

# URBAN95



**IF YOU COULD EXPERIENCE  
THE CITY FROM 95cm – THE  
HEIGHT OF A 3-YEAR-OLD –  
WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE?**



# WHAT IS URBAN95?

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**Every baby is born learning. Each time she is fed, comforted, or played with, she makes new connections about how people behave. From her first steps outside to the inside of her first nursery classroom, the places she goes teach her how the world works.**

Science shows these early experiences shape the developing brain and set the foundation for later learning and health. A good start in life makes a child that is much more likely to reach her full potential. To build a prosperous future. To be a good neighbour and citizen.

We take it as given that adults make the decisions that shape children's experiences and environment. But what if these adults experienced the world from the perspective of a child? How would their decisions change?

This simple question is at the heart of Urban95, an initiative created in 2016 by the Bernard van Leer Foundation to help change the landscapes and opportunities that shape young children's lives. Whether you're a city leader, planner, architect, or innovator, we ask you to consider:

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# URBAN95 PARTNERSHIPS

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We believe the well-being of the babies and toddlers who live there is the best measure of a vibrant, prosperous and healthy city. That's why we are investing 30 million Euros in three aspects of Urban95:

1

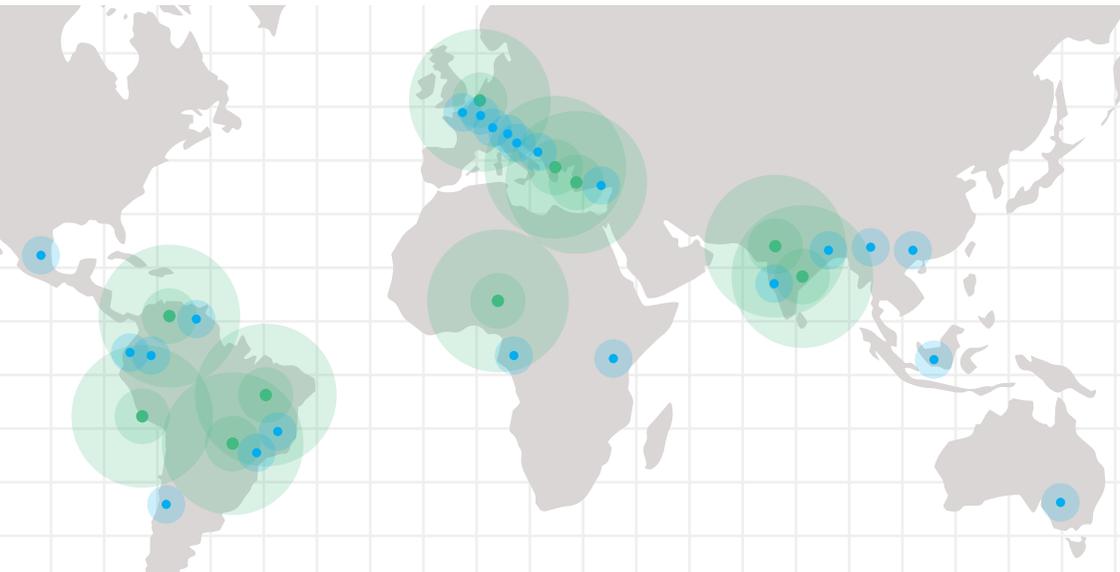
**Identifying new innovations** through our Urban95 Challenge small grants programme. From safer road crossings in Mexico City to spaces where babies and toddlers play while their mothers meet in Mumbai, we're shining a light on dozens of new ideas to change the way young children live, learn, and play.

2

**Multi-year partnerships with 10 pioneering cities committed to taking promising practices from pilot to scale.** With our technical and financial support, cities will launch new efforts to provide parent coaching, create public green space, increase families' options to move safely around their communities, and use data to inform decision-making. Thus far, we've launched partnerships with Bogotá, Colombia, Tel Aviv, Israel and Bhubaneswar, India.

3

**Introducing the needs of young children and their families to the global dialogue about the future of cities** through partnerships with city-focused research and training institutions, trade publications and convenings. That's why we're here at CityLab!



# AN URBAN95 STARTER KIT:

## 5 ideas for action

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### 1. PARENT COACHING

Cities have opportunities to communicate with parents all day, every day. On the side of the bus, in handouts from the doctor, in childcare centre materials, and signs at the grocery store. Surround parents with ideas for ways to incorporate play and storytelling into daily routines, and nurture their children's fast-developing brains.

**Spotlight:** *Tel Aviv, Israel is using its digital platform to deliver customized content to parents with babies and toddlers. This includes connecting new parents to services and activities near their homes and sharing practical child development tips.*

### 2. POP-UP PLAY

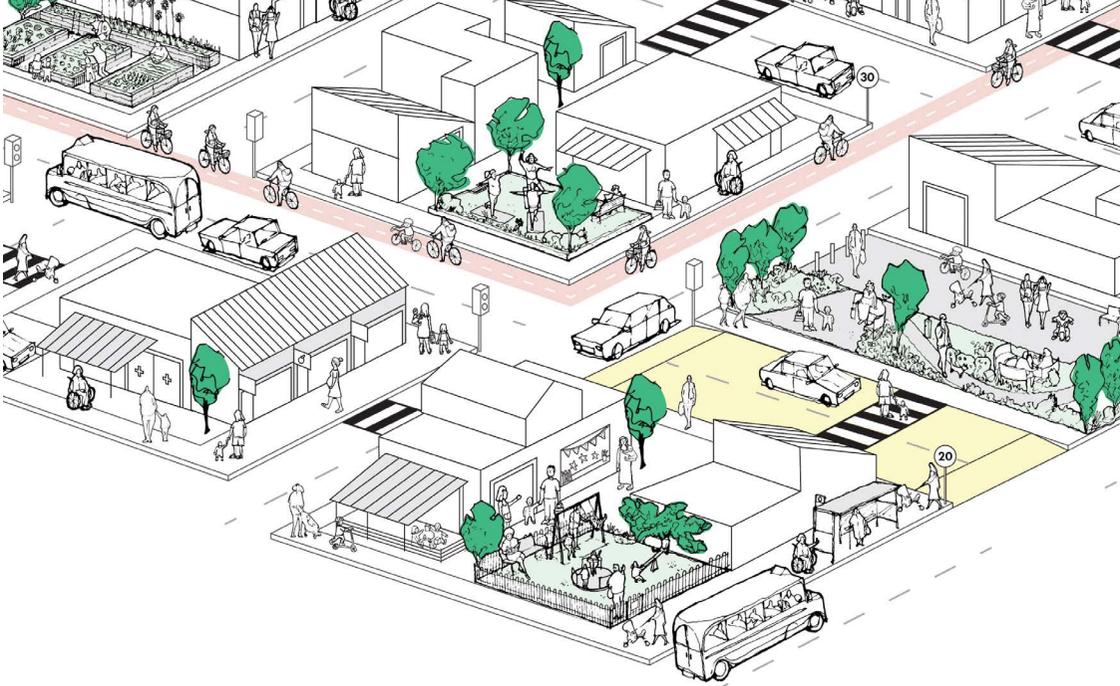
Mobile containers of books, toys, and games for small children, along with movable benches and chairs that can be easily towed by bicycle or car. Fills dormant public space with life and is an efficient way to test ideas for more permanent infrastructure.

**Spotlight:** *In Canberra, Australia, an eight-day pop-up park experiment led to a six-fold increase in children and families spending time outside enjoying public space.*

### 3. PLAY STREETS

Close a network of streets for a day, so people of all ages have a safe public space to play, meet, and be active. Temporary closures are a good first step toward more permanent solutions to street safety, and give everyone a chance to breathe cleaner air.

**Spotlight:** *In Mexico City, LabCDMX is regularly closing streets in front of schools in some of the city's most deprived neighbourhoods.*



#### 4. NATURE TAKE-OVER

Turn unused or dilapidated infrastructure into community gardens or small parks where children can play and families can meet. This gives urban babies and toddlers access to nature, creates a stronger sense of community and improves environmental awareness.

**Spotlight:** In Antwerp, Belgium, Kind en Samenleving is turning small, sterile plots of land in front of homes into green zones where young children can play and learn gardening activities.

#### 5. CHILDREN'S PRIORITY ZONES

A comprehensive, neighbourhood-based approach to healthy child development. Create a perimeter around an “anchor institution” that families often visit and progressively introduce new activities, services, and features to make the area better for young children and those who care for them. Measure how these improvements change lives over time—including increases in outdoor play, better air quality, more people getting active through walking and cycling, and parents connecting more with their kids.

**Spotlight:** Recife, Brazil is experimenting with children's zones around local community centres. This will include a series of actions from temporary to more permanent, including a “pop-up play and parenting” campaign to reclaim public space for families, safer routes between typical family destinations such as preschools, grocery stores and playgrounds, and investments in symbolic landmarks such as playgrounds, parks and pedestrian areas.

# THE MAYOR'S GUIDE TO THE FIRST 1000 DAYS

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Elected officials' track records are often measured during their first 100 days. What if we asked them to think about what they can accomplish in the first 1000 days of children's lives?

To spark this way of thinking, we're creating **The Mayor's Guide to the First 1000 Days**: a playbook for city officials who want to champion the needs of their youngest residents. We're just getting started, so please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have a question, suggestion, or an idea.



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