Child-Friendly Urban Planning & Design

Insights and lessons from cities around the world

www.rethinkingchildhood.com
Sollefteå (map credit: Torbjörn Wrange)
What is a child-friendly city?

Family-friendly neighbourhoods

Public realm

Housing

Services
Why does child-friendly urban planning matter?

• Children’s views
• Health & well-being
• Environment & sustainability
• Community life
• Economy & demography
• Solving the insoluble
Children’s views about cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safety &amp; free movement</th>
<th>Heavy traffic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer gathering places</td>
<td>Rubbish &amp; litter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Varied activity settings</td>
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<td>Safe green spaces</td>
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Child-friendly cities

• Compact
• Easy to get around on foot or by bicycle
• Green & playful
• People care about children
Sustainable Child-friendly cities

- Compact
- Easy to get around on foot or by bicycle
- Green
- People care about the environment
Nature is good for children

“High levels of childhood green space are associated with lower risk of developing any of a spectrum of adolescent into adult psychiatric disorders.”

Engemann et al (2019)

"If we were talking about a new medicine that had this kind of effect the buzz would be huge, but these results suggest that being able to go for a walk in the park as a kid is just as impactful."
Children’s well-being
Figure 17. Infant and young child overweight trends from 1990 to 2015, by World Bank income group
Mental health

Fig. 2. MMPI Depression (D) scale scores of college students, 1938–2007.
“The generators of community life”
“Rotterdam and Vancouver have taken ambitious steps to make urban environments attractive to families, retaining skilled workers and driving the local economy.”

Arup, *Cities Alive: Designing for urban childhoods*
“Children are a kind of indicator species. If we can build a successful city for children, we will have a successful city for all people.”

Enrique Peñalosa, Mayor of Bogotá
Solving The Insoluble
Rotterdam, Netherlands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>635,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Density (per sq km)</td>
<td>3,050</td>
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<tr>
<td>Density compared to London</td>
<td>56%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Households with children</td>
<td>29.5% (lower than national average)</td>
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<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>• Europe’s largest port</td>
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<td>• Traditionally a working class city</td>
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<td>• Rebuilt along car-centric lines after World War 2</td>
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Rotterdam, city with a future

How to build a Child Friendly City

- Euros 27.5 million
- 2006-10 & 2014-18
- 1 Pilot Neighbourhood
- 9 Follow-up N’hoods
- Public Realm, Schools, Housing
De Vergadering der Dieren

There are now 10% more home-owning, degree-educated people living in our target neighbourhoods.

Ronald Schneider, Former Deputy Mayor
Oslo: a child-friendly smart city
The Most Child-Friendly Neighbourhood?

- School & childcare at the heart of the neighbourhood
- Frequent, accessible, reliable public transport
- Public green space with natural play features, fire pit and outdoor seating area
- School’s outdoor informal sports facilities open to the public
- Car park on the edge of the neighbourhood
- Extensive tree cover
- Car-free, shared surface streets
- Sustainable urban drainage as a natural feature
- Balconies and active building frontages
- Connected walking & cycling networks
- Teen-friendly seating & social area
- Multi-functional market square
Rationale

Economy and Demography
Antwerp
Rotterdam

Sustainability
Vancouver

Children’s rights and well-being
New West.
City of N. Vancouver

Freiburg
Oslo
Ghent

Calgary
Municipal Model For Child-Friendly Urban Planning

- Measures and indicators
- Links to progressive planning and transport policies
- Investment in spaces and mobility
- Meaningful engagement
- Focus on residential neighbourhoods

Municipal official (and politician)
“You look at the geodata. You look at what the children say with the participation. You walk around with the external bureaux. You make your own observations. And you come up with a plan.”

Wim Seghers, Antwerp City Council
Challenges & questions

• Equity & gentrification
• Legislation & regulation
• Teenagers & younger children
• Older people
Takeaways

• Build An Ambitious, Progressive Vision
• People Before Policies
• Play AND Mobility
• Mainstreaming:
  • “Children’s Infrastructure”