



City of Rotterdam
Youth, Education and Society

Rotterdam, city with a future

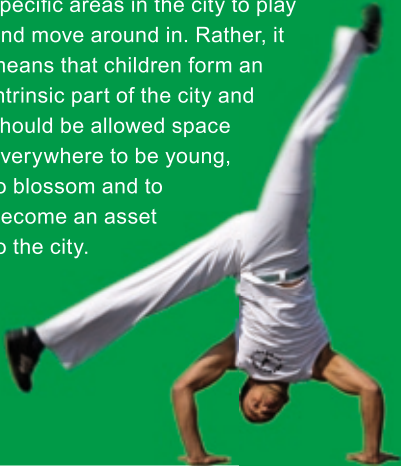


How to
build a Child
Friendly City



What is a Child Friendly City?

A Child Friendly City is a city in which children and youngsters can grow up in a pleasant, responsible, safe and dynamic way. Being a Child Friendly City does not simply mean that children are allotted specific areas in the city to play and move around in. Rather, it means that children form an intrinsic part of the city and should be allowed space everywhere to be young, to blossom and to become an asset to the city.



In order to be a Child Friendly City, a city needs to meet certain physical and socio-economical requirements. But what are the basic requirements and how can they be monitored?

Programme Child Friendly Rotterdam

In 2007, a special programme was set up in Rotterdam to turn abstract goals into tangible results: Child Friendly Rotterdam. Within three years, an urban planning method, Building Blocks for a Child Friendly Rotterdam, was developed to scan neighbourhoods on their degree of, and potential for, child-friendliness. Also, a tool was developed to measure the effects of the city's specific efforts towards becoming a Child Friendly City.

Subsequent pilot studies conducted in eleven neighbourhoods in Rotterdam have shown that a focus on child-friendly development truly helps to keep families in the city.

The programme 'Child Friendly Rotterdam' aims to:

- Enhance the city as a residential location;
- Keep families in the city;
- Strengthen the economy;
- Improve the quality of life for children from 0 to 18 years.

Urban Planning method

The urban planning method 'Building Blocks for a Child Friendly Rotterdam' provides a new way of looking at the city. It highlights the strong points of individual urban neighbourhoods and shows where there is room for improvement.

The Building Blocks are excellent tools to achieve major results with minimal effort. District councils and city services, together with housing corporations and project developers, can use this tool to chart a course for specific neighbourhoods to make them truly child-friendly.



Practical Building Blocks

Rotterdam works on becoming a sustainable city where children, both literally and figuratively, have room to grow. The method 'Building Blocks for a Child Friendly Rotterdam' consists of a practical package of four Building Blocks that can be used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of neighbourhoods.

Building Block 1: Child Friendly Housing

In the city, single-family houses with a garden are ideal for bringing up children. Under certain conditions apartments can also be suitable for children. The conditions for child-friendly homes were formulated in partnership with housing corporations and project developers.

Conditions for family-friendly apartments:

- A minimally net floor area of 85 m² (915 sq ft);
- A direct correlation between entrance and street, and adequate storage space;
- A room for each child;
- A communal playground within the building in apartment blocks higher than four storeys;
- An elevator;
- Private outdoor area(s) large enough for at least a table;
- Good outdoor play areas and communal areas for various age groups.



Building Block 2: Public Space

To develop a truly child-friendly city, it is essential to gear the public space to the specific needs of children. The building block Public Space addresses conditions for play areas, outdoor play areas and the use of the space between front door and street level (liminal space).

Conditions for outdoor play areas in Rotterdam:

- Sports and play areas of minimally 5,000 m² (5,910 sq yd) for each demarcated residential zone larger than 15 hectares (0.06 sq mi). In blocks covering less than 15 hectares, a single combined sports/play area of minimally 1,000 m² (1,200 sq yd) suffices;
- A second large sports and play area covering at least 1,000 m² (1,200 sq yd) within 300 m (328 yd) of the central sports and play area;
- A pavement suitable for playing: 3-5m (10-16ft) wide on at least one side of the street, preferably on the sunny side of the road.



Conditions for green play areas:

- Trees with seasonal variation (i.e. blossom, fruit and leaf colouring) and climbing trees;
- Grass areas and green playgrounds (with climbing trees rather than prickly shrubs and bushes);
- Schoolyards with greenery. Ratio of surfaced area to greenery should be 2 : 1 for schoolyards larger than 300 m² (3,230 sq ft).

Conditions for liminal space:

- Including the area between front door and public space in the total design should become standard procedure;
- The use of the pavement should be encouraged in areas where houses have no front garden and in urban neighbourhoods with wide pavements of minimally 3 m (10 ft).

Conditions for existing buildings:

The options available for liminal space are determined by the location itself. A wall garden, park bench against a wall or low wall for sitting on provide viable options for liminal space. On busy traffic routes, liminal space creates a buffer. In quiet, residential side streets liminal space provides ample opportunity for children and adult residents to meet.

Building Block 3: Facilities

Local facilities such as shops, sports clubs and schools, are generally highly appreciated by parents and children. They contribute to a lively neighbourhood with social cohesion.

Conditions for facilities

- At least one extended school per district, i.e. either a primary or a secondary school offering additional activity programmes for six hours per week;
- A safe school environment, both in terms of schoolyard layout and school accessibility;
- A ratio between surfaced area and greenery in the schoolyard of 2 : 1, with a surfaced area of minimally 300 m² (328 sq yd).



Building Block 4: Safe traffic routes

Child-friendly traffic routes encourage children to explore the city and engage in city life more independently.

Examples of measures that help improve safety:

- Speed reduction measures and no-through traffic zones;
- Locating public amenities at strategic points makes the street socially safe and therefore safer to travel through independently;
- In order to create a child-friendly network of streets in every neighbourhood, it is essential that at least one side of every street has a sidewalk of at least 3 m (10 ft) wide.



Building Blocks in practice

A neighbourhood scan based on the four Building Blocks provides a clear insight into the exact areas in which these neighbourhoods score well and in which they score less in terms of childfriendliness.

The Building Blocks can:

- Identify not only problems, but also opportunities for improvement;
- Distinguish between short-term, high-priority projects and longer-term, lower-priority projects.

The results of efforts to make urban neighbourhoods child-friendly are measured by the Rotterdam Child Friendly Monitor. This monitor was especially developed for the Rotterdam Child Friendly programme.

Inspirations

Mental Maps

Asking children to make a drawing of their surroundings often reveals surprisingly simple solutions. They can draw both the existing situation, including the problems and inconveniences these children encounter, and the way they would like it to be.



Green areas

Play areas with greenery and shrubbery can be made more interesting and appealing by cultivating edible and educational plants and crops, or by cultivating semi-wild play areas:

- Edible and educational plants and crops are cultivated in school gardens, allotment gardens and urban agricultural plots;
- Housing corporations and local district councils in Rotterdam have created communal gardens;
- Rotterdam created so-called 'play wildernesses', where children can run around freely and engage in climbing and playing.



Playing on the street

So-called 'play streets' are streets with extra playing facilities for children. Play streets can be realised with relatively simple means. The city of Rotterdam has made containers available with go-karts, roller skates and skipping ropes, which the children can borrow.



What next? Act!

Building Blocks for a Child Friendly Rotterdam provides a practical roadmap for making urban neighbourhoods a better place for children to grow up in. With the implementation of these building blocks, the city truly becomes an appealing place for families to live and play in.

More information?

Call Programme Manager Rita Wapperom on 0031 10 267 44 81 or send an e-mail to r.wapperom@jos.rotterdam.nl



Colophon

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The City of Rotterdam is initiator of the programme Child Friendly Rotterdam and developed the urban planning method Building Blocks for a Child Friendly Rotterdam in close collaboration with various district councils, housing corporations, higher education institutions and project developers.

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