



## Church Street Urban Room

**Location:**

Westminster, London.

**Run by:**

Church Street Ward Neighbourhood Forum.

**Commissioned by:**

Church Street Ward Neighbourhood Forum.

**Date:**

September - October 2015 (7 week period).

**Timing:**

Temporary.

**Space:**

Shop front.

**Description:**

Church Street Urban Room was held as part of a process to develop a neighbourhood plan for the multicultural and deprived Church Street Ward in Westminster, London. It was hosted in a vacant shop unit on Church Street, a shopping and market street in the heart of the area, and hosted a full programme of engagement events, animated by a series of community activities and displays. In the seven week period this 'part meeting place, part exhibition, part festival' welcomed over 1000 visitors.

CSWNF invited submissions from 'everyone who knows and loves the neighbourhood' to suggest activities and uses for the Urban Room, under the banner 'Create This Street'. The Urban Room featured exhibitions about local heritage, current issues and future plans alongside an ever-changing programme of workshops, performances and activities.

The Urban Room engaged more than 1000 visitors from a wide cross-section of the community. Over the seven weeks around 30 local organisations used the space to run activities and engage people in debate about the future of the local area.



**Image:**

Church Street Urban Room  
Credit: Church Street Ward Neighbourhood Forum

**Aims of the UR:**

The Church Street Urban Room was set up in response to the consultation fatigue and disengagement apparent in the local community towards development in their streets and neighbourhood. The Urban Room brought a fresh interactive approach offering open access for all the community to a short and dynamic programme of events and activities.

The theme of the Urban Room 'Create This Street' aimed to encourage many more people in the Church Street Ward to participate and, importantly, influence decisions about the area's future with the following invitation:

"The Church Street area is changing. The Urban Room is everyone's room. It's a free community space for exploring the past and planning the future...to share ideas, talk, voice concerns, resist, debate, object, suggest, perform, entertain, be entertained, get creative, learn a skill, innovate, volunteer, exhibit art, dance, sing, work out, network, crowd fund, have coffee, have fun, chat, socialise, promote your business, promote your services, promote your group, promote your talent, promote yourself, be active, or just observe, do anything...just be part of it."

**Image:**

Church Street Urban Room  
Credit: Church Street Ward  
Neighbourhood Forum

**How was the UR funded and resourced?**

The Church Street Urban Room was a partnership between the Church Street Ward Neighbourhood Forum (CSWNF), Westminster Council and numerous local community groups, charities, civic organisations and local businesses. CSWNF and key partners supplied the core team, supported by many volunteers from the local community. The Urban Room hosted a wide range of activities showcasing the enterprise and creativity of the local community. The space was free to use with the cost of the events covered by the groups and individuals who facilitated them. Voluntary donations were requested from those who could contribute to support the overall running of the UR.

**Activities of the UR:**

Over the 7 week period the Church Street Urban Room hosted 50 events and activities, collaborated with 30 local organisations, and presented 8 displays in the space. Exhibitions and events presented varied subject matter, discourse of the built environment was facilitated through discussions on development sites within the ward, whilst complementary events were utilised to inhabit and engage local residents in the space.

Focussed engagement was held on 7 neighbourhood planning themes including housing, heritage, health and wellbeing and the market. Community events hosted included dance and sports displays, Eid feast, death café, health & wellbeing activities, arts, crafts & open mike, video diary room, walking tour, community meetings.

Careful thought and preparation was undertaken to ensure that the Urban Room was as inclusive and accessible as possible. The shop premises were fully accessible and marketing material was made available in both English & Arabic. 'Champions' were recruited to represent certain groups to ensure marginalised groups were invited to help shape the UR and fully participate in targeted entertainments & events.

**Impact of the UR:****On placemaking:**

The Urban Room helped to identify and define specific themes for the development of the neighbourhood plan. It revealed latent interest, expertise and knowledge in the community around built environment issues and it strengthened community ties and encouraged new volunteers to join CSWNF and other community groups. It delivered rich and diverse community engagement in the past, present and future of the Church Street Ward and highlighted the development issues that mattered most to local people.

**Image:**

Church Street Urban Room  
Credit: Church Street Ward  
Neighbourhood Forum

## Acknowledgements:

The Urban Room Toolkit has been funded and supported by The University of Sheffield, the Greater London Authority and [Urban Room Folkestone](#) and the [Urban Rooms Network](#).

It was researched, written and produced by [Live Works](#), [The University of Sheffield, School of Architecture](#) (Carolyn Butterworth, Rosa Turner Wood, James Harrington)

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Graphic design by [Jon Cannon](#)  
Website design by [Ross Bennett](#)

The Urban Rooms Toolkit is a public resource to be used, downloaded and shared by anyone interested in situated creative community engagement in placemaking. If you have any ideas or experience you would like to share and potentially contribute to the Toolkit please join the [Urban Rooms Network](#)!

This document is a downloadable, printer friendly version of the Urban Rooms Toolkit which can be found at [urbanroomstoolkit.org](http://urbanroomstoolkit.org)

