



Cities Alive

Designing for urban childhoods

ARUP

Cities for everyone

“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*

A blurred background image of a busy city street. In the foreground, a group of school children in white shirts and dark trousers are walking across a crosswalk. A green pedestrian crossing light is visible in the upper left. The background is filled with other pedestrians and city buildings, creating a sense of a vibrant urban environment.

A vital part of shaping and supporting cities

Child-friendly urban planning is a vital part of planning, design and management of cities that work for everyone.

A photograph of two young children, a boy and a girl, looking out of a window. They are both wearing grey hooded sweatshirts. The boy is on the left, and the girl is on the right. They are both looking out the window with interest. The window is slightly dirty, and the view outside is a blurred city street with buildings and trees. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Everyday freedoms

**Playful behaviours and freedom to explore
should be part of everyday life,
throughout the city.**

Children's infrastructure

The network of **spaces, streets, nature and interventions** which make up the key features of a child-friendly city.

Opportunities for children's infrastructure

- **Streets and spaces** in front of people's homes
- **Intergenerational and multifunctional** spaces
- Influencing **everyday journeys**
- Interventions at the **neighbourhood scale**
- **Reducing car dependency** and traffic dominance
- Connected **green infrastructure** networks

A catalyst for improving cities

Focusing on the needs of children has the potential to act as a **unifying theme** to **navigate challenges** and competing priorities, **promote progressive ideas** and gain support for **ambitious actions**.

Achieving child-friendly cities

Actors should be **opportunistic** and **strategic**, championing child-friendly ideas and integrating child-friendly urban planning into policy and projects in **all lenses of city making**.



Simple solutions



Simple solutions



Simple solutions

Advocates for urban transformation

Bogotá and Tirana see **children as agents of change**, driving a sense of ownership and influencing behaviours from **reduced car use** to **sustainable waste management**.

Encouraging safe and active spaces

Barcelona is supporting physical activity with a radical superblocks strategy, restricting traffic to main roads and turning internal streets into safe and green ‘citizen spaces’.

A photograph of a man and a young boy in a rooftop garden. The boy is holding a green watering can and pouring water onto plants in a wooden planter box. The man is standing next to him, looking on. In the background, there are other rooftop gardens and a modern building with many windows.

Attracting families for economic competitiveness

Private-sector led developments like River District, Vancouver create vibrant destinations that can **attract and sustain new communities** and make **flexible use of space**.

Resilient and shared use cities

The City of Rotterdam reframed how city spaces were shared, **transforming school yards into neighbourhood squares** and creating parks that enhanced **climate change resilience** while offering opportunities for play.

Activating new neighbourhoods early on

Arts programming, urban gardens and a natural open air swimming pool **generated activity** in London King's Cross Central's outdoor spaces from the **early stages of development**.

A young child wearing a red cap is looking through large green leaves in a garden. The child is partially obscured by the foliage. In the background, a person wearing a white t-shirt with a logo that says "BUILDING A BRIGHTER C" is visible. The scene is outdoors with sunlight filtering through the leaves.

Caring for nature and each other

Restoration of Natividad Creek Park in California supported **intergenerational activity**, becoming a space where young people **avoid gangs and violence** and learn about ecology.

Reclaiming streets through community action

Play Streets in Bristol, Melbourne, New York and Tokyo are small yet catalytic steps creating **space and freedom** for community interaction while **highlighting problem areas** for change.



Results that overcome resistance

A month-long experiment for a car free zone in Suwon, South Korea proved successful when residents **voted to impose speed restrictions, parking controls and car-free weekends.**

Actions and opportunities





CIP

children's
infrastructure
partnership

Cities Alive

Designing for urban childhoods

e: hannah.wright@arup.com

e: info@childrensinfrastructure.org

w: arup.com/cities_alive