

THE REMAKERY

The Railton Road Co-Design Panel

Commissioned by Lambeth Council, the Railton Codesign project was created to capture the rich cultural history of the road. This project was developed and run by Inuse Reuse and Urban Growth and supported by The Remakery.

IN
RE USE

URBAN GROWTH



Project Introduction

In Summer 2022, the Remakery was funded by the National Lottery Community Fund 'Together for Our Planet' initiative, to communicate projects which have had a positive impact on waste and

consumption. We asked *Chloe McFarlane* to share her experiences of the Railton Co-Design Panel project in Brixton and the reuse approach taken to create bespoke street furniture in this location.

Lambeth Council commissioned the Railton Codesign project to capture the rich cultural history of the road, as a part of permanent upgrades to the Low Traffic Neighbourhood. Local residents and researchers were invited to share their thoughts on how public space can be re-animated. Across five co-design workshops in April and May, facilitators worked with the local community to design and build seating and cycle parking stands using locally sourced materials.

How did facilitators and experts encourage the community to rethink that space?

Across the five weeks, various Brixton based experts were invited to the Remakery to talk about a range of design considerations for the new public space on Railton Road. A construction company spoke about a variety of materials which could be used to create new street furniture. They discussed possible construction techniques – the use of fillings and joints to provide security and structural stability. James, CEO of environmental charity Father Nature, also came into the Remakery. He shed light on the vast range of plants which could be used to liven up Railton Road, equally being reflective of the area's rich cultural diversity. He also spoke about the importance of selecting plants which help tackle climate change. The facilitators inspired us to think about creating street furniture that is representative of prominent revolutionary communities (i.e. the Afro-Caribbean community which has flourished since Windrush in 1950's, LGBTQIA+ Brixton fairies) in a sensitive, respectful way. The sessions also sparked conversations about transport, accessibility, multifunctional uses of the space, and what community ownership might look like after the completion of the project.

How did the Remakery's ethos of reuse, repair, and recycle inform the project?

Remakery's ethos of reuse, repair and recycle has been a considerable influence on the design of new benches. The Remakery has a good relationship with local environmental charity Trees For Cities who have a base close by in Myatt's Fields Park in Camberwell. With some of their work involving the creation of park furniture, the organisation produces off cuts of wood (roughly 0.4 – 0.8 metres in length). Earlier this year, Trees for Cities donated approximately 250 kg of oak to The Remakery which was used to build the new benches on Railton Road. Stressed by co-design facilitators, a brilliant aspect of the reclaimed oak is its durability.

What did the community do to reimagine the space on Atlantic Rd?

Through the five weekend co-design workshops, the community reimaged the new public space on Atlantic Road in numerous ways. We had intense discussions about our relationship to Brixton, how the area has changed and our aspirations for what new street furniture should represent. Following this, we reflected upon case studies from around London and beyond which could help shape the creation of this new public space – i.e. the vibrant educational fencing which surrounds Printworks Apartments on Coldharbour Lane and Canning Town Underpass. After collecting many case studies, we then started collaging our ideas using an assortment of Sharpie pens, newspaper and magazine cuttings. Some people used magazine cuttings to imitate potential colour schemes, patterns, themes, and atmosphere of the new public space. Some community members envisioned the new

public space from a street-level view whilst others reimagined the space from a birds-eye angle. Finally, following the illustration of our ideas on paper, we enacted it...! Using old car park markings in the Remakery, we mapped out the dimensions of new seating and cycle stand spaces for Railton Road. Using spare planks of wood from the back room, we experimented with appearance. Using our physical bodies, we enacted different social activities on this part of Atlantic Road – friends sitting down catching up with one another, cyclists/buses travelling past, children playing with new sensory planting features and new visitors to Brixton reading historic facts stencilled into the design. Dramatisation was a much more interesting way of experimenting with and shortlisting our ideas, than typically relying on computer generated images.



What will be the outcome of this project and the effect on the future of this space?

The Railton Co-Design Panel has inspired many debates about how the rich cultural history can be protected and enhanced amidst ongoing gentrification in Brixton. The project has also highlighted the appetite of the community to get involved in the maintenance of the space ensuring benefits are continuously enjoyed by locals. I feel it will deeply inspire community members to think about reusing, repairing, and recycling materials on any street design project they get involved in.... whether in Brixton or beyond!

About the author

Chloe McFarlane has an extensive background in community engagement, working with various urban regeneration companies and charities over the past 5 years including Fluid & Soundings, Roman Road Trust and Groundwork UK. In addition to this, she recently completed her masters in Interdisciplinary Urban Design from the Bartlett School of Planning at UCL. Her masters research project focused on the evolving social value of the Railton Low Traffic Neighbourhood in Brixton.