particular policy problems but their role as agenda setters (Stone, 2004), and the long-term 'enlightenment' or atmospheric influence on political actors (Lucarelli & Radaelli, 2004; Rist, 1998; Sing, 1999; Stone, 2004).

Therefore, it becomes less relevant to identify exactly where advocacy has influenced policy outcomes (Rist, 1998). In this way, it becomes

less critical to demonstrate the direct policy influence of Open House. It has demonstrated clearly its function as an agenda setter, and its atmospheric influence. Jules Pipe the deputy mayor of London rhetorically asked how under-represented groups can have a greater stake in shaping London's future, then responded that Open House has

*set a benchmark for engaging people of different ages and socio-economic backgrounds in architecture and regeneration of London ... work like this will be fundamental to encouraging diversity in the built environment industry, but also in supporting young people to be the decision makers of tomorrow and have a greater stake in the future of their City (Jules Pipe, 2016).*

This atmospheric influence is also demonstrated by Open House Slovenia, who have been invited to be regular contributors to several national magazines (The biggest business daily magazine Finance). They are also often invited to meetings with Government ministries or municipalities on built environment topics as moderators, conference organisers, or to contribute to white papers.

Open House could amplify its impact through more targeted campaigns. Policy influence can be increased by marketing research at potentially interested policymakers, in a timely manner (Rich, 2004). Objectives are more likely to be achieved if research is released to take advantage of opportunities that give the research relevance and potency. Preparing material to coincide with current political debate and the legislative process and directing it at a particular political or bureaucratic audience (as well as media, public, industry) is critical (Bartlett, 2010; Stone, 2004).

## 5.2 Sponsors and partnerships

Open House attracts a huge breadth of support from the public and private sectors. Many cities are supported by their city councils, mayors, and district/borough level government. Built environment professionals support Open House through volunteering, funding, in-kind support, hosting open buildings, chairing panels, delivering lectures, and designing special programmes. These include small local architecture firms, professional institutes, universities, and large multi-disciplinary global practices such as Aecom and Arup.

The construction and real estate sectors support Open House cities worldwide through funding and participation, and also include local firms and large multi-nationals including Dulux, Velux, Lend Lease, Colliers International, Skanska, Siemens and Lafarge.

Supporters also come from outside the built environment disciplines with companies such as Google, Ikea, PWC, Barclays, KPMG, Ernst and Young, Microsoft, and Mandarin Oriental supporting Open House cities through funding or opening their buildings to the public. Community organisations, clubs and churches also enthusiastically participate in Open House.

Many of these organisations engage with Open House to increase their own outreach and communication with the public. Open House London participants stated that it “was a great opportunity for us to celebrate our structure with the wider community ... helped our local community to realise what a fantastic asset we have!”, and another “this was the redevelopment of a prominent site that had been vacant for many years and I felt that many of the local residents really appreciated the opportunity to see what we had built (Open House London 2016).

Open House events also provide an opportunity for these bodies to gather public response to

their policies or approach. One of the Open House Stockholm building participants gathered visitor responses to the city planning projects they are involved with and then used the data to inform the municipal policymakers.

Supporting Open House enables corporate strategies and values to permeate including corporate responsibility, sustainability, marketing and publicity, staff development, and creates a community of shared interest. Winfried Kallinger, from sponsor Kallco, explains Open House Vienna gives them the opportunity to show “our responsibility to the city”. Working Heritage (Melbourne Open House building owner) explain they support Open House because it is a “well regarded, known and trusted event – easy to get buy in from stakeholders – Enthusiastic volunteers – Sense of being part of something bigger rather than going it alone – Good springboard for media coverage – Chance to link in with other projects/events/organisations – Good reason to learn more about the assets we manage”. Ernst & Young support Open House because architecture “feeds the soul. It uplifts, inspires and enlightens us”.

Open House cities have enthusiastic media partners from local/national/international architectural and mainstream publications, social media, TV, and radio. Media partners typically include the leading national architectural publications, for example the Architects Journal (London), Domus (Milan and Rome), and Architecture AU (Melbourne). Mainstream media partners include local and national press, and global press such as Timeout (New York), and the Wall Street Journal (Chicago).

Open House programmes are regularly reviewed and supported by local and national television and radio. Open House gains considerable coverage as a significant cultural programme. For example, the cumulative audience of Melbourne’s 2016 Open House media campaign exceeded 5 million people.

# 6 Conclusion

The Impact Study has assessed the impact of Open House on enabling greater public participation in the design of cities. The study demonstrates that Open House has a significant and positive impact on the way stakeholders and participants engage with their city. Examples from each of the cities have been included, which demonstrates that Open House aims can be achieved in a number of different ways and the model is readily translatable. Open House values have been successfully exported across the world to create a growing family of independent, locally focussed organisations and teams sharing an ethos of promoting design advocacy. Open House has been repeatedly described by visitors and partners as being a unique programme.

The rise of the Open House movement is indicative of an international shift in public awareness of the way cities determine how we live, as well as a growing desire for greater stake in the creation of their city. Open House offers a more inclusive and open-ended way to engage and acknowledge public voices. Open House democratises spaces in the city. The growth of the concept suggests it is a zeitgeist, which demonstrates there is a global need for the experiences that Open House curates.

The scale and inclusivity of Open House audiences, three quarters of a million worldwide, is attributable to its approach. Offering direct experiences, free-of-charge, in a non-elitist manner is essential to success of Open House. It has the largest audience of any international architecture festival. Open House capitalises on this audience to create an independent platform to gather people's attitudes to their city that can help support policy decisions. It also creates a platform that can be used by policymakers,

architects, and industry to engage with the people of the city.

Open House empowers people, creating a sense of civic pride and active citizenship by enabling visitors to see they can have a greater stake in the future of their city, and by operating at a local (but citywide) scale. A majority of Open House visitors state they are more likely to become involved in local governance decisions in relation to architecture and urban design as a result of Open House.

Open House creates a bridge between government, the architectural profession, and the public. It is neither bottom-up nor top-down but endeavours to help people push from the bottom-up and try to influence top-down policies. As a uniquely independent body, Open House is able to engage all of the stakeholders in a dialogue liberated from the entrenched hierarchies that undermine traditional forms of public engagement.

Open House catalyses successful dialogue through learning opportunities, accessible language, focused dialogue, and encouraging reflection. Linking to current issues builds a groundswell around critical issues and feeds into policy thinking; Open House is an agenda setter. Open House cultivates advocacy coalitions and strong relationships with policy makers to amplify their influence championing well-designed cities.

Each of the stages in the process is essential to achieving the aim; providing experience without dialogue or trying to create dialogue without information inhibits the development of advocacy. This is where it departs from architecture events that offer experiences as an end in themselves for professional interest.

Building tour events rarely have explicit advocacy objectives. Architecture festivals tend to 'preach to the converted', often present mediated two-dimensional experiences through exhibitions and talks, and tend to limit their audience through language and framing to architectural professionals.

The Impact Study demonstrates the success of Open House programmes in encouraging advocacy for well-designed cities, but there is potential for its impact to be amplified. We have identified a number of recommendations to increase the impact of Open House Worldwide. The Impact Study demonstrates the need for a joined-up approach to design advocacy that places physical experience of the buildings and spaces at its heart. In order to advocate for good design, people must first experience it.

# Contributors and Acknowledgements

Open House London is the originator of the Open House concept

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