

Kathryn Firth

Tuesday 6th November 5:30-7:00pm Library
(Department of Architecture)



Regenerative catalysts: From Urban Surgery to the Olympic Park

The Legacy of the Olympic Games will bring investment, as well as, access to amenities and services, to one of the most deprived areas of the UK. Indeed, the Games were won on the promise of 'convergence' - ensuring that people in east London have the same opportunities as people across the rest of the city. The London Legacy Development Corporation is building on the momentum of the Games, namely, the provision of fantastic sports facilities and parkland in an incredibly well-connected part of the city. The hope is that the Games have catalysed what was previously a rather slow process of regeneration in this part of London. There is an underlying belief that by establishing good design principles from the onset that value, in all senses of the word, will be created in east London. This is only a starting point, but an important one. This is also only true, however, if these principles are adhered to at all scales, from a park visitors' centre to a new neighbourhood, and supported by robust social infrastructure. Most importantly, high quality urban design initiatives must be promoted not only within the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park but also in the existing neighbourhoods adjacent to the Park. Regeneration can only occur if this new, or rather, re-connected piece of city is just that - a place that is fully integrated with its immediate context spatially, socially and economically.

Kathryn Firth is the Chief of Design at the London Legacy Development Corporation and urban designer with over 25 years of experience working on a range of masterplanning and urban regeneration projects in the US, Europe, the Middle East and the UK. She has also been involved in highly topical research projects that inform both the practice of urban design and associated policy. These include a study of the spatial and social dynamics of streets and public spaces in smaller cities and towns, and a study looking at urban density and how it affects neighbourhood perception. She attained her Bachelor of Architecture in Toronto and, after practicing for a decade, went on to do a Masters of Architecture in Urban Design at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design (GSD). Kathryn has taught at several universities in Canada and the USA. She ran the MSc City Design and Social Science in the London School of Economic Cities Programme for 6 years.

All welcome