

SPACESHAPER FACT SHEET

May 2010

What is Spaceshaper?

Spaceshaper is a practical toolkit for use by anyone – whether a local community group or a professional – to measure the quality of a public space before investing time and money in improving it. The toolkit works by capturing the perceptions of professionals involved in running a space, as well the views of the people that use it. Facilitated workshops allow people to discuss the Spaceshaper results, debate issues of design quality and build a better understanding about how the space works for the different stakeholders. The toolkit is positive and aims to raise aspirations, encouraging people to demand more from their local spaces.

The toolkit can:

- Bring staff and users together to discuss the space
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the space
- Measure how well the space meets everyone's needs
- Track changes in people's views

How does Spaceshaper work?

Spaceshaper uses a questionnaire and a facilitated workshop to measure the quality of a public space.

A site visit is an integral part of the process and prepares the participants to fill out the Spaceshaper questionnaire which records individual perceptions of the space. Spaceshaper captures these perceptions by rating the site against 41 characteristics. It covers eight specific areas:

- Access: finding your way and getting about
- Use: what activities and opportunities the space has to offer
- Other people: how the space caters for different needs
- Maintenance: how clean and cared for the space is
- Environment: how safe and comfortable the space is
- Design and appearance: what the space looks like and what materials it uses
- Community: how important the space is to local people
- You: how the space makes you feel

During the workshop the facilitator inputs the data into the Spaceshaper software. The facilitator presents the results to the group, provoking discussion and debate.

The most important part of the whole process is the discussion between those with the knowledge of what it is like to use the space and those whose job it is to care for it. What you get from using the toolkit depends on your original objectives. These can include:

- Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of a space
- Establishing what is most important to people
- Measuring how well the space meets everyone's needs
- Stimulating new ideas for improvements
- Comparing different people's views
- Tracking changes in people's views over time
- Bringing staff and users together in a structured way to discuss the space

What does Spaceshaper not do?

Spaceshaper is designed for people who have a willingness to bring about change for a space. Spaceshaper is used for assessing existing sites but can also be used when planning new sites to assist with developing the brief – it does not identify the solutions for improving the space. It should be used as one element of a broader process of consultation, as opposed to the only form.

How can I apply to run a Spaceshaper workshop?

- 1 Choose one of CABE's approved facilitators. See: www.cabe.org.uk/files/spaceshaper-contacts.pdf
- 2 Fill in the short application form
- 3 Send the completed form to spaceshaper@cabe.org.uk

A number of architecture and built environment centre staff are trained facilitators.

Introductory sessions and facilitator training for Spaceshaper

No taster and training sessions are currently planned for 2010.

Further information

www.cabe.org.uk/public-space/spaceshaper

www.cabe.org.uk/public-space/spaceshaper/faq

www.eibe.co.uk/documents/fairplay/cabe_spaceshaper.pdf

www.southwark.gov.uk/download/3736/spaceshaper_workshop_2008-report